

United We Ride Strategic Action Plan

April 2006

Colorado Interagency Coordinating
Council for Transportation Access
And Mobility



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Background	1
Assessment Of The Status Of Coordination	6
State Priorities And Action Steps	7
Creating Bi-Level State-Local Coordination Framework	7
1. Create Task Force	
2. Develop Communication/Advocacy Strategies	
3. Encourage and Assist Local Councils	
State Implementation Structure, Accountability, and Sustainability	9
4. Provide Consulting Support	
5. Request Support for an Executive Order Creating Council	
Information Gathering	10
6. Identify Information Gaps	
Identifying and Addressing Obstacles	10
7. Analyze and Address Regulatory Obstacles	
Communications And Information Dissemination	11
8. Brief State Executive Directors and Federal Regional Directors	
9. Brief Other Key Stakeholders	
10. Create Information Clearinghouse	
11. Secure United We Ride Conference Sessions	
Attachment A – Interagency Coordinating Council Roster	
Attachment B – Framework for Action: Overall State Self-Assessment	
Attachment C – Strategic Plan Implementation Timeline	

COLORADO INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL
FOR TRANSPORTATION ACCESS AND MOBILITY

STATEWIDE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
Adopted April 2006

All across the nation it is recognized that transportation is the life blood of many human services programs, as access to services is what enables those services to be provided. It is also recognized that a failure to ensure the smooth coordination of transportation services can hamper service delivery. For that reason, like some other states, Colorado has formed a coordinating council and committed itself at all levels to ensure a smooth flow of coordinated transportation services by finding solutions to the obstacles that stem that flow.

BACKGROUND

Human services transportation refers to transportation provided to the transportation disadvantaged—that is, the elderly, persons with disabilities, low-income persons and others with special transportation needs. It refers to transportation whether it is door-to-door, demand-responsive service offered by human service organizations or traditional fixed route transit offered by public transit agencies.

There are at least 62 different federal programs that fund human services transportation, and a myriad of public, private non-profit and commercial operators that deliver that service. As a result, there is a great potential for service overlap and duplication. Some experts have observed that those involved in human services transportation, whether at the funding or operational level, do not communicate enough or may miss opportunities to share resources.

In many communities, access to human services transportation can be difficult and/or confusing, with availability often dependent on the purpose of one's trip, one's place of residence, or a variety of other factors. In many communities there is not "one-stop shopping" when it comes to accessing transportation services. In many places there are "stove pipe" programs that do not coordinate their services, instead serving people based on the source of funding and each program's particular eligibility criteria.

The success of many public programs, such as Medicaid, Medicare, workforce development, veterans' services, Headstart, and many others is often dependent upon customers being able to access transportation services. For example, a Coloradan who is enrolled in Medicare but cannot find transportation to the

doctor's office is not being served; and a resident in a welfare-to-work program will not succeed without transportation to work.

With the continuing growth of Colorado's population, the projected tripling of the over-65 population in the next 25 years, the increase in veterans locating in communities like El Paso County, and other factors, the demand for human services transportation will continue to grow. There will also be increasing pressure on our state and local elected officials to find and fund solutions for those transportation needs.

History of State and Federal Government Initiatives

For years, two federal agencies that fund many transportation programs--the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)--have been working together to promote coordination of their particular transportation programs in order to reduce duplication and overlap. That effort was enhanced in 2004 when President Bush issued Executive Order 13330, which requires federal agencies to work together to find new solutions to improving human services transportation. That executive order established the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility at the Federal level.

As a result of the President's efforts, four federal agencies (FTA, HHS, Labor, and Education) launched a new initiative, called "United We Ride", to break down barriers between programs and set the stage for also creating state and local partnerships that generate common sense solutions. These partnering Federal agencies then encouraged states to form similar coordinating councils and agreed to provide various tools to assist them.

In considering how Colorado would respond to this Federal initiative, it is important to note that Colorado is a "local government state." It has one of the lowest levels of state taxation in the nation and, conversely, one of the higher levels of local taxation. Many human services programs are offered through the Colorado Department of Human Services but are delivered by county departments of human services. The state delegates a high degree of authority to those local departments. In other words, Colorado takes a "bottom up" approach to governance.

