

North Central Pennsylvania Regional Public Transportation Needs Assessment

Discussion Paper – Alternative Transit Improvement Strategies

February 3, 2011

Prepared by



Alternative Service Improvement Strategies

Introduction

This discussion paper presents a series of alternative transit improvement concepts that were prepared based on knowledge gained from previous study analyses including the community characteristics analysis and the quantitative and qualitative analysis of potential transit demand across the region. The intent of this document is to provide a wide range of alternatives, at the concept level, for consideration and prioritization by the study task force. It is important to focus available resources on the alternatives that are viewed as having the best chance of (a) addressing the highest priority needs, (b) gaining the support of key stakeholders and policy makers, and (c) being implemented. Therefore, taskforce guidance is requested regarding which items should be designated as a priority for potential inclusion in the Plan and subject to further analysis and development that will include estimated costs and potential funding sources. The remaining items will not be analyzed further as part of this study, but they can still be included at the end of the report for possible reconsideration in the future if needs, regional priorities, institutional dynamics or funding prospects change.

The alternative strategies are designed to remedy current deficiencies and exploit opportunities for the future. There was a conscious attempt to include a wide range of types of improvements encompassing:

- short range (1-3 years), medium (3-6 years) and long range (beyond six years)
- both institutional matters and service-level improvements
- traditional fixed route service, demand responsive service and other options that rely on making better use of private vehicles, and
- varied geographic focus such as local, intra-regional and inter-regional.

There will be some duplication evident as the alternatives are reviewed since (a) the bolder initiatives (e.g. Establish a Regional Transportation Authority) may include discussion of service improvements that are also described as stand-alone alternatives, and (b) alternative approaches are offered to address certain identified needs such as for the Rt. 11 and Rt. 15 corridors. For the most part, the alternatives are not mutually exclusive and a mix of the various strategies will likely be included in the plan.

A blank template is included at the end for taskforce members to advance new proposals that they feel merit the consideration of the taskforce.

The next page provides a brief explanation of the terms used to describe the alternatives.

Category(ies): Indicates whether the proposal deals with organization, coordination of services, service enhancement, new service, new program etc.

Identified Need: The basis for the proposal e.g. What is the need or the “problem” that the proposal is attempting to address?

Discussion: A concept-level overview of what is being proposed and, in some instances, giving examples of where this type of proposal has been implemented in other parts of the Commonwealth.

Implementation/Time Frame: The proposals have been categorized into three categories: short (1-3 years), mid (3-6 years) and long term (beyond 6 years). The assigned time frames reflect various factors including:

- revisions to existing versus entirely new programs or services
- institutional complexity including the number and type of entities involved and the likelihood of obtaining the necessary buy-in
- lead time required to plan and properly execute a transition
- whether new funding would be required and the relative amount of funds required.

Parties Responsible: This section indicates the key parties that would be responsible for implementation. It may include one or more existing agencies as well as new entities that may not currently exist.

Probable Funding Implications: A general assessment as to whether new funding would be required and the relative amounts that would likely be involved. Also important is the source of these funds in terms of local, state and federal programs. For the near term, funding at all levels of government is expected to be very constrained. Cost estimates and potential funding sources will be prepared in the next phase of work for the selected priority alternatives

Other Considerations: This section provides additional information on the proposal that is not covered in the above categories, to help explain the proposal and/or the steps necessary to achieve implementation.

More than a dozen strategies have been identified which range from relatively modest changes to major expansion of service. To an extent, there is some duplication in the strategies since the most ambitious proposals call for several services to be operated. To be sure that smaller scale projects are considered, some strategies call for a single enhanced or new service. The initial set of strategies is listed below. The assigned numbers are for reference only.

1. Regional Public Transportation System
2. Regional Coordination Council
3. Establishment of a Regional Transportation Broker

4. Transportation Management Association (TMA)
5. Evening and Weekend Service Expansion
6. Centralized Resource Directory
7. Improved Service Convenience
8. Taxi Subsidy Program
9. Accessible Taxi Vehicles
10. Carpool/Vanpool Services
11. Car Sharing Program
12. Previous Transportation Proposals
13. Intra-Regional Commuter Bus Service
14. Beyond-the-Region Subscription Commuter Bus Service
15. U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 – Regional Connecting Bus Service
16. Local Community Bus Routes with Deviation
17. General Public Rural Demand Responsive Service
18. PennDOT Human Service Transportation Coordination Pilot Project
19. Special Event/Special Purpose Transportation Service
20. Non-Motorized Options – Bicycling Programs

The remainder of this discussion paper presents the description of each of the strategies, in the template format, and the results of the Study Taskforce rankings of the various proposals completed at the Taskforce meeting on January 25, 2011.

#01 - Regional Public Transportation System

<p>Category(ies): Organizational/New Service /Service Enhancement</p>
<p>Identified Need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a regional network of public transportation connections along major corridors, between various communities, and between population centers and major generators. • Available and affordable public transportation service. • More consistency across the region in policies, service levels, fares, etc.
<p>Discussion: It is unlikely that the existing collection of individual operators serving individual counties or pairs of counties can successfully address all identified needs solely through coordination efforts. One example of how another predominantly rural region addresses this need is the Area Transportation Authority (ATA) which serves a 5,100 square mile, five-county region in North Central PA consisting of Elk, Jefferson, Potter, Cameron and McKean Counties (limited service is also operated into Clearfield County). ATA operates an array of service types including, demand responsive human service transportation, local fixed-route transportation and fixed-route with deviation service, and a network of regional connection services. The authority is financed through system fares and funded provided by FTA, PennDOT, the Counties and various third-party sponsors of certain types of trips. The system has been in operation for over 30 years with start-up funding provided through a federal demonstration program which no longer exists. Another example is the Endless Mountains Transportation Authority (EMTA) which serves Bradford, Tioga and Sullivan Counties. Other possible approaches would be (a) one county take the lead on creating and managing a multi-county system, and (b) hire a private broker to manage, administer and deliver some or all regional services under the sponsorship and oversight of a regional board.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe : longer term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: A new regional body would likely have to be formed through local initiative. Governance is typically provided through a board appointed by the sponsoring entities. The sponsoring entities are typically responsible for providing local matching funds required to qualify for federal and state grant funding.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs of a regional nature get addressed • Political boundaries, within the region, should become transparent to users. • Consistency in service standards, levels of services, fares, amenities, etc. • Potential efficiencies with a regional system • Consistent with latest PennDOT directions
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Considerable resources are already being expended that could be applied to a regional system. Some economies could be realized but a new network of regional connecting services would likely require additional funding to achieve.</p>
<p>Other Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires the collaboration and cooperation among the counties and yielding of some control to the regional authority. • Sharing of local funding responsibilities can be difficult to agree on. • If one or more counties decide not to participate, it is not practical to operate a multi-county system serving non-contiguous counties.

