

ONE CALL-ONE CLICK Profiles

PADUCAH, KENTUCKY

BACKGROUND

The Paducah Area Transit System (PATS) and three rural transit systems are collaborating as Purchase Area Regional Transit (PART) in a multiyear demonstration project to design and implement a model-coordinated human service and public transportation service organization called a Transportation Management Coordination Center (TMCC). The TMCC provides transportation one-call service as part of a comprehensive coordination effort funded by the USDOT-sponsored Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA) Project.

The Purchase area encompasses 2,569 square miles spanning eight predominantly rural counties (Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, Marshall and McCracken) in Western Kentucky. The area's population is about 195,000, including 27,000 residents in the City of Paducah.

CONDITIONS PRECEDING ONE-CALL SERVICE

Local interest in transportation one-call service developed over a period of years as part of a broad vision for coordinated transportation services in the region. A number of smaller agencies had individually adopted a "mobility management" approach to arranging for client transportation, although it may not have been formally recognized as such at the time. A large stakeholder group formed over time to bring together local leaders, consumers and service providers who were supportive of coordination in concept but uncertain about how to proceed. The opportunity to pursue federal grant funding for the TMCC presented a rallying point for action. As many as 220 agencies in the eight-county region initially expressed an interest in coordination prior to 2006. Ultimately, this number was reduced to 5-10 agencies sharing a leading role in advocating for, preparing and submitting the grant application.

DESIGNATING A LEADER

Local participants generally agreed that PATS was the "logical choice" to serve as the lead agency for the TMCC project. PATS is the largest of the four transportation providers involved in the PART consortium, operating approximately two-thirds of the revenue vehicles and carrying three-fourths of the passengers in the region. As a community transportation provider, PATS already was engaged in brokering Medicaid-funded Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation (NEMT) trips and providing contract transportation services for dozens of human service agencies and community organizations, including, but not limited to:

- Kentucky Department for the Blind
- Kentucky Department of Disability
- Kentucky Department of Medicaid Services
- Kentucky Department of Vocation Rehabilitation
- Medicaid-Private Auto Transportation Program

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- Oscar Cross Boys & Girls Clubs
- Paducah Housing Authority
- Paducah-McCracken County Senior Services
- R.O.S.S. Elderly & Disabled Program
- US Department of Veterans Affairs
- United Way

PATS also operates six days per week with a longer daily span of service than its three partnering rural transit systems. PATS fixed-route network provides intermodal connections to intercity bus stations and the regional airport, as well as to major community institutions located in and around the City of Paducah. Other related services provided by PATS include several employer transportation shuttles and a pharmaceutical courier service.

Looking forward, it was anticipated that PATS would have the best likelihood of sustaining the achievements of the project beyond the grant funding stage. It had a large staff, more sophisticated vehicle operations and maintenance facilities and expertise, the capacity to support Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies, and the financial resources to install and manage a T-1 line and other infrastructure required to network the phone system and handle high-volume digital communications between the Dispatch Center and vehicles in revenue service.

GOALS SELECTED AND FUNDING OBTAINED

Acting on behalf of a four-member consortium of local transit agencies, PATS applied for an MSAA Demonstration of Enhanced Services Transportation Models grant in June 2006. USDOT issued a Phase 1 System Development & Design grant to PATS in December 2006, one of eight such projects selected nationwide. The initial stakeholder input stage of the project began in April 2007. Although the TMCC project initially focused on the local system in Paducah with a future regional or state-wide focus, it quickly evolved into a larger effort focused on meeting the transportation and human service information and referral needs of the entire Purchase Area region.

Subsequently, PATS became one of just three grantees nationwide¹ to receive a Phase 2 System Deployment grant in 2008. Representing the PART consortium, PATS received \$1.5 million to create a “replicable and scalable model” to deploy a regional TMCC. PATS also received a \$2 million Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5309 Bus & Bus Facilities discretionary grant to expand PATS’ operating and administration facilities, to provide additional office space for staff and local service organizations, and to create a

¹ The other two Phase 2 grant recipients are the Lower Savannah Council of Governments in Aiken, SC and the Camden County Workforce Investment Board in Camden, NJ.

