

## Appendix D

### South Central Urbanized Area - Locally Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan – Updated 5/1/2009

#### Assessment of Available Services

The South Central Region's Locally Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (LOCHSTP) was completed in March 2007. Based on guidance received from the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT), this regional plan was then incorporated into the statewide LOCHSTP that was completed in July of that same year.

Discussions to update the plan began in December 2007 and continued into 2008. A coordinated process was developed by ConnDOT with input from the MPOs. A project proposal and request for funding application packet was presented to the MPOs for comment in August and finalized in December 2008.

The region's first LOCHSTP meeting to update the plan was held on December 15, 2008. Both The South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) and the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency (CRERPA) participated with SCRCOG once again taking the lead in identifying services and administering the meetings. Participants included representatives from ConnDOT, SCRCOG and CRERPA and transportation providers from the region including CTTRANSIT, Greater New Haven Transit District (GNHTD), Estuary Transit District (ETD), Meriden Transit District, and North East Transit (NET) and for the first time Metro Taxi. Recipients of the Section 5310 applications this year were encouraged to participate. And representatives from Easter Seals Goodwill Industries, Marrakech Inc, The Mary Wade home, New Haven disability services, and the Center for Disability Rights also took part. A second meeting of the LOCHSTP committee to finalize service gaps and solicit proposals was held on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 the committee met again to review the proposed strategies and prioritizing the projects for inclusion into the updated LOCHSTP.

#### Service Summary and Update

Since the 2007 plan was adopted there has been little change in the transportation services available in the region. The LOCHSTP plan did identify and recommend for funding eight new services. Five out of the eight programs were funded and an update of these five programs follows;

***Gaylord Hospital Connection;*** This service was provided by North East Transit which provides ADA service from Meriden into Wallingford. The ADA coverage area was expanded to allow service to the hospital. Through a separate agreement GNHTD also began to provide paratransit service to the hospital. While the committee identified this as an area where expanded transportation was needed actual passenger counts remained low. GNHTD has since discontinued regular service to the hospital although both GNHTD and NET continue to provide transportation when requested.

***Weekend service expansion in the Meriden Wallingford area;*** Funding for this service was provided through the Governor's Initiative. CTTRANSIT expanded the 'C' route to include a

stop at Kohl's in Meriden and North East Transit received funding to add a Saturday route to connect downtown Meriden, the Train Station, and MidState Medical facility with CTTRANSIT. This service continues to operate and weekend ridership continues to grow.

***Flex route service in North Branford-*** Funding for this service was provided through a combination of the Governor's Initiative, ConnDOT operating funds and NFI. A new flex route service called the "R link" began in February 2008 and operated by GNHTD. The Bus route was designed to connect North Haven, North Branford and Branford. The buses traveled primarily along Routes 22 and 139; Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Regular stops were made at the Stop and Shop in North Haven, Northford Plaza in Northford, Central Plaza and Hillside Terrace in North Branford, Business Park Drive and the Stop and Shop in Branford. Initial feedback was positive however ridership was very low. During its first 11 months in operation only 639 trips were provided.

In December 2008 the route was revamped to provide feeder route service to the Branford train station. In an effort to build awareness and encourage ridership, the service was offered free of charge to riders until February 1, 2009. Unfortunately the passenger counts remained low and only 150 trips were provided during the next 4 months. As a result the service was discontinued on May 21, 2009.

***Public Transit Connections between Old Saybrook and Middletown-*** In 2007 LOCHSTP approved funding for this service with NFI. Matching funds were provided through ConnDOT's operating budget. In June 2009 The Estuary Transit District began operating a flex route service with limited stops to connect Old Saybrook and Middletown.

***Public Transit Connections between the Old Saybrook Train station and the South East Area Transit District bus route in East Lyme.*** Funding for this service was provided through the Governor's Initiative. The Estuary Transit District began operation of a Flex Route service from the Old Saybrook train station to East Lyme with a connection to the SEAT Bus routes. Ridership has been low and plans are in the works to revamp the route service to provide express route connection to the multi-modal train station in New London.

