

Alaska Community and Public Transportation Advisory Board

Annual Recommendations Report and Funding Review

December 30, 2016

Leverage Alaska's Resources

With an estimated 1 in 9 Alaskans with special transportation needs,ⁱ the variety of transportation funding available through numerous state and federal programs, the dire condition of the state's budget, and a senior population anticipated to grow by 68 percent between 2014 and 2024,ⁱⁱ the need to coordinate transportation services and leverage transportation resources in Alaska is greater than ever before.

Established in [Alaska Statute 44.42](#), the Alaska Community and Public Transportation Advisory Board (C&PTAB) is comprised of individuals from a diverse mix of perspectives, including state agencies, tribal representatives, user advocates, transportation providers and the public-at-large. As directed by law, representatives are appointed by the Governor or they are state agency commissioners or their designees.

Among other tasks, the C&PTAB is responsible for making "recommendations for the improved agency coordination and combining of services to achieve cost savings in the funding and delivery of community and public transit services."

In the 2015 C&PTAB Annual Report (published February 3, 2016), the C&PTAB presented an Interagency Coordination Recommendation for state agencies that would formalize an interagency coordination culture, foster a coordination culture among local stakeholders and grantees seeking effective human service and public transit systems in their areas, and gather consistent types of data across agencies that is relevant statewide and informs decision-making. This year, with Medicaid expansion and new human service transportation contracting practices, the Interagency Coordination Recommendation is increasingly relevant.

The need to coordinate human service and public transportation services and leverage transportation resources in Alaska is greater now than ever before.

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Recommendation for Structured Interagency Coordination

C&PTAB's Interagency Coordination Recommendation (Recommendation) results from years' worth of study, discussion, and collaboration. Members of the C&PTAB and the C&PTAB's Interagency Working Group (IWG) members have reviewed, studied, debated and expressed their support for this Recommendation. It was a featured topic of the 2015 Alaska Community Transit Conference and the subject of a workshop of all conference participants where feedback was collected, documented and used.

The Recommendation is presented in full on the next page. C&PTAB recommends it be adopted through Administrative Order. At the time of this printing, the presentation of the recommendation to the Governor's Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of staff is scheduled for the second week of January, 2017.

With the signing of an Administrative Order, implementation can be opportunistically and efficiently phased in, occurring over time as Requests for Proposals, transportation service contracts, certification processes, and grants expire and are reissued.

Even without a formally adopted structure, some state agencies are moving forward with implementing aspects of the Recommendation.

For 2017, the C&PTAB is poised to support implementation, addressing issues, finalizing the development and deployment of tools to support the reporting process, supporting providers' in their response to the shared requirements, and pursuing the opportunity to establish statewide performance measures to guide and demonstrate the most effective use of human service and public transit resources in Alaska.

Other initiatives of the C&PTAB, including the use of a consistent methodology for calculating the actual cost of a ride and ideas for fostering coordination with tribes, are complementary to the Recommendation.

C&PTAB recommends adoption of the Interagency Coordination Recommendation through Administrative Order. Implementation can be phased in over time.

C&PTAB Interagency Coordination Recommendation

| Outcomes | Recommendations | Content |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Recommendation #1</i> | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a consistent framework and expectation for coordination in policy and practice across all state funding entities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All state agencies that provide or in some manner pay for human service and public transportation adopt the same, shared definition of coordination | <p>Shared Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination is an ongoing strategy of committed funders, providers and stakeholders working together to improve both local and statewide transportation options through planning, shared resources, and consolidation of programs. |
| <i>Recommendation #2</i> | | |
| <p>Foster and stimulate meaningful and consistent coordination practices at the state and local level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generate shared expectations for coordination across all public funding sources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All state agencies use the same coordination requirements and template language in Requests for Proposals, transportation service contracts, certification processes, and grants that support transportation services for client populations. | <p>Language/Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providers must demonstrate and verify their participation in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. ▪ Providers must show where local planning processes provided for the meaningful involvement of representatives of public, private, non-profit transportation and human service providers, as well as members of the public including seniors and individuals with disabilities. ▪ Providers' services will directly correspond with the identified transportation needs of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and people with disabilities in the local coordination plan, supporting local strategies and prioritized services. |
| <i>Recommendation #3</i> | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide for increasingly consistent data regarding the use of human service and public transit funding ▪ Streamline reporting requirements and minimize the reporting burden on providers ▪ Make increasingly meaningful recommendations about how to optimize funding and quantify funding needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recipients of human service and public transportation funding from any state funding agency will report annually to that agency a consistent set of data in a manner that can be sorted, aggregated and reported across agencies. | <p>Reporting requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local match amount and partner ▪ Actual transportation expenditures by service and provider ▪ Number of people served ▪ Cost per ride or amount of purchased transportation services ▪ Level of engagement in Local Coordination Plan implementation per Recommendation #2 |

