

Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation

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Mobility Planning Services Retrospective 2001-2010

*Celebrating Ten Years of Building Stronger
Communities Through Accessible Transportation*



Easter Seals
Project ACTION
ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY®
TRANSPORTATION IN OUR NATION



Mobility Planning Services Retrospective 2001-2010

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Easter Seals Project ACTION is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration.

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Note: Accessible Transportation Coalitions Initiative teams are selected through an application process held each winter. Communities are required to develop community planning committees and prepare applications according to specific instructions. ESPA selects approximately 10 teams each year to participate. Visit www.projectaction.org to find out more.

Foreword

Transportation is the vehicle to community participation for all Americans. From the minute we leave our homes, we begin our community journey as we move along sidewalks, cross streets, travel on roads, or ride in a bus, taxi, ferry, or train. The Mobility Planning Services Institute and the Accessible Transportation Coalitions Initiative have facilitated the development, building and growth of transportation services and systems in communities across the country. They have also been instrumental in the formation of new partnerships among individuals, organizations, and agencies.

We all know, however, that bringing about change is a complex process. It requires us to look at all of our transportation resources in the community and explore the potential for enhancing connectivity. It requires a willingness to come together to identify the challenges as well as the opportunities. It requires cooperation and coordination.



Photo: 2005 Greenville, North Carolina Team

I applaud Easter Seals Project ACTION and all of the communities that participated in this initiative over the past decade. Their successful outcomes can be attributed to their creative energy, hard work, and get-it-done approach! It also demonstrates our ability to come together for a common goal enhancing independence and community mobility. The communities highlighted in this report serve as models for ways to build livable communities that provide accessible transportation services and systems throughout our nation.

Bryna Helfer

Director of Public Engagement
U.S. Department of Transportation

Introduction

As Easter Seals Project ACTION (ESPA) celebrates ten years of working closely with communities across the United States and its territories to enhance accessible transportation options at the local level—first through Mobility Planning Services (MPS) and now through the Accessible Transportation Coalitions Initiative (ATCI)—we take time to reflect upon and celebrate the accomplishments of these dedicated communities.

Since the creation of MPS, ESPA staff has worked with 144 communities from across the United States and two U.S. territories. Our efforts began in the 1990s with training sessions presented in the MPS communities addressing such topics as disability awareness and sensitivity training, environmental barrier analysis and options for remedy, and paratransit eligibility functional assessments. Participants acquired new knowledge but told us that it was challenging to apply what they learned working alone after the events.

In response in 1999, MPS as we know it—a coordinated, comprehensive approach to enhancing accessible transportation focused on systems-change efforts—was born. MPS brought together teams of three to five people from communities across the United States and its territories. These teams consisted of decision-makers and community leaders with both personal and professional expertise related to accessible transportation.

ESPA's efforts to promote accessible transportation through systems change at the community level continued to grow in 2010 into the Accessible Transportation Coalitions Initiative (ATCI), a two-day, facilitated event held on-site in the communities with 15-25 leaders to formulate a vision and a plan to address transportation concerns for people with disabilities. ATCI brings together the best elements of both the earlier on-site MPS training events and the later centralized MPS events, which embraced a coordinated, comprehensive approach to enhancing accessible transportation focused on systems change.

The local planning committee for each ATCI event is responsible for identifying and securing participation from leaders in their community with the knowledge, interest and authority to affect change to improve accessible transportation. This is an impressive mix of public and private transportation providers, advocacy leaders with disabilities, human service agencies and planners. The ATCI teams often include older adults, staff from agencies serving the needs of older adults, educators, engineers, and elected officials.

ESPA provides two trained facilitators to lead the groups in reaching consensus regarding the prominent issues, a vision for what they want transportation to become, and a plan to begin addressing those issues immediately. ESPA also provides technical assistance to inform the group's decisions and, as was the case with MPS, supports the ATCI team through the process of setting this change in motion over the subsequent year. For more information about ATCI, please visit ESPA's website at www.projectaction.org.

MPS/ATCI teams are from as near to us as Washington, D.C. and as far away as Guam. They represent large urban communities with highly-complex existing public transportation systems to smaller rural communities with only one bus line to communities with everything in between.

In this retrospective we highlight the work of a sampling of MPS teams from 2001 to 2009. We divide this collection of stories into six broad categories.

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|---|---|
| (1) Collaboration, Coalitions, and Coordination | (4) Bus Familiarization and Travel Training |
| (2) One-Call Centers | (5) Accessible Taxi Service |
| (3) Fleet and Service Expansion | (6) Assessments and Other Research |

We conclude with several of the lessons we learned from these remarkable MPS/ATCI teams and communities.

Collaboration, Coalitions and Coordination

Creation of a Transportation Office

Team: Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Year: 2003

Photo: A woman using a wheelchair boards a CNMI paratransit van in 2003

The 2003 Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) team had big goals; they wanted “people with disabilities, their families and the Man’Amko (elderly) [to] have available, accessible, flexible, reliable transportation program and services of their choice.” The team planned to advocate for the creation of legislation establishing a transportation department that would include appropriation, guidelines and standards. By the end of the Institute, the CNMI team had developed a plan that proved to be helpful and effective throughout their advocacy work.

“MPS was a great learning experience and finally paid off!” Thomas J. Camacho, a member of the CNMI team, stated.



In 2011, after many years of advocacy work on public transportation, CNMI established its first transportation office called the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority. On May 27, the Honorable Benigno R. Fitial signed into law HB. 17-43 (now PL. 17-43) establishing the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority within the Office of the Governor. On August 11, Governor Fitial affirmed and officially established the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority within the Office of the Governor and concurrently appointed Camacho as his Special Assistant for Public Transportation.

In addition to establishing the first transit authority office, PL. 17-43 and the Governor’s Memorandum re-designated the FTA Consolidated Formula grants from the CNMI Public School System to the new Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority. The Saipan Call-a-Ride Transportation Services for People with Disabilities and the Elderly has been privatized, as well, and continues to be in demand. This service is also recognized as the ADA Paratransit System that will complement CNMI’s future public transportation system or fixed-route system.

Camacho adds, “We will surely be in touch with ESPA again for technical assistance in the very near future.”

Coordination and Transportation Funding

Team: Ann Arbor, Michigan

Year: 2006

The Ann Arbor MPS team's focus was "to provide universal public transportation services which are seamless and accessible throughout Washtenaw County in a safe, reliable and efficient manner."

When they returned from the MPS Institute, the Ann Arbor team learned that service to Ypsilanti, a high-demand urban service area, was subject to elimination. Due to the work of the MPS team and rider advocates, the Ann Arbor Transit Authority (AATA) Board of Directors decided that further investigation of funding alternatives was needed and instead of eliminating service instructed AATA staff to reduce expenses to cover the Ypsilanti shortfall.

