Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.

Transportation Options Research Project

Executive Summary Recommendations

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## Project Objective: Recommendations

Recommendations are compiled in the Transportation Options Research Recommendations and Action Steps report and contained as part of the Gap Analysis and Comprehensive Report. A total of 87 recommendations are included in the reports. These are divided into 45 primary recommendations (listed next) and 42 subordinate-recommendations not duplicated again in this summary. Recommendations are clustered under five (5) overarching need categories, as follows:

### Need 1: Establish and Support Reliable Funding and Support from Policy Makers

1.1. Convene a grant management support team from APD, DOT, TD and others as identified. This group would meet with some regularity and provide technical assistance especially for rural counties that lack resources for grant submissions.

1.2. Regularly access funding opportunities, including grants that are related but not specific to transportation, e.g., the United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development Rural Housing Service's Community Facilities Program that offers direct and guaranteed loans and grants to encourage the development of community transportation facilities serving rural populations.

1.3. Utilize the Transportation Disadvantaged infrastructure and experienced staff to seek available Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) grants that reimburse agencies for 50 percent of their operational expenses, identify and apply for grants/opportunities specific to hiring more drivers, and identify and apply for grants that can be used to assist in building the infrastructure for agency partnerships. These planning grant dollars can be used to build a collaborative increasing strength to apply for grants that directly fund transportation needs.

2.1. Consistently update legislators, county commissions, and other decision-making bodies on cost comparisons from high quality research like the Center for Urban Transportation Research in Tampa, the Return on Investment Study done by the Marketing Institute at the Florida State University College of Business which demonstrates the economic value to government of providing these services, and others. Target the information to support the effectiveness of current practices, gaps, and solutions.

3.1. Improve collaboration and seek to streamline Transportation Disadvantaged Plans in neighboring counties to increase reach and range of transportation entities, while leveraging current resources.

3.2. Assist local and paratransit agencies to form collaborative agreements with agencies that serve persons with disabilities, supporting mutual fundraising, donation support, endowments, contracts and other forms of revenue generation.

3.3. Partner with municipal governments and businesses for fundraising. Also, partner with organizations that have strong fundraising capacity, endowments, and grant writing capabilities to be a “preferred partner” for transportation services with additional financial support for their organization.

4.1 Complete a review of mandatory costs for fixed route and paratransit services, and prioritize legislation, e.g. legislation to lower, stabilize, and control liability insurance costs for paratransit services.

5.1. Utilize Local Coordinating Boards, purchasing agencies and the Community Transportation Coordinator with identified human service/disability provider groups and organizations to coordinate human transportation funding with special emphasis in rural areas. Medicaid reform has severely affected rural resources by eliminating Medicaid’s NET contract with CTD in 2014. However, coordination under Chapter 427 produced the first viable public transit in many rural Florida counties. In Putnam County, the coordination of human service transportation funding via the flex route format produced a 50% boost in productivity due to the walk-ons that accessed the system at public bus stops.

5.2. Approach business associations and local chambers of commerce to rally support from small businesses that are not on or within one-half mile of bus stops to improve coverage.

5.3. Using grant or other one time funds to upgrade equipment, such as replacing ramps, adding technology and negotiating maintenance agreements to include advertising (when allowed) the name of the maintenance business as part of a lower maintenance cost arrangement. This supports impactful use of funds where sustainability of services may be difficult.

5.4. Use 5310 grants (Transportation Equity Act) to purchase vehicles for employment related needs as well as providing pre-employment services and in general to increase fleets or replace vehicles.

### Need 2: Improve Access, Collaboration, and Expansion of Transportation Services

6.1. Create circulating systems in which feeder buses and circulation buses maintain a constant flow around a fixed route to provide reliable service for riders to make appointments.

7.1. Improve van pool-leasing for paratransit agencies in higher population areas to maintain sufficient number of drivers and vans available to handle fluctuations in need. Van leasing changes out driver cadres but uses vans maintained by the local government or other designated agencies, including private agencies.

7.2. Improve or start (when absent) hybrid systems using paratransit services to take a person to a fixed bus route and then pick them up there or at another fixed bus stop at a later time.