This might seem to present a problem, insofar as the state cannot easily make statewide policy and procedural changes. On the other hand, one could argue that there could be a higher level of buy-in to changes from the local level when local officials have had an active and meaningful role in developing solutions. There can be fewer complaints about the state trying a "one size fits all" approach. In Colorado, state government is unlikely to propose a strong, "top down" approach, but it can nonetheless play an important role by offering incentives to local governments and organizations on a competitive basis,

addressing state-level obstacles, and involving local governments throughout the process.

Colorado is better poised to undertake a coordination effort because of its previous work on this topic. In the mid 1990s, the State formed a Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council. That council oversaw a consultant project that examined the status of human services transportation and recommended ways to improve it. That effort was helpful in improving collaboration in Colorado and identifying a few obstacles to coordination. But that effort suffered from a lack of a dedicated facilitator, the lack of adequate executive level buy-in, and the failure to consider major institutional changes, such as the blending of funding streams. It is believed the current effort will be more successful because of a higher level of collaboration, an executive level buy-in, a dedicated facilitator for the process, and a more comprehensive review of potential solutions.

Initiatives of Other Colorado Partners

Colorado's commitment to a United We Ride (UWR) effort has also been aided by the early grassroots efforts of an informal public/private group that was formed to address issues of coordination and service improvement. This group consisted of the state transit association, advocacy groups, state agencies, local transportation providers, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and two philanthropic organizations-- Rose Community Foundation and HealthONE Alliance. This group strongly advocated that Colorado participate in the United We Ride program so that a high-level group could recommend ways to improve the human services transportation network in the state. Colorado has essentially converted this grassroots effort into its current United We Ride project.

Consumer input and involvement, including through advocacy organizations, has been and will continue to be an important part of coordinating efforts in Colorado. An early step in the HealthONE Alliance and Rose Community Foundation initiative was a Transportation Summit for the Denver/Boulder metro area in October 2000. More than 300 consumers, advocates and providers participated and identified transportation issues and problems.

Another important planning initiative directly involving consumers was the Community Action for Transportation Solutions (CATS) led by Easter Seals of Colorado and the Colorado Mobility Coalition in 2003 and 2004. As part of the needs assessment, 7,500 surveys were distributed through organizations serving people with disabilities and an employer advocacy group for persons with disabilities. The survey asked how people with disabilities get to and from work, school, medical and other appointments, recreational or other activities and shopping, and what specific problems they encounter.

Interagency Council—Members, Purpose and Process

Governor Owens created the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility in the summer of 2005 in response to the federal United We Ride initiative to improve coordination of human services transportation activities at the federal, state and local levels. The governor named the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) as lead agency and asked representatives from a full range of key stakeholder groups to participate on the council, including local, state and federal government agencies; transportation providers; and non-profit organizations, including representatives of persons with disabilities, seniors, nursing homes, and transit agencies. Education, human services, transportation, health, veterans, and workforce development agencies are all members of the council. (See Attachment A - Interagency Coordinating Council Roster.)

Government agencies represented on the council included not only agencies that fund human transportation services, but also those whose programs and customers depend on such services in order to be successful.

The council's purpose was to complete the first phase of the state's strategic planning process, as follows:

- Assess the status of transportation coordination in Colorado;
- Examine possible ways of addressing coordination;
- Improve communication among organizations providing and funding human services transportation; and
- Develop a strategic action plan for the next steps to be taken to improve coordination.

This council was responsible for completing the first phase of the state's strategic planning process. This phase and the existing council was scheduled to end no later than the summer of 2006.

The council's planning process included:

- Pre-meeting consultant interviews with council members;
- Multiple facilitated meetings of the council;
- Survey of council members regarding priorities, actions, strategies, and benefits to be achieved; and
- Review of "Analysis of Colorado's Human Service and Public Transportation Networks" and the "Coordinating Transportation in Colorado: A Practitioner's Guidebook" (Fall 2005).

The analysis and practitioner's guide were prepared by a consultant firm (Nelson/Nygaard) as part of the Getting There Collaborative, a transportation initiative of the HealthONE Alliance and Rose Community Foundation, in support of the state's United We Ride coordination initiative.

