

Chapter 2. Project Methodology

As was detailed in Chapter 1, the four elements of a coordinated plan required by the FTA are:

- An assessment of current transportation services;
- An assessment of transportation needs;
- Strategies, activities and/or projects to address the identified transportation needs (as well as ways to improve efficiencies); and
- Implementation priorities based on funding, feasibility, time, etc.

This chapter describes the steps that have been undertaken to develop these elements of NYMTC's Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan.

Community Transportation Service Provider Workshops and Community Open Houses

This plan draws heavily on stakeholder involvement and public outreach, which guided the final outcome and ensured that it receives the support of those it most directly affects. At the project's outset, a regional Steering Committee as well as three subregional Stakeholder Advisory Committees (SACs), representing New York City, Long Island, and the Lower Hudson Valley, were formed. The former guided the study, while the latter committees offered additional direction, facilitated access to stakeholders, and provided a reality check for the initial findings. The members of the Steering Committee and the Lower Hudson Valley SAC are listed in Figures 2-1 and 2-2. These committees each met five times during the course of the project.

To develop an understanding of service delivery of community transportation services, funding availability, and key issues of concern, interviews were conducted with regional stakeholders and Lower Hudson Valley stakeholders representing transportation providers, human service agencies, and advocacy organizations reflecting each of the three target populations.

The project also involved two rounds of community transportation service provider workshops, community open houses and public meetings in all three counties. The first round focused on verifying findings on services and needs and seeking input on preliminary sets of strategies based on the shortcomings identified. The second round occurred after the Draft Final Report was completed and reviewed by NYMTC, the Project Steering Committee, and the Lower Hudson Valley SAC. The focus of this second round was to present findings and elicit feedback on the Plan.

In addition, three focus groups were conducted for the three target populations in each of the counties (9 focus groups total). Each of the groups focused on themes unveiled by the preceding outreach efforts and analysis. They were also used to determine which obstacles to coordination commonly cited in other studies around the country, and which solutions, were germane to the NYMTC region and the Lower Hudson Valley subregion in particular.

Figure 2-1 Project Steering Committee

Name	Organization
Linda Black	New York City (NYC) – Department for the Aging
Evelyn Carroll	NYC – Department of Transportation (NYCDOT)
Cathryn Flandina	Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)
Patrick Gerdin	Rockland County Planning Department
David Glass	New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)
James Goveia	Federal Transit Administration
Virginia Johnson	Westchester County Department of Transportation
Uchenna Madu	NYSDOT Transportation Coordinating Council (TCC)
John Murray	Suffolk County Department of Public Works (DPW)
John Pilner	Putnam County Planning Department
Denise Ramirez	Nassau County Planning Department
Ophelia Ray-Fenner	NYCDOT
Heather Richardson	NYCDOT
Jean Shanahan	NYSDOT (TCC)
Tom Vaughan	NYSDOT
Judy Walker	MTA
Lanny Wexler	NYSDOT

Figure 2-2 Lower Hudson Valley Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Name	Title	Organization
Naomi Adler	President and Chief Executive Officer	United Way of Westchester and Putnam
Chris D. Andristsopoulos	Admin of Spec. Transit	Westchester County Office for the Disabled
Diane Atkins	Deputy Commissioner	Westchester County Dept. of Social Services
Medley J. Broege	Coordinator	Putnam County Office for People with Disabilities
Jim Burton	Associate ED	Meals on Wheels Programs and Services of Rockland County
Anthony D'Antoni	Coordinator of TRIPS Operations	Rockland County Dept. of Public Transportation
Sherry Defrancesco	Admin. Director	Westchester Disabled On The Move
Joseph Finch		CP Putnam
Patrick Gerdin	Principal Planner	Rockland County Planning Dept.
Mike Gurski	Transit Administrator	Rockland County Department of Transportation
William Huestis	Director	Putnam County Office for the Aging
Jennifer Irven	Transportation Planner	Westchester County Department of Transportation
Virginia E. Johnson	Principal Planner	Westchester County Department of Transportation
Evan Latainier	Director	Westchester County Office for the Disabled
Vincent Marzella	Assistant Supervisor of TRIPS Operations	Rockland County Dept. of Public Transportation
Grant Mitchell, M.D.	Commissioner	Westchester Department of Community Mental Health
John Mizerak	Director	Taconic Developmental Center
June F. Morlof	Director	Rockland County Office for the Aging
Carlos Pascoa		Ability Beyond Disability
Patricia Perez	Coordinator of Community Affairs	Putnam County
Winston Ross	Executive Director	Westchester Community Opportunity Program
Jean Shanahan	Staff Director	MHSTCC
Michael Shine	Grants Specialist	Rockland County Planning Dept.
Mimi Vilord	President	United Way of Rockland County
Mary Ann Walsh-Tolzer	Commissioner	Rockland County Department of Mental Health
Susan Wayne	President/CEO	Family Services of Westchester
Caryl Weinstein	Program Coordinator	Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services
Janet Wheeler	Director	Hudson Valley DDSO
Ann B. Woody	Deputy Director Community Support Administration	Taconic DDSO
Catherine Wynkoop	President	Active Living Over 50, Inc. (ALOFT)

The general public was also invited to participate in the planning process. In addition to offering this opportunity at the combined stakeholder workshops and public meetings, NYMTC established a web page to inform the public about the combined workshops/meetings, disseminate information, and elicit feedback. Press releases advertising the workshops were provided to the local media, and newsletter articles were published to publicize the project.

