



**Rural Communities Initiative
Webinar: Rural Transportation Models
Serving TANF Participants
Transcription of Audio recording/Webinar
February 11, 2009**



Welcoming Remarks and Introduction of Speaker # 1 (James Butler, OFA)

Yes. Thank you. Hello everyone and thank you to those who were waiting patiently for us to get started. We were waiting on some other folks to join us. So, welcome to part two of our Rural Communities Initiative Webinar on rural transportation models serving TANF participants.

For anyone who is joining us for the first time, just a little backdrop. During the Rural Communities Academy back in September of 2008, the challenges of providing reliable and cost effective transportation was identified by many Rural Communities Initiative sites as one of the most critical issues facing rural organizations serving TANF participants. As part of their technical assistance plans, sites expressed interest in learning more about current rural transportation models serving TANF participants, resources on forming partnerships with local transportation stakeholders, and direction on how these types of projects could be funded.

Based on the interests expressed by our Rural sites, we have designed a series of technical assistance events that focus on the issues of rural transportation. In addition to these series of Webinars, we also held a Roundtable in West Virginia last month, bringing together rural sites and content specialists to discuss transportation in their areas, and to develop action plans for moving forward.

On today's Webinar we have three very knowledgeable speakers from different programs, who will be discussing their experiences with providing transportation options to TANF participants. They are Sandy Conner from the Transportation Institute Partnership, John Squires from The Community Resource Group, and Donna Shaunesey from JAUNT and that is spelled J-A-U-N-T.

After the presentations from our speakers, we will then open the lines up for any of the participants who may have questions or comments.

So, without further ado, we will start with our first speaker, Ms. Sandy Conner from the Transportation Institute Partnership.

Presentation by Sandy Conner from the Transportation Institute Partnership.

Hello everyone, this is...my name is Sandy Connor and, as James just mentioned, I am from Sojourner-Douglass College. I wanted to let you know, first of all, the reason why some folks may ask the question why would that college be engaged in transportation?

The reason why you will find us here at Sojourner-Douglass College being actively involved in providing transportation for our population, which is the TANF customers. Those persons are either underemployed or not employed at all, is because we have here at the college a particular mission and our mission is for the purpose of creating self-determination. We want to also create and stimulate community-based economic development and to build community capacity as well as individual capacity to become the best person that they can be. So that is probably the reason why Sojourner has been engaged in the initiative of transportation.



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We got involved back in 1997 at the entry or the onset of welfare reform and we were engaged at that time with the Baltimore City Department of Social Services as well as the Maryland trans-administration and at that time we were starting our initiative by providing training for those persons who were unemployed coming from TANF customers and welfare recipients at that particular time. What we formed as a result of that partnership was what we call now, at that time, the Advantage 2 and will go with the training up to 24 participants.

Just to give a little bit of background, more background about it, the program was designed after another program that was called Advantage Van and it was a micro enterprise project. It was started in Anne Arundel County of Maryland.

We received technical assistance from Community Transportation Association of Maryland, better known as CTAA and we provide the training of a one year period providing skills such as basic business, transportation, marketing, and also opportunities for them to have a mentor from the Service Core of Retired Executives, better known as SCORE. In September of 1988 we graduated our very first class, graduating 18 participants.

After graduation, we had many of the participants that launched their businesses and they began transporting other TANF customers to and from work. Some of the places that they would actually take the participants would be, for example, our office is located in Baltimore City, so they would be accountable for taking people to places like Howard County, Anne Arundel County, and many of them were like apartments such as to nursing facilities and other kind of opportunities that were located in those particular counties. They also did some general transportation for the public, such as maybe school runs. There was no real limitation. They were really their own true business owners and they were free to operate accordingly. Sojourner at that time, of course, did some of their administrative work for them to keep them moving and keep them going.

But, as you know, funds do tend to run out and on my side this initial program was funded with an estimated I think \$600,000 initially and that was to get the vehicles running, situated for the 18 participants and also some other necessary funding that we needed to operate the program at that time.

Because funding did run out, Sojourner began to look for other ways to sustain the participants, so they would not have to go back on welfare and we at that time launched an LLC, making it Advantage 2 LLC. The college found a way to pay them \$8 an hour, guaranteeing them up to 20 hours a week for them to do some miscellaneous runs.

And on the next page you can see a view of the van. This is a van that was given to us through NTA, it was refurbished, and it, the vans came really from different places, it was refurbished and also the college's name was put on the particular van.

What we found though, after a while that really many of them could not sustain themselves or keep themselves. We found that less than 10% were really able to keep their programs and businesses



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going. I was not a part of the Advantage 2 era, but I came on board in like late, early 2000 and at that particular time began looking at the things or the challenges that were facing the participants that were part of the Advantage 2 program.

What we found was that there were many issues and many variables that caused them not to really be successful, not to sustain themselves. There were legal barriers, some still had issues with substance abuse, and some still had child care issues. There were multiple barriers, the same kind of barriers that our constituents or our welfare recipients or those that are unemployed tend to face normally. Just the regular life skills or life kinds of situations that plague this population were some of the issues that, I believe, kept them from being successful as a business owner. And, as a result, you see that only 10% were able to really sustain themselves and the other reason, of course, was not having the necessary funding to get the insurance, maintain the vehicles and the where with all to really, really launch and keep the business going.