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“one-stop shop” for transit customers. The TMCC, which includes a transportation one-call service function, opened in March 2010.

The mission, goals and objectives of the Purchase Area TMCC were thoroughly vetted by stakeholders during the project application process. The stated mission of the TMCC is to:

“...provide customers with a single point of access to receive regional transportation, human services and community information facilitating greater personal mobility for all individuals in the Purchase Area region.”

GOALS FOR THE OVERALL COORDINATION PROCESS INCLUDE:

- Do more with existing resources;
- Enhance mobility within and between communities, meaning increasing access to multiple destinations and opportunities; and
- Generate new revenues for transportation services.

PERFORMANCE-RELATED GOALS FOR THE TMCC INCLUDE:

- Provide a place, phone number and website where people can get information about services, bus passes and vouchers;
- Assist consumers in learning about/becoming eligible;
- Offer a source for travel training and travel orientation;
- Empower customers to schedule rides and check on ride status via the Internet and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) telephony; and
- Link one-call service directly to rides as part of an integrated service delivery chain.

ONE-CALL SERVICES TODAY

The TMCC opened in March 2010, and while it is fully functioning at present, not all functions are operating at full capability yet. The TMCC is housed within PATS’ expanded operating and administrative facility in Paducah, with satellite locations at each of the other three provider locations. There are four transportation providers participating in the PART collaboration:

- **PADUCAH AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM (PATS)** provides fixed-route, paratransit, dial-a-ride, Medicaid, human service, contract, shuttle, vanpool, and senior citizen transportation services in McCracken, Graves, Marshall, and Ballard counties. PATS utilizes a fleet of 67 vehicles operating 4:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. PATS provides over 556,000 passenger trips annually.
- **MURRAY - CALLOWAY TRANSIT AUTHORITY (MCTA)** provides fixed-route, paratransit, Medicaid, human service, and university transportation services in Calloway, Marshall, and Graves counties. MCTA utilizes a fleet of 11 vehicles operating 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. MCTA

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provides approximately 65,000 passenger trips annually.

- **FULTON COUNTY TRANSIT AUTHORITY (FCTA)** provides paratransit, Medicaid, and human service transportation services in Fulton, Hickman, Carlisle, and Graves counties. FCTA utilizes a fleet of 27 vehicles operating 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 6:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. FCTA provides approximately 80,000 passenger trips annually.
- **EASTER SEALS OF WESTERN KENTUCKY (ESWKY)** provides agency and Medicaid transportation services in Graves, Marshall, Ballard and McCracken counties. Easter Seals operates on weekdays with a fleet of five vehicles.

The TMCC provides transportation one-call service as part of a comprehensive coordination effort.

- The one-call center allows consumers to make and manage their transportation reservations either online or by calling a single toll-free telephone number.
- The TMCC offers transportation one-call information pertaining to the public transportation services of the four participating providers, as well for Job Seeker and other referral services.
- Information is available for all public transit providers, ADA Paratransit, specialized transportation services, human service transportation programs, and privately operated transportation services, including taxis.
- PART also provides trip-planning assistance.

The providers handle incoming calls for TMCC services during their regular business hours. Reservations are scheduled immediately while the customer is on the phone. The customer has a confirmed reservation with estimated pickup or drop-off time at completion of the call. Since

PATS has longer operating hours than the others, incoming calls roll over to the main call center when the other providers close for the day.

PART has a searchable Information & Referral (I&R) Directory on its website (<http://www.ridepart.com/directory.htm>). The inventory lists more than 3,800 resources in the database, including community agencies in 60 categories encompassing health and human services, government and education, including transportation in the following Western Kentucky counties - Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, Trigg, Union and Webster. Although specific procedures for updating the database have yet to be developed, PART intends to meet or exceed AIRS standards, including updating all records every six months. Customer Service Representatives are being trained to administer the updating process.

