

**Executive Summary**

**Catawba Regional**

**Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan**



**Prepared by**  
**Catawba Regional Council of Governments**



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## Executive Summary

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## **BACKGROUND**

The CATAWBA REGIONAL HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PLAN was developed through the work of Catawba Regional Council of Governments (CRCOG) and South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and prepared by TranSystems. The Catawba Region consists of Chester, Lancaster, Union, and York Counties which are located in the north-central part of South Carolina.

The CATAWBA REGIONAL HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PLAN is designed to assist with development of an efficient and effective transit service network for the region. Additionally, the plan will ensure the Catawba Region's compliance with certain federal public transit funding requirements. Under the federal transportation bill, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), in order to be eligible for some Federal funding programs, a locally developed human services coordination plan must be completed by 2007, and subsequently will provide the basis for funding decision for Federal Fiscal Year 2008.

According to federal requirements, this coordination plan must include, but is not limited to, involvement of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human service providers and the general public. Catawba Region's plan goes beyond the scope of federal requirements and includes coordinating efforts required by other governmental agencies. Future updates and program specific initiatives can be made more easily because of the adaptability of this plan.

The coordination plan consists of three parts: (1) INVENTORY OF SERVICES and TRANSPORTATION NEEDS, (2) STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS to fulfill those needs, and (3) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN. Each part of the plan was developed through input and feedback from CRCOG representatives during meetings with SCDOT and representatives of human services transportation. These steps assist the plan in meeting the requirements of SAFETEA-LU. South Carolina DOT is concurrently conducting a statewide plan, which involves significant public outreach efforts to better understand the transportation needs in the State.

## **I. INVENTORY OF SERVICES and TRANSPORTATION NEEDS**

Currently, 62 federal government funding programs are aimed at providing human services transportation with 16 specifically for public transit. Of the 16 programs specifically designated for public transit, six programs are funded in the Catawba Region by US Department of Transportation (USDOT) through the Federal Transit Administration.

The six USDOT public transportation programs funded through SAFETEA-LU in the Catawba Region are:



1. Section 5307: Urbanized Area Formula Program
2. Section 5309: Capital Grants
3. Section 5310: Transportation for the elderly and persons with disabilities
4. Section 5311: Nonurbanized Area Formula Program
5. Section 5316: Job Access and Reverse Commute
6. Section 5317: New Freedom for disabled workers

It should be noted that Sections 5316 and 5317 funding will start in the region in 2008.

The ten non USDOT programs providing transportation in the Catawba region are:

1. Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
2. Vocational Rehabilitation
3. Medicaid
4. Head Start
5. Grants for Supportive Services and Senior Centers (Older Americans Act)
6. Workforce Investment Act (WIA)—Adults
7. WIA—Youth
8. WIA—Displaced Workers
9. Program for Native Americans
10. Senior Community Service Employment program

Various SC agencies administer the above programs.

A major concern of human transportation service providers is the perceived funding barriers required from the above listed programs. This perception is not always correct. The findings of this plan indicate that government programs from the federal, state, and local level do not restrict coordination through regulations, but that practical and programmatic issues do at times make coordination efforts somewhat difficult.

Coordination efforts may be a challenge if funding programs have different requirements for who is eligible to receive service or if guidelines demand the use of certain technologies. To meet these requirements, coordination challenges must overcome the administrative (referring to the use of funds) and service delivery (referring to special requirements) issues. Finding and implementing creative solutions will make sharing resources and coordination a reality.

## **Demographics**

The demographic characteristics of the Catawba region vary. York County and the upper portion of Lancaster County are closely linked with the Charlotte urban area, and have a relatively young and affluent population. However, the other, more rural counties have an older population as well as a higher proportion of lower-income residents. In the areas closest to Charlotte, there appears to be a growing need for commuter-oriented transit services, whereas in the remaining counties, transit needs are likely to be more centered on providing access to basic needs.



### Available Services

The City of Rock Hill provides express bus service daily to downtown Charlotte. This service is operated by the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS). York County and the City of Rock Hill have made available “York County Access” a demand response service for the residents of rural York County and the Rock Hill urbanized area. Chester County offers its residents demand response services countywide through the “Chester County Connector.” Other organizations in the four counties offer human service transportation services, but these services are limited and generally provided for their own clients. Examples of these organizations are Chester & Lancaster, Union and York Disabilities and Special Needs, Veterans Affairs and Carolina Community Action.