In 2000 Sojourner received additional funding. We received capital funding in the amount of, estimated 600,000. We renovated a building. We purchased additional, this time, brand new vehicles hoping that that would not cause the issues that we had before. We purchased seven brand new vehicles. We renovated space, lots of space here at the college. We got office equipment. We had operating funds also to work a program and this is in 2000.

We used the lessons that we learned from Advantage 2. Actually, some of the lessons resulted in us even having to seek legal advice because many of the participants did not remove the college's name from the vehicles and that was liability issues for not only us, but our partner which was Maryland Trans-administration and the Department of Human Resources, of course, Baltimore City DSS. So for many reasons, legal reasons and others, we were advised to change the name, but not so much for that reason did we change the name, but because we want our focus to be a little bit more broader.

We are an educational institution, so we looked at it in terms of starting something that we could perhaps expand it beyond the funding sources that we currently have, that we will actually begin to launch a training program for others to come in be it the unemployed, underemployed, or others that might just simply join this pool of folk learning more about the transportation industry. So, we launched, in 2002, our first class of transportation institute partnerships.

Just before we launched the transportation institute partnership with PIT program we also began the workforce transportation referral center and that was in 2000. That was a job access reverse commute program and we were a brokerage accountable for finding the best transportation solutions that might connect job seekers who are unemployed either underemployed to jobs that were in the county or remote areas. And one of the things that we focused on was trying to serve all shifts. Just the information of workforce transportation referral center runs, operates services 24 hours a day, seven days a week and we try to meet all seven shifts.

If I am talking to fast at any time, just somebody stop me please.



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Just to give you a little bit about the components of the transportation institute partnership. The initial design, the reason why I said initial design you will find later on in the slides that we did some changing with the program but, our initial design had five learning modules. One of the modules from one through four and it took over an eight week period, consisting of a minimum of thirty hours per week. And this is a little bit shorter you will see from what we did with Advantage 2. Advantage 2 ran a whole year, but we tried to do some things a little bit different with the transportation institute partnership program.

And then of course module five which could last for a year or even longer and that particular module is mentoring where people have access to us for as long as we are here, as long as we are available to come ask us anything that they want about their businesses or about job opportunities or etc., that might help them become self-sufficient.

Module one you find that we have a program, it is called, Introduction to Owning a Transportation Business, and it is a one week orientation program workshop, more or less, or seminar, and this session really tries to get at their career assessment, their career planning, looking to see whether or not they really do have the finesse, really do have the desire to become a transportation business owner. We also try to look at some of the barriers that they may have, so that we can begin to identify them early on, if they have got work ethic issues, whatever might keep them from owning and sustaining a business we try to do this early on, in this first session.

Module 2 we began looking at the transportation core competencies. And here is the session that is designed...and I can back up one minute. Our focus of our training is not just to be a business owner, but it is also to get people to think in terms of having other job opportunities in transportation. What we found is that often people have to work first to get the money to start a business, to sustain a business, and even to get additional skill sets in the industry. So, the training is designed as such that they can either consider becoming an office clerk, a dispatcher, a reservationist, or they can become a driver, and then ultimately begin to look in terms of do I want to become a business owner.

Module 3 is when we began to really focus on the transportation administration pieces of it and looking at how you use your rich management components, how you do your budgets, how you look at running some office kinds of things that is beyond the typical office clerk and dispatcher kinds of jobs you use and responsibilities. This is where they began to learn some of the skill sets that are required for managing a transportation business.

And, of course, Module 4 is the actual module we began to sit them down and to begin asking them to develop their business plan and we take them to other places that you can see in Module 5, to the small business resource center, which is one of our other partners.

The small business resource center in addition to what we facilitate here and our training facilities here at Sojourner also provide with other kinds of training such as accounting. They help us use their business plan, they have got all kinds of resources and, of course, there are mentors, some of



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the mentors from SCORE are still possibly there that they can talk to, to get additional assistance on how to begin and develop their business.

I allude to the fact that that was the initial phase of how we did, of running the training from eight weeks and almost, some times, twelve weeks, but then we looked to see that it had some issues that was really impacting their ability to become self-sufficient, their ability to have money to sustain and maintain themselves.

So, we began running trials, looking at what was the best way to do this, was the better way to do it would be six weeks and then have them come back later after they had looked for job opportunities and we also tried to get them job opportunities in the transportation industry. If not in the transportation industry, we tried to get them jobs in some other place so that they can begin to become self-sufficient.

And, we currently do have a class right now. We have got one TANF customer who is in that class, one person who is been, who is unemployed who is and then there is another person who is also seeking employment.

