

# TRI COUNTY JOINT TRANSPORTATION Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Subcommittee

## SUMMARY 2012 TO 2020

### BACKGROUND

A Tri County Partnership between Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco Counties Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Boards (TDCB) has been in place since the creation of the Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco Tri County Access Plan in 2006 and updated in 2009.

The Hillsborough TDCB has been working with the Pinellas MPO, the designated recipient of the *Job Access and Reverse Commute* (5316) and *New Freedom* (5317) programs, to ensure that these funds supported regional access, the focus of Tri County Access Plan.

#### Key Terms:

- *49 USC 5316: Job Access and Reverse Commute (Program provides grants for competitively selected projects to improve access to transportation services to employment, job training and support activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals.*
- *49 USC 5317: The New Freedom formula grant program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society*

In June 2012 members of the Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas Coordinating Boards convened a meeting to discuss the existing limitations of Tri County travel for the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) population. Consensus from that meeting directed staffs of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Community Transportation Coordinators (CTC) as well as representatives from the 3 TDCBs to work together and develop strategies to address the needs of the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD). The following is a summary of Tasks, Findings and Actions by year of what came to be called the Tri County Joint Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Subcommittee.

**Excerpt from Invitation Letter:** Joint coordination of transportation services across county lines has been an interest of our constituents as evidenced by the priorities of the Tri County Access Plan. To our knowledge, the Boards of these counties have never met



together. We believe that a joint meeting can further our common interests in coordinated services and allow for a sharing of ideas on best use of Job Access Reverse Commute and New Freedom Program grant funds.

### Year 1: 2012 Summary:

The 3 Boards were briefed and updated on the following status of Tri County efforts:

Tri-County Partnership since 2006:

- Tri-County Access Plan (TCAP) created 2006 with the purpose to
  - Define unmet needs
  - Establish broad project areas to address those needs
  - Provide RIDES-RIDES-RIDES
  - TCAP Updated in 2009 :
    - Re-evaluated needs
    - Developed a strategies-based approach to address needs
    - Used New Freedom and JARC to implement

With the concurrence of the three (3) Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards, the Pinellas MPO undertook the update of the 2009 Tri County Access Plan.

### Year 2: 2013 Summary:

**The Tri County Access Plan update included the following:**

An update to the MAP-21 Funding Program changes noted that:

- \* No new funding for the JARC and New Freedom programs
- \* JARC activities are now eligible under the Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5307) & Rural Area Formula Program (Section 5311)
- \* New Freedom activities are now eligible under the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program (Section 5310)

Completed public outreach:

Public workshop in each county

- \* November 5, 2013 - Pasco
- \* November 6, 2013 - Hillsborough
- \* November 7, 2013 - Pinellas
- \* Web access survey until December 20, 2013



#### Public Input Summary – Pasco

- \* Local connectivity needed more than regional connectivity
- \* Greatest need for seniors and persons with a disability is transportation options for quality of life/social activities
- \* Service improvements
- \* Coverage to new areas

#### Public Input Summary – Hillsborough

- \* Need regional para transit access regardless of funding source
- \* More local service to areas currently without service
- \* Additional infrastructure (sidewalks, bus shelters)
- \* More flex routes

#### Public Input Summary – Pinellas

- \* Regional connectivity needed more than local service
- \* Greatest need for seniors is transportation options for medical
- \* Greatest need for persons with a disability is transportation options for travel assistance
- \* Connections to/from Hillsborough to Pinellas
- \* Extend evening service hours
- \* Regional paratransit service

The Draft *Tri-County Area Regional Mobility Needs* identified that the Combined Top Needs for the Tri County area are:

- \* Transportation options for quality of life and social activities.
- \* More regional transit.
- \* More focus on expanding fixed route transit services- area coverage and hours of operation.
- \* Focus investment on rail and bus transit.
- \* Connect to Hillsborough

### Year 3: 2014 Summary

Tri-County Area Regional Mobility Needs Plan is adopted by three (3) Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards.

The Tri County Joint Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Subcommittee affirmed the groups mission, goal and objectives:

#### *Mission*

Meet the mobility needs of the transportation disadvantaged in the tri-county area.



### *Goal*

Ensure transportation services are provided to the disadvantaged populations of the Tampa Bay area in the most cost effective manner possible.