#02 - Regional Coordination Council (RCC)

<p>Category(ies): Organizational/Coordination</p>
<p>Identified Need: Current and previous planning studies, as well as public input identified numerous issues impacting the ability of the existing demand responsive transportation systems from providing more efficient and effective regional service to transit dependent population groups and the general public. Greater coordination between the region’s demand responsive systems in various functional areas – grants management, administration, procurement, public information, scheduling, reservations, operations, and funding – offers the potential for agencies to reduce costs, save resources and improve customer service.</p>
<p>Discussion: The existing public and human service transportation systems and various public and private transportation-related organizations within the six-county region could establish a Regional Coordination Council (RCC) to promote regional coordination strategies. The Council would be a voluntary organization and act in an advisory capacity with the transit systems retaining full control of their operations and decision making functions. While lacking direct authority, the RCC could perform several useful functions. It could convene regular meetings to improve communication among the counties, identify needs and opportunities, share information related to service planning, operations and funding, and provide an umbrella organization for human service transportation programs. A RCC could take many different forms since the number of agencies willing to participate as well as the functional areas that are coordinated may vary. Since the transit systems retain control of their organizations and can modify their services, offer new types of services, and/or expand the geographic area it serves, the RCC would provide a venue for resolving any conflicts and promoting coordination whenever possible. The North Central Pennsylvania Public Transportation Taskforce (NCPPTT) and/or the Pilot project work group could be used as a nucleus for the formation of the Coordination Council which would have a different mission than either of those groups.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe: Short Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: The NCPPTT could initiate the formation of the RCC and SEDA-COG could provide “in-kind” services such as meeting space and the provision of office supplies. However, the organizations that agree to participate in the Regional Coordination Council would enter into a cooperation agreement or memorandum of understanding that defined the goals and objectives of the council, funding roles and responsibilities of the participating organizations, management and operational principles, and any other appropriate rules and conditions. Once the goals and objectives of the Council have been clearly defined, working groups or committees could then be established to develop projects and/or action plans to address specific regional transportation priorities.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide consistent regional service delivery standards to manage expectations and ensure that all clients/customers in the region are provided equitable service. This could be achieved through coordinating fares, scheduling, public information, eligibility criteria, customer service, etc. • A RCC would be a suitable candidate to take the lead in developing a comprehensive transportation directory, standardizing and consolidating driver and staff training, discussing joint procurement opportunities, etc. • A stand-alone organization that functions well has the potential to enjoy greater visibility of its actions and legitimacy of its position on transportation issues. An informal network or a committee within some other organization that is not created with the primary function of addressing transportation coordination may not have the same visibility or legitimacy.

#02 - Regional Coordination Council (RCC) (Continued)

Probable Funding Implications: No new funding required. It is assumed that existing agencies would commit to participate in the forum and that staff involvement, meeting-related travel and miscellaneous costs would be covered with existing staff and existing budgets.

Other Considerations:

- A RCC would not change the participating agencies' structures or organization since they would continue to have primary responsibility for all functional areas. As a result, the ability of this model to make fundamental policy changes is limited to those areas which are informally negotiated between the agencies involved in the process.
- A RCC would be less effective if one or more existing demand responsive systems decide not to participate.

#03 - Establishment of a Regional Transportation Broker

<p>Category(ies): Organizational/Coordination</p>
<p>Identified Need: Similar to a Regional Transportation Authority, a centralized broker system could respond to policy changes and would be well positioned to expand service and meet new and emerging travel needs. This alternative would establish consistent operating and service standards with transportation service managed by a professional team of transit managers.</p>
<p>Discussion: Under a brokered system, a single organization would handle all reservations for demand responsive trips and prepare schedules for daily vehicle runs based on efficiency and other criteria. The broker would also be responsible for scheduling, procurement, contract management, customer registration, record keeping and accounting, service standards and customer service. There are also different options for the establishment of the broker. The counties could procure the services of an outside party, through and IFB or RFP, to act as the broker. Alternatively, one of the existing demand responsive systems could assume the responsibility of the broker either under contract with, or through designation by the counties. In some instances, one entity assumes the role of broker/manager and service provider. Clarion and Forest Counties, with PennDOT support, are currently moving toward changing from two individually operated systems to one coordinated system managed by a private-for-profit broker. Also, the PA Department of Public Welfare contracts with a private for profit broker to manage the MATP Program in Philadelphia.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe : Mid Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Existing transit systems and local government</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective voice in securing funds since it would serve a number of groups and constituencies. • Improves service delivery through consistent operating and service standards. • Regional transit needs are addressed. • Create efficiencies and lower costs through competitive bidding and by assuring the scheduling of the least costly, most appropriate method of transportation for a client. Cost savings could translate into increased service. • A broker with strong ties to local medical and human service providers can be valuable in promoting coordinated service for clients. • Consistent with latest PennDOT directions. • Transfers a substantial portion of the budgetary risk to the broker.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Considerable resources are already being expended that could be applied to a regional transportation broker. Although certain economies are expected to be realized, it is likely that some combination of local, state, and federal funding will be required to plan for and effect a transition. Local funding can include in-kind grants from area social service agencies and other non-profit organizations that could benefit from a brokered system.</p>

#03 - Establishment of a Regional Transportation Broker (continued)

Other Considerations:

- Requires multiple agencies/organizations to champion the broker concept and the support of local elected officials.
- Concerns over service quality, loss of control and client contact.
- If implemented, requires project management and oversight, cost allocation/reimbursement models and service delivery standards.
- A transition plan would be required and transition costs would be incurred.
- The transition could be a phased process to minimize risks and potential disruptions.
- If an outside party is hired as the broker, the lack of knowledge regarding the local environment and human service providers will result in a “learning curve” as that knowledge is acquired.
- Customers will potentially be dealing with new parties and practices which can be confusing for certain types of clients and/or impose more of a burden on their caregivers.

