3.5.3 Specialized Transportation and Mobility Management

Introduction

Specialized transportation focuses on the unique needs of target populations. These populations may include seniors, individuals with disabilities, or people with specific medical needs, and individuals with low incomes. Providers of specialized transportation serve the unmet needs of target populations by offering accessible vehicles, on-demand service, and assistance based on a rider’s unique situation.

Mobility Management is a strategic approach to the various public, private, and social service transportation systems that often lack coordination. Mobility solutions are especially important for those who require options beyond personal vehicles.

In the five-county region served by NOACA, there are numerous social service, public, and private agencies that provide transportation. With cooperative effort, these organizations can begin to offer coordinated mobility for residents throughout the region while providing resource savings though efficiencies.

Existing Conditions

Demographics

The following demographic information and current conditions are compiled based on the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan for Northeast Ohio for Federal Fiscal Years 2015-2017. This plan is required by the federal government for regions that are seeking funding from the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (5310) program. This vital data provides a baseline from which to analyze potential coordination opportunities and improve mobility in the NOACA region.

According to the 2010 United States Census, the NOACA region had a population of 2,070,000. Cuyahoga County holds 61.6% of the overall population of the region. The five-county region is home to 17.8% of Ohio’s 11.6 million population, which is a decline of 3.30% from the 2000 Census.

The Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan focuses on the following target populations and their unique needs pertaining to transportation.

Older Adults

Older adults are identified by the Federal Transit Administration as those over 65 years old. In 2010, the NOACA region had 315,712 people in the older adult cohort, a 15.20% share of the total population and an increase of 0.7% from the 2000 Census (see Figure 3.5.3-1).
**Individuals with Disabilities**

Individuals of any age may have disability status, considered by the Census Bureau to refer to one’s ability to perform certain daily tasks such as dressing, bathing, and cooking. The Census Bureau found that the percentage of individuals with disability increases with age and includes people who range from “some degree of disability” to those with “severe disability.” In 2010, 311,966 people in the NOACA region were identified as individuals with disabilities, a 16% share of the total population (see Figure 3.5.3-2). This is a decrease of 2.5% from the 2000 Census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>All Ages</th>
<th>Age 65 and Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disabled Population</td>
<td>Share of Population (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuyahoga</td>
<td>207,525</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geauga</td>
<td>10,943</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>30,278</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorain</td>
<td>44,969</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medina</td>
<td>18,251</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>311,966</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>1,899,462</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

**Individuals with Low Income**

Low-income classification is based on individuals who are at or below 150% of the U.S. Health and Human Services poverty line. According to the 2010 Census, the NOACA region had 441,120 people of low-income status, a 21.4% share of the total population and an increase of 3.7% from the 2000 Census (see Figure 3.5.3-3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Below 150% of Poverty Line</th>
<th>Below 100% of Poverty Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuyahoga</td>
<td>1,269,094</td>
<td>321,932</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geauga</td>
<td>97,062</td>
<td>13,615</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>232,220</td>
<td>30,861</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorain</td>
<td>292,559</td>
<td>57,583</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medina</td>
<td>168,488</td>
<td>17,129</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,059,423</td>
<td>441,120</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>11,194,344</td>
<td>2,459,692</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census
Zero car households

Individuals and families living in zero car households have no access to personal vehicles, either by choice or due to other circumstances (cost, ability to drive, etc). In 2010, 10.5% of households in the NOACA region did not have access to personal vehicles, equating to approximately 88,561 households (see Figure 3.5.3-4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total Households</th>
<th>Households without a Vehicle Available</th>
<th>Share of Households(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuyahoga</td>
<td>537,203</td>
<td>71,704</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geauga</td>
<td>34,447</td>
<td>2,436</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>94,347</td>
<td>4,736</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorain</td>
<td>115,534</td>
<td>7,373</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medina</td>
<td>64,813</td>
<td>2,310</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>846,344</td>
<td>88,561</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>4,554,007</td>
<td>371,041</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Figure 3.5.3-4: Percent of Households without a Vehicle Available, 2010

Existing Transportation Providers

Public Transit

Within the NOACA five-county region, there are five transit operators: Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, Laketran, Lorain County Transit, Medina County Transit (which includes Brunswick Transit Alternative as of January 1, 2017), and Geauga County Transit. Detailed profiles about each transit system can be found in the Transit Chapter.

Paratransit

Per the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, all persons are afforded the right to use public transit and requires equivalent, corresponding service for individuals who cannot independently ride. For riders who cannot use fixed public transit routes or do not live near available public transit, paratransit offers on-demand service that is vital to the health, safety, and quality of life for many. In the NOACA region, each transit operator offers this accessible, demand-response service.

Private Transportation

Private transportation providers can offer direct options beyond personal and public transportation, and can be especially helpful when trips are needed outside normal transit hours, giving riders the freedom for more spontaneous travel. While private transportation services can be cost prohibitive to some riders, it is a viable option for others to consider.

Non-Profit Transportation

To supplement public and private providers, human service agencies and nonprofits throughout the region offer transportation options to their clients. Whether through actual operation, transit passes, or volunteer driver programs, human service agencies and nonprofits offer direct assistance to clients who need it. According to the 2015 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Northeast Ohio, there were more than 50 identified senior centers, nonprofit organizations, governments, health centers, and social service agencies that provided transportation services.