### *Objectives*

- Provide solutions for regional transportation needs, as identified in the Tri-County Area Regional Needs Assessment.
- Evaluate and address the regional priorities of the transportation disadvantaged in Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties.
- Continually assess and update tri-county regional needs.
- Promote regional transportation initiatives serving the transportation disadvantaged. This includes efforts associated with identifying and pursuing funding opportunities.
- Share information associated with the development and implementation of the individual transportation disadvantaged service plans, annual operating reports and related issues. Emphasis shall be placed on identifying “best practices.”
- Educate elected officials and other community leaders on the challenges and needs of the transportation disadvantaged in the Tri-County area.

### Other activities of the committee included

- Issues and concerns including the importance of providing rides, negative connotations associated with the word “disadvantaged,” focusing on people and the need to change the culture and effect a paradigm shift in the way disadvantaged citizens are treated.
- Identifying other regional transportation groups that might be helpful to follow are the Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area Leadership Group (composed of MPO members from the tri-county area) and the TBARTA’s Transit Management Committee.
- Overviews of the Hillsborough County CTC’s organization and the work that they do.
- Discussion of the changes that have been occurring to Medicaid programs and how that relates to transportation. Detailed information is available on AHCA’s website.

### **Year 4: 2015 Summary:**

In this year, the subcommittee conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Threats (SWOT) analysis examining common themes and comments threaded through the work that had been done to date, including coordination/communication, safety, quality of life and service improvements/needs, safety and infrastructure. Arriving at consensus, the group agreed:



- Tie the action back to a need that a specific operator could fulfill.
- Find a sponsor who could match opportunities for funding with operators and help with the grant application and management, with a Regional benefit approach
- Pinellas Homeless Leadership Board is an example of regional coordination, work together, write the grant together and share the funding
- What can we do regionally to bring more dollars to the program? Figure out if the DOPA is the coordinator, who is the best resources (LCB?) who can revise and advise. Provide training for the small groups
- Elected officials on the Boards are valuable for sharing the needs of the TD community with other elected officials.
- Each local coordinating board give real time report to the MPO board and TMA board as well
- Transportation Management Area board was discussed
- The time is now for a Regional LCB with a message for including all community members, reminded of the needs of the TD

Through facilitation, the subcommittee ranked the priorities of the

- Regional paratransit services
- Infrastructure and technology improvements
- Educate elected officials and other community leaders on the challenges and needs of the transportation disadvantaged in the Tri-County area.
- Incorporate regional transportation needs into the FTA Section 5310 application criteria and evaluations.
- Identify and pursue funding opportunities, including reaching out to community organizations locally, statewide and nationally.
- Let's implement a Regional Bus Pass at a reasonable cost

Also in 2015, the subcommittee conducted discussion of:

- TBARTA 's Master Plan and how it addresses the transportation disadvantaged. The presentation included information on their vanpool program, carpool matching, One Call One Click efforts and myRide. myRide is run through the crisis center and includes transportation information that TBARTA is looking into expanding. TBARTA agreed to regularly attend the subcommittee meetings.
- Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) gave a presentation on the regional fare box efforts. The efforts include the transit agencies from Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Manatee, Citrus, and Hernando counties.



The regional fare box efforts will allow migration from paper cards to reloadable, account-based cards, smartphone use and barcode cards (like gift cards).

- **Issue:** There was a question of how crossing county lines will work, in respect to counties that currently have free or reduced fares, but neighboring counties do not have the same structure. The regional fare box relates to the subcommittee's priority of implementing a regional bus pass.
- The Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT's) consultants on the 5310 program provided an update on the new requirements and process that FDOT has implemented, including maintenance checks and preventative maintenance work.
- The subcommittee continued its discussion of priorities. Based on the discussion, a status update will be provided at each meeting and the priorities will be revisited each year.
- One of the priorities is the education of elected officials and community leaders. Using the Transportation Disadvantaged Legislative Awareness Day (TD Day) on Thursday, January 21, 2016 as a kick off, a common information flyer was developed that individuals from all three counties can bring with them to TD Day.

#### Year 5: 2016 Summary:

The committee explored the opportunity for the 5310 process to fund regional trips, exploring alternate funding sources:

- Working with FDOT staff, the statewide 5310 Process which includes Title VI assurances, vehicle preventative maintenance and annual timelines for recipients and potential applicants was reviewed.
- FDOT consultants demonstrated a new GIS mapping tool being developed that spatially locates 5310 recipients. Data is also being collected on providers who provide cross county trips.
- Focusing on the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Rides to Wellness (R2W) Demonstration and Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants, the FTA R2W grant information including application deadline of May 31, 2016. It was noted that the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) was planning on applying for the grant.



