

FINAL Recommendations Paratransit Coordination Task Force

Action: This list of recommendations was unanimously approved with two abstentions by the Paratransit Coordination Task Force on February 16, 2005. However, specific recommendations may not have been approved by consensus. The majority-rule votes for these recommendations are noted.

GOAL #1 – THE SYSTEM WILL USE FUNDING AS EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE.

I. Issue: How to manage eligibility under various programs (clear criteria, centralized information and/or registration)

Short term recommendations:

1. Print Spanish and large print versions of the Guide to Specialized Transportation. (This action is already underway and should be complete by April 2005.)

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*)

2. Post the Guide on the RTC website in a manner that is Section 508-compliant making the information accessible to people with screen readers etc... (This accessibility is planned in RTC's current website redesign project.)

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*)

3. Develop a "cheat sheet" for use by service providers and related agencies to help direct riders to appropriate service providers. The sheet should include eligibility criteria and phone numbers and could be indexed to more complete information available in the RTC's "Guide for Specialized Transportation," ADA legislation or other detailed information. This could be done in collaboration with Community Bridges operating as the CTSA and other interested parties.

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*)

4. Designate an in-house expert within the major service providers (Metro and Community Bridges) to answer questions that an operator or scheduler is unable to address. This includes providing basic information and referral to other local transportation agencies.

Responsibility: Metro and Community Bridges

5. Ensure that all front line staff and telephone operators that deal with customers have a basic level of knowledge about local transportation options.

Responsibility: Metro and Community Bridges

6. Clarify the expectations regarding the level of knowledge and extent of the information and referral services to be provided.

Responsibility: Service providers and funders

Long term recommendations:

8. Research establishing a Mobility Management Center (or centralized information point) in Santa Cruz.

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*)

9. Research establishing a 511 telephone system in Santa Cruz County, similar to what currently exists in the San Francisco Bay Area, to provide transportation information including specialized transportation.

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*)

II. Issue: Available Funding and Resources

Short term recommendations:

1. Develop a process for determining duplication and report to the RTC annually. Input would be solicited from the RTC's advisory committee, funding agencies, social service agencies and specialized transportation service providers. This should include compiling a list of concrete examples of areas of duplication. The effort could be combined with the annual unmet needs process.

- a. Have funding agencies review the performance and use of funds for specialized transportation to make sure that duplication is being avoided and that service is provided as cost effectively as possible.

Responsibility: RTC and Metro

- b. Interested parties should be able to submit to staff examples of duplication. This could then be analyzed by relevant agencies, reviewed by the E/D TAC or RTC advisory committee and a report submitted to the RTC on ways to deal with these issues.

Responsibility: Paratransit TF, RTC staff, service providers (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*)

- c. Clarify various categories of "duplication." For example, a person may qualify for rides under many different programs. That's not duplication of rides, that is duplicate eligibility. MediCal rides vs. medical voucher rides are a totally different type of duplication.

Responsibility: Paratransit TF, (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*) and service providers

2. Redefine the RTC's advisory committee to empower it to play a stronger role in the oversight of paratransit services so that the committee's recommendations are taken seriously by both the RTC and Metro.
 - a. Create a structure that works mutually, where staffs can work together, where interested parties can work together to deal with issues that may arise that concern both of these services, whether it's the E&DTAC as its formed now or a revised E&DTAC or some other entity altogether. (* 9 to 3)

Responsibility: RTC & Metro

- b. Establish a structure that assures that the efficiency and duplication issues are dealt with effectively so problems are solved. This structure needs to have the respect and credibility with both the RTC and Metro. This would provide for continuity with the work that the Task Force has started. (* 9 to 3)

Responsibility: RTC & Metro

Long term recommendation:

3. Include review of available countywide funding and resources for specialized transportation as a sub-task of the Regional Transportation Plan update (every three years).

Recommendations: RTC

Short and long term recommendation:

1. Lobby state and federal representatives for waivers or policy changes to broaden the transportation options for MediCal/Medicare recipients. This could include providing fixed route bus passes for non-emergency medical trips such as is done in Florida.

Responsibility: Service providers and RTC

III. Issue: Coordination between paratransit services (ADA, TDA, other)

Short term recommendation:

1. Develop an effective information and referral system. (See recommendations I.3 and I.4.)

Responsibility: RTC, Metro, and Community Bridges

2. Develop a committee that is respected by all transportation players (or its committee, See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2)

Responsibility: RTC and Metro

3. Encourage Metro to continue meeting with agencies to accommodate group site needs, such as Stroke Center, Satellite Dialysis, senior centers and meal sites.

