

ONE CALL-ONE CLICK Profiles

STEBEN COUNTY, NEW YORK

BACKGROUND

Steuben County is a mostly rural county, with approximately 96,000 residents, located at the northern fringe of the Appalachian region in New York State's Southern Tier. Local interest in transportation coordination initially was articulated in the October 2002 Schuyler-Steuben Rural Transportation Needs Study, and defined more clearly in the Human Services Coordination Plan (HSCP) completed in June 2007. The HSCP was prepared by staff of the Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council (ECTC), which is the metropolitan planning organization for the City of Elmira in Chemung County and the City of Corning in Steuben County.

ECTC also organized and facilitated meetings of the Schuyler-Steuben Transportation Committee to ensure stakeholder input during the study process. New York State Department of Transportation (NYS-DOT) also served as an active proponent of coordination during and after completion of the HSCP. The coordination planning process incorporated a formal assessment of community resources, functions, and gaps in transportation services, and generated the following key recommendations:

- A "mobility management" function for the County should be developed to provide the public with transit information and referral (I&R) to transportation services, and to assist with further coordination efforts.
- Scheduling and dispatching software should be acquired for Steuben Area Rides, and potentially for other transit service providers in order to coordinate existing and new public rider services.
- Increased involvement by, and coordination with, the Steuben County Department of Social Services is needed. Collaboration with other agencies in the County, where coordination of services could be of benefit to County residents, also is encouraged.
- Creation of a marketing program for the various transit services available in the County is needed to give them a common identity and improve residents' awareness of, and access to, the county-wide transit system, tied to the easy-to-remember 2-1-1 telephone number and comprehensive information and referral service.
- Definition of potential transportation needs that could be funded by the FTA Section 5317 New Freedom program.
- Continued discussion of additional coordination efforts should be undertaken by a Steuben-specific advisory committee.

Although the HSCP did not recommend a specific organizational approach for coordination, two alternatives were cited for further discussion. The choices were either to locate the mobility management function

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within an existing transit service provider's (mostly likely Steuben Area Rides) organization, or to assign it to the Institute for Human Services, which operates a five-county 2-1-1 information and referral service and coordinates a volunteer-driver-based county-wide transportation service but is not a transit service provider.

Currently there are five public transportation providers operating in Steuben County:

- Steuben County and the City of Corning contract with First Transit, a for-profit firm, to manage and operate the Corning-Erwin Area Transit System (CEATS), which provides fixed-route services in Corning, Painted Post, Gang Mills and Coopers Plain.
- Steuben County also contracts with First Transit to manage and operate Steuben County Transit (SCT) fixed routes serving the Villages of Bath and Hammondsport, and connecting between Bath and the City of Corning.
- The City of Hornell sponsors its own local "HAT" system, which includes a local fixed route in the Village and connecting rural routes extending into neighboring Allegany and Livingston County. A locally based for-profit service contractor is used for service delivery.
- The Arc of Steuben operates a primarily client-based transportation program that includes several Steuben Area Rides (StAR) bus routes that are open to the general public. These were formerly client-only bus routes that cover areas not otherwise served by public transit. There was residual capacity to accommodate additional riders.
- Chemung County Transit System (CCTS) primarily serves the City of Elmira in Chemung County, but also extends to Corning and Corning Community College in eastern Steuben County. CCTS is managed and operated by First Transit as well.

In 2009, the Steuben County Transportation Advisory Committee (SCTAC) was formed to oversee better integration of public transportation and Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) services using a mobility management approach. The Institute for Human Services (IHS) was selected to lead the implementation of the next phase of coordination at that time.

Founded in 1984, IHS is a non-profit organization providing management support services, information and referral, technology administration and capacity-building services for the regional non-profit and health care sector. The Institute is a member-based organization composed of funders, planners and providers working in the Southern Tier non-profit and health care sectors. Its stated mission is to improve the quality of life in the Southern Tier by increasing member agencies' capacity for success. Annual membership dues range from \$45 to \$225, depending on the size of the organization. IHS also generates revenue from management and administrative services provided to members, including development, implemen-

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tation and evaluation of sound strategic, operating, fiscal and technology plans.

