



**LONG TERM TRANSPORTATION CAPACITY BUILDING
SERVICES**

FINAL REPORT



Submitted by:



CAPE ANN TRANSPORTATION OPERATING CO., INC.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This purpose of this study is to improve employment transportation options for persons with disabilities in Southern Essex County, MA. The study was funded as part of a Workforce Incentive Grant from the U. S. Department of Labor, awarded to the Southern Essex Workforce Investment Board (SEWIB) in partnership with a group of human service agencies referred to as the North Shore Employment Consortium (NoSEC). The NoSEC partners include: the North Shore Career Centers, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Department of Mental Health, Department of Mental Retardation, and Independent Living Centers of the North Shore and Cape Ann, Inc.

The overall objective of the Workforce Incentive Grant is to make employment opportunities more accessible to individuals with disabilities, through such priority actions as: improving transportation options, employer education, procurement and installation of adaptive technologies and equipment, and disability awareness training for Career Center staff. The transportation component of the grant, which is the subject of this study, focuses on: (1) the determination of the specific transportation problems and barriers that are preventing or limiting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and (2) the development of strategies for reducing or eliminating these barriers.

The Cape Ann Transportation Operating Co., Inc. (CATOC) of Gloucester, MA was selected by SEWIB through a request for proposal process to conduct this study. CATOC is a private non-profit company that operates the transportation services for the Cape Ann Transportation Authority, one of the public transportation providers in the Southern Essex area. Kay Nordstrom and Norm Ketola from CATOC were the Transportation Specialists responsible for the study. The study was performed during the six month time period from January – June 2003.

The key elements of the study were: (1) to determine the employment transportation needs of persons with disabilities, (2) to conduct an inventory of existing transportation services, (3) to identify the gaps in existing transportation options, and (4) to develop an Action Plan to address the gaps in transportation and reduce barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.

An assessment of the employment transportation needs for disabled persons was performed through interviews with staff at each of the participating NoSEC partners. From these interviews, a data sample representing 164 individuals with disabilities was used to identify and categorize specific transportation problems in the Southern Essex region. One of the key findings of the needs analysis was a lack of public transportation services along Route 1 in Peabody, Danvers and Saugus, along Route 114 in Peabody, Danvers and Middleton, and to the major industrial parks in Peabody, Gloucester and Beverly. These areas contained many retail, manufacturing and service employment opportunities. Another finding was that the range of affordable fares was between \$.50 - \$3.00 per trip.

The inventory of available transportation options included two public transportation providers, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) and some thirty private transportation providers with experience in

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transporting persons with disabilities. Information relating to service area, days and hours of service, fares, response time, service capacity constraints, etc. were collected and analyzed. The fares charged by private transportation providers, which ranged from taxi rates of \$1.50 per mile upward to \$13.50 per trip (within 10 miles) were cost prohibitive for regular employment transportation. Within the public transportation options, the level of service varied widely depending upon whether the disabled person qualified for Americans with Disabilities (ADA) complementary paratransit service, where the person was going to or from, and the time of travel.

The major “gaps” in public transportation services currently being offered include: (1) lack of knowledge of transportation options, (2) disparity of services provided to those who are ADA eligible and those who are not, (3) uneven public transportation coverage within Southern Essex County, and (4) limitations due to hours of service.

Based on the known gaps in public transportation options and input from the NoSEC partners, an Action Plan was developed focusing on the following activities: (1) providing specialized transportation advisory services to the staffs of the North Shore Career Centers and local human service providers, (2) coordinating transportation planning efforts with local employers, and (3) developing plans to fill the actual gaps in available public transportation services.

The Action Plan is expected to accomplish both immediate and long term measurable results. Immediate results will occur as knowledge gaps start to disappear. Long term results will be achieved through the development of transportation improvement plans that eliminate the actual gaps in transportation options. These actions are expected to achieve significant progress toward the goal of a seamless public transportation network that will enable universal access to employment and other aspects of community life by reducing the transportation barriers now experienced by persons with disabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the primary barriers to employment and better job opportunities faced by many persons with disabilities is the difficulty of actually getting to a work location. Based on a sample of 164 individuals with disabilities that have transportation problems, as identified through the data collection efforts in this study: 33% were willing and able to work, but unemployed, 60% were working, but having significant difficulty getting to the job, 5% were working, but hours and income were limited as a result of transportation issues and 2% were working but employment options were limited to those within walking distance.

