



Maryland Department of Transportation
The Secretary's Office

Martin O'Malley
Governor

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Darrell B. Mobley
Acting Secretary

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Acting Deputy Secretary

August 15, 2012

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Governor of Maryland
State House
Annapolis MD 21401-1991

Dear Governor O'Malley:

The State Coordinating Committee on Human Services Transportation (the "Committee") was established by Executive Order in 1997. The Governor's Executive Order 01.01.2010.10 expanded the membership and added a requirement for the Committee to provide you with an update on the Committee's progress annually. Specifically, the Executive Order directs that the Committee:

- 1. Examine the transportation needs of citizens who are elderly, who have disabilities, and individuals requiring transportation to access jobs, medical and health appointments, senior citizens programs and other programs requiring the transportation of individuals who qualify as transportation disadvantaged;*
- 2. Coordinate Maryland's efforts to provide quality human services transportation services by working with appropriate federal, State and local agencies, transit customers and transportation providers to develop a cooperative, coordinated human services transportation system;*
- 3. Devise a five-year human services transportation plan, which sets goals and objectives to help transportation disadvantaged citizens access jobs, education and training programs, healthcare services and other activities by providing cost-effective, affordable, high capacity, high quality, easily understood, safe and accessible transportation; and*
- 4. Serve as the clearinghouse for human services transportation coordination issues throughout the State of Maryland, identify and facilitate a resolution to local and statewide issues regarding human services transportation, participate in the identification of possible allocations of human services transportation resources during emergency evacuations, evaluate cost-savings measures, investigate the need for the establishment of standards for vehicles and drivers within the human services transportation program, and examine other appropriate areas that facilitate the development of a quality human services transportation system in Maryland."*

Since the submission of our August 2011 report, the Committee has met ten times as a full committee and various other meetings have taken place among the sub-committees. The Committee holds regularly scheduled monthly meetings for two hours every third Wednesday of the month at the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) with representation from the following agencies: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Maryland Transit Administration, Maryland Transportation Authority, Maryland Department of Disabilities, Maryland Department of Aging, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Human Resources, Maryland Department of Planning, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, and the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The mission of the Committee was explored in depth and in an attempt to bring greater organizational structure and focus, the Committee developed three sub-committees: (1) Information Gathering; (2) Needs Assessment; and (3) Planning and Communication. The sub-committees were asked to re-examine the Committee's enabling Executive Order and identify several major, overarching goals as a way to more effectively and efficiently advance the work of the Committee. Committee members have agreed to: more fully explore the "other programs requiring transportation" category as we move forward; focus on policy issues in a broader sense; assess the feasibility of developing a Committee website as a central repository for statewide information; and, recommend the development of a comprehensive Needs Assessment to include riders' needs, the State's system needs and policy needs. The intent is to develop and implement new ideas to execute the charge of the Five Year Human Services Transportation Plan.

In an effort to improve communication and better coordinate the various human services transportation initiatives underway throughout Maryland, the Committee welcomed several guest speakers to provide updates and present on the following topic areas:

Mr. Christian Kent, WMATA, Assistant General Manager of Access Services; Mr. Kent is responsible for system-wide accessibility and ADA compliance to include rail, bus, and paratransit operations and all Metro operating facilities. Mr. Kent discussed the importance of communication with stakeholders and other community advocates and the need to explore new and different approaches to meet the needs of human services transportation riders.

Ms. Linda Singer – Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator; Ms. Singer informed the Committee of the SHA's comprehensive efforts to address unmet needs throughout the communities in Maryland with regard to ADA accessible sidewalks and access to bus stops.

Mr. Joe Schissler – constituent, member of the blind community who shared first-hand experience with the application process for paratransit certification in various jurisdictions. Mr. Schissler has been an integral voice on the Committee with regard to the development of a uniform paratransit application/certification form. Hearing from Mr. Schissler has helped inform the Committee there are numerous opportunities for coordination and communication between the State and the local jurisdictions in order to provide a more streamlined and efficient paratransit application process.