On the next page you find we have our selection criteria and I will not go through all of them, but that information is available for anyone who would like to get it. And, you see that they see it is the typical kinds of things that you want to have them go through. We have to make sure they meet certain criteria, to minimize the risk that is imposed on us here at the college, as well as, the Department of Human Resources, and Maryland Transit Administration, so we make sure that they go through all these kinds of steps. One of the primary issues or challenges that we have is their ability to, this has not really been an issue, because if, in fact, as they come from DSS they do not have the drug issues or problems, but on occasion there may be someone who may not be able to pass a drug and alcohol test and/or successfully pass the criminal background check. These are things that they do have to go through.

One other piece that I did not mention, that they also get is that they get on-the-job training where they get the opportunity to come into my shop and do some things, as well as, we have vehicles here through the workforce center where they can actually get the on-hands driving experience. So, that is one of the reasons why they have got to have, pass a criminal background check and there are also occasions where they may have to collect money or funds as well, so that is another reason for things like the criminal background check and the selection criteria that you see on the slide here.

You may ask the question, how do we get the folk? I have got to say that some of our challenges are just being on going forward has been getting the folk that can really, really get into the program and just maintain coming to class. And some of the things that we try to do to get them - we participate in job fairs, we pass out the information there, and we pass out information twofold. One to let them know that they can start their businesses to let them know also about the workforce transportation referral center and that typically what we have are job opportunities. So folks who go through our program get first opportunity for getting a job as a part time driver or whatever position that may come up to work for us in our shop, so we share that information with them at the job fair.



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We have job developer forums, as a matter of fact on February the 26th from 1-3 we will be hosting our next kind of regional like job developer forum and at the particular job developer forum we share information similar to what we are sharing today, but we look at how we can move, remove the barriers of transportation and also share job placement ideas, then, to plan potential successes where we celebrate business owners or employers who have been partners with us. So this is the kinds of things that we do at job developer forums, so FYI for you the next one that Sojourner will host will be February 26th from 1-3 and I can give you that information later for the address.

We go to churches and you can see the other thing and if you see hackers on there, for those who may not know hackers, if you are anywhere in the Baltimore metropolitan area and you ever see folk on the corners waving their fingers down, trying to flag down you think a cab or whatever, they are probably illegally trying to get a taxi and those are the people that we try to get and we actually go to the markets and different places and pass out information, try and screen them and see if they might be potential people that might work with us. We also work with small transportation providers, trying to see if they got folk who are underemployed or not working and word of mouth, the Web site, and, of course, we have our partners as you can see here on this page below.

Just to give you some highlights on this section, in 2002 we were purchased, unlike Advantage 2, we purchased several brand new vans, and right now these vans are currently being used for training, were there were some things we are working on to see exactly what will happen to these vans going forward, but right now they are being used for training.

We, because we are co-located with the workforce transportation referral center, we share resources and what that means is that some of the rent space, some of the costs for some of the things we do and even some of the training is done by my, say my dispatcher, someone who is a part of the WTRC, so the person who is my one trainer does not do all the training. She does training, I do training, and then we also have resident experts in the workforce transportation center to also do some trainings. And they train from the standpoint of some of the maintenance components, dispatching components, even office management components, along with the trainer that are facilitating most of the lesson.

We have held sixteen classes. Typically what we have is like two to three classes a year and we hold a graduation for all of those classes in the month of June. And, it is usually a great event because we have the administrator from NTA to come, we have the person from DHR and DHS to come as well and the people really fight it because it is like a formal graduation and many times these folks are graduating when they may not have had an opportunity before to do so. So we really do make a big deal of that. As you can see we enrolled, probably enrolled a little bit more than 94 participants, but only 57% of them have actually completed the training.

I mentioned early on that we hired them, as they go through the program they have opportunities to work for the workforce transportation referral center. So, we hired 13 of them over the time, the span that we have had our workforce transportation referral center here. Two persons have served as our maintenance supervisor, which means there are maintenance management opportunities, two have been full time drivers, we have a dispatcher, and six part-time drivers have been here and



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currently, today, we have five of them working with us today, one is still in management and then as my other senior driver, so those are the persons who are currently working with us.

Seven are still employed in other transportation businesses. Fourteen persons, as a result of going through our career assessment etc., realized that transportation was not for them and they are working in other businesses. Twenty-two have actually registered businesses with the public service commission, a requirement that we have here in the state of Maryland, but only six of them have actually launched their businesses and twelve of them which is the good news story, are still in business. And three of those are currently working with us they are subcontractors or subgrantees for us on the other job access and reverse commute program. Three have launched other businesses.

One lady came through our training like what you have heard and what you have learned and everything reading, seeing, covering, covering books The Seven Habits of Successful People decided that transportation was not for her, but she went into a clothing business and that is what she is doing.

Five of them are minority business enterprise owners and that is one of our goals as well and one is actually registered as a DVE.

With any good news stories there are always challenges facing you and some of our challenges, as I may have alluded to early on have been recruitment, including participants' ability to successfully pass entry exams or to demonstrate their ability to comprehend training. I have got to say that that has been kind of minimal because for the most part we put them through testing early on where they have to pass math and/or reading at a certain level. We can assess early on from our interview process, whether or not we think that they'll be able to stay in the course and really comprehend the material.