- The subcommittee discussed connecting transportation to health and human services exploring the creation of a coalition. The discussion included
  - Quality of Life has vehicles
  - The Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger has a partnership with Humana, part of Bold Moves 2020
  - The need for a tri-county hub and for a paratransit tri-county hub or way to deliver paratransit trips across county lines
  - Regional centers – VA hospitals, Moffitt
  - TBARTA's Once Call Once Click Center abilities and potential to assist with a regional project
  - The grant is for a small amount, so begin with something small that is scalable
  - Whether the R2W grant would be available beyond 2016
- The group reached consensus that PSTA explore the ideas further and explore linking the three counties to support health and human service needs. They will provide an update at the Pinellas LCB meeting and send out information regarding letters of support.
- PSTA's pilot program, Direct Connect a technology software initiative that will help coordinate trips. The Pilot Expansion would provide more opportunities for education, seven more location, and up the availability of more trips.
- Explored Mobility Management the TNC models each of which are opening doors to new opportunities.
- CTD's Mobility Enhancement Grants and Jacksonville's Rides to Wellness grant.

### Year 6: 2017 Summary:

In this year, the Committee assessed the effectiveness of outreach to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) and Florida Legislature through the TD day events in Tallahassee including: The CTD's review and proposed update of Trip & Equipment formula and Senate Bill 1086 and House Bill 881 in the Florida legislature and update on their status.

Also in 2017:

The TDLCB subcommittee explored the possibility of using Route Match, a software platform for public transit fixed route and demand response operations. The subcommittee suggested that, as all three counties CTCs use Route Match, they will be able to work together to set up a system to provide regional trips as well as collectively work on finding different funding sources.



Mr. Tim Flanagan of Route Match was invited to attend and provide an overview of how the company has developed different programs around the country and how they can provide assistance in the Tri-County area. Mr. Flanagan gave details about how the company can coordinate fleets and hubs between the three CTC counties. Riders will be able to call in to the central hub with pick-up and drop-off details, which will allow for coordination among the three CTC agencies. Mr. Flanagan suggested that different hubs be set up to maximize the capacities of the CTC agencies.

Mr. Flanagan provided an estimate of the platform development fees, which may cost approximately \$200,000 per site. The TDLCB subcommittee mentioned that it would look into a \$750,000 grant in order to fund this service.

Subcommittee members discussed the goal and purpose of the group is for the transporting transportation disadvantaged individuals between the counties of Pasco, Pinellas and Hillsborough. Currently, customers cannot be driven across the border during trips. Furthermore, each Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) has a different degree of Route Match software implemented.

Mr. Tim Flanagan of Route Match discussed overcoming the different degrees of Route Match implementation by stating that this tri-county coordination software will be newly developed rather than rely on current software. This coordination software will establish targeted service zones, with points interspersed for meetings between vehicles. Subcommittee members discussed reducing deadhead time by using these cross-border trips to perform trips within the destination county.

The subcommittee performed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis. All three CTCs determined that medical trips are currently their number one request. Members discussed coordination, vehicles, reimbursement, and cost-effectiveness. The conversation continued with a discussion of success measures, which might relate to return on investment for taxpayers as well as positive health and wellness outcomes.

Mr. Dave Newell of FDOT discussed 5310 applications, stating that most agencies are in a position of minimal vehicle and operational funding in the coming year. Therefore, a large portion of funding, in the range of \$3 million, may be used toward coordination software implementation. This funding will become available in August or September of 2018. Mr. Newell recommended a joint application, which Mr. Ross Silvers of the Pinellas County CTC agreed to write.



Subcommittee members discussed details of vehicles, and whether this pilot would involve trips to all medical facilities or just select high-priority sites. Members determined they would reach out to St. Luke's Cataract & Laser Institute, All Children's Hospital, Moffitt Cancer Center, and the two VA hospitals to determine demand.

**OUTCOME:** In December 2017 the 3 CTC's gathered to discuss their capacity to apply for funding from the 5310 grant process. The CTC's were unable to commit the time and resources necessary to make the application process.

### Year 7: 2018 Summary:

**Regrouping, the Committee reaffirmed their purpose to:** *Provide regional trips across Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties serving individuals who are transportation disadvantaged.*

The subcommittee then agreed to focus efforts on creating a regional pilot project that would provide medical and life sustaining trips.