#04 - Transportation Management Association (TMA)

<p>Category(ies): Organizational/Service Expansion/Service Enhancement</p>
<p>Identified Need: Public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions identified a number of ideas to improve the availability and delivery of transportation services in the region. Several of these suggestions included developing alternative transportation services and support facilities (i.e., vanpools/carpools, employment transportation, ridesharing, park and ride facilities, car sharing, etc.) as well as increasing awareness of existing transportation services and improving the availability of overall quality of the information that is provided to the public.</p>
<p>Discussion: Ensuring that the public has easy access to timely and accurate information about available transportation services is an essential component of maximizing mobility and service utilization. This is particularly important in the region where transportation service is provided by a variety of organizations with different policies and procedures, service hours, and service areas. The creation of a Transportation Management Association (TMA) could provide a clearinghouse for information on existing services, as well as market, manage, and even implement various transportation services to address specific mobility needs. As an autonomous organization, a TMA has the ability to develop services that local governments may be unwilling or unable to provide. The services provided by a TMA can be designed according to the needs and expectations of the area in which it serves. An important role of a TMA would be to establish and oversee various transportation demand management concepts to increase transportation options, help provide basic mobility, and increase transportation affordability. Concepts include carpool/vanpool matching programs, car sharing, employer services, guaranteed ride home, trip planning, a single source of information, and improved marketing. An example of a successful local TMA is the non-profit Commuter Services of PA/Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership that includes business groups, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) representing Adams, Berks, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry and York counties. Commuter Services of PA serves as an information clearinghouse on available transportation services and programs, and provides alternative transportation services to meet mobility needs.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe : Mid Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: A TMA is typically a public-private partnership created by a consortium of local municipalities, government organizations, business groups, transit agencies, major institutions (i.e., colleges and medical centers) and large employers to address transportation issues and encourage the use of alternative transportation options.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A TMA can assist employers in establishing commuter benefit programs that provide employees with subsidies and tax breaks that apply to work-related trips taken on public transportation. The Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit program governed under Section 132[f] of the IRS Code provides a tax incentive to employers for employees who commute to work on a publicly or privately owned or operated transit vehicle. Commuter benefits offered by an employer are exempt from withholding and employment taxes and are not reported as taxable wages on the employee's W-2 form. They are also deductible as an employer-provided benefit from the employer's gross profit. Businesses can set aside an employee's pre-tax income amount, up to a maximum of \$230 per month, for commuting expenses on a qualified vehicle. • A stand-alone organization has the potential to enjoy greater visibility of its actions and legitimacy of its position on transportation issues. An informal network or a committee within some other organization that is not created with the primary function of addressing transportation may not have the same visibility or legitimacy.

#04 - Transportation Management Association (TMA) (Continued)

Probable Funding Implications: TMA membership fees, local funding, PennDOT (i.e., Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative), federal grants, in-kind contributions and payment for services rendered. A non-profit TMA has access to a greater variety of funding opportunities. For example, it may be necessary to be a nonprofit corporation in order to apply for various grants. Further, corporations' in-kind contributions and payment for services rendered to recognized nonprofit organizations may qualify as a tax deductible expense. Commuter Services of South Central PA, mentioned above, uses Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funding to support their program costs. The consultant team has preliminarily determined that no CMQ funding is available to the communities included in the study area.

Other Considerations:

- Would require a private sector “champion” who believes in the need for a TMA and who can use its influence to expand its membership. An initial committee or board is also needed to get the TMA started.
- Challenge to promote member interest and TMA services, document the TMA’s effectiveness, maintaining stable, ongoing funding and developing and maintaining services.
- Groups considering forming a TMA in the region would likely need to conduct preliminary planning to identify the existing conditions under which a TMA would be formed, assess the applicability of the TMA concept to local conditions, and perform preliminary organizational, service, and financial planning.

#05 - Evening and Weekend Service Expansion

Category(ies): Service Expansion
Identified Need: A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions indicated the need to provide affordable general purpose transportation during evenings and on weekends.
Discussion: With the exception of the RVT and STEP systems in Lycoming County, none of the other existing transit systems in the region operate evening service. Further, LATS is the only system outside Lycoming County that operates service on Saturday, with this service providing only three round trips in the morning and early midday hours. The benefits of service expansion would provide transit-dependent groups as well as the general public access to more employment opportunities and more access to shopping and other essential services. Existing systems could offer contractual service to local universities, organizations or municipalities to provide evening and/or weekend service.
Implementation Timeframe: Short Term
Parties Responsible for Implementation: Transit Systems
Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases the level of mobility in the region, which is one of the primary objectives of this study.
Probable Funding Implications: Would likely require additional local, federal and state financial assistance, which could be supplemented with farebox revenue.
Other Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of sufficient densities and demand to warrant service. • Lack of funding to pay for additional service. For example, it may be difficult to obtain a local match to access federal funds.

#06 - Centralized Resource Directory

<p>Category(ies): Awareness/Customer Service</p>
<p>Identified Need: Increasing awareness of existing public and human service transportation services throughout the region.</p>
<p>Discussion: Input from the public outreach and stakeholder interviews indicated the need for improving the availability and quality of information that is provided to the public. In particular, there appears to be confusion on the part of the consumer in terms of services that are available, eligibility, how to access service, expectations of the services provided, etc. A lack of basic awareness and understanding is a barrier to people using and benefiting from public transportation. Since mobility needs are often regional in scope, this alternative would organize information regarding all available transit providers into a single place, where the rider or an agency representative could easily obtain essential information regarding eligibility, service hours, geographic coverage, etc. The information would be available in hard copy and web-based formats and would also be available via telephone. This directory could be developed out of the service inventories prepared as part of the coordinated plans recently prepared by the SEDA-COG and the Lycoming County Planning Commission, and could be among the first opportunities for the region to identify, understand and evaluate the variety of existing transportation services.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe : Short Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Best practice models in the transit industry suggest that directories are most effective when prepared by a reliable organization with a regional scope and the ability to partner with transportation providers, municipalities and/or counties. At this time, the organization best suited for this role is likely SEDA-COG. Institutional alternatives that are proposed in this study, such as a Regional Coordination Council or a Transportation Management Association (TMA), would be well suited to lead the develop of a comprehensive resource directory.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves access to both local and regional services through increased awareness and understanding. • Enhances mobility options for transit-dependent population and the general public by increasing awareness of all available public and private transit services and human service agency transportation. • Increases utilization of existing services with nominal additional investment. • Increased visibility for public transportation and its benefits among elected officials and policy makers. • Directories can be particularly useful in larger communities with a large number of public and private sector transportation resources.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Up to 80 percent of the cost of developing a transportation resource directory may be available through the Federal Section 5317 program, with the remaining 20 percent local match provided by local government, existing transit providers, and/or by local agencies and organizations.</p>
<p>Other Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The entity responsible for developing the directory would need to commit to updating and maintaining the directory for a specified period of time. • Care must be exercised to ensure that the directory or other materials are easy to use and understand, and that distribution channels and techniques maximize effectiveness. • Directories only alert consumers to the availability of a service provider; consumers and/or agency representatives must still inquire about eligibility and arrange for services.

