



# Lower Savannah Council of Governments, Aiken, SC

## **Mobility Services for All Americans: Update**

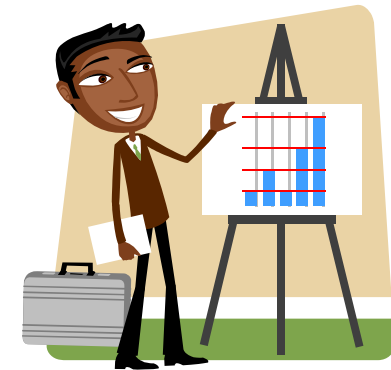
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# Lower Savannah Council of Governments Is The Region's....

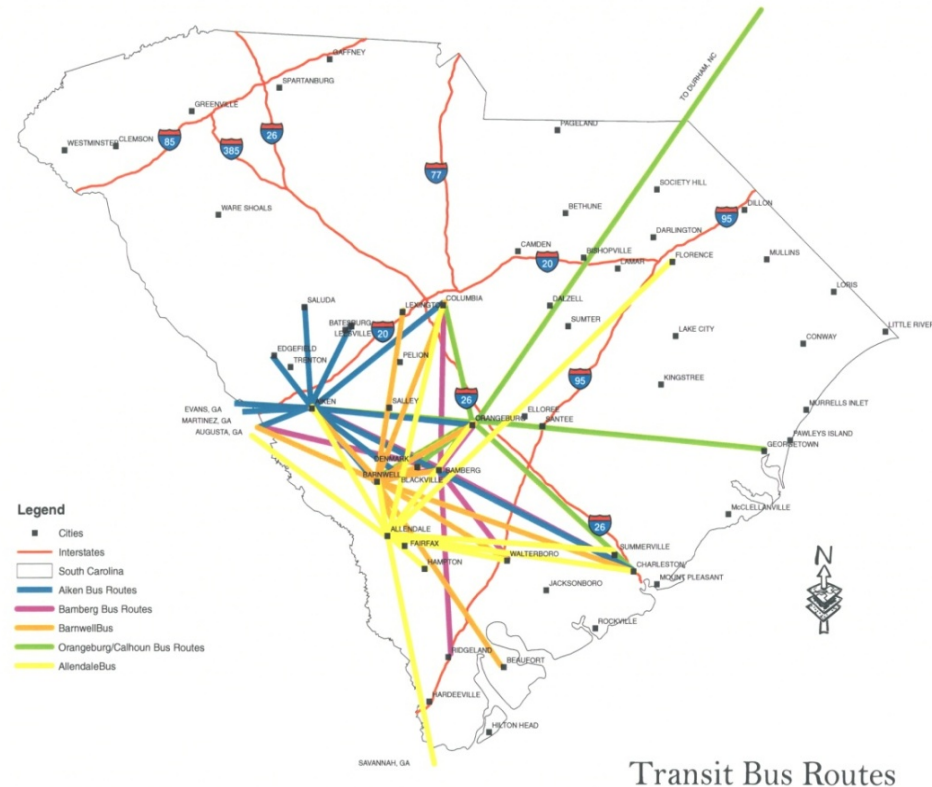


- Planning and Development Organization
  - Area Agency on Aging
  - Aging and Disability Resource Center
  - Regional Transportation Management Association, (RTMA), responsible for coordination and administration of FTA transit funds and programs
  - SCDOT-designated lead coordination agency
  - Workforce investment act lead agency
  - Highway and transportation planning agency
- 
- We are rural and have higher than average rates of poverty, disability and unemployment.



# Working Together to Change Our System!

- Transit providers want our help to coordinate!
- The public needs one place to call for help to find rides
- We have a renewed sense of urgency and excitement about our shared vision –we “get it”; we can do it and we’re looking ahead!

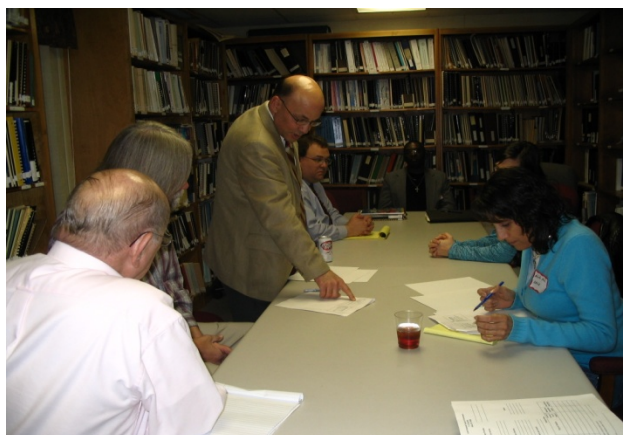


# Travel Management Coordination Center: (TMCC) – What Will It Do?



- Our TMCC will offer **mobility management** services -
  - helping *consumers* find transportation
  - becoming the regional coordination center for a network of *providers* of health, human service, public and private transportation
- New **technology** will enable better service and meeting critical local needs:
  - New telephony, web-based access, interactive voice response, automated vehicle location, mobile data terminals in vehicles, fare management, updated routing, scheduling and dispatch software and other technology will *enable new operational practices*
- There will be **new roles**, more and **better service and options**
- **TMCC will be a new model for operating transit and serving consumers!**