Existing Funding Resources

Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Section 5310 Program

The U.S. Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA’s) Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals With Disabilities (Section 5310) Program is designed to assist private nonprofit, government authorities, and public or private operators of transportation services in meeting the transportation needs of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities. Funds are distributed to support vehicle purchases, mobility management activities, technology upgrades, infrastructure improvements, and other operating costs. As a designated direct recipient of FTA funds, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) staff manages the grantee selection process, recommends awards, and performs program administrative functions.
Goals, Objectives, Measurements/Targets

Specialized transportation needs will continue to grow beyond the current options as the population of the United States ages. In the report “An Aging Nation: The Older Population in the United States,” published by the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of adults 65 and over are expected to double from 2012 to 2050. This expected increase from 43.1 million to 83.7 million is caused by the aging Baby Boomer generation and longer life expectancy. While some seniors may choose and be able to continue driving personal vehicles, additional transportation options are vital to the health and safety of this growing population.

Additionally, emphasis is being placed on the benefits of community integration of seniors and individuals with disabilities and the subsequent transportation requirements. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) notes that “the vast majority of older adults want to age in place so they can continue to live in their own homes or communities.” Their report “Aging in Place: A State Survey of Livability Policies and Practices” specifically found that transportation was a core concern and that “increased mobility options can reduce reliance on transportation by personal car.” Similarly, the Independent Living Movement heralded by disability advocates calls for “consumer control, the idea that people with disabilities are the best experts on their own needs, having crucial and valuable perspective to contribute and deserving of equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and take part in their communities, particularly in reference to services that powerfully affect their day-to-day lives and access to independence.”

In response to growing needs, agency collaboration, and community outreach, the 2015 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Northeast Ohio identified the following goals:

- Improve accessibility and service efficiency for low-income, elderly, and/or disabled riders
- Improve cost effectiveness
- Improve safety
- Improve coordination of services and resources

Tier One Objectives

1. Reduce transit/specialized transportation costs for riders and providers
2. Improve frequency of service
3. Improve weekend service
4. Improve operational efficiencies at all levels
5. Improve access to underserved areas with transit dependent populations
6. Improve evening service
7. Advance awareness to growing unmet transportation needs

Tier Two Objectives

8. Improve access to information and travel training for riders and human service agencies
9. Improve last-minute transportation options
10. Mitigate environmental barriers
11. Improve inter-county transportation options

Recommendations

In response to these goals, the following strategies were identified. Specific detail on each objective can be found within the 2015 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Northeast Ohio.

Tier One Objectives

1. Reduce transit/specialized transportation costs for riders and providers
2. Improve frequency of service
3. Improve weekend service
4. Improve operational efficiencies at all levels
5. Improve access to underserved areas with transit dependent populations
6. Improve evening service
7. Advance awareness to growing unmet transportation needs

Tier Two Objectives

8. Improve access to information and travel training for riders and human service agencies
9. Improve last-minute transportation options
10. Mitigate environmental barriers
11. Improve inter-county transportation options
In 2012, the American Cancer Society (ACS) commissioned a study to review transportation gaps in its Road to Recovery program. One of the findings suggested looking to regional transportation providers as a solution. In summer 2014, NOACA and ACS staff began to collaborate on mobility management and convened the first NEO Mobility Coalition in October 2014 at NOACA. More than 30 participants, including most of the region’s public transit providers, took part in the meeting. As the group created strategies and goals at the November 2014 meeting, two working groups formed: Access to Transportation and Public Awareness.

This coalition is a helpful resource and change agent in implementing the objectives of the 2015 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Northeast Ohio.

Available Transportation Website/Mobility Guide
According to the New York City Mobility Management Resource Guide, “Access to information is almost as important as access to the service itself.” Linking individuals in need to available resources is important to the success of these objectives. One strategy that was suggested in agency and community outreach and that was taken on by the Mobility Coalition is a “one-stop shop” for education and resource sharing.

In 2017, NOACA staff will begin to integrate a specialized transportation portion into an update of Ohio’s Transportation Demand Management (TDM) platform. The search tool can be used by residents, human service agencies, and other stakeholders to obtain detailed ride information based on provider, schedule, cost, location, and population served. This TDM tool will connect individuals to various transportation options and in turn improve congestion and air quality for the region.

Additionally, NOACA staff and members of the NEO Mobility Coalition will begin work on a printed guide with similar information as a resource for those who do not readily have access to the internet. It will be distributed through human service agencies, community centers, and health centers.

University/College Volunteer Driver Programs & Collaboration with Ride Sharing Services
When funding is an issue, it is vital to seek innovative solutions to meet these objectives. One strategy involves connecting university/college students with target populations who need rides (for little or no cost to the rider). Volunteer driver programs are especially useful for individuals traveling to medical appointments or as first/last mile options. This type of program could be a solution to fill gaps in the current transportation system in the NOACA region. As part of their efforts, the NEO Mobility Coalition brainstormed a possible program aimed at students with specific majors or those interested in service learning opportunities. Majors may include social workers, nurses, psychology/sociology, and physical and occupational therapies.

Additionally, ride sharing service companies, such as Uber and Lyft, are showing a willingness to participate in greater mobility for specialized populations. Collaboration between these private companies, public transit, and nonprofit agencies has the potential to offer on-demand service for lower costs.

Accessibility and mobility are paramount to a successful regional transportation system in tandem with performance measures for transit. This ensures 100% mobility and access to opportunities and activities on various modes are available for all area residents, visitors, and organizations. The strategic measures are job access, equity, transportation affordability; network completeness; distribution of population to alternative transportation; and distribution of jobs to alternative transportation.