Funding for the strategic planning process came from a \$35,000 United We Ride planning grant, from other CDOT federal planning funds, and approximately \$70,000 spent for research and analysis by HealthONE Alliance and Rose Community Foundation.

Colorado's UWR efforts have been supported by a consultant firm, The Adams Group, Denver, which has provided facilitation and coordination for the council's work. The Adams Group has significant experience in this type of work. Efforts have also been bolstered by collaboration with Nelson/Nygaard, the consultant firm that conducted the Getting There Collaborative research for the two philanthropic organizations. That firm has made presentations to the council and helped in a variety of other ways.

ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF COORDINATION

One of the tools provided by the Federal United We Ride office was a Framework for Action (FFA) self-assessment tool for states and local governments. Through pre-meeting consultant interviews with members and council deliberations using the FFA for states, the council assessed the current status of coordination in Colorado.

Council members identified a number of positive factors. For example:

- The governor's creation of the interagency council;
- The enthusiastic engagement of the council members in the planning effort;
- The significant involvement and financial commitment of two leading Colorado philanthropies;
- An existing interagency process of CDOT in which four other state agencies evaluate grant applications for Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) funding;
- Several successful coordinating partnerships and brokerages at the local/regional level around the state;
- The state's unprecedented action to set aside a portion of state General Fund transportation proceeds for transit purposes; and
- A new federal requirement that states include human services transportation planning within their transportation planning processes.

Despite these positive factors, the council determined that, overall, coordination efforts either "needed substantial action" or "need to begin", at least at the state level, in the six areas described in the FFA. (See Attachment B - Framework for Action: Overall State Self-Assessment.) Some examples of factors that need to be addressed include:

- Gaps in the information available at the state and local levels;
- The absence of a formal mechanism to disseminate existing information;

- The lack of coordination of funding and providing transportation services to clients even within some state agencies;
- The lack of adequate state funding for human services transportation;
- Recent cuts in Medicaid funding for transportation; and
- The absence of technology solutions being used to design and manage coordinated transportation systems.

STATE PRIORITIES AND ACTION STEPS

The council utilized the FFA self-assessment, an internet-based survey of council members, and the findings and recommendations of the Getting There Collaborative report to develop this strategic action plan. The adopted action steps focus on actions to be taken over the next 12 to 18 months (see Attachment C – Strategic Action Plan Implementation Timeline) with the understanding that additional priorities and other long-term actions will be identified during that 12-to-18-month period, as will identifying responsible parties, timelines, and benchmarks.

In addition, the council adopted two key principles to govern the state's coordination efforts:

- Rural and urban appropriateness needs to be considered in developing state policies and programs; and
- The needs of all consumer groups need to be met, such as the disabled community, including mentally ill consumers, and individuals in nursing homes and other institutional settings.

The top strategic priorities are:

- Create a framework for state and local/regional coordination, including providing local areas the tools they need to develop human services transportation plans and partnerships;
- Create a state implementation structure that promotes accountability and sustainability to implement the strategic plan;
- Gather information, beyond that gathered by the Getting There Collaborative report and the Transit Element plans developed by transportation regions across the state, relative to transportation resources and services throughout the state;
- Identify and address local, state and federal obstacles to coordination and efficient provision of transportation services; and
- Establish efficient and effective information dissemination mechanisms to provide information to funders, providers, consumers, local governments, and policymakers.

Creating Bi-Level State-Local Coordination Framework

The council recognizes that both state and local coordination are critical to achieving a more efficient and effective human services transportation system that meets the needs of consumers across the state. Council members emphasized the importance of these two levels working together, understanding that Colorado has strong local control, is dependent on significant local funding, and must meet diverse needs across the state.

The council supports the Colorado Department of Transportation remaining the lead state agency for state coordination of human services transportation with major involvement and commitment from the Departments of Health Care Policy and Financing and Human Services, and other key state agencies.

Implementation of a bi-level framework will require significant communications and advocacy, for example, regarding the benefits of coordination to consumers, funders and providers, and the need for implementation tools, such as, memoranda of understanding among state agencies and an executive order creating the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council.