IHS' program structure, shown in Figure 1, is organized around three broad functions: communication programs, capacity-building programs, and collaboration programs.

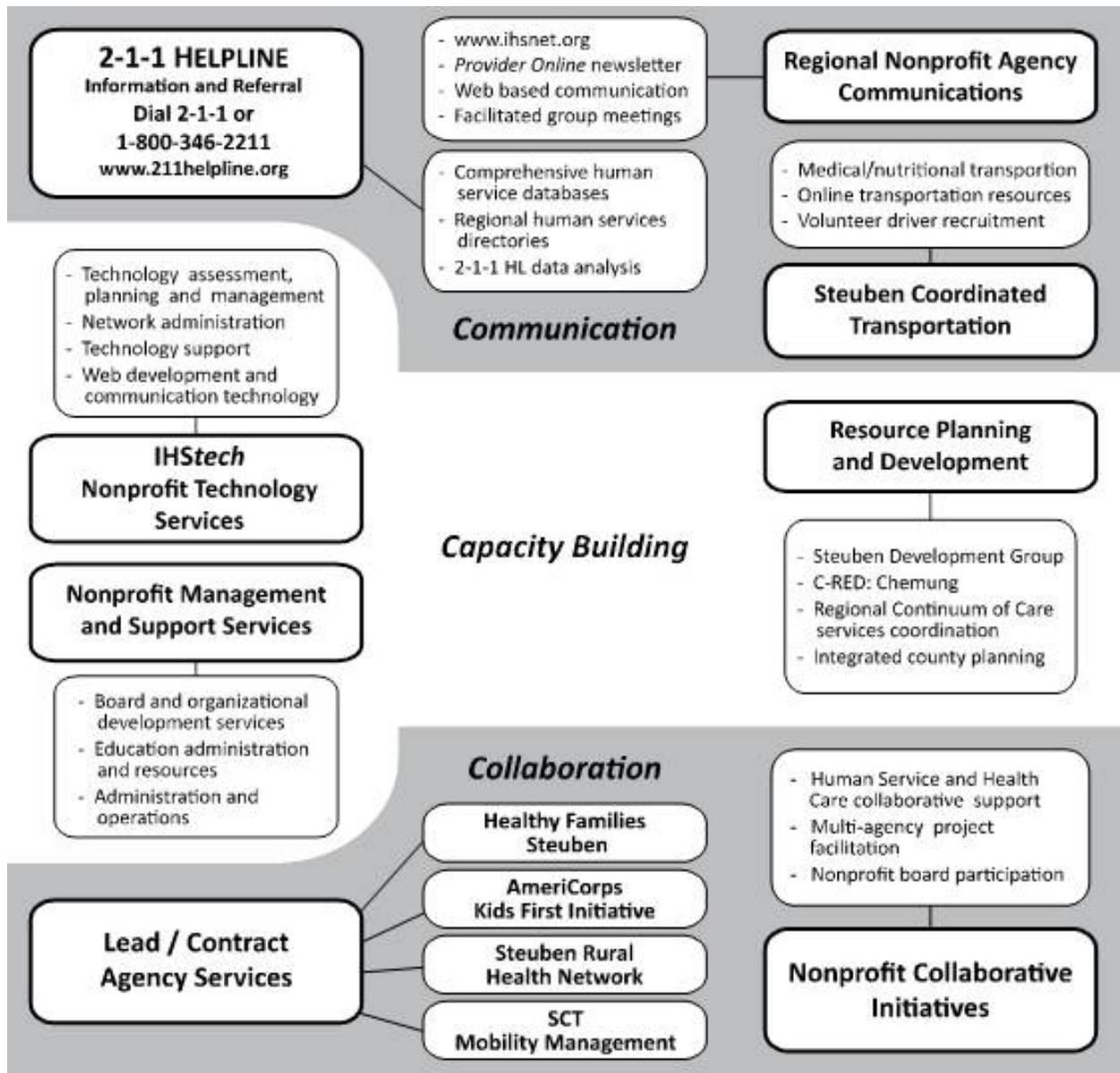
Funding required to engage IHS in the coordination process came from an FTA Section 5316/5317 JARC/ New Freedom grant awarded to IHS by NYSDOT in 2009. The Steuben Coordinated Transportation (SCT) Project work scope includes four primary tasks:

- Create and staff a full-time Mobility Manager position to carry out the day-to-day transition to mobility management by coordinating services and planning among Steuben County's varied public, private, and volunteer transportation programs, and increasing transportation access for the low-income, elderly, and disabled to get to and from the employment and services they need.
- Coordinate transportation service marketing and promotion to create a common identity for the transit system in Steuben County that improves residents' awareness of, and access to, the services available, and increases availability and ridership among transit providers.
- Expand the existing toll-free 2-1-1 regional one-call information Helpline to include specialized transportation information & referral services. Provide information and referral, data collection, and online database information management services.
- Provide technology assistance supporting procurement of mobility management (scheduling) software suited to a multi-user environment; and provide hosting and network administration services for the scheduling system installed on an IHS computer network server. Transit providers, and potentially other specialized transportation providers, will need to have access to the system via the Internet.

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FIGURE 1: Institute for Human Services One-Call Center Structural Chart



Source: Institute for Human Services, www.ihsnet.org

REASONS FOR THIS SELECTION

NYSDOT and Steuben County Planning staff recognized that coordination among five transit providers would pose a challenge without the involvement of an “honest broker” to provide leadership and staff

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resources to implement a coordinated system. IHS was invited to take a leading role in the coordination process for a number of reasons, notably:

- The Institute's mission and reputation for maintaining neutrality and providing all services with impartiality and integrity were well-established. IHS brings together member organizations and assists them in functioning as a comprehensive, collaborative and coordinated network of planners, funders and providers.
- IHS is overseen by an 18-member Board of Directors representing a wide cross-section of local organizations and local governments, including a number of transportation stakeholders:
 - Steuben County Administrator
 - Board Member, United Way of the Southern Tier
 - CEO, Arbor Development (housing/shelter services)
 - Executive Director, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc. (community action program)
 - Executive Director, Catholic Charities of Steuben County
 - IHS Board Member At-Large
 - Director, Steuben County Department of Community Services
 - NY Connects / Caregiver Coordinator County Office for the Aging
 - Executive Director, Arc of Steuben
 - Deputy Director, Legal Assistance of Western New York
 - Director, Continuing Education Corning Community College
 - Executive Director, Steuben County School Boards Association
 - Director, Steuben County Public Health and Nursing Services
 - Board Member, Bethesda Foundation Board (health services)
 - Commissioner, Steuben County Department of Social Services
 - Program Officer, Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes
 - Executive Director, CSS Workforce NY
 - Social Worker Executive, Bath VA Medical Center
 - Assistant Professor, Alfred University School of Psychology/Counseling
- IHS administers the volunteer-driver-based Steuben Coordinated Transportation program as a partnership with the Steuben County Office for the Aging, United Way of the Southern Tier, and 2-1-1 Helpline.
- IHS already is the 2-1-1 regional call center service provider in Steuben and neighboring counties, and it was determined that adding transportation one-call service would present fewer challenges than setting up an entirely new program. The 2-1-1 service is an established toll-free help line operated in accordance with state and national standards for information and referral, with sufficient capacity to meet anticipated demand, ACD capability for call routing and state-of-the-market I&R software staffed

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by IHS personnel. Volunteer clearinghouse software is also in place, and information concerning the SCT volunteer-driver program already is provided.

