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# Implementing Coordinated Transportation in Grays Harbor County

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Findings and Recommendations

**May 15, 2002**

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## 1 Executive Summary

Under contract by the Coastal Community Action Program (CCAP), a consultant from FLT Consulting, Inc. interviewed representatives from 18 transportation, social service, and private agencies to determine the feasibility of implementing a coordinated transportation plan in Grays Harbor County.

The findings show that significant work is needed before coordinated transportation can be a reality in Grays Harbor County. Stakeholders do not have a common vision of coordinated transportation, stable funding is not secured, and there is not consensus about unmet transportation needs. Stakeholders are comfortable with CCAP continuing to be the lead agency, however without additional resources the agency is unable to absorb the cost.

Regardless, a number of opportunities to address potential unmet transportation needs were identified.

The following recommendations are suggested based on the findings. The report provides options for the Coalition to consider under each recommendation.

- A. Maintain and expand the Coalition
- B. Retain CCAP as lead agency
- C. Identify and pursue funding
- D. Increase public awareness of current services
- E. Demonstrate the possibilities
- F. Address major concerns and challenges

## 2 Background

In 1999, the Coastal Community Action Program (CCAP) received and administered a planning grant from the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT). The grant funds were used to build a coalition of stakeholders interested in coordinating transportation resources in Grays Harbor County, and to develop a coordinated transportation plan.

CCAP contracted with the Community Transportation Association to assist with the development of the plan. In 2002, the ***Coordinated Transportation Plan: Improving Access in Grays Harbor County*** was published and distributed to the Grays Harbor County Coordinated Transportation Coalition.

After the development of the plan, CCAP contracted with FLT Consulting, Inc. to:

- Interview stakeholders and assess the feasibility of implementing a coordinated transportation plan in Grays Harbor County
- Prepare a report with interview findings and recommendations for appropriate next steps
- Facilitate two meetings of the Grays Harbor County Coordinated Transportation Coalition

This report provides findings from the stakeholder interviews and recommendations on how the Coalition should proceed.

### 3 Approach

Stakeholder interviews were conducted in April and May of 2002. The majority of interviews were conducted in person, however several were conducted over the phone.

Interview participants were chosen based on the transportation services performed in the community, transportation need, and previous participation in coalition meetings.

A standard list of questions was developed prior to meeting with participants, but the interviews were informal and discussion varied depending upon the interview participant.

The findings and recommendations in this report will be presented to the Grays Harbor County Coordinated Transportation Coalition on May 15, 2002 from 10 am to 12:00 pm at the offices of the Coastal Community Action Program in Aberdeen, WA. The Coalition will meet again on June 19, 2002 at the same time and location to discuss and agree upon a plan of action.

### 4 Interview Participants

Representatives from the following 18 agencies were interviewed. Contact was made with the Quinault Tribe, but a meeting time was unable to be arranged.

<b>Stakeholder Agency</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
Aberdeen/Hoquiam Cooperative	Ron McCarty	Executive Director	May 1
Catholic Community Services	Mike Curry	Executive Director	April 25
Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce	Leroy Tipton	President	May 1
Ocean Shores Chamber of Commerce	Barbara Smith	Executive Director	April 15
Coastal Community Action Program	Troy Colley	Executive Director	April 25
Coastal Community Action Program	Craig Dublanko	Finance Manager	April 25
Coastal Community Action Program	Roxanne Jackson	RSVP Coordinator	April 25
DAV	Thelma Harris	Commander	April 2
DAV	Curt Kelly	Driver	April 2
Department of Social and Health Services, Regional Office	Karen Klinger	CSO	April 17
Department of Social and Health Services, Regional Office	Steve Hall	WorkFirst	April 17
Grays Harbor County	Dan Wood	Commissioner	April 25
Grays Harbor Housing Authority	Shelly Wood	Program Manager	April 10
Grays Harbor WorkSource	Charles Sunberg	Program Manager	May 1
Grays Harbor Transit	Dave Rostedt	General Manager	April 10
North Beach School District	Stanley Pinnick	Superintendent	April 15
North Beach School District	Doug Moore	Transportation Manager	April 15
Ocean Shores Senior Center	JoAnn & Fred Balmer	Representatives	April 15
Ocean Shores Senior Center	Herb Pember	Treasurer	April 15
Olympic Area Agency on Aging (O3A)	Jean Davies	Manager	April 10
Paratransit Services	Tom Young	General Manager	May 1
Quinalt Resort and Casino	Debbie Martin	Manager	May 1
Regional Planning Council	Vicki Cumming	Manager	May 1
Tours Plus	Jill Park	Manager	April 17

