

Access to Community Transportation Services for Individuals with Disabilities

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■ Executive Summary

Between 2001 and 2004, Maine conducted the Quality Choices for Maine project. This project was supported by a three year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to improve services for people with disabilities. This grant was part of the Real Choice Systems Change Initiative funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Access to Services was one of four major areas of focus for the Quality Choices for Maine project. This report focuses on the work related to Access to Services, and specifically the development of increased access to community transportation services for individuals with disabilities in Maine. The report includes a summary of grant activity, lessons learned throughout the project, and recommendations for next steps to sustain the work of this grant.

The specific goal related to the Access to Transportation Services project was as follows:

To make transportation more available and responsive to persons with disabilities.

Project activities were overseen by both the Access to Services Technical Assistance Group (TAG – see listing in Appendix), as well as a Transportation Resource Team that included a variety of stakeholder representatives.

The first product, developed by both project staff and the members of the Transportation Resource Team, was the *Guide to Resources and Opportunities for Transportation Advocacy (GROTRANS)*. The purpose of the GROTRANS document is to connect those concerned about the transportation component of independent living with resources and opportunities for transportation advocacy around the state and the nation.

In addition, three local transportation access demonstration projects were funded. Each of these projects are described in relation to the following:

- What worked
- What didn't work
- How outcomes inform future planning
- Unexpected challenges
- Expected challenges
- Potential project replication

■ Background

In 2001, the Maine Department of Human Services received a three year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to improve services for people with disabilities. This grant was part of the Real Choice Systems Change Initiative funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Called Quality Choices for Maine, the goals of the grant were to:

- make services and supports more consumer-centered by incorporating greater choice and control for consumers in the system;
- ensure the quality of Maine's community-based living options by building community relevant quality management structures that incorporate the consumer perspective;
- focus attention on services and supports identified as weak links in the system; and
- facilitate inter-departmental collaboration by developing integrated data capacity.

The grant provided funds for work in four major areas: Person Centered Services; Quality; Access; and Data Integration.

This report focuses on the work related to Access to Services, and specifically the development of access to community transportation services for individuals with disabilities in Maine. The report includes a summary of grant activity, lessons learned throughout the project, and recommendations for next steps to sustain the work of this grant.

■ Goals

One of the overall goals of the Quality Choices grant was to focus attention on services and supports identified as weak links in the system, either because they are inconsistently available, or are inaccessible to people with disabilities. These include the short supply of personal assistance workers, lack of housing in many areas of the State, patchy access to transportation, and low participation among people with disabilities in existing community recreational and cultural events.

The specific goal related to transportation was as follows:

To make transportation more available and responsive to persons with disabilities.

■ Transportation Resource Team

Membership and Composition

One important initial project activity was to convene a Resource Team that would assist in three primary areas:

- The development of the Guide to Resources and Opportunities for Transportation Advocacy (GROTRANS);
- Provide guidance in the development of the solicitation for the demonstration projects; and
- Help to select and oversee the funded demonstration projects.

In March 2002, individuals with significant experience and expertise in transportation systems issues in Maine were invited to an introductory meeting held on April 2, 2002 at the Cohen Center in Hallowell.

Invitees included:

- Linda Belfiore, Washington-Hancock Community Agency
- Marcia Cooper, Brian Injury Association of Maine
- Stephanie Crystal-Wolfstone-Francis, State-wide Independent Living Council and Plan Development Work Group representative
- Jon McNulty, Regional Transportation Program (RTP)
- Dave Willauer, Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG)
- Kathy Adams, Alpha One
- Tonia Boterf, Maine Developmental Disabilities Council
- Don Cooper, Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System
- Stephen Crate, Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
- Barbara Donovan, Maine Department of Transportation
- Dennis Fitzgibbons, Alpha One
- Kathy Freund, Independent Transportation Network
- Connie Garber, York County Community Action Corporation
- Claire Harrison, Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services (BDS)
- Kathryn McInnis-Misenor
- Dave Pelligrini, Rec-Ride Plus
- Jose Soto, Maine Rural Workers Coalition

Staffing for these meetings was provided by the Muskie School. Participating staff included Larry Glantz and Mark Richards.