This study is aimed at improving employment transportation options for persons with disabilities in Southern Essex County, MA. To accomplish this, the specific problems and barriers that are preventing or limiting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities were determined, and strategies leading to an Action Plan were developed for reducing or eliminating these barriers.

The following data collection and assessment tasks were performed in order to determine the transportation barriers currently being experienced by persons with disabilities,

- Interviews with the staff of the North Shore Employment Consortium (NoSEC) member agencies, with direct experience in providing services for persons with disabilities, were conducted to identify the specific transportation problems of individual clients
- An inventory and assessment of local public and private transportation providers was conducted to determine the available options for employment transportation for disabled persons

The results of these two tasks were used to identify a series of “gaps” in the current transportation system serving the Southern Essex region. These gaps must be filled as part of the long term strategy to develop a truly seamless system for ensuring that those disabled persons, who are willing and capable, are able to travel to the most suitable and desirable employment opportunities anywhere in the Southern Essex region.

The Action Plan presents the overall approach to achieving the long term strategy cited above. This Plan was developed through the cooperative efforts of the NoSEC partners. These same agencies have contributed valuable staff time for researching and documenting specific examples of the transportation problems and barriers that their clients face as they consider suitable employment opportunities.

The following sections provide the details of the planning effort and the comprehensive strategy for achieving the goal of developing a seamless employment transportation system in the region:

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- **Transportation Resources and Providers in Southern Essex County**
- **Employment Transportation Needs**
- **Gaps in Employment Transportation Options for Persons with Disabilities**
- **Action Plan for Improving Transportation Capacity**

TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES AND PROVIDERS IN SOUTHERN ESSEX COUNTY

The Southern Essex Workforce Investment Board (SEWIB) serves nineteen (19) cities and towns in Essex County, MA. Within this area, there are two public transportation providers, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) that serves thirteen (13) communities and the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) that serves four (4) communities. There are two communities unserved by public transportation. The map included in Appendix 1 shows the service areas of SEWIB, the MBTA (within the SEWIB area) and CATA. There are also numerous private transportation providers serving the area. Both the public and private providers are discussed below.

Before discussing the specific parameters of the MBTA and CATA Americans with Disabilities (ADA) services, a brief overview of the ADA regulations relating to public transportation is included as background information.

- ADA paratransit service is intended for persons who cannot independently use fixed route public transportation.
- Eligibility is based on functional ability, not on disability alone (a disability in of itself does not guarantee ADA eligibility).
- The level of ADA complementary paratransit service is meant to be comparable to the level of service provided to individuals who use fixed route.
- ADA complementary paratransit is required of all fixed route providers.
- Transit providers must plan, budget, and strive for zero trip denials.

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) ADA Service

The MBTA serves Boston and sixty-one (61) surrounding communities, thirteen (13) communities are within the Southern Essex Workforce Investment Board Area (SEWIB). The MBTA provides ADA-mandated paratransit service throughout its service area, which is referred to as “The Ride.” The MBTA meets and exceeds the ADA regulations for public transit providers. A description of the MBTA’s ADA paratransit service is outlined below:

- **Eligibility:** Client must have a mental, physical or sensory disability that prevents the use of public transportation
- **Service Area:** Anywhere in the member communities regardless of proximity to public transit routes
- **Days and Hours:** Seven days 6:00 AM – 1:00 AM
- **Fares:** \$1.25 for local trips, fare matrix applies to multi-zone trips
- **Response Time:** Reservations must be made by 4:00 PM of the preceding day
- **Trip Purpose:** All trip purposes without prioritization

- **Service Capacity:** Must meet demand. Currently, “The Ride” meets 99.67% of its requests for service.

Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA)

As required by the ADA regulations, both CATA and the MBTA provide the following transportation options for disabled persons: (1) fixed route bus service on accessible buses, and (2) ADA complementary paratransit service (“ADA paratransit service”) on accessible vans. In addition, CATA provides its own paratransit service (“paratransit service”) on accessible vans, available to anyone with a self identified disability or who is over sixty years of age. CATA’s “paratransit service” has been in existence since the inception of CATA, pre-dating the passage of the ADA regulations, and has continued ever since. CATA’s ADA paratransit service and paratransit service are described below.

Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) ADA Service

CATA provides fixed route service in Gloucester and Rockport, and therefore provides ADA mandated service in those communities only. A description of CATA’s ADA service is outlined below:

- **Eligibility:** Client must have a mental, physical, or sensory disability which prevents the use of public transportation
- **Service Area:** Gloucester and Rockport only, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from fixed public transit route
- **Days and Hours:** Monday through Friday 6:00 AM – 7:00 PM, Saturday 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM
- **Fares:** \$1.00 one zone; \$2.00 two zones
- **Response Time:** Reservations must be made by 4:00 PM of the preceding day.
- **Trip Purpose:** All trip purposes without prioritization
- **Service Capacity:** Must meet demand. CATA uses private providers when its own accessible van service is unavailable

Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) Paratransit Service

CATA serves the four communities of Gloucester, Rockport, Essex and Ipswich with its regular paratransit service. There are significant differences between the CATA ADA service and the CATA Paratransit service.

- **Eligibility:** Self certified disability or over 60 years of age
- **Service Area:** Gloucester, Rockport, Essex, Ipswich and several other communities where human service transportation contracts are in place
- **Days and Hours:** Monday through Friday, 7:30 AM – 4:30 PM
- **Fares:** \$1.00 within service area and \$2.00 beyond service area
- **Response Time:** Reservations must be made by 4:00 PM of the preceding day. Monday trips must be reserved by Friday at 4:00 PM

- **Trip Purpose:** All trip purposes without prioritization
- **Service Capacity:** Very limited availability between 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM due to contract transportation responsibilities

Private Providers

A survey of thirty private transportation providers operating in the Southern Essex County area was made. These providers were selected as they had experience in special needs transportation either as a human service transportation provider or as a special needs school transportation provider (766 program). The results of the survey varied widely, as shown below.

- **Eligibility:** No restrictions
- **Service Area:** Various depending on the location of the provider
- **Days and Hours:** Various depending on the provider; three providers operated seven days per week, twenty four hours per day
- **Fares:** Varied widely: \$1.50 per mile taxi rates, \$13.50 one way (up to ten miles), \$25 and up per hour, flat rate city to city up to \$80.00 per ride
- **Response Time:** Generally two or three day advance reservation. Some same day if available
- **Trip Purpose:** Any
- **Service Capacity:** Most providers had limitations due to other subscription services.

For an individual's daily work trip, the cost of transportation by a private provider is prohibitive. Private providers do play an important role in supplementing public transportation services for subsidized group rides.

Key Findings from the Analysis of Public Transportation Options

From this evaluation of available transportation options for individuals with disabilities there are several important findings, particularly as they relate to ADA eligibility, location and hours of service.

ADA Eligibility. Individuals who are ADA eligible receive a higher level of service than those who are not ADA eligible. ADA eligible individuals receive door to door service. Non-ADA individuals must walk or find other means to get to the nearest bus stop. In the MBTA service area, anyone who lives in the community or anyone who is ADA eligible from another area is entitled to receive the service. In the CATA service area, the ADA service is slightly more restrictive in that the client's origin and destination must be $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from a CATA bus route.

Geographic Limitations: ADA eligible individuals can travel relatively easily anywhere in the MBTA service area, and likewise for ADA eligible individuals in CATA. However, if an ADA eligible client wishes to travel from CATA to the MBTA, the only way to connect is by the commuter rail, which depending on the travel situation, may or may not be viable.

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Non-ADA eligible individuals must navigate the public transit networks. In two of the communities within the Southern Essex area, Manchester and Hamilton, no public transit service (other than commuter rail) exists. In two other communities within the CATA service area, Essex and Ipswich, only (non-ADA) paratransit service exists, which is subject to availability and not a viable option for regular employment transportation.

Hours of Service: In the MBTA service area, the hours of service for both the fixed route bus service and complementary ADA van service are extensive, seven days a week from 6:00 AM – 1:00 AM. These hours would cover most employment situations. In the CATA service area, the fixed route and complementary ADA services are more limited, Monday through Friday 6:00 AM – 7:00 PM and Saturday from 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM. These hours would limit employment opportunities to daytime work.