#07 - Improve Service Convenience

<p>Category(ies): Enhance Existing Services</p>
<p>Identified Need: Improving public information, marketing, and passenger amenities to increase awareness and utilization of services.</p>
<p>Discussion: Input received from the public outreach effort indicated that some of the existing transit systems, particularly LATS, should become more user friendly in terms of the quality of public information materials provided to the public, overall availability and quality of passenger amenities and more options for payment of fares. Examples may include improving the readability and comprehension of route and schedule brochures, adding properly marked signage and passenger amenities at dedicated bus stops, and ensuring that bus stop locations can be safely and easily accessed by all members of the community. The former is fairly easy to accomplish and could entail adopting best practices of peer transit systems in revising various materials such as published route and schedule information that is more user-friendly for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. For example, using large, bold fonts and color coded maps with contrasting primary colors indicating the different routings would be beneficial. This might also be a candidate for cooperation with a marketing professor/grad student from a local college or university that would produce multiple benefits including practical experience for students, establishing a cooperative relationship between the provider and the educational institution, better understanding of available transit services among college students, and no or low-cost to the transit system.</p> <p>Some transit systems place adhesive stickers denoting a bus stop on the back of other municipal signs (i.e., no parking, etc.), or use plastic wraps that are placed around utility poles. These bus stop sign suggestions are relatively inexpensive to install and easy to remove if funds for more permanent signs became available. Providing passenger amenities and accessibility improvements is more expensive and presents a higher degree of difficulty due to funding constraints and the need to cooperate with local government. Passenger amenities at dedicated bus stops should include benches, shelters, and lighting. Accessibility improvements may include removing barriers on sidewalks, improving or adding sidewalks, adding curb cuts, or adding pedestrian crossing and signals.</p> <p>Fare payment methods could be expanded to include multi-ride tickets and/or monthly passes which would be more convenient for passengers while decreasing driver distraction and potentially providing a more stable revenue stream for the system.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe : Short Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Many of the comments regarding public information and passenger amenities were directed towards LATS in lower Northumberland County. Accordingly, LATS and Northumberland County would be responsible for making these changes.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in consumer comprehension of available services will encourage greater levels of transit utilization by seniors, persons with disabilities and the general public. • Accessibility improvements will increase mobility and travel options, especially for populations served by LATS in lower Northumberland County.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Costs are expected to be relatively minor and could be covered through the operating budget or possibly through a modest grant from PennDOT coupled with local matching funds or in-kind services.</p>

#07 - Improve Service Convenience (Continued)

Other Considerations:

- Transit systems such as LATS do not control rights-of-way and lack authority to make improvements.
- Physical improvements are expensive and require commitment from local authorities.
- Transit shelters or bus stop signs could potentially be procured through a piggyback purchase arrangement with a larger transit authority.

08 - Taxi Subsidy Program

<p>Category(ies): Service Expansion</p>
<p>Identified Need: Provision of evening, weekend, and same-day paratransit service that is generally not provided by existing demand responsive systems.</p>
<p>Discussion: A sponsoring entity (transit provider, human service agency, TMA, etc.) would establish an agreement with a taxi company or companies to provide subsidized transportation service to eligible individuals through the use of vouchers. This program could be restricted to agency clients or program participants, but could also be made available to the general public if a source of funding is available for that purpose. The rider would pay a nominal fare and the sponsoring entity would provide a subsidy toward the fare. If the taxi fare for the trip is more than the passenger fare plus the subsidy, the rider would be responsible for the balance. After the trip is served, the sponsoring entity would reimburse the taxi company for the subsidized portion of the trip. Another option under this model could be to allow the rider to travel to any origin and destination point within a defined geographical area for a nominal fare. The sponsoring entity would then pay the taxi company the difference between the set fare and the meter price.</p> <p>These strategies could utilize taxi services to fill gaps in service hours – especially in the evenings and on weekends – and could also offer the potential to provide same-day service. A greater reliance on taxi services can offer a cost-effective way to address a variety of trip needs, particularly where fixed route bus service is impractical or during times when demand is low.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe : Short Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: human service agencies, transit providers, TMA, etc. Providers or some other entity would have to enter into an agreement with the taxi companies, provide oversight and quality assurance and handle grant administration functions.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective for evening and weekend service and for unanticipated travel needs. • Effective in low density areas or during times when demand is low. • Provide same-day service. • Increases mobility options in the region for transit-dependent population groups and potentially for the general public. • Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions. • Can be advanced incrementally.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Would require new funding since these services are not currently being provided.</p>
<p>Other Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would require good communication between sponsoring entities and taxi operators • Lack of accessible taxi vehicles • Limited taxi coverage • Taxi companies may be unwilling to participate.

#09 - Accessible Taxi Vehicles

Category(ies): Service Enhancement
Identified Need: The need for accessible taxi vehicles was identified during the public outreach effort and stakeholder interviews. Accessible taxi services could supplement existing demand responsive systems by providing an option for passengers with disabilities, particularly individuals who use wheelchairs.
Discussion: Under this alternative, existing demand responsive transit systems could purchase accessible vehicles (i.e., ramp-equipped low-floor minivans) using FTA funds and local grants and lease them to taxi operators; or purchase vehicles with FTA funds and have the taxi company/taxi companies pay the local match. Accessible taxi vehicles would be an important component of the taxi subsidy alternative described above or could be implemented independent of a taxi subsidy program.
Implementation Timeframe : Short Term, depending on funding availability and sources
Parties Responsible for Implementation: Human service agencies, transit providers, TMA, taxi companies, etc.
Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would complement taxi subsidy program but could be advanced independently. • Increase mobility options by expanding the number of accessible vehicles in the region. • Could help fill in service gaps during the hours when existing providers do not operate.
Probable Funding Implications: Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some local costs could be offset if taxi companies agree to provide all or part of the local match.
Other Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxi companies may not be interested in the program. • Some type of local match will be required to access Federal or state programs. • The entity applying for grant funds will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate maintenance practices, insurance and eligible uses of the vehicles are being adhered to.