Access to Transportation Resource Team Meeting Schedule

Wednesday, April 3, 2002

The discussion included: The Olmstead Decision - Maine's Plan Development Work Group for Community-Based Living; The Quality Choices Project; The Project: Access to Community Transportation Services for People with Disabilities in Maine; discussion of possible strategies for the Access to Transportation work and the Resource Team; strategies for approaching the advocacy demonstration; options for the other demonstration projects.

Tuesday, June 4, 2002

The discussion included: understanding community transportation services for people with disabilities in Maine; presentation by Kathy Freund, founder and director of Independent Transportation Network (ITN); a semi-structured brainstorming session to identify other models, possible transportation systems change demonstrations, selection criteria and parameters.

February 2003

Several members of the Access to Transportation Resource Team participated in the demonstration proposal review process (See more details on this process in the Funded Local Demonstration Project section, below).

■ Guide to Resource and Opportunities for Transportation Advocacy (GROTRANS)

The purpose of the Guide to Resources and Opportunities for Transportation Advocacy (GROTRANS) is to connect those concerned about the transportation component of independent living with resources and opportunities for transportation advocacy around the state and the nation.

The guide was created by Muskie School staff with the assistance of a Muskie School graduate student. The first activity was a mail survey of all members of the Access to Transportation Resource Team which identified and provided contact information for the following resources:

- Transportation system services planning and oversight boards;
- Regional or community transportation action or advocacy groups;
- Other regional or community action or advocacy groups with experience and/or reputation related to transportation services;
- Transportation advocacy reference, training or other resource materials; citizen activists in the transportation community; and
- Literature resources addressing advocacy, transportation access and availability, and related information for persons with disabilities in Maine.

The survey was followed by direct contact with representatives of transportation-related organizations who were asked if their organization has advocacy opportunities related to

transportation for persons with disabilities. Information collected included a brief organization profile, information on any boards/committees the organization convenes, whether membership on these board is open, and other ways that advocates for individuals with disabilities can be involved.

GROTRANS includes the following:

- **Advocacy Opportunities in Maine**—Information about organizations and agencies with boards and advisory committees to which advocates can apply for membership, as well as other opportunities and avenues for advocacy with existing organizations.
- **Advocacy Resources in Maine**—Organizations in Maine that provide support to advocates for access-related issues or advocate on behalf of people with disabilities at the state and local level.
- **National Advocacy Resources**—Organizations that advocate at the national level for transportation policies which advance the goal of independent living for people with disabilities.
- **Models from Maine and Other States**—Examples of innovative approaches to addressing transportation needs.
- **Tools for Effective Advocacy**—Links to organizations offering training, tips, and other information to help advocates be effective in their efforts.

The guide does not provide an inventory or listing of transportation services and supports in Maine, for people with disabilities or anyone else.

To view GROTRANS go to:

http://www.mainerealchoices.org/commliving_trans_materials/GROTrans_TOC.htm

Web-based access of GROTRANS (hit count) from October 2002 through August 2004 breaks down as follows:

- Introduction page: 248 hits
- Advocacy Opportunities in Maine: 161 hits
- Advocacy Resources in Maine: 138 hits
- National Advocacy Resources: 130 hits
- Models from Maine and Other States: 314 hits
- Tools for Effective Advocacy: 134 hits

GROTRANS is available in several electronic formats, including as a web page (HTML), in Microsoft Word, and in “rich-text format,” which can be read by a variety of word processing programs. If you cannot reach this web site or would like to request the document in another accessible format, or if you have any questions or comments, please contact the Quality Choices Transportation Access project at (207) 228-8345, or by e-mail to larryg@usm.maine.edu.

■ Funded Local Transportation Demonstration Projects

The budget for the Quality Choices Access to Transportation project was quite limited, at least in the sense that real changes to transportation systems and related supports would require a tremendous capital investment. The Transportation Resource Team helped to shape the design of a demonstration project activity that would identify, and test, relatively low-cost ideas for increasing access to community transportation options by Maine citizens with disabilities.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) document was developed and issued in November 2002. The decision was made to solicit proposals for up to three project awards at one time, and to allow applicants to propose project activities for as long as one year. Six applications for funding were received, and were read and evaluated by individuals selected from both the Quality Access TAG and the Transportation Resource Team. Three awards to operate local transportation demonstration projects were made.

Mid-Coast Collaborative for Accessible Transportation

The Independence Association submitted a proposal entitled “Sitting at the Table: An Inclusive Transportation Planning Strategy for the Brunswick-Topsham Community.” Twelve other project partners were named, including the towns of the Brunswick and Topsham, Bowdoin College, United Way of Mid-Coast Maine, and Coastal Transportation.

