

Boone County
**Coordinated
Transportation
Services**



Executive Summary



VHB *Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.*

Prepared for **Boone County Community Partnership**



Boone County Coordinated Transportation Service

Executive Summary

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LSC #056050

December 7, 2006

Executive Summary

The Boone County Community Partnership (BCCP) contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants Inc., VHB, and the Missouri School of Journalism, Center for Advanced Social Research, to prepare a comprehensive inventory and needs assessment of the human transportation services in Boone County, Missouri. The project focused on transit needs within Boone County and Columbia (the largest incorporated area in the county), and those coordination efforts to meet the needs. This report presents a summary of the planning process and scope of work, project goals, key terminology, a review of community input, an assessment of the transit needs in Boone County, and the potential for various coordination strategies.



This project grew out of a grass roots effort in the community. Previous studies have confirmed that there are unmet transportation needs in Boone County. As a result, the Boone County Community Partnership took a lead role to initiate planning for a coordinated transportation system. This project is a first step toward developing that coordinated transportation system. The next step is to prioritize coordination strategies to be implemented and develop a coordination plan for Boone County.

EXISTING RESOURCES

An intensive data collection effort was conducted to inventory all of the existing transportation resources in Boone County. A detailed inventory questionnaire was sent to over 85 agencies which are involved in either providing transportation services, funding transportation services, or have clients who rely on trans-



portation services. Follow-up contacts were made as necessary to obtain the maximum number of responses. Columbia Transit and OATS provide about \$3.8 million in transportation services annually. Human service agencies either provide

or fund another \$2 to \$3 million annually in transportation services. There are significant financial resources which are currently being used for transportation services in Columbia and Boone County.

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

A detailed analysis of transportation needs was conducted as part of this study. The analysis included an assessment of community characteristics with particular attention paid to those population groups dependent on transportation services and most likely to use transportation services. Demand estimates for rural areas and the urban areas were used, as well as estimates for program trips. Program-related trips are those trips taken to attend, or in association with, a human service program. These are trips which would otherwise not be made but for the existence of the program. The quantitative assessment of transit demand indicated that approximately 50 percent of the needs in the county are being met based on the trips provided by the various transportation providers.

In addition to the quantitative transit demand estimates, input regarding transportation needs was sought from the community. A series of open houses were held to solicit community input. These open houses were conducted at the University of Missouri campus, the Resource Center, the Wabash Center, and the



Columbia Library. Four different survey efforts were also conducted. The first of these was a community-wide survey. Questionnaires were distributed through a number of agencies. The questionnaires were also available at the community meetings. An online version was available and publicized through all project information. This effort resulted in over 1,500 responses. Although most of the community survey

respondents did not need or use public transportation, the majority was very supportive of transportation services being provided in Boone County. A small majority indicated support for an increased tax to fund transportation services.

The second survey effort was conducted by human services agencies of their clients. Each agency chose the methodology most appropriate for reaching their clients. These population groups are frequently difficult to reach with traditional

survey approaches. The efforts of the human services agencies resulted in over 1,000 responses to the questionnaire. As would be expected, this group was much more dependent on transportation services than the respondents to the community survey. Over half of the respondents either do not drive or do not have a car available for their use. Approximately 67 percent of the respondents indicated they would use public transportation services more often if it was available. As an indication of the need for transportation among this group, 21 percent indicated they had either lost a job or had problems finding a job due to lack of transportation.

The third and fourth survey efforts were targeted to University of Missouri students and employees. These surveys were conducted through the campus e-mail system with a link to an online questionnaire. In both cases, the number of responses was too low to use as representative of the campus population. The low response rate may indicate that transportation needs are not a significant issue among these two population groups.

FUNDING SOURCES

Chapter XIII describes potential funding sources for coordinated transportation services. These include some of the funding sources which are currently being used as well as additional sources of funding which could be pursued if needed. Often coordination of transportation services does not require additional funding as there are potential cost savings which result from coordination and consolidation of services.