10 - Carpool/Vanpool Services

Category(ies): Service Enhancement
Identified Need: Public outreach and stakeholder interview feedback indicated the need to provide transportation services to employment and educational facilities in the region, with participants suggesting carpool and vanpool services and utilizing existing park and ride facilities as part of this program. These models can also address mobility needs in low density areas where conventional fixed route bus service and general public demand responsive transit service are not financially feasible. Carpool and vanpool matching programs could be part of a larger transportation demand management program organized by the establishment of a TMA, or could be advanced by other appropriate organizations such as SEDA-COG.
Discussion: Carpooling is among the easiest and most flexible ways to share a ride. Carpoolers either pay a pre-established weekly or monthly fee or share actual costs plus parking fees. Carpool riders typically establish rules and etiquette to sustain the carpool partnership, such as timely notifications of absences and whether to eat or drink in the car. Formal arrangements, such as online carpool matching services, could be administered by a large employer or major institution (i.e., medical center or university), SEDA-COG, or a newly created Transportation Management Association (TMA). The Geisinger Medical Center in Danville recently implemented a carpool program for employees. The program is based on a computer program in which employees enter their home ZIP code, their work shift and how many miles they are willing to drive to meet up with a ride. The program then presents potential matches with contact information, at which point the employees are responsible for organizing the carpool, paying for fuel, and working out other details related to changes in work schedules or emergencies. The computer program also allows employees to calculate the cost savings to ridesharing. As an added benefit, employees using carpools are afforded preferred parking at the medical facility. In total, over 300 employees have signed-up looking to share rides. Vanpools are generally comprised of groups of 7–15 people to commute to work on a prearranged basis by van, with one of the riders agreeing to be the primary driver and 1–2 others serving as back-up drivers. Vanpool riders may meet at one designated location or at specified pick-up and drop-off stops along the way. The number of passengers, length of trip, insurance, gas, parking fees, and third-party fees, if applicable, will determine the actual cost per passenger. The driver usually travels for free and may also have access to the van on nights and weekends. Participants may all work at the same location or at nearby locations. There are three types of vanpool arrangements available: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employer-sponsored or operated vanpool programs in which the employer purchases or leases the vans and is responsible for overall program administration. Insurance is usually obtained through the company’s regular fleet policy.• Individually owned and operated vanpools in which the driver owns and maintains the van and coordinates the daily operation of the vanpool; rider fares are used to cover the purchase and maintenance costs.• Third-party vanpooling programs in which a private company or organization purchases or leases vans and then offers them to vanpooling groups for a fee that covers the cost of program administration, vanpool promotion, vehicle amortization, operating expenses and van maintenance. One such company is VPSI Inc. which is an international commuter transportation and mobility management company.
Implementation Timeframe : Short Term

10 - Carpool/Vanpool Services (Continued)

Parties Responsible for Implementation: A single vanpool program can be coordinated by an employer, while larger and more complex vanpool arrangements are often handled by an outside organization, such as a TMA or an existing organization such as SEDA-COG. The responsibilities for administering a comprehensive vanpool program would include applying for and managing grant funding, recruiting riders, approving and training drivers, determining routes, collecting monthly fees, developing marketing materials and publicizing the program, and monitoring and maintaining the program. The administering agency could choose to limit their role. For instance, they could agree to perform all of the facilitation roles but leave financial matters to the participants; or alternatively could simply market the program to private employers and provide technical assistance and sample documents to interested employers.

Benefits:

- Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public.
- Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.
- Provides alternative ride-sharing services to under-served areas and serves as a means of assessing the potential for traditional types of public transportation service.
- Improves access to regional services and employment opportunities.
- Provides mobility options for non-drivers, lower income residents (Welfare to Work), and the general public.
- Vanpools provide a more cost effective means of serving mid-range and long-distance commuters compared to conventional transit service.
- Less costly to public agencies than providing public transit service.

Probable Funding Implications: A ride matching and carpool program, which is relatively inexpensive to implement, should be undertaken first to determine demand and possible interest in developing more formal vanpool arrangements. The carpool program used by the Geisinger Medical Center could serve as a test case; the institution may even be willing to provide guidance for organizations or groups interested in establishing carpool programs of their own.

Other Considerations:

- Increases travel time and lacks flexibility in accommodating changes to working times/patterns. This could be addressed through a guaranteed ride home arrangement with a local taxi company.
- Reliability of the informal arrangements made between individuals which can result in passengers or drivers occasionally not showing up for pre-arranged trips.
- There must be a monetary incentive (e.g., high gas prices or restricted parking availability) and a sufficient number of persons with reasonably similar origins and destinations.
- Potential difficulty in collecting payments from riders.
- Potential for continuing turnover in ridership.
- Volatility in market forces such as gas prices and employment trends.

#11 - Car Sharing Program

<p>Category(ies): New Service</p>
<p>Identified Need: Public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions indicated the need to provide mobility for transit-dependent population groups to access employment opportunities, services, and maintain independence. There was also a need to provide transportation services to employment and educational facilities in the region. A car sharing program could be a stand-alone program or part of a larger transportation demand management program organized by a TMA or other appropriate organization.</p>
<p>Discussion: Car sharing is intended for occasional trips when a car is needed. The program allows individuals to use a pool of automobiles for a small annual fee and payment by the hour. Cars are reserved by phone or on-line and picked up from a designated parking space and returned to the same spot once the trip is complete. The hourly fee includes fuel and insurance costs. Car sharing programs can be for-profit, non-profit, or cooperative organizations and can have widely different objectives, business models, use of technology, and target markets. In most instances, car sharing programs typically share the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An organized group of participants that pay an annual fee to become members. • One or more shared vehicles. • A decentralized network of parking locations (“pods”) stationed close to homes, workplaces and/or transit stations. • Usage booked in advance. • Rentals for short time periods. • Self-accessing vehicles.
<p>Implementation Timeframe : Short Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Car sharing programs can be run by local governments, transit agencies, employers and businesses, universities and private-for-profit companies. Bucknell University in Lewisburg and Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove currently operate car sharing programs on their campuses for students and faculty.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public. • Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions. • Cheaper than owning an automobile. • Lessens parking demand. • Provides an additional mobility option. • Complements taxi service which is better suited to one-way trips.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Would be self-financed through membership and rental fees. May require nominal funding for start-up and program oversight.</p>
<p>Other Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding car-sharing. • Sufficient members to allow for reasonable user charges that fully cover program costs. • Regulatory obstacles such as securing dedicated parking spaces. • Works best in areas with relatively high densities; as a result, the implementation of this program may be best suited for select areas in the region such as Williamsport, certain municipalities along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors, or on college campuses.

#12 - Previous Transportation Proposals

<p>Category(ies): Service Expansion/New Service</p>
<p>Identified Need: A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions reiterated the need, identified in previous studies, to expand the availability of public and human service transportation service in the region, particularly along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors.</p>
<p>Discussion: Over the last decade a number of transportation planning studies and county comprehensive plans have been undertaken that either identified possible mobility concepts and/or made recommendations on specific services. Key findings or recommendations developed as part of planning documents included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The identification that a regional fixed route system would provide the greatest benefit to riders but would also exhibit the highest cost. • The recommendation for fixed route service between Berwick, Bloomsburg, and Danville and expanding the availability of the Bloomsburg University Shuttle to the general public. • A recommended plan for individual fixed route bus services in Lewisburg and Selinsgrove, with another route designed to connect the two municipalities. • Exploring the feasibility of developing deviated fixed route bus service using the service model operated by the Endless Mountains Transit Authority (EMTA); and • Explore the potential for transit service between Milton, Sunbury, and Lewisburg. <p>Based on data compiled from the Community Characteristics report, the logic of these routes are still valid from the perspective of service area characteristics and places served. However, the challenges that prevented their implementation are likely still present.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe : Mid to Long Term, but could be advance incrementally</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Transit systems and local government</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public. • Addresses unmet needs cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions. • The bus routes developed in the Union & Snyder Counties Fixed Route Public Transportation Feasibility Study were fully developed, making these route proposals ready for implementation.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through private sector contributions, and farebox revenue.</p>
<p>Other Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding to pay for new bus routes. It may be difficult to obtain a local match even if Federal and state funding sources are available. • Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service. The most recent fixed route bus service provided in the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridor area was eliminated in 2004 because of low ridership and the inability to obtain funding. • Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to manage and administer the services, which would include preparing grants, quarterly reports, and ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices and vehicle maintenance.

