

# Chapter 9. Implementation Priorities for the Lower Hudson Valley

## Introduction

Building on the analysis of unmet transportation needs for the three target populations – older adults, persons with disabilities and persons with low income – a collection of strategies was identified that offer potential to address service gaps, unmet needs and service duplication. These strategies drew heavily from input and suggestions gathered during the outreach meetings and interviews conducted in the summer and fall of 2008. Working in conjunction with the Lower Hudson Valley Stakeholder Advisory Committee, this list and description of 14 individual strategies is documented in Chapter 8. This list contains a description for each strategy, cost estimates, potential lead agency for implementation, and examples of best practices drawn from examples throughout the United States.

The Lower Hudson Valley Stakeholder Advisory Committee met on February 24, 2009 to prioritize the proposed strategies based on criteria outlined in Figure 9-1.

**Figure 9-1 Strategy Prioritization Criteria**

<b>Meet Documented Needs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify options/Create choices</li> <li>• Increase accessible infrastructure</li> <li>• Support existing operators</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation Feasibility</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient use of available resources</li> <li>• Likelihood of project sponsor</li> <li>• Complexity of implementation</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid duplication of effort</li> <li>• Promote coordination</li> </ul>

Copies of the evaluation criteria were distributed to each SAC member and attendees were given five “votes” (approximately half the number of strategies under consideration) and asked to distribute them among their preferred strategies.

Additionally, since not all SAC members were present at the meeting, a brief survey was distributed via e-mail on March 5, 2009 (with the minutes of the February 24, 2009 meeting) that enabled each member of the SAC to register their priorities on the list of strategies. Additionally, this same short survey was posted for those SAC members who wished to complete the survey electronically. This extended voting process reinforced the top vote getting strategies (“high” priority strategies) and slightly modified the order of “medium” priority strategies. The low priority strategies remained unchanged from the announced order at the February SAC meeting.

At the end of the process, the Lower Hudson Valley Stakeholders Advisory Committee identified nine (9) strategies determined to have a high implementation priority for the Lower Hudson Valley:

- Improved Coordination of Agency Services through Mobility Management
- Transit Service Expansion and Improvements
- Accessibility Improvements at Bus Stops
- Centralized Resource Directory
- Jobs Access Strategies
- Affordable and Accessible Taxi Services
- Travel Voucher Programs
- Travel Training Programs
- Reverse Commute Strategies

All strategies, shown in priority order, are reflected in Figure 9-2. The “**MM**” icon denotes strategies that could be implemented by a Mobility Manager as part of a broad range of mobility strategies. The remainder of this chapter provides more detailed implementation considerations for each of the strategies deemed “high priority.” The purpose of this chapter is to provide enough information for the highest priority strategies so that agencies and organizations understand the respective opportunities and challenges and can hence make a more informed decision about pursuing specific grant funding.

Following Figure 9-2, each of the high priority strategies are described. Potential lead organizations that would be tasked with responsibility for implementation are identified. Any issues regarding implementation, including a range of costs and approximate implementation timeframes, are also provided. For each strategy a lead agency or “champion” has been suggested to initiate action. The agencies listed are merely possible lead agencies and should in no way preclude other agencies or organizations from leading an effort to address this strategy. The implementation timeframe estimates the time required to implement the strategy, after funding has been secured. Order of magnitude costs reflect approximate costs to implement the strategy, inclusive of both capital and operating costs. Potential funding sources refer to the funding programs for which projects are likely to be eligible. Experience from across the nation was drawn upon to provide examples of cities where similar programs have been implemented.

**Figure 9-2 Summary of Proposed Strategies for the Lower Hudson Valley<sup>1</sup>**

Strategy (to address need/gap)*	Lead Agency/Champion	Implementation Timeframe †	Order of Magnitude Costs (Capital or Operating) ‡	Potential Funding Sources	Comments
<b>High Priority Strategies</b>					
Improved Coordination of Agency Services/Mobility Management <b>MM</b>  Could be implemented in all three counties in the LHV	County departments  Transit agencies  Non-profit organizations	6-8 months	Annual salary: \$30,000 to \$60,000  Training and admin costs of \$50,000 and \$100,000  Federal participation: 80%	JARC  New Freedom	A Mobility Manager could be an individual, a group of individuals or an organization that provides a wide variety of mobility management functions for consumers, human service agency staffs, and/or for community transportation providers.
Transit Service Expansion and Improvements	Transit agencies	12-24 months	Public transit – up to \$100 per hour  Community transportation services \$55 and \$65 per hour	JARC	Public transit affords the most mobility to the target populations when located in proximity to target population origins/destinations of travel. Following the example of Bee-Line, continue to create new services and/or expand existing services to provide service to new areas, expand service hours and/or expand options in area with limited service to meet employment transportation needs. Build on opportunities to coordinate existing services to maximize efficiency and ridesharing.
Accessibility Improvements at Bus Stops  Could be implemented in all three counties in the LHV with high priority for Putnam County	County/municipal departments  Transit agencies	2 years	Capital expense  \$400,000 - \$500,000 (range can depend on number of shelters, benches and other amenities)	New Freedom	Improving bus stop accessibility and installing passenger amenities can make transit more accessible by persons with disabilities and older adults.

