

**Statewide Executive Summary  
of the  
South Carolina Regional Human Services Transportation  
Coordination Plans**



South Carolina Department of Transportation

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## **Executive Summary**

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The purpose of these plans is to ensure that federal requirements regarding coordination are satisfied as well as to assist the state's regions in their continuing efforts to develop an efficient and effective human services transportation network.

### ***Background***

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) created a requirement that a locally-developed, coordinated public transit/human service planning process and an initial plan be developed by 2007 as a condition of receiving funding for certain programs directed at meeting the needs of older individuals, persons with disabilities and low-income persons. Plans must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human service providers, as well as the general public. Complete plans, including coordination with the full range of existing human service transportation providers, are required by federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2008.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), through the consulting team of TranSystems/URS and in partnership with Councils of Governments (COGs) and interested stakeholders, has developed regional coordinated plans that meet the requirements of SAFETEA-LU and the Federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM). While at a minimum projects funded under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) formula programs for Sections 5310, 5316 and 5317 must be derived from a coordinated plan, the coordinated plans incorporate activities offered under other programs sponsored by federal, state and local agencies. The federal coordination initiative, called United We Ride, has identified over 60 federal programs in addition to those sponsored by the FTA which include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, Community Action (CAP), Independent Living Centers, and Agency on Aging (AoA) programs among others.

SCDOT has attempted to facilitate this by developing a plan in each region of the state and inviting all of the agencies that meet the letter and intent of this policy to the table and encouraging their participation throughout the plan development process.

### ***Purpose of the Plan***

Development and content of coordinated plans have been designed to be specific to the needs and issues of each region. The coordinated plans address intra- and inter-regional needs and issues, and in a manner that allows the COGs, concurrent with regional LRTP updates, to directly update the regional coordinated plan. Further, the coordinated plans have been developed in a

manner that allows the COGs to adapt and expand the plans to incorporate programs and initiatives specific to their region.

SAFETEA-LU also allows two significant changes to the standard procedures defined by previous legislation. Under the new regulations, project proponents are allowed to use dollars from other federal programs as match to FTA funds and expenses related to mobility management can be considered a capital expense. These are two significant changes that allow greater flexibility for budgeting and financing human service transportation.

### ***Development of the Plan***

Cognizant of the fact that different evolution of transportation coordination already exists within each region, SCDOT has endeavored to develop an individual plan for each of the ten regions in the state. The development process from region to region, however, was basically the same and was predicated on a series of three to four facilitated meetings among stakeholders in each region. The consultant team also conducted a survey of human service agencies and transportation providers and reviewed information from previous planning efforts around the State.

Each coordinated plan's development has, at a minimum, addressed the following:

- Assess and document transportation needs in each region for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with limited incomes;
- Inventory available services in each region and identify areas of redundancy and gaps in service;
- Identify and document restrictions on eligibility for funding;
- Identify and document short- and long-range strategies in each region to address the identified gaps in service, including mobility management strategies;
- Identify and document technological resources currently available and appropriate for coordination of transportation services;
- Identify and document coordination actions in each region to eliminate or reduce duplication in services and strategies for more efficient utilization of resources; and
- Document and prioritize implementation strategies to increase coordination of transportation services in each region.

Each plan was focused further on three basic steps:

1. Development of an inventory of services in the region as well as a sense of transportation gaps and needs.
2. Development of strategies and actions.
3. Development of the regional plan document that includes regional priorities of the targeted gaps in transportation to be addressed by projects submitted for FTA funding under Sections 5310, 5316 and 5317.

At each of these steps SCDOT and its consultant team met with representatives of each COG region to solicit input and feedback.

### ***General Findings***

Although the specifics of transportation needs from region to region differ greatly, the primary findings in the process indicate that the needs of each region can be classified under the following:

- Increase service (more days, hours, geographic coverage including rural areas)
- Targeting populations that may not qualify for existing programs (like Medicaid and TANF) but are still low/fixed income and have unmet transportation needs
- Access to jobs many of which are across county or regional boundaries
- Improve response time for return trips through centralized and/or real-time scheduling
- Coordinate fleet replacements and expansion in an effort to reduce capital costs
- Develop programs that increase the utilization of existing services
- Improve the distribution of information to the riding public, human service agencies about available services through the use of a mobility manager (this is underway in the Lower Savannah Region).
- Expense pooling program (fuel, insurance, training etc.)
- Address cost allocation among operators to facilitate greater coordination/cooperation

These issues constitute the commonalities among the regions, but the coordination plan development process did show significant differences in the primary transportation needs of each region. Given the differences in the provision of service and the different evolution of relationships among agencies from region to region, potential strategies to address these issues vary across the state.

All plans explored the need to insure the greatest efficiency with existing and needed resources through inter-agency coordination, while seeking to address gaps through service enhancement and expansion. One common strategy discussed in most every region was the concept of a mobility manager, designed to coordinate to varying degrees as a “one-stop-shop” the client intake, trip reservation, scheduling and vehicle dispatching among multiple agencies. Stakeholders in multiple regions also identified the need to provide greater outreach and education of public agencies and citizens alike about the level and type of transit service available.

Each plan does place the responsibility of developing actual projects to the human service agencies and transportation providers and for the COG to develop an evaluation process to identify which of these projects will receive funding.

## ***Evaluation Process***

The next step in the coordination plan process will be the development and implementation of an evaluation process that identifies the projects that warrant funding from year to year. SCDOT has worked with each COG in the development of an evaluation process based on the findings and the priorities identified in each respective plan. The State, as the designated recipient for small urban and rural funds, will maintain its role of oversight and continue to determine project eligibility for each program.

Developing project criteria is one way competing projects can be ranked in order of desired undertaking. In each regional plan examples of criteria were provided but it will be the responsibility of each COG to develop the criteria for the evaluation process specific to its region.

The evaluation of projects will center on:

- The level of coordination for each project, in terms of partnering agencies and the mix of matching funds;
- Consistency with the regional plan and its potential for addressing the gaps identified in the plan; and
- An assessment of the cost effectiveness of the project.

SCDOT has developed and provided template for the evaluation process that can be tailored to each region.