It’s not just a ride

Developing Flexible Service and Accommodating Special Needs within a Coordinated System

Karen Hoesch
ACCESS Transportation Systems
Pittsburgh, PA
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Pittsburgh, PA

- Sponsored by Port Authority of Allegheny County
- ACCESS serves as broker since 1979
- 1.7 million rides provided annually in the coordinated system
- Decentralized service model with 8 service providers
- 125 sponsoring agencies
A Seat for Everyone

- ADA Paratransit
- 65 Plus Program – PA Lottery
- Area Agency on Aging
- Medicaid Transportation
- Churches
- Nursing/personal care homes
- Veteran’s Administration
- Community based human service agencies
- JARC – access to work
- Protective service, prisoners, community emergency
- Vanpool emergency ride home
Problem Statement

- Some transportation exists, yet unmet needs
- Restrictions of funders limit who can ride
- Duplication – silo offerings - 3 vans at the hospital
- Human service agencies find themselves in the transportation business
- Increasing ADA demand and cost
- Local opportunity - how can we cooperate to:
  - Serve more people
  - Provide more service
  - Use capacity and existing resources effectively
More than a Ride

- Amenities make service usable
- No benefit to availability without usability
- Engage the community
- What are the perceived barriers
  - Level of assistance
  - Cost
  - Ease of use – understandability, stress, anxiety
  - Personal safety
- What can be addressed and how much will it cost
  - Trade offs and decisions
  - Affecting cost with policy
  - What each partner can bring to the table
Find a Way to Say Yes!

- Transportation as a local asset
  - Variety of amenities
  - Responds to stated needs
  - Service designed for usability

- Create “premium” service offerings
  - What do people request
  - What would it take to do it?
  - How can we make their ride a success?

- Integrated vs. separate services
- Improve efficiency by filling empty seats
- Establish cost sharing
- Conversation shift from the transportation problem to the transportation solution

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Basic Paratransit

*Our basic service model*

- Advance reservation
- Curb to curb as base system
- Limited driver assistance
- On time window
- Shared ride
- Possible capacity constraints
- Low fares, high costs
- Days / hours / service area may be limited
- Small vehicles
- Accessible
Who makes the rules?

- Agreement on essential policies and procedures that define the service
- Sufficient flexibility for diverse sponsors to add individual elements
  - Cost sharing
  - Eligibility
- Who is ultimately responsible
  - For implementation and accountability
  - For cost recovery and fare setting
Amenities — Assistance

Consider the person — not the ride

- Driver assistance
  - Door to door
  - Door through door
  - Hand to hand
  - Packages
- Difficult or challenging behaviors
- Children / car seats
Most Requested Services

**NCST**

- Higher level of assistance
  - To and from the vehicle
  - At the destination
- Integrating people with Alzheimer's and dementia into transportation services
- Variety of service options
Higher level service

Benefit of establishing special programs

- Rules clearly understood by all parties
- Greater consistency
- Training, safety, liability
- Cost, if any, evaluated and included
- May ultimately be less expensive
  - Individual review
  - Documentation
  - Are you going to do it anyway?
  - “Special Requests”
- Policies do not preclude flexibility
Adult Day Health

- Consumers have Alzheimer's / dementia
- Can’t be left alone
- Can’t tolerate long rides
- May have difficult behaviors
- Only certain clients

- Hand to hand supervision and assistance
- “Safety net” – emergency backup procedures
- Regular, set runs
- Driver training
  - Incident reporting
  - Language, communication
- Strategies – team approach
Implementing “Hand to Hand”

- Safety net – no one home
- Identify which riders
- Driver training
- Responsibilities clearly communicated in writing
  - Driver and system
  - Family – written signed agreement
  - Program
- It works!
  - King County, WA (Seattle)
  - Arlington, VA
  - Pittsburgh, PA
- Shift from ADA to community based service?
Serving the most frail

- Pilot project with Area Agency on Agency
  - Care managers
  - Client profiles
  - Initial home visit
- Modest additional assistance – enough to make the trip possible
  - Help with coat
  - A little extra time
  - Outdoor steps
- Additional driver training
  - OT, how to provide assist
- Preserving independence
- Avoiding institutionalization
- Cost analysis and operational considerations

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Escorted transportation

- Increasingly in demand (NCST)
- Demands on caregivers
- Maintaining people in the community
JFCS Minneapolis

**Accompanied Transportation**

- NCST high profile grant 2009
- Designed for “nearly poor”
  - Do not qualify for other assistance
- Volunteer driver
- Volunteer Escort
  - Accompanies riders who need a higher level of assistance
- Sliding scale fees ($7 - $13 per hour)
  - Volunteer programs are not “free”
- Any trip purpose
  - Assumed medical was most important
  - Greater need for shopping and errands
I’d love to do my own shopping….