The team's focus was to collaborate with human service organizations to establish a coalition of community members, community leaders, and local transit riders to develop a cooperative countywide buy-in for regional transit funding. AATA joined forces with the Washtenaw County Human Services Collaborative (HSCC), whose Adult Action Group shared a common focus with the MPS team.

Meanwhile, AATA continued its work to leverage Job Access Reverse Commute and New Freedom funds and hired a market research firm to assist with developing and implementing a plan to gauge community support for public transportation funding.

A Partnership Between Transit and the Disability Community

(Excerpt from February 2008 ESPA Update)

Team: Hampton, Virginia

Year: 2001

Accessible transportation has become a focused activity for Insight Enterprises Inc., Peninsula Center for Independent Living of Hampton Roads on the Virginia peninsula.

The organization offers another success story as a result of participation in ESPA's MPS Institute in Washington, D.C. In fact, they were in the very first "Class of 2001," still benefiting years later from being a part of MPS.

Today, Insight Enterprises works with the local transit company, Hampton Roads Transit (HRT), on improving services for people with disabilities.

"As a result of the MPS experience, the transit agency and the disability community are truly working together in partnership," said Donald Fennell. "HRT and people with disabilities work together on issues of accessible

service and the ADA eligibility process. Additionally, the User Citizen Advisory Committee for HRT has evolved into an important voice for the disability community on issues concerning public transportation in our region."

Mobility Management

(Excerpt from October 2007 ESPA Update)

Team: Louisville, Kentucky

Year: 2006

Photo: 2008 Louisville, Kentucky MPS team

In Louisville, the transportation and human service community is steadily progressing toward a vision of coordinated transportation that is accessible to people with disabilities. This vision led a team to the 2006 MPS Institute and continues to gather momentum.

Milestones have included formation of a Regional Mobility Council (RMC), launch of a mobility management program, hosting annual transportation summits, development of a coordinated transportation plan, design of a Travel Management Coordination Center (TMCC) funded as a pilot project through the federal Mobility Services for All Americans initiative, and selection of JARC and New Freedom Program projects.

The 2006 MPS Team Louisville's experience illustrates well that MPS is a process that doesn't simply begin and end with the three-day event itself. The MPS team was a subset of the larger steering committee that was formed following a 2005 transportation summit convened locally to explore coordinating Louisville's human services - public transportation resources. A second summit was held shortly before the team participated in the MPS Institute in April 2006.

“MPS helped the group solidify their mission and vision.”

“MPS helped the group solidify their mission and vision,” said the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) Mobility Manager Nancy Snow. Formerly a representative of another organization on the steering committee, Snow was hired by TARC in September 2006 to lead the coordination effort.

In addition to hiring a mobility manager, the steering committee was expanded and formalized into the RMC. The group now includes consumers, advocates for seniors and for people with disabilities, representatives from human service agencies, transportation providers, and local governments. The RMC meets on an ongoing basis throughout the year and works toward the goals adopted at the annual transportation summit. It serves as the key advisory group for coordination efforts including development of the Coordinated Public Transit - Human Service Transportation Plan and selection of projects to be funded under the Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom federally funded transportation programs.

People with additional perspectives are invited to the annual summits, including workforce development and the faith-based community. The RMC continues to bring additional people to the table, and more people and organizations are engaged in the coordination process.



Coordination and New Service

(Excerpt from December 2006/January 2007 ESPA Update)



Team: Washburn County, Wisconsin
Year: 2006

Photo: 2006 Washburn MPS team

Team Washburn County came together with the intent to increase transportation services in this rural county with a year 2000 population of just over 16,000 people. No public transportation service existed in the county at the time of the 2006 MPS Institute, though several human service agencies provided transportation services for their consumers. The largest provider was

the County Unit on Aging, which provided medical transportation through a cadre of volunteer drivers. The community had a history of working together to share resources for meeting transportation challenges in this remote rural area some 250 miles from Madison.

"The MPS Institute was a totally supportive environment, including the staff, instructors, and consultants," said Bob Olsgard. "We came out of it feeling like we could move mountains." During the hands-on planning sessions, the team members discovered there were things they could do right away, as well as six months down the road and over a long-term basis.

Ventures Unlimited and the Unit on Aging realized there was nothing to stop them from opening rides to members of the general public, something they put in practice shortly after returning home from MPS. On June 23, 2006, a new "Rides" service began offering weekly transportation to a regional shopping destination in a nearby county, using available seats on a Ventures Unlimited van that was already traveling in that direction. Olsgard noted, "This may seem like a small step for a larger community, but it's a huge step for our small community."

The Washburn County MPS team also quickly set to work on expanding the planning group. At their first meeting back home, they made the decision to work in partnership with a human service coordination planning process required by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. This strategy paid off. At the August 2006 coordination planning meeting, at which the Federal Transit Administration's *Framework for Action* tools were put to use, other key transportation allies identified by the team joined in support of the team's mission. That expanded partnership formed at that first meeting continues to work. At subsequent meetings the group formed the Washburn County Transportation Council, developed a mission of providing countywide transportation for all, and worked on a resolution to make the council the official transportation advisory group for Washburn County.

"Without the support of the MPS team, I do not feel that we would have made the leaps and bounds in transportation services for our county," said Kristin Frane. "Before the MPS, our service providers were focused on only their silo service and funding, now community transportation leaders and providers are looking for ways to work together to provide more rides to more people."

Full Access & Coordinated Transportation

Team: San Diego, California

Year: 2005

The San Diego MPS team formed a nonprofit organization called Full Access & Coordinated Transportation (FACT). FACT's mission is: "to create a transportation system that will provide access and mobility for the people of San Diego County by augmenting existing resources." This is accomplished through the creation of partnerships that eliminate barriers, developing alternative modes of transportation, and accessing additional sources of funding.

Accomplishments include: the development of FACT into a Regional Mobility Management Center, establishment of the Community Partnership Program, conducting the North County Pilot Project (NCPPI), and spearheading the San Diego County Volunteer Driver Coalition.

The Community Partnership Program offers three different levels for agencies and organizations to demonstrate their support for FACT: a Statement of Support, a Partnership Agreement, and an Operating Pledge.

The NCPPI worked on such issues as determining the true cost of rides, insurance liability, shared ridership, shared vehicles, and shared drivers.

In addition to other accomplishments, FACT sponsored an all-day training with the staff from the California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CalACT) and the United We Ride regional ambassador. The training covered coordinated transportation, mobility management, technology, and an overview of how agencies can determine the true cost of their transportation and what cost they can assign to a passenger or mile or length of trip.