The application proposed the convening of a broad-based steering committee on key stakeholders in the area, including agencies and individuals who represent those persons who are most likely to need enhanced accessible public transit and alternative transportation options. The steering committee was charged with the supervision of a consultant hired to identify specific transportation needs and viable solutions for people who have disabilities, long term illness, seniors, and others who lack the resources to own and operate a private vehicle.

The proposal was funded for one year, from April 2003 to April 2004. However, in April 2004, an additional award of \$8,700 was made, to allow certain additional project activities through August 31, 2004.

What Worked

This project was very successful, and many of the ways in which this project was successful are described below.

Community Collaboration. Perhaps the most successful outcome of the Mid-Coast project was the collaboration itself, the diverse organizations that came together to propose and then conduct project activities. Led by a disability services provider, the Collaborative included both medical and community service providers, state and local agencies, transportation and human services providers, municipal governments and a variety of non-profit organizations. The project

demonstrated an excellent collaboration model that can be adopted and customized by other local advocates in Maine.

Widespread Community Input. The consumer survey developed by the Collaborative asked 17 questions on a variety of transportation issues, demographics, and concerns of the respondent. It was not designed to measure a sample of the community, but rather to collect the opinions of citizens who cared enough about transportation to answer a survey.

The survey was printed as an insert for the Brunswick *Times Record* and distributed throughout the area in January 2004. Extra surveys were also made available at Bowdoin College and other community locations. One hundred forty (140) completed surveys were returned. When a preliminary tabulation indicated that people with disabilities were under-represented, Independence Association made an additional effort to survey people with disabilities who live with relatives or in a nursing facility. This effort produced an additional 20 surveys (160 total).

Downtown Brunswick pedestrian issues surfaced in the survey results. The Collaborative and the Brunswick Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee planned and conducted a public forum on walking (June 2003) to learn more about what limits the ability of people getting around on foot and to collect suggestions on improving pedestrian access. The forum was broadcast live on Brunswick Cable Television, and viewers were able to call in.

Transportation Provider Survey. A primary achievement of the project was the broad identification, within the two target communities, of key transportation providers. This included providers that are usually named as transportation providers, such as Coastal Transportation, the publicly funded paratransit service. However, it also identified Bowdoin College, which owns and operates a fleet of vans and cars for use by students and teachers, and private taxi companies. The Collaborative developed a 33 question survey to better understand mission, population served, geographic area served, annual trips, fleet size, revenue base for capital and operating expenses, use of volunteers, use of technology, past and future willingness to collaborate with other transportation providers, insurance issues, demand, frequent destinations and willingness to charge fares.

The survey was mailed in November 2003 to 28 organizations in the Brunswick/Topsham area that provide transportation either as a service or to support the populations they serve. The mailing was followed by phone calls to improve response. Twelve surveys were returned.

“An exciting outcome and opportunity for creative action is the realization that 8 providers have indicated a willingness to collaborate in several areas, including: vehicles, staff, riders, funds, dispatch, facility, vehicle maintenance, purchasing, volunteers and personal assistants. This future effort has great promise to more efficiently use available resources.....”¹

National Connections. In the course of this one-year planning effort the Collaborative learned of and applied for a scholarship (Project ACTION) to send a group to Washington to participate in the Project ACTION Mobility Planning Services Institute. The Mobility Planning Services philosophy is based on the premise that entire communities are responsible for improving

¹ Freund, Katherine, Mid-Coast Collaborative for Access to Transportation: Consultant’s Report, June 8, 2004, p. 22.

mobility options for people with disabilities and others who share transportation. The overarching theme is collaboration.² The Project ACTION training in November 2003 was a significant and unanticipated help to the Collaborative's efforts.

The major benefit of the Project ACTION Mobility Planning Services Institute was the Collaborative's introduction to a transportation model, Ride Connections, from Portland, Oregon. Ride Connections is a non-profit organization that was formed several years ago by a group planning effort similar to that of the Mid-Coast Collaborative. A non-profit organization, Ride Connections adds an administrative framework that allows the various transportation groups to function efficiently as one harmonious entity. The Ride Connections model holds much promise for helping the Mid-Coast Collaborative continued coordinated activities among its members when the funded planning process is over.