Responsibility: Metro

4. Set up a process whereby the Metro, the Community Bridges and other program operators meet on a regular (quarterly or semi-annual) basis to discuss service and eligibility issues in order to try and avoid potential duplication.

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*) to coordinate start up

5. Research roles and responsibilities for CTSA's throughout the state

Responsibility: RTC Staff (already complete and provided to Task Force 2/16/06)

6. Maintain the current designation

Responsibility: Community Bridges/RTC

Long term recommendation:

7. Explore feeder paratransit service options.

Responsibility: Service providers and RTC

8. Develop a long range strategic plan designating one public agency to consolidate (and potentially provide) services eliminating the need to coordinate service between multiple service providers.

Responsibility: RTC

9. Monitor the Long Range Strategic Plan developed by the state to incorporate relevant components.

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2*)

IV. Issue: Co-mingling/combine duplicative services

Long Term Recommendations

1. On an ongoing basis encourage the two main service providers, Metro and Community Bridges, to implement contract agreements when necessary and when feasible to minimize the inefficiency of both providers providing rides to the same location. (* 8 to 2, with 1 abstention)

Recommendation: Metro and Community Bridges, ongoing

2. Lobby state and federal regulators to reduce barriers to sharing rides between different programs/funders.

Responsibility: RTC

3. Include co-mingling issues in future discussions about the Community Bridges.

Responsibility: RTC

V. Issue: Making the transit system and related infrastructure more accessible (e.g. sidewalks, coordination with planning/public works departments on land use, etc.)

Short Term Recommendations

1. Support development of the Pedestrian Access Report form by the Community Traffic Safety Coalition as a way to communicate pedestrian improvements to local jurisdictions and help them prioritize needed projects

Responsibility: Community Traffic Safety Coalition

2. Participate in the process to review local General Plans, Housing and Circulation Elements to ensure that the specialized transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities are included
3. Responsibility: Social Service agencies and Representatives from Local jurisdictions on local boards

Long Term Recommendations

4. Recommend that local jurisdictions:
 - Pursue aggressive conditional use permits to force developers to provide transit accommodations;
 - Encourage, through zoning, construction of facilities for seniors and people with disabilities near services;
 - Require appropriate access facilities near congregate living locations (group, licensed);
 - Require developers to include pedestrian/infrastructure improvements in project plans/costs or divert costs to fill gaps in the network; and
 - Request that each local jurisdiction develop an annual target number of accessible improvements (e.g. specify a number of curb cuts per year)

Responsibility: Local Jurisdictions

VI. Issue: Increase ridership among those with functional abilities (e.g. Mobility Training)

Short Term Recommendations

1. Develop a "Buddy System" to mentor new transit riders

Responsibility: Metro and possibly the Volunteer Center

2. Train groups of people at one time including offering mobility training at residential facilities

Responsibility: Metro

3. Expand promotion of the Mobility Training Program including identifying potential partner programs (entities such as the Department of Motor Vehicles)

Responsibility: Metro, other service providers and potential partners

Long Term Recommendation:

4. Expand mobility training, if funding permits, including more promotion and an expanded focus on young people possibly working through school districts.

Responsibility: Metro, funding entities, school districts, San Andreas Regional Center

5. Lobby state and federal entities to provide funds for this program

Responsibility: RTC and Metro

6. Look into providing free bus passes for conditional riders of ADA Paratransit as a way to reduce paratransit use, cut costs and encourage long term transit use (*10 to 5)

Responsibility: Metro

7. Consider Deviated Fixed Routes, that can deviate slightly from fixed paths to address elderly and disabled transportation, as another way of providing additional service in parts of the county where it would be appropriate (* 7 to 3).

Responsibility: Metro

VII. Issue: Maintain fair funding allocations without disadvantaging one group over another

Short and Long Term Recommendation:

1. When making funding allocations be aware of the different special services provided and their potentially different costs

Responsibility: Funding entities

VIII. Issue: Encourage accessible multi-modal transportation choicesShort Term Recommendation:

1. Establish an annual day to encourage increased sensitivity for elected/appointed officials and relevant employees with events such as "Living the Paratransit Experience," Disability Awareness Day or transportation expositions.

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges in conjunction with community groups and agencies such as the Central Coast Center for Independent Living and the Stroke Center

Long Term Recommendation:

2. Explore establishing a centralized location for paratransit and specialized transportation information such as a Mobility Management Center, kiosk, or 511 transportation information service. These transportation information services could be integrated with information about social services.