The other thing we have found that has been a major challenge is the fact that there are very few who complete the training. As I mentioned before, 94 of them or more have signed up with us, costs us still money to run the program, only 54 of them, 57 percent of them actually complete it, the, all of the requirements and there are some that are still pending out there and although they may be working in the industry, they have not done things like complete their business plan and their financial projections to show or indicate that they are really serious about getting into this business.

And then, of course, the biggest challenge has been resources for staying in the business, including cost for insurance and repairs.

Just for your information, these are the next couple of slides given to what participants have said about our program and we have been quite pleased with the kind of comments they have given us. I think I mentioned, the first participant, Robin Ireland, she is the one that ended up going into another business. She understands the importance of owning a business. You have Mary Imbudi, who also said that before she came here, she was a little bit bitter about life just in general and now she has a better attitude about the work environment and what to do. And, of course, you see the other slide too with the other folks that are here – Karina Tate gave comments.



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And we, every class, what happens with this is at our graduation, to give us a source of feedback, we of course do a course evaluation form, but a part of our graduation ceremony, we have the participants write what the program means to them and this is where this information comes from, it is actually published.

And I might also add that the graduation is so formal that they get to invite guests as well, so their family members get to see what they have gone through, our partners get to see what they have gone through, and they get to share with others just how they feel about the program.

And, you see, Diane Abdul or John Hyde. John Hyde is one of my MVEs and so is Devina White, they are MVEs who come into the program. Now John Hyde, I believe was made the, was not a TANF customer, he was perhaps, I think, unemployed and had some business in transportation, but was not really functioning, operating up to par and up to level and he decided to come into our course and is now moving forward.

And, of course, just to get a glance at what we look like now compared to the burdening vehicles back then, we now have the white vans that are the fifteen passenger vans. The sides are magnetic, which means if we loan them or let the participants use them, they can get their own signs and put them on there and then the other advantage to this is that we do not have to run around chasing them to take our names off the vehicles if, in fact, we transfer the vehicles to them or whatever the case may be.

And this concludes my presentation.

James Butler, OFA

Thank you very much Sandy. Excellent job. We are going to go ahead and move on to our next speaker who is Mr. John Squires who is from the Community Resource Group. John Squires is the CEO and Founder of the Community Resource Group. John began his work in rural transportation over 30 years ago with a successful proposal to develop a rural public transportation prototype funded by the Federal Highway Administration. He has since worked on several transportation projects, including the design and launch of a car donation program that refurbished, sold, and financed 247 cars to very low-income families for \$1,000 each. John currently works on a variety of programs helping low-income populations. Ladies and gentlemen welcome John.

Presentation by John Squires, Community Resource Group

Thank you very much. I am delighted to be here. The first thing I want to make clear is that I am first and foremost a practitioner, I am not an expert, and I do not claim any universal truths in what we think we learned over the last 30 years doing both public and personal transportation here in Arkansas. One of the things; I think what I want to focus on primarily is the last five years that we have worked to provide affordable and reliable used cars for TANF recipients. In 2002, we had completed a demonstration program for TANF participants for the state of Arkansas and one of the things that we have learned over the years when you live by the subsidy, you die by the subsidy. When the subsidy dies, the program goes away. We have kind of developed and are trying to find



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market based solutions that provide high volume solutions for the hard to serve, and I can not think of a group that is harder to serve in terms of meeting transportation needs than the TANF participants.

Certainly it is, we need some large volume solutions, and the effort that we focused on was trying to do it without government subsidy so that it could expand to include whatever market that was there. In 2002, the state of Arkansas had a \$2,500 down payment assistance program for TANF recipients that had been in place for 60 days. It was a one time down payment assistance grant. Unfortunately what seemed to be happening was that we looked at that program, was that very unsophisticated, mostly young women were given \$2,500 dollars and sent out to the used car industry to do business. And mostly they failed to successfully negotiate the purchase of a reliable and affordable car. We basically decided that we would set up as a nonprofit used car dealer. We would focus exclusively on trying to provide really affordable and reliable cars for this population group. Understanding this clearly that if you can not get to work every day, your car breaks down, you are not going to stay employed. You are not going to be able to maintain that jobs, and consequently you are not going to get out of poverty. Having said that....the slide that is on up on the screen. I wanted to revisit very briefly some fundamental things that we believe we have learned, and like I said I am not suggesting any universal truths here, this is where we came out.

Well the slide says you can not make it in rural America without a car, the reality is that you can not make it in anywhere in America without a car. Even people who say you can not do it in urban areas have a car at home or do not ride public transportation very often. If TANF participants are using employment as their primary strategy for getting out of poverty, they simply need a car. You can forget about buying buses, and chauffeuring participants to work. It is simply too expensive. The other part of it never seems to get beyond pilot stage, and goes away when the subsidy runs out. We worked in public transit long enough to be able to do the math, the constant number of passenger trips provided in a given time period, you divide that into the total costs of providing the ride, you see very quickly why subsidized personal cars make better economic sense and also increases the chance that the person is actually going to be able to use employment as a strategy for getting out of poverty. To expect a single mom with mostly limited education and even more limited job prospects to make it without a car, in our estimation is to set them up for failure. You can not get to work, shopping, drop the kids at school, do the laundry, pick up the kids after school activities. The truth is it is hard enough to do that when you have a car and impossible if you have to do that spending time waiting for the bus.