EMPLOYMENT TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

The following information was collected from all of the NoSEC partner agencies:

- Number of individual clients with employment transportation problems
- Description of transportation problem for each client
- Origin – Destination information for each client’s job-related trips
- Travel times for employment trips
- Specialized vehicle equipment requirements
- Requirement for door-to-door or other special needs services
- Estimate of affordable fare for any new transportation services required

From all of the information and data collected, a total of 164 individual clients with specific employment transportation problems were identified. This database was used to identify the key transportation problems and barriers affecting disabled persons in the Southern Essex region, including the locations of employment opportunities that were not served by the existing public transportation system. The key problems and barriers were categorized according to the work status of each person:

- Willing and able to work, but unemployed - 33%
- Working, but having significant difficulty getting to job - 60%
- Working, but hours and income limited - 5%
- Working, but employment options limited to those within walking distance - 2%

The other information derived from the data collection process was the identification of two corridors that contained many retail, manufacturing and service employment opportunities that were not adequately served by fixed-route public transportation (Route 1 in Peabody, Danvers and Saugus and Route 114 in Peabody, Danvers and Middleton). It was also found that the range of affordable fares (based on the estimates of agency staff interviewed) was from 50 cents to \$3.00 per trip.

The information and data provided by the participating agencies has helped to define the specific employment transportation needs of disabled workers in the Southern Essex region. The simplest way to present the information about transportation needs is to discuss it in terms of “gaps” in the current system of transportation services for persons with disabilities. These gaps in available services are due to a wide variety of factors as discussed in the following section.

GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Eligibility for ADA-mandated Paratransit Service

Both the MBTA and CATA, the public transportation providers operating in the Southern Essex region, are obligated by ADA to provide advance notice, door-to-door (paratransit) transportation to those who, because of a mental, physical or sensory disability, are unable to use general public transportation. ADA regulations also require that the MBTA and CATA establish a process whereby disabled persons can apply for certification of ADA paratransit eligibility. The typical eligibility criteria, such as those used by the MBTA, require that the individual's disability actually prevents them from using general public transportation, such as extreme difficulty or inability to:

- Walk
- See
- Ride a bus
- Use stairs/escalators
- Stand in moving vehicles

There are other factors used in assessing (typically by a human service or health care professional) an applicant's functional ability to use public transportation, such as the ability to:

- Give information such as address and telephone number upon request
- Recognize a destination or landmark
- Deal with unexpected situations or change in routine
- Ask for, understand and follow directions
- Safely travel through crowded and/or complex transit facilities

For those persons certified to be eligible for ADA paratransit service (ADA-eligible), there should be no significant problem in obtaining transportation to a place of employment, as long as their trip origin and destination are within the ADA service area and they are traveling during the regular hours of operation for the MBTA or CATA, whichever is applicable. These geographic and hours of service issues are discussed in the following subsections.

The "eligibility gap" refers to those persons who are not ADA-eligible (according to the determination of the MBTA or CATA), and do not have public transportation routes close to their home and/or workplace. These persons are either not employed, even though they are willing and able to work, or they are dependent upon family, friends or program staff/resources as the means of getting to and from work. In some cases, the person is limited to those employment opportunities that are within walking distance. None of these transportation options can be considered as a reliable means of accessing employment opportunities.

Geographic Gaps in Transportation Service

As noted earlier, ADA-eligible persons will not be able to reach employment sites that are outside the service areas designated by the MBTA and CATA. The MBTA ADA service area covers 13 of the 19 cities and towns in the Southern Essex region, while the CATA ADA service is only available in Gloucester and Rockport where CATA operates fixed route bus service. CATA Paratransit service (not ADA) is available in Gloucester, Rockport, Essex and Ipswich; however, it is not considered to be suitable for employment trips because it is a limited service that operates on an advanced reservation, space available basis.

Within the Southern Essex region, ADA-eligible persons living or working (or wanting to work) in Hamilton, Manchester, Essex or Ipswich cannot access the ADA services provided by the MBTA and CATA. The same holds true for any work destination outside the Southern Essex region unless it is Boston or one of the many urban and suburban towns (around Boston) within the MBTA ADA service area. ADA-eligible persons living in Gloucester or Rockport who are working or seeking work in cities and towns with more employment opportunities, such as the commercial and industrial centers in Boston, Lynn, Danvers and Peabody, are faced with a lengthy three-segment trip (CATA ADA to accessible commuter rail to MBTA ADA) at both the beginning and end of their workday.