- If only I could get help with my packages
- Cited as a transportation problem
  - Is it the ride or the amenities?
  - Test driver assist (rather than vols.)
- Pilot with Area Agency on Aging
  - “Need” for assist vs. “want”
  - How much and what type
  - Demand
  - Outcomes
    - Nutrition
    - Quality of life
    - Cost
For Profit Offerings

- Silver Rides - www.silverride.com
- Combines driver and personal assistant
- Hourly rate
  - Transportation to and from the store
  - Accompany / assist through the store
  - Help put groceries away at home
Food Bank Shuttles

*If only we had transportation.....*

- **Increase Food Bank utilization**
  - Target populations
  - Delivering food vs. getting a ride
  - Waiting for return ride

- **Identify current excess capacity**
  - Weekends, evenings
  - Pregrouping to improve productivity

- **Can we afford it?**
  - Getting the most rides for the money
  - “Natural” partners
    - Funding, volunteers
  - Extra assist time vs. productivity
Menu of options
Arlington, VA
Innovative transportation resources

Funded through Human Service Grants

- **STAR Assisted Transportation**
  - Assist from the driver through the door, through the building to medical office waiting room, visit to family in nursing home

- **Door-Through-Door Assisted Transportation**
  - Home care aide assistance to health care appointments
  - Help prepare for the trip, get to the office, if needed attend the appointment, assist home and report back to family

- **Interim STAR**
  - While awaiting an ADA eligibility determination, trips for medical appointments
Family Friendly Solutions

- Grandparents as primary caregivers
- Disability may prevent use of bus
- No car in family
- Caring for several young children
- “Lending” car seats
- Car seats remain with vehicle
Amenities

Information

- Array of program offerings
- Real time information
- Non-English speaking customers
- Fare payment
Information

- Cited by NCST as a major barrier to use
- Multiple and confusion choices
- Offerings usually presented according to program eligibility
- Responses:
  - Transportation options counseling (aging)
  - Mobility management (transportation)
Mobility Management in Operations

- One call
- One trip request
- Centralized info re: multiple options and eligibility
- Decisions based on policies of coordinated system
- Place customer on best sponsor choice for trip
Personal Transportation Profile

- Lists of services creates a barrier
- Create an individual profile linked to services and program offerings
  - Tell us about yourself
  - Demographics and preferences
- System searches options and finds the “best” personal solution for the trip
- “Warm” referral for registration
- Tool to collect information re: gaps
We don’t have all the good ideas….

- “Best thinking” group assembled
  - Talk about not how, but what
  - Agencies and customers
  - Rank issues

- “The waiting is the worst”

- Unpredictability of arrival causes significant stress – even when on time
  - When will the driver arrive
  - Will I be late
  - Anxiety of waiting and watching
  - Comfort
  - Agencies and families as well
Worries about waiting
Reduce anxiety with information

- Real time information
  - 10 minute advance call out
  - When will the driver arrive
  - Tell me if you’re going to be late
  - Anxiety of waiting and watching
  - Agencies and families

- Practical and affordable

- Tool to reduce:
  - No shows
  - Dwell time
Unintended consequences

- Reminder call to every rider the day prior with cancellation option
- Hundreds of complaints from responsible riders
- Sensitivity to time of day call is made
- No impact at all on “worst offenders”
- Discontinued after 3 month trial
Cultural / Language Barriers

Partnering with faith based organization

- Non-English speaking elderly Russian Jewish immigrants
- Living in large public housing complex
  - Fearful, lacking trust
  - No natural supports within housing community
  - Increasing isolation creates risk
- Services available at local community center and kosher food pantry
- If only they could get there - “They need transportation”
- The ride was not enough
  - Dedicated vehicle and driver – standing order
  - Trusted individual who speaks Russian
  - Partnership of three agencies
A Flexible solution

Transportation vouchers

- Issued or sold to eligible individuals
- Eligibility determined by sponsor
  - Disability
  - Income
  - Employment
- Used to purchase trips
  - Public or private providers
- Self directed – consumers make own decisions and take responsibility for arrangements
- Flexible
- Uses existing community resources
  - Going beyond taxis
- Cited by NCST as emerging best practice – personal choice
APRIL’s Travelers Cheques

- Sponsoring agency
  - Determines eligibility
  - Assists in providing insurance
- Community Transportation Coordinator
  - Establishes network of providers and users
  - Manages voucher program
- Individual Transportation Plan
  - Participant and CTC
  - Allocation of resources
  - Instruction and assistance
- Provider network
  - Public, private, volunteers, taxis, family and friends
Non Traditional Partners

Faith Based Community

- Beyond fliers on the bulletin board
- How can we work together?
- Collaboration with volunteer driver and assistance programs
- Supplement their own service
  - Accessible
  - Broad service area
- Powerful community partners
Partner with human service agencies

- **Area Agency on Aging**
  - Invitation to start a conversation
  - Connection between Aging Service plan and HST coordinated planning process

- **Surveys and focus groups**
  - Meaningful outreach to the community
Allegeny County Area Agency on Aging
Our First and Favorite Partner

- Transportation supports all AAA sponsored services,
- 350,000 annual rides
  - Senior Centers, grocery shopping
  - Adult Day Health
  - Home and community based waiver programs
  - Senior Companions / Senior Employment
  - Health care and medical appointments
  - Protective service
  - Emergency response (Cooling Islands)
- Gave up its own fleet

ACCESS Transportation Systems
Value....

*Inclusion and flexibility*

Many needs require many solutions

- Focus on rider rather than ride
- Design reflects community standards
- Why can’t everyone ride?
Value....

**Stewardship of public resources**

- Use what you have before creating something new
- Least expensive, most appropriate
- Affordable
  - For users
  - For funders
- Sustainable
- Rational basis for establishing cost sharing, fares
- Level of administrative effort required
- Demonstrated and measurable value
  - Impact and satisfaction as well as cost
Value.... Accountability

Rigorous evaluation and standards

- Pre and post satisfaction surveys
- Community involvement “Beyond the usual suspects
  - Consumers
  - Families
  - Community service providers
  - Drivers, calltakers and dispatchers
- Ridership trends
- Administrative cost
- Productivity – cost per trip
- On time pickups and arrivals
- Reliability of technology

ACCESS Transportation Systems
Sharing the ride and our resources
Connecting people to life