Now one of the things that we learned very quickly is everyone wants a car but not everyone wants a job. Maybe we are getting a little cynical after awhile, but the challenge is to figure out which clients are really motivated to use the transportation to keep the job. One of the things that we found out very quickly is that we never met a TANF participant that did not want a car. Preferably a red car. There were a lot of reasons for wanting this car, not all of them however involved a job. I think we all know that transportation or that a car is more than just work transportation, it represents status, it represents freedom, and represents sometimes even represents a ride for your boyfriend. I think the challenge is to try to figure out which participants understand that unless car payments are made the car goes away. That unless the car is maintained, the car will break down, and you will lose your



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job, but you still have to make the payments even when it is not running, or you lose the car. The challenge is how to invest in those who are most likely to succeed, and some of the keys to doing this we found is people need to understand that they must be employed in order to afford the vehicle. They must be motivated and supported in their job that allows them to make the car payments and keep the car running. They need to know what it takes, what car ownership requires. We have to remember that for many of them this is really their first car. A lot of us assume because we have had cars in our family all our lives that everyone knows how to take care of a car is simply not so in our experience.

The other thing, the other part of this slide says there will never be enough money to invest in cars for everyone. The challenge is to select those that are most likely to succeed, give them the knowledge and training they need in order to really understand what is involved with car ownership and provide them with the support they need to succeed. To do that I think it is important to understand that an affordable and reliable car is not an oxymoron or a catch 22 necessarily. But too often a reliable car costs too much to be affordable for this particular client group and equally often the affordable car is simply not reliable. So if you are designing a program you got to balance the affordability and the reliability, and in order to do that you must define your terms.

These are some good used car standards that we developed painfully over a long, over the five years that we worked in this program. If you are really looking to help someone get the best balance between affordability and reliability you want to create some standards that we are not going to pay for a car that is ten years old. Because it is going to break down on you very quickly. The odometer reading needs to be under 75,000 miles, needs to be a sedan or minivan, no trick trucks or muscle cars, two wheel drive. You do not need an off the road vehicle, four to six cylinder for gas mileage, no branded, you need to make sure whoever is selling cars is not selling anything that was in Hurricane Katrina or underwater. The final part is that whenever you buy a car, if it is a lemon, it is going to break down; you will have problems in the first 30 days.

A 30 day unlimited mileage bumper to bumper warranty is more definite than a power train warranty. There are lots of other things that have to go wrong before power train warranty is affected. The other piece, before I move on to this slide, I just want to make one more comment here. The same thing applies to affordability. Money magazine recommends not paying more than 8-10 percent of your gross income for a car. For low wage earners though it is a lower percentage, because there is less financial cushion available you simply need to multiply the participants hourly wage times the number of hours per month times eight percent and that will give you a pretty good idea of what they can afford for a car payment. And it is important to remember that a car payment is only the tip of the iceberg in the costs of owning a car. You have gas, insurance, and repairs and maintenance and all the other things, tires, and they always hit whenever you have the least amount of money to pay for them.

One of the things that we came to believe very strongly was just like in the affordable home business, they have learned that if you go through a homebuyer education class your chances of succeeding as a homeowner are greater substantially, than simply if you go and buy a home on your own. We are strong proponents of consumer education and we are also, came to realize that if



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somebody really wanted a car, not just because they could get it for free or little or nothing, but were really serious about using it to, using employment to get out of poverty, they would go through this process of spending ninety minutes in a class for six to eight weeks, and some of these are listed here, are some of the topics that we try to cover to make them as responsible and knowledgeable car owners as they could be. What people do not know about owning a car comes to light very quickly when you are working and financing and providing cars for this particular group of participants.

One of the things that we have, in our particular used car program, we ran a virtual car lot on the Web. Case managers could link up to the Web site and show their clients a number of cars, choices, and there was all the information about the car for their inspection. They could see the car, and they could select the one that they wanted to purchase. We also provided zero interest financing for up to 30 months in order to keep these cars affordable and partly because we are mission driven, not profit driven. We wanted as much of their hard earned money going toward reducing the debt on that car as quickly as possible and so that they could get as much car for their money as possible.

Nonetheless, we still had to develop a collections process so that we could minimize our losses on the loans that we had made. And we took what we called a buyer advocate approach to buyer collections. Before their first payment was due, we had someone in our finance department calling them, making contact, and introducing themselves as their buyer. And they were really buyer advocates because we measured our collections success, not by how many loans we got, or cars we repossessed, but by how many people succeeded with the help of their buyer advocate to successfully pay off the car which was good for us and good for them. One of the things we were looking at, that this particular client group really needs high touch, needs someone to listen to, commiserate, mostly they have a very slim support system out there. But then at the end of the day we would if the person simply was not able to afford the car, was not interested, or was no longer working, we would of course repossess it, refurbish it, and reallocate it to another client who was trying to use the car to go to work. Just some final thoughts here. One of the things that we kept seeing was that the, it seemed to us that the state was unwilling to make the level of effort or investment in these individual's transportation needs that would really get them a chance to succeed.

