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TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

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ABSTRACT

The Transportation Information Clearinghouse (TIC) Project was the result of collaboration among the Regional Transportation Authority, the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago and the Urban Transportation Center (UTC) at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The primary objective of the project was to identify privately-provided, employer-based, non-traditional transportation services in operation as well as specific information about these services in order for employers, Workforce Boards, One-Stop Centers, transportation planners and policymakers to facilitate low-income workers and job seekers to access employment opportunities. The non-traditional transportation information has been used to create an information clearinghouse to supplement the region's public transportation resources. Additionally, such information was sought to identify potential service coordination opportunities for service providers to pursue as well as enhance the current body of transportation information on services currently in operation in the region. The study found that employer-provided services are an integral part of the region's transit network which "bridge the gap" for workers unable to utilize traditional public transportation due to temporal and/or spatial mismatches. A secondary goal was to market commuter benefits to employers and employee groups to facilitate increased transit access and usage. The project was unique in that the Workforce Boards, whose caseworkers directly manage job-seeking activities, had oversight of the project while transportation and planning agencies acted in an advisory capacity.

To obtain information on non-traditional transportation services in the region, a survey instrument was developed and delivered to each employment site with more than fifty employees (over 14,000 sites) in the eight-county region. A summary of key preliminary survey findings include:

- Only 5% of responding companies have, at some time, offered transportation services to employees.
- Only 40% of responding companies were aware of pre-tax transportation benefits (e.g., RTA Transit Check Program or RTA/CTA Transit Benefit Program); however, one in five respondents did request, and was provided, additional pre-tax and commuter benefit related information.
- Over 30% of responding employers offer staggered work hours and flextime to their workers.
- 8 out of 10 employers do not share transportation services with other companies.
- Responding employers were equally likely to subcontract service operation as to operate transportation services with their own personnel.
- 92% of companies offering transportation services do not charge employees fares.
- There is a significantly high turnover rate of transportation coordinators among regional employers.
- The decision to offer transportation was largely based on employee recruitment and retention concerns.

- The decision to discontinue transportation services was due primarily to dwindling participation and the ending of pre-defined time limits (e.g., during a company relocation).
- Significant transportation issues employers cited include: high cost, logistics, liability, safety, and overcoming the preference to drive alone.
- Beneficial outcomes of offering private transportation services include employee retention, improved employee morale and appreciation, and an expanded labor pool.

Ultimately, 156 employers were identified as current providers of non-traditional transportation services. The findings serve to reverse commonly-held misinformation, i.e., that public transportation can and does serve the needs of all job seekers in the region. During the course of the project, an indirect discovery revealed that a majority of employers in the region lack understanding and usage of pre-tax transportation benefits. This finding points to the need for further exploration to potentially expand the programs. Recommended additional follow-up work necessary to maintain, update and enhance the Clearinghouse in order that the data continues to be a regional resource to facilitate access to employment opportunities include:

- Develop an ongoing update and maintenance of the existing Clearinghouse database of information. It is critical that the information obtained through the project be properly maintained, kept current and accurate in order to assist those individuals who require information to access employment opportunities.
- Develop ongoing procedures for Workforce Board and One-Stop Center staff to utilize so that changes, additions and new employer transportation services are captured, recorded and included in the Clearinghouse database. While the study obtained a significant amount of detailed information, which was previously unknown about employer-offered transportation services, there are still opportunities available to expand and improve the information database.
- Integrate and incorporate the Clearinghouse information for inclusion within the RTA Regional Transportation Asset Management System (RTAMS). The Clearinghouse information needs to reside in a well maintained, user-friendly and easily accessible network-type environment. RTAMS is the perfect location for this type of information to reside.
- In conjunction with Workforce Board staff, train the region's One-Stop Center job counselors on the RTA RTAMS system. In order to provide the maximum level of assistance to persons in need of transportation to and from work, it is crucial that staff from these entities be proficient in all facets of RTAMS.
- Explore service coordination and expansion opportunities. Through partnerships with existing employers and transportation providers, there are numerous opportunities for existing services to be shared and/or expanded in order to serve a larger client base and increase service efficiency and effectiveness.
- Investigate coordination opportunities of the TIC findings with other non-traditional public transportation programs (e.g., CATS Ridematch 21, Pace VIP Vanpool, car sharing and station car demonstration projects) in the region. There may be untapped benefits and opportunities among and between these non-

traditional services that could address some of the unmet commuter related transportation needs.

