

Bergen County Community Transportation



Human Service Transportation

Coordinated Plan

December 2013



To understand where Bergen County Community Transportation is going, there must be an understanding of where it has been. This update to the Coordinated Transportation Plan will briefly cover Community Transportation's past, present and future.

PAST

How Community Transportation got started:

Bergen County is located in the Northeastern corner of New Jersey and consists of 70 municipalities. It is bordered by Hudson County and the Hudson River on the East, Essex County on the South, Passaic and Essex Counties on the West and Rockland County, New York on the North. The County is linked directly to New York City via the George Washington Bridge. The County occupies 233.9 square miles, ranking it in the middle of the 21 Counties in New Jersey in terms of overall land area.

In the late 1970's, Bergen County established the Bergen County Special Transportation division as part of the Department of Human Services to provide transportation services using money from the Title XX grant. Initially, the Division of Special Transportation provided services to economically disadvantaged persons including senior citizens and persons with disabilities. During its first few years, the focus of the Bergen County Special Transportation was to provide access to medical, nutrition and vocational workshop services.

During the 1980's, the arrival of the Casino Revenue tax funded Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Act (SCDRTAP) required each of the 21 New Jersey counties to designate an agency as the recipient and encouraged this lead agency to coordinate services with other community transportation providers located in their respective counties. Bergen County Special Transportation became the designated recipient of the SCDRTAP funds for Bergen County and expanded its services to senior citizens (60 and over) and people with disabilities. In 1986, Bergen County Special Transportation had 25 vehicles.

During the late 1990's, Bergen County expanded its transportation funding to include other funding sources, including the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Administration. Also, a portion of the County Work First (including Temporary Assistance to

Needy, TANF) funding was added to the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funding to meet the competitive employment and training mobility needs of low income workers. The Bergen County fleet grew to 75 vehicles.

In February 2004, President George W. Bush issued an Executive Order on Human Services Transportation that launched the Federal UNITED WE RIDE initiative. The Executive Order required agencies to improve coordination of federally supported transportation services for people who are transportation disadvantaged, persons with disabilities, low income and senior citizens. Bergen County has a mix of transportation options including a large network of highways, rail services, private and Government operated bus lines, taxi and van services and County and locally operated Para Transit systems.

PRESENT

Current services provided by Community Transportation.

Currently, Community Transportation operates an 86 vehicle system incorporating 63 demand and deviated routes that transports seniors, disabled, low income and veteran clients. In addition, it operates two (2) Shuttles. The first is the Tri-Boro Shuttle that provides transportation from the Ridgewood Train Station to places of employment in the Boroughs' of Park Ridge, Woodcliff Lake, and Montvale. The second is the Bergen Community College Shuttle that provides transportation for students, faculty and employees between the Paramus Campus and the Lyndhurst Campus in the Meadowlands. This is in addition to the 15 daily routes to deliver Meals on Wheels to seniors and the disabled. Community Transportation operates five (5) days a week, Monday thru Friday, from 6:00 AM – 8:30 PM and registers over one million miles per year.

During the past four (4) years, Community Transportation has applied for, and has been awarded, the following grants:

- **New Freedom Grants:** The money from these grants provide transportation for individuals with special needs.
- **JARC Grants:** The money from the Job Access and Reverse Commute funds provides transportation for low income individuals to and from work.

- **CMAQ I (Tri-Boro Shuttle):** Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds are used for the Tri-Boro Shuttle, which has been in existence since March 2012. To date there have been 7,238 riders traveling to and from the Ridgewood Train Station going to and from their work in the three (3) Boroughs of Park Ridge, Woodcliff Lake and Montvale. Just think of all the automobiles that have been taken off the already congested roadways.
- **CMAQ II (Bergen Community College Shuttle):** This Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality money comes from another CMAQ grant, and funds the Bergen Community College Shuttle. It began just this past October, and in only two months, 1,228 students and faculty traveled back and forth between the Paramus Campus and the Lyndhurst Campus, located in the Meadowlands. Again, think about all of the automobiles that have been taken off the already congested Route 17 corridor.
- **Veterans Shuttle:** This bus runs four (4) days a week, Monday through Thursday to the Veterans Hospital in East Orange.

As required, Community Transportation conducted both a Stakeholders Sub-Committee Meeting and a Full Committee Meeting to identify the unmet transportation needs and gaps. During the meetings numerous topics were discussed. The following are those voted on by each of the committees.