#13 - Intra-Regional Commuter Bus Service

Category(ies): New Service
Identified Need: A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for general public transportation service to access major employers and post-secondary institutions along the along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors.
Discussion: This transit service option would provide bus service during the weekday morning and afternoon peak periods between a limited number of strategically located bus stops (i.e., park and ride facilities) and major employment sites in the region, such as Bloomsburg, Danville, Lewisburg, and Williamsport. Conceptually, this service could consist of two minibuses that begin from opposite ends of the region – for example, one vehicle starting from the park and ride facility near Benton in Columbia County and the other vehicle starting from the park and ride facility in Hughesville in Lycoming County – and operate inbound along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors to serve major employment sites and/or municipalities with a high number of jobs. The two routes would terminate at the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville and then turn around and operate in the outbound direction back to their point of origin. A third vehicle operated by LATS would begin inbound service at a designated stop in Lower Northumberland County and operate northbound on Route 54 to Danville, at which point the route would turn around and operate along the same alignment back to lower Northumberland County. Based on the distances traveled by each vehicle, it is likely that the routes would operate limited peak period service, such as one or two round trips in the morning and again in the afternoon. To maintain convenient service and reduce the travel time, the routes would serve a limited number of designated stops. The services would be scheduled to arrive at the Geisinger Medical Center at approximately the same time so that passengers could transfer to another route for broader access to points throughout the region.
Implementation Timeframe: Long Term, but could be advanced incrementally
Parties Responsible for Implementation: Transit systems and local government
Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three routes would provide direct access to the Geisinger Medical Center – one of the largest employers in the region. Passengers could also transfer to another route to travel to other locations. • In the long term, the service could be expanded to evenings and weekends to accommodate workers employed during second and third shifts, or workers employed in industries that do not operate according to the typical eight hour weekday work period.
Probable Funding Implications: Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through, private sector contributions, and farebox revenue. JARC funding may be available if the focus of the service is on work trips.
Other Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated and should be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc). • Passengers that need to transfer between routes to reach their destination could not likely rely on services for work commutes due to the travel times involved. • Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service. Driving is faster and parking is generally easy to find and free. • Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing grants, quarterly reports, and ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices and vehicle maintenance.

#14 - Beyond-the-Region Subscription Commuter Bus Service

<p>Category(ies): New Service</p>
<p>Identified Need: The Community Characteristics report indicated that although most commuters in the region are employed in their county of residence or an adjacent county, the number of jobs in the region is in decline. Further, the loss of employment was a common theme noted throughout the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions. As a result, it is likely that employment centers in Dauphin County (i.e., Harrisburg), Centre County (i.e., State College), and Williamsport will become more prominent commuting destinations for the region's commuting labor force population.</p>
<p>Discussion: This alternative proposes operating inter-county commuter bus service during the weekday peak period between strategic park and ride facilities in the region and major employment centers such as Harrisburg and State College. To expedite service and increase rider convenience, the routes would ideally operate express service from the park and ride facilities or provide a limited number of stops at key locations in the region. This service could be operated on a subscription basis where a passenger receives a reserved seat by paying a weekly or monthly fare in advance. A subscription bus is usually started only when a sufficient number of passengers have committed to the service to ensure cost effective service. The service would likely operate one trip in the morning and one return trip in the afternoon.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe: Mid Term, but could be advanced incrementally</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Subscription service could be organized by employers, employees, or one of the existing transit systems in the region, with the transit system providing the vehicle and a driver paid an hourly rate or by shift. A private contractor could also operate the service.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transit-dependent individuals and the general public with improved access to major employment destinations. • Could be a more cost effective means of commuting than driving alone, especially if gas prices rise as they did in 2008.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Requires new funding. Financed through rider fares, private sector contributions, and possible state and federal operating assistance. Subscription services are generally not eligible for public transit grant programs.</p>
<p>Other Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The park and ride facilities should be paved and provide a safe waiting area for passengers. The waiting area should have a shelter, seating, and a list of existing transit services with their telephone number and/or e-mail address. • Unpredictable market forces that influence demand such as gas prices and employment trends. Could be more costly and less flexible than car pooling or van pooling. • May increase travel time compared to private automobile and lacks flexibility in accommodating changes to working times/ patterns. This could be addressed through a guaranteed ride home arrangement with a local taxi company. • Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance, and quality assurance. • A private operator could be contracted to provide the service but would have to use ADA accessible vehicles.

#15 - U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 – Regional Connecting Bus Service

<p>Category(ies): New Service</p>
<p>Identified Need: A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for some form of regularly scheduled public transportation service to operate between the population centers located along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors. This service is one alternative to provide access to employment sites, retail areas, and other essential services.</p>
<p>Discussion: The Community Characteristics report indicated that several communities located along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors – Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Sunbury, and Selinsgrove, among others – were among the highest ranking municipalities in the region in terms of transit need. However, because the overall size of each municipality is rather small and the distance between the municipalities along the two corridors is fairly significant, it is difficult and costly to operate conventional fixed route bus service in this area of the region. However, it is apparent from population and land use patterns that a linear route(s) linking various municipalities and activity centers along the corridors is appropriate. This route would use small vehicles and primarily operate along a defined alignment on an established schedule like regular fixed route bus service, but would also deviate to pick-up or drop off riders by request and then return to the defined route before the next marked bus stop. Passengers could board and alight anywhere on the route as long as the driver deems it safe to stop the vehicle. This type of service could reduce demand on the existing demand responsive services if the routes are easy to use for the elderly and persons with disabilities. Initially, this service could be operated on select weekdays depending on the area being served. For example, on Tuesday and Thursday, the route would serve the US-11 corridor between Berwick and Sunbury; then on Wednesday and Friday the route would operate between Danville and the population centers located along US-15 such as Lewisburg and Selinsgrove. Many factors must be taken into account when designing route deviation service, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer eligibility for deviated service (general public, persons with disabilities, other rider groups). Timing of requests for deviations (scheduled on the day prior to the trip, scheduled with minimal advance notice, given to the driver when the rider boards the vehicle). • Accommodation of deviation requests (How to provide deviation requests without negatively affecting fixed route service reliability). • Area to be served by deviations (maximum distance from the route, all or only portions of the route, only to/from specific key sites). A deviation of three-quarters of a mile would satisfy ADA service regulations. • The days and hours for deviated service (all days and hours that the route is in operation or only during certain times).
<p>Implementation Timeframe: Mid Term but could be advanced incrementally</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Transit Systems, local government, private sector</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public. • Would link many of the region’s major activity centers (i.e., retail centers, post-secondary schools, etc.) and transit supportive residential areas. • Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through private sector contributions, and fares.</p>

#15 - U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 – Regional Connecting Bus Service (Continued)

Other Considerations:

- Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated and should be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc). If park and ride facilities are utilized, these lots should be paved.
- Services operated than five days per week do not serve the work trip market.
- Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service.
- Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance, and quality assurance.
- Operation could be handled by the same entity or contracted to a private operator.