7.3. Enroll volunteers to use paratransit vans on off hours to provide transportation to recreation, shopping, education and employment locations, supporting improved quality of life for persons with disabilities. Collaboration caveat: The vans would be maintained by a central designated agency (public or private) with strict monitoring for use to ensure proper use and ensure maintenance.

8.1. Develop and support a statewide, or at least regional, prepaid card system. Ensure affordability and support agencies that support persons with disabilities in accessing discounted cards to ensure that persons with disabilities can access services, supports, education and employment. Include a system based on the Charleston, SC CARTA system. CARTA fares for persons with disabilities are available to riders who have a Disabled Fare ID card. Riders much show this ID card for the reduced fare to be applied to their travels. Persons with disabilities receive a 50% fare discount when they show the driver their special ID card.

9.1. Expand paratransit eligibility and advertisements for services to include individuals with less severe disabilities to support their independence, including employment, education, medical, recreation, spiritual, and familial.

9.2. Consider replicating a system like the Ride Together Mileage Reimbursement program for rural areas (Oregon). This program empowers riders to recruit their own drivers, scheduling directly with the driver. Each driver is reimbursed for miles driven. Vehicles included faith-based organization vans, other organizations willing to offer their vehicles, and private vehicles. How trips and mileage is verified was asked but not answered.

10.1. Create partnerships with Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC) that tend to serve as coordinated points of entry for older adults and people with disabilities, who are also a high percent of people who are transportation disadvantaged. The purpose of this partnership is to create a system that is a Single Entry Point (SEP) or No Wrong Door (NWD) model, so long as the experience of ADRC contact is seamless from a consumer’s perspective.

10.2. Improve collaborative planning with disability provider organizations at state, county and local levels.

### Need 3: Improve Efficiency, Cost and Quality of Transportation Services

11.1. Support integrated use of Dynamic Planning of routes to meet identified needs, responding to data to identify new/changes in needs, changing routes accordingly and providing updates on transportation websites.

11.2. Enhance trip planning to incorporate transportation services offered by public transit agencies, human service agencies, and private sources to provide current and specific origin and destination trip plans. These should be used for specific reasons (e.g. employment, medical, linkages between childcare and transportation when possible).

11.3. Support Mobility Management Initiatives as a strategy to improve the use of transportation resources and link those needing transportation with available services. In some communities, the public transit agency has taken on the role as the mobility manager. This may be more responsibility than some transit agencies may want, but there may be related activities that the transit agency could extend to non-ADA riders, such as a travel training program.

12.1. Establish policies that transportation should be coordinated based on geographic area, not by funding agencies. Community leaders should help locate services, facilities, and activities in proximity and schedule trips appropriately.

12.2. For areas that are finding it difficult to encourage riders that are capable and able to access cheaper fixed route systems, offer a program similar to Portland’s Para-Pass. Para-Pass is an exchange for voluntarily giving up paratransit service, riders would receive a free lifetime bus pass, renewed annually, for the fixed route system. Each Para-Pass participant would be allowed to come back to the paratransit system if his or her mobility needs change.

13.1. Improve incentives and pay for drivers. Supporting evidence suggests that experienced drivers are an overall cost savings. For example, drivers with six months or more experience are 8 to 24 percent more productive than those with less experience. For 100 drivers with a baseline turnover rate of 40 percent that is reduced to 20 percent, productivity increases by an average of 16 percent, which returns 3,200 revenue hours of savings per year for the same number of trips. If operating cost averages are $55/hour (2010 prices), the savings equals $176,000 per year (Audney, 2017).

13.2. Create a county or regional Driver Retention Plan via a collaborative of geographically connected Local Coordinating Boards and Community Transportation Coordinators leading an effort comprised of local stakeholders. This should be reported to the TD leadership and used to move state policy and practice.

13.3. Create a statewide Travel Trainer and Support training to train volunteers and, when available, paid staff to act as travel supports for persons with disabilities. This is targeted to improve quality and provide support for persons with disabilities as they learn local transportation systems.

13.4. Develop county, regional or state Volunteer Exchange Programs: A member who needs a ride calls and is matched with a member who has volunteered to drive. Drivers’ hours are recorded in a computer program and banked for services the drivers may need to draw upon for themselves, such as pet care or handyman services. This is similar to a Time Bank.