Stakeholders Sub-Committee Meeting:

Bergen County Community Transportation's Stakeholders Subcommittee Meeting took place on Tuesday, November 12, 2013. The Sub-Committee was chaired by the Director of the Bergen County Department of Human Services. There were twelve organizations in attendance. They were:

- Spectrum for Living Director of Transportation;
- United Way Housing Services Coordinator;
- Meadowlink Executive Director;
- Crestron Electronics, Inc. Senior Director of Human Resources
- Bergen County Division of Community Transportation Interim Director;
- Bergen County Division of Community Transportation Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator;
- Bergen County Division of Disability Services Director;

- Bergen County Division of Senior Services Assistant Director;
- Bergen County Division of Veterans Services Director;
- Bergen County Planning and Economic Development Director;
- Bergen County Community Development Director; and
- Bergen County Aide to County Freeholder.

The attendees discussed the unmet transportation needs and gaps in Bergen County. While many issues were discussed, the subcommittee voted to present the following four (4) identified gaps to the Full Committee meeting on Thursday, December 5, 2013. Those issues follow:

- To extend Community Transportation's hours of operation to provide low income clients, this includes people living with disabilities, transportation home after work;
- To provide transportation services for seniors living in the Northern part of the County;
- To develop a Central Clearinghouse for available County services; and
- To extend the Veterans Shuttle to the VA Hospital in East Orange from four days a week to five. And from one bus a day, to two buses (one in the morning and one in the afternoon).

Stakeholders Full Committee Meeting:

The Stakeholders Full Committee Meeting took place on Thursday, December 5, 2013, and was chaired by the Director of the Bergen County Department of Human Services. There were with 19 organizations in attendance. They were:

- Spectrum for Living Director of Transportation;
- United Way Housing Services Coordinator;
- Meadowlink Executive Director;
- Crestron Electronics, Inc. Senior Director of Human Resources
- New Jersey TIP Program Manager at Rutgers
- Community Transportation Advisory Council's Co-Chair
- Bergen County Community College
- Bergen County Division of Community Transportation Interim Director;
- Friendship House

- Bergen County Division of Community Transportation Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator;
- Bergen County Division of Disability Services Director;
- Bergen County Division of Senior Services Assistant Director;
- Bergen County Division of Veterans Services Director;
- Bergen County Planning and Economic Development
- Bergen County Community Development Director
- Bergen County Aide to County Freeholder
- Bergen County Board of Social Services
- New Jersey Transit Local Programs Manager
- New Jersey Transit Environmental Planning and Mobility Programs Manager

The Stakeholders present represented a cross section of our county. They represented municipalities, Non-Profits, and County Departments. The Stakeholders represented service providers that are currently working with the County, as well as those who desire to add a new service or expand a current service.

It is estimated 40 communities currently operate at least one bus. This local service generally involves medical appointments, local shopping trips and transportation to Senior Centers. Inter-county transportation is coordinated with Bergen County Community Transportation who provides the majority of that service.

In addition, Bergen County has numerous non-profit organizations providing transportation. Most non-profits limit the transportation options they provide to their distinct populations. Transportation that is outside their regular services is provided by Community Transportation.

However, during the meeting it became clear there was a distinct lack of communication concerning available transportation services among the 70 municipalities and the County. To address these issues and to move forward, the Full Committee voted on the following issues to be addressed by Community Transportation.

- **Survey:** Conduct a survey to identify all available transportation services offered by the 70 municipalities within Bergen County;

- **Call Center:** Once the survey is completed, Community Transportation would develop and implement a Call Center with responsibilities to include dispatch personnel to receive calls to Bergen County Community Transportation and identify available transportation either within their municipality, or with the county. This will streamline the intake, the schedule, and the dispatch duties to a central location. In addition, Municipalities with vehicles will be notified that a ride(s) are needed in their area. In addition, some of the funding for this service could be charged-back to Medicare, Medicaid, and to individual municipalities;
- **Corporate Shuttle:** This Shuttle service will operate Monday thru Friday and is expected to run during peak commuting hours in the morning and the afternoon. It is intended to provide transportation to low income workers to and from their places of employment;
- **Veterans Shuttle:** This will be an expanded Shuttle from four days a week to five days, and with two (2) buses a day, instead of one (1) bus. This will allow more veterans to travel to the Veterans Hospital in East Orange for appointments; and treatment;
- **Feeder Service:** This service will provided transportation from remote locations to a New Jersey Transit system. These will be shorter runs, and would require less funding than running a Shuttle. With the savings, greatly reduced rate vouchers, obtained from New Jersey Transit, could be given to seniors or the disabled to cover any additional cost.

Before Community Transportation can proceed with the wishes of the Stakeholders it must determine where the additional services are most needed. For example, which municipalities are most in need of transportation services? How many seniors, how many veterans, how many disabled, and most of all, how many households do not have an automobile? Based on the statistics from the 2010 U.S. Census, here are a few of the answers.

