

FY 2009 RMAP Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan Update**-Background-**

The **Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning** (RMAP, formerly the *Rockford Area Transportation Study, RATS*) adopted their initial version of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) in January of 2008. The document identifies transit needs and gaps for elderly individuals, individuals with disabilities and individuals with low incomes as well as provides strategies that will help address those issues. In addition, the document provides a listing of transportation and human service providers, both private and public, that operate within the Metropolitan Planning Area.

-Process of Developing the RMAP HSTP Update-

The RMAP Human Services Transportation Plan *update* has been developed through implementing various methods. One method was to engage the Mobility Subcommittee regarding transit issues that impact transit dependent individuals. The purpose of the Mobility Subcommittee is to create a forum where various participants (transportation & human service providers; workforce development and planning agencies; the general public) can discuss transportation issues that affect transit dependent populations in the RMAP Metropolitan Planning Area as well as develop strategies that will promote better public transportation. The RMAP Mobility Subcommittee consists of regional transportation and human service providers.

Another measure that was taken to solicit interest and invite other organizations to participate in the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee, as well as the ongoing development of the HSTP, was to distribute an invitation letter and survey to potential participants. These invitation letters and surveys were distributed to organizations in the planning area through the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee. This method was undertaken in such a fashion as to utilize the networking potential of the Mobility Subcommittee members. As stated, the Mobility Subcommittee is consistent of area transportation and human service providers. These organizations have connections with other local and regional entities. Thus by having members of the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee discuss and inform similar service agencies of the work the Subcommittee is involved with, there is a greater likelihood of recruiting new agencies to participate in the HSTP planning process. Types of agencies that current members of the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee work with on a daily basis include workforce development agencies (both public and private), governmental entities, public and private transit providers, assisted living facilities, school districts, local community colleges, taxi and ambulance services and human service agencies. It is important to note these types of agencies also interact with the public and have in the past encouraged clientele or members of the public to attend and participate in Mobility Subcommittee meetings.

RMAP staff have also attended meetings of outside organizations, i.e. the Mayor's Taskforce on Homelessness, etc, to discuss the MPO and HSTP structure and to stress the importance of public participation in the transportation planning process. This has been a mutually advantageous strategy due to the fact that more area agencies are being made aware of the MPO's work and that some of those agencies have started to attend and participate in MPO meetings.

While any organization or member of the public is welcome to attend the Mobility Subcommittee meetings and provide input, this process was undertaken to secure committed attendance and input for the HSTP document. New organizations are always welcome to join the Mobility Subcommittee or attend meetings periodically to provide input.

Public comment and review sessions were also held to allow members of the public to comment on the RMAP Human Services Transportation Plan. Aside from having the Mobility Subcommittee meetings open to the general public for participation and comment, this opportunity was afforded to the public to review draft material of the HSTP, provide feedback and comments, and receive a general understanding of the framework of the existing plan as well as to understand the purpose of the HSTP. Also, these sessions allowed citizens to provide input as to any other transportation-related issues to members of the MPO staff and transit/human service agencies present. The RMAP Human Services Transportation Plan has been made available on the Rockford MPO website (<http://rockfordil.gov/government/works/index.cfm?section=planning&id=977>) for review by all interested parties. The plan has also been available to the public and interested parties in a hard copy format through contacting RMAP staff.

The RMAP HSTP will be reviewed annually by RMAP Staff, the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee and the RMAP Technical Committee to determine if there are new transit needs for transit dependent populations within the Metropolitan Planning Area as well as to update the plan. The HSTP will also be reviewed annually in preparation of the RMAP TIP.

-Existing Services in the in the RMAP Metropolitan Planning Area-

This section of the amendment provides information as to *additional* transportation or human service providers that have become involved in the RMAP HSTP planning process since the first approved version of the HSTP. This section also *updates* information regarding service providers as listed in the adopted January 24, 2008 RATS/RMAP HSTP. A listing of service providers can be found in the RMAP HSTP, pages 6-14.

CAREAVAN Demand Response Service

Careavan Demand Response service closed their operation in March of 2008 and no longer provides demand/response service within the RMAP Metropolitan Planning Area.

ASAP Transport

ASAP Transport is a non-emergency transportation company. The organization is a licensed and state approved Medicaid transportation provider and has a fleet of wheelchair vans, minivans & sedans to provide transportation service. ASAP also accepts "private pay" transports. ASAP originated from the Illinois Valley area but migrated to the Rockford area when they identified the need for a quality non-emergency transportation company.