- Sponsor additional employer-targeted pre-tax commuter choice benefit educational workshops. These will provide a way for employers and employer associations to enhance their awareness and learn about available employee transportation benefits as well as assist them in implementing and administering programs, such as RTA Transit Check, to their employees.

Transportation Information Clearinghouse

INTRODUCTION

Traditional public and private transportation providers operate in limited geographies and time periods. Often, job seekers find opportunities for entry-level employment in locations and/or during periods of time when trip pairs to and from work cannot be conveniently made using traditional providers. However, many privately-provided transportation services operate for limited clientele at times and in locations that could provide needed links in the home/work trips for some job seekers. In many cases, such services could be utilized by employees and/or job seekers if the information were to be made available.

In practice, these candidates are often unaware of and unconcerned about the transportation difficulties being faced in a particular commute. It is only after they become serious job candidates do they perceive the problems they face securing and holding a job. While current travel information services provide excellent information regarding services operated by traditional public providers, the information and service required by entry-level job candidates, particularly those with little work history, may not be widely known. In fact, these transportation services may not even be available without the assistance of an intermediary. Those first aware of the difficulties faced by entry-level candidates are often the company human resource departments, and in the case of welfare clients, the caseworker contracted with the Department of Human Services.

Linking individuals with non-traditional private transportation providers is not as simple as travel planning with published schedules and historical services. Likewise, welfare recipients and low-income individuals may not be in a position to utilize traditional ridesharing programs. This is particularly true during the initial phases of identifying services and formalizing relationships with non-traditional providers and ridesharing programs. For this reason, the Clearinghouse dealt primarily with intermediaries on behalf of users.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The concept of the Transportation Information Clearinghouse (TIC) Project was initially developed through the City of Chicago/Cook County Welfare Reform Task Force Transportation Committee. The Committee consisted of a cross-section of employers, Workforce Boards, human service, state and regional agencies and public and private transportation providers. The Regional Transportation Authority provided the sponsorship and local funding to match Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funds. The Urban Transportation Center (UTC) at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) was approached for advice on preparing a scope of work and to undertake the research

project. The project is unique in that the work has been overseen by the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago, which represent the eight counties in the Chicago area. The oversight and direction was provided by a Steering Committee composed of representatives of each of the Workforce Boards. In addition, an Advisory Committee composed of the region's transportation and planning agencies was created to provide input during the course of the project.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The first task of the TIC project was to perform a needs assessment of the target transportation stakeholders, which was determined to be welfare clientele, low-income workers, reverse commuters, and other non-traditional work and work-related trip makers. The goal of the needs assessment was to identify the needs of the target population, the barriers to utilizing public transportation, and existing transportation alternatives. These stakeholders included seventeen private employers, employment training centers, and social service agencies. Two need assessment instruments were developed, one for one-stop centers/human service organizations, and one for private employers. Results are discussed below.

One-Stop Centers/Human Service Organizations

Four completed needs assessment surveys were returned, one from an Illinois Employment Training Center (one-stop) and three from public human service organizations. Each respondent indicated that their clientele (job seekers) relied heavily on public transportation alternatives for getting to work, job training, and interviewing/testing for jobs. The agencies cited the following barriers to increased utilization of public transportation:

Late night/weekend commutes – transit not available
Too far to walk to and from pick-up point
Service too infrequent
Multiple transfers
Safety concerns regarding walking and waiting at pick-up point
Multiple destinations (child care, school)
Affordability

Three agencies noted that they had contacted transit agencies to overcome these barriers, resulting in implementation of new service routes, modification of existing routes, and expansion of service. Respondents were also amenable to acquiring and disbursing public transit information to their clientele. However, despite knowing whom to contact at transit agencies, respondents still indicated that unresolved transportation problems were a cause of attrition for their clientele, and that service availability and cost were the most prevalent issues. Given the opportunity to suggest questions to ask of transit providers and/or employers, need assessment respondents overwhelmingly targeted employers – what carpool/vanpool options they sponsor, the availability of private transportation service, and the level of

awareness of transportation tax credits. These suggestions were incorporated into the preliminary survey distributed to all area employers later in the project.