Action steps:

1. Create Task Force

Create a state interagency coordinating council task force, including state and local government representatives and other knowledgeable stakeholders, to develop specific recommendations regarding a state-regional/local framework for human transportation coordination throughout the state. Working groups would be created as needed to review funding sources, application processes, eligibility requirements, measurements and definitions used for tracking and reporting the costs of transportation services, other policies, practices and laws to create a more efficient system of funding (avoiding “stove piping”) and reimbursing services. Recommendations would include local coordinating entities (e.g. councils), regional/local geographic boundaries, state and local/regional roles and responsibilities, funding and tools needed by local/regional entities to develop and implement local plans. It is critical that the framework accommodate the diverse needs of communities and regions across the state. The framework would incorporate an existing governance framework in Colorado rather than add a new layer to an already complicated transportation planning system.

Lead: Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council

Time frame: 1 to 3 months

2. Develop Communication/Advocacy Strategies

Develop communication and advocacy strategies to gain support for the task force recommendations at the state and local/regional levels, including sharing information regarding the benefits of coordination with local stakeholders.

Lead: Colorado Department of Transportation and Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council

Time frame: 3 to 6 months

3. Encourage and Assist Local Councils

Encourage the creation and development of coordinating councils at the local level by providing consultant assistance and other resources, including pilot funding for local/regional councils to support the new state-local coordination framework.

Lead: Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council

Time frame: 6 to 12 months

State Implementation Structure, Accountability, and Sustainability

The federal Framework for Action states that a driving factor for success is, “The governor and state officials serve as a catalyst for envisioning, organizing, and sustaining a coordinated system that provides mobility and access to transportation for all who need it.” A review of best practices in other states that have successfully improved coordination indicates that designating a lead agency with adequate resources, instituting a permanent state level interagency coordinating council, and entering into interagency agreements help propel and sustain efficient and effective coordination efforts.

The council also identified these issues as critical components of the state’s coordination plan. It believes that the designated lead agency could be an existing agency or newly established office, and would potentially need a minimum of one FTE in this initial phase. The interagency council could be an extension of the life of the current council or a newly formed group and could be created by administrative action or executive order.

Action steps:

4. Provide Consulting Support

Provide consultant support to the lead state agency in order to focus the effort and reduce the burden on the lead state agency.

Lead: Colorado Department of Transportation with support of the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council

Time frame: Immediately (and ongoing as needed)

5. Request Support for an Executive Order to Create Council

Request that the Governor support creating a state interagency coordinating council via executive order with a strong tie to department and agency executives.

Lead: Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council

Time frame: 1 to 12 months

Information Gathering

The Getting There Collaborative report and guidebook have consolidated a significant body of critical information, including funding, transportation networks and services, and demographic trends in various regions across Colorado and statewide, as well as best practices in other states and related findings and recommendations for Colorado. The Transit Element plans for the 15 Transportation Planning Regions (TPRs) across the state also provide some information regarding services and estimated needs. However, there are still some gaps in the data and information needed to identify the needs of various groups of consumers; to improve state laws, policies and programs; and to develop state and local plans, among other activities.

Action steps:

6. Identify Information Gaps

Work with stakeholders, including consumers and consumer representatives, across the state and the Getting There Collaborative consulting team to identify data and information gaps; develop plan to gather information identified (incorporating ways to regularly access customer input); and, begin implementing information gathering as outlined in that plan.

Lead: Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council with support from Colorado Department of Transportation

Time frame: 1 to 18 months

Identifying and Addressing Obstacles

The Framework for Action self-assessment tool, the Getting There Collaborative report, and council members all identified state-level obstacles to coordination as

a top priority. They felt that state leadership in coordinating and consolidating services would set an important example for local efforts and resolve many of the current obstacles to coordination. However, local and federal obstacles must also be examined and addressed whenever possible. The council identified this priority area as the one requiring the most time and commitment to implement.

Action steps:

7. Analyze and Address Regulatory Obstacles

Conduct a review of federal, state and local rules, regulations, practices and statutes to identify obstacles to coordination and efficient provision of transportation services. Conduct an analysis of each major obstacle and take actions to address and remove obstacles, including presenting solutions to policy makers with authority to address them.