<sup>1</sup> Strategies presented in rank order of preference express by the Lower Hudson Valley SAC.

Note: \* MM refers to project or strategy that may be led by a Mobility Manager.

† Timelines are indicative and based on time required once funding is secured.

‡ Dollar figures reflect differences in subregional economies.

Strategy (to address need/gap)*	Lead Agency/Champion	Implementation Timeframe †	Order of Magnitude Costs (Capital or Operating) ‡	Potential Funding Sources	Comments
Centralized Resource Directory <b>MM</b>	Putnam County Planning Department in partnership with community-based non- profit organization  Various county agencies and departments  Non-profit organizations	4-8 months	Operating expense, but may be considered a mobility management expense, particularly if undertaken in combination with other strategies  \$25,000 initial cost; community support for maintenance/updates	JARC  New Freedom	Centralized resource directories are very helpful to consumers, human service agency staff, and advocates who need to find and/or arrange transportation for members of the target populations (persons with low income, older adults, and persons with disabilities).
Job Access Strategies	Westchester County Department of Transportation  Rockland County Department of Public Transportation  Putnam County Planning Department  Public efforts could be coordinated with appropriate other public entities and non- profit corporations	Will vary depending on whether reverse commute service is new or expansion of existing services	Operating expense  Cost based on variable cost per hour of Bee-Line service	JARC	With continued rates of high unemployment, there will be a continued need to link low income individuals with these employment centers. Adoption of this strategy in the plan will continue to afford public transit agencies with the flexibility to apply for JARC funding to create new reverse commute routes or expand existing routes to better meet commute needs.

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‡ Dollar figures reflect differences in subregional economies.

Strategy (to address need/gap)*	Lead Agency/Champion	Implementation Timeframe †	Order of Magnitude Costs (Capital or Operating) ‡	Potential Funding Sources	Comments
Affordable and Accessible Taxi Service <b>MM</b>	Various county or municipality agencies and departments  Other community transportation programs	3-6 months	Administrative costs between \$50,000 and \$125,000  Subsidy costs vary	JARC  New Freedom	Provide reduced fare vouchers to older adults, persons with disabilities and persons with low incomes to increase trip flexibility and coverage; may also be used to support employment. Encourages use of lower-cost travel modes and supports expansion of accessible and community car fleet. Similar to Travel Voucher program below, but aimed specifically at taxi services in the LHV.
Travel Voucher Program <b>MM</b>  Could be implemented in all three counties in the LHV with high priority for Westchester County	Municipal departments  Non-profit organizations  County agencies/departments	4-8 months	Operating expense; costs can be controlled/contained by participating organization to fit budget parameters	JARC  New Freedom	Transportation voucher programs are consumer-driven, and allow participants to control resources directly and to make their own decisions about service providers. Other advantages include low start-up and administrative costs, support for existing transportation providers and services, and the flexibility to adapt to a variety of local conditions.
Travel Training	Transit agencies  Non-profit organizations  County departments	3-9 months	Varies by program – with Mobility Manager in place simple programs as low as \$5,000	JARC  New Freedom	Design programs to train individuals to use public transit. Increasing use of public transit will increase mobility for individual and reduce reliance on higher cost transportation modes. Some travel training programs exist already – potential to build on these efforts.

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Strategy (to address need/gap)*	Lead Agency/Champion	Implementation Timeframe †	Order of Magnitude Costs (Capital or Operating) ‡	Potential Funding Sources	Comments
Reverse Commute Strategies – Shuttle Services to/from Rail Stations or Bus Stops; Vanpools <b>MM</b>	Westchester County Department of Transportation  Rockland County Department of Public Transportation  Putnam County Planning Department  Public efforts could be coordinated with appropriate other public entities and non-profit corporations  Transportation Management Associations	3-6 months	Shuttle services might cost \$50-60/hour  Vanpool costs could be covered by fares or subsidized for low income individuals by a sponsor organization	JARC  New Freedom  Employers (or agencies)  County Medicaid agencies	Reverse commute strategies could be used to address the difficulty that home healthcare workers have with reaching clients' homes, as well as other types of workers needing to expand job access travel options.
<b>Medium Priority Strategies</b>					
Capital Equipment for Coordinated Agency/Program Services	Putnam County Office for the Aging and Putnam ARC, Inc.	Annual process corresponding to NYSDOT grant cycles	Capital expense  \$40,000 to \$50,000 per vehicle, depending upon capacity	Section 5310	This longstanding FTA program provides capital assistance to non-profit organizations that perform a vital role in providing essential mobility to programs and services operated by a range of human services.