## 5 Findings

Assessing the feasibility of implementing coordinated transportation in any community is evident by evaluating the following seven criteria:

- A clear vision and desire to reach it
- Adequate sponsorship or leadership
- Adequate resources
- The right people at the table
- An understanding of transportation needs
- Opportunities to coordinate transportation
- An understanding of challenges/issues and a willingness to address them

Based on the stakeholder interviews, the feasibility of implementing coordinated transportation in Grays Harbor County was rated by these criteria.

A high rating is indicated by a “green light”, and means that conditions are optional for moving forward. The medium rating is indicated by a “caution sign”, and means that some work is needed before progressing further. A “stop sign” indicates a low rating, which means that significant work is needed and that activities should stop until the issue(s) can be addressed.

The ratings are subjective and not based on a scientific method.

High



Medium



Low



### **Is there a clear vision and a desire to reach it?**

While a very clear mission statement has been developed by the Coalition (provided under the Appendix), a wide disparity exists between stakeholder views of what coordinated transportation should look like, or if it should be pursued at all. Approximately 70 percent of those interviewed believe coordinated transportation is an idea with merit, and the remaining 30 percent see it as an expensive proposition with no funding.

The following opinions from stakeholders illustrate the variety in vision:

- No changes are needed; needs are being met.
- Don't need to be coordinated; just provide funding to meet unmet needs.
- Develop a centralized trip information center.
- Develop a centralized call/brokerage center with web-based, ride-planning software for non-Medicaid trips (Hybrid model).
- Combine Dial-A-Ride and Medicaid dollars; coordinate the trips through a broker (Brokerage Model).



### **Is there adequate sponsorship or leadership?**

Most all interview participants referred to CCAP or Grays Harbor Transit as the logical agency to lead any coordinated transportation efforts. CCAP has the highest level of interest in being the lead agency, however is concerned about the sustainability of funding and would be unable to absorb the responsibilities without funding. The transit agency is not willing to be the lead agency due to the same sustainable funding concerns. Other agencies noted as possible leads were the Chamber of Commerce, Catholic Community Services, and the Council of Governments (as a lead agency for administration).



### **Are there adequate resources?**

The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) has provided funding to the Coalition for coordinated transportation planning. However, the agency has limited to no demonstration and implementation dollars over the next 12-month period (July 2002 – June 2003). New funding opportunities may arise through federal grant opportunities such as the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant or ISTEA. If the state transportation funding ballot measure passes this fall, new funds for special needs transportation would be available. These potential opportunities would not generate income for coordinated transportation until next year. Other funding opportunities could come from businesses serving the community, in particular resorts, hotels, and restaurants in the Ocean Shores area.



### **Are the right people at the table?**

The majority of key stakeholders are participating in the Grays Harbor Coordinated Transportation Coalition. However, several organizations or agencies were noted as being potential stakeholders but either is not aware of or actively participating in coordination activities. They are the VFW, Tri-City Taxi, the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Paratransit Services (the Medicaid broker), Harbor Point, community clubs (e.g. Lions Club), major employers, churches, senior residential centers, home health nurses, and schools.



