On November 25, 2014 the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) and the Alliance for Transportation Working in Communities (ATWIC) held an initial meeting to begin to develop a Coordinated Transportation Plan, with a total of 40 regional attendees. The meeting represented what is expected to be the first of many recurring meetings of the Alliance to advance human services transportation in the 10-county region and increase overall coordination amongst its members.

The main goals of the meeting were:

➢ **Creating a definition of "Coordinated Transportation"**

➢ **Defining "transportation" and "mobility" and the differences between the two**

➢ **Preliminarily identified the most important accessibility issues and perceived resources available to solve these issues**

Creating a definition of "Coordinated Transportation"

Participants were divided into five groups to develop potential definitions for "Coordinated Transportation" that will serve as a guiding principle for the Coordinated Transportation Plan (CTP). The core elements that emerged through the discussion included:

- Create an accessible, affordable, reliant, convenient, and when possible, efficient service to allow people to get to their destination

- Considers safety and accessibility (can people safely get to where they need to be to get transportation, including sidewalks, etc.)

- Counties and agencies share information

- Identifying gaps in service delivery and allowing services and resources to cross counties to meet individual needs

When asked to prioritize all of the potential definition elements for "Coordinated Transportation", participants tended to rate **extremely important**:

- Ensuring that transportation is accessible and safe to all individuals regardless of barriers.

- Addressing need for individuals to be able to utilize transportation across county lines

- Multiple providers and the county share information and work together to meet the transportation needs of an individual.

Participants were **less likely** to indicate that finding new transportation modes, flexibility in the system for last minute trips, and individual financially responsibility were important.

Defining "transportation" and "mobility"

To help guide the development of the CTP and determine the end goal, participants were asked what it means to provide transportation vs. what is means to provide mobility. Responses can be summarized in the general broad statements below:

What does it mean to provide transportation?

- Getting someone from point A to point B

- Transportation is the physical resource used to travel, ideally one that is safe and accessibly

What does it mean to provide mobility?

- Mobility is the ability to conduct your life without hindrance and by mode of choice that is safe.

- The ability to do something when want without planning days in advance

- Giving people options and teaching them to use them with flexibility to meet their needs

- Access – schedules, sidewalks – don't often think about how that affects an individual to

- Mobility is transportation that fits everybody (universal design) with transportation that works for anybody with regardless of needs

Accessibility Issues and Resources

At the end of the Alliance meeting, participants were asked to rank, in their professional opinion, the importance of a variety of accessibility issues to those they serve. Based on the outcomes, the most important recurring themes (in order) were:

1) **Funding**
2) **Evening and weekend transportation**
3) **Transportation cost to users**
4) **Transportation in non-urban areas**
5) **Connections between rural & urban areas**
6) **Transportation cost to agencies**
7) **Cross-county transportation**
8) **Transportation program regulations & restrictions**
9) **Length of shared ride trips**

Following the ranking of accessibility issues, participants where then asked to determine what level of resources have been, or are being, spent to solve this issues. The responses varied substantially based on the type of organization responding. The level of perceived resources used identified by the group are ranked below from most ample to leas:

1) **Funding**

2) **Transportation cost to the agency**

3) **Connections between rural & urban areas**

4) **Transportation cost to users**

5) **Cross-county transportation**

6) **Transportation program regulations & restrictions**

7) **Transportation in non-urban areas**

8) **Evening and weekend transportation**

9) **Length of shared ride trips**

It is important note that on every resource category, the overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that "some" resources were being expended, while very few indicated that either "ample" or "no" resources were being expended on these issues.

Next Steps

At the conclusion of the Alliance meeting, a series of next steps were identified.

➢ The CTP project team will work with the steering committee to develop a final definition of "Coordinated Transportation" to present at the next Alliance meeting

➢ Results of the ranking exercise will be further analyzed by organization type and based on responses to glean any additional information

➢ A summary will be produced of the results to guide the CTP and the next meeting of the Alliance as the project moves forward to identify gaps and other transportation issues that need to be solved in the region

On January 29, 2015 the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) and the Alliance for Transportation Working in Communities (ATWIC) held a second meeting to continue to develop a Coordinated Transportation Plan (CTP). In attendance were a total of 34 human service agency representatives, transportation providers, and other professionals who are interested in transportation accessibility.