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‡ Dollar figures reflect differences in subregional economies.

Strategy (to address need/gap)*	Lead Agency/Champion	Implementation Timeframe †	Order of Magnitude Costs (Capital or Operating) ‡	Potential Funding Sources	Comments
<p>Coordination of Volunteer Driver/Escort Programs <b>MM</b></p> <p>Programs of similar nature exist in all three counties; this strategy would formalize/ centralize program management</p>	<p>Existing transit systems or departments of transportation County human service agencies Non-profit human service agencies Community organizations, such as United Way, etc</p>	3-6 months	Operating expense; costs include mileage reimbursements and program management costs. Low-cost, with cost containment easily implemented.	Management costs could be funded, in part, under Mobility Management	Strategy added by the LHV SAC (2/24/2009). Seen as low cost technique to address problematic trips (individuals in the target populations who do not meet program eligibility criteria, long distance trips, or inter-jurisdictional (inter-county) trips.
<p>ITS Technologies</p> <p>Good use of technology in Rockland and Westchester counties; best potential application for Putnam County.</p>	<p>Putnam County; Westchester Department of Transportation; Rockland County Department of Public Transportation</p>	Typically 12-18 months to permit specification development, procurement, installation and testing	<p>Capital expense</p> <p>Cost based on the particularly technology deployed</p>	JARC New Freedom	“Intelligent Transportation Systems” or ITS strategies, such programs can provide traveler information, can help to lower operating costs, reduce customer travel times, and provide more convenient routes and schedules. The use of technology to improve services to the target populations can benefit both the transport provider and customer.
<b>Low Priority Strategies</b>					
Improved Transit Traveler Information	Westchester County Department of Transportation	Westchester DOT has already initiated effort to improve route and schedule information.	<p>Operating expense</p> <p>To be determined pending outcome of consultant study</p>	New Freedom	Improving the readability and comprehension of route and schedule brochures can improve the utilization of public transit services by the target populations.
Bus Buddy Program	Putnam County Transit	6 months; local program based on best practice examples	<p>Operating expense</p> <p>Little or no cost if implemented with volunteers</p>	New Freedom	Bus buddy programs help reduce demand for paratransit services by increasing consumer knowledge in using and independently navigating the fixed route system

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## High Priority Strategies

### Mobility Management

#### Description

This was the top-ranked strategy supported by the Lower Hudson Valley Stakeholder’s Advisory Committee. The primary attraction associated with this strategy was the recognition (in all three counties) that no one individual was responsible for addressing community-wide mobility issues. The fragmented nature of funding – each program with its own eligibility criteria – was seen as working to inhibit mobility among the target populations.

One of the key factors associated with this strategy is the ability to coordinate implementation of other priority strategies (including medium or low priority strategies) under the auspices of a Mobility Manager position. Thus, one of the main appeals of Mobility Managers is the flexibility of the job description – organizations may use a Mobility Manager to conduct outreach, coordinate policy or support operations. They can be full- or part-time staff positions; may be housed in a range of agencies, organizations or government agencies; and could be assigned in a variety of geographic configurations. This characteristic is particularly important in the Lower Hudson Valley, where there is a wide range of existing conditions in the three counties.

To the extent that the job duties of the Mobility Manager can address reverse commute or non-ADA transportation needs for persons with disabilities, the position could be funded through JARC and/or New Freedom grants. Additionally, FTA will consider mobility management related expenses as a capital/administrative expense, which means they are eligible for 80 percent Federal funding and require only a 20 percent local match. Mobility Managers can serve in a variety of capacities. The Federal Transit Administration notes that Mobility Managers can serve as policy coordinators, operations service brokers, and customer travel “navigators.” The policy coordination function can include development of programs and policies, preparation of coordination plan updates, and development of local partnerships. The brokerage function can include coordination of services provided to the three target populations. Travel navigation assistance can include working with human service agencies and individual consumers to meet travel needs.

#### Organizational Framework and Support

The Lower Hudson Valley SAC did not address the potential organizational and support structure to implement the mobility management strategy. Given the geographic diversity in the Lower Hudson Valley, and the high degree of interest in this strategy in the other two subregions in this study, New York City and Long Island, a two-level approach is suggested.

