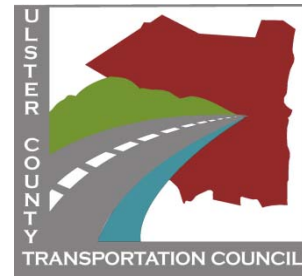


Ulster County Transportation Council Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan



2015 Update – MAP-21 5310 Program Requirement

PURPOSE OF UPDATE

This update of the Ulster County Transportation Council's ("UCTC") *Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan* ("Coordinated Plan") is an addendum to the UCTC 2010 Coordinated Plan. Its purpose is to ensure compliance with the FTA Section 5310 project solicitation issued by the New York State Department of Transportation in April of 2015 by assessing and updating local needs regarding specialized transportation services in Ulster County. A full update of the Coordinated Plan is included in the UCTC Unified Planning Work Program and is expected to begin in the fall of 2015.

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORIZATION ACT

The current Federal Transportation Authorization Act –Moving Ahead for Progress in the Twentieth Century (MAP-21) – was signed into law in July 2012 and took effect on October 1, 2012 (FFY2013). Among the many changes to Federal programs included in MAP-21 were the consolidation of various funding sources for specialized transportation services, such as JARC, New Freedom and Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities programs.

MAP-21 made significant changes to the JARC and New Freedom programs: it eliminated the JARC program and consolidated the New Freedom and the Section 5310 Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities Program into a new program – **Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities**. Job access and reverse commute activities are now an eligible expense under the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program.

The former Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) required that projects for JARC, New Freedom and Section 5310 programs be derived from a *Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan* ("Coordinated Plan"). MAP-21 retains the requirement for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to maintain a Coordinated Plan that must be used to guide funding decisions for the new Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility program.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) described a coordinated plan as a "unified, comprehensive strategy for public transportation service delivery that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited income, laying out strategies for meeting these needs and prioritizing services." Under MAP-21, the Formula Grants for enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (5310) is the only funding program with coordinated planning requirements. This Coordinated Plan update is intended to meet this requirement while providing a "blueprint" for implementing a range of strategies to advance local coordination efforts to improve all transportation services

The Federal Transit Administration proposed that the Coordinated Plan follow the update cycles for metropolitan transportation plans (i.e., four years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas and five years in air quality attainment areas). UCTC last updated its Coordinated Plan in March 2010 in line with the completion of its Year 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (completed in August 2010). In accordance with FTA guidance, the UCTC Coordinated Plan is scheduled for its next update in the fall of 2015, to be completed in concert with the 5-year update of its Long Range Transportation Plan.

FEDERAL 5310 FUNDING PROGRAM

The Section 5310 program was established in 1975 as a discretionary capital assistance program. In cases where public transit was inadequate or inappropriate, the program awarded grants to private non-profit organizations to serve the transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities. FTA, on behalf of the Secretary of Transportation, apportions the funds appropriated annually to the States based on an administrative formula that considers the number of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities in each State. These funds are subject to annual appropriations.

Under MAP 21 the program now provides grant funds for **capital and operating expenses** to recipients for:

- Public transportation projects planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable;
- Public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.);
- Public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance on complementary paratransit; and
- Alternatives to public transportation projects that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities with transportation.

Entities eligible to receive 5310 funding include the following:

- a. A private non-profit organization, if public transportation service provided by State and local governmental authorities under Section 5310(a)(1) is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate; or
- b. A governmental authority that:
 1. is approved by the State to coordinate services for elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities; or
 2. certifies that there are not any non-profit organizations readily available in the area to provide the special services.

NYSDOT 5310 SOLICITATION

NYSDOT issued its most recent project solicitation for 5310 funds in April of 2015. The solicitation includes funding from Federal Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014. Two separate urban areas have been allocated 5310 funds that are available to eligible entities that provide or will provide service within Ulster County. The first consists of the Kingston Urbanized Area (UZA 457) and the second is the Mid-Hudson Valley Urbanized Area (UZA-89) that includes the counties of Ulster, Orange, and Dutchess. In addition, the rural portions of Ulster County are eligible for consideration of funding that is available state-wide.