Through the Steering and Stakeholder Advisory Committees and through local stakeholder meetings and interviews, workshops, open houses, focus groups, and general outreach efforts, stakeholder opinions were sought in the following areas:

- Transportation needs;
- Adequacy of existing resources to meet transit needs;
- Perceived benefits of coordination;
- Obstacles/barriers to the implementation of local coordination;
- Existing tools employed by local coordination initiatives;
- Additional tools required by local officials to increase coordination;
- Strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in current state transit policies and practices with respect to coordination;
- Strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in current Federal/state human services programs' policies and practices with respect to coordination; and
- Recommendations.

The contact sheets for the Steering and Stakeholder Advisory Committees, meeting minutes, the stakeholder interview guide and all other materials used in connection with the public input process are found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Demographic Profiles

Demographic profiles of the NYMTC region, Lower Hudson Valley and each of the counties were prepared using data from the US Census and NYMTC, supplemented by relevant disability and aging findings from the 2005 American Community Survey. This step established the framework for better understanding the local characteristics of the study area, with a focus on the three population groups subject to this plan. This information can also serve as a surrogate for trip origins. The demographic profile is incorporated in Chapters 3 and 5 of this report.

Chapter 3 presents an overview and profile of each subregion and Chapter 5 presents more detailed data on each target population by block group. Census data was also used to compute target populations by city and town for the subregion. Since many towns cover large geographic areas, demographic data is shown on a smaller level in addition to the city and town level. To do this, village boundaries were overlaid onto block groups and a GIS script called "calculate demographic" was utilized to pull out population data by village. In cases where a village boundary crossed two or more block groups, the script split the population among the villages according to the proportion of the village within a block group. For example, if a block group contained 1,000 older adults and 50 percent of the geography fell within Village A and 50

percent within Village B, the script placed 500 older adults in each village. This method is not exact since population is not distributed evenly throughout each block group; however, since most villages are fairly small geographically, it still provides a fair estimate of the target populations in each village.

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted of recently completed—or currently underway—planning efforts relevant to this Coordinated Plan. This literature review helped identify planning activities in the region and issues that needed to be incorporated into the Coordinated Plan. Additionally, these plans were assessed to determine whether they addressed the requirements identified in the FTA’s guidelines on Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plans. The annotated list of each of these documents and a summary of pervading themes is included in Appendix B.

Inventory of Public Transit and Community Transportation Services

This step involved documenting the range of public transit and human service transportation services that currently exist in the NYMTC region. An inventory of available services and levels and sources of funding was developed through stakeholder interviews and the literature review, as well as surveys of transportation organizations. The survey instrument and survey report are presented in Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively. NYSDOT also provided lists of 5310 applicants and recipients for the region. Grant applications and other information from the Section 5310 grant recipients and applicants who elected not to participate in the survey were reviewed in Albany.

Current Transportation Patterns

To assess existing transportation needs, data on trip origins and destinations was collected and mapped. As described above, demographic data was used as a surrogate for trip origins. To identify destinations, employment information from the Census was accessed and mapped. Other major origins and destinations for the three populations were identified using ADA paratransit trip data, survey data and internet searches.

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment provides the basis for recognizing where and how service for the three population groups needs to be improved. Using the data collected in the preceding steps, existing services and coordination efforts designed to improve the mobility of target population groups were compared with major travel patterns. Duplications, overlaps, and gaps in service were pinpointed. Findings were then reviewed by stakeholders and the public via the stakeholder workshops, public informational meetings and focus groups.

Strategy Identification & Prioritization and Final Plan

A major goal of the study was to identify and prioritize coordination and other innovative mobility improvement strategies to enhance transportation services to older adults, persons with

disabilities, and persons with low income. From a nationwide inventory of best practice models, a menu of locally-appropriate coordination options was developed, or a “coordination continuum,” which included alternatives ranging from simple to complex:

- **Networking** – the simplest form of partnerships where participants share a common interest but with no significant action other than information exchange.
- **Cooperation** – involves low-level linkages, informal agreements, and some possible resource sharing.
- **Coordination** – more intense linkages that include resource sharing to pursue common goals.
- **Collaboration** – the most sophisticated partnership form with strong, formal linkages among partners and complex goals implemented over longer periods of time.
- **Consolidation** – one organization assumes responsibility for service delivery of other participant organizations.

Each coordination strategy recommended included: a description; a list of likely participants; an assessment of the benefits, obstacles and feasibility; an assessment of the length of time necessary; a cost estimate; and an analysis of funding constraints and opportunities.

Drawing on these specific recommendations, policies and strategies were recommended that can be applied throughout the region to eliminate or reduce duplication in services, fill service gaps, and otherwise provide more efficient utilization of transportation services and resources pertinent to the target populations.

A Draft Final Report was submitted to NYMTC, the Steering Committee and the Lower Hudson Valley Stakeholder Advisory Committee for review and comment. A revised draft, based on a unified set of comments, was resubmitted to NYMTC for final review. From this document, the Final Report was created.