The TMCC makes extensive use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies to manage and coordinate the scheduling and dispatching of 110 vehicles deployed in fixed-route and demand-responsive service. The vehicles are linked using sophisticated paratransit scheduling software, mobile data computers (MDC), automatic vehicle location (AVL), and computer-assisted dispatching (CAD) technologies.

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TELEPHONE SYSTEM - PART uses an Iwatsu business telephone system with a total of 23 incoming lines, including 12 lines that were added as part of the TMCC project. The system supports English and other language options, and includes a TTD/TTY for callers with hearing impairments, as well as 2-1-1 call forwarding and fax. Although the TMCC advertises a toll-free “800” number that is distinct from PATS’ other business requirements, customer service representatives (CSRs) initially were unable to distinguish incoming calls as either related to the TMCC or other PATS services. This deficiency is being rectified so that TMCC calls will have a different ring tone and a light on the phone set that will enable the CSRs to distinguish incoming calls to the TMCC and answer accordingly. The phone system also has IVR features available at all times that enable callers to obtain information and direct their calls using a phone tree directory (e.g., Press “1” for __, “2” for __, etc.). The phone system is Internet-accessible using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology. Additionally, PATS acquired a telephone call accounting software product called TAP-IT at a cost of approximately \$2,400.

RESERVATIONS AND SCHEDULING – The TMCC has implemented an integrated scheduling and dispatching system using RouteMatch scheduling software and a real-time vehicle location system (AVL) and in-vehicle mobile data computers (MDC) supplied by Mentor Engineering.

These systems provide customers with Internet and telephone access to their reservations and booked trips via password-protected client accounts and support dissemination of day-of-travel information such as vehicle arrival status and notification, schedule changes, and service disruptions via cell phone text messaging and e-mail.

PART also purchased six information kiosks to allow remote access to the RidePART website from selected high-visibility locations in the service area. Four have been installed to date, including one at PATS’ administrative facility, one at the Visitors Bureau in Paducah, and two on the Murray State University campus located approximately 50 miles south of Paducah in Murray, KY. Two others will be installed at locations to be determined.

The MSAA grant funding has enabled PART to implement comprehensive marketing and outreach efforts, including an introductory video on its website. PART has developed a logo with the tagline:

“One call gets it all in Western Kentucky.”

LOOKING FORWARD

As noted earlier, the TMCC formally opened in March 2010, and various technical and procedural details are still being implemented and adjusted accordingly. Retrospectively, TMCC management staff recommend that other entities contemplating implementation of a comprehensive coordination package take more time at the beginning of the project to research hidden costs associated with the concept of operations. For example, is current technology compatible with the newer technology required for establishing

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the center? Other ongoing areas to address include resolution of “territorial” issues between agencies, negotiating rates and other financial considerations among service providers, and achieving full interoperability of equipment and software. Securing funding to sustain the TMCC beyond the completion of the grant funding period in 2012 will be a major issue in the near future.

The original grant application included an advanced fare collection (AFC) system, including a contactless “smart” farecard and onboard card readers intended to give customers an enhanced pre-paid fare option. However, it was subsequently determined that fewer than 300 individuals would likely need or use a farecard, so this ITS component was dropped due to its high capital cost and the level of staff support required to maintain a very complex system.

At one time, PART had plans to pursue accreditation of the TMCC as a 211 call center. There are three such call centers in the State of Kentucky, none of which are based in the Purchase region. However, the Kentucky United Way, which is responsible for 211 deployment, has decided not to create a fourth call center in the state. Consequently, PART is no longer actively pursuing accreditation.

For more information about the Purchase Area Regional Transit one-call service, contact Michael Hughes, TMCC Coordinator, 270-444-8700, mhughes@paducahtransit.com and view the call center’s website at www.ridepart.com.

The Community Transportation Association of America is a national non-profit, membership organization working to ensure that our nation’s residents have reliable, accessible, affordable, convenient and safe transportation services. The Association is involved in several projects to provide information and technical assistance to communities, transportation providers, human services agencies and other groups to increase mobility through effective public and community transportation.

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