# Lower Savannah TMCC Stakeholders



# Stakeholder Needs Identified



## Consumer Needs

- Consumer focused information, assistance and advocacy available from **one source**
- Ability to reach a “live” agent for assistance, when needed; appropriately-used IVR
- Not being required to make 3-5-day-advance reservations for all trips
- Expansion of transportation service hours, destinations and options throughout the region
- Increased payment options when riding

## Health/Human Service Agency Needs

- Assistance to find transportation options for their clients to expedite service or care provision
- Education on how to assess for need and to use available transportation
- A mobility manager’s individual assistance with difficult case scenarios
- Assistance from ADRC information, referral and assistance staff on behalf of unmet needs of clients – the more at one stop, the better!

# Stakeholder Needs Identified

## Transportation Provider Needs

- Leadership to develop more opportunities for diversifying services/business
- Leadership to help providers to work together to meet consumer needs instead of competing against each other
- Acquisition of and assistance with the technology needed to bring about improvements in
  - Data collection
  - Reservations & scheduling
  - Fare Management
  - Trip Verification
  - Eligibility Determination
  - Vehicle tracking
  - System management
  - Communications and service for passengers
  - Reporting
  - Billing



# Stakeholder Needs identified

## Transportation Provider Needs

Leadership from the TMCC to provide all partnering transit agencies the benefits of

- Marketing
- Customer service standards
- Driver training
- Standardized safety guidelines
- Training and guidance for using new technology
- Fleet maintenance
- Regional drug & alcohol testing pool
- TMCC advocacy to attract additional transportation programs and funding streams to the region
- TMCC leadership in planning, grant management and monitoring



# Stakeholder Needs Identified

## Other Needs

- **Funding sources** want:
  - a successful transportation coordination model that is scalable/ replicable in other parts of the state region, or country
  - the TMCC to help provide accurate, consistent reporting data from the entire region
- **Organizations** around the state and the country are eager for information on our progress in developing local coordinated public transit systems, and in the development of the TMCC and are asking us to share information
- **Government** (**all** levels) looks to the Lower Savannah COG/TMCC to lead the way to greater efficiency and effectiveness in operations and improvement and enhancement of services to local citizens