To date, the only state agency requiring participation in the development and implementation of a local coordination transportation plan is the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). Such planning is a requirement for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding that supports public transit in Alaska. Should other state funding sources maintain the same coordination requirement, local provider engagement in existing processes is a direct step toward increasing the coordination culture. Where those plans don't exist, other solutions, including a potential bye on the requirement to participate in the development of a local plan, will need to be addressed in the implementation phase. Regardless, the Recommendation perpetuates a coordination culture from the most general – adopting a shared definition – to the most specific – some consistent reporting requirements – that are essential to informing how effectively and efficiently the Alaska dollar is used.

While other involved agencies have important roles in human service transportation, the most significant impact of the C&PTAB Recommendation is on DHSS Medicaid, Medicaid Waiver and non-Medicaid transportation programs and supports.

While working to secure a state-wide approach to implementing the Recommendation, DHSS explored opportunities for better coordination across its own programs in a manner consistent with the Recommendation's intent. To that end and in coordination with DHSS, C&PTAB has submitted the following suggestions for integration in DHSS policy and operations as appropriate:ⁱⁱⁱ

- Align non-medical transportation provider certification processes
- Use the same rate methodology for non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) across all other Medicaid programs that utilize transportation services
- Use the same definitions and procedures for NEMT (for example, use the same definition and distance limits for short-distance ground travel) across Medicaid programs
- Require provider agreements and transportation contracts for NEMT and other transportation needs to include coordinated transportation language reflected in the Interagency Coordination Recommendation on page 3
- Encourage participation and education to use public transportation, where available
- Continue the practice of issuing a bus pass for multiple NEMT appointments when the bus is the transportation method

The C&PTAB is aware of the many changes underway in the system and the demands on DHSS staff time; still, the DHSS is considering how it can implement these suggestions and assume a leadership role in helping to foster the coordinated environment. Other state agencies, and specifically those involved in the IWG, are considering how they can move forward implementing aspects of the Interagency Coordination Recommendation as well.

2016 Efforts and Accomplishments

In 2016 the C&PTAB continued to make progress on the following initiatives identified in its strategic plan:

Coordination with Tribal Governments

Strategy: Secure effective coordinated transportation services among local tribes, governments and providers.

The C&PTAB identified four tribes with assumed likelihood for the coordination discussion given their expressed interest in, and federal funding available for, public transportation. The C&PTAB has secured the approval of the Governor's Tribal liaison to pursue discussion with each of these tribes regarding coordination challenges and possibilities.

Furthermore, Medicaid is in the process of contracting its medical transportation services for tribal members to the tribes rather than through the traditional human service providers. With this change, DHSS reports that tribal health organizations (THO's) have the opportunity to prior authorize and coordinate transportation for American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) Medicaid beneficiary transportation. Currently, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) is the only tribal health organization to enroll as a transportation broker.

ANTHC is providing this service in the Anchorage area. It is anticipated YKHC and Norton Sound tribal health organizations will enroll as Transportation Brokers and provide regional transportation services. More tribal health organizations may enroll in the future or choose to contract with ANTHC or another tribal entity to provide these services.

AI/AN Medicaid beneficiaries may choose to use the tribal health organization or continue to use existing venues – Xerox and Corporate Travel Management (CTM) – to prior authorize and arrange travel.