#16 - Local Community Bus Routes with Deviation

<p>Category(ies): New Service</p>
<p>Identified Need: A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for regularly scheduled public transportation service for the municipalities located along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors. This service is one alternative for providing access to retail areas and other essential services along the corridor.</p>
<p>Discussion: Another route concept involves operating local community shuttle service using small vehicles in areas with the highest population and population densities to provide point-to-point service between residential areas and major activity centers. This service concept would also operate along a defined route on an established schedule but would deviate to pick-up or drop off passengers and then return to the defined route before the next marked bus stop. The last stop would always occur at the same pre-determined time. Passengers could board and alight anywhere on the route as long as the driver deems it safe to stop the vehicle. This type of service could reduce demand on the existing demand responsive services if the routes are easy to use for the elderly and persons with disabilities. The Area Transportation Authority (ATA) operates a similar type of service in communities with at least 5,000 persons and a population density of at least 2,500 persons per square mile. The municipalities in the region that meet this criteria and are not currently served by regularly scheduled public transportation include Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Lewisburg, Milton, Selinsgrove, Sunbury, and Watsontown. It is possible that these communities could be divided into two separate service areas that could be served on alternating weekdays. For example, the municipalities along US-11 served Tuesday and Thursday and the municipalities along US-15 served Wednesday and Friday. Many factors must be taken into account when designing route deviation service, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer eligibility for deviated service (general public, persons with disabilities, other rider groups) Timing of requests for deviations (scheduled on the day prior to the trip, scheduled with minimal advance notice, given to the driver when the rider boards the vehicle). • Accommodation of deviation requests (would the service accommodate all requests, accommodate requests with either deviation or paratransit service, accommodate requests only if possible without negatively affecting fixed route service quality). • Area to be served by deviations (maximum distance or time from the route, all or only portions of the route, only to/from specific key sites). A deviation of three-quarters of a mile would satisfy ADA service regulations. • The days and hours for deviated service (all days and hours that the route is in operation; only during certain times, such as off-peak hours; only on certain days, such as weekends).
<p>Implementation Timeframe: Long Term but could be advanced incrementally</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Transit systems, local government, private sector</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public. • Service operated less than five days per week does not serve work trip markets. • Would serve many of the region’s major activity centers (i.e., retail centers, post-secondary schools, etc.) and transit supportive residential areas. • Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through private sector contributions, and farebox revenue.</p>

#16 - Local Community Bus Routes with Deviation (Continued)

Other Considerations:

- Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated and should ideally be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc).
- Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service.
- Would require an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance and service quality.
- Service could be provided by the same entity or contracted to a private operator.

#17 - General Public Rural Demand Responsive Service

<p>Category(ies): New Service</p>
<p>Identified Need: A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for affordable general purpose public transportation in the rural areas of the region for individuals who do not qualify for subsidized transportation through agency programs.</p>
<p>Discussion: As an alternative to trying to operate conventional fixed-route service in the rural areas where the density is low and travel patterns are dispersed, there are various models of general purpose demand responsive services that cost less than fixed route service while maintaining mobility within the community. Further, service capacity can easily be increased or decreased as demand changes. For example, a demand-responsive feeder service could be operated in which passengers make a prior day or same day reservation to be picked up at their door and taken to a transfer point to access the existing RVT and LATS systems or the proposed services, such as the U.S. 11 and U.S 15 corridor service and/or the community bus service. Another example is Demand Response Direct service which is a combination of fixed route and demand responsive service. Under this model, a transit vehicle would operate on a demand responsive basis within a defined geographical area for a particular amount of time and would then operate on a fixed route basis to a particular destination. In the reverse, the route would leave the terminal point, operate on a fixed route basis until it reached the demand responsive zone and would then operate on a demand responsive basis within the zone for a given period of time. Passengers in the defined geographical area could board or alight at any requested location in the geographical area with a reservation. Passengers traveling to and from locations along the fixed route portion could board at any bus stop. It is possible that the region could be divided into separate service areas and served on alternating weekdays. An example is the Area Transportation Authority's (ATA) Call-A-Bus service, which is an entirely demand responsive service that operates in zones covering the system's six county service area. The rider is charged per zone traveled. The service requires a prior day advance reservation and is available to anyone who wants to use the service.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe: Long Term but could be advanced incrementally</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Existing service providers and local governments, or a new entity.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an affordable mobility option for individuals residing in rural areas who don't qualify for subsidized transportation through agency programs. • Less expensive than operating conventional fixed route bus service. Using defined trip parameters (i.e., certain day or geographical area) provides the opportunity to group trips and provide more cost effective service • Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.

#17 - General Public Rural Demand Responsive Service (Continued)

Probable Funding Implications: Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through farebox revenue.

Other Considerations:

- Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated for any fixed route components of the service and should ideally be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc).
- Service operated less than five days per week does not address work trip markets.
- Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance, and service quality.
- Service could be provided by existing entities or contracted to a private contractor(s).

#18 - PennDOT Human Service Coordination Pilot Project

Category(ies): Service Expansion
Identified Need: The public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions identified the need for existing demand responsive systems to improve coordination to medical facilities, particularly the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville.
Discussion: PennDOT is currently funding a project to improve human transportation coordination with goals including improving operational efficiency and customer service. The Pilot Project will focus on travel oriented to the Geisinger Medical Center but could be expanded to the other facilities/areas if the pilot project proves successful.
Implementation Timeframe: Short Term
Parties Responsible for Implementation: Existing transit systems and local government
Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses several of the needs identified through the stakeholder outreach and public forums. • Improves the efficiency and effectiveness of human service transportation associated with the region’s largest attractor of this type of service. • Could serve as validation of a model for future expansion throughout the region. • PennDOT is supportive of the Pilot.
Probable Funding Implications: The Pilot Project is being funded 100% by PennDOT.
Other Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project is an initial step in the process of developing a regional coordinated human service transportation system and addresses many of the barriers presently preventing more coordination in the region. • The proposed Regional Coordination Council (RCC) would be ideally suited to take the lessons learned from this project and develop additional projects and action plans throughout the region.

