

# A Focus on Mobility Management

By Dan Dalton and Ken Hosen

**M**obility management—sounds like something all of us in the transportation industry have been doing for years. In fact, we have been, but in the past few years, this term has come to represent a formal definition of a transportation strategy that focuses more on the customer and their needs, and the meeting of these needs through the coordinated use of a variety of providers. This has occurred because of a concerted effort within the Federal Transit Administration to encourage public transit agencies to move into a broader transportation-planning role in their communities to coordinate a full range of mobility options and inform their constituents (including the private operators in their communities) accordingly.

This FTA effort was reinforced when mobility management activities were made eligible to receive funding under SAFETEA-LU. Mobility management is an eligible capital expense under most U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs (5307, 5310, 5316, 5317, and 5318). This means FTA can fund 80 percent of mobility management expenses. SAFETEA-LU also affords a new option to use non-DOT transportation funding or service contracts to meet matching requirements. The

law defines mobility management as “short-range planning and management activities and projects for improving coordination among public transportation and other transportation service providers.” Mobility management activities eligible for SAFETEA-LU funding include:

- operating transportation brokerages to coordinate service providers, funding resources, and customer needs;
- coordinating transportation services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes;
- supporting local partnerships that coordinate transportation services;
- staffing for the development and implementation of coordination plans;
- providing travel training and trip planning activities for customers;
- developing and operating traveler call centers to coordinate travel information, manage eligibility requirements, and arrange customer travel; and
- planning and implementing the acquisition and purchase of intelligent transportation technologies to operate a coordinated system.

Obviously, private transportation providers can—and should—be a major component of this transportation delivery system.

The mobility management approach is critical for meeting transportation challenges we face as a country, and on the surface, appear to be in conflict with one another. On one hand, realities such as the impending explosion of older adults needing transportation services beyond their personal car, and the availability of jobs for low income workers requiring late night and weekend hours, call for increased mobility options and individualized trip arrangements that cannot be met through traditional services. At the same time, local and state-level transportation budgets are strained to meet mass transportation needs, let alone specific and individual needs. Rising fuel costs, particularly



**TLPA members meet to network and learn about enhanced contracting opportunities by participation in the transportation planning process, during this presentation by Dan Dalton of the KFH Group.**

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in the last six months, just add to the daily pressures transportation providers face when trying to meet customer demands with limited resources. Mobility management, through individual travel navigators and coordination of multiple transportation providers, can help ensure people get to where they need to go and in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

The customized approach of mobility management means no two programs are exactly alike, and a variety of entities can serve as a mobility manager in a community. There are some common components. These include:

- partnerships between multiple agencies and organizations, including taxi and other private transportation providers.
- a customer-driven, market-based approach that provides customers with a variety of transportation options through individualized trip planning.
- one-stop travel information and trip planning centers that provide information on available transportation options and coordinate requests for transportation services.

To encourage greater use of mobility management in communities throughout the country, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is not just talking up mobility management, but more importantly funding mobility management. Through the FTA's Section 5310 (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities), Section 5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute – JARC) and Section 5317 (New Freedom) Programs, mobility management is an eligible capital expense and eligible for 80% federal funding—even if the project involves hiring personnel or other typical operating expenses. As you may know, projects funded through these programs must be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan, and through this coordinated planning process many communities have identified mobility management as a priority.

So, how can private transportation operators be involved and benefit from this focus on mobility management? While your level of interest and involvement must be based on current conditions in your community, these opportunities include:

- ensuring that any mobility management activities in your community, such as the creation of an inventory of available transportation services, include information on private transportation providers.
- leading or participating in local efforts to explore local mobility management options.



- exploring the possibility of operating mobility management brokerages or call centers.
- advocating for taxi and other voucher programs and real-time demand response services that offer customers expanded transportation options but that may be able to be provided more economically through a private provider.