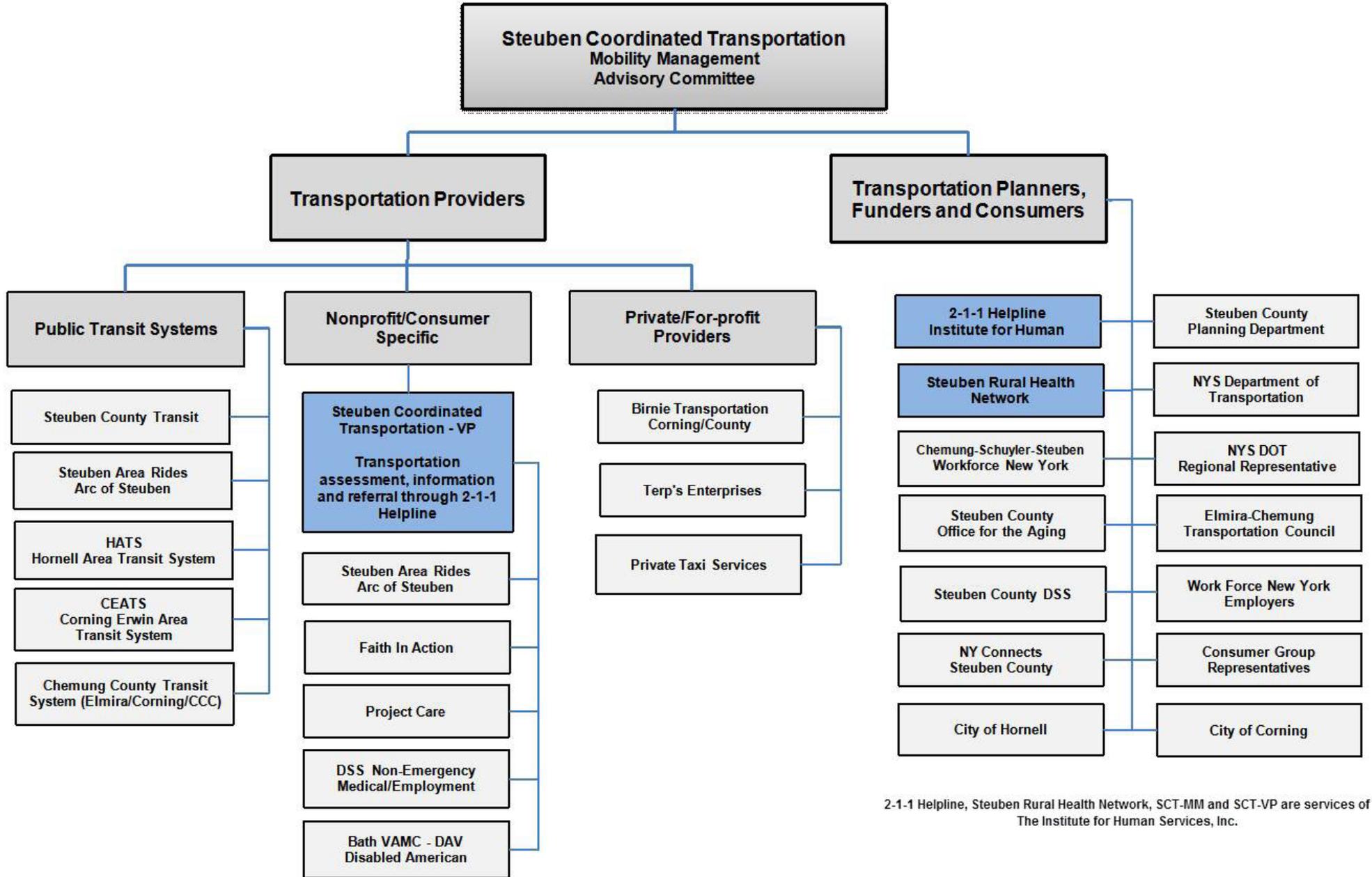
- IHS is a technology-focused organization with an internal Information Technology (IT) Department providing network administration and related services to member agencies on a fee-for-service basis. IHS is perceived to be a competent provider of technology services, with personnel resources capable of supporting the effort to acquire next-generation scheduling software to support productivity gains.

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Assuming the self-described role of “Neutral Convener”¹, IHS became an FTA sub-grantee through an agreement with NYSDOT in October 2009. This relationship is more accurately characterized as a negotiated partnership than a more-typical grantor-grantee agreement resulting from a competitive grant application process. IHS hired a Mobility Manager in February 2010. Figure 2 shows the Steuben Coordinated Transportation Project organization table reflecting two primary stakeholder groups that comprise the Mobility Management Advisory Committee (MMAC). The transportation providers appearing on the left side of the table include public transit systems, not-for-profit consumer specific services and private, for-profit providers. Other participating stakeholders on the MMAC are listed on the right side of the table and include transportation planners, funders and consumers representing 14 agency programs and governmental offices.