There was enough money to get them into a car that they could just barely afford and if something went wrong, a child got sick, they lost their job, something happened, they got kicked out of their apartment, they were too close to the economic edge and oftentimes it was the car payment that languished. Vehicle affordability is clearly more than the car payment that is just like what I said about the tip of the iceberg. It is those other things that you do not budget for that really oftentimes sink a TANF participant in their quest to own and keep a car operating. If you are looking for a large scale population, a statewide program. It is all about sales volume. It is having enough capital to finance the cars, it is setting high vehicle standards, and selecting carefully who you are going to lend to.

And we think that getting a car, if it is tied to, if you want it bad enough to go to class and do your homework, and learn what you need to know about operating that car, chances are you are going to be a pretty good risk. Certainly better than somebody who gets a job for 60 days and gets the car and immediately quits their job. And believe me we had plenty of that. Keeping the car has to be



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tied to maintaining employment, this can be worked out in the sales figuring, but if the focus is just on giving the car it is, the client gets the car, but they do not necessarily maintain their strategy for getting out of poverty through employment. The last thing that we thought throughout our whole financing and providing cars is that the stronger the family support system, the community support system, and the greater chances people had of succeeding. Hopefully some of those will be of value to you and look forward to your questions.

James Butler, OFA

Thank you John.

Our next speaker is Ms. Donna Shaunesey from JAUNT. Donna Shaunesey is the Executive Director of JAUNT, Inc., a regional public transportation system in central Virginia. The 65-vehicle fleet of small buses and vans covers 2,500 square miles, including the City of Charlottesville and the Counties of Albemarle, Buckingham, Savannah, Louisa, and Nelson. She holds a Master's Degree in Planning from the University of Virginia. She is a Certified Community Transit Manager who has been working in the transportation field since 1982. Ladies and gentlemen, Donna Shaunesey.

Donna Shaunesey, JAUNT

Thanks everyone. I find it fun to follow up after people who are not exploring public transportation options. That is what we do. I will give you a little bit of background to give you the framework, and then I will talk a little about our welfare to work project that we think was very successful. And we would have loved to keep doing it.

James mentioned several of these items, but we are owned by the local governments that we serve, and we do several state and local dollars to supplement the fares that we take in. And we have gotten lots of recognition from the federal and state governments, and elsewhere. We have been around since 1976 and we are just, we keep growing every year and we are pretty excited. We do three main things. One is the urban services for people with disabilities; we fill in where the city bus system can not. And then we do a lot of coordinated human service agency transportation and out in the rural areas we are the bus system so we have commuter routes and a lot of demand response service. What we do in each locality depends on what they are willing to pay for, or help pay for. We have commuter routes; we are a big piece of the puzzle in trying to help people make their transition from welfare to work. Right now in most cases they are available Monday through Friday, we have a few seven day a week commuter routes as well. They start pretty darn early in the morning and because they are going such long distances, some go through 6:30 at night. The cost for each of those is 2-3 dollars each way depending on the route.

Just a quick map to show you the distances involved, and the areas in the green are the ones that we have demand response service, and the grey areas are the counties that we just happen to do some commuter routes and that it just about it, we hope to bring them in the fold and do more in that direction in the future. So we have demand response service, and several of our counties, seven days a week in the core area, from Albemarle, six days a week out to ___ in Louisa County, and several days a week in some of the other outlying counties. JAUNT is a human agency service provider, in order to deal with the gas prices in the seventies, no one wanted to pay for each van,



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each agency to put their own van out and bring people in, so they pooled their services, and JAUNT started with just one human service agency van, and covered a huge area, but we expanded since then. We try to do everything we can so that agencies can avoid having to take on the responsibility of buying a vehicle and paying a driver, and that kind of thing. We have been pretty successful in that regard.

Ridership overall is over a quarter million trips a year, about a 1/3 of them are for medical appointments, 1/3 are for work, and another 1/3 are for social appointments or going to the grocery store, or going to senior citizen centers, or whatever. About a third of the passengers are seniors, and three quarters have a disability of some kind. So we are happy to have both of those groups as our core riders. Out in the rural areas, a quarter of the people we carry are going to work. Thirty percent are definitely in the low income category, although we certainly do not use income tests. Anybody can ride.

Our funding as you can see comes from a lot of sources and the more people we have supporting us the happier we are, because that will in tough times, mean somebody is going to keep giving us money we hope. But last year we took in about five million dollars from local areas to keep ourselves going and that is just for operation that does not cover capital. I told you about the gas crisis for our human service agency clients, local governments were paying for pieces of that, and got tired of every agency asking them for money and it did not make any sense, and once agencies got going on services, people who were not clients of that agency wanted to get on board, and we added that feature. In the beginning we started out with mostly human services, a little bit of public, and in the last thirty years it has reversed completely, and is not mostly public, and just a little bit human service agency. The reason why it was successful, was because our local planning agency was very supportive and when agencies wanted to come in and say they wanted to buy vans, and back in the olden days they had to fill out the appropriate forms and approval, they would say no you have to use JAUNT and talk about how we could be useful for them. Local governments have really stepped up to the plate and have been really helpful.