**Exploring the opportunities available, the Committee determined the following:**

1. The Tri-County Regional Mobility Needs Plan serves as the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan and is instrumental in determining if a project is eligible to receive Federal Transit Administration Section (FTA) 5310 funding.
2. A desired outcome for providing regional trips would be a 5310-eligible agency (or multiple agencies) providing regional trips in partnership with a medical or life sustaining services provider
3. Guidelines for a pilot project should include:
  - Individuals must qualify for the TD Program in their home county
  - Agency must have a CTC agreement
  - Propose funding needed for operations and capital
  - Applicant agency must be 5310-eligible
  - Must include a partnership with at least one provider (medical or life sustaining services) that would be the trip destination (if applicable)
  - Estimated duration is 2 years with an option for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year



- Ideally, the project should be scalable
  - Work with FDOT on how to implement project
4. The Committee asked that all three (3) Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Boards review the outlined scope and support moving forward with the development of a Request of Intent to move forward.
  5. The Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco county Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Boards supported the subcommittee proposals and a request for a Letter of Intent was issued in the Fall of 2018.
  6. A special meeting with MPO staffs, CTCs and coordination Contractors was held to encourage participation in the Letter of Intent process.

**CONCLUSION:** While two (2) applicants did submit preliminary letters of intents to provide regional trips, the applications were never submitted, and this project was never realized.

#### Year 8: 2019 Summary:

The subcommittee reconvened with a roundtable discussion to *explore with Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Agency (TBARTA), Community Transportation Coordinators (CTCs) and Transit agencies the feasibility of cross county trips for the Transportation Disadvantaged.*

**Participants:** David Green and Chris DeAnnuntis – TBARTA; Ross Silvers – Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (CTC), Scott Clark and Karen Smith – Sunshine Line (Hillsborough CTC), Kurt Scheible – Pasco County Public Transportation (Pasco CTC), Greg Brackin – Hillsborough Area Regional Transit, David Newell – Florida Department of Transportation.

Following the roundtable, an agenda item for TBARTA's September 27, 2019 prepared.

- On September 27, 2019, Ms. Sarah Caper, representing the 3 MPO staffs made a presentation to the TBARTA Board. The Board, lacking a quorum referred the Tri County access program to their staff.
- FDOT staff offered to work with the 3 CTCs to provide funding for cross county trips if the CTCs are willing and able to provide such trips.



## Year 9: 2020 Summary:

**Update:** Hillsborough County CTC is providing limited cross county medical trips if that trip is cost effective

### REFLECTIONS:

1. Cross county trips are *an interest of our constituents as evidenced by the priorities of the Tri County Access Plan and the Tri-County Area Regional Mobility Needs Plan.*
2. The funding initially IDENTIFIED to implement the needs of the Tri County Plans were:
  - 49 U.S.C. 5317- The New Freedom formula grant program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society. Lack of adequate transportation is a primary barrier to work for individuals with disabilities
  - 49 U.S.C. 5316: JARC relating to the development and maintenance of transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment, and for public transportation projects designed to transport residents of urbanized areas and nonurbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities.
3. These programs were rescinded and replaced by:
  - **49 U.S.C. 5310:** *New Freedom program aims to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options. This funding is shared by recipients who serve their clients individual needs and do not have the capacity to do cross county trips as an additional service*
4. The Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged recently completed The Advantage Ride pilot from January 29, 2019 and October 31, 2010 and served approximately 483 individuals and provided over 20,000 trips in Hillsborough, Pinellas and Manatee County. The Pilot allowed cross county trips and reports that 753 trips were made from Pinellas to Hillsborough and 814 trips from Hillsborough to Pinellas (7%).



5. **The Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area Leadership Group (TMA) is a group whose** role includes developing regional consensus priorities for the TMA, especially in the allocation of federal & state funds. The Leadership comprises three members of each MPO board as voting members, and non-voting advisors from FDOT and TBARTA. Recommendations are by consensus.
  
6. The group focuses on major cross-county transportation markets and traffic movements, and on helping the Tampa Bay metropolitan area speak with one voice in discussions of regional transportation prioritization issues and financial resources. This group brings cross county interests together and this should be a next step for the Tri County subcommittee to discuss the Tri-County Area Regional Mobility Needs similar to the other modes of transportation the TMA advocates for.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Tri County Joint Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Subcommittee evolve to an annual subcommittee to provide the Tri County priorities to the TMA.