In the first level, Mobility Manager positions would be created at the county level. Potential organizations that could serve as the agency that would house mobility management functions include:

- Westchester County – Westchester County Department of Transportation or the Office for the Disabled;
- Rockland County – Rockland County Department of Public Transportation;
- Putnam County – Putnam County Department of Planning or Putnam County Office for the Aging.



The second level of organization would be a regionally based mobility management network. In this scenario, Mobility Managers from across the New York area would form a coalition to ensure that common approaches to problems are undertaken, information on successful strategies are shared among Mobility Managers, and that problem resolution is undertaken using a team-based approach (e.g., the nature and source of some problems may not be local in origin and may require a consolidated approach). In the ideal arrangement, an internal framework would support Mobility Managers working in different departments, geographic areas, or with different target populations, but come together at regular meetings to review progress, discuss challenges and develop support programs for Mobility Managers.

## **Implementation**

An individual Mobility Manager could probably be established within three to six months of a successful grant application.

The annual salary cost of a (single) Mobility Manager (overhead and program function cost additional) might range between \$30,000 and \$60,000, depending on whether the Mobility Manager is part- or full-time. The cost to train and support Mobility Managers is estimated to be between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year, and might best be accomplished through a consulting contract unless in-house expertise in this area is developed.

The cost of funding a Mobility Manager or mobility management activities is allowed under the JARC and New Freedom programs (as well as under all FTA programs with a capital assistance component). In each case, this is considered to be a capital cost, and hence, Federal funds from these programs are available at an 80/20 match.

## **Transit Service Expansion and Improvements**

### **Description**

When and where available, public transportation represents the most cost-effective method for meeting a wide range of mobility needs among the target populations. As documented earlier in this report, the extent of geographic and temporal coverage among the three counties varies widely. Even in areas where there may be opportunities to expand services, limited financial resources may restrict new or expanded services (e.g., Putnam County). Nevertheless, expansion of existing services represents a viable strategy to address needs and this plan should reflect expansion of traditional services as one in a series of strategies to improve mobility.

### **Organizational Framework and Support**

Extension of bus service areas or hours would enhance mobility for residents in the Lower Hudson Valley, particularly in Rockland and Westchester counties. Such expansion would assist individuals seeking or trying to maintain jobs with non-traditional hours. An added benefit to the expansion of transit service would be that use of transit service by the general public would increase as well.

Expanding service, temporally or spatially, is one of the more expensive strategies prioritized in this process. Funding streams include JARC, if the service is used to support employment, and potentially New Freedom, if the service is used to solely support persons with disabilities and goes beyond the requirements of ADA. A clarification on eligibility issued by the FTA in April 2009 states that expanding transit service to the public and persons with disabilities would be an

eligible activity if other conditions are met (see Chapter 1). JARC funding can be used to fund transit services that benefit the public at large if those services increase access to employment or job training. In addition, JARC funds may be matched by other federal programs as long as the funds do not originate from the US Department of Transportation (DOT). Thus, Department of Labor (Welfare to Work), Health and Human Services (Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid funds can be used as local match.

## **Implementation**

Generally speaking, establishing new transit services and/or expanding existing services is challenging, as the hourly rate of public transit service providers in Rockland and Westchester counties may be high. Local agencies are often reluctant to commit the ongoing funding required to support operating programs. Furthermore, operating costs are subsidized at a 50 percent level, as compared with capital projects which are funded at 80 percent.

While no specific route configuration for expanded services was identified in this study, some previous planning efforts identified the need for expanded services in some corridors, such as Route 22.

## **Accessibility Improvements at Bus Stops**

### **Description**

This strategy is aimed at increasing the use of fixed-route services by those customers currently using paratransit service who could use otherwise accessible fixed-route transportation. One reason for this preference for choosing the paratransit mode was the fact that existing bus stops lack passenger amenities (shelters or benches), the stop is not accessible, or there are no accessible pathways leading to and from the bus stop location.

Putnam County has expressed interest in improving the accessibility of bus stops placed to serve older adult residential facilities. It was reported these stops sometimes do not have accessible pathways from the residences to the bus stop and that the stops lack passenger amenities. Improvements will encourage residents to use accessible fixed-route service instead of paratransit. Putnam County has identified a number of stops that could benefit from such improvements.

While Putnam County was the leading advocate of this strategy during the study process, this is a viable strategy for the other counties as well. Indeed, there was sufficient support for this alternative from the other counties to make it the third highest ranked strategy in the group of nine “high” priority strategies.

Improving the accessibility of and access to fixed-route bus stops involves first examining bus stops (and especially those used or potentially used by significant numbers of older adults and/or persons with disabilities) and determining whether improvements could help make stops more accessible. Easter Seals Project ACTION’s Bus Stop Accessibility and Safety Toolkit has helped transit agencies develop an inventory of bus stops, assess the accessibility and safety of each bus stop and access to that bus stop, and create an action plan to address shortcomings. Enhancements that make travel easier for pedestrians, such as accessible pedestrian signals and improved sidewalks, could be installed along paths between bus stops and major destinations.