We think we are giving people a really big bang for their buck, and many of our localities, all are quite happy with the service. We really do a good job.

So coordination is not really easy, people often get in the way of that, so lots of agencies want to have their own bus so they can decide when their clients get picked up, where they go, how long it takes, and sometimes that has been an obstacle. There are lots of regulations, federal drug testing, job regulations, and all of these other things that I am sure all of you have seen and that is not really easy to get around. Transportation is expensive, especially when you have all the extra features that we have, like we have computers in every vehicle, and we have very high quality, high standards for safety, and those kind of things, so that does not come cheap. Sometimes agencies do not really understand how costly it takes to provide transportation, and they think they can do it for minor money, like paying for gas.

So, the welfare to work project that we did started back in 1997. Virginia was one of the first states to try welfare reform. They tried a pretty different approach, and so we got a jumpstart on the whole



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process. We had a state grant to start with, and Virginia had not used all their TANF dollars, so were able to use Federal job access funding along with state TANF dollars in order to provide the service for free. It was 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We would go anywhere for anyone as long as they had been vetted by their case managers and social services, so they were the gatekeepers. They said here is a client that can use your service, and so we would not only take people to work, we would take them to drop their kids off at daycare on the way, take them to job training, and also at some point we were taking people to drivers license classes so they could learn to drive because some of them did not have licenses. And we also cooperated with our other bus systems so they got some funding to provide other services as well.

Over the course of the grant we provided over 100,000 trips, helped 460 clients, and that does not include the clients who were covered with extra services on the fixed route system in the city which were free. We had some great success stories. This young woman you see in the photo on the left is one of our star clients. She had never worked before and got to work at Krispy Kreme and was really, she was so happy to be working and was just a delight to have with us and went on to be quite successful. We were pretty pleased with her. Some of the things that we had to deal with was we had some tough clients, we are used to carrying people ordinarily who trust us. It was clear that a lot of the people that we were working with did not trust us, and did not want to be moved to a nursing home, and we really, it was more of a challenge dealing with folks who were on welfare who were not really happy to go to welfare and that shows. And they argued with the drivers. And would do some interesting things, so it took some adjustments from us to make sure that happens.

We were traveling some incredibly hard distances. If the only job someone could get was an hour and a half way at McDonalds, we would go there. Even in the middle of the night to make sure they got there, and that was not necessarily the best use of money but for some reason who never had a job; but they had a resume, they got work experience, we were not going to do that forever, but it was a great way to get people in the job and get them work experience. We also never had to deal with car seats in any large extent forever, but we were starting to see women with as many as five children who needed to go to daycare, and managing that level of car seats was a challenge. Both grants paid for those, but just fitting five children into car seats takes a long time if you are going to do that correctly. Justifying expense was the local governments [concern]; I do not believe you just sent a vehicle all the way you know, 60 miles, to take this person to work, who is only making \$5 an hour. But I think we called it, it is like college, you do not expect to get an immediate return on your investment when you send y our kids to college, you expect to get paid back over a lifetime and that was the same thing we thought was supposed to apply to a rider like that.

One of the good and bad things that I experienced, was because we did not really want to run 24 hours a day seven days we year, we were using cab systems to do the rides, and they were great because they would go anywhere at any time, and that made it a lot simpler for us. On another hand when you are using cabs, that is a whole different ball game from the kind of folks we were used to dealing with, so sometimes those trips could be pretty challenging, so we would get into a cab war so they were using us to fight with each other and that was not a good situation. All in all we were really grateful for having them help out and thought that was really useful.



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The program eventually ended because the state TANF dollars were used up and so they no longer had to use those under pressure with the feds, and that was really hard to find that 50 percent local match. We had a couple of projects, ideas, but they did not work out really well. A lot of the clients we had been carrying were able to transition to our regular service or were able to get cars, some of them got donated cars through a local community action agency, so we thought that part worked really well. And so I know that the challenge of pulling off something like JAUNT, we got started when the time was right in the 1970s, but it can still happen. We have had at least ten new transportation systems start up in Virginia, it really takes just one really dedicated person to make it happen. In our case just one agency donated a van because people had been talking about it for five years. One agency donated a driver, and all just came together and so we have grown into something as big as we are which we are really happy about. This slide is a little dated because we have done six million trips over the years and so we are growing as we speak. We expect to break a new record again this year for more transportation, and so that is our staff, at least part of them, we could not get everyone there because someone had to be out there driving and thank you for your attention.

James Butler, OFA

Thank you so much Donna. Unless any of our speakers has anything additional to add we can go ahead and open up the lines for questions and comments.

Q&A Session

First Question: We have one question from online; the question is what an LLC?