Coordination and Innovative Approaches to Rural Transportation

(Team contributed stories through the MPS/ATCI online dialogue)

Team: Sumter, South Carolina

Year: 2006

Through a larger coalition effort, the Sumter MPS team implemented a volunteer transportation program, a rural rideshare program, and more efficient flex routes in rural areas. They also worked to maximize human service transportation through coordination and better utilization of the open seats on vehicles. In addition, they encouraged employers to use the Federal Commuter Tax Benefit for employees.

"Our objective was to bridge the transportation gaps for as many of the neediest individuals in the region—with the primary focus in the rural areas due to less frequent and visible transportation services," said Orlando Papucci. "Working with Easter Seals Project ACTION has been very instrumental in garnering recognition and support (current and future) that has helped to further our efforts of bridging the transportation gaps in our region."

The Sumter team utilized many strategies to reach their goals, including: holding monthly coalition meetings, conducting extensive media outreach, maintaining a consistent objective of increasing accessible transportation options, going to the grass roots level to address the need, partnering with public and private transportation providers, providing assistance to any organization in finding accessible

transportation options, ensuring that all transportation plans endorse accessible transportation options for every facet of transportation, and always being available to give a presentation.

Papucci offers the following advice to other communities interested in improving accessible transportation: “Just start...don’t worry about money at the start...it will be an issue, but hopefully as others begin to recognize there is an advocacy group that promotes accessible transportation, they will eventually come to you for guidance. I think now with the emphasis on livability, more agencies will be looking for coalitions and advocacy groups that promote accessibility for all.”

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One-Call Centers

Community Involvement and a One-Call Center

(Team contributed stories through the MPS/ATCI online dialogue)

Team: Aiken, South Carolina

Year: 2006

The Aiken MPS team arrived with big plans: the creation of a one-call center to serve the six-county region. However, due to ESPA staff encouragement, they started a bit smaller with an action plan focused on education and marketing the benefits of transit to decision-makers in the Aiken community in order to (1) sustain the transit and paratransit system and (2) enhance them.

“In the short-term, we hit some speed bumps,” explained Lynnda Bassham, “when through a misunderstanding...a cut was applied to the transit system budget, which resulted in the elimination of Saturday service. In the process of holding public hearings about those cuts, we discovered the silver lining in the situation—amazing and articulate passengers who depended on the Best Friend Express and Dial-a-Ride service to access school, work, and other necessary destinations of daily living. The next year, we formed an advocacy committee and worked with our County Administrator on a win-win strategy for advocacy, which resulted in restoration of half the funds cut.”

This committee continues to advise the transit provider on enhancements, issues, and improvement needs.

The Aiken team also experienced quite a bit of success on the one-call center front. They received grant funding assistance from the United We Ride initiative at FTA, the Mobility Services for All (MSAA) Initiative in the Research and Innovative Technology Administration at U.S. DOT, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, FTA, South Carolina DOT and Older Americans



Act funds through the South Carolina Lieutenant Governor’s Office on Aging to develop and implement a one-call center as one of the national MSAA model one-call centers which integrates the provision of human service and transit information, referral, and assistance and mobility management services.



“Thanks to ESPA for all the great support and information along the way,” said Bassham.

Successful Rollout of New Call Center

Team: Lane County, Oregon

Year: 2008

The Lane County MPS team's action plan focus was: "integration of transportation services into a centralized model using a call center."

Following the MPS Institute, the Lane County team noted a successful rollout of the new call center and that they had received primarily positive feedback. They hired a transportation case manager and had her trained on paratransit eligibility. They developed a dispute resolution process in collaboration with Lane County Mental Health. Finally, they established an advisory committee for the call center.

Fleet and Service Expansion

Twice the Service, Twice the Freedom

(Team contributed stories through the MPS/ATCI online dialogue)

Team: Alleghany Highlands, Virginia

Year: 2007

According to Dawn Wilson of the Alleghany Highlands MPS team: "(MPS) gave us a road-map to direct our efforts, and we accomplished a great deal towards our planning right during the training."

Following the MPS Institute, the Alleghany Highlands team held a community summit to gather support for their efforts and then applied for the grants needed to increase the service. They expanded their Mountain Express to two buses that run from one end of the community to the other. They provide ongoing education about their program and have letter-writing campaigns, raffles, and other community fundraisers.

"Individuals with disabilities can get to their appointments, visit friends, or go shopping for 50 cents," said Wilson. "With gas prices as they are, this is a tremendous savings for them."

Increased transportation service has really made a difference, Wilson said. "One of my dialysis patients does not have a car and rides his bike around town. Our center is too far from home, though...he would not be able to get to and from his treatments without our buses."

"In another more poignant example," she continued, "an elderly lady got on the bus one day and rode most of the day throughout the community. When the driver inquired why, she told him that she had not been able to get out for years and wanted to see how much the community had changed."

"(MPS) gave us a road-map to direct our efforts, and we accomplished a great deal towards our planning right during the training."

Regional Transportation and Shared-Ride Taxi Program

(Team contributed stories through the MPS/ATCI online dialogue)

Team: Western Wisconsin

Year: 2008

The La Crosse County MPS Team celebrates the following accomplishments:

- Transportation service between the three counties of La Crosse, Vernon, and Monroe with the “33 Express”
- Development of a regional transportation coordinating committee, including eight surrounding counties, to look at transportation from a regional perspective
- Development of a rural shared-ride taxi system in La Crosse County
- Expanded transportation for the Hmong community with a provider who speaks the language

“The Easter Seals (MPS) experience was the catalyst,” said Noreen Kuroski. “Our efforts will not diminish and we thank Easter Seals for their support.”

New Service and New Facilities

(Team contributed stories through the MPS/ATCI online dialogue)



Team: Latah County, Idaho

Year: 2007

Photo: 2007 Latah County, Idaho MPS team

The Latah County five-member MPS team was comprised of a county commissioner, student with a disability, mayor, disability support services staff member from the university, and a transit provider.

“Direct cause-effect benefits may be difficult to quantify,” said Debbie Hornbuckle. “But since the ESPA experience, Moscow has installed 95 tactile curb drops around town to improve access and safety for users of all abilities.”

With the help of federal stimulus funding, they also installed 11 bus shelters and have two more planned for this summer.

Moscow was one of only 42 recipients nationwide to secure a Tiger II grant for capital construction projects, specifically, for an intermodal transit center. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2012 and to be completed by the end of that year. This facility will link the University of Idaho (UI) campus, downtown business district, and medical services, through centralized dispatch and ADA access for multiple integrated modes of transportation.

