

# SUMMARY

## Transportation Coordination Network Meeting

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

### [RURAL SITE MEETING]

Bee Community Action Agency - Conference Room

1701 N.W. Frontage Road, Beeville, TX 78102 ♦ 1-800-358-5534

#### Members Present:

Michael Day, DARS, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor  
Martin Ornelas, Kleberg Health Center, Director  
Tom Niskala, CCMPO, Transportation Director  
Carol Cornelison, HHSC, Community Relations Specialist  
Bruce Robertson, DFPS, Adult Protective Services Program Administrator  
David Garcia, Kleberg County Human Services, Transportation Coordinator  
Delia Garcia, Area on Aging, Case Manager  
Gloria Ramos, REAL, Inc. Executive Director  
Nancy Lawson, Coastal Plains MHMR, Day Coordinator  
Alex Rodriguez, Bee Community Action Agency, Transportation Manager  
Anna Simo, Bee Community Action Agency, Executive Director  
Irene Martinez, WorkForce Solutions, Disability Program Navigator  
Pam Miles, WorkForce Solutions, Program Specialist - Transportation  
Carmen Garza, SERCO  
Richard Bullock, CBCOG - Dir. of Planning & Development  
Stephen Ndima, TxDOT  
Brigida Gonzalez, CCMPO, Regional Transportation Coordinator  
Doris Ortiz, Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living (3 p.m.)

#### Coordination Update

**TxDOT Regional Forum:** Update provided on the regional forum held in Alice, Texas on April 23, 2008. The intent of the meeting was to bring transportation together with our Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) partner and establish how to better serve our consumers. Transportation providers consistently work to provide quality service to consumers but it has been raised that some of our consumer's in the HHSC arena are not aware of the transportation services available to them. As a result of this dilemma, forum participants expressed an interest in determining, "How much do our consumers know about services?" The plan is to partner transportation providers and HHSC staff to host town meetings where consumers from our respective communities come together and offer feedback on services. Once we have a sense of what our consumers know, we can use their responses to develop an outreach services guide to help us better educate them. Our HHSC partners were receptive and supportive with assisting in the education of staff and consumers alike.

The coordination of information has already begun through the development of our TCN web site which can be found at [www.tcncb.org](http://www.tcncb.org). Those that visit our web site will be able to view how we feature our transportation service provider's services, cost, and service area. Attendees were encouraged to visit the web site and discover the information available. Those interested in having their organization featured were encouraged to submit information for inclusion. *[Transcript notes of the Regional Forum Meeting outlining meeting goals have been posted at the TCN web site.]*

**Grant Submittal for FY 09/2008 to 08/2009:** Information was offered on a TxDOT grant application submitted for use in funding the outreach program outlined at the regional forum meeting. The grant, available for use without a matching requirement, will help pay for the hosting of town meetings, the development of outreach materials, and the education of staff and consumers. Should the TxDOT grant not be awarded, alternative funding options available to rural providers was discussed and the impact on the proposed project's scope. While the decision to award or not award the grant being considered for outreach, what can we be doing now in anticipation of the upcoming project? Suggestions were to distribute information on current rural providers and medical transportation programs available in the various communities.

**Web Site – Forum opportunity:** A new TCN web site feature was presented. Participants were introduced to the benefits of communicating with and using the web site forum developed. The forum will serve as a gathering place for TCN members to submit comments and information regarding coordination while allowing anyone who logs on to view and participate in the exchange. Participants were asked to complete an enrollment form to assist with registration.

**TxDOT Transportation Planning Conference in Houston** – Members were notified of our invitation to participate in a coordination presentation in Houston for TxDOT officials from across the state. Coordination is a new and innovative process that is invoking interest from a variety of audiences across the state.

“Building Partnerships: Moving Forward” – TxDOT is hosting a workshop on July 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> in Austin to focus on regional coordination planning topics and issues. Members were notified of TxDOT sponsorship opportunities and asked to consider participating in the various training tracks being offered.



**Questions regarding:**

Deadlines set at the forum in Alice – information from forum facilitators was not available. [*Forum notes have now been issued and they confirm action to distribute information in each other's facilities, initiate staff orientations, and share information with consumers. Service providers are encouraged to start these activities informally – with a more formal process to be realized with the awarding of the TxDOT grant.*]

Services beyond 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. – rural providers were asked for feedback on how to overcome this limitation in service. Input on existing contracts available to provide service beyond 8 to 5 was offered. While rural providers stated challenges they face with managing driver hours (maintaining part-time status) when services exceed the norm, they acknowledged the need for service beyond 8 to 5. In response to the issue of providing matching funds for work related trips (JARC), WorkForce Solutions stated they are in discussions with TWC.

**Presentation Series: Alex Rodriguez, Transportation Manager for Bee Transit**

Alex Rodriguez, transportation manager for Bee Transit welcomed TCN members to Bee Community Action Agency (BCAA). He introduced Anna Simo, executive director for BCAA who also greeted attendees and provided an overview of the various services and counties being served by BCAA with a budget of approximately \$5.4 million.

Mr. Rodriguez highlighted information surrounding transportation services for Bee Transit by identifying his staffing levels, services offered, cost for service, equipment available, and maintenance demands.

## **Discussion of additional needs/TCN member input**

The following captures coordination topics discussed and TCN input:

- Service providers discussed the concept of sharing trips, coordination of services, fare collection, handling passengers, and the level of assistance provided to passengers in rural communities.
- Rural providers were asked to begin the process of exchanging and assisting each other with trips. The expectation is to have them report back at our next meeting on activities that worked and did not work. We can then assist with specific issues as needed.
- It was established that rural service is through-door service vs. curb-to-curb service in the urban area.
- The recommendation to encourage consumers to participate in our process was offered. (*TCN members who are consumers of services in the urban area were unable to attend our meeting. Rural providers will be encouraged to invite passengers from their communities.*)
- With through-door service being offered in rural communities, discussion ensued on how to better fund the case management/patient support/attendant care aspect of service in an effort to maintain dignified service. (*We are researching available funding through other HHS agencies.*)
- Transportation providers have different policies and practices regarding their level of mobility support. As a matter of public policy, there are agencies that have opted to transport passengers, less any additional mobility support. Limited resources directly impact services, and mobility support is an added expense.
- Consideration for using volunteers to assist passengers with special travel needs was recommended as opposed to utilizing funds for services other than transportation.
- Examples of how rural providers are currently offering services with assistance from voluntary agencies (i.e. American Cancer Society) were provided. A suggestion was made to find out if organizations – such as dialysis clinics have volunteers to assist passengers at their facilities.
- Discussion was held on how to acquire agency support from HHSC for passengers who need additional assistance when traveling – especially on trips where the passenger is experiencing a medical crisis.
- Participants were reminded that there are state and federal requirements associated with our funding streams and we cannot keep doing business as usual without putting our funding streams at risk. It is incumbent upon us to try and find ways to be more efficient. Texas has lost over a billion dollars in highway funding, WorkForce Solutions has lost program funds, and it would not be unusual to see other FTA programs (which include 5310 programs) cut. Speculation on the upcoming transit bill due next year and the possibilities of totally rewriting how funding is handled was offered.
- Concerns on the numerous restrictions encountered when trying to access and use public funds were expressed. It was contemplated that rewrites to the process would be realized and possibly restructured to be more like block grant programs.
- Comparisons between urban and rural service were raised. Rural service is more remote and requires the passenger to travel longer distances and services are offered more intimately to their communities.