The main goals of the meeting were:
- ➢ **Identify the Foundational Components of the Coordinated Transportation Plan**
    - ○ **Finalize "Coordinated Transportation" Definition**
    - ○ **Refine Access Barriers and Barrier Categories**
- ➢ **Begin to formulate Objectives and Solutions**
    - ○ **Establish Regional Coordination Objectives**
    - ○ **Identify Regional Coordination Solutions**

Identify the Foundational Components of the Coordinated Transportation Plan

The definition of "Coordinated Transportation" is an important component of the Coordinated Transportation Plan, and serves as an aspirational, vision-oriented statement that guides the development of actions in the CTP. As such, agreeing on a definition that Alliance members buy into is critical to the successful implementation of the CTP.

To create this definition, participants were shown a draft definition of "Coordinated Transportation" that was developed utilizing input provided at the Alliance meeting held on November 25, 2014 and refined by feedback provided by Steering Committee members on January 16, 2015.

The following was presented as the definition: *"Coordinated Transportation creates an integrated network of transportation services that provides, through successful collaboration and resource sharing, affordable, reliable, and accessible mobility for everyone."*

Participants then had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed definition. Participants used OptionFinder, an anonymous audience response polling system. They were asked to comment using a 3 point scale, "Yes" (this is the right definition), "Yes, But" (this is a good definition, but have some concerns or would like to change some words), or "No" (this is not at all the correct definition). The majority of participants (74%) responded "Yes", 21% responded "Yes, But", and 6% responded "No".

The following comments were shared:
- Change the word "creates" to the word "is" to reflect an actual definition.
- Change the word "creates" to the word "enhances", if coordination exists to some level; it is not being newly "created".
- The definition should be person centered.
- The definition says what you do and how you do it – if it continues to be redefined it will be from individual points of view; therefore does not need to be changed.
- The word "is" does not meet the needs of everyone, so it should stay "create".
- "Accessible" could mean physically, but it could relate to enrollment/connecting to the services.
- The word "coordinated" means avoiding duplication of services.
- There are a lot of providers but they don't coordinate – if truly coordinated, it would be flexible and could expand to meet the needs and would give options to meet individual needs.
- The current statements are positive and neutral.
- "Affordable" is a charged word – funding is based on the principle that everyone pays, the end user pays something even if just a small part – so who is it "affordable" for?
- If talking about perception from the public – "affordable" resonates both with end user and those that provide rides – transportation needs to be "affordable" to both the provider base and end user.
- If the plan is going to succeed there needs to be public and social service providers involved who are not present.
- "Affordable" is unnecessary – to meet the rest of definition it would need to be "affordable".
- The word "reliable" also is unnecessary as it is implied.

After discussion was concluded, the CTP team agreed to incorporate the comments into a final definition prior to the next meeting.

The group was then shown a consolidated list of access barriers and categories. This list began with the outreach sessions that were conducted, was consolidated at the first meeting, and was further refined to create 6 categories. Participants then used OptionFinder to prioritize these categories. The results in priority order are as follows:
1. Funding
2. Access (Service Schedule, Geographical Coverage, and Physical Limitations)
3. Cost (Human Service Agencies and Consumers)
4. System Design (Urban/Rural Connectivity, Cross-County Travel, and Trip Length Logistics)
5. Program Regulations and Rules

6. Education and Information

Begin to formulate Objectives and Solutions

Participants were then broken into six small groups with each assigned a barrier category. The groups were asked to:
- Create an objective statement
- Identify a minimum of 3 possible solutions on how to achieve that objective/ways to address the barrier

The CTP team explained that the information provided by the groups will provide a foundation for the CTP. Following the meeting, the CTP team will meet to review the small group discussion and to create additional objectives, solutions, and strategic initiatives that provide actions for the solutions.

In summary, the groups concluded:

Group 6: Education and Information
- Objective: Establish a central (central, easy, current, comprehensive) resource for service information for users and providers

- Solutions:
    - Establish working group of providers with current information
    - Have them answer questions related to the information they have
    - Develop a plan and implement
    - Monitor and evaluate

Group 5: Program Regulations and Rules
- Objective: ATWIC will work with federal, state, and local partners to improve and simplify program regulations and rules – Broker the conversation between regulators, providers, and consumers

- Solutions:
    - ATWIC to collect, review and summarize current rules and regulations of both funding programs and providers
    - Identify gaps and issues in the previous solution above; create strategies for coordination within the current system
    - Create a method and identify resources to advocate for change (ATWIC can be the catalyst)
    - Identify strategies for coordination