The geographic gaps in transportation service for those who are not ADA-eligible are much more extensive. For example, a disabled person (not ADA-eligible) living in one of the 15 cities and towns in the Southern Essex region with fixed route service (13 – MBTA, 2 – CATA) cannot access these services unless they are able to walk/travel to the closest route/station at both the start (home) or end (work) of the trip. During the data collection process there were a number of neighborhoods and employment locations that were identified as not having public transit available. Some examples of these geographic gaps include:

- Neighborhoods – South Peabody, West Peabody, Danvers (parts), Topsfield, Middleton
- Employment locations – Malls and “big box” stores along Route 1 in Danvers, Peabody and Saugus; and along Route 114 in Peabody, Danvers and Middleton

Hours of Service Gaps in Transportation Availability

This issue affects ADA-eligible persons traveling in the ADA service area, and those not eligible but with access to fixed route service. These persons cannot use ADA or conventional public transit for employment if their start or end times fall outside the hours of service. This is not a significant problem in the MBTA service area because they operate seven days from 6:00 am to 1:00 am. Most jobs will have start and end times that fall within these hours of operation.

The situation is different in the CATA service area where the days and hours of service are: Monday to Friday 6:00 am – 7:00 pm; Saturday 9:00 am – 6:00 pm and Sunday – No Service. Persons in the CATA service area are effectively prohibited from using public transit for employment purposes when evening or weekend shifts are required

Gaps in Knowledge of Transportation Services

In the interviews and meetings with the participating agencies, as part of the data collection and analysis process, it became evident that the issue of understanding how to access transit and paratransit services was not simple and easy for agency staff or clients. This is not surprising since the transportation situation, as explained in the discussion of gaps above, is quite complex, requiring program staff to expend more time than they have available in order to become knowledgeable.

There are two issues of concern with regard to the knowledge gap. The first is that the person who is seeking employment transportation is simply unaware of the public transportation options that are available. For example, the person may not know that they are eligible for MBTA or CATA ADA service or they may not be aware of the procedures to be followed in submitting an application. The same lack of knowledge would make it difficult for a person to use fixed route public transportation that is available in close proximity to their home and work.

The second issue of concern is more difficult to characterize, in that it deals with the lack of knowledge regarding the collective need for transportation services between common origins and destinations. In general, the participating agencies are concerned with the specific transportation needs of their clients, and they will coordinate the transportation for a group of their clients when it is feasible, typically when there is a central worksite or program site. There is no mechanism currently in place to collect and analyze the current transportation patterns for the clients of all participating agencies, as well as the unmet transportation needs of those clients, on a systematic basis throughout the Southern Essex region. It is highly likely that the centralized compilation and analysis of such data would help in identifying situations where unmet transportation needs of one agency could be served through coordination with current transportation patterns of the other participating agencies.

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION CAPACITY

Introduction. Based on the known gaps in transportation options for person with disabilities, the Action Plan focuses on the following key activities:

- 1 - Provide specialized transportation advisory services to the staffs of the North Shore Career Centers and local human service providers.
- 2 – Coordinate transportation planning efforts with local employers.
- 3 – Develop transportation improvement plans to fill the actual “gaps” in available public transportation services.

These activities are designed to systematically eliminate the gaps that are barriers to access for persons with disabilities. The first step will be to eliminate the gaps in knowledge of transportation options on the part of providers of services for persons with disabilities and their customers. Consequently, available transportation options will be more efficiently utilized as more people take advantage of existing transportation services for employment and for other purposes.

There are also “real” gaps in the public transportation network that prevent travel from one place to another except by personal auto. Based on information to be gathered from human service agencies and from employers, these real transportation needs will be identified and quantified. Specific plans for addressing these needs will be developed along with funding options. These improvements will expand the transportation options that are currently available and ultimately result in a seamless transportation network, with universal access to employment and all other aspects of community life.

Action Plan Description.

Overview. For the duration of the project, two Transportation Specialists will be located at the North Shore Career Center in Salem, MA and made available to local human service agencies on a telephone consultation and/or on-site visit basis, dependent upon need. A telephone hotline will keep the Transportation Specialists in immediate and constant contact with these agencies. Other activities of the Transportation Specialists will be to contact area employers to receive detailed information regarding transportation needs, particularly employment transportation needs for any of their workers with disabilities. As information is gathered from the human service agency staff and employers, plans for supplemental transportation services will be developed and options for funding will be researched. Plans for supplemental transportation services will be reviewed with public transportation officials for incorporation in their planning initiatives.

Description of Key Activities. Each key activity is described below along with objectives, tasks and measurable results.

1 - Provide Specialized Transportation Advisory Services to the Staffs of the North Shore Career Center and Local Human Service Providers. The Transportation Specialists will be available to assist staff members of the North Shore Career Center in Salem and local human service providers on issues having to do with transportation for persons with disabilities. The Transportation Specialists will serve as a regional resource and may be contacted directly at the North Shore Career Center in Salem, MA, by phone, or by appointment at any of the offices of local agencies serving people with disabilities.