This initiative emerges relatively concurrent with the C&PTAB initiative to explore and foster increased public transit and human service transportation with the tribes, and potentially opens the door to an even more significant conversation. The arrangement would also be an opportunity to infuse within tribal contracts the coordination language proposed in the Interagency Coordination Recommendation.

C&PTAB's recommendation advocating for coordination language in state agency grants, contracts, and certifications could potentially leverage coordination opportunities through those agreements being drawn with tribal organizations to provide Medicaid transportation.

Consistent Methodology for Calculating Costs

Strategy: Implement the Calculating Costs Methodology among public transit and human service providers in order to provide for consistent and meaningful reporting, and to enable the State of Alaska to truly to be able to calculate the actual cost per ride across services and make coordination and funding decisions accordingly.

In 2016, a consistent methodology for public transit and human service agencies to use to calculate the cost per ride was produced after a year-plus process of outreach to state agencies and human

service providers. The methodology was used by the DOT&PF for use in its 2017 transportation grant application processes. While well received, implementation in other systems, and specifically, those within DHSS, requires changes to grant application and reporting requirements. C&PTAB will be continuing this work in 2017.

Should the Interagency Coordination Recommendation be formalized, the methodology will be an immediate and important tool to helping establish some consistency across all reporting efforts.

Accessible Taxicabs

Strategy: Generate and implement strategies for increased accessible taxicabs in Alaska in order to provide for a safe, reliable, affordable and available resource for those who need and want mobility and opportunity akin to those who don't share transportation challenges.

In 2014 C&PTAB released a white paper regarding options for increasing accessible taxicabs, knowing that any strategy must by necessity be responsive to the local environment. Among the strategies listed were municipal ordinances, state facility requirements, and other approaches to incentivize accessible taxicab resources.^{iv}

In 2015, C&PTAB released the results of a survey it conducted to better understand users' (and any interested person's) experience and ideas regarding accessible taxicab availability and use in Alaska. The following findings emerged from that effort:^v

- "Accessible Taxi" means many things, not just wheelchair access as evident by the responses of the need for many methods of assistance. Accessibility means equipment installed within the vehicle, policies that dictate operation, communication issues and training for both the operators and users (e.g. where does a person with a disability learn about how to use an accessible taxi?).
- Fares paid by vouchers accounted for 40% by those responding. This emphasizes the importance of being able to easily use this type of payment and any other non-standardized ways of compensating the taxi driver.
- Some type of standardized or mandatory training for taxi operators would probably assist with dealing with the issues of safety, treatment and respect.
- In areas where accessible taxicabs exist, respondents report that 43% of the time they ask for one, one is available. While this percentage is higher than what the CPTAB anticipated prior to the survey, it does indicate room for improvement and better accessibility is necessary.
- Individuals responding to this survey and making trips on taxis indicate a high percentage of those trips are medically driven and are regular in cycle or need. Obviously, the reliance on taxi service is high for these trips. It is concerning that 45% of those responding did not make their trip if a taxi wasn't available, regardless of the reason.
- The response that over 66% of respondents will again use a taxi even if it means significant challenges with accessibility highlights the reality that taxi service may be the only transportation option for them.
- The reality is that only a few of our major population areas provide accessible taxis at all.
- There are pockets of areas where effective accessible taxi service was identified, appreciated and noted as effective. While these areas have different business models, the models they use might be worth exploring in other areas.

The C&PTAB concluded that accessible taxicabs are an important need, and their prevalence and capacity warrant further development. In spite of some working business models, C&PTAB

speculated that the cost to operate accessible taxicabs, the cost to purchase them, and the need for driver training are primary barriers for taxicab business owners to develop the resource.

In 2016, the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) contracted with a consultant to do an Accessible Taxi Feasibility Study for the Borough. The study was intended to generate the following:

- An understanding of the current taxi/vehicle for hire environment in the Borough
- An understanding of best practices including alternate service delivery and governance models in the planning an implementation of accessible taxi services
- An inventory of the key attributes of an effective accessible taxi operation
- A Borough-specific implementation plan^{vi}

Integral to the FNSB study were C&PTAB-generated questions to inform the development of additional strategies and opportunities to increase the prevalence of accessible taxicabs in Alaska.