### **Is there an understanding of transportation needs?**

Many of the interview participants commented on unmet transportation needs, but were unsure of the “true” need or potential volume. In general, however, the following transportation needs were identified by many as significant:

- Out of county transportation, especially for specialized medical services (Seattle; Olympia; Tacoma; Lakewood; Aberdeen).
- Transportation for resort, hotel, and restaurant employees from Aberdeen/Taholah to Ocean Shores.
- Transportation for residents in remote areas (Queets, Westport, Wishkah, Moclips).
- Senior transportation.
- Transportation for people with wheelchairs at the North and South beaches.
- More qualified drivers (both paid and volunteer).
- Increased public awareness of existing transportations services.
- Other comments: Need for overlapping circular routes, need for schools to help parents with their transportation needs; need for transit station in Ocean Shores; transportation within Ocean Shores and to/from marina.



### **Are there opportunities to coordinate transportation?**

A number of opportunities to coordinate transportation were identified. They include:

- Coordinate all of the different transportation listings in file cabinets into one Transportation Directory.
- Coordinate marketing and public awareness efforts.
- Coordinate transit, social service, resort shuttles and taxi services to/from Aberdeen and Ocean Shores.
- Coordinate Aberdeen/Hoquiam School District vehicles and drivers during summer and off-hours to provide wheelchair transportation for Medicaid trips.
- Coordinate transportation needs of tourists in Ocean Shores with the North Beach School District.
- Coordinate Dial-A-Ride and Medicaid trips.



**Is there an understanding of challenges/issues and a willingness to address them?**

Participants have a clear knowledge and concern regarding the challenges of coordinating transportation. The commitment to overcome these challenges is questionable given the lack of clear vision and resources. Challenges and concerns identified include:

- Lack of stable funding
- Liability and safety issues
- Not sure if the need or ridership level is high enough to warrant cost of major changes
- How to ensure a fair distribution of trips between and among public and private transportation providers
- Not comfortable with putting general public on school buses with children
- How to recoup the replacement costs for school buses if used for community transportation
- How to effectively coordinate when funding formula for school buses do not encourage coordination
- How to maintain dignity of vulnerable riders when grouping trips
- Potential for increased paperwork if billing isn't streamlined
- Start-up challenges –how to manage general confusion

## 6 Recommendations

### **A. Maintain and expand the Coalition**

The Coalition should continue to meet as soon as possible to get clarity on direction and vision for coordinated transportation in the county. Regardless of outcome, it is recommended that the group periodically meet in the future to provide the opportunity for transit, school, and social service providers to formally and informally coordinate services. Depending upon the direction taken by the Coalition, additional participants should be recruited.

- Option A-1: Agree on a short and long term vision for coordinated transportation in Grays Harbor County. Sign a Statement of Intent documenting participant agreement with the vision.
- Option A-2: Recruit additional stakeholders to participate if appropriate. Potential participants include: the VFW, Tri-City Taxi, the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Paratransit Services (the Medicaid broker), Harbor Point, community clubs (e.g. Lions Club), major employers, churches, senior residential centers, home health nurses, and schools.
- Option A-3: Break the Coalition into workgroups around specific tasks when and if appropriate. Workgroups should meet more frequently than the Coalition to achieve the task objectives.

### **B. Retain CCAP as lead agency**

The current lead agency for administering the ACCT grant is the Coastal Community Action Program (CCAP). Given stakeholder desire to retain CCAP as the lead agency--and CCAP's willingness and ability to play that role, the Coalition should consider retaining this agency as the lead for implementing coordinated transportation activities.

- Option B-1: Retain CCAP as the lead agency to administer demonstration and implementation grants from ACCT and other sources.
- Option B-2: Consider designating the Council of Governments as the lead agency for administering the grants, and passing-through dollars to CCAP to provide coordinated transportation services.

### **C. Identify and pursue funding**

Without funding, coordinated transportation will not be able to happen in Grays Harbor County. Funding is primarily needed for staffing resources to manage and implement coordinated transportation, as well as increasing public awareness about mobility options. The Coalition needs to identify potential funding sources and partners, and aggressively pursue them.