Group 4: System Design
- Objective: Develop an integrated system design that allows easier use of services and connectivity
- Solutions:
    o Create "hubs" within the city that will give integration within county agencies - meet at the hub to connect to other counties – break out hubs based on geographies
    o Identify the different "systems" and how they interconnect in order to design an effective system/common approach (unified)
    o Standard signage, maps, and technology that allow users to understand the system as a whole – right now there are different signs in each county

Group 3: Cost
- Objective: Minimize cost for users and human service agencies to maximize coordinated transportation services

- Solutions:
    o Prioritize transportation needs in human serve program planning and siting (location) – write into planning process as well as location of where services will be provided
    o Assess current actual cost for transportation service delivery in region
    o Use information to identify what happens next

Group 2: Accessibility
- Objective: Identify clear barriers to access with accurate data collection (Accurately identify what accessibility means and the needs and barriers to accessibility)

- Solutions:
    o Development of coordinated mobility management system
    o Accurate data collection (Accurately identify barrier to accessibility through analysis of consumer and provider – scheduling, routes, physical aspects like sidewalks,ramps)
    o Prioritize the barriers based on data collected by (1) most important and (2) most do-able with funds and resources available
    o Rural/urban – what is already available? What is needed?

Group 1: Funding
- Objective: To recognize transportation as a basic human right (need), along with food, clothing, and shelter, and to identify and allocate funding to meet those needs.

- Solutions:
  - o Put more money into vouchers or personal choice preference (Consider ways in which funding resources, vouchers could get in the hands of the end user)
  - o Look at what have now and how it can be better utilized and look at system where funding could be introduced in more user active approach
  - o Regionalize transportation systems

Next Steps

The following are the next steps in the process:
- Take information from today and summarize into a document that Kathy will send out and participants will respond if anything is missing
- Administer phone survey on current users of transportation – ideally 10 per county. Alliance participants should look for communication to explain what we are doing and hopefully identify people we can talk to
- Incorporate user responses into plan
- Refine barrier categories and solutions – geographical piece look at maps and gaps
- Develop strategic initiatives for solutions
- Develop draft report and present at March 18th meeting which is scheduled from 10 am to 1 pm at SPC.

SPC Alliance Meeting
March 18, 2015

On March 18, 2015 the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) and the Alliance for Transportation Working in Communities (ATWIC) held a third meeting to continue to develop a Coordinated Transportation Plan (CTP). In attendance were a total of 27 human service agency representatives, transportation providers, and other professionals who are interested in transportation accessibility.

The main goals of the meeting were:
  ➢ **Review HST User Feedback and Discuss How to Incorporate Into the CTP**
  ➢ **Review Research Findings From 4Ward Planning**
  ➢ **Finalize Major CTP Components**

HST User Feedback

Consumer outreach calls began the beginning of March to users of transportation services whose names were provided by social service agencies. To date, a total of 41 interviews have been completed, the breakdown is as follows:

County	Number of Names Provided	Number of Completed Interviews
Allegheny	12	0
Armstrong	7	4
Beaver	14	3
Butler	12	1
Fayette	8	4
Greene	0	0
Indiana	14	7
Lawrence	6	3
Washington	12	10
Westmoreland	11	9
Totals	**96**	**41**

Consumers were asked the following questions:
  • What is your experience with local transportation services?
  • Do you encounter any barriers in accessing this service (cost, lack of sidewalks, inconvenient hours of operation, etc...)
  • What are your thoughts and reactions to the idea of coordinating transportation services across our ten county area? Any suggestions on improving transportation services in our region?
  • What is your "Transit Story"? How do these systems benefit you? What challenges have you encountered? Has a lack of transportation impacted your ability to have basic needs met?

The consumers have shared a wealth of information and are providing a "voice" to the coordinated transportation plan. There have been an equal number of consumers sharing positives experiences as those that have experienced barriers or shared suggestions for improvement.

Consumers have experienced barriers related to:
- Cost
- Pick up/drop off times
- Location of stops
- Length of ride
- Limitations of available services (times, crossing county lines, destinations, etc.)

Consumers see value in better coordinated services, noting that it may help minimize some of the barriers they face.