Objectives

- Problem-solve individual and group transportation issues.
- Conduct training programs on topics such as ADA eligibility and certification, and travel training.
- Compile a database of unmet transportation needs in the area.
- Provide planning services for interagency coordination.

Tasks

- 1) Market the Transportation Advisory Services to Career Center Staff and Human Service Agencies. A kick-off meeting will be held at the start of the project to inform Career Center staff and human service agency staff of the new service and how to access it through the 1-800 telephone line.
- 2) Transportation Specialists will arrange site visits to all Local Human Service Providers. The Transportation Specialists will meet with staff to discuss any individual or group transportation issue. Information on unmet transportation needs (needs that can not be satisfied with existing transportation options) will be collected at the first meeting and on an on-going basis throughout the project. Unmet needs data will be assembled in a format that will be entered in a database program. The format for the unmet needs database will be based on a current data collection effort that is underway at Bridgewater State College (MA), that also involves the unmet transportation needs of persons with disabilities in three other regions of the state. This will allow for a direct comparison of the categories of unmet needs in four separate geographic regions within Massachusetts. If there are requests for training on ADA eligibility and certification or travel training, these will be scheduled. The Transportation Specialists may decide that one of the two public transportation providers should also participate in the training session. If so, the Transportation Specialists will make the arrangements. If the agency has contracted group rides with private providers, trip data will be collected to determine if coordination might be possible with other agencies.
- 3) Provide on-going transportation assistance by phone or on-site. Throughout the project, this specialized transportation assistance will be provided to the participating local agencies.

- 4) Documentation of the process and results. Monthly reports will include summaries of the meetings and interactions that took place, the topics and issues discussed, the transportation assistance that was provided, and a status report on the unmet needs database. Quarterly reports will present key findings and describe the progress on the stated measurable objectives.

Measurable Results.

Records of all meetings, training sessions and telephone inquiries with human service agencies will kept to show progress in closing the knowledge gap. The database will show specific unmet transportation needs in the area. The contracted transportation services of each agency will be documented, reviewed for possible interagency coordination by the Transportation Specialists and made available to all agencies for their use.

2 - Coordinate Transportation Planning Efforts with Local Employers. It is important that the efforts in this project are coordinated with local employers, and that their needs with regard to future hiring, employee skill requirements, hiring policies, and any concerns about employee transportation are fully considered in the planning and development of improved transportation services. Toward this end, the Transportation Specialists will initiate an outreach program with local employers for the purpose of collecting the above information, establishing informal working relationships, and as a means of including “interested” employers as part of the North Shore Employment Consortium (NoSEC). The focus of the outreach effort will be on those companies and organizations that are located in areas not served by public transportation, because they would be most likely to support transportation improvements that would make it easier to find qualified personnel. These employers are located along busy commercial routes that border shopping malls, national retail stores, auto dealerships, restaurants, and major industrial and office parks.

Objective.

Conduct meetings with:

- Employers located along busy, commercial areas such as Route 1 in Peabody, Danvers and Saugus and Route 114 in Peabody and Middleton. This area takes in three shopping malls, national retail stores, auto dealerships, and restaurants.
- Major industrial parks and office parks including Centennial Park in Peabody, the Cummings Center in Beverly, and the Blackburn and Cape Ann Industrial Parks in Gloucester.

Tasks.

- 1) Contact appropriate employer personnel and arrange meetings. Discussions will be held with mall managers, managers of industrial and office parks, and human resource managers from national retail and service companies to make them aware of the planning effort, and to

collect data on hiring policies and plans and transportation concerns. Any company that indicates an interest in having access to more employee candidates, including persons with disabilities, will be invited to participate as member of NoSEC.

- 2) Compile employer information into usable format. The Transportation Specialists will organize the information and data collected from the employers into a format that will be useful in the planning and development of additional transportation services. In particular, the number and types of jobs that will be filled in the near future, and the skills/experience required for these positions. This information will be used as an essential component in the development of a strategy for improving transportation services in the region, as discussed in the next function.
- 3) Documentation of the process and results. Monthly and quarterly progress reports will document the results of the meetings with employers, including their hiring plans and policies and an assessment of the employment opportunities for workers with disabilities.

Measurable Results.