What Didn't Work

Inclusion of Bath and Harpswell in Project Scope. While it is always difficult to draw target boundaries in a regional project of this type, the project principals expressed a particular regret that the Bath community, just several miles north of the Topsham/Brunswick area, and the extended town of Harpswell that lies south of Brunswick, were not included in the project boundaries. The town of Bath, as well as the fast-growing areas in between such as Cooks Corner, are connected to the Topsham/Brunswick area in many significant ways, and as such greatly influence the transportation needs and array of available resources that were the focus of this effort.

How Outcomes Inform Future Planning

The successful outcomes achieved by the Mid-Coast Collaborative Project during their first fourteen or so months of operation will certainly add a lot to the near-term planning activities across communities in that area related to transportation. As indicated above, much attention and activity related to transportation planning activities is going on now related to the development of regular passenger train service north of Portland, with a station stop in Brunswick. But ongoing transportation concerns also fuel additional planning and development activities, including the Route 1 corridor development and town bypass activities, area economic development, and increasing traffic congestion.

The Mid-Coast Collaborative has helped to increase the depth of community input and involvement with these transportation planning and development activities, particularly relating to individual people with disabilities, family members, and service organizations with which they relate.

The success of the Collaborative's work has been noticed by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT), which has pledged an additional grant of \$50,000 to extend the work of the Collaborative, particularly in relation to planning related to the train service. Seed funding for the MDOT grant is being put up by project partners, including Bowdoin College (\$5,000) and the Town of Brunswick (\$5,000).

² Abeson, Alan, Director, Easter Seals Project Action Handbook, November 2003, introductory letter.

The Mid-Coast Collaborative is also seeking additional funding support for a pilot project that brings together the various current volunteer transportation resources in order to initiate the development of a more collaborative local transportation system.

Coastal Trans has enthusiastically volunteered and assumed administrative responsibility for the ongoing management of the Collaborative as it moves towards genuine improvements regarding access to transportation.

Unexpected Challenges

One unexpected finding was the numbers of elderly individuals who responded to the survey.

“[M]ore than half the respondents answering the survey were 65 years of age or older. Indeed, more people over the age of 81 answered the survey (30) than below the age of 40(25). This is a surprisingly older sample and it implies that older people have more concerns about transportation or more time to answer surveys, or both.”³

The Collaborative recommends another survey designed specifically to understand and measure the transportation needs and preferences of older residents in the Mid-Coast area.

People with disabilities were under-represented in the initial survey returns. The survey was administered a second time targeting people with disabilities who live with relatives or in a nursing facility. This produced an additional 20 completed surveys that were added for the analysis.

Some unexpected findings were converted by the group to additional outreach and engagement opportunities, which extended the Collaborative’s efforts. One example, previously mentioned, was when downtown Brunswick pedestrian issues surfaced in the survey results. The Collaborative used this result to join with the Brunswick Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to plan and conduct a public forum on walking in June 2003. That forum was broadcast live on Brunswick Cable Television, and viewers were able to call in, which again increased the awareness of the Collaborative in the local community.

Expected Challenges

From the beginning it was expected that with a small and wide-open community survey, it is difficult to avoid over-representation of certain groups. The over-representation of elder individuals was mentioned above. In addition, two-thirds of the survey responses were women. Geographic imbalance was indicated by two-thirds of respondents from Brunswick, with the remaining one-third from Topsham, Bath, and Harpswell.

Some of the over-representation showed that the Collaborative, in fact, reached individuals with real transportation service needs. For example, 60% of survey respondents reported they had a drivers license, as opposed to 90% of Maine residents who hold a drivers license. Also, only 48% of respondents own a car. The Consultant’s Report concludes that “these numbers lend

³ Freund, Katherine, Mid-Coast Collaborative for Access to Transportation: Consultant’s Report, June 8, 2004, p. 1.

validity to the findings because they indicate that the survey did reach both people with low-income and people who are in need of transportation services.”⁴

Potential Project Replication

The project could not be disseminated or replicated prior to the end of the Quality Choices Access to Transportation project. However, the success of the Mid-Coast Collaborative, including its ability to obtain additional funding to continue its work, is getting the attention of others across Maine, particularly individuals with disabilities and their advocates. Information about the Collaborative’s work has been presented at several conferences and meetings, and there is great interest in replicating the ideas and activities of this project in other areas of Maine.