-Identified Transit Gaps and Needs-

This section is intended to elaborate upon and to add, where required, to the already noted "Identified Transit Gaps and Needs" as located on pages 15-18 of the RMAP HSTP.

In discussing the already established listing of identified needs with RMAP Staff, the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee, area transit and human service providers and the public, it has been determined that the gaps and needs as listed in the January 24, 2008 adopted version of the HSTP are still valid. However, in discussing existing transit needs, additional transit needs have been identified as well. These are outlined below.

RMAP Mobility Subcommittee

Building upon conversations and requesting feedback from those members of the public and representatives of transportation and human services organizations that have attended various Mobility Subcommittee meetings, the following additional concerns have been identified:

- Safety concerns near the Careers, Etc. office location due to an increase in pedestrian/bus rider traffic. Consideration of a drive-off lane would be an asset when street construction projects are being planned to avoid buses stopping in the traffic lane and increase pedestrian safety.
- Transportation for seniors who are not eligible for paratransit service and who are not able to reach fixed route service but are *able* to use fixed route service.
- Review of RMTD bus stops to determine route/stop proximity to employment centers, etc.
- Growth of the number of persons within Winnebago County whose needs are not being met by paratransit due to their location of residence or work
- In Boone County, persons with disabilities report that service through the senior center is unable to meet the need for some medical, employment or social trips. Therefore, there is a need for expanded service in the area that runs to and from Rockford throughout the day to allow persons greater access to employment and medical centers.

- In Boone County, there is a need to provide both night and weekend service as well as to develop a fixed route service between Belvidere and Rockford.
- Need for transportation service for seniors who are not paratransit eligible or who are not able to navigate to a fixed route location
- Providing more user friendly information regarding transportation availability and access to transportation
- Extend Sunday hours on East State Street (inbound and outbound) to provide access to the numerous second and third shift jobs along the commercial corridor

-HSTP results within the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area-

Since the adoption of the January 24, 2008 RMAP HSTP, several of the transit needs and gaps identified in the plan have been discussed between RMAP staff, the public and the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee. RMAP has a policy of an always open comment period for all of their planning documents. While the identification of transit needs/gaps for individuals with disabilities, elderly individuals and individuals with low income is an ongoing and evolving process, there have been progressive steps taken within the Metropolitan Planning Area to address some of the concerns that these individuals face. Namely, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom funds have been utilized to provide service in the following ways:¹

As stated in the RMAP HSTP, there has been a need to provide a service route to CherryVale Mall, which is a source of employment for individuals throughout the region. A route to this employment center was first established in 2007, but has still required funding to keep the route running as well as to continue to build ridership and increase awareness and availability of the route. Through discussion of this need as well as its selection from a call for projects issued, this need was selected by the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee as a program to be pursued.

A need to extend transit service hours to the Burden Loop area near IL-173 in Machesney Park was also an expressed concern from the RMAP Mobility Subcommittee. Similar to the previous example above, this area is also a source for employment. With the use of JARC funds, RMTD will begin night service to this destination which will assist those individuals who work later shifts. The route has been finalized and the start of this service is anticipated for January 2009.

New Freedom funds have been allocated to provide a demand response service that will assist individuals with mobility limitations, but who are able to use fixed route service, reach fixed route service. The project will be implemented in two parts. The first part entails the purchase of two paratransit vehicles to support service and then the second part is the actual start of the service. This program will provide greater mobility options for individuals who are able to use fixed route service, but may not be able to reach it due to their mobility limitations.² This service is anticipated on starting in FY 2009.

It must also be noted that there have been two programs implemented by the State of Illinois regarding public transit for elderly individuals (age 65 and over) and individuals with disabilities. Illinois Senate Bill 1920 was enacted in January of 2008 and provides free rides for seniors on all Illinois public transportation systems. While the Free Rides for Seniors Program was the initial program that took effect as of March 17, 2008, the Free Rides for Persons with Disabilities program was passed in August of 2008 and provides free rides for individuals with disabilities (who *qualify* for the state circuit breaker program). Free rides for persons with disabilities amendment of the Seniors Ride for Free Program will be implemented no later than October 24, 2008 by all Illinois Public Transit entities. In order to use this service, transit districts throughout the state have *required* that individuals register and receive identification cards. It is also important to mention that the free ride program for seniors (age 65 and over) and individuals with disabilities *only* applies for trips on fixed route transit and *does not* include rides on paratransit demand/response service.

