

Needs, Strategies, and Next Steps for Travel Training in Alameda County



ACTIA Coordination Summit
May 21, 2009

Recap of January Summit

Key Themes:

- Promoting more effective use of fixed-route services
 - Travel training, transit amenities, partnerships with ethnic and cultural communities, accessible path of travel to transit stops
- Better coordination of trips and services between cities and counties
- More mobility options to address “gaps”
 - Residents of areas with no service coverage, individuals with dementia, same-day options, accessible taxis, volunteer drive/escort programs

Recap of January Summit

Key Themes:

- Better communication among social service agencies, medical facilities, and transportation providers
- More senior living facilities near mixed-use development, transit
- Legislators' lack of understanding of issues
- Resource constraints

Recap of January Summit

“Magic Wand” Scenarios Included:

- More/expanded strategies for education, outreach, and training regarding the *full range* of transportation options
- Improved availability of travel planning information and assistance in multiple languages
- Holistic approach to creating aging-friendly communities, working with local planners and public works officials

Travel Training in a Nutshell

- *Travel training* encompasses a spectrum of approaches to promoting use of public transit by demystifying transit systems, teaching skills, and providing information to potential riders
- Key benefits for consumers:
 - Expanded mobility options and geographic reach
 - Access to same-day transportation options
 - Cost savings (compared with paratransit, taxis)
- Key benefits for providers:
 - Increased transit ridership
 - Reduced costs for paratransit service provision

Active Programs and Tested Models

- ACTIA Gap Grant Cycle 3 (FY 06-07)
 - Successful projects sponsored by ACTIA/City of Fremont, CIL, USOAC, and LAVTA/Wheels
 - Projects in North, East, and South County
 - Group training for older adults
 - One-on-one training for people with disabilities
 - Training in ethnic and cultural communities
 - Development of *Alameda County Older Adult Group Travel Training Manual*
 - Valuable support from transit agency staff

Active Programs and Tested Models

- In Gap Grant Cycle 4 (FY 08-09), Travel Training remains a key focus area
 - **Mobility Matters!:** A multi-faceted program co-sponsored by USOAC, CIL, and BORP in North and Central County
 - **Learn BART!:** A visual training tool focused on the needs of people with low vision, cognitive impairments, and limited English readers
- Ongoing training by LAVTA/Wheels and City of Fremont

Sample of Lessons Learned

- Initial barriers for novice riders can be considerable
 - Concerns about getting lost and safety, stamina issues, language barriers
- Making transit information available in native languages of riders is critical
- Additional challenges in areas with limited transit coverage and frequency
- Cultural norms play an important role in attitudes toward transit use and travel training

Sample of Needs Identified

- Tailored transit information:
 - Bus stop specific schedule information, and timepoints provided at bus stops
 - More precise information about actual bus stop locations
 - Larger font sizes
- Post-training trip planning and support in native language
- More bus shelters and benches

Emerging Opportunities

- New city-based shuttle services act as a “bridge” between paratransit and fixed-route transit
 - More personalized, tailored service for populations that may face barriers to shifting trips to transit
- New connections/coordination between city-based shuttles have travel training implications
 - Hayward Round-About/San Leandro Flex Shuttle now linked via BART or AC Transit
- Shuttle services as venue for encouraging riders to try transit
 - Pleasanton Transit Ambassadors will use city’s Downtown Route to market Wheels services

ACTIA New Freedom Grant

- Federal New Freedom program a key source of funds for travel training programs
- Opportunity today to inform ACTIA's grant application, identify partnerships, ensure that proposed program meets key needs
- Bay Area New Freedom applications due to MTC by June 26, 2009

New Freedom Grant Overview (as currently proposed)

- Focused in Southern Alameda County, with aim to lay groundwork for countywide expansion
- Training for seniors and people with disabilities
 - Target groups include older adults who have not yet qualified for paratransit, new users of mobility devices, city paratransit program registrants, those with limited English proficiency

New Freedom Grant Overview (as currently proposed)

- Classroom and field training
 - AC Transit, Union City Transit, BART
- Emphasis on peer-to-peer support networks
- Revise curricula and Alameda County training manual using lessons learned
- *Current partners:* City of Fremont, City of Newark, Union City Transit, AC Transit, BART, Community Ambassador Program for Seniors

Funding Sources

- Grants that specifically fund travel training for the general public appear to be limited
- A recent survey of 74 travel training programs across the nation found:
 - Nine out of 10 programs have a single funding source
 - 50% were federally funded (primarily by operating funds of public transportation providers)
 - Nonfederal sources included local property tax, sales tax, municipal budgets, State Department of Education, special state grants or transportation funds, private foundations, and United Way

Funding Sources

- **FTA New Freedom Program:** Projects that reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the mobility options available to people with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act
 - <http://www.mtc.ca.gov/funding/FTA/>
 - http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_3549.html
 - Summer 2009 call for projects (MTC administers)

Funding Sources

- **ACTIA Gap Grant Program:** Projects that reduce differences in services based on geographic residence or meet priority established by PAPCO
 - Call for Cycle 5 planned for Fall of 2009
 - Public agencies and certain non-profits eligible to apply for funds
 - \$4 million available in Cycle 3; maximum award of \$500,000

Funding Sources

- **MTC Lifeline Transportation Program:**
Community-based transportation projects that result in improved mobility for low-income Bay Area residents
 - Public agencies, transit operators, non-profits, private operators of public transportation services can apply
 - Projects may focus on transportation needs of low-income older adults and people with disabilities
 - Administered by the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency

Funding Sources

Others?

Vision for Travel Training in Alameda County

Current efforts and New Freedom grant are a great start, but what's the long-term vision?

Previously identified goals:

- Countywide availability of travel training on an ongoing basis
- Training approaches and resources that meet a range of needs (i.e., are tailored to older adults, people with disabilities, limited English speakers, cultural and ethnic communities)
- *Others?*

Roundtable:

Travel Training Needs and Strategies

- In what way(s) is travel training important to your community or the people you serve?
- What are the current barriers to providing travel training?
- What does a travel training program need to offer to be effective in your community?

Roundtable:

Travel Training Needs and Strategies

- What role could your organization or agency take in supporting or implementing travel training in a countywide program?
- What would you need to make this happen?