Regional Transportation Program’s Intermodal Trip Planning Software

The Regional Transportation Program (RTP), in partnership with the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), submitted a proposal entitled *Trip Interface Between Paratransit and Fixed Route Transportation in Cumberland County*.

The application proposed that project funds be used to purchase a fixed route interface software module as an addition to a technologically advanced paratransit reservation, scheduling, and dispatching system.

The proposed project described the following expected outcome:

“The fixed route interface software will allow RTP to efficiently and effectively plan, schedule and dispatch trips that connect its riders with fixed route transit providers. This new technological ability will allow RTP to reduce its costs while expanding and enhancing transportation choices for persons with a disability or a long term illness, capable of utilizing other, less expensive modes of public transportation.”

The funding award to RTP was made for \$15,000, and for a one-year period from April 2003 to April 2004. After project implementation challenges were encountered (as explained more below), in April 2004 the end date for project activities was extended to September 30, 2004.

What Worked

This project faced significant obstacles and challenges, and yet was able to adapt its approach to address these challenges and still accomplish project outcomes that were meaningful. These outcomes have the potential to play a very significant role in the development of comprehensive intermodal transportation options in southern Maine.

When it became very clear that the software module would not work for RTP when purchased “off-the-shelf,” that is without a customized development, RTP explored how it could develop a similar system. More detail on the problems with the original software is provided in the “What Didn’t Work” section, below.

⁴ Freund, Katherine, Mid-Coast Collaborative for Access to Transportation: Consultant’s Report, June 8, 2004, p. 12.

The idea behind the original proposal was sound – develop the means (through a fixed route interface software module) to enable RTP to coordinate individual trip planning to ensure that a person with a disability or long term illness is connected with the most appropriate and least expensive transportation option. One expected outcome would be that many paratransit trips, which are offered door-to-door and as a result are, on a per-trip basis, very expensive, could be linked to existing bus routes and other “fixed route” transportation options. It was hoped that the savings from this increased use of existing fixed route services might allow RTP to extend the range of accessible transportation services that it can provide from the ADA-mandated corridor⁵ to cover all of the Greater Portland area.

The revised project initiated several stages of development:

- 1) Working with StrataGen⁶ ADEPT (Adaptive Decision Engine for Passenger Transportation) software engineers, GPCOG completed the design and installation of a data file that displays key transportation routes on RTP’s current ADEPT map. This map, which can be turned on and off as needed, will later be used on the interactive web site to illustrate transportation routes in relation to key destination and departure sites.
- 2) Another StrataGen “off the shelf” function that did not work was revised and replaced with more useful data on “Key Destinations,” providing much better trip planning resources for local consumers.
- 3) Rider’s Choice, a consumer-oriented and easy to use map was made available on the RTP web site⁷ to allow consumers, caseworkers, and others to see the map and use it to figure out their own connections.
- 4) An additional table of information called “Access Portland” was developed to be part of the interactive map in the same way as the Key Destinations information. This table includes accessible hotels, restaurants, conference centers and similar locations.

What Didn’t Work

It was originally expected that the Fixed Route Interface Module would be purchased from the vendor (StrataGen) and installed by June 2003. RTP has separately purchased and installed StrataGen’s primary product, ADEPT (Adaptive Decision Engine for Passenger Transportation). ADEPT is billed as “a sophisticated software package incorporating advanced technology with functionality developed by both industry-leading software developers and paratransit operations managers.”

Thus the project element that did not work was the purchase and installation of this additional ADEPT software module. The project was able to define a redirection that seemed likely to result in positive outcomes and long-term increased capacity for transportation services for people with disabilities, both those in the RTP service area in southern Maine, but also in other areas where the project-developed software and methods will be shared.

⁵ The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates that free paratransit services be provided to individuals with disabilities who live within three-quarters (3/4) of a mile of any fixed-route bus or other transportation route.

⁶ StrataGen Systems, a “leading provider of dynamic, real-time and intelligent scheduling software for the demand-responsive transportation industry,” is headquartered in Kirkland, Washington. More information on the Internet at <http://www.stratagen.com/>

⁷ <http://www.rtprides.org/>

It is regrettable, though, that the new project direction was not set earlier, thus allowing the Access TAG and the Transportation Resource Team to monitor and provide feedback to RTP staff and partners prior to the end of project activities. It is hoped that some of the transportation access activities that come after this Quality Choices project ends (outlined below in the Recommendations/Next Steps section) will involve working with RTP and GPCOG to promote the success of the project, as well as to share the techniques and products with other transit providers throughout Maine and the nation.