#19 - Special Event/Special Purpose Transportation Service

<p>Category(ies): New Service</p>
<p>Identified Need: The public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions identified the need for some type of transit service to be available for special events in the region or to be available during certain times of the year such as the holiday season, summer fairs or when the local colleges are in session.</p>
<p>Discussion: Special event transportation service is often designed to accommodate particular market segments attracted to a special event or certain destinations using either fixed routes or deviated fixed routes. Service could link major activity centers (i.e., shopping centers or college campuses) with nearby parking facilities to mitigate traffic congestion, or could involve making existing college transportation shuttle buses open to the public during the fall and spring semesters through a cost sharing agreement between the colleges and the municipalities or activity centers desiring service. Another possibility could be to operate bus service between various municipalities at certain times of the year as an economic development tool to attract residents and visitors back to the region’s traditional downtown business districts. This service could be made more attractive and distinguished by operating rubber-tire, trolley replica vehicles.</p> <p>Special event services operated by River Valley Transit (RVT) could serve as potential models. These services include: the Williamsport Trolley (July through August), Williamsport Crosscutters Baseball (Friday nights after baseball game), and the Lycoming County Fair (operates during Lycoming Fair in Hughesville).</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe: Short Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: A public-private partnership that would distribute responsibilities for designing, operating and financing the service.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses an unmet need identified through the stakeholder outreach and public forums. • Could be a useful economic development tool to help local merchants and older downtown business districts in the region, especially during the holiday season or special events that bring large numbers of visitors to the area.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: A combination of local, state, and federal funding could be pursued along with significant contributions from local institutions and the private sector, such as local visitor bureaus. In addition, passenger fares could be utilized to help offset operating costs.</p>
<p>Other Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized nature of service would not be suited for work trips. • Would require designation of an entity(s) to be responsible for administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance, and service quality. • Service could be provided by existing entities or contracted to a private contractor(s).

#20 - Non-Motorized Options – Bicycling Programs

<p>Category(ies): Service Enhancement</p>
<p>Identified Need: Access to transportation could be enhanced if opportunities for bicycling from origin to destination, or to reach a bus stop was available. Further, intermodal connections and the development of bike paths and pedestrian trails will be reflected in the long range transportation plan currently being developed by SEDA-COG.</p>
<p>Discussion: The integration of public transportation and bicycling can include the installation of bike racks on all public transit vehicles and installation of bike racks for parking; signage to identify shared bike/auto-routes and to remind motorists to be aware of cyclists; educational and promotional activities; and infrastructure improvements such as widening roadway shoulders, designated bike lanes, installation of bike racks, and traffic calming measures. River Valley Transit (RVT) has bike racks on some of the buses in their fleet. Another could include developing bike-sharing programs serving the region’s college campus areas. Bike-sharing is becoming increasingly common at colleges and universities throughout the United States and can be designed in a variety of ways to suit local needs. For example, a person with a campus identification card could access a bike at kiosks placed throughout campus. A bike could be rented at one location and returned to a different bike kiosk located somewhere else on-campus or even somewhere off-campus. This program could be free and paid for through student fees or could be designed to charge users by the minute or hour the bike is in use.</p>
<p>Implementation Timeframe: Short Term</p>
<p>Parties Responsible for Implementation: Local colleges or agencies such as SEDA-COG or a newly formed TMA.</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycling is inexpensive and provides mobility options for people who do not have an automobile or access to public transportation. • Planning for bicyclists is supported by PennDOT and is included as a component of the Transportation and Land Use Toolkit prepared by PennDOT in 2007. • Consistent with SEDA-COG’s long range transportation plan.
<p>Probable Funding Implications: A combination of local, state, and Federal programs could be pursued to assist in bicycle infrastructure improvements. The costs of establishing a bike sharing program would be relatively modest and be paid for by the participating colleges and/or local municipalities.</p>
<p>Other Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical improvements to infrastructure are expensive and require commitment from local authorities. • Bike-sharing is best suited to college campuses and/or within specific municipalities where activity centers and residential areas are clustered together. • A temperate climate comprised of hot summers and cold winters can affect the convenience of bicycling as a viable transportation mode during these time periods.

Ranking of Alternatives

The alternatives presented above were discussed in a facilitated meeting of the Study Taskforce at its regularly scheduled meeting of January 25, 2011. The meeting included a brief presentation on each alternative, voting by taskforce members (each was asked to identify their top five choices), group discussion on the voting results and selection of six alternatives for further development.

The results of the voting exercise are presented in the table starting on the next page. The intent of the voting exercise was not to make the final determination of which alternatives should be advanced for further analysis, but rather to inform that decision-making process. After much discussion of the voting results, the Taskforce chose the following alternatives to be advanced for further evaluation and potential inclusion in the plan.

Alternative #1	Regional Public Transportation System
Alternative # 2	Regional Coordination Council
Alternative # 5	Evening and Weekend Service Expansion
Alternative # 6	Centralized Resources Directory
Alternative # 16	Local Community Routes with Deviation
Alternative # 18	PennDOT Coordination Pilot Project

With the exception of Alternative #18 – PennDOT Coordination Pilot Project, the chosen alternatives are those that received the highest number of votes. During the Taskforce discussion, a number of members indicated that they didn't vote for that particular alternative since they believed that it was being advanced regardless of the outcome of the ranking of alternatives but that they felt that it should definitely be included in the set of alternatives chosen for further evaluation.

Votes	Ref. #	Strategy	Type of Strategy				Timeframe		
			Organi- zation	Enhance	Expand	New	Short	Mid	Long
10	1	Regional Public Transportation System	√	√		√			√
10	2	Regional Coordination Council	√				√		
8	3	Regional Transportation Broker	√					√	
3	4	Transportation Management Association	√	√	√			√	
12	5	Evening and Weekend Service Expansion			√		√		
9	6	Centralized Resource Directory		√			√		
4	7	Improved Service Convenience		√			√		
3	8	Taxi Subsidy Program			√		√		
5	9	Accessible Taxi Vehicles		√			√		
6	10	Carpool/Vanpool Services		√			√		

Votes	Ref. #	Strategy	Type of Strategy				Timeframe		
			Organization	Enhance	Expand	New	Short	Mid	Long
1	11	Car Sharing Program				√	√		
0	12	Previous Transportation Proposals			√	√		√	
4	13	Intra-Regional Commuter Bus Service				√			√
1	14	Beyond Region Subscript Commuter Bus				√		√	
6	15	U.S. 11&U.S. 15–Regional Connecting Bus				√		√	
10	16	Local Community Routes with Deviation				√			√
5	17	Public Rural Demand Responsive Service				√			√
6	18	PennDOT Coordination Pilot Project			√		√		
7	19	Special Events/Special Purpose				√	√		
0	20	Non Motorized-Bicycling		√			√		