Private Employers

Completed surveys were returned from three representative private employers, all of which have 24-hour operations at their facilities. Two employers were able to estimate transit usage by their employees – 10-15% and 30%; the third responding employer was unable to provide an estimate. All three employers indicated that they currently provide transportation in the form of shuttle vehicles; they also provide transportation information to their employees (public and private bus schedules, self-service ridematching database). Only one of the employers had contacted a public transit agency regarding implementing new or expanding existing services, and this had occurred seven years prior, when ECO mandates were announced.

Private employers listed the same barriers to using public transportation as the one-stop center/human service organizations:

Late night/weekend commutes – transit not available
Multiple transfers
Safety concerns regarding walking/waiting for transportation
Multiple destination points
Affordability
Public transportation too infrequent

NON-PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES INVENTORY

To address spatial and temporal mismatches and other barriers preventing job seekers from accessing jobs, a major goal of TIC was to survey all employers in an eight-county region. The purpose of the survey was to assess which employers offered private transportation (e.g., shuttles, door-to-door service, or other alternatives to public transit) to provide employee commute linkages between their worksite and existing public transit, so that an all-inclusive inventory of such services could be established and provided to interested stakeholders. For this reason, statistical sampling techniques were disregarded in favor of a population survey.

On the advice of the Steering and Advisory Committees, a two-part survey process was created; the preliminary survey instrument was used as a screening function to identify which employers currently or formerly offered public transportation services. Initially proposed to incorporate only the single qualifying question, the preliminary survey was expanded to five questions to gather more information regarding employer awareness and use of commuter benefits. In addition, two marketing pieces were included in the survey package; one piece introduced the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago, identifying their purpose and contact information.

The second piece was a promotional flyer to arouse interest in pre-tax commuter benefits. All preliminary survey packets were mailed in early May, 2002.

Once identified as a current or former provider of non-public transportation services, qualified employers would receive the longer, more detailed questionnaire which asked in-depth questions about their transportation service's operational, financial, and functional qualities. In addition, the longer questionnaire allowed for the inclusion of many qualitative variables that might point to service improvements, opportunities for shared services, and other items of interest to regional transportation providers and policy makers. Discussion of the employer questionnaire is included in the next section.

The scope of the project encompassed the Chicagoland region, which includes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties, as well as two burgeoning western collar counties, DeKalb and Kendall. An up-to-date Dun & Bradstreet database of employers was obtained from the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA) and was screened to include only employers with at least fifty employees at a work site. Thus, employers who had fifty or more employees spread across multiple work sites would be excluded if individual worksites did not contain at least fifty employees. With this restriction, 16,034 employment sites were identified in the database. Of those, 1,830 (11%) were returned as undeliverable with no forwarding address. Of the remaining 14,204 employment sites, responses were received from 2,287 (16%). Results and discussion of each question follow.

Preliminary Survey

Provision of service Employers were asked if their company currently provides or if it has ever provided transportation services (e.g., van shuttles) to its employees. Most respondents indicated that they have never provided transportation services (95%), while 118 (5%) indicated that they currently or used to provide transportation to employees. This smaller response set became the focus of the more detailed employer questionnaire which will be discussed in further detail later in this report.

Commuter benefits Employers were asked to indicate each type of commuter-related benefits their companies offer to employees. Percentages exceed 100 due to multiple responses.