The scope of potential improvements under this strategy is not limited; potential improvement may include: creation of concrete stop pads, installation of shelters and benches, creation of accessible pathways, other sidewalk, curb, and ramp improvements, lighting, safety enhancements to intersection crosswalks, and drainage improvements.

## **Organizational Framework and Support**

Because of right-of-way ownership issues, this strategy will generally be limited to the respective county departments of transportation or other appropriate unit of county or municipal government.

## **Implementation**

Bus stop and pedestrian pathway improvements would be medium- to long-range projects, requiring between eight and twelve months to plan and construct or install. Many improvements require prioritization, funding, and commitment from local authorities, which might increase the time needed to complete them. Costs would generally be in the low to medium range, and would vary according to the specific type of improvement that is added. For example, the cost of retrofitting an intersection with Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) on four crosswalks can range from \$8,000 to \$12,000; improving multiple intersections at one time or including APS when a signalized intersection is originally created may lower the cost. The cost of a bus shelter can vary greatly depending on size, type, and features. The average cost of a standard, pre-manufactured shelter with a bench could be in the range of \$3,000-5,000; customer-designed shelters might cost \$15,000 and up apiece. The cost of adding a new curb cut might be \$1,000 or less. An accessible bus stop is one which is designed to allow a person with a disability to travel to the sidewalk or building served by the stop without encountering a barrier, includes wayfinding principles and aids, is safe, and provides warning of hazards to users. Conducting a thorough inventory of the conditions at and around a bus stop can identify improvements that are needed to ensure accessibility; costs of adding accessibility are dependent on the specific changes that need to be made.

## **Centralized Transportation Resource Directory**

### **Description**

Centralized resource directories are very helpful to consumers, human service agency staff, and advocates who need to find and/or arrange transportation for members of the target populations (persons with low income, older adults, and persons with disabilities). Outreach efforts conducted as part of this study indicate that consumers generally are not aware of any centralized source to find information on the transportation services that are available in the greater New York metropolitan region.

This problem is present in the Lower Hudson Valley in Putnam and Rockland counties. Westchester County's government website was cited by several key stakeholders to be an excellent resource for programs and services available to persons with disabilities, providing a comprehensive listing of community resources. Similarly, the county's Department of Senior Programs and Services publishes a Directory of Services, Rights & Benefits for Senior Citizens in Westchester County. However, no such centralized directories exist in the other counties. Moreover, computer access is required in order for consumers to access this information. The Lower Hudson Valley Stakeholder Advisory Committee indicated that many older adults, low income individuals, and persons with disabilities do not have this access.

Staff at individual agencies have informally compiled directory information for their own information and referral purposes, but this information is not available to the community at-large.

## **Organizational Framework and Support**

Creation and publication of a centralized directory of transportation services would address this problem. A review of best practices indicates that, historically, such directories were published in book form. Creation of a centralized resource directory is often a first step in an incremental strategy to implement greater coordination in the future, such as brokerage or purchase of service.

Other than the online efforts noted above, there is no central directory containing information about transportation options in the Lower Hudson Valley. The lack of a comprehensive, accessible source of information about transportation services was noted as a need in the workshops and focus group meetings. Providing accurate, widely available, accessible information about available services in one location would encourage use of existing services and increase mobility. Consequently, this strategy received a high priority ranking from local stakeholders.

This type of activity is often a first step in a broader mobility management strategy. Thus, this strategy could be included in the work program for those counties that have expressed interest in establishing Mobility Manager positions (such as Westchester County). Even in counties that do not pursue Mobility Managers, this strategy could be undertaken by existing county departments, transit agencies, or community non-profit organizations.

## **Implementation**

At a minimum, a printed directory could be published annually or bi-annually, and should be made available in several languages and accessible formats. Online access could also be provided, either through posting the directory on key websites or creating a searchable online database to supplement the printed directory. The directory should cover rail, bus, ADA paratransit, taxi, and community transportation services, and include key information such as service area, days and hours of service, rider and trip eligibility (if applicable), fares, accessibility features, service policies, how to access the service, and where to find more detailed information. In counties where trip itinerary planning is available, a link to these services should be included.