The City also assumed oversight of vanpool vehicles for commuter service, and continues to work with regional providers—including volunteer drivers—to integrate the

various services available in the region and the funding sources to support them.

“Probably the most telling of our local accomplishments came from establishing the Mobility Task Force, whose membership includes people with physical disabilities and mobility challenges,” said Hornbuckle. This group surveyed the core of the city and main non-motorized routes, described gaps in infrastructure, structural disrepair, obstructions, and topographic challenges, and developed a prioritized list—replete with map—of places needing attention. “With budgets so tight,” she continued, “that prioritized list is invaluable, and was my first of two goals in developing the budget for the next fiscal year.”

“Probably the most telling of our local accomplishments came from establishing the Mobility Task Force, whose membership includes people with physical disabilities and mobility challenges.”

Additionally, an accessible shuttle bus program was implemented on the UI campus that is operated by Parking and Transportation Services. Initially, the program was funded by student fees, but after 20,000 plus rides were given in the first year alone, the UI Administration recognized its importance and moved funding to a more sustainable line item in the institution’s budget.

Travel Training and New Bus Service

(Team contributed stories through the MPS/ATCI online dialogue)

Team: Middlesex County, New Jersey
Year: 2008

Photo: One 2008 MPS team’s representation of their ideal local transportation system

According to Steve Fittante of the Middlesex County MPS team, “The [MPS] planning process helped us to clarify the expansion of marketing and travel training for people with disabilities that we were seeking to do.”

The team initially focused its efforts on travel training and a timetable distribution program. They also designed and implemented a new bus route serving a suburban portion of the county, which did not previously have local transit.

“The accessible bus service is enabling people who use wheelchairs to access a service that provides them with more choices of times and spontaneity that is not available on our advance reservation service,” said Fittante. “In addition, we have graduated approximately 160 people with disabilities and older persons through our travel training program with NJTIP, Inc.”



Increased Ridership Through Coordination

Team: Pierre, South Dakota

Year: 2005

Photo: 2005 Pierre, South Dakota MPS team

River Cities Public Transit in Pierre had both a humble and rocky start. It was incorporated as a non-profit in 1998 with a small amount of 5311 funds, two donated used buses, and, admittedly, unreliable service resulting in low ridership.

By November 2001, the bank accounts were overdrawn, payroll was paid by credit card, their three vehicle fleet broke down and was replaced by borrowed South Dakota DOT buses, they were \$160,000 in debt and behind \$48,000 in FICA deposits, and they were late filing their tax returns.

They had little or no record retention or accounting, no maintenance program for their vehicles, no training for employees, and extremely high insurance costs (liability). In addition, they were operating a cab service at a loss and borrowing vans from car dealers to provide rides. In April 2002, they lost most of their fleet to a fire.

Once they got their financial, administrative, and operational matters in order, they started to look to coordination as a strategy for increasing ridership.

Team Pierre had an action plan focused on creating additional transportation options. They determined desired areas of growth through a coordination plan, which emphasized more hours of service, enlarging the service area, coordinating services, increasing public access, and public outreach and education.

They reached out to businesses regarding job access and marketing and advertising. They reached out to healthcare providers, the airport, the interstate bus and rail service providers, and area non-profits, such as senior centers, the YMCA's Boys and Girls Club, the Adjustment Training Center, and churches. They showed the true cost of providing transportation to their consumers and made the case for coordination. And through coordination and public-private partnerships, their two-vehicle fleet grew and expanded into a robust transportation service attracting both transit-dependent and choice riders with some service even being available 24 hours per day.



Ron Baumgart offered the following advice: "Be prepared to accomplish the planned growth through coordination, get the desired outcome using varied approaches, be patient, grow beyond your plans, face change and difficulties, and support unplanned growth opportunities." (from Baumgart's *Gaining Community Support for Your Transportation Network MPS PPT* presentation)

Bus Familiarization and Travel Training

Public Awareness and Bus Familiarization

Team: Central Iowa

Year: 2009

Photo: The 2009 Central Iowa ATCI Team works on a representation of their ideal local transportation system

The Central Iowa MPS team's action plan focus was "to increase passenger transportation awareness, individual accessibility, and interagency coordination in Central Iowa." Their initial work emphasized public awareness and bus familiarization.

After returning from the MPS Institute, the Central Iowa team expanded by incorporating the transportation advisory group into the team and by joining the annual Mobility Matters workshops offered in their area.

The team initially focused on increasing public awareness by marketing the 211 program and conducting targeted outreach to older adults for their new bus familiarization program. They had a great response from older adults using the fixed-route service as a result of this program and hope to continue to build upon this success.



Promoting Inclusion by Supporting Travel Training

(Excerpt from December 2009 ESPA Update)

Team: Houston, Texas

Year: 2001

In Houston, personnel with the area's transit service, METRO, are helping school districts, special education teachers and job coaches introduce METRO services to children and young adults with disabilities.

One of the creators of the initiative is Mary Ann Dendor, the system's ADA administrator who was inspired by the 2001 MPS event to commit to the local youth initiative.

Ten years later the program, called Choices, is going strong. Annually, some 150 teachers, life skills and job coaches apply or renew applications for the free passes that are provided to introduce and teach young people how to use Houston's buses and light rail system.

Dendor used to say that the program offers young riders access to many more community destinations and, therefore, greater independence in their lives. Now she sees an even deeper effect.

“These young people are being included in things in their community - they are a part of their community now.”

“I use a different ‘I’ word now: Inclusion,” Dendor said. “These young people are being included in things in their community—they are a part of their community now.”

Education, Outreach, and Bus Familiarization

Team: Memphis, Tennessee

Year: 2007

Team Bluff City Blues from Memphis had an action plan focus to: “increase ridership by people with disabilities and seniors on fixed-route buses by identifying potential incentives and improvements.” This included work in the areas of education, outreach, and bus familiarization.

Following the MPS Institute, Team Bluff City Blues engaged in bus familiarization training sessions in senior centers, libraries, and other community centers. Willie Lewis, Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) ADA coordinator, and Betty Anderson, disability advocate and travel trainer, partnered to give these presentations. As a result, MATA, the transit provider, saw a decrease in paratransit ridership and an increase in fixed-route ridership by customers who use mobility devices.

Travel Training and Technology

(Excerpt from November 2008 Update)

Team: Northwest Ohio

Year: 2008

A Mobility Alliance of agencies and organizations was formed, taking a dedicated, grass-roots approach to improving transportation in the Northwest Ohio region. All five members of this 2008 MPS team and the agencies they represent are members, uniting a mix of agencies providing transportation (both public transit and human service transportation), those working with individuals who need transportation, and advocates for seniors and people with disabilities.