Table 1. Commuter Benefits Offered to Employees

Commuter Benefit	# Responses	Percentage
Staggered work hours	736	32%
Flextime	695	30%
Emergency ride home	333	15%
Employee-paid pre-tax benefit	318	14%
Telework	293	13%
Compressed work week	223	10%
Preferred parking for car/vanpools	136	6%
Employer-paid pre-tax benefit	129	6%
Parking cash out	88	4%

Transit benefit program Approximately twenty percent of respondents (n = 442) indicated that they offer pre-tax benefits, including both employee-paid and employer-paid contributions, to their employees. To ascertain how the benefit was managed, employers were asked to identify their transportation benefit administrator. Among 76% of respondents, there was a fairly even split between administering the benefit in-house versus using RTA Transit Checks or the RTA/CTA Transit Benefit Program, with slightly more employers administering the benefit in-house. Other third-party administrators named include WageWorks (.7%), FlexBen, and AMG (.4% each).

Awareness Employers were asked to indicate whether they were previously aware of IRS pre-tax transportation benefits. A majority (60%) indicated no prior awareness of these benefits. A cross-tabulation of company size and awareness of pre-tax transportation benefits reveals that the largest companies in the region are more likely to be aware of pre-tax benefits *(see Table 2)*; moreover, of companies that are aware of pre-tax transportation benefits, larger companies are more likely to offer the benefit to their employees and more likely to do so via a self-contributing plan *(see Table 3)*.

Table 2. Awareness of Pre-Tax Transportation Benefits by Company Size

Company Size	Aware of Pre-Tax Benefits	
	Yes	No
50 - 250	37%	63%
251 - 500	50%	50%
501+	64%	36%

Table 3. Pre-Tax Benefit Program Offered vs. Company Size

Company Size*	Pre-Tax Benefits Offered	
	Employer-paid	Employee-paid
50 - 250	13%	31%
251 - 500	13%	42%
501+	17%	60%

**includes companies aware of benefit*

Additional information Employers were asked whether they would like to receive more information any commuter benefits mentioned in the survey. There were 850 additional information requests from approximately 200 unique employers, or one in five respondents by fax or mail. All respondents who requested additional information were mailed packets of information including an explanatory piece that described each benefit and gave website and contact information. In addition, requestors were added to a mailing list that was used to announce upcoming Commuter Benefit workshops held in the Chicagoland area (February 21 and October 16, 2003). Note: this question was omitted from subsequent phone surveys to make calls as short as possible.

Employers were most interested in acquiring information on pre-tax transportation benefits, whether employee or employer-paid.

Table 4. Additional Information Requests by Employers

Commuter Benefit	# Responses	Percentage
Employee-paid pre-tax benefit	180	17%
Employer-paid pre-tax benefit	173	17%
Parking cash out	76	7%
Emergency ride home	74	7%
Preferred parking	71	7%
Flextime	70	7%
Compressed work week	70	7%
Staggered work hours	68	7%
Telework	68	7%

Other As stated earlier, this project was not a sample study; rather, the whole qualifying population of employers was surveyed. The table below indicates the response rate versus actual representation in the study population and shows that the makeup of survey respondents closely mirrors the target population, with some overrepresentation of Lake County businesses and under-representation of Cook County businesses.

Table 5. Geographical Distribution of Respondents vs. Actual Population

County	Responses (number)	Responses (percentage)	Actual Population
Cook	1,316	58%	64%
DuPage	376	17%	16%
Lake	295	13%	8%
Kane	108	5%	4.5%
McHenry	91	4%	2.5%
Will	68	3%	4%
DeKalb	27	1%	1%
Kendall	1	<1%	.2%

Response Mode Survey instruments were mailed in May, 2002. In an attempt to maximize the response rate, Steering and Advisory Committee members included references to the survey in their e-mails and newsletters, directing employers to take the survey via the UTC website. In all, 46% of survey respondents mailed or faxed their completed surveys. In August, TIC staff began cold-calling employers to administer the survey, eventually more than doubling the response rate to over 16% of the surveyed population.