The development of a useful directory typically requires a comprehensive data collection effort. Resources will also need to be devoted to publicizing the existence of the directory, distributing it widely through human service agencies and other public outlets, and perhaps publishing a version in local newspapers so that as many older adults, persons with disabilities, and persons with low income as possible have access to its information. The inventory prepared as part of this Coordinated Plan (presented in Chapter 4) could be used as the basis for the first version of the directory, thus decreasing the amount of initial work needed. The entity that takes the lead in developing, publishing, and distributing the directory, however, must be prepared to commit time to updating and maintaining the directory on a regular basis. Another important component of the project will be the ability to seek and obtain support from private sector and institutional sources, in the form of donations and/or advertising, to underwrite some of the costs of updating and printing the directory.

Successful transportation directories in other areas have been developed by county planning departments, regional economic development organizations, non-profit information and referral organizations, and regional transportation coordinators or Mobility Managers.

A centralized transportation resource directory could likely be developed in a six- to twelve-month timeframe. As mentioned above, the inventory included as part of this plan could provide data for the initial edition. It is recommended that the directory be updated annually or at six-month intervals, by verifying the contact information for each provider and then sending the current listing to the provider to identify any necessary changes.

Development of a basic directory might range from \$50,000 to \$75,000. Working with planning organizations or college/university students for development of maps or a design format is likely to reduce the cost.

Central resource directories facilitate enhanced access to services by the general public, including older adults, persons with low income, and persons with disabilities. This activity is expressly permitted under the JARC and New Freedom programs as a mobility management strategy.

## **Job Access Strategies**

### **Description**

Projects in this category, as distinguished from the strategy of expanded transit services and improvements, are focused on mobility solutions that address low income individuals accessing employment opportunities.

This strategy would continue support the efforts in Westchester County, using JARC funding, to create job access through temporal and spatial expansion of transit services. The strategy could be employed in other Lower Hudson Valley counties that sought JARC funding to support employment transit oriented services.

This strategy is related and could be linked with other strategies of “Transit Service Expansion and Improvements” and “Reverse Commute.”

### **Organizational Framework and Support**

Partnerships could be formed between transportation providers, employers, and human service agencies to plan shuttle services to specific employers or employment areas and seek funding for their operation. Reverse commute vanpools could be established by transit providers in partnership with employers using commuting subsidies as a means of recruiting employees or human service agencies wishing to provide support to a particular client group.

A Mobility Manager could not only address the mobility challenges of individuals needing transportation to work or training, but could also work with employers (on behalf of their employees and prospective employees) to offer a wide range of ridesharing and vanpool services. A Mobility Manager could also establish and manage supporting services such as a guaranteed ride home program for those who are stranded at the workplace and a child transportation program for those workers who rely on child care services.

## Implementation

Job access strategies could be implemented within three to six months of receiving funding; changes to existing bus routes would probably require less time to implement than the development of new services. Costs would depend on the type of service implemented, but would fall in the low to medium range. The costs associated with shuttle services to and from trail stations or bus stops would be similar to the normal cost per vehicle hour of the service operator. Vanpool expenses (fuel, insurance, maintenance and repairs) are typically covered by the fares paid by vanpool members; drivers often commute free of charge. Alternatively, costs could be covered by a separate entity or a subsidy provided by a sponsoring agency to eligible low income vanpool members to help cover the fare.

A wide range of programs and services to provide connections to work and training opportunities qualify as eligible expenses under the JARC program. If services are specifically designed to increase commuting options for persons with disabilities, the New Freedom program would be another potential funding source. Employers may also be willing to contribute to services that enable workers to reach the employer's facilities.

## Accessible Taxis

### Description

Assistance to taxi operators to encourage or facilitate acquisition of accessible vehicles would address the need for accessible taxi service that was identified by participants in workshops and focus groups. Such service, if more widely available, could help to fill gaps in fixed-route and demand-response service hours (especially in the evenings and on weekends). Accessible taxi service would offer a flexible option for persons with disabilities, particularly individuals who use wheelchairs – in addition to longer hours of service than many bus routes, taxi service operates on a same-day or real-time schedule, and could be used for any trip purpose.

Initiation of strategies to address the affordability of existing taxicab services will facilitate greater utilization of this private sector resource. This strategy could potentially expand on several smaller existing programs (with spatial limitations) operated by some municipalities that currently manage a taxi subsidy program.

Multiple stakeholders identified the lack of accessible taxicabs as an impediment to greater utilization of the private sector. As individual municipalities generally regulate licensing of taxicabs, individual counties felt they could not have much impact on this strategy. Thus, the strategy must engage the various individual municipalities.

A second component of this strategy addresses the affordability of taxicabs. Often, members of the target populations do not have sufficient incomes to pay the full fare for taxicab trips that must be taken repetitively throughout a month. A handful of municipalities in Westchester County, for example, have initiated taxi voucher programs to assist older adults in utilizing this mobility resource.