### Needs and Issues

According to Catawba Regional’s Advisory Participants, the lack of public transportation services makes residents face challenges of long trips to get to needed employment, commercial, medical or government destinations. Some residents also have special transportation needs because of conditions such as advanced age, lack of income, or disabilities. Providing transportation is particularly challenging in the rural areas of the Catawba Region with long distances between destinations and limited local resources. The SCDOT Catawba Region Survey and the Catawba Human Service Provider Survey provide feedback on these issues. Catawba Regional COG understands that establishing and supporting transit efforts require significant and continuing commitments. Additionally, Catawba Regional COG realizes that to achieve effective planning and coordination of transportation services, efforts must take place over a long period of time.

Catawba Region’s overall human services transportation needs and issues raised during coordination planning were:

- Maintain and create more service (more days, hours, geographic coverage)
- Demonstration of coordination activities
- Applicable laws, e.g., Jacob’s Law
- Insurance coverage
- Explore mobility manager concept
- Address service standards and performance requirements
- Deal with cost allocation among operators

## II. COORDINATION STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Coordination strategies and actions were developed in the plan to address the transportation needs confronting the region. Three strategic areas were developed to address the identified “needs and issues.” The three strategic areas are the *administrative* strategy (procedural and paper barriers inhibiting coordination), the *information sharing/capacity management* strategy (sharing of resources in the region),

and the *future operations planning* strategy (future needs and looks for ways resources can be shared in order to increase efficiencies).

The table below summarizes the strategies and actions developed by the regional advisory participants to address Catawba's identified needs and issues.

Table X - 1: Coordination Strategies

NEED/ISSUES	AREAS OF ACTION		
	Administrative	Information Sharing and Capacity Development	Future Operations Planning
<b>1. Demonstrate Coordination Activities</b>	Be involved with various groups and organizations that coordinate transportation	Exhibit willingness to coordinate by developing mutually agreed upon projects	Impart information on available transportation capacity
<b>2. Maintain Existing Services</b>		Secure funding for replacement vehicles and ongoing operations	Determine effect changes have to existing services
		Offer access to jobs, skills development, and training programs	Increase efficiencies to create more services
		Offer community access	
<b>3. Create New Services</b>	Provide opportunities for joint partnerships	Better share resources through managing driver and vehicle availability	Identify future needs
		Better understand trip origins and destinations	Prioritize emerging service needs
		Secure funding for new vehicles and operations	Identify additional opportunities and resources
		Offer access to jobs, skills development and training programs	
		Provide community access	
<b>4. Applicable Laws, e.g., Jacob's Law</b>	Raise awareness of constraints created by various laws	Analyze laws to determine real or perceived constraints	Effect public policy changes, if appropriate
<b>5. Insurance Coverage</b>	Identify barriers that inhibit resource sharing because of insurance constraints		
<b>6. Mobility Manager</b>		Define scope for a mobility manager	Analyze need and fiscal requirements for development
		Establish a call center with tools to assist with scheduling trips on unused seats	
<b>7. Service Standards</b>	Identify and agree upon common performance and service standards among partners	Create joint, cooperative programs utilizing resources of various partners	Execute MOUs among service partners
			Develop common standards for driver training and qualifications
			Set up mechanisms for sharing driver information, such as background checks
<b>8. Cost Allocation</b>	Develop cost allocation plan among service partners	Share allocation plan among service partners	Promote understanding of actual costs for providing transportation

### III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

The strategies and actions presented in this plan only set the stage for enhanced coordination. More work is needed if these actions are to be converted into concrete steps or projects. “Projects” will be the steps necessary to fulfill the strategies and actions identified in the plan.

Projects should advance through a working group consisting of key stakeholders from each county in the Catawba region. The working group needs to identify the goal or end result of their task so that this can become the guiding principle for any project. Steps must then be defined as to how the goal or end result will be achieved, and then the group must identify and take the first step to get the project underway.

Once a working group is formed, Catawba Regional COG will need to develop criteria for selecting the order in which projects are undertaken and implemented. This process should consider type and amount of resources available, technical difficulty, time needed for completion, and how the project addresses immediate or long term needs.

Criteria for project prioritization should be developed. Prioritization of projects will result in selecting projects that affect specific areas or the region as a whole. This consideration can be challenging because funding sources may target a specific group for funding. But even though a project may result in a small number of persons affected because of funding requirements, the impact may be great. The amount of effort (called scope of effort) a project takes is also relevant in project prioritization. The scope of effort identifies what kinds of technical skills the project may require and whether a working group has the abilities and time to contribute to the project or if outside assistance is required.

As the Catawba Regional Council of Governments begins planning projects for the future, this CATAWBA REGIONAL HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PLAN will be a guide in accomplishing the actions set forth in the plan. The services provided to this region can be coordinated more efficiently, and the next steps the Catawba Regional Council of Governments takes in the future will help in achieving this goal.



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