- Option C-1: Use the remaining ACCT planning dollars for demonstration purposes; and apply for ongoing ACCT support.
- Option C-2: Apply for Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant funds to fund transportation for low-income individuals to employment opportunities in Ocean Shores. Potential partners are CCAP, Quinault Resort and Casino, other major hotels and resorts in Ocean Shores, Council of Governments, Grays Harbor Work Source, DSHS WorkFirst, Ocean Shores Chamber of Commerce, Paratransit Services, and Grays Harbor Transit.
- Option C-3: Research the possibilities of using ISTEA grant dollars for funding coordinated transportation. Partner with Council of Governments, CCAP, and Grays Harbor Transit.
- Option C-4: Work with the Council of Governments to research and apply for other grants.

### **D. Increase public awareness of current services**

Many of the interviewed stakeholders believed that transportation needs could be met if more people were aware of the current available services. The Coalition should cooperatively work together to increase public awareness of current mobility options.

- Option D-1: Develop and implement a communication plan.
- Option D-2: Coordinate marketing plans between transit and social services agencies to effectively communicate the mobility options available (e.g. Dial-a-Ride, RSVP, CCS, Medicaid, veteran's, private companies). Potentially use Channel 6 to broadcast information.
- Option D-3: Develop a transportation directory or "wallet" card. Work with social service agencies and chambers to distribute.
- Option D-4: Designate an agency to be the central point of contact for community transportation information.

### **E. Demonstrate the possibilities**

Opportunities for coordination exist in the community. The Coalition should identify which opportunities best meets the needs of the community and act upon them.

- Option E-1: Raise \$50,000 or more annually to meet unmet transportation needs. Designate a centralized point of contact to provide trips to people without transportation assistance.
- Option E-2: Train Community Jobs participants to be employable transportation operators by driving WorkFirst recipients to employment-related activities. (e.g. Pierce and Thurston County)
- Option E-3: Coordinate and fund Medicaid trips with out-of-county medical needs for non-Medicaid eligible individuals.
- Option E-4: Hire school bus drivers and vehicles in Ocean Shores to provide community transportation during the summer.
- Option E-5: Coordinate transit and school bus driver training through the Aberdeen/Hoquiam School Transportation Co-Op.
- Option E-6: Review common destinations points between Grays Harbor Transit and Medicaid. Study feasibility of grouping Dial-A-Ride and Medicaid trips.
- Option E-7: Address Medicaid wheelchair needs by using Aberdeen/Hoquiam Transportation Co-Op school buses during off-hours and the summer.
- Option E-8: Demonstrate coordinated call center/brokerage by coordinating trips to/from the Aberdeen area and Ocean Shores.

### **F. Address major concerns and challenges**

The Coalition should prioritize and address the major concerns and challenges facing coordinated transportation. Addressing the funding issue is mandatory. Other potential focus could address useage questions, liability and safety concerns, and fairness issues.

- Option F-1: Conduct a survey in Ocean Shores area and/or the Aberdeen/Hoquiam/Cosmopolis area to assess the potential usage of coordinated transportation services. Partner with the city utility department to insert the survey in utility bills.
- Option F-2: Work with the ACCT School/Community Transportation Workgroup to address liability and safety issues of using school buses as public transportation.

- Option F-3: Develop minimum driver and vehicle standards for transportation providers providing transportation to different population groups (e.g. transportation children v.s. the general public).
- Option F-4: Identify how trips would be fairly distributed between public and private providers, if trips are brokered.
- Option F-5: In cooperation with school districts, recommend an alternative school bus funding formula that encourages transportation coordination.

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# Appendix

## Grays Harbor Coordinated Transportation Coalition Mission Statement

The Grays Harbor Coordinated Transportation Coalition is dedicated to creating a model coordinated transportation system that serves all people with special transportation needs, efficiently uses all traditional and non-traditional community transportation resources, is easy to access regardless of who needs the ride or is paying for the ride, is integrated and interdependent, and contributes to a livable community, a vital economy and a sustainable environment.