14.1. Develop a quality recruitment process and pair with a training system in order to (1) attract quality and dependable volunteers; (2) improve commitment of volunteers; (3) address detected performance issues;, and (4) document good work and reward via low cost incentives and support.

15.1. Assist agencies that ask with improving marketing of services and documenting the needs of riders.

15.2. Signage for all stops and pickup points are complete and easily accessible and understood by people with a variety of disabilities including visual, auditory, and mental.

16.1. Improve coordination between public transportation and human service organizations to address identified mobility gaps. This includes (1) provide same-day transportation for critical transportation needs of the Target Populations, such as for medical care, job interviews, training, and education; (2) address connectivity, including transfer and fare issues, to improve the customer experience with trips involving multiple operators; (3) provide enhanced incentives and support collaborative partnerships to better address the need for medical trips and other hard-to meet trip purposes; (4) increase span of service on weekdays and weekends on public transportation services, recognizing riders’ needs for evening classes, retail work shifts and others; and, (5) incorporate lower-cost ridesharing options including Transportation Network Companies (such as Uber and Lyft) into subsidy and voucher based programs that benefit users and support other activities that promote cost-efficient, cost-effective, coordinated transportation.

16.2. Consider replicating the Dialysis Transportation Project (Oregon). This program provides dedicated drivers on scheduled days with dialysis a first priority. When prioritizing, it was found that some days were heavier scheduled days for dialysis, mostly due to dialysis organization staffing, and when this became more predictable, the program expanded to include other medical needs as a second priority.

17.1. Improve rider experiences at stops and during waits to maximize safety, information and comfort.

### Need 4: Improve Rider and Driver Awareness and Understanding of the Transportation System

18.1. Drivers will be provided trainings, online/webinar or in person, on disability, common disabilities, the impact of disability on rider ability, communication with persons with disabilities, and how to assist persons with disabilities to have an optimal riding experience. This will also include compassion training and communicating with caregivers of persons with disabilities.

19.1. Collaborative (when possible) trainings will be provided to persons with disabilities and caregivers that include but is not limited to (1) printed material that clearly delineates routes, times, costs, start and end times; (2) online training in webinar and video (YouTube) formats that show where they can find information regarding transit system and para-transit, separate videos regarding various services, routes, options, how to schedule rides and other subjects; and (3) support and training for mobile apps that support in real time while in the community. Training should be no cost.

19.2. Consider contacting, reviewing and incorporating information from successful programs from other states. For example, the Portland Oregon RideWise program that teaches individuals with cognitive, vision and multiple disabilities throughout the region how to safely use public transportation. With the Portland Partner Program, volunteers stay with riders at medical appointments, supporting their return trips as well.

20.1. Develop a statewide training system for airport, rail, shipping, and motor vehicle transportation professionals, including first responders that will provide transportation services, around people with disabilities and interacting with them. The training would be developed with continual input and feedback from persons with disabilities, caregivers, and disability service providers.

21.1. Improve education of the public, especially persons with low income or disabilities to increase community access and social networks.

### Need 5: Address Other Accessibility Issues

22.1. Increase free WIFI accessibility to support rider comfort and productivity, improving desirability of public transportation.

23.1. Develop real time apps for pick-up planning and drop-off scheduling. These should be free and easily used.

23.2. Support state, county and local scheduling software with GPS screens to find locations while maintaining safe driving conditions

24.1. Create a uniform, statewide, system for licensing and supporting wheelchair accessible vehicles, modeling on the Boston WAV (Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Vehicle) system.

# Recommendations for Future Action

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council should carefully review all report submissions. The final versions of reports were completed with confidence. Recommendations based on the match of gaps to strategies should be reviewed and implemented with FDDC support when possible. The intention of the developers was that the final reports would not be used as sequential, actionable information to be implemented as a single or series of steps. The belief was that the information would help guide prioritizing and support of transportation for persons with disabilities when resources and political will are available.

The Council should work with other entities statewide to use this projects final products as one of, hopefully, many sources of information to guide the improvement of the Florida transportation system. The preliminary action steps accompanying recommendations are based on what appears to have worked in Florida TDSP’s, other implementation plans and reason. They are not comprehensive but are meant to stimulate planning conversations.

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