One of their first orders of business was to explore the formation of a travel training program. ESPA suggested the alliance take advantage of its Introduction to Travel Training course, which it did.

The team also reported that TARTA, the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority, equipped its paratransit vehicles with software that assists with scheduling and on-time performance.

The Mobility Alliance received a coalition building grant from the American Public Transportation Association and used this funding to broaden and strengthen its work.

Train the Travel Trainer Workshops

(Excerpt from April 2007 Update)

Team: Palm Beach County, Florida

Year: 2007

The Palm Beach County MPS team also focused on travel training. As a result, hundreds of students with disabilities are enjoying work, school and other community-wide access thanks to local adaptation of an ESPA resource. A project of Palm Tran exemplifies how ESPA's free resources can work for transit and its customers.

Palm Tran, Palm Beach County's public transportation agency, adapted the CD-ROM of *Public Transportation: The Route to Freedom*, a high school curriculum that uses lessons and a 14-minute DVD program to teach students with and without disabilities how to use public transportation. The transit agency developed its own "train-the-travel trainer" workshop program based on this curriculum. In response, 65 to 70 high school teachers in the Palm Beach County School District, who teach alternate assessment students to ride the bus, participated in the training program.

The program was coordinated by RoseAnn LaBella-Voils, who used the teacher's guides as a training curriculum and as part of Palm Tran's training packet. She also used ESPA's *You Can Ride* pictorial booklet, a step-by-step guide to using public bus or paratransit services for people who cannot read, and included a customized copy of the booklet in the training packet.

According to Kristi Hoot of Palm Beach County Public Schools, some of the students who benefited from the Palm Tran program went on to riding public buses to attend classes at community college.

Education, Outreach, and Travel Training

Team: Washington, District of Columbia

Year: 2008

Photo: An MPS team explains their representation of their ideal local transportation system



The Washington, D.C. MPS team's action plan focused on education, outreach, and travel training and through the professional work of the individual team members they were able to reach many of the goals in their action plan. Their work included bus familiarization and travel training for individuals and groups as well as train the travel trainer workshops offered through the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), the regional transit provider.

While most of the initial Washington, D.C. MPS team members either left their respective organizations or took new positions within their organizations, new staff and advocates from the same key organizations replaced these team members. In 2011, the new team members requested technical assistance from ESPA regarding developing a regional travel training consortium. Thus, like so many MPS teams that have seen changes in their membership, the work of Team Washington, D.C. moves forward.

Accessible Taxi Service

Accessible Taxis, Transportation Vouchers, and New Rural Service

Team: Fort Wayne, Indiana

Year: 2008

Photo: ESPA Technical and Information Services Coordinator Ken Thompson assists an MPS team at the 2008 Institute



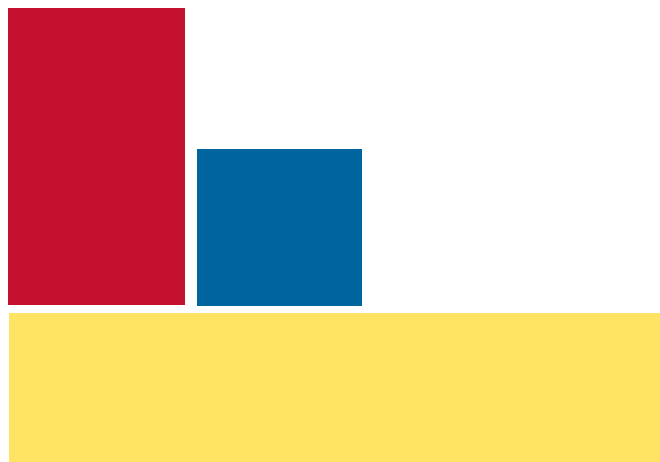
The Fort Wayne MPS team left the MPS Institute with a number of ambitious goals that fell under their broader action plan focus to “provide a continuum of transportation services to meet the mobility needs of Fort Wayne and Allen County residents.” Since then, they have experienced a number of significant successes.

Following the MPS Institute, the team began meeting monthly with the metropolitan planning organization’s Transportation Planning Committee and expanded to include members of that committee as well as the public school transportation coordinator.

The team’s first major accomplishment was to make available accessible vehicles for taxi service to a local taxi service provider and then to offer transportation vouchers through local agencies to reduce the cost to riders for this new 24/7 accessible taxi service.

In addition, the local Council on Aging received \$80,000 in federal funds from the state to initiate a rural public transportation service in January 2009.

Throughout the process, the team also focused on outreach and education. The team gave many presentations to stakeholders in the community, including: the Citilink (the local transit provider) Board, the Council on Aging Board, the Community Transportation Network Board, the League for the Blind and Disabled, the Transportation Planning Committee, the City Safety Board (related to the taxi project), the Urban Transportation Advisory Board, and others.



Accessible Taxis in New York City

(Excerpt from November 2008 Update)

Team: Team Taxi NYC

Year: 2008

Team Taxi NYC came to the 2008 MPS Institute with one goal: to implement accessible taxicab service in New York City.

The New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission approved and launched a two-year pilot project to try out a central dispatch system for wheelchair-accessible vehicles. The testing phase began in August 2008, following the MPS Institute, with some 120 drivers, 59 accessible taxis and 17 passengers with disabilities as testers.

The Taxi NYC team also pursued additional incentives for drivers to fully participate in the program, such as airport privileges through the New York Port Authority or free lunch at certain locations when they make the longer trips necessary to provide accessible rides.

According to Carolyn Castro, disability advocates played a key role in achieving support for the program. "Disability advocates have been essential in aiding communication between smaller organizations and members," she said. "This has been helpful in strategizing incentives and buy in for the program."

Thanks to Team Taxi NYC, the pilot project was a huge success and New York City now has accessible taxicab service.

Assessments and Other Research

Bus Stop Assessments and Increased Fixed-Route Ridership

(Excerpt from December 2006/January 2007 ESPA Update)

Team: Genesee County, Michigan

Year: 2006

Team Genesee County hails from the urbanized area of Flint, which is served by the largest network of transit services in Michigan outside of the Detroit area.

Mae Golden, transportation advocate for The Disability Network, attended ESPA's People on the Move train-the-trainer training in Ann Arbor in April 2005 and initiated the MPS team formation process. The Disability Network already had a working relationship with the assistant general manager of the Mass Transit Authority. In addition, both had contacts with the Metropolitan Planning Commission. The LFA Transportation Coalition, an advocacy group of The Disability Network, which Golden facilitates, brought a fourth perspective to the team. The group met twice prior to applying for MPS, and it was clear that they were all working toward a common goal of improving community services for people of all abilities. Their priority areas of focus included increasing fixed-route ridership for people with disabilities and older adults, increasing transportation options through coordination, bus familiarization, travel training, and other customer supports for using transportation.