Mode	# Responses	Percentage
Phone	1,235	54%
Mail	612	27%
Fax	436	19%

Field observations Another effort to boost response rates included field observations at Metra train stations across the region. Thirty-five stations were observed for approximately three-hour blocks of time to identify the existence of privately-provided transportation, namely, marked and unmarked cars, vans, shuttles, and buses. Where possible, drivers were asked about the frequency of service, number of riders per day, and contact information for their employers. In all, 50 companies were identified via this method and were mailed the employer questionnaire.

CATS Private Providers Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) staff, the regional MPO, provided TIC staff with a Private Providers Listing. All private providers listed were mailed a short questionnaire in October 2002 that asked them to identify any known employers who used their services to transport workers to a job site on a regular basis. Through this method, eighteen employer transportation providers were identified and mailed the employer questionnaire.

In all, information was gathered for 65 employers confirmed to provide private transportation services. A complete listing of identified employer transportation providers can be found in Attachment 9.

EMPLOYER QUESTIONNAIRE

In addition to those employers who completed the preliminary survey and identified themselves as providers of private transportation, questionnaires were mailed to companies identified via the CATS Private Provider mailing as well as to companies observed providing transportation at Metra stations. In all, 156 employer questionnaires were mailed, and 32 responded (21%): six former providers and 26 current transportation providers.

Former Providers of Private Transportation

Six employers who formerly operated private transportation services completed the employer questionnaire.

- **Vehicle ownership:** all four companies that responded to this question indicated that the vehicles used in the service were company-owned.
- **Service operation:** there was a 50/50 split on company-operated versus subcontracted service.
- **Service access:** All respondents operated on a fixed service route and schedule.
- **Service availability:** None of the companies allowed non-employees to use the service.
- **Other destinations:** Five companies did not allow the transportation service to deviate from pick-up points and job sites; one company used the service for work events, such as conventions.
- **Service funding:** All respondents indicated that their companies funded the entire expense of the transportation service without employee contributions, grants, vouchers, or point of service payment.
- **Route sharing:** None of the companies shared routes or services with other companies.
- **Recruitment and retention ratings:** respondents gave their transportation service an average score of 1.8 (on a 5-point scale) as a tool for employee recruitment and retention.
- **Program termination:** excessive cost (67%) and low ridership (33%) were the most-cited reasons for terminating transportation services. One employer indicated that insurance-related issues led to terminating transportation services.
- **Former users:** four of six respondents indicated that employees who formerly used the company-provided transportation services now drive alone to work; an equal number indicated the use of vanpools and carpools. One-third indicated use of public transit, and one employer indicated he did not know how his commuters got to work.

Discussion of qualitative items Two employers indicated that their initial reason to offer transportation service was to have a recruitment incentive; four cited a retention benefit, with three of those employers specifically stating that their companies had relocated. When asked what went well in the provision of transportation service to employees, respondents agreed that the service was reliable in getting employees to work and maintaining employment status after a company's relocation. However, over time, companies encountered problems such as dwindling participation and scheduling difficulties; two companies had specifically provided the service for a pre-defined time period following their relocation and decided not to extend provision of service beyond that point. No employers provided additional comments regarding other significant issues or problems that their companies have faced related to transportation services for employees.

Current Providers of Private Transportation

Twenty-six employers who provide non-public transportation for their employees responded to the questionnaire.

- **Vehicle ownership:** thirteen companies use their own vehicles in their transportation service, one company exclusively leases equipment, and three others use a combination of owned and leased vehicles.
- **Service operation:** seven companies operate their own transportation service, seven who subcontract that service to an outside provider, and two companies combine their operations with a subcontractor. Ten companies did not indicate how their service was operated.
- **Service access:** nineteen companies offer fixed-route service only; one operates an exclusively reservation-only basis, and six offer a combination of fixed route and reservation access.
- **Service availability:** 62% (16) of the company-provided transportation services are for employees of that company only; ten companies allow non-employees to use their private transportation. Of those, half do not charge a fare; the other five companies charge an average $2.25 per trip (range $1.25 - $3.50).
- **Other destinations:** 38% (10) of companies allowed vehicles to deviate from established pick-up points and work sites for trips to the airport, other campuses, doctor offices, and recreational uses.
- **Service funding:** Sixteen (62%) employers cover all of the transportation expenses on their own without employee contributions. The other respondents reported using a variety of methods to recoup service costs, as noted below:

Funding Source	Number	Percentage
Company's expense	23	92%
Pre-paid voucher/ticket	4	16%
Payroll deduction	3	12%
Point of service	3	12%
Employee Reimbursement	2	8%
Grant program	1	4%

- **Route sharing:** 85% (22) of responding employers indicate that they do not share routes or services with neighboring employers.
- **Recruitment and retainment ratings:** when asked how they would rate their transportation services as a recruiting tool, employers gave an average score of 3.57 out of a possible five; as a retainment tool, they gave a slightly higher score of 3.78 out of five.
- **Reasons for initially offering transportation services:**
    - Our offices are not easily accessible by public transportation and we are far from the train stations
    - To provide shuttle service for the safety & convenience of employees, & as an occasional service to some volunteers & senior level management
    - To reduce cars and the need for parking at the company
    - Mandated by service agreements
    - To comply with EPA requirements in 1994
    - We moved operations from Chicago to Des Plaines, we wanted to help retain employees who lived in Chicago and had used public transportation
    - Loop service – we moved/split two of our major locations and needed a way to get from one location to the other. 2 staff routes – had difficulty filling shifts due to lack of public transportation
    - We offered transportation service to address associate concerns about commuting issues, deal with congested new highway, and improve associate engagement
    - When Bond Street facility was built in February 2001, the decision was made to provide a transit link to the train for associates that relocated there
    - At employee's request vehicles are typically not used after hours so no issue with availability of vehicle
    - Shuttle service was offered to assist employees who could commute by train to downtown Chicago but could not easily get to the facility by public transportation. Commuter Choice was offered to give a pre-tax benefit to those who use public transportation or commuter rail transport
    - Employee recruitment and retainment
    - The need for additional parking requiring transportation arrangements

- As a convenience to employees commuting from the suburbs to our organization using the NW Metra trains at Union Station
- As a service to employees
- Our janitorial employees sometimes have difficulty finding transportation to suburban worksites
- Mail between sites, small service to clients (our families and children)
- Employees were complaining about the traffic and how long it takes them to get here and how aggravated they were when they came in
- Recruitment for specific location in Addison
- Because the office is located too far west of the loop, which would discourage recruitment
- As the Roosevelt University's suburban campus continued to grow, there was a greater need for transportation assistance for students/faculty/staff, as not all classes/events/meetings are held on both campuses
- When office moved from Western Avenue, Chicago to Des Plaines
- Reconstruction of Wacker Drive causing long commutes to the train stations, people left work early

- **What went well in the provision of transportation services to employees?**
  - Employees think the price is reasonable and the stops are convenient
  - Thousands upon thousands of trips w/o serious injury to staff or clients The employee's trust that Baxter realizes we are located in a rural area and that should not influence their job decisions
  - We retained employees we might have lost. We were able to recruit employees living in Chicago. We increased employee goodwill and company reputation
  - It provides employees an opportunity to get to work without having to spend 2-3 hours each way (public transit)
  - After changing private carriers, service went well and is relatively trouble-free
  - The service extension went well
  - City parking lot located at both sites
  - People greatly appreciate the shuttle service as it saves them from fighting traffic. Pre-tax benefit helps them to put money aside for train fares and parking at train stations
  - It all went well
  - The ability to improve employee morale and transport some employees to and from the Metra Station
  - Employee appreciation
  - It gets employees to work
  - No major problems – getting the actual grant took the longest time
  - Able to hire wider groups of people

- Basically employees all start at 8 and end at 5 so the uniform time allows us to provide this service. Employees are aware they are on their own if not at the stops in the timefram
- This service is popular, because it connects door-to-door with our two downtown locations and is less expensive then gas-plus-parking or train-plus-cab
- Was always on time
- Great initial response