Lead: Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council

Time frame: 1 to 18 months

Communications and Information Dissemination

Much information and data is available at the local or state level, but its existence is often not known or is otherwise unavailable to agencies, providers, advocacy organizations and consumers who need it. In addition, stakeholders, for example, elected officials and executive level policymakers, must be routinely informed regarding human services transportation issues and progress in order to assist in continued high level knowledge and support for implementation of the strategic action plan.

Action steps:

8. Brief State Executive Directors and Federal Regional Directors

Provide a briefing on this strategic plan at a joint meeting of the executive directors of participating state departments and regional directors of key federal agencies. Continue to keep them informed throughout the next phase of work.

Lead: State representatives on Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council and federal agency contacts and/or council members

Time frame: Immediately and again in 2007

9. Brief Other Key Stakeholders

Provide briefings to legislative committees on transportation and human services, Colorado Counties Inc., Colorado Municipal League, and other stakeholders.

Lead: Members of the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council and Colorado Department of Transportation staff

Time frame: 1 to 18 months

10. Create Information Clearinghouse

Create a human services transportation information clearinghouse, a shared transportation coordination web site that includes publications, links to relevant information, policies and programs.

Lead: Colorado Department of Transportation

Time frame: 3 to 6 months

11. Secure United We Ride Conference Sessions

Include UWR coordination as a regular topic of sessions at Colorado's transit conferences and offer to provide similar sessions at conferences of human services organizations.

Lead: Members of the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council and Colorado Department of Transportation staff

Time frame: 1 to 18 months

ATTACHMENT A – INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL ROSTER

Bruce Abel
Regional Transportation District

Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld
Colorado Counties, Inc.

Mike Braaten
Colorado Municipal League

Patrick “Charlie” Brown
U.S. Department of Veterans Administration

Lee Carter
Colorado Department of Local Affairs,
Workforce Development

April Dahlinger
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Rural Development

Nora Earnest
ARC of Colorado

Steve Eggleston
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development

Tex Elam
Consumer

Jeanette Hensley
Colorado Department of Human Services,
Division of Aging and Adult Services

Bryan Johnson
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services, Head Start

Joyce Johnson
Colorado Department of Labor and
Employment, Workforce Development

Wes Law
Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council

Bruce Little
Colorado Department of Education

Tom Mauser
Colorado Department of Transportation

Margaret Mohan
Colorado Department of Health Care Policy
and Financing

Jay Moskowitz
Colorado Health Care Association

Margi Ness
Colorado Mobility Coalition

Doris Puga
Denver Department of Human Services,
Adult Services Section

Kevin Richards
Colorado Department of Human Services,
Workforce Development

Donna Schulte
Easter Seals of Colorado

Nancy Smith
Colorado Department of Human Services,
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Marilyn Spiegel
AARP - Colorado

Karen Thorson
Colorado Department of Human Services,
Division for Developmental Disabilities

Elena Wilken
Colorado Association of Transit Agencies

Commissioner Melanie Worley
Denver Regional Council of Governments

John Zabawa
Colorado Association of Homes and
Services for the Aging

ATTACHMENT B – FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: OVERALL STATE SELF-ASSESSMENT

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION:

Overall state self-assessment completed by the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility based upon federal United We Ride State Self-Assessment Questionnaire. The six sections highlighted in the questionnaire represent the core elements of building a fully coordinated transportation system.

Section 1: Making Things Happen by Leadership and Partnership

Needs to Begin Needs Substantial Action Needs Some Action Done Well

Section 2: Taking Stock of State Needs and Moving Forward

Needs to Begin Needs Substantial Action Needs Some Action Done Well

Section 3: Putting Customers First

Needs to Begin Needs Substantial Action Needs Some Action Done Well

Section 4: Adapting Funding for Greater Mobility

Needs to Begin Needs Substantial Action Needs Some Action Done Well

Section 5: Technology Moves Coordination to Next Level

Needs to Begin Needs Substantial Action Needs Some Action Done Well

Section 6: Moving People Efficiently

Needs to Begin Needs Substantial Action Needs Some Action Done Well