In 2010, Bergen County had a population of 905,116, which was an increase of 2.4% of the Census taken in 2000. Bergen County is one of the most urban and densely populated Counties in the state with 99% of the population living within an urban area and with a total of 3,870 people

residing per square mile. In terms of population density, it is the areas along the Western border with Passaic and Essex Counties and along the Eastern part of the county bordering with the Hudson River South of the George Washington Bridge.

Bergen County is considered to be one of the most affluent counties in New Jersey with a 2010 medium income of \$81,708. However, the per capita income for 2010 was \$42,006. Further, during the years of 2006-2010 approximately 5.8% of the population was living below the poverty level.

Based on the U.S. Census of 2010, the breakdown of the population of Bergen County is as follows:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Number</u>
Caucasian	71.9	
Hispanic or Latino	16.1	
Asian	14.5	
African American	5.8	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	.02	

The age of 65 and older	15.1	137,103
People living with a disability		75,113
Veterans		44,145
Households without a car (estimated by 2012)		17,786

FUTURE:

The process Community Transportation will use to determine future shuttles, and the estimated cost to implementation the plan.

Survey:

The survey will be conducted first; transportation data will be obtained from the 70 municipalities. Existing data will be reviewed and a letter with a form enclosed will be sent to each municipality requesting an update of their services and the number of buses that are available. When returned, that information will be entered into a matrix.

The survey form will request the number of buses available for seniors and for those living with disabilities. It also will request the types of services, for example Food Shopping, Doctor's Appointments etc.

Next, a phone call will be made to the municipalities who did not respond requesting the form be returned with the updated data. This will continue until all 70 municipalities have responded.

Time Line
4-6 months

Projected Budget for 2014
\$50,000

This is a one-time cost. Tasks will be performed by current employees, under separate responsibilities. The update process will be built into the system.

Call Center:

Once the survey is completed, and the matrix studied and entered into the data base, Community Transportation will develop and implement a Call Center. Incoming calls will be answered by personnel able to access via the computer, transportation services available throughout the County. This will streamline the intake, schedule and dispatch duties to one central location. In addition, some of the funding for this service could be charged-back to Medicare, Medicaid, and to some individual municipalities.

Time Line
8 to 11 months

Projected Budget for 2014
\$150,000

This is the start-up cost. It covers the salary for one full time Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator. It covers the cost to input the data from the survey into the computer, the training of current personnel, and the marketing of the telephone number and available services. Monthly reports, updates to the services and to the system will be the responsibility of the Coordinator.

Time Line
2015

Projected Budget for 2015
\$100,000

This will continue to cover the salary of the Coordinator. Also, it will provide funds for the Coordinator to update the municipalities of services being provided to their constituents, and to update information in the computer.

Corporate Shuttle:

The Corporate Shuttle will operate Monday thru Friday during peak commuting hours, in the morning and the afternoon. It is intended to provide transportation to low income workers to and from their places of employment. It would operate much like the Tri-Boro Shuttle. Pick up passengers at one, or more, New Jersey Transit locations, and transport them to their places of employment and reverse the process in the evening.

<u>Time Line</u>	<u>Projected Budget, 2015</u>	<u>Projected Budget, 2016</u>
12-18 months	\$200,000	\$200,000

Veterans Shuttle:

This Shuttle is currently in effect. However, it will be expanded from four days a week to five days, and from one (1) bus a day, to two (2) buses a day. This will allow more flexibility for veterans to travel to the Veterans Hospital in East Orange for appointments and treatment.

<u>Time Line</u>	<u>Projected Budget, 2014</u>	<u>Projected Budget, 2015</u>
6 months	\$75,000	\$125,000

Feeder Shuttle:

The Feeder Shuttle will provide the same type of transportation as the other shuttles. That is, transport people from a New Jersey Transit location to another location not serviced by New Jersey Transit. However, the Feeder Shuttle can be used faster and for less money than a dedicated shuttle. For example, passengers might be able to travel part of the way to their destination on New Jersey Transit, but not be able to continue their journey. Community Transportation would provide the “feeder” service for less than half the cost of running a dedicated shuttle. The Feeder Shuttle would run on short trips (under 15 minutes) and stop at New Jersey Transit Connection stops where the passengers can transfer to the Feeder Shuttle to continue their journey. Community Transportation would be saving a substantial amount of money, even if we use two or three buses. The use of the Feeder Shuttle at a location will be based on the specific transportation needs of that community. In addition and as a public relations possibility, Community

Transportation could purchase in bulk, low cost tickets from New Jersey Transit and give them to passengers on the Feeder Shuttle as they continue their Journey.

<u>Time Line</u>	<u>Projected Budget, 2014</u>	<u>Projected Budget, 2015</u>
10-15 months	50,000	\$225,000

Bergen County Community Transportation stands ready to implement these projects, as well as apply for grants to expand current services and to develop new routes to provide transportation to all of the residents of Bergen County who are in need of our services.