- That is a legal term, a form of corporation, and it is a Limited Liability Corporation which minimizes your liability coming back to you. Someone can sue but they would sue the corporation, it is a private type of corporation, a lower version of a corporation.

Second Question:

- We have another online question, someone has asked for the contact email for the presenters. We will send that to everyone who has called in today along with the Powerpoint presentation. So we will make sure their contact information is on there as well.

Third Question: We have another question for John Squires. What funding sources are used to purchase the used cars for participants?

- Those were the internal funds of the Community Resource Group. We are actually a CDFI, which is a certified development lending institution; we make a number of types of loans to families and communities in a seven state region. We actually invested our own assets and lost our own assets in trying to find a large scale solution to the affordability and reliability problems that TANF participants were facing in Arkansas. So all of the financing resources, several million dollars came from our corporate resources, there was no government resources, except for the same down payment that the used car dealers were eligible for from the state.



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Fourth Question: Donna, this is Louisa from the Rural Communities Initiative. Can you talk a little bit more that you said sometimes there were 4-5 kids who had to be loaded in the car seats and in the van, and how that was structured in dropping them off at childcare, after school, and getting their mother or father to work.

- Sure when they made a reservation they would have to make a reservation for every trip. Mom says I have to be picked up at 7:15 and I have to drop this kid off here and this kid there, etc. So we would make multiple reservations for them which was a little tricky and our computer system was not as crazy about that but we did find a way to make that work.

Fifth Question: Can I ask another question on that same point? Of course. Did you provide the car seats? I think I heard you said that and that you were accountable for strapping them in.

- The grant paid for the car seats and we had to keep them current, and you know they go out of legality pretty quickly. We trained all our staff on how to install car seats. We left a lot of them strapped in and tried to not reinstall them in every vehicle, and foreign vehicles come in with built in car seats which is great. It is a challenge, I do not know how many of you taken that class, but it is a hard job and it is not easy to strap in a car seat properly. And our drivers were responsible for that.

Sixth Question: Everyone this is John Squires. I wanted to make an observation. We operated a public transportation system for over 20 years. I wanted to put this in the context that we are strong public supporters of public transit, however I am not a supporter of public transportation as a primary source of transportation for people going to work. It is all about economics. The JAUNT program, and I am picking on you because you are the only one to provide numbers to pick on, you do about 250,000 trips per year, and at a cost of \$4.7 million plus additional capital costs. If you take that \$4.7 million and you divide it by 250,000 riders, you get a per passenger one way trip of about \$18.80. I do not actually know what your actual number turns out to be. If you look at 18.80 for a one way trip times ten trips to and from work five days a week, and you do that for 4 ½ weeks, and then you do that for 12 months. It is basically costing you over \$9,000 dollars to provide that transportation for that individual going to work. None of the cars that we sold cost \$9,000 dollars and most of the cost was externalized from the taxpayer to the individual that got the car, and so the down payment assistance or any assistance given by the state to help subsidize helping someone get a car is certainly cost effective when compared to public transportation. Again I want to be clear that I think public transportation is absolutely essential for people with disabilities, for people who for one reason or another can not drive, too young, or for some other reason, and for elderly folks. But for folks going to work, waiting for the bus is not going to get you out of your poverty.

- John, Donna if you don't mind can I comment. I hear what you are saying and that is a great comment, and that is one thing I struggle with because I run a JARC program similar to what Donna talked about. One of the challenges in the process that I use to transition them off of my services, and one of the things I do to do that is ride share, car pool, and trying to get them their own cars. We have a relationship with Marty Schwartz from Vehicles for Change, who we have worked with in the past to get folks a car. Our challenge is to target the population who can not drive, who can not seem to get there, we are looking to some opportunities here to try to get them the training because that in itself is a problem to get them to drivers ed and get the training but that is one of our problems, that they can not



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drive for one reason or another. But some of my folks have been elderly, they are all not young, or in workforce, but that is some of my challenge.

- John--- I just want to make a quick comment on the ability to drive. One of the things we found in rural areas was that people may have gone to drivers education in high school or maybe not, but probably had not owned a car or owned it for very long. One of the things we worked with was trying to set up driver training programs, again it requires subsidy, but it is still cheaper than the alternative. The other thing we learned very quickly on a used car you want to require comprehensive insurance for at least the first six months. Admittedly it is cost prohibitive if you are having to pay it along with your car payment, but typically we would find that if we had a bad driver that an accident would happen during the first six months but hopefully no one was hurt but the asset was replaced by the insurance company so were able to get a person back into t a car.

James Butler, OFA

Thanks again to the participants for attending this Webinar and thank you to our wonderful speakers and thank them for shearing their wealth of knowledge with working with rural transportation initiatives that serve TANF participants, and a special thanks to the staff at ICF International who were very instrumental in putting together this Webinar.

As Alison mentioned earlier, the power point presentations and an audio recording from today's Webinar will made available for everyone within the coming weeks. Also, you can feel free to e-mail anyone on the Rural Communities Initiative team if you have any further questions. So, on behalf of the Federal Office of Family Assistance, thank you all very much and have a pleasant day!