Among their accomplishments, the Genesee County team initiated an innovative partnership to assess 100 bus stops using the checklists in ESPA's *Toolkit for the Assessment of Bus Stop Accessibility and Safety*. The MTA selected these stops out of the more than 900 stops served by their routes. The Metropolitan Planning Commission provided a \$25,000 grant for this initiative so that volunteers from the LFA Transportation Coalition conducting the assessments could be paid stipends. Additional organizations got involved in the collaborative effort. For example, the Genesee County Road Commission provided orange safety vests for the assessors. Through a local college, The Disability Network worked with interns to develop the bus stop database.



When asked what words of wisdom she would offer future teams to make the most of their experience, Golden said: "Come with an open mind expecting to gather exceptional tools to take back to your community to improve the quality of transportation for people of all abilities."

Image: ESPA's Toolkit for the Assessment of Bus Stop Accessibility (2006) provides guidelines for optimal bus stop design

Paratransit Eligibility, Paratransit Operations, and Contractual Services

Team: Guam

Year: 2005

The Guam MPS team focused their efforts on an improved paratransit eligibility process, improved paratransit operations, and improved contractual services.

The Guam MPS team experience at the Institute spawned an educational partnership between Guam Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (Guam CEDDERS) with the Guam Public Transportation Division and transportation providers.

Following the Institute, on-site technical assistance was provided through ESPA by Arturo Jackson of Houston Metro-Lift. According to the team, the timing couldn't have been better, as on the second day of the on-site technical assistance, the Guam Supreme Court put out a ruling on a procurement dispute that would end the month-to-month procurement that had beleaguered the transit system since January 2003.

Jackson provided technical assistance on converting to functional assessments for paratransit eligibility, detailing specifications for contractual services, and planning flexibility to reduce ride denials. Jackson's and ESPA's timely guidance helped shape Guam's paratransit eligibility processes, operations, and procurement processes.

"Art's technical assistance to us has been quite helpful," said Ginger Porter.

Research, Education, and Coordination

Team: Southwest Wisconsin

Year: 2007

Photo: Member of the 2007 Southwest Wisconsin MPS team

The Southwest Wisconsin Transit Team (SWTT) attended the 2007 MPS Institute. SWTT was formed in 2006 “to begin exploring ways to collaborate, improve existing transportation services, and ultimately take a regional approach to the provision of transportation services for elderly and disabled individuals.”

In January 2007, SWTT was awarded a Supplemental Transportation Rural Assistance Program (STRAP) planning grant. This grant was used to develop a comprehensive transportation survey.

In April 2007, SWTT invited local transportation providers and stakeholders within the five-county area to participate in a seminar titled, *Coordinating Human Transit Services in Southwest Wisconsin*.

Following the 2007 MPS Institute, SWTT mailed over 3,000 surveys in five counties and distributed these surveys to clients through various human service agency offices. A parallel fleet inventory survey was also administered to transportation providers in the five-county region. Results from these two surveys helped paint a clear picture of supply (vehicles and existing transportation services) and demand (where consumers needed to travel).



Conclusion: Lessons Learned



Photo: Kelly Buckland, executive director of the National Council on Independent Living and member of the ESPA National Steering Committee, speaks at the 2009 MPS Institute

MPS and ATCI teams represent a diverse array of communities. Some teams represent predominantly rural areas while others represent predominantly urban areas. Some start with no or few existing transportation options while others work to coordinate already robust and complex transportation networks. Regardless of their population, varying transportation options, or geography, they all share one common goal: to expand accessible transportation options.

In spite of this common goal, each community faces unique challenges and, through the MPS and ATCI programs, ESPA is there to help guide them through these challenges. These challenges include building trust, dealing with egos and turfism, learning to work effectively with new partners, nurturing strong coalitions, understanding cost allocation in coordinated systems, and determining strategies for identifying and meeting transportation demands with limited financial resources.

Team successes take many forms. Teams work to enhance the role of the disability community in the transportation planning process. Some teams establish travel training programs to increase fixed-route ridership. Others create additional transportation services ranging from new fixed-route lines to transportation voucher programs to increasing the number of accessible vehicles in taxicab fleets. Some teams create flexible service delivery models, such as deviated fixed-route. Others leverage new funding to expand transportation options.

Here are several of the lessons we learned from the MPS and ATCI teams:

(1) As is the case with coordination, systems change is all about relationships.

For example, the San Diego, California MPS team formed a nonprofit organization, FACT, with a primary focus on coordination achieved through the creation of partnerships. The Sumter, South Carolina MPS team, which also focused its efforts on coordination, was part of a larger coalition effort that met monthly. The Pierre, South Dakota team reached out to businesses regarding job access and marketing and advertising and, in time, developed strong partnerships with the business community. The Northwest Ohio MPS team included members of a Mobility Alliance of agencies and organizations that received a coalition building grant from the American Public Transportation Association. And the work of the Palm Beach County, Florida MPS team, which centered on travel training, came to fruition through a partnership between the MPS team, Palm Tran, and the Palm Beach County Public Schools.

(2) Teams that worked together prior to MPS were more likely to continue to work together following the Institute and, consequently, more likely to successfully implement their action plans.

We saw this with MPS teams such as Louisville, Kentucky; Central Iowa; Team Taxi NYC; Genesee County, Michigan; and Southwest Wisconsin, to name just a few.

(3) People change jobs frequently; however, in some cases, new players continued the work of previous team members and brought new energy to the teams.

We learned this not only through our research and follow-up with past MPS team members but also through specific striking examples. Team Washington, D.C., for example, is continuing its work related to travel training with all new team members.

(4) Starting small and building upon success contributes to the staying power of teams.

The Washburn County, Wisconsin MPS team started right away by opening seats on a Ventures Unlimited van that was originally available to older adults and to other members of the public so they, too, could go on shopping trips. This early coordination success led to other successful collaborations.

And the Aiken, South Carolina MPS team started small with education and marketing activities and later went on to develop a one-call center.

(5) Effective education and outreach are essential.

The Alleghany Highlands of Virginia MPS team held a community summit to gather support for its efforts, which resulted in funding that doubled their service. The Middlesex County, New Jersey MPS team also focused its efforts on marketing through its timetable distribution and travel training programs. The Memphis, Tennessee MPS team engaged in bus familiarization presentations in senior centers, libraries, and other community centers. Through marketing its programs and increasing awareness that the fixed-route is accessible, they were able to reduce paratransit ridership while increasing fixed-route ridership. And the Fort Wayne, Indiana MPS team gave numerous presentations to community groups and organizations to garner support for its accessible taxi and rural transportation programs.