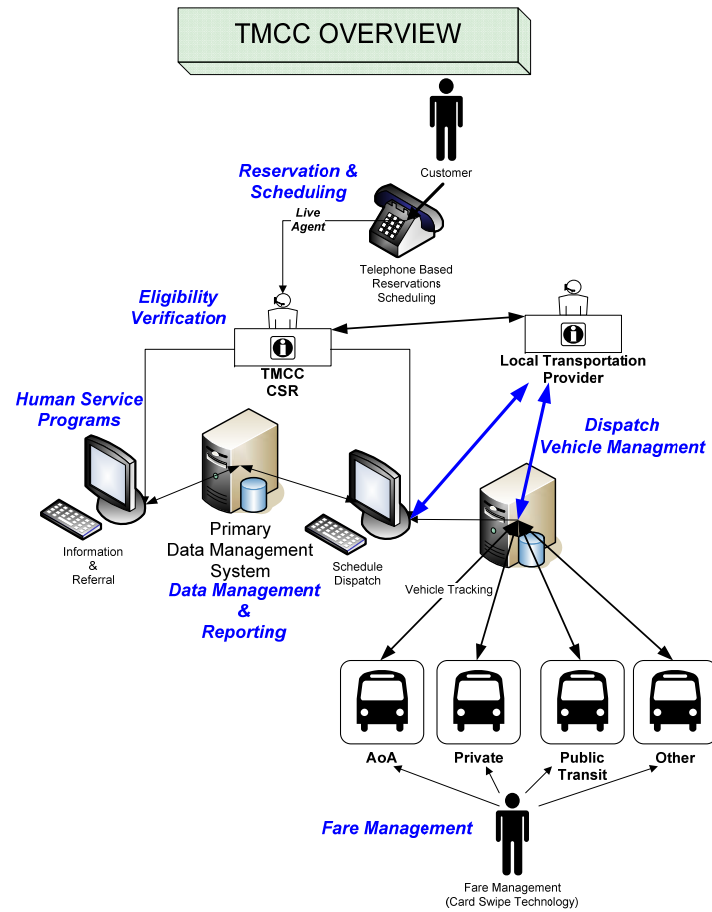


# Stakeholder Participation Approach

- LSCOG has worked with many organizations for years.
- New stakeholders were invited to the table as new players came into the picture (i.e. new Medicaid brokerage).
- LSCOG Board is a majority of elected officials, who are in the communications loop on this project.
- LSCOG hosted regional coordination plan public input meetings conducted focus groups, and held stakeholder input meetings regularly throughout the planning process; this input was most helpful.
- No stakeholders “dropped out” but some new ones joined in – happily the state Medicaid agency and the new Medicaid broker were among these!
- It is good to have both executive and operations level perspectives.
- Stakeholder involvement leads to a stronger design.



# TMCC System Components: Diagram



# What Will Be New? Centralized Mobility Management and Coordination Using Technology!

- Integrated Reporting & Data Management
  - Applied in transportation services and information & referral
- Regional Telephone System
  - IVR, voice recording, performance monitoring, reverse calling, language assistance, flexibility in where phones are answered
- Automated Vehicle Tracking and Electronic Data Communication
  - AVL / MDC – great scheduling and management tools!
- Regional Operations
  - Shared staffing, technologies, standards, policies and procedures
  - coordination of out-of-area trips; new service offerings; more responsive customer service
- Automated Billing and Payment Verification Process
  - Fare determination, collection, billing & reconciliation
- Full Range of Options for Consumer Info and Assistance



# TMCC System Concepts



## Addressing Stakeholder Needs

- Now identifying system requirements from the stakeholder needs and operational concepts developed previously. **Every** need listed is being considered . Two examples follow:
  1. **Consumer Need: Consumer focused information, assistance and advocacy available from **one** source**
    - Local phone #s and regional # ring into the TMCC
    - Interactive Voice Response (IVR) enables customers reach the right person to help.
    - The SC Access website will contain transportation info and link to on-line reservation capability
    - Callers with other IR&A needs receive assistance at the same number.

# TMCC System Concepts

- For complex problems, mobility management staff will assist caller individually to determine needs and find options
- If needed, mobility manager will arrange a ride, research options, and negotiate with possible resources or follow up on complaints or problems
- Using routing and dispatching software and vehicle location and mobile data terminal technology ,the TMCC can schedule rides in real time



# TMCC System Concepts



## 2. **Provider Need: Coordination for out-of-county trip requests**

- Six passengers from three neighboring counties have medical appointments in Augusta, Ga. on same day. The TMCC takes the calls for trips.
- It's not efficient for three small provider agencies in three neighboring counties to send vans with two passengers each to Augusta (current practice).
- Using scheduling and dispatching software, the TMCC can assign all six passengers on one provider's vehicle, saving two vehicles from making the trip nearly empty. TMCC will develop protocol for fairly assigning trips.
- Will-call trips and referral trips to secondary destinations can now be worked in to existing capacity using AVL and MDT equipment on board vehicles.
- Reporting features of the software will assure that billing and reporting for the passengers from the other two counties is handled in accordance with agreed-upon procedures.

# Trips Affected



- The core providers of transportation now involved in the Lower Savannah Regional Transportation Management Association (RTMA) are providing about **400,000 passenger trips annually**.
- This does not include currently un-coordinated trips made by other human service programs
- An expected outcome of the operation of the TMCC will be to increase the number of trips made through the coordinated network!
- SCDOT projects in their just-released Statewide Long Range Multi-modal Transportation Plan, that **there will be a need for 1.5 million passenger trips in the region by 2010** – a significant gap between current service and actual need!



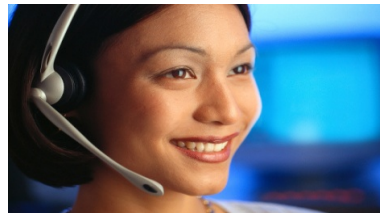
# Everyone Benefits!



- A purpose for the TMCC is to expand options to meet transportation needs of not only older adults, people with disabilities and low-income people, but of the general public as well! Beneficial outcomes will include:
  - More transportation options + better service = more riders getting needs met
  - Healthier bottom line for transit providers means they can do more in their communities
  - More opportunities for independent living and employment; peace of mind for older adults and families
  - Better community infrastructure, health and quality of life; better communities
  - Better use of tax dollars and resources
  - Model for replication in other areas – why re-invent the wheel? Other areas are working to do similar projects and contacting us for information and help.
  - Better operations and service will help to change negative perceptions of public transportation, especially in rural areas, resulting in more ridership and more public support
  - Better service will attract choice riders and favorably impact environmental issues