Below are a few of the "Transit Stories" that were shared:
- "I am an overprotective mom who worries, and I appreciate that they will call me if they are running late. They will call to let me know when they pick him up if they are late so I know when to expect him. The drivers are wonderful and my son has a great relationship with them. Nice to have an option that I feel will safely get him there and keep me informed - knowing that I worry."
- "Due to not having a close bus stop and having to walk a couple of miles each way for the bus stop, I don't shop as much as I would like and have to get all of my shopping done only a couple times a month. It is hard in the winter as I am not a spring chicken and the cold air effects my lungs and breathing, and I have to walk on the street as the people don't shovel their sidewalks."

The participants in the room highlighted that many of the noted barriers were more of a communication problem than anything.

4Ward Planning Research

The group received copies and had a brief overview of the results of the Transit Gap Analysis and Socio-Economic Trends Analysis. The following were highlighted:
- There are about 876 places in the region that are not within ½ mile of public transit
- There are 288 places that are within ½ mile but not within ¼ mile of public transit
- Access is really good in some categories, but not in others
- Walkability was not taken into consideration – just distance
- Population has been declining since the 70s but is expected to stabilize

- 40% of the region is considered low income; 24% of those are very low or extremely low (household income is less than 50 percent or 30 percent of area median income or AMI, respectively)
- 26% are seniors
- 26% have a disabled person in the household
- Young empty nesters and older empty nesters may be moving into metropolitan area

CTP Components

During the previous ATWIC meeting the group identified 6 barriers to transportation accessibility. Following the Steering Committee, 2 of them were combined to create 5 barriers:
- Education and Information
- Program Policies and Regulations
- Cost and Affordability
- Availability and Accessibility
- Public Funding

Public Funding was identified as the most important. The definitions as well as some of the emerging strategies were shared with the group, as outlined below. Participants were encouraged to document additional suggestions on a sheet of paper over lunch or to send via email.

EDUCATION & INFORMATION

A lack of information regarding available transportation options and their use hinders a person's ability to get to the places and services that are necessary to daily life.

Objective: Improve service information available to both users and transportation providers
Solution: Establish a comprehensive, central resource for service information for users and providers.

Objective: Create a standard-level of expected training and education for transportation providers
Solution: Develop and/or host regional training programs available to all transit providers, particularly in customer service

PROGRAM POLICIES & REGULATIONS

Human service program policies and regulations limit flexibility in the utilization of funds and preclude agencies from having the capacity to fully serve and meet the needs of their clients.

Objective: Broker a conversation between regulators, providers, and consumers to reduce barriers caused by program policies and regulations
Solution: Collect, review, and summarize current rules and regulations of both funding programs and providers

Objective: Develop a coordinated regional voice to advocate for a common-sense approach to human services transportation (HST)
Solution: Identify a local champion/champions to serve as the point-of-contact for regional HST issues
Solution: Develop briefing papers on common issues

COST & AFFORDABILITY

Transportation services are costly to provide and their dependence on public subsidies for ongoing operations impacts the quantity, quality, and affordability of the services that exist.

Objective: Encourage agency regionalization without negatively impacting service
Solution: Provide resources to facilitate and implement regionalization.

Objective: Reduce the cost of unsubsidized trips on existing public transportation services
Solution: Explore special "flex zones" in areas of frequent shared-ride service with insufficient fixed-route demand to reduce cost to users

AVAILABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Insufficient levels of service, limited geographical coverage, minimum urban/rural connectivity, complicated cross-county travel, inaccessible facilities, and lengthy trips challenge those most dependent on public transportation services.

Objective: Encourage vehicle sharing and increased volunteerism
Solution: Provide legal support to protect vehicle owners and drivers for liability

Objective: Facilitate cross-county travel, ideally with one-seat rides
Solution: Leverage common fare technology
Solution: Educate about regulations related to cross-county travel

PUBLIC FUNDING

Investment in public transportation falls short when compared to spending for other aspects of the transportation network, making it difficult to maintain let alone enhance services.

Objective: Attach funding to people, rather than a program
Solution: User-based transportation subsidy pilot

Objective: Encourage private-party human services transportation partnerships
Solution: Pilot medical-center transportation scheduling and coordination

Next Steps

The following are the next steps in the process:
- Finalize the plan the first week of April
- Steering Committee will review draft plan
- Plan will be finalized and presented to stakeholders the last week of April
- Plan will likely be approved by SPC in late June after which the Alliance will consider how to go about implementing some of the proposed access improvement strategies