

SUMMARY

Transportation Coordination Network Meeting

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority - Board Room
5658 Bear Lane, Corpus Christi, TX 78405 ♦ Phone (361)289-2712

Members Present:

Brigida Gonzalez, CCMPO, Regional Transportation Coordinator
Michael Day, DARS
Martin Ornelas, Kleberg Health Center
Esmeralda Garza, REAL, Inc.
Abel Alonzo, Consumer
Margie Del Bosque, Kleberg County Human Services
David R. Garcia, Kleberg County Human Services

Barbara Johnson, WorkForce Solutions
Irene Martinez, WorkForce Solutions (2:30 p.m.)
Pam Miles, WorkForce Solutions (2:30 p.m.)
Judy Telge, Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living
Oscar Vargas, Corpus Christi RTA
Ed Carrion, Corpus Christi RTA

Easter Seals Project Action – People on the Move

Training for *Easter Seals Project Action - People on the Move* was presented and shared with TCN members. Training covered general information of transportation issues. Five major points of discussion were:

- IDENTIFY TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITIES TO COORDINATE: It was noted that as participants of the TCN, members are aware of the need to explore transportation options as well as pursue opportunities to coordinate. We will continue to stay informed and learn from other communities with respect to what they are doing and how they are doing it.
- TRAINING FOR DRIVERS AND STAFF WHO DEAL WITH CONSUMERS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES: The importance of this topic was addressed and input from TCN members was requested regarding the effectiveness of current staff training efforts. Kleberg County Human Services offered how they provide Passenger Assistance Safety Service Training which covers basic safety regulations and customer service. Information on RTA's use of persons with disabilities to train staff on customer service and passenger handling was presented. It was noted that having individuals with disabilities conduct training provides staff with a firsthand perspective of what a disabled passenger experiences when using services. The RTA recognized the new teaching method for significantly impacting the quality and effectiveness of their training. TCN members were notified that the possible awarding of PTN funds could make monies available later this fall for supplemental training activities. It was recommended that sensitivity training be incorporated in standard customer service training.
- FIXED ROUTE - IDENTIFYING AND FINDING REMEDIES FOR SERVICE ISSUES: Information on how to assist riders plan multiple task trips by educating them on the uses and availability of fixed routes was presented. While coordination is an ongoing process, we need to keep working to connect organizations and transportation providers with each other. As transit providers, we want consumers to know of the services available to them. In order to create more ease with traveling between different transit providers, an option to be considered is a fare voucher system. This would allow the rider to choose a service and pay for it with a voucher. As part of our continual information exchange between transit and our HHSC partners, the "Do You Need a Ride?" poster with general service, fare, and trip information on regional transportation service providers was presented.
- KNOWING YOUR ADA RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Providers indicated having knowledge of ADA, but it was not consistent or identical knowledge, i.e., how to distinguish service dogs from pets, how to ask the right questions to collect information from consumers, and taxis and manual wheelchair assistance. Members acknowledged ADA rights and responsibilities would be a beneficial topic for a future meeting as ADA definitions and regulations are changing. Input on web sites to consider for the most updated ADA information, i.e., Department of Justice web site was discussed. Relevant ADA links and information would be added onto the TCN website. Consideration for hosting a paratransit specialist at a future meeting was discussed.

- **BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF FUNDING ISSUES:** The general consensus of the group was that here again inconsistent knowledge of the topic created the need to clarify the appropriate and effective use of 5310, 5311, JARC, New Freedom, and other funds.

Funding Opportunities

TxDOT Public Transportation Coordination Call: TxDOT has issued information on a new procedure that allows the applicant to request multiple funding sources for public transportation projects – i.e. JARC, New Freedom, State Planning Assistance, Rural Transportation Assistance, Intercity Bus, and Rural Discretionary – through the use of one proposal. Upcoming requests and proposals should be submitted by December 12, 2008. For more information visit our TCN web site (www.tcncb.org) or contact our TxDOT representative, Stephen Ndima at 361-808-2351.

Coordination Update

Volunteer systems in our community: As part of our previous discussion – held during our last TCN meeting, it was noted that rural providers are offering services beyond curb-to-curb service. The service being providing is more through-door service. As a result of this heightened level of service, the discussion explored the need to consider alternatives to this service level as the financial impact is significant and budgets are tightening. The question raised was, “What, if any, additional funding is available for this level of service?” Paisano Express from Kleberg County indicated they provide free escort service for passengers over age 60 with 5311 grant money. This is the result of county commissioner’s commitment to service residents. There were no other providers present that offer this same benefit.

Following up on May’s dialogue, the Regional Transportation Coordinator (RTC) contacted Volunteer Services of the Coastal Bend to seek information that could assist rural providers. The intent was to locate volunteers that could assist passengers with traveling and hence help alleviate rural services from through-door to curb-to-curb service. By applying to the volunteer system, we verified our non-profit status. Once enrolled, we were now able to post our requirements and access thousands of volunteers. One area of concern was the need to “clear” individuals volunteering as “eligible” and safe for our program. The clearance process would prove to be yet another financial burden to be addressed. Another possibility discussed was consideration of faith-based volunteers – posting in area churches.

Rural providers discuss experiences with shared trips: During our May TCN meeting, rural providers were invited and encouraged to actively participate in coordinating trips with each other. While coordination continues to be absent, providers were again reminded of the need to start coordinating and sharing trips.

Mr. Martin Ornelas offered information on the upcoming Mental Health Consumer Voice Training to be held on August 26th and 27th which includes participants from Jim Wells, Brooks, and Kleberg Counties. He suggested that transportation to the event might be a great opportunity for transportation providers to try and coordinate trips.

TxDOT Workshop in Austin (July 23 & 24, 2008) – Building Partnerships: Moving Forward: The workshop agenda was provided. The primary purpose of the workshop is to provide guidance and share information with lead agencies and our partners on ways to enhance community transportation services through coordination. RTC and some TCN members will attend this training.

Discussion of additional needs/TCN member input

Southwest Transit Association Workshop in Corpus Christi (August 17 – 19, 2008): A preliminary agenda and registration form was provided. The purpose of this workshop is to learn how to provide safe, effective, and affordable ADA and paratransit service. Rural transportation providers and TCN members are encouraged to participate.