(6) It is important to be involved and engaged in the communities you serve.

We learned this through the advice provided by Sumter, South Carolina and Pierre, South Dakota team members. Ron Baumgart of the Pierre, South Dakota MPS team used those precise words in a presentation he gave to MPS teams. And Orlanda Papucci of the Sumter, South Carolina MPS team specifically emphasized the importance of providing assistance to any organization in finding accessible transportation options.



Photo: Speakers and staff members from the 2009 MPS Institute, from left to right: Douglas Birnie, Federal Transit Administration; C. Marie Maus, ESPA; Peter M. Rogoff, Federal Transit Administration; Mary Leary, ESPA; Penny Everline, ESPA; Sue Clark, Federal Transit Administration

(7) Never underestimate the important role customers can play in the systems change process.

For example, in 2006 due to the work of the Ann Arbor, Michigan MPS team along with rider advocates, the Ann Arbor Transit Authority (AATA) Board of Directors decided that further investigation in funding alternatives was needed and, instead of eliminating service, instructed AATA staff to reduce expenses to cover the budget shortfall. Due to the work of the Hampton Roads, Virginia MPS team, the disability community and the transit agency are working together in a much more collaborative manner. The Lane County, Oregon MPS team also regularly engages customers through its advisory committee to its call center as well as through other advisory groups. And the Latah County, Idaho MPS team engages customers through its Mobility Task Force, which, among other accomplishments, helped prioritize accessibility improvements to pedestrian facilities in that community.

(8) Be patient and flexible.

This was exemplified by all MPS/ATCI teams, as systems change is incremental and usually occurs in small steps. But perhaps a striking example of patience and flexibility would be the work of the Guam MPS team, which included changes to procurement processes following a Supreme Court ruling on a prolonged procurement dispute.

(9) Be persistent.

Again, this was exemplified by all the highlighted MPS/ATCI teams. For example, a travel training initiative that grew out of the work of the 2001 Houston, Texas MPS team, called Choices, is still going strong. In addition, Noreen Kuroski of the La Crosse County, Wisconsin MPS team expressed her team's determination despite current fiscal challenges and opposition. "Our efforts will not diminish," said Kuroski.

(10) Just Start.

In the words of Orlando Papucci of the Sumter, South Carolina MPS team: "Just start...don't worry about money at the start it will be an issue, but hopefully as others begin to recognize there is an advocacy group that promotes accessible transportation, they will eventually come to you for guidance."



Photo: The 2008 Sante Fe team's ideal transit system model

Appendix A

List of MPS/ATCI Teams 2001-2010

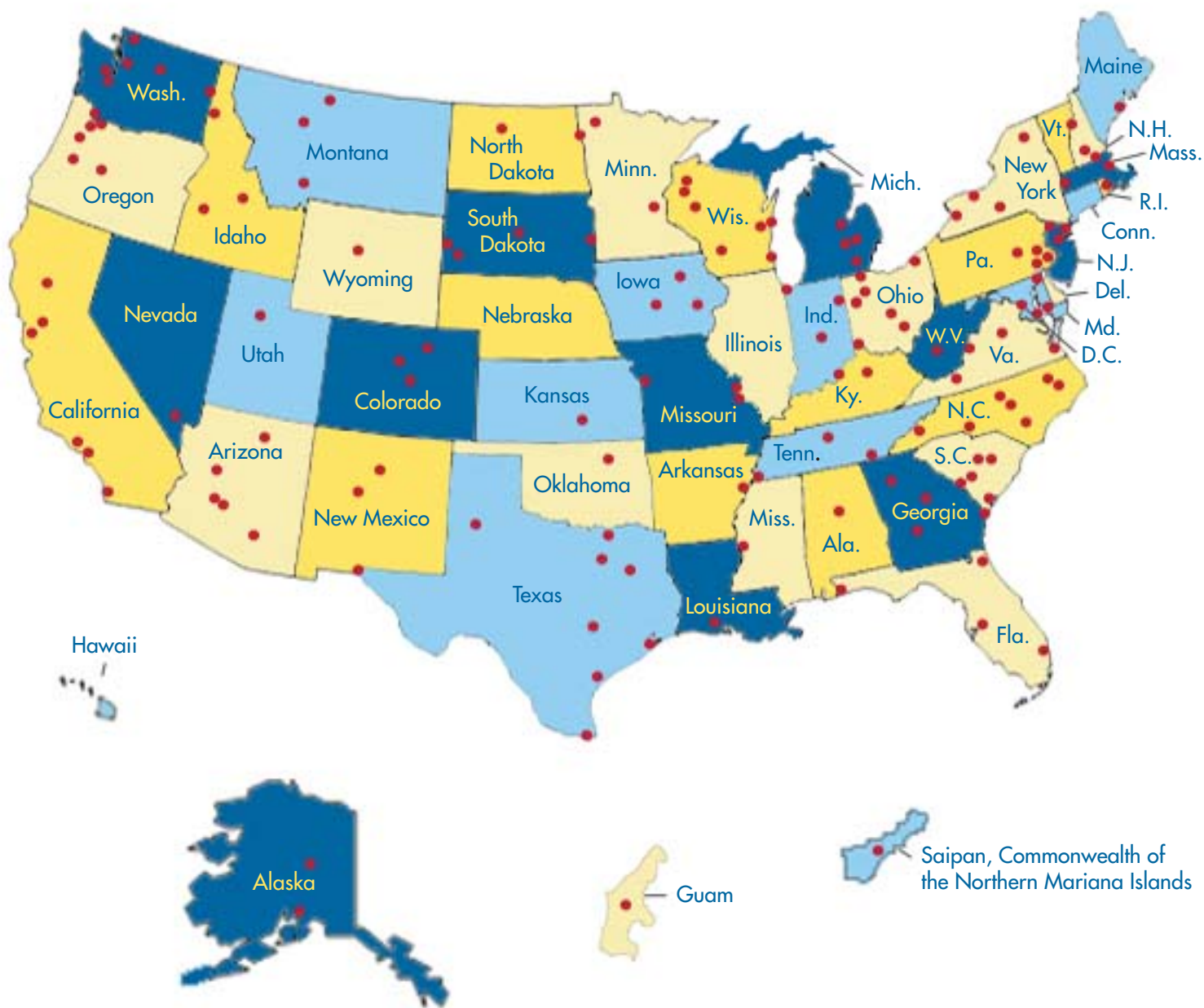
Pensacola, Fla.	(2001)	Rocky Mount, N.C.	(2003)
Boston, Mass.	(2001)	Reading, Pa.	(2003)
Marshall County, Minn.	(2001)	Tyler, Texas	(2003)
Charlotte, N.C.	(2001)	Salt Lake City, Utah	(2003)
Providence, R.I.	(2001)	Pulaski, Va.	(2003)
Olympia, Wash.	(2001)	Mason County, Wash.	(2003)
Vancouver, Wash.	(2001)	Barron County, Wis.	(2003)
Birmingham, Ala.	(2001 & 2002)	Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	(2003)
Stockton, Calif.	(2001 & 2002)	Nashville, Tenn.	(2003 & 2008)
Tampa, Fla.	(2001 & 2002)	Los Angeles, Calif.	(2003 & 2009)
Indianapolis, Ind.	(2001 & 2002)	El Paso, Texas	(2003 & 2010)
Wichita, Kan.	(2001 & 2002)	Seattle (King County), Wash.	(2003 & 2010)
Kansas City, Mo.	(2001 & 2002)	Phoenix, Ariz.	(2003 & 2007)
St. Louis, Mo.	(2001 & 2002)	Palm Beach County, Fla.	(2003 & 2007)
Great Falls, Mont.	(2001 & 2002)	Tucson, Ariz.	(2005)
Philadelphia, Pa.	(2001 & 2002)	Butte County, Calif.	(2005)
Hampton, Va.	(2001 & 2002)	San Diego, Calif.	(2005)
Corpus Christi, Texas	(2001, 2002 & 2005)	Des Moines, Iowa	(2005)
Memphis, Tenn.	(2001, 2002 & 2007)	Covington, Ky.	(2005)
Orange County, Calif.	(2001 & 2006)	Manchester, N.H.	(2005)
Louisville, Ky.	(2001 & 2006)	Greensboro, N.C.	(2005)
Houston, Texas	(2001, 2002 & 2009)	Greenville, N.C.	(2005)
Toledo, Ohio	(2002)	Columbus, Ohio	(2005)
Anchorage, Alaska	(2003)	Portland, Ore.	(2005)
Lee County, Ark.	(2003)	Salem, Ore.	(2005)
Colorado Springs, Colo.	(2003)	Columbia, S.C.	(2005)
Savannah, Ga.	(2003)	Pierre, S.D.	(2005)
Monroe-Randolph Counties, Ill.	(2003)	Lubbock, Texas	(2005)
Lake County, Ind.	(2003)	Sherman, Texas	(2005)
Brunswick, Maine	(2003)	Spokane, Wash.	(2005)
Calvert-Charles-St. Mary's Counties, Md.	(2003)	Whatcom, Wash.	(2005)
Midland-Saginaw Counties, Mich.	(2003)	Milwaukee, Wis.	(2005)
Gallatin-Madison-Park Counties, Mont.	(2003)	Guam	(2005)
Las Vegas, Nev.	(2003)	Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska	(2006)