How Outcomes Inform Future Planning

The outcomes of the RTP Intermodal Trip Planner project provide better information for various stakeholders in Maine who are interested in comprehensive transportation options for persons with disabilities throughout Maine. The benefit of these outcomes is significant and meaningful in two separate but very related ways:

- 1) First, that individualized paratransit services can be very expensive. The goal of RTP's project was defined in their proposal:

“A gap exists in public transportation between what is inaccessible but affordable, and what is accessible but very expensive. This project as proposed will bridge the gap between the two sets of issues stated above.”

By developing tools and services that help individuals with disabilities plan trips that use existing fixed-route and other regular community transportation services where possible, the overall per-trip costs will go down. More people will be served, including those over a wider service area, with the same amount of resources.

- 2) The second benefit of this approach is increased integration of services for persons with disabilities in regular community activities. By riding fixed route buses and other transit, persons with disabilities will learn the benefits, and the limitations, of using these resources. Perhaps a greater benefit will be the education of the general public, who will routinely see people with disabilities using transportation services to go to work, shopping, the hospital, and for other community activities.

Unexpected Challenges

The difficulty in purchasing the StrataGen ADEPT software and getting it to work within the RTP system was not expected.

Expected Challenges

The Resource Team directed RTP and GPCOG to address the following issues and concerns.

- The need to outline project outcomes that could help to accomplish systems change for transportation systems beyond the RTP service area. Though the Greater Portland area is perhaps more resource-rich than other areas of the state, RTP was asked to define one or more project activities and outcomes that might benefit other transportation service providers.

- RTP was asked to better define the project evaluation activities which were proposed to be done under contract with GPCOG.
- RTP was asked to seek ways in which individuals with disabilities might be involved in the project. One suggestion was that RTP collect feedback from people with disabilities, both consumers of RTP services and others, in terms of their view of the implementation of the Trip Interface software and the impact that this software has on the planning, scheduling and dispatching of rides for people with disabilities.
- RTP was asked to provide some specific examples of the kinds of trips that were changed as a result of the installation and use of the Trip Interface software module.

Potential Project Replication

The project could not be disseminated or replicated prior to the end of the Quality Choices Access to Transportation project. However, RTP is planning to share its products and expertise with other transportation providers in Maine, especially in the Bangor area. It is expected that these providers will be able to replicate some or all of RTP's project activities in their own area, or at a very minimum use some of the tools and lessons learned in their own area.

Project TOT (Taking on Transportation)

Project TOT was proposed by the Maine Parent Federation, Inc. a statewide parent training and information center. The Maine Parent Federation has a staff of about 40 with seven regional offices. Its board consists of parents of people with disabilities, individuals with disabilities and individuals who work with parents and families.

This project's proposal envisioned the creation of a statewide volunteer ride share bulletin board for people with disabilities which would help them be more active in the community and facilitate natural friendships. However, Project TOT proposed to start in two pilot regions, Western Maine and Aroostook County, and to expand statewide if the pilots in those two regions were successful.

Project TOT received \$20,000 for a one-year grant period that started April 1, 2003. The two pilot regions were Aroostook County and western Maine, including Oxford, Androscoggin and Franklin Counties. The Maine Parent Federation worked with their Regional Coordinators and existing advisory committees in these areas on outreach and recruitment activities.

What Worked

None of the project objectives or activities were successful, though in a very small way even the project's failure raised the awareness of some Maine residents regarding the issues and challenges around certain elements of transportation for people with disabilities.

What Didn't Work

The project was unable to recruit a sufficient number of drivers or individuals seeking rides and was terminated at the mid-point of the project period. No rides were provided.

How Outcomes Inform Future Planning

The difficulties that the project faced provide two key lessons for similar projects in the future:

- The safety, liability and confidentiality issues involved with a volunteer-based transportation program need to be fully researched and addressed in order to respond to host agency, driver and rider concerns prior to program start-up; and
- Sufficient time and resources need to go into outreach and driver/rider recruitment activities in advance of service start-up.

Unexpected Challenges

There were two unexpected challenges:

- The amount of time involved to get a volunteer-based ride board program up and running.
- The refusal of volunteers to put identifying/contact information on the project website.