### Organizational Framework and Support

Because of the need to work with individual municipalities, the LHV SAC recognized that this strategy could be incorporated into the work of a Mobility Manager. In this scenario, the Mobility Manager would have countywide responsibilities, but would then work with individual municipal

licensing authorities to determine and effect changes regarding acquisition of accessible taxicabs. In a review of best practices nationally, an approach requiring license holders to establish a certain percentage of their fleets as accessible is the most common approach to encourage private sector investment. In some instances, financial assistance was made available to assist in the increased costs of acquisition of accessible vehicles. Estimates from Houston, TX, where there has been considerable efforts to expand the number of accessible taxis, it was estimated that accessible vehicles are approximately \$15,000 more per vehicle than a regular taxicab. Thus, it is important to assure such operators that new and additional business will be generated to support this capital investment. Voucher/subsidy programs can work to foster that additional business.

## **Implementation**

As noted above, this strategy could be assigned to a newly created Mobility Manager position within the respective counties that choose to implement this strategy. Thus, administrative costs for could be included in the budget. Operational costs would consist of implementation of voucher/taxi subsidy programs, described as a separate strategy below.

This strategy could be implemented within the first year after the establishment of Mobility Manager's position at the local level.

## **Travel Voucher Programs**

### **Description**

A strategy that could work anywhere in the Lower Hudson Valley, this concept has particular application for Westchester County. Under a voucher program, targeted consumers with mobility issues would be able to purchase transportation vouchers, at discounted rates, that could be used in lieu of cash payments to pay for transportation services from a wide range of providers, including private sector taxicab companies. This option subsidizes the consumer, rather than the provider organization. If designed properly to prevent fraud and abuse, this strategy generally entails a nominal level of administrative oversight.

The option benefits the consumer, the provider, and the community. From a consumer perspective, many communities in the Lower Hudson Valley have adequate transportation services available; however, the affordability of these services may limit mobility. Vouchers can reduce the cost of these trips to the consumer by providing the trip at reduced out-of-pocket costs. Trips could be arranged directly between the consumer and provider or, alternatively, as part of a broader mobility management strategy, be arranged by the Mobility Manager as part of the trip brokerage function.

This strategy could be employed to address a range of unmet needs in the Lower Hudson Valley. For example, one identified unmet need is to improve services to reverse commuters heading to northern sections of Westchester County via existing rail services. Outreach efforts identified a segment of low income home healthcare workers commuting by train, only to have difficulty making the last leg of the trip to client residential locations. These clients do not live on an existing Bee-Line route, or the transit schedules are not convenient to their work schedules. A voucher program could potentially solve this problem provided that sufficient taxicabs or other transportation providers are available to serve the respective train stations. A second potential application for vouchers is to address those needing medical transportation originating in Putnam County traveling to destinations in Westchester County.

## **Organizational Framework and Support**

From an organizational perspective, there are several ways to administer a voucher subsidy program. This function could be carried out as a component to an existing public agency, such as the Rockland County Department of Public Transportation, Westchester County Department of Transportation, or Putnam County Office for the Aging. Similarly, a non-profit organization, such as ALOFT, could act an administrative agency. Finally, if implemented in combination with a mobility management strategy, this program could be appropriately housed within the same office that hosts the mobility management function.

One advantage of this type of strategy is that it affords participating agencies control over budget outlays. This can be accomplished by limiting the subsidy amount per trip, the number of trips a person may take (per day, week, or month) and/or that can be taken on the system (per day). A sponsoring organization would divide this unit subsidy into its annual budget for this program to figure out how many trips it could afford for the year. This could then be converted to a daily, weekly, or monthly trip limit for each eligible individual.

This strategy also permits the sponsoring organization to define those individuals who would be eligible to participate in the voucher program. Methods for getting the subsidy to the individual include reimbursing individuals for certain rides, setting up paper vouchers, and/or setting up unique identifiers. Experience suggests there are increased opportunities for fraud if rides are arranged directly between the rider and a provider company. This program is best administered when methods are used to minimize potential abuse, such as use of numerical confirmation codes, or smart cards that come pre-loaded with a specified amount that could be used for travel stipends.

The main administrative costs of a voucher program are associated with labor required to register participants and oversee distribution of the voucher, and auditing the voucher redemption process.

## **Implementation**

The cost of a voucher program will be dependent upon the amount of the subsidy per trip and the number of participants enrolled in the program. An individual county program may cost between \$50,000 and \$75,000 to administer.

A potential funding source is Section 5317 (New Freedom) if it is a new program and goes beyond the minimum requirements of the ADA, in offering same-day service and service beyond the ADA service area. Section 5317 funding is also available for a Mobility Manager, noting that the Federal share of mobility management costs may not exceed 80 percent of total program management cost. Section 5316 (JARC) may also come into play if this service offers access to/from employment services or training (e.g., guaranteed ride home or as a feeder service to/from a train station). FTA considers subsidy programs as an operating program and funds them at 50 percent. Funding from other municipal or agency partners would cover the cost of their constituents or clients. A potential sponsor might also look at this as a way to reduce the current cost of paratransit if it believes that it can divert trips to such a service.