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Jacksonville, Fla.	(2006)	Fort Wayne/Allen County, Ind.	(2008)
Harford County, Md.	(2006)	Central Iowa Team	(2008)
Genesee County, Mich.	(2006)	Lafayette, La.	(2008)
Ann Arbor, Mich.	(2006)	Berkshire County, Mass.	(2008)
Polk County, Minn./East Grand Forks, N.D.	(2006)	Vicksburg, Miss.	(2008)
North Country N.H./Vt.	(2006)	Middlesex County, N.J.	(2008)
Valencia County, N.M.	(2006)	Taxi NYC	(2008)
Erie County, N.Y.	(2006)	Rochester, N.Y.	(2008)
Lake County, Ohio	(2006)	Haywood County, N.C.	(2008)
Multnomah-Clackamas- Washington Counties, Ore.	(2006)	Northwest Ohio Team	(2008)
Montgomery County, Pa.	(2006)	Lane County, Ore.	(2008)
Aiken County, S.C.	(2006)	Low Country, S.C.	(2008)
Santee Wateree Region, S.C.	(2006)	Brookings County, S.D.	(2008)
Spearfish, S.D.	(2006)	Black Hills of South Dakota	(2008)
Capital Area Region, Texas	(2006)	Brownsville, Texas	(2008)
Thomas Jefferson District, Va.	(2006)	Manitowoc County, Wis.	(2008)
Washburn County, Wis.	(2006)	Western Wisconsin Team	(2008)
City of Surprise, Ariz.	(2007)	Chelan County, Wash.	(2009)
Santa Clara County, Calif.	(2007)	Cobb County, Ga.	(2009)
Augusta, Ga.	(2007)	Delaware County, Pa.	(2009)
Latah County, Idaho	(2007)	Greeley & Weld Counties, Colo.	(2009)
Lower Eastern Shore of Md.	(2007)	Johnson County, Iowa	(2009)
Twin Cities, Minn.	(2007)	Lexington, Ky.	(2009)
Contoocook Valley, N.H.	(2007)	Souris Basin, N.D.	(2009)
Santa Fe Collaboration Broup, N.M.	(2007)	North Central Idaho	(2009)
North Country/Franklin County, N.Y.	(2007)	Northern Arizona	(2009)
Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit/Ithica, N.Y.	(2007)	Oshkosh, Wis.	(2009)
Cumberland County, N.C.	(2007)	Southeast Tennessee	(2009)
City of Tulsa, Okla.	(2007)	Shiawassee County, Mich.	(2009)
Bend, Ore.	(2007)	Sussex County, N.J.	(2009)
Alleghany Highlands of Va.	(2007)	Treasure Valley, Idaho	(2009)
Kanawha County, W.V.	(2007)	Allen County, Ohio	(2010)
Southwest Wisconsin Transit Team	(2007)	Chatham County, N.C.	(2010)
State of Wyoming	(2007)	City of Logan/Hocking County, Ohio	(2010)
Central Yavapai MPO, Ariz.	(2008)	Coastal Bend (Corpus Christi), Texas	(2010)
Washington, D.C.	(2008)	Dallas County, Texas	(2010)
Central Florida Team	(2008)	Jefferson County, Colo.	(2010)
Rides for All Georgians (statewide)	(2008)	Kentuckiana (Louisville) Region Ky., Ind.	(2010)
		North Central Region, Mont.	(2010)
		City of Waverly & Bremer County, Iowa	(2010)

Appendix B

Map of MPS/ATCI Teams 2001-2010



Note: Hawaii, Alaska, Guam, and Saipan are not drawn to scale

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Easter Seals Project ACTION is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration.
9/2011