# Operational Scenario # 1: Mr. Carlos

- Mr. Carlos calls the number, which rings into the TMCC
- Mr. Carlos selects among options and is routed to the multi-lingual representative, via Interactive Voice Response (IVR), who helps him plan his trip
- During the conversation, he will have the opportunity to communicate other transportation needs, problems or questions; if need exists, he will have the opportunity to learn about other programs or special service for which he might be eligible and to pursue eligibility determination
- The TMCC can give or send him information, help him find additional resources, or offer him the opportunity to access the reservation and scheduling process through the web in the future, if he prefers
- If a need becomes apparent for other information, he will be transferred to the ADRC.
- There will be a QA follow-up to see if Mr. C. received the help he needed.



## Scenario #2: Medicaid Brokerage

- The TMCC could submit a proposal to become the regional broker, or
- The TMCC could represent and lead the provider network in transitioning to a new broker from outside the region, minimizing service disruption to consumers and assisting both brokers and providers in the transition.
- TMCC leads a strong, efficient provider network, linked by coordination, communications structure and other technology.
- TMCC is familiar with the area, operations, political landscape, service expectations and has solid relationships with both the state Medicaid agency and the state Department of Transportation.

# Scenario #2 : Medicaid ( 2)

- TMCC Strengths

- **Technology infrastructure in place** (includes phone system, coordination, routing and scheduling software, vehicle location, mobile data terminals on vehicles, automated billing, reporting and payment process in place, quality management survey lace and complaint tracking protocols in place.
- 24 hour accessibility
- Visibility into coordinating provider network from TMCC
- Contracts in place with private on-demand providers
- Contracts in place with volunteer drivers
- Readily available case managers to work directly with Medicaid agency staff and local medical providers
- Over 5 years of transportation and human service program coordination
- Training, monitoring, safety, drug testing programs in place with providers
- One number to call for all transportation programs; ability to coordinate trips to similar destinations across funding sources

# Scenario #3: The Lower Savannah TMCC, using technology .....

- Helps consumers to find transportation, advocates when needed and helps health and service agencies to find transportation for clientele
- Takes reservations, gives information and schedules all types of trips
- Tracks service, fares and payment, billing and reimbursements as needed by local provider network
- Coordinates trips among providers, sharing seats, and blending funding sources
- Plans and coordinates funds distribution, marketing, maintenance, training, consumer education, technology acquisition and use for regional transportation
- Allows each element /entity to focus on doing what it does best, promotes interagency cooperation and meets needs of both consumers and providers of services, all through one number and one place to call!

# Moments of Sharing



- Our most pleasant surprises:
- 1) How much we liked and learned from each of the visitors to our location – MSAA evaluators, TA liaisons, etc.
- 2) How much we learned that is helpful to the design process from adding a Mobility Manager to our staff during the spring of this past year – the consumer’s perspective of the transportation network and how to access it is very different from the providers’ perspective!

# Moments of Sharing



- The most satisfactory moment:
- During our December 13, design team meeting to work on system requirements with our core transportation providers and the Medicaid office, we had an epiphany! In discussing the possibilities of a strong regional provider network and the specifics of how technology can address current challenges and shortcomings, providers GOT IT! One of the most cautious, was moved nearly to tears and made a strong statement of excitement and commitment to the TMCC concept and to changing the way her agency operates; others picked up the ball, took ownership and began expanding on the benefits of changes to be made possible and how the TMCC and the regional provider network concept will benefit them and their constituencies. It was a most positive and pivotal event at a critical time in the design process!

# Moments of Sharing



- The most difficult challenge you have encountered
- The timing of the implementation of a new Medicaid brokerage system ( May 1, 2007) which caused incredible disruption among our stakeholders and core transportation providers, and raised questions about their future operations and customary protocols for operations. It also caused a setback for shared seat transportation operations in several of our counties and made it more difficult to coordinate out-of-county Medical trips. That disruption is beginning to settle down, but it made our planning process more difficult, as it diverted stakeholder focus from our original vision for a time!

# One Wish... other than...



- That Congress, FTA, SCDOT and human service agencies (at all levels) would all truly get on the same page to actively support the implementation of the TMCC and regional mobility management and to remove obstacles to full implementation of it. Don't leave us out because we're rural! Embrace technology and the need for it and help us to get what we need. Walk the talk, let go of strings on funding and control, be flexible, give up turfism and care about the greater good, along with individual constituencies!



# Experience is a good teacher...

- Some things that have worked for us...
- Ask the hard questions along the way; involve stakeholders; communicate and keep a positive vision on the horizon.
- Try to incorporate diverse perspectives in your design process for a stronger end product.
- Share your vision with others and help others when you can even if you don't have all the answers.
- THANKS!