The timing of the NYSDOT solicitation is inconsistent with UCTC's planned comprehensive update of its Coordinated Plan. Therefore, to ensure that eligible entities were not at a disadvantage in seeking funding under the 5310 Program UCTC conducted an interim update of its Coordinated Plan.

UPDATE METHODOLOGY

UCTC reviewed the current 2010 Plan as well as the 2012 Transit System Coordinated Development Plan for continued viability of the recommendations contained in each. In addition, UCTC reviewed notes of its stakeholder meetings being conducted as part of the required update of its Long Range Transportation Plan. Finally, UCTC initiated several meetings with specialized transportation service providers and other local and county stakeholders beginning in late 2014. The purpose of these meetings was to better understand the ongoing needs and priorities to improve specialized transportation services in Ulster County. A final meeting was conducted with expected applicants for the 5310 funding in May of 2015. Information gathered during these meetings as well as through the review of existing transit development plans identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited income, and provides strategies for meeting these needs and prioritizing services.

STRATEGIES

Elderly and Disabled transportation services are provided numerous agencies both public and private serving a wide geographic area and are only occasionally integrated into the broader fabric of the transit system. Within Ulster County there has been a consistent effort to integrate these services when provided by a public agency with those of the public transit provider while maintaining the care and knowledge of the agency. The overarching objective is to broaden all agency understanding of the potential for more effective transit service and less cost by integrating the carriers into a coordinated transit system in a manner that reduces overlaps, and increases services while maintaining the overall independence of the operators to meet their special needs. The following strategies are in keeping with this overall objective:

Expand ADA Service Area

Ulster County Area Transit (UCAT) services all of the major corridors in the county utilizing fixed routes. This center to center service meets both commuter and captive transit individuals. However the fixed route service misses significant areas of the county that are away from major corridors. The current ADA requirement for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile service beyond the fixed route still leaves many seniors and disabled without reliable service.

Expanding this service area to 1.5 miles will provide significantly better service for this population and support a preferred age-in-place scenario for many.

Support Personalized Senior and Disabled Service

Many seniors and individuals with disabilities are unable to access transit even when available from curb to curb. Long driveways, difficulty with packages, trip lengths, and required transfers, combine to create significant barriers to traditional transit services for this increasing segment of the elderly population. “Neighbor to Neighbor” programs offer an opportunity to provide personalized service that meet the needs of this segment and can be done using carefully screened willing volunteers with reimbursement for mileage expenses.

Support and Expand Public Access to Non- Profit Agencies with Transit Capabilities

Many non-profit agencies caring for seniors and individuals with disabilities have transit capabilities. Change to the model of care (SCOTUS Olmsted decision) has increased the need for these services. Supporting these agencies transit needs ensures that seniors, the disabled and low-income populations have access to employment, job training, and essential services. In addition, opportunities exist to integrate a client based transit system into the public transit system by such assistance including appropriate operating agreements with public carriers.

Support Public Agency Senior and Disabled Transit Needs

Public agencies such as the Office of Aging and Veterans Affairs have intimate knowledge of their clients including their transit needs. Combining this knowledge and administrative capabilities with the ability to provide demand responsive transit service ensures that the elderly and the disabled can get needed care, life essentials, and maintain a quality of life that includes socialization. Such demand responsive service should be actively integrated into the public system. In addition, it is best to combine the strengths of a public transit agency to maintain and service vehicles with the client knowledge and care of the service agency.

Mobility Management

The nature of elderly and disabled transportation services as discussed above assures that a mobility management focus across providers will bear fruit. How this should be structured has not been finalized, however, the stakeholder meetings suggest that this is more about awareness than special staffing at this time. Although likely not eligible for funding under 5310 convening agencies semi annually on the current routes, capital needs, and service coordination is a first step to a more robust coordination effort. In particular, such meetings should discuss how agencies operate to ensure that the elderly and disabled individuals have a continuum of transit service to meet their needs. The likely success of this arrangement can be found in the similarities between this type of coordination and the Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) Continuum of Care requirements for addressing services for the homeless.

Service Providers Capabilities and Transit Assets

Decisions for funding for the 5310 Program should come with a clear understanding of the service providers assets, their commitment to the service, and a willingness to be part of a broader transit system where possible.