- **What did not go well?**
  - It is expensive for the employer and the schedule is not very flexible. Since we share the service with Northwestern we aren't able to control the schedule
  - Vehicle maintenance scheduling, etc.
  - Problems with pickups when el trains ran late, need to supplement van service with taxi service
  - It's a lot of work to initially set it all up to meet as many needs as you can. It is a big expense
  - Introduction of Pace Route 576 has posed many problems, primarily due to operational issues
  - Ridership is low at this facility. Parking is plentiful. Also, riders coming from Deerfield have to transfer to reach Bond Street
  - Low enrollment in pre-tax program
  - Nothing
  - We expected to have more employees utilize Metra but the trains do not come in early enough for our employees from Chicago and Waukegan
  - Sometimes difficult to provide if driver calls off with little notice
  - We incur liability by using company owned and/or leased vehicles to transport employees
  - Could not find a driver or back-up driver for some time. Finally two of our employees agreed to do it
  - Nothing
  - Available runs/vehicle count is sometimes behind the demand for this service. In the past we have had waiting lists for some van runs, but recently we have added second van runs at popular times. Reservations and follow up with the riders is not automated and is very labor-intensive for one or two people on staff
  - Sometimes does not show at appointed times – drivers are employees doing other jobs
  - Participation is lower than expected. 86 people said they would use it. Only about 30 per day do use it.

- **How did the service evolve over time and why?**
    - The routes and times change due to construction in the city
    - As we have opened up residential programs for individuals with disabilities we have added vehicles to transport those individuals to day programs. As our people get older, mini vans are easier to get into and out of than full size vans
    - We added carpool incentives because more employees have moved to the area
    - Number of round trips decreased due to decrease in employee base. Elimination of supplemental taxi service due to abuse. Upgrade of shuttle vehicle to carry more people per trip and to provide safer, more comfortable transportation
    - Both have evolved only with regard to stops and pick up times and locations. The Loop service began initially with only 2-3 stops
    - In the beginning (1998) Laidlaw Transit operated service. They were replaced by Midwest Motorcoach in 2000. Part of the service (Deerfield) was replaced by Pace Shuttle Bug Rt 176 in June 2002
    - Both Midwest Motorcoach routes (Deerfield and Highland Park) initially provided service to Bond Street, though not all trips went there. When Rt 576 was implemented, we had to have the shuttle timed to make connections to the Pace route
    - Program initially has two pick-up and departure times. One was eliminated due to low utilization
    - We added the clinic runs because of the convenience. We also added company mail delivery throughout our facilities twice a day for convenience and business needs
    - We have no record of changes over time
    - We might be adding a bus specifically for transportation of our children
    - No changes – everything is still the same trying to recruit more riders.
    - We had a rideshare fair hoping to attract more employees. Not sure what the outcome is yet because we just had it last week
    - No changes as of yet
    - Program has been in place for 10 years. No changes over time
    - The demand for this service has increased over the years, so additional vehicles were purchased in an attempt to satisfy the demand
    - We have added the two shuttles recently by joining with area companies
    - We have cancelled the small bus lease due to it no longer being cost-effective
    - Not many changes, may use smaller buses

- **Other comments**
    - We also offer transit passes and vouchers and qualified parking programs
    - While the state mandates transportation services, they do not pay for them – it is a <u>very</u> costly program to run

- I have an issue occasionally with movement of employees from our urban office to our rural manufacturing site. Our division's program is not as diverse
- In general, it has gone quite well. Employees appreciate and use the service
- Public transportation needs in NW suburbs are significant. Coming from the city was a big eye-opener. People are in love with their cars!
- There have been significant operational problems with Pace Route 576, which has resulted in a loss of riders. We could use more service to the North Central Line, as well as better service to points further west and south. Transit connections to these places either don't exist or are less than desirable
- Rt 576 has had major service problems as described in the West Campus write-up. Bond Street is a tougher market as ridership is low, and associate work hours are varied. No connections (other than Pace Rt 626) exists to North Central Metra Line
- Do not understand why private contractors have to compete with Pace and CTA and others that are subsidized by the government?
- Mechanical problems with bus
- Maintenance problems when van is down the driver has to bring it to a dealer and find a way back to work
- Most of our positions now require staff to have driver's license. We have less people interested in public transportation
- The company provides free parking at our location
- Scheduling the proper number of vehicles to meet last-minute requests. Limited resources does allow for requirements outside of the specified schedule
- RTA's reliance on a voucher-only system

