Successes and Challenges with the FTA New Freedom Program: Guidance for the NYMTC region

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New Freedom Program

- Newly established under SAFETEA-LU
- Designed to provide new public transportation services and public transportation alternatives beyond those required by the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) to individuals with disabilities.
  - Funds allocated nationally based on a formula that accounts for the number of persons with disabilities.
New Freedom Program

Examples of Eligible Programs

- New and enhanced paratransit beyond the minimum requirements of ADA.
- Customer or travel workshops or “travel training”
- New feeder services.
- Accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations.
Eligible Applicants

- Private non-profit organizations.
- State or local government authorities.
- Operators of public transportation services including private operators of public transportation services.
New Freedom Program

Funding Availability

NY Urbanized Area

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<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
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Coordinated Planning Process

- Selected projects **must be** derived from a locally-produced Coordinated Plan
- The required elements necessary in a coordinated plan are:
  - An assessment of available services
  - Identification of the transportation needs of individuals with low income, those with disabilities, as well as older adults
  - Ways to address these gaps in service
  - Priorities for how to implement these strategies to address service gaps and the feasibility of each
Research Questions

- What challenges has NYMTC and the country faced in implementing this newly established FTA initiative?
- What can be done to improve the implementation of this program in the NYMTC region?
Methodology

- **Task 1**: Literature Review

- **Task 2**: Informal Discussions with other cities

- **Task 3**: Develop a Final Paper with Best Practices and Conclusions
Broad Difficulties

- **Funding**
  - Largest issue facing the New Freedom Program
  - Paratransit is costly - Access-a-Ride costs $55.64 per trip to New York City Transit
  - Large Organizations vs. Small Non-profits

- **Designated Recipients**
  - Lack of funding is a disincentive to volunteer

- **Oversight**
  - 23 requirements have to be abided by large agencies and non-profits
Discussions with Other Cities

- **Interviewed:**
  - Washington, DC
  - Denver, CO
  - Dallas/Fort Worth, TX
  - Seattle, WA
  - Phoenix, AZ
  - San Diego, CA
  - Chicago, IL
  - Minneapolis, MN
Common Themes/Innovative Practices

- Outreach and Education
  - Workshops
  - Web Presence
  - Targeted Outreach
  - Application
Common Themes/Innovative Practices

- Funding Issues
  - State Resources
  - Pilot Projects
  - Match Sharing
  - In-Kind Matching

- Oversight
Conclusion

- New Freedom program DOES have positive elements
  - “The real value here is less in the money chase and new projects...instead, the real benefit is making the best use out of existing resources and programs.”
  - David Snyder - MWCOG Transportation Planning Board Member

This will allow NYMTC to be able to stretch the $12 million allocation
Conclusion

- New Freedom program is still in its infancy and will take time to grow and evolve into a successful and sustainable program
- Recommendations should be used to better educate the public on the New Freedom Program