### **Identification of Gaps**

As part of the process to update the region's LOCHSTP the Committee's first meeting in December 2008 included a review of the service gaps identified in 2007. Through open discussion of service needs, and input from ConnDOT, a revised list of seven clearly defined service gaps was developed and presented at the January 2009 meeting. The identified gaps are;

***Service for persons who are not eligible for ADA services or for trips that are not ADA eligible*** Seniors and, persons who don't have access to or are unable to operate a motor vehicle, lack mobility options in areas where public transportation is not available. In some communities transportation is offered through the local Senior Centers to seniors and persons with disabilities, however trip purposes may be confined to certain categories or the hours of service are limited based on vehicle availability and a lack of drivers. Many times those in need find that these services are not adequate and instead they must rely on friends and family for transportation or, as is often the case, do without.

***Wheelchair Accessible Taxis*** Taxi companies are a valuable transportation resource throughout our region. For individuals with a disability who use a wheelchair, taxi service is not an option they can use. There are no wheelchair accessible taxis in Connecticut and this limits the mobility for those in need, especially during timeframes where public transit and paratransit services do not operate.

***Develop taxi voucher program*** Taxi companies are a resource that can offer trips that can not be anticipated or are unable to be handled by the ADA paratransit systems. Taxis are an effective mechanism to allow people with disabilities to access locations outside of the ADA paratransit service area and at times when ADA paratransit is not available or as a resource for same day trips which is not available with ADA paratransit in the region. The cost of cab fare discourages individuals and human service organizations with limited funds from making better use of this option. Through voucher programs to subsidize the taxi fare, services can be offered 24/7 and taxi services become a more viable option for those in need.

***Community Based transportation*** There is a need in our region for specialized transportation to support programs that make it possible for seniors and persons with disabilities to remain involved in their communities. Many of these individuals don't have access to or are unable to operate a motor vehicle, and find it difficult to take part in these programs. While public transportation and ADA service may be an option for some these services cannot always provide the same flexibility and personal service that this group needs. These needs can include transportation to medical appointments, to the Veteran's Hospital, shopping trips, scheduled group activities and bus service to and from the senior centers for meals and any number of programs.

***Vehicles*** As the percentage of seniors and persons with disabilities compared to the overall population continues to increase, human service organizations find they are in need of additional vehicles to serve current and prospective clients. Increased use of their fleet adds to the burden on vehicles that may be nearing or past their anticipated useful life. These agencies may need to replace vehicles sooner in order to maintain existing services.

***Service between Meriden, Cheshire and Southington;*** There is currently no public transit service connection from the city of Meriden to points west. This includes the towns of Cheshire and Southington and a connection to CTTRANSIT 'J' route into Waterbury. For their part, officials from both Cheshire and Southington support the proposal and see a benefit to providing residents improved access to the Meriden Train Station, the Westfield Meriden mall and MidState Medical Center. There is a need for this service to run along Rte 691 from Meriden and along Rte 10 through Cheshire and Southington. It is anticipated that service could be provided roughly every hour from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Friday.

***Saturday service Route 'C' Expansion in Meriden;*** Meriden Transit's 'C' route currently operates Monday through Friday with no weekend service. The first phase of Governor's Service Initiative provided funds for a new Meriden bus route on Saturday which connects with the CTTRANSIT 'C' Route. Increased ridership on that route has led to increased demand for more services on the weekend. There is a need for an East-West Connection on Saturdays to be provided roughly between 9:30 AM and 6:00 PM. The elderly and persons with disabilities

living in these communities have no access to transportation on the weekends for transportation to jobs and connections to MidState Hospital for Medical appointments.

### **Identification of Strategies**

Once the gaps had been clearly defined the next step was to solicit projects to address these needs. This process began in January 2009 and based on guidance from ConnDOT four service proposals were received and put on the agenda for the meeting in May 2009. One proposal was from Estuary Transit for second year funding of its bus service between Old Saybrook and Middletown.