Discussion of qualitative items Responses to the employer questionnaire were quite varied and presented some serious setbacks to the ultimate goal of this project -- to create a database of privately provided transportation. First, employers who do provide transportation services indicated a strong unwillingness to share information regarding those services. TIC staff observed dozens of instances of private shuttle operations where the employer subsequently denied offering transportation services to employees. Second, there is an overwhelming preference for employers to provide exclusive service for their employees and to not share routes with neighboring companies, despite significant issues they faced with covering the expense of the service and dealing with mechanical/maintenance problems. Third, employers have an extremely high turnover of designated transportation coordinators. It was not uncommon to deal with two or three different people from the time of the preliminary survey to the employer questionnaire; often the position comprised a small percentage of the person's daily workload. Due to high turnovers of transportation coordinators, project staff was frequently unable to obtain historical information on the services provided by employers because the

employers themselves were unaware of the circumstances when transportation provision started.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the survey resulted in the following major findings:

- While only 5% of employers provide transportation, they are fulfilling a significant need for transit where public transit is non-existent or inconvenient.
- Those who do provide service have strong unwillingness to share information or share services with other employers.
- There may be an opportunity for public transit providers to take over successful services and open their doors to other employers.
- This information can be a resource to those responsible for making job placement and/or referrals, particularly for low-income workers.
- The most typical commuter benefits offered by employers in the Chicago region are flextime and staggered work hours.
- Only 21 percent of employers offered the pre-tax benefit, while more than half of the employers were unaware of the pre-tax benefit program.
- There is an opportunity to significantly increase the usage of the pre-tax benefit through a public information and/or marketing campaign.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Annual update of database information

TIC staff recommends the development of procedures for Workforce Board and one-stop center staff to utilize so that changes, additions, and new employer transportation services are captured, recorded, and included in the Clearinghouse database. The existing database should be updated on at least a yearly basis to refresh data on known sources of private transportation and to identify currently unknown sources of alternative transportation. Modes to gather such information include, but are not limited to: field observations, e-mail, telephone calls, mailings, and use of appropriate agency or organizational newsletters.

Inclusion of TIC information on RTA's Asset Management System (RTAMS)

Clearinghouse information needs to reside in a well-maintained, user-friendly and easily accessible network-type environment; such an environment is possible with the RTA's Asset Management System (RTAMS). RTAMS incorporates all bus, train,

and vanpool routes in the region. Information developed from the TIC project will be included in this database and will be made available to all Workforce Board and one-stop center job counselors who apply for access. Training job counselors to proficiently utilize the RTAMS network is critical to allow them to provide the maximum level of assistance to persons in need of transportation to and from work.

Explore service coordination and expansion opportunities
Through partnerships with existing employers and transportation providers, there are numerous opportunities for existing services to be shared and/or expanded in order to serve a larger client base and increase service efficiency and effectiveness.

Coordinate TIC findings with other non-traditional transportation programs
Explore coordination opportunities of the TIC findings with other non-traditional transportation programs such as CATS Ridematch 21, Pace Vanpool Incentive Program, car sharing and station car demonstration projects in the region. There may be untapped benefits and opportunities among and between these non-traditional services that could address some of the unmet commuter-related transportation needs.

Additional employer-targeted commuter choice workshops
Sponsor additional employer-targeted pre-tax commuter choice benefit educational workshops. These will provide a way for employers and employer associations to enhance their awareness and learn about available employee transportation benefits as well as assist them in implementing and administering programs, such as RTA Transit Check, to their employees.

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