Responsibility: Consolidated Transportation Services Agency or other social service agency and RTC (for 511)

IX. Issue: Encourage people with special transportation needs to live in areas with more urban servicesShort Term Recommendations (see also VII):

1. Emphasize that transportation choices are related to housing choices

Responsibility: Realtors, property managers, high density residential managers and local jurisdictions through zoning of use permits

2. Develop maps though out the county showing residential, education and commercial and recreation activities near residential areas, along major transit routes (within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile), etc.

Responsibility: Local Jurisdictions, Metro, residential developments

3. Better publicize existing information and resources, such as the Senior Network Services guidebook, for seniors and people with disabilities, including income eligibility issues.

Responsibility: RTC reference in the Guide to Specialized Transportation

Long Term Recommendations

4. Encourage higher densities in downtowns and urban areas with mixed use housing including provisions for seniors and people with disabilities.

Responsibility: Local Jurisdictions

5. Inclusionary housing should be maintained and "in lieu" developer fees should be discouraged as a way to encourage integrated, non isolated residential facilities for seniors and people with disabilities

Responsibility: Local Jurisdictions

X. Issue: Assess and integrate unmet specialized transportation needs

Short Term Recommendation:

1. Use statistical and economic information to help determine unmet needs.

Responsibility: RTC including service providers, funding agencies and the Area Agency on Aging

XI. Issue: Potential duplication between MediCal/Alliance and Medical Voucher rides, and Taxi Scrip and ADA Paratransit rides

Short Term Recommendation:

1. Work through the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee or other RTC committee (per Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2) and appropriate bodies to develop recommendations for program changes as needed. Bring final recommendations to the RTC

Responsibility: Community Bridges, E/D TAC (or other RTC committee per Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2), RTC and appropriate bodies

2. Require all Transportation Development Act fund recipients to take responsibility to ensure that ride and cost issues are resolved

Responsibility: RTC and TDA fund recipients (currently Metro, Community Bridges, Volunteer Center) with the E/D TAC as oversight

3. Promote Taxi Scrip, within funding limitations

Responsibility: Entity overseeing the Taxi Scrip program (currently Community Bridges)

XII. Issue: Some rides don't meet ADA criteria (outside geographic service area, wheelchair size, no service at days/times)

Short Term Recommendation:

1. Create an administrative mechanism to allow a passenger to ride on one vehicle for one trip. These rides may have various funding sources and negotiated special billing arrangements. (* 12 to 3)

Responsibility: all service providers

XIV. Service between counties

Short Term Recommendations:

1. Ensure coordination between ParaCruz and fixed-route bus service. Conduct public education efforts to encourage and train people to use these services to travel between Santa Cruz and the Bay Area (Highway 17 Express Bus and VTA's Outreach Program.) Include this information in the next printing of the RTC's *Guide to Specialized Transportation Services*.

Responsibility: Metro, RTC, Valley Transit Authority (VTA), Monterey-Salinas Transit, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

2. Continue support for the Red Cross inter-county medical transportation program.

Responsibility: RTC, Community Bridges

Long Term Recommendations:

3. Identify those parts of the state where paratransit services are not available to the public trying to move between areas where they are available

Responsibility: RTC

4. Encourage Bay Area agencies to coordinate their paratransit services between themselves including standardizing eligibility criteria and providing centralized information to the public.

Responsibility: MTC

5. Encourage AMBAG's Sr. Mobility Council to work on coordinating paratransit and bus services between San Benito, Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties

Responsibility: AMBAG, Metro, MST, San Benito COG

GOAL #2 – THE SYSTEM WILL STRIVE TO MAXIMIZE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SATISFACTION

I. Ease of use for client

Short Term Recommendation:

1. Expand the prepaid account option to ParaCruz customers (other than the Stroke Center) and encourage other paratransit providers to offer similar arrangements

Responsibility: Metro and Other Paratransit Providers

Long Term Recommendation:

2. Consider the creation of a single agency which would, at a minimum, administer the allocation of paratransit services and/or potentially be the provider of an integrated system of paratransit services. (* 7 to 4)

Responsibility: RTC and Metro

II. Customer service (phone hold times, eligibility determination, etc.)

Short Term Recommendations:

1. Request that Metro consider the option of designating appropriate individuals at particular facilities to determine eligibility for ADA paratransit services using Metro's criteria/standards and operating under Metro's supervision. (* 7 to 5)

Responsibility: Metro

1. Require members of Metro's ParaCruz Appeal Panel to be persons with disabilities who are users of the system and who have knowledge of the ParaCruz eligibility criteria. (* 6 to 4)

Responsibility: Metro

III. Trip quality (timeliness, safety, clean vehicles, support equipment in vehicles e.g. more hand grips, etc.)

Short Term Recommendations (in response to all of the above):