1 Telephone discussion with IHS Executive Director Patrick Rogers, March 12, 2010.

FIGURE 2: Steuben Coordinated Transportation Project Organizations & Stakeholders



Source: Institute for Human Services

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ONE-CALL SCOPE OF SERVICE

The main objective of the transportation one-call service at the present stage of development is to provide basic information and referral services to consumers via the existing toll-free 2-1-1 Helpline. Information will be available for all providers of public transit, ADA paratransit or specialized transportation services, Aging and Disability support services, personal and family health services, temporary aid to families and individuals, and privately operated transportation services, including taxis and other human service program transportation.

Each caller will be pre-screened for probable eligibility for specific services using criteria such as age, disability, income or other program-specific criteria. Upon completion of a brief screening interview, 2-1-1 Helpline staff will transfer the phone call to a particular provider while the caller remains on the phone. It is anticipated that IHS involvement will conclude upon transfer of the call. A definitive eligibility determination and the transportation service itself will be provided by the service provider or a designated third party.

ONE-CALL FUNCTIONALITY AND TECHNOLOGY

The transportation one-call service is partially functioning at present within the 2-1-1 Helpline but will become more specialized for Steuben County providers. 2-1-1 Helpline staff is housed in the IHS central office located on a main county road outside the Village of Bath, NY. Currently there are 3.5 FTE dedicated I&R staff, plus two to three other administrative or part-time staff who handle the overflow of calls during the busiest times. After-hour and weekend service is provided by ABVI-Goodwill in Rochester, NY, the 2-1-1 provider for Monroe and five additional counties, using remote access to the 2-1-1 Helpline database.

INTEGRATED TELEPHONE SYSTEM

The Institute's 2-1-1 Helpline has a Samsung OfficeServ phone system with seven incoming lines, automatic call distribution (ACD) to as many as 12 workstations, each with networked access to the resource database and call-screening protocols. ACD reporting includes time to answer, rate of abandoned calls, average queue time and other data.

IHS uses "REFER" Information & Referral software that supports data collection about caller characteristics and referrals made. The needs of each caller are assessed, and results are filtered based on applicable criteria, including geographic area served, eligibility, purpose of trip, for example. State and national standards for I&R encompass data elements, data accuracy and updating requirements, classification, quality assurance measures and staff certification. Standard and customized reports provide important information to the agency providers and collaborative work groups. This includes reporting to agencies on the calls received.

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INFORMATION DATABASE

IHS' current one-call service database includes information for approximately 500 agency programs and thousands of individual services. Users may call or search the database online (by keyword, category or agency name) and results are geographically specific. The information for each program is updated annually for each agency, primarily via electronic formats. Although there are no formal written agreements with the agencies partnering to provide their program

information, IHS reports a 97% response rate associated with implementing online data collection, a significant increase that coincided with discontinuing the use of paper forms. Services accessed through the NY 5-1-1 travel information telephone number are also noted in the database.

RESERVATIONS AND SCHEDULING

Although the transportation one-call service will not be actively involved in accepting reservations for rides or scheduling trips, IHS is playing an important role in the procurement and implementation of new paratransit scheduling software. The JARC/New Freedom grant includes 80% federal funding to acquire the software through an ongoing competitive procurement process. The prospective users of the system will provide the required 20% local share on a pro-rata basis. IHS will host the software and facilitate a multi-user environment, enabling the transit providers to utilize it without the burden of ownership and maintenance.

LOOKING FORWARD

IHS will be looking for alternative grant-funding opportunities in the future to cover the ongoing costs of providing mobility management services.

For more information about the Institute for Human Services one-call center, contact Patrick Rogers, Executive Director, Institute for Human Services, Inc., rogersp@ihonet.org.

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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The “One-Call One-Click Transportation Services Toolkit” was created with United We Ride funding from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, through a cooperative agreement between the Community Transportation Association of America and the Federal Transit Administration. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the authors and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the federal government. Dec 2010.

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