

Best Practices

Swan Island Transportation Management Association - Portland

Area Population Size: Medium Urbanized (200,000-1,000,000)

Partnerships: Human Service Providers, Public Transportation Providers, Other: Employers

Target Population: People with Disabilities, People with Lower Income

Target Outcome: Extension of service to accommodate later shifts

Description: Job-access challenge – How to provide access to and from jobs on Swan Island after TriMet's Line 85 service ends in the early evening.

Swan Island is a 580-acre industrial park owned by the Port of Portland. The site is a major corporate center and hub for distribution, warehousing, and manufacturing activities. Major tenants include Freightliner, Federal Express, and United Parcel Service, and work shifts extend around the clock. TriMet operates two bus routes on Swan Island. Line 85 covers the entire island and provides weekday fixed-route service from 5:40 AM to 6:20 PM. Buses run every 20 minutes from the Rose Quarter Transit Center for connections with MAX light rail. Line 72 operates seven days a week from about 5:00 AM to midnight, but does not serve the entire island. Connections are available at the Clackamas Transit Center and the 82nd Avenue MAX station.

The Swan Island Transportation Management Association (TMA) received Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funds to extend fixed-route bus service until midnight. The evening shuttle follows the route of the TriMet's Line 85 and provides 11 round trips from the Rose Quarter Transit Center to Swan Island. The bus leaves Rose Quarter every 30 minutes from 6:36 PM to 11:36 PM, and the last bus leaves Swan Island at 11:48 PM. The last bus continues to City Center Transit Center to allow more connections with other TriMet routes. Service operates weekdays only. A private contractor operates the evening shuttle. No passenger fare is charged on the shuttle; in effect, passengers are making a free transfer from a TriMet bus or train.

Planning and coordination: The director of the Swan Island TMA and TriMet staff worked closely together to develop and market the shuttle. The bus follows the TriMet route and uses TriMet bus stops. TriMet added the Swan Island Shuttle logo to its bus stop signs and brochures promoting transit access to Swan Island reference both TriMet and shuttle services. The TMA director also worked directly with Swan Island employers to determine shift schedules. The program began in 2001 and has received \$70,000 in JARC funds annually through TriMet. Average weekly ridership was 250-300 in 2005, and the average cost was \$5.00 per trip.

Sustainability: Without JARC funding, the future of the shuttle would be uncertain. The route's performance statistics do not currently make it a candidate for TriMet to take over the operation of the route. Instead, TriMet has indicated that it would operate the evening service only if midday hours were cut at the same time. These efforts to maintain cost neutrality have been an ongoing source of frustration for the TMA, which would like to turn the service over to TriMet if ridership exceeds a specified target.

Elements of success: Maintaining communication among all the project stakeholders—and knowing what motivated each one—was critical to the program's success. Knowing that employers were motivated by their bottom line, the TMA director educated them on the value of getting their people to work. Simply put, employers cannot make money if their workers are at home. The TMA determined that contracting the service would be the most cost-effective approach. However, TriMet union rules required approval before the contract could proceed. Although the TMA believed it would attract riders, there was no reason to operate the shuttle past midnight because TriMet service ends around 1:00 AM and riders on later shuttles would not be able to transfer to other routes. Finally, the TMA determined that fixed-route service best met the needs of potential riders. Because employers are clustered in a small area and riders can access regional services at a transit center, a traditional route structure works well.

Middlesex County (NJ) DOT Community Shuttle Program

Area Population Size: Medium Urbanized (200,000-1,000,000)

Partnerships: Public Transportation Providers

Target Population: Children and Youth, Older Adults, People with Disabilities, People with Lower Income

Target Outcome: Increased Cost Efficiency

Description: The Middlesex County Area Transit Community Shuttle program was developed to provide modified fixed route system that bridged the gap between human service transportation and traditional transit. The routes were designed on clock headways, with timed transfers at key points that also included NJ Transit bus and rail services. Since the June 2005 implementation of the first two routes, system productivity has increased from 2.45 trips per hour in 2004 to 3.06 in 2006 and is continuing to increase. The four routes and eight buses, which carry predominately traditional paratransit users, represent 12% of the fleet and now account for nearly 40% of the total MCAT ridership. Total ridership which was constant at 220,000 annual passenger trips in 2003 and 2004, has increased to over 280,000 passenger trips in 2006. The shuttles now offer Saturday service, have greatly expanded mobility opportunities for the general public in the areas where they have been introduced and are promoting connections to traditional NJ Transit bus and rail services.

Shepherd's Center Escort Transportation, Kalamazoo, MI

Area Population Size: Medium Urbanized (200,000-1,000,000)

Partnerships: Faith Based

Target Population: Older Adults, People with Disabilities

Target Outcome: Centralized One-Stop Customer Services, Coordinated Funding, Coordination Between Providers

Description: Escort Transportation services began in 1989 through the Shepherd's Center, mainly in response to the need for one-on-one transportation for the elderly. For the most part, transportation is provided to and from doctor appointments, which involves escorting the person to the doctor, waiting for the person and finally taking the person home. The program began in 1989, as a volunteer program involving 12 churches that provided five volunteers each. Currently, 42 churches with 120 volunteer drivers participate in the program, making it a huge success. A \$20,000 grant from a local agency helped pay for the program's start-up costs; currently the Shepard's Center is capable of providing in-kind funding and financial aid. Service is provided for elderly citizens from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Thursday. In 2000, the Shepherd's Center provided 4,162 one-way passenger trips for its 258 clients. The Center coordinates with the local paratransit services, senior centers, adult day care facilities, hospitals, and other agencies. Transportation is provided to all adults aged 60 and over in Kalamazoo County; due to excess demand, rides are restricted to medical trips, including doctor appointments or visits to a loved one in the hospital. There are no rider fees, although suggested donations of \$5.00 are the norm for most roundtrip rides. Most riders that rely on the service have relatives that work and cannot give trips to them or relatives who live too far away. Public transport is typically not sufficient for the individuals who ride with Shepherd's. Although riders make most of the reservations themselves (about 70%), social workers and nurses also make reservations. The program is promoted through newspaper, TV and radio ads and public service announcements, as well as newsletters and referrals by social workers and nurses. While its annual budget is only \$9,000, the program sustains itself through donations and contributions from individuals and local organizations. A local church provides office space through in-kind donation. Individuals who might consider starting a similar program should first identify the population in need, and speak with officials in the often overburdened public transportation agencies. Leadership, an extremely important element in beginning the Shepherd's Escort Transportation program, and driver guidelines were essential to its success.

School Buses can ONLY Transport Students! (Right?)

When it became apparent that existing rules and regulations prevented the use of school buses in coordination projects, the Ohio Transportation Coordination task force worked with the Ohio Department of Education to amend their rules to allow school bus usage for transporting "Ohio Works First" clients during the times when the buses were not utilized for transporting students.

In addition, the task force worked with the Department of Insurance and the major insurance carrier for the majority of school bus operations across the state to draft language to ensure appropriate and cost-effective insurance coverage of school buses used in coordination projects.