

## **Developing a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan For Summit and Portage Counties**

### **The Coordinated Plan Requirement**

Metropolitan areas across the country are developing plans to coordinate transportation services offered with funding from federal programs across departments and agencies. The focus of the planning is on the transportation mobility of three target groups: 1) older persons, 2) persons with disabilities and 3) persons from low income families. In the Akron metropolitan area, this plan is being developed by the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, the METRO Regional Transit Authority in Summit County and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority in Portage County. The plan will recommend strategies that improve travel mobility by making better use of federal programs to meet the needs of these target populations.

### **Three Federal Transit Administration Funding Programs**

With the passage of federal transportation authorizing legislation (SAFETEA-LU) in August 2005, three funding programs administered by the Federal Transit Administration require this Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan and the competitive selection of projects for funding.

These three programs are:

- FTA Section 5310 Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program – a capital program designed for and implemented to meet the special needs of elderly Individuals and Individuals with disabilities..
- FTA Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program – a program focused on improving access to transportation services to employment and employment-related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals.
- FTA Section 5317 New Freedom Program – a program that will provide funding to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society.

This federal requirement offers the opportunity to take a fresh, in-depth and creative look at how transportation services are offered to meet travel needs.

### **The Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan**

To take advantage of funding from these three programs, metropolitan areas need to prepare a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. Projects receiving funding through these programs must be consistent with strategies and priorities in the plan. The development of a successful plan will require significant community outreach to the three target populations, agencies

and advocates serving them and providers of transportation and human services funded by other federal programs.

The coordination plan must address the following elements:

- An assessment of available transportation services and the transportation needs of older persons, persons with disabilities and people with low incomes
- Strategies and activities to address gaps and overlaps in transportation services
- Priorities for implementation based on resources, time and feasibility for implementing the specific strategies and activities

### **Community Outreach and the Advisory Committees**

Community outreach, collaboration and consensus building will be important in ensuring that the coordination plan is responsive to needs and consistent with the resources that are available. Development of the plan will include close collaboration with Advisory Committees in each county. These committees will focus on the following:

- Identification of organizations and stakeholders that should be involved in the coordination planning
- Advocacy within their respective counties for outreach and involvement in the planning process
- Participation in general community outreach, county workshops, regional forum
- Access to transportation needs analyses and studies focusing on target populations
- Focus of unmet needs, gaps in service, overlapping services, solutions and priorities

### **Adoption of the Plan**

The resulting plan will be approved locally by a process identified by the local participants. The plan will recognize the relative roles of METRO, PARTA and AMATS in implementing competitive projects from these programs. Further, it is important to recognize that there are many other federal programs that fund transportation services, the "Human Services" in the coordinated transportation plan. The planning that is proposed recognizes the need and challenge to integrate these other federal funding programs that support transportation services to the target populations.