The three new proposals are;

***Wheelchair Accessible Taxis*** This proposal would fund the purchase of two wheelchair accessible taxis which would be operated by Metro Taxi. NFI funding for this project is estimated at \$70,400 with Metro Taxi providing \$16,000 in matching funds. Ridership data will be collected. If approved ConnDOT, Metro Taxi and GNHTD will work together to facilitate the vehicle procurement.

***Develop taxi voucher program*** Metro Taxi in cooperation with the City of New Haven, ConnDOT and GNHTD have developed a process to make discount taxi vouchers available to persons with disabilities for full inclusion into the community. The purchase of taxi vouchers would be used to offset the passenger's cost of the taxi fare by 50%. The amount of NFI funding for this project is estimated at \$71,500. Funds received through the sale of vouchers will provide the necessary match. Metro Taxi has recently introduced a paperless voucher program that is accessible and maintainable via the internet. It is through this system that program will be administered. If approved ConnDOT, Metro Taxi and GNHTD will work together to facilitate the program.

***Service for persons who are not eligible for ADA services or for trips that are not ADA eligible and Community Based transportation*** This project proposed by ETD will extend the hours of their Riverside Shuttle Route. The route serves Old Saybrook, Essex, Deep River and Chester along Route 154. While the existing service is well utilized, there is a large gap in both the morning and evening hours which prevent the route from being used for commuting to and from work. This proposed service will expand the hours of the Riverside Shuttle to give seniors and disabled persons improved access to employment opportunities. It will expand the times from the current 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM to 6:00 AM – 7:00 PM Monday through Friday. NFI Funding for this project is estimated at \$30,536 annually with ConnDOT providing the required \$30,536 in matching funds.

## **Prioritization of Strategies**

The list of identified gaps and strategies was finalized on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 and the South Central LOCHSTP committee set about assessing proposed strategies and prioritizing the projects. Projects were judged, based on input from ConnDOT, on their ability to serve the targeted populations. Roughly \$200,000 in 5317 New Freedom Initiative federal fund was available based on the apportionment for FFY07 (\$150,505) combined with the balance of FFY06 (\$50,111) funding. The LOCHSTP committee utilized prioritization criteria provided by ConnDOT to rank the projects.

The following table provides a brief list of projects in the order they were ranked and their funding amount.

<b><u>5317 New Freedom Initiative</u></b>	<b><u>NFI</u></b>	<b><u>Match</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
Old Saybrook and Middletown-Operating	\$31,000	\$31,000	\$ 62,000
Accessible Taxi Purchase- Capital	\$70,400	\$16,000	\$ 86,400
Taxi Voucher Program- Operating	\$71,500	\$65,000	\$136,500
Riverside Extended Hours	\$30,536	\$30,536	\$ 61,072
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$203,436</b>	<b>\$142,536</b>	<b>\$345,972</b>

## **Relationship to Other Transportation Planning Processes**

Both SCRCOG and CRERPA will follow their respective operating procedures to include the LOCHSTP components into their transportation process. This plan attempted to incorporate the goals and strategies described in the Connecticut Long Range Transportation Plan, along with the regional transportation plans adopted by both SCRCOG and CRERPA.

The role of The South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) and the local LOCHSTP process is documented in the SCRCOG Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as described below:

*Locally Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (LOCHSTP)* - This requirement of SAFETEA-LU is the planning element under which SCRCOG will coordinate transit services to provide for the basic mobility needs of the Region's elderly and disabled (Section 5310); access to jobs and reverse commute programs (Section 5316); and the New Freedom program (Section 5317). During FY2009, the Region has undertaken a LOCHSTP review process, with outreach to service providers and municipalities to identify service gaps and needs. During the FY2009 and FY2010 staff will work with service providers and CDOT to implement service priorities.

The Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency Long Range Plan incorporates the region's long range accessibility goals, objectives, and strategies within the region which includes LOCHSTP planning and implementation initiatives.