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ITS Sheet

Connecting
Workers
With Jobs

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATIONS
WORKING
GROUP
FOR ITS

Intelligent Transportation Systems Help Welfare-to-Work Programs Succeed

Transportation is critical to the success of welfare-to-work programs. In many areas, jobs are distant from new workers, and reliable, affordable transportation is scarce. However, intelligent transportation systems (ITS) are helping communities across the country to improve access to jobs.

Integrating Services to Maximize Resources

Local governments and transit providers are adapting a variety of ITS technologies to solve welfare-to-work transportation problems. For example, *computer assisted dispatching* (CAD) and *automatic vehicle location management and monitoring systems* (AVL/MMS) help agencies knit existing services into flexible systems that are responsive to worker and employer needs. Typically, within a given area, a patchwork of public and private agencies offer transportation services:

- general-use, fixed-route transit,
- demand-responsive services, including paratransit and taxi operations, and
- specially funded transport for target populations (elderly, handicapped, low-income) provided by social service agencies, schools, and churches.

Although service integration can provide greater flexibility and efficiency, complex coordination and reliable accounting to funding agencies are required.

ITS applications support integration that expands transportation options for individual workers. Where different agencies operate parallel systems that serve clients with different needs, CAD and AVL help dispatchers match riders to vehicles, maximizing use of demand-responsive resources. Workers can identify appropriate routes and schedules for work trips and arrange rides

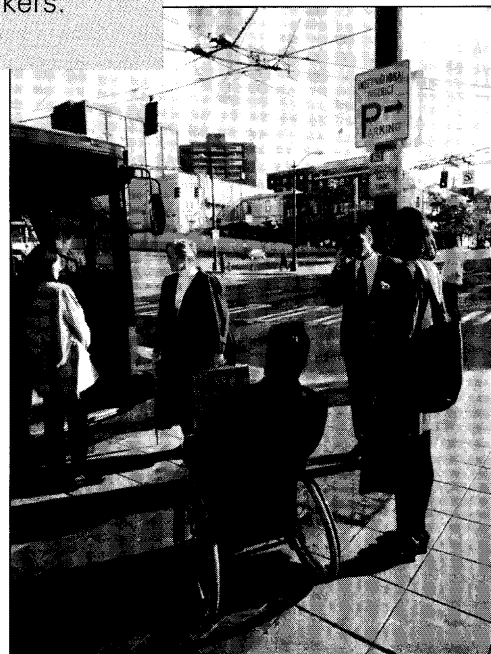*ITS applications can expand transportation options for workers.*

through real-time ride matching systems. Job seekers, caseworkers, and job developers can make one-stop transportation calls.

Automated fare collection systems support the complex accounting that integrated systems demand. "Smart cards" track client eligibility, document trips, and charge travel to the appropriate funding sources, allowing agencies and nonprofit organizations to share resources while reducing the risk of fraud and abuse.

These ITS technologies offer significant opportunities for greater financial control and revenue management. For example, use of coordinated paratransit with a dispatch system including AVL, which can coordinate trips for up to five agencies, has the potential to reduce fraud in Medicaid

Integrated transportation resources serve low-income job seekers, people with disabilities, and seniors more cost-effectively.

transportation by $11 million annually in the State of Florida alone.[1]

Planning Rational, Responsive Systems

Successful planning to improve worksite access in underserved areas requires the involvement of all parties with a stake in the outcome:

* employers,
* public and private transportation providers,
* human services transportation networks,
* welfare benefits/job training agencies,
* concerned elected officials, and
* community representatives.

These stakeholders can identify needs and solutions, and plan how their individual resources can be leveraged to produce optimum results.

States and localities, working with metropolitan planning organizations and public transit operators, are beginning to address welfare-to-work transportation gaps in a comprehensive way. In Kentucky, for example, four Cabinet offices—Families and Children, Health Services, Workforce Development, and Transportation—have combined their transportation resources to develop a state-wide free transportation brokerage system for all their beneficiaries. In other areas businesses are organizing transportation management associations to improve transportation in underserved areas.

One ITS tool in particular, *geographic information systems* (GIS), facilitates planning. With GIS software, planners can easily inventory and display graphically the locations of transit services, concentrations of welfare recipients, employment sites, and job training centers. GIS can help transit providers fine-tune the coverage and timing of services to meet changing job access demand.

[1]"Operational Strategies for Rural Transportation," Florida Coordinated Transportation System, cited in *Intelligent Transportation Systems Benefits: 1999 Update.*

For more information...

Federal Transit Administration,
Office of Mobility Innovation;
202-366-4991; fax: 202-366-3765.

FTA Welfare-to-Work Web site:
http://www.fta.dot.gov/wtw/

Leveraging Federal Support to Expand Transportation Access

Through the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant program, the U.S. Department of Transportation is working with other Federal agencies to assist States and localities in meeting job access needs. Funds are available for capital projects—including ITS technologies like those described here—designed to improve transportation services to low-income individuals and welfare recipients, for operating costs of related equipment and facilities, and for other specified costs. JARC funds *cannot* be used for planning and coordination, however.

The JARC program provides grants through the States for rural areas and urban areas with populations less than 200,000, and through metropolitan planning organizations for urban areas with populations greater than 200,000. Grantees must coordinate with their State welfare agency, transportation providers, and affected transit grant recipients. However local coordination efforts are undertaken, it makes sense to identify an existing forum for working collaboratively to achieve integration of welfare-to-work activities.

ITS in action...

Detroit's *EZ Ride* gets welfare-to-work clients, seniors, and disadvantaged and disabled people to work, medical appointments, and other needed services, providing more than 100,000 rides per year and tracking the delivery of some 2,400 meals a day to homebound seniors.

Computers coordinate ride dispatching. Soon, smart-card technology will verify passenger eligibility and streamline accounting to multiple funders in a growing coalition of nonprofit and for-profit providers.

Developed through the collaboration of business, labor, nonprofit, and government partners, *EZ Ride* reduces transportation and administrative redundancy and connects people to jobs and services more efficiently.

U.S. Department
of Transportation