At the TLPA Annual Convention & Trade Show in Denver in 2007, Larry Buter, Director of Paratransit Operations for the Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) provided an overview of the RTD noting that it is a single regional service provider serving eight counties comprised of 31 municipalities, with a population of 2.5 million people, covering 2400 square miles. He stated the RTD's philosophy is, "We need to manage public transit as a business enterprise. We must conduct "make or buy" analysis on all we do. Monopolies are not good, neither public nor private. You can't negotiate with a monopoly. It is in our interest to maintain a private market barometer against which we can compare our costs of operation." The RTD has embraced mobility management. It has created mobility management services that are closer to the customer and more cost effective than typical transit services. Two of the RTD's mobility management programs, the vanpool program and the Access-A-Taxi program that provides an alternative to some ADA paratransit services, are saving RTD over \$2 million per year while providing access to increased numbers of people. RTD is currently developing other mobility management programs including additional taxicab services, car sharing, feeder bus services to light rail, and transit-oriented land use development. As more and more transit agencies embrace the concepts of mobility management, there will be more and more opportunities for private transportation company participation.

More information on mobility management, and opportunities to align your company to new business opportunities, are just a few of the topics in the current *Planning Ahead: Enhanced Contracting Opportunities By Participating in the Transportation*

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**Planning Ahead: Enhanced Contracting Opportunities By Participating in the Transportation Planning Process seminar series. Sponsored by TLPA with support from FTA, these events are designed to assist private transportation providers in understanding and benefiting from the transportation planning process at the state, regional and local levels. Contact TLPA at 1-866-928-6550 for more information.**

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*Planning Process* seminar series. Sponsored by TLPA with support from FTA, these events are designed to assist private transportation providers in understanding and benefiting from the transportation planning process at the state, regional and local levels. So, if you haven't already registered, please plan to attend the Tampa workshop on October 26 (held in conjunction with the TLPA Annual Convention), or upcoming workshops in Chicago on November 5, or in Denver on November 7. Visit the TLPA Web site at [www.tlpa.org](http://www.tlpa.org) for more information or contact TLPA at 1-866-928-6550.

### Sources and Resources

- United We Ride, the interagency Federal national initiative that supports coordinated human service delivery systems, includes information on mobility management strategies and links to other resources through <http://www.unitedweride.gov/>. The site also includes a fact sheet on mobility management, available at [http://www.unitedweride.gov/Mobility\\_Management\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.unitedweride.gov/Mobility_Management_Brochure.pdf).
- The FTA's Web site provides an overview of mobility management and related resources at [http://www.fta.dot.gov/planning/metro/planning\\_environment\\_2366.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/planning/metro/planning_environment_2366.html).
- The National Transit Institute (NTI) provides "Coordinated Mobility: A Unified Transportation Management Solution," a two-day course that includes elements of mobility management and planning techniques and helps communities identify and promote the benefits of mobility management at <http://www.ntionline.com/CourseInfo.asp?CourseNumber=ID427>.
- Earlier this year, the National Center on Senior Transportation conducted two "Distance Learning" events on mobility management. Transcripts are available at [http://seniortransportation.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=NCST2\\_aging\\_training\\_distance\\_learning&autologin=true](http://seniortransportation.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=NCST2_aging_training_distance_learning&autologin=true).
- The American Public Transportation Association's Web site includes "Mobility Management: A New Role for Public Transportation" that discusses partnerships with taxi companies and taxi voucher programs, and includes links to additional information on mobility management at [http://www.apta.com/research/info/online/mobility\\_management.cfm](http://www.apta.com/research/info/online/mobility_management.cfm). ■



**Charlie Goodman, Director, Office of Systems Planning, from FTA (left) answers questions for TLPA members, Jerry Williams (center) and Robbie Werth (right) at the TLPA and FTA Planning Ahead, Enhanced Contracting Opportunities by Participating in the Transportation Planning Process Seminar held in Alexandria VA on September 16, 2008.**

## Enhanced Contracting Opportunities

By Participating in the Transportation Planning Process Seminar Topics Include:

- SAFETEA-LU and the transportation programs available to the private sector with potential for contracting with grant recipients
- Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans required by SAFETEA-LU for funding through the Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom Programs
- Conveying your company's value to public entities, including MPO and other planning agencies
- United We Ride, the Federal initiative for developing coordinated human service delivery systems and contracting opportunities.

**Hurry! Don't Miss Out!**  
Seating is limited!

**Upcoming Workshops**

**Tampa — October 26**  
**Chicago — November 5**  
**Denver — November 7**

For more information, visit [www.tlpa.org](http://www.tlpa.org) or call TLPA, toll-free, at:

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