Records of all meetings will be kept. Specific unmet transportation needs will be compiled in the needs database. These meetings will also examine the feasibility of funding by the private sector for supplementary transportation services.

3 - Develop transportation improvement plans to fill the actual “gaps” in available public transportation services. The first two activities described above will result in an accumulation of very specific information about qualified individuals with disabilities who are unable to work, or limited in their employment options, due to the lack of affordable transportation; as well as specific information regarding those companies that would be most willing to hire workers with disabilities, assuming that affordable transportation was readily available. The “gaps” in available (affordable) public transportation, consisting of home or work locations that fall into one of the “geographic gaps,” and work start or end times that fall into one of the “hours of service gaps.” The development of a transportation improvement plan will be based on an assessment of the changes or additions to the existing public transportation network that would result in the greatest benefit in terms of new/improved employment opportunities for workers with disabilities. Any such changes or additions are also likely to provide additional benefits in terms of “quality of life” travel needs.

Objectives.

- Investigate funding options for supplemental transportation services from both public and private sources.
- Develop plans for improvements to the existing transportation network.
- Review and recommend plans to public transportation providers.

Tasks.

- 1) Determine what services are needed and prioritize the needs. Using the unmet transportation needs database, the Transportation Specialists will identify the geographic areas and “out of service” hours that create transportation barriers for the largest number of human service agency clients. Priorities for improved public transportation route and schedule changes, including service into new geographic areas, will be based on the number of persons that would be likely to find new/improved employment opportunities.
- 2) Work with the public transportation agencies (CATA and MBTA) to define feasibility and costs of route and schedule changes. The Transportation Specialists will work with the appropriate personnel at the public transportation agencies to examine the feasibility of the service changes/additions and make preliminary estimates of the costs.
- 3) Assess the potential for private/public sector funding of service changes/additions. One of the most important items to be examined in this project is the willingness of the “interested” employers to financially participate in transportation improvements that will be of direct benefit to them in terms of providing access to a larger pool of potential employees. The Transportation Specialists will work with the local employer personnel to identify the corporate staff responsible for grant programs, or an affiliated company foundation, and then follow-up with a request for a statement of support for the concept and a commitment for funding, contingent upon participation by other private sector employers and public transportation funding agencies. Other sources of private sector funding, including local foundations with an established interest in programs that have a positive impact on people with disabilities, will also be sought. Opportunities for public sector financial participation will be assessed based upon information from the MBTA and CATA regarding federal and state support for transportation improvements that are of immediate and direct benefit to persons with disabilities.
- 4) Documentation of the process and results. Detailed plans will be developed that describe a proposed course of action based upon the results of the tasks described above.

Measurable Results.

Funding options will be researched, prioritized and documented. Plans to close the actual transportation “gaps” will be developed and recommended to public transportation officials. Plans for supplemental transportation will be documented for incorporation in future planning initiatives.

EXPECTED IMPACT/RESULTS OF THE ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan is expected to accomplish immediate and long term measurable results. Immediate results will occur as knowledge gaps start to disappear. The Transportation Specialists will be in contact with human service providers on a daily basis to work through transportation problems. New people will become ADA eligible, including those who were not aware of ADA services, or those who have had difficulty completing the certification application, and will start to take advantage of available services. For other people who are not ADA eligible, options within the public network will be explored and assistance given with travel training. Improved coordination among agencies may be possible, putting existing contract transportation services to better use, serving more people. Human service agency staffs have a new resource to turn to, to find solutions to transportation problems, relieving them of troublesome transportation issues.

Long term results will be achieved through the development of transportation improvement plans that eliminate the actual gaps in transportation options. As the Transportation Specialists work with area human service agencies and employers, particularly those that are located in industrial parks, office parks, shopping malls, and busy commercial areas accessible only by personal autos, transportation needs and solutions will become apparent. Transportation links to critical destinations, currently unserved by public transportation will be proposed in this effort. All means of funding for these missing links, including the possibility of private support for employment transportation for people with disabilities, will be explored. Recommendations for new transportation options will be presented to public transportation agencies for adoption in their planning initiatives.

The primary goal is to achieve a seamless transportation network, one that will enable universal access to employment and all aspects of community life. The actions proposed by this project are expected to go a long way toward achieving this goal by reducing the barriers to employment and other quality of life activities now experienced by persons with disabilities.

APPENDIX 1 SERVICE AREAS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS IN SOUTHERN ESSEX COUNTY