The draft study was released late in 2016, and will be subject to C&PTAB review and discussion at its first meeting in January 2017. Findings from that report will inform the group's path forward. It is interesting to note that during this time, there has been increased activity within municipalities respective to generating accessible taxicab resources in a community. Those experiences will also inform the numbers and varieties of options C&PTAB is development.

Annual Funding Review

One of C&PTAB's legislated tasks is to "conduct an annual review of available funding, including state, federal and local governments and private entities that administer or support services, using that information to develop recommendations and potential legislative and other changes to improve the effective use of funding" (AS 44.42).

Data Barriers

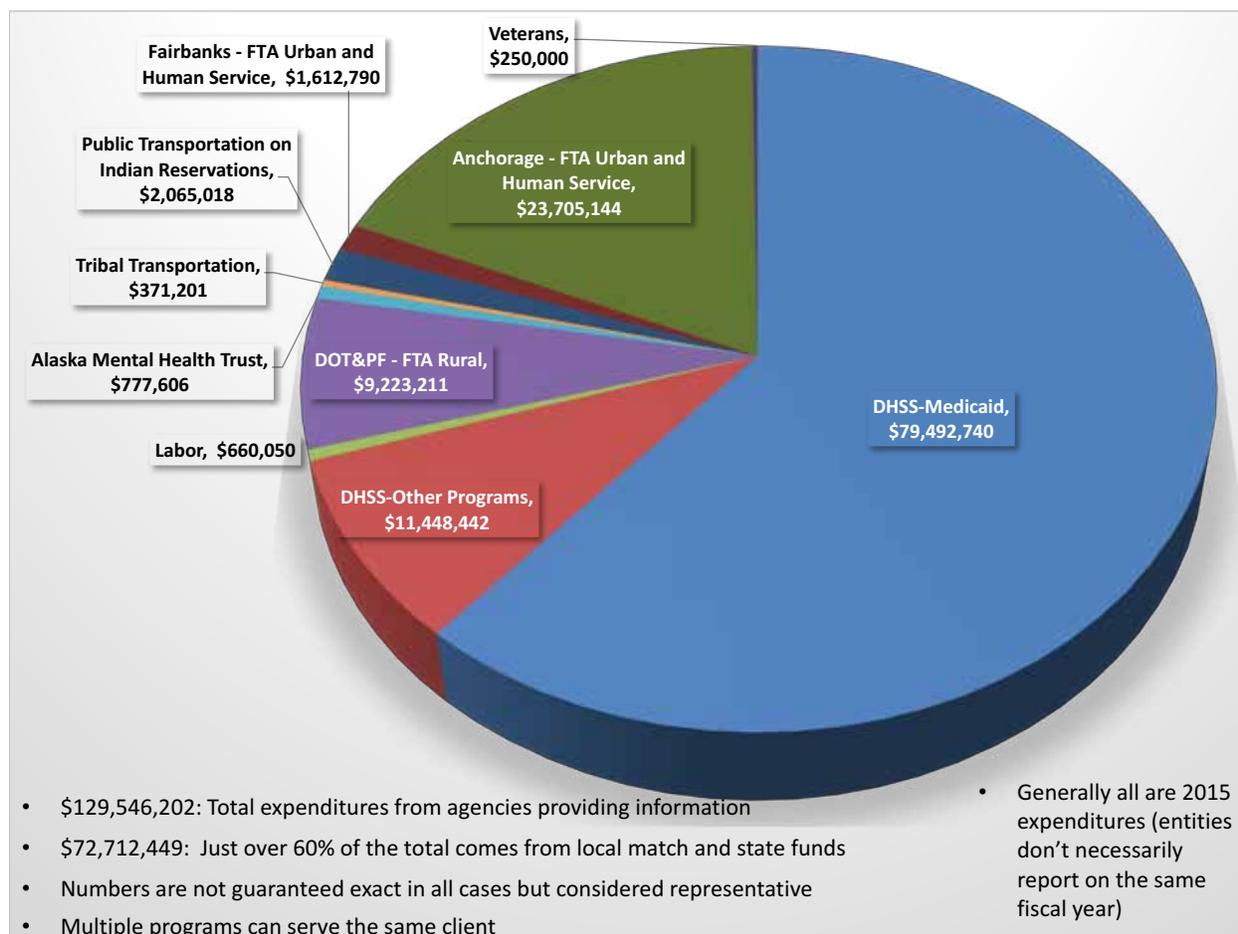
The effort is always challenging, and the numbers collected each year over the past 8 are still not equal. The following barriers exist regarding the collection and use of information generated on a state level:

- Statewide Transportation Expenditures:
The ability to gather and compare data across state agencies continues to be a barrier to generating an accurate report and accounting. Different agencies budget and track transportation expenditures in different ways; it takes a hand-walked effort by each entity involved (except DOT&PF) to collect the funding information C&PTAB presents in this report. Other entities with equally relevant information, either because they are not on the C&PTAB or, as in the tribes' case, are managed by many separate entities, makes securing that collective information significantly more challenging, if even possible.
- Specific Quantity of Riders and Rides:
The state shares a similar problem tracking the numbers of riders and rides across systems. There is no electronic system in any agency to effectively provide such tracking, and even the DOT&PF's tracking is dependent on grantees' reports. Furthermore, FTA guidelines require different duration of tracking for different funded programs. Labor, Medicaid, and the variety of programs within DHSS track different kinds of data in different kinds of ways. None of the data talks well to the other, very much complicating the state's ability for accurate collective and comprehensive reporting.

Data We Do Have

The following table identifies that funding information the C&PTAB has been able to collect about state, federal and local agencies and private entities that administer or support community and public transportation services. C&PTAB recognizes it is not comprehensive, that in some cases agencies are reporting different fiscal years, and that it is possible that there can be some duplication among numbers, and that funding agencies share responsibilities and clients. C&PTAB proposes, however, that the numbers are at least reflective of the current funding picture.

What it also depicts is how reporting even a few data elements in a consistent manner across agencies can provide meaningful information that will help agencies and policy-makers make informed decisions and ultimately be able to quantify potential efficiencies generated by coordination.



The Solution

Recognizing the desire to specifically not increase providers' administrative burden, and acknowledging the reporting requirements of different federal funding programs to which state agencies may be accountable, C&PTAB asserts implementation of the Interagency Coordination Recommendation and the shared Methodology for Calculating Costs provide the means to consistent, meaningful data.

2017 Body of Work

The C&PTAB's 2017 body of work rests on the groundwork laid in previous years respective to the following efforts:

- Spread the use of a consistent methodology for calculating cost per ride among public transit and human service agencies
- Develop strategies to increase numbers of accessible taxicabs
- Identify opportunities for coordinating human service and public transportation with tribes

Ultimately, C&PTAB maintains its focus on bringing the Interagency Coordination Recommendation to fruition. C&PTAB recognizes implementation of this Recommendation is the catalyst to meaningful, tangible, measurable coordination on the ground.

ⁱ State of Alaska Governor's Coordinated Transportation Task Force Administrative Order 254 Report: February 24, 2012. P.19 & Attachment C Needs Assessment. <http://www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/cptab/docs/CTTFfinalreport022412.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.ktuu.com/content/news/Alaskas-senior-population-projected-to-boom-creating-thousands-of-health-care-jobs-398745671.html>. For a close analysis of changes in the population, and particularly the growth in the senior population, go to: <http://laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/jun14art1.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Letter from Patricia Branson on behalf of the C&PTAB to Jon Sherwood, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services. December 1, 2016.

^{iv} Alaska Community and Public Transportation Advisory Board. Moving our People, Stimulating our Economy: Accessible Taxis in Alaska. Updated January 12, 2016.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} IBI. Accessible Taxi Feasibility Study. Draft Final Report. October 2016. P. 1.