## Travel Training

### Description

People who have never used public transportation often have real concerns and fears about using the public transportation network. A training program that teaches consumers how to use public transportation and become confident transit riders can help encourage use of public transit. Travel training may be promoted as a marketing strategy to encourage key consumer groups (*i.e.*, older adults) to use public transit; or it may be targeted towards frequent users of paratransit to encourage individuals to use lower-cost fixed route services, as appropriate to the individual's circumstances. Focus groups revealed that persons with disabilities are often very comfortable navigating the system after one-on-one training showed them the specifics of how to navigate specific stations or routes that they frequently used.

### Organizational Framework and Support

An important element associated with program success is marketing. Many individuals are not aware of travel training services available to them or members of their community. Nor do they necessarily understand how they work. Special effort should be made to advertise short travel training sessions and more involved, one-on-one services. A Mobility Manager could undertake advertising these services as part of a larger mobility mission, be it neighborhood-based or specific to a population group.

Travel training programs could be implemented at many levels of the transportation service system. This type of training is most typically provided by the transit systems themselves, thus existing public transit operators in all three counties would be the logical organizational framework to build upon in implementing this option. In some cases, these programs already exist in the Lower Hudson Valley and this option would merely expand and build upon these existing programs.

In some smaller communities, transit systems have partnered with nonprofit organizations that represent, serve, and advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities to assist in identifying potential consumers who could benefit from such training. In some instances, the trainers are employees from these organizations. Working cooperatively with the transit system, a training curriculum is developed and executed by these organizations with the full support and resources of the transit system.

### Implementation

Travel training programs can range considerably; they may be based on a single, short session covering basic skills to multiple sessions provided over an extended time period. Likewise, a program may concentrate on a single skill, such as riding the bus, or offer more comprehensive training that includes the full range of available services, including learning to use online trip planning tools. An important element of training is human contact, which can eliminate the intimidation factor associated with traveling on transit. Mobility Managers are logical resources for getting a travel training program organized and operated; this is true for a Mobility Managers working in specific neighborhoods or with specific populations.

Potential types of travel training programs include:

- **Basic Training Sessions** - Many types of travel training focus on navigating complicated schedules and maps, and a short afternoon session reviewing transit literature is often enough to give many individuals the confidence to ride transit alone. Including training for online trip-planning sites can be very useful for encouraging individuals to travel independently. Senior centers are an ideal setting for these types of sessions. Funding could also be used to train individuals who will in turn provide training services to senior centers or local organizations. Also, the Department of Motor Vehicles could encourage older adults who are contemplating giving up their license to participate in travel training sessions.
- **One-on-One Training Sessions** - Many individuals, especially persons who use wheelchairs or live with other types of disabilities, find that multi-session, individualized route planning and practice are necessary to travel independently on transit. These training sessions can involve a range of step-by-step guidance, including using wheelchair lifts and elevators, negotiating difficult transfers, and knowing how to take alternative routes during service interruptions.

## Reverse Commute Strategies

### Description

This strategy is very similar to Job Access strategy, but is specifically focused on reverse commute issues.

One specific reverse commute issue that was identified in public and stakeholder workshops in the Lower Hudson Valley was the difficulty that home healthcare workers or personal care attendants who live in New York City have in reaching clients' homes in northern Westchester County where less public transportation service is available or service is not convenient at particular times of the day.

This strategy is aimed at improving connections and alternatives for this final leg of the commute. Based on stakeholder input, there is a need to create additional opportunities from train stations in northern Westchester County, enabling workers to complete their journey. Reverse commute strategies such as feeder shuttle service to/from rail stations and reverse commute vanpools may be effective solutions to this problem.

### Organizational Framework and Support

Partnerships could be formed between transportation providers, employers, home healthcare agencies, and human service agencies with clients who need home healthcare services to plan shuttle services and seek JARC funding for their operation.

Tasks of identifying reverse commute needs are perfectly suited to the role of a Mobility Manager; therefore, it is recommended that a Mobility Manager having countywide responsibilities, be tasked with organizational responsibility for this strategy. In the absence of a Mobility Manager, this strategy could be undertaken by a transit agency, county departments, and non-profit organizations.

## **Implementation**

Reverse commute strategies could be implemented within three to six months of receiving funding, although in cases where new services must be established (as opposed to expansion of existing services), as much as a year may be required for planning and implementation.

JARC services are specifically designed to fund these activities and would be the likely key funding source for any reverse commute project.