1. Encourage all paratransit service providers to develop, and keep current, a "Riders Bill of Rights" (or equivalent document) that defines pick up windows, safety, cleanliness, etc... and how customers can make suggestions for improvements. (Example: existing Metro ParaCruz Customer Guide and Eligibility Criteria)

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, Other Paratransit Providers

2. Provide a convenient, public forum once or twice a year for all paratransit agencies to receive input on their services from users. (* 7 to 2, 1 abstention)

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, Other Paratransit Agencies

IV. Communication between drivers and riders for schedule changes

Short Term Recommendation:

1. Dispatchers should continue to call the rider if the pickup is going to be outside (earlier or later) the ready window.

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, Other Paratransit Service Providers (These practices currently exist and are practiced.)

V. Affordability

Short Term Recommendation:

1. Programs for low income individuals should continue to receive priority funding for Paratransit services when no other options are available

Responsibility: Central Coast Alliance for Health, Community Bridges, Red Cross, RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2a*)

VI. Community input procedures

Short Term Recommendations:

1. Coordinate with Annual Unmet Needs meeting(s)

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2a*)

2. Participate in RTP Update Process

Responsibility: RTC

3. Increase public awareness of Metro Advisory Committee (MAC)

Responsibility: Metro

4. Develop mechanisms to assure that policy making boards stay apprised of concerns the community has about paratransit services

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, RTC

VII. Accountability and system responsiveness

Short Term Recommendations:

1. Provide a convenient, public forum for all paratransit agencies to receive input on their services from users. (* 7 to 2, 1 abstention)

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, Other Paratransit Providers

VIII. Countywide availability of accessible vehicles (including taxi scrip and regular taxi service)

Short Term Recommendations:

1. Periodically review and evaluate the list of taxi scrip clients to ensure that registrants still want to be a part of the program and are still eligible

Responsibility: Community Bridges, RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue II, Recommendation 2a*)

2. Consider expanding funding of the taxi scrip program

Responsibility: Community Bridges, RTC

Long Term Recommendations:

3. Lobby state representatives to support requirements for all taxi vehicles to be accessible in the future (within the constraints of vehicle size); and lobby local elected officials to, through the permitting process, require local taxi operators to have a certain percentage of taxi fleets fully accessible (* 6 to 4, 1 abstention)

Responsibility: RTC, Metro, Community Organizations representing the Elderly and Disabled communities

IX. Clear transportation system understanding/expectations and community outreach (riders, caseworkers, counselors, etc.)

Short Term Recommendation:

1. Develop a "cheat sheet" for use by service providers and related agencies to help direct riders to appropriate service providers. The sheet should include eligibility criteria and phone numbers and could be indexed to more complete information available in the RTC's "Guide for Specialized Transportation". This could be done in collaboration with the CTSA and other interested parties. References can be made to resource documents.

Responsibility: RTC (or its committee, *See Goal 1, Issue 2, Recommendation 2a*)

X. Emergency Ride programs for paratransit and transit riders

Short Term Recommendations:

1. Conduct outreach to paratransit users who work for TMA member employers to advise them that they may be eligible to use the TMA's emergency ride home (ERH) program. Encourage more employers to join the TMA in order to offer the ERH program.

Responsibility: Santa Cruz Area TMA, Pajaro Valley TMA, TMA Employers, Metro

2. Encourage expansion of emergency ride home programs beyond employers.

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, Other Paratransit Providers, RTC

3. Request that all paratransit providers adopt policies to ensure that none of their clients are stranded on a trip without a ride home

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, other Paratransit providers

4. Request that all paratransit providers consider adopting policies to allow same-day changes under criteria that they may adopt. (* 7 to 2)

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, other paratransit providers

GOAL #3– LEGAL MANDATES SHALL BE OBSERVED

Short Term Recommendations:

1. All legal mandates and requirements -- such as the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, state Medi-Cal requirements and funding requirements from entities such as the Area Agency on Aging – shall be met.

Responsibility: Metro, Community Bridges, private operators, other paratransit providers

GOAL #4– INCREASE FUNDING FOR SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Long Term Recommendations:

1. If another transportation sales tax measure is considered in the future, it should include funding specifically allocated for paratransit and specialized transportation for seniors and people with disabilities (* 11 to 2).

Responsibility: RTC and the community

2. Task force favors attempting to secure additional funding from federal, state and local sources for paratransit and specialized transportation services.

Responsibility: RTC and service providers

* All recommendations by consensus except those noted in parenthesis with vote counts

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