In furtherance of the Committee's outreach and communication efforts, Committee Chair Karen Williams Gooden worked with the MTA's Office of Local Transit Support to meet with representatives from the 21 various Locally Owned Transit Systems (LOTS). Meeting with the LOTS and introducing them to the goals of the Committee has already provided additional opportunities for further collaboration and coordination.

The Committee remains committed to working on issues identified by SB 789 (which was ultimately withdrawn) *Transportation - State Determination of Paratransit Service Eligibility - Acceptance by Local Governments*, and to develop non-legislative recommendations for satisfying the goals and intent of the bill. If enacted, the legislation would have made the Maryland Department of Transportation the central certification entity for paratransit eligibility, requiring local governments to accept the State's certification that the individual satisfied certain standards under the federal ADA. While the Committee supports the intent of the bill and appreciates the need for eliminating unnecessary redundancies and frustrations posed by the various certification processes, it is also important to note the restrictions and requirements of the ADA and how they guide each local paratransit service providers' certification process. Nonetheless, the Committee strongly supports evaluating the various application forms, identifying where they overlap and how they can be streamlined into one universal application form to be accepted by each jurisdiction in Maryland (i.e. reciprocity). The goal is to cut down on time and cost to the individual seeking paratransit certification by eliminating redundant trips to the doctor and duplicative application forms. To that end, the Committee divided into the following sub-groups: (1) Local Focus; (2) Streamlining; and (3) Reciprocity. Currently under review is a draft uniform application document developed by the Committee. In September, the Committee will host a workshop with representatives from the LOTS to discuss any necessary revisions to the document and the appropriate mechanism to recognize uniform acceptance and implementation by January 2013, i.e. a Memorandum of Understanding. While the ADA encourages each jurisdiction to conduct its own in-person interview and allows for re-certification every few years, the Committee's recommended universal application should provide a noticeable improvement and efficiency in the overall certification/application process. The Committee will continue to work with riders, such as Mr. Schissler, on any and all practicable improvements that can be accomplished.

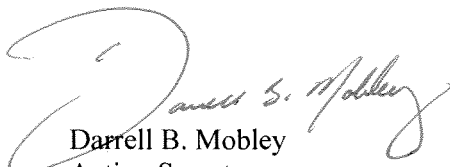
Additionally, the Committee is working with WMATA/Metro Access and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) to conduct a study entitled *Regional Coordination of Specialized Transportation: Alternative Models for Providing Demand Responsive Services to People with Disabilities*. The purpose of this study is three fold: (1) to examine coordination and alternative service delivery models to provide more cost effective and responsive specialized transportation; (2) to identify various customer or market segments of specialized transportation and how to best meet their needs; and (3) to outline the actions necessary to implement a pilot project in Suburban Maryland that would use transportation and human service resources more efficiently. A significant and inherent benefit to this partnership will be the resulting, increased communication and collaboration between the Committee and the Metropolitan Washington's Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force. The two groups will have greater opportunities to provide input and share ideas for maximizing resources and providing quality services in order to meet the human services transportation needs throughout Maryland.

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The Committee will continue to work on a recommendation for an appropriate internet or web presence and the planning of a regional Summit. The Committee would like to pursue the development of a statewide central location/website, a "one-stop-shop" for human services transportation information, including links to the Maryland Access Point (MAP) program already underway, provide a list of non-profit and church organizations that provide human services transportation and any other pertinent information in order to ensure that this information is available to everyone. Furthermore, the Committee continues to work on the development of a joint Summit with WMATA to assemble key stakeholders of human services transportation to examine collective resources and opportunities for partnership and coordination. The summit will also address the growing demand for human services transportation. Inasmuch as funding is a critical aspect of the initiative to coordinate human services transportation more effectively, representatives from federal, State and local funding sources will also participate in the summit.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding this matter, please feel free to contact Ms. Karen Williams Gooden, Chairman, State Coordinating Committee on Human Services Transportation at 410-865-1125. You may also contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Darrell B. Mobley
Acting Secretary

cc: Ms. Karen Williams Gooden, Assistant Secretary for Administration, Maryland Department
of Transportation
Members of the State Coordinating Committee for Human Services Transportation