More information regarding these programs can be found on the State of Illinois Seniors Ride Free website <http://www.illinois.gov/transit/> or by calling either 217-782-0244 or 312-814-2121. For more information regarding the implementation of these programs by the local transit agency, please contact the Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) at 815-961-9000.

¹ Note: Projects selected for JARC and New Freedom funds were selected from those submitted through a call for projects.

² Traditional ADA paratransit service is provided for pre-certified persons with disabilities that limit their ability to use the fixed route service and who meet criteria established by the U.S. Department of Transportation under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

SERVICE PROVIDER CONTACT INFORMATION

ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	ADDRESS	CITY/ZIP
Boone County Council on Aging	815-544-9893	2141 Henry Luckow Lane	Belvidere, IL 61008
ASAP Transport	815-654-2727	7117 Clinton Road	Loves Park, IL 61111
Rockford Mass Transit District	815-961-9000	520 Mulberry	Rockford, IL 61101
Septran Inc.	815-874-8999	4760 American Rd	Rockford, IL 61109
Barbara Olson Center of Hope	815-964-9275	3206 North Central Ave	Rockford, IL 61101
Booker Washington Community Center	815-968-8861	524 Kent St	Rockford, IL 61102
Illinois Growth Enterprises	815-962-8333	7200 Clinton Rd	Loves Park, IL 61111
Lifescape Community Services	815-963-1609	705 Kilburn Ave	Rockford, IL 61101
Milestone, Inc.	815-654-6100	4060 McFarland Rd	Rockford, IL 61111
Northwestern Illinois Area on Aging	815-226-4901	2576 Charles St	Rockford, IL 61108
Regional Access & Mobilization Project	815-968-7467	202 Market St	Rockford, IL 61107
Rockford Public Schools #205 -DOT	815-966-3706	2000 Christina St	Rockford, IL 61104
Shelter Care Ministries	815-964-5520	412 N. Church St	Rockford, IL 61103
The Crusader Clinic	815-490-1600	1200 West State St	Rockford, IL 61102
Winnebago School District CUSD #323	815-335-2903	302 E. McNair Road	Winnebago, IL 61088
Careers, Etc	815-964-3491	5301 E. State Street	Rockford, IL 61108
The Workforce Connection (Belvidere)	815-547-9616	998 Belvidere Road	Belvidere, IL 61008
The Workforce Connection (Rockford)	815-395-6638	303 N. Main St	Rockford, IL 61103
Action Taxi Service	815-961-3333	2252 11th Street	Rockford, IL 61104
Best Shuttle	815-639-1010	1915 Windsor Rd	Loves Park, IL 61111
Love, Inc	815-282-4384	P.O. Box 1633	Rockford, IL 61110
Need-a-Lift Shuttle	815-874-0371	4401 11th Street	Rockford, IL 61109
Reliable Cab	815-968-2227	150 N. Fourth St	Rockford, IL 61107
Rockford Yellow Cab	815-962-5511	521 15th Ave	Rockford, IL 61104
Spee-Dee Taxi Cab Service	815-963-3322	522 15th Ave	Rockford, IL 61104
Yellow Line Cab & Limousine	815-962-5511	523 15th Ave	Rockford, IL 61104
Greyhound Bus Lines	815-399-7725	542 N. Lyford Rd.	Rockford, IL 61107
Van Galder Bus/ Coach USA	815-399-0092	715 S. Pearl St	Janesville, WI 53545
American Medical Response	815-964-0911	PO BOX 8003	Rockford, IL 61126
ATS Medical Services Inc	815-963-5001	4811 W State St	Rockford, IL 61104
Lifeline Ambulance Service (Belvidere)	815-544-5221	1005 Julien St	Belvidere, IL 61008
Lifeline Ambulance Service (Rockford)	815-395-6039	318 Roxbury Rd	Rockford, IL 61107
Metro Medical Service	815-964-5432	5112 Forest Hills Ct.	Loves Park, IL 61111
Superior Ambulance	815-968-8800	6822 Forest Hills Rd	Loves Park, IL 61111