Expected Challenges

A number of Access to Transportation Resource Members voiced concerns around the issues of liability and safety. These concerns did not affect the decision to fund this project but were communicated to the Maine Parent Federation prior to awarding the grant. The grantee had access to an attorney for project planning and who drafted a waiver of liability form to hold the Maine Parent Federation harmless. However, the perception of the individuals being recruited was that they would be in great danger of being sued and therefore would be putting themselves at risk.

Recommendations/Next Steps

The Quality Choices Access to Transportation project was clearly not of sufficient size or scope to make significant and lasting changes in such an extensive and complex area as community transportation services and supports for individuals with disabilities. That said, the project was still worth doing. Even small efforts that result in incremental changes, and lessons learned, are better than doing nothing at all.

Thus an obvious recommendation is that much more work is needed to address this very important area. People with disabilities, their advocates, local municipal officials, and many others should be actively engaged in looking for, and then acting on, opportunities that could allow for additional research and development in this area.

There are four specific transportation initiatives under way in Maine that provide opportunities for additional work in this area. The Quality Choices Access to Transportation project was closely connected to the development and implementation of each of these.

1. As a result of the Supreme Court Olmstead Decision, Maine in 2000 convened a group representing consumers, consumer advocacy groups, service providers, state agencies and other interested parties. This group oversaw the development of an Olmstead response plan for the State. The report of the group's efforts, released in October 2003, is entitled *Roadmap for Change: Strategies for Integrated Living*.⁸

The Roadmap includes a section on Transportation Issues and Problems,⁹ which includes a description of transportation issues, and recommended action steps and strategies that should be developed and advanced here in Maine.

2. Representatives from several state agencies (Departments of Health and Human Services, Transportation, and Labor) that financially support passenger transportation have been meeting and corresponding to provide a coordinated response to current transportation issues for individuals with disabilities. Part of the impetus for meeting was the Olmstead response efforts detailed above, but their efforts have been bolstered by the national United We Ride initiative.¹⁰ Representatives of each of the involved state agency partners participated in national United We Ride training workshops.

In addition, these state agency partners have responded individually to the United We Ride State Assessment. One result of this effort was agreement among the partners that the best initial direction is to assist in the development of an Executive Order from the Governor which will establish new and sustainable coordination activities. One goal is the convening of a formal council charged with reporting on transportation issues on a biennial basis to the Governor, Commissioners, and Legislature. The Department of Transportation has applied for federal United We Ride state coordination funds to support these activities, which includes the hiring of consultant and staff supports for the council.

3. As a result of the annual meeting of the National Federation of the Blind in Maine, a group has met monthly during 2003-2004 to discuss transportation needs, resources and potential in Maine. This enthusiastic group has been composed of workers from the State Dept. of Labor, Division of the Blind and Visually Impaired; the Iris Network, a non-profit provider of services and advocates for the Blind and Visually Impaired; Alpha One, Maine's Center for Independent Living; and volunteers who work with the blind and visually impaired. This group crafted a rough beginning to a strategic plan that defines three areas for improvement:
 - Information/Education/Outreach/Training;
 - State and local level Coordination/Sustainability activities; and

⁸ Available on the Internet at http://www.mainereachchoices.org/workgroup_roadmap.htm

⁹ http://www.mainereachchoices.org/wg_roadmap/Transportation.htm

¹⁰ More information on the Internet at <http://www.fta.dot.gov/CCAM/www/index.html>

- Improved Local Transportation Service Options and Capacity.
4. The Maine Transit Association (MTA) plays a critical role in bringing transportation providers together and providing education regarding transportation for people with disabilities. The 2004 Maine Transit Association Annual Meeting and Training Conference included a Disabilities and Transportation Roundtable that focused on the transportation challenges people with disabilities experience and the topic was part of the Transportation Coordination Panel discussion. The MTA also creates, maintains and distributes the *Maine Transportation Directory - A guide for using Maine's roads and highways without a car*. This directory lists and describes, by region: regularly scheduled local bus services; subscription commuter, Park & Ride and ride share programs; regional public providers; volunteer driver programs; sheltered workshop transportation; transportation for senior lunch programs; and intercity bus and ferry services.

■ Appendices

Appendix A: Access Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Members

■ Appendix A: Access Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Members

Patricia Albert-Dehetre
Elder Independence of Maine

Pam Allen
Elder Independence of Maine

Linda Ault
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