POTENTIAL FOR COORDINATION

There are many coordination strategies which were considered. Those strategies which are appropriate for Boone County were identified and the potential for each was assessed. Where possible, either additional costs or cost savings were identified. Although these costs were identified, the actual costs or savings must be investigated in more detail as part of the implementation effort as the actual costs will be dependent on the specific approach taken to implement the coordination strategy.

There are a number of coordination activities which are already taking place in Boone County. Detailed coordination activities were identified as part of the transportation resource inventory. Highlights of the existing coordination include the Medicaid brokerage operated by LogistiCare which contracts with local trans-



portation providers. Columbia Transit operates the campus shuttles under a contract with the University of Missouri. Several agencies purchase bus passes on Columbia Transit or contract with OATS for service. OATS is already a consolidated rural transportation provider.

The coordination strategies which were considered were grouped into three categories—basic coordination, extensive coordination, and enhanced services. The basic coordination strategies are based upon continuation of existing coordination efforts. Other agencies could participate in some of the existing coordination efforts to enhance the overall coordination of service in Boone County. For example, additional agencies could purchase transportation service from OATS or Columbia Transit. Smaller providers could join together for joint purchasing of fuel, maintenance, and supplies. There are two basic coordination strategies identified as the most obvious steps in Boone County—joint public relations and marketing materials, and coordination with other modes of transportation. Joint marketing materials could include inclusive information on individual agency brochures, creation of a transportation resource manual, a common brochure, and a single informational telephone number. There is a timely opportunity to coordinate with other modes of transportation as Columbia has received a grant specifically to enhance non-motorized transportation. As the City develops plans for non-motorized transportation facilities, coordination with the public and human services transportation providers should be an important element of the process.

Extensive coordination efforts could include development of a brokerage or lead agency for all transportation services, Columbia Transit contracting with OATS for paratransit service, consolidation of all rural transit services, and development of a regional transit authority for Columbia and Jefferson City. Each of these actions requires much more effort to implement than the basic coordination options. These options require contracts for service. Some agencies would give up their trans-

portation operations to a new consolidated agency. These strategies may provide improved service to users and improved efficiency in operations. However, they will take longer to implement and are not seen as the first steps toward coordination of services.

Those activities identified as enhanced services relate more to the quantity of service provided than to coordination. However, coordination of services may provide the resources to implement some of the enhanced service options. These options include expansion of the service area for Columbia Transit and extension of the days and hours of operation for Columbia Transit. Each of these options will require additional funding.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At each step in the process, the public was invited to participate in completing the coordination study. The survey efforts and open houses to help identify transportation needs have been described. Four Technical Memoranda were prepared as interim documents. Each of these was posted on the project website to allow public review and comment. The information was also presented to the Steering Committee to obtain feedback. Additional public meetings were held to provide the community an opportunity to provide input at each step in the process. The public input and Steering Committee feedback was used to guide subsequent work and incorporated into the final document. A draft report was presented to the community at meetings with the stakeholders, funding agencies, and a joint meeting of the City and County. The final plan incorporates feedback received from the community at these meetings and through written comments.



IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The final chapter in the report briefly describes the next steps toward implementation of coordination strategies. A key step will be to select and prioritize coordination strategies for implementation. This step should include completion of a local public transit-human services transportation coordination plan so that

coordination activities and services are eligible for funding under Federal Transit Administration programs. Partnerships must be developed to implement the coordination strategies. The specific strategies will depend on which agencies are interested and willing to participate. The Mid-Missouri Transportation Alliance should be seen as a starting point toward formation of partnerships to implement any coordination strategies. To begin, partnerships may be informal, but to implement some of the strategies may require formalization through a Memorandum of Agreement or contract.

It will be important to determine priorities for implementing the various coordination strategies. Some may be implemented easily with little or no cost, while others may require a significant investment of time, resources, and funds. Based on the priorities, an implementation plan should be completed which describes each strategy, the specific goal to be achieved, the steps necessary for successful implementation, the responsible individual or agency, and timing for each of the implementation steps.

