

Presentation by:  
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Getting Inner City Workers to Suburban Jobs  
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Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to present the Lancaster experience with providing access to jobs for this workshop of the Pennsylvania Planning Association's 2005 Annual Conference. My name is James J. Lutz and I am the executive director of the Red Rose Transit Authority located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Red Rose Transit is a small urban transit system operating 46 fixed route buses and 42 paratransit buses to serve over 2.3 million customers each year. We have been fortunate for a small system to provide an array of services not always found in areas our size. Sunday bus service and night services have been available for much of our nearly 30-year history. Yet, for many years we struggled with finding the means to provide work trip services for second and third work shifts and weekend work shifts. It is these shifts that are often the starting point to a better job and a better way of life for the unemployed, the underemployed and those moving from welfare to work.

This all began to change in 1997 when the new Access to Jobs / Reverse Commute program was first proposed. RRTA began meeting with local business groups, employment agencies and others in advance to develop a program to eliminate the weakest link in our system. It became clear in these meetings that our situation called for a door-to-door service to provide access to work sites at the times buses did not operate. In most cases our bus service was able to meet an employee's needs at the 3:30 p.m. start of work for the second shift as well as take an employee home at 7:00 a.m. for the completion of the third shift. But we were unable to take them to or from work at the 11:00 p.m. shift change. The Access to Jobs program had the promise to change that for the first time in our first 25 years of service.

RRTA was fortunate to be one of four systems in Pennsylvania to receive an Access to Jobs grant in the initial year of federal funding. We received \$100,000 in federal support towards our \$200,000 budget. Our County Commissioners provided \$22,000 and the

Pennsylvania Department of transportation provided the remaining local match of \$78,000. Our new late night door-to-door service was unveiled at the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Fall Job Fair on September 29, 1999. It was an immediate hit; in fact, we would call it a home run.

Requests for the new service exceeded our expectations. Within three months we registered our 100<sup>th</sup> customer and were providing over 300 trips each week. At the end of our first year, we provided over 17,000 trips and were poised for continued growth. At the end of our second year, we doubled the number of trips provided to more than 35,000 and continue to show modest growth. We have just begun our sixth year of service program and have budgeted \$480,000 to provide nearly 40,000 trips.

Most of our Access to Jobs service is provided in the metropolitan region, an area within a six-mile radius of Lancaster city. Friendly Transportation, a local transportation company providing taxi and van services, provides the service for \$12.40 per trip. RRTA adds a 16 percent administrative/reservation surcharge to this resulting in a total cost of \$14.38 per trip. Customers pay \$1.90 while the Access to Jobs grants provide the balance of the trip cost.

Most Access to Jobs trips are provided between 6:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. as shown on the attached Weekday Access to Jobs chart. The largest percentage of trips occur at the 11:00 p.m. shift change. However, we find many individuals are starting or ending their work at all hours of the evening and early morning.

Although we do have Sunday bus services, not all areas of the metropolitan region are served. As a result, the need for Access to Jobs transportation can be seen throughout the day as shown on the attached Sunday Access to Jobs chart. The early morning and late evening hours when bus service is not available, however, continue to comprise the largest percentage of trips on Sunday.

It is also important to understand why door-to-door service rather than expanded bus service works in our situation. Many of our customers are traveling from diverse origins to diverse destinations. They are also traveling at different times of the night. It would not be economically feasible to provide regular bus services to all of the needed locations for the times required.

RRTA also provides Access to Jobs service outside of the metropolitan region. This is in the form of van services to employment centers located beyond the six miles radius of Lancaster

city. The cost of the service to RRTA is \$35.00 per hour with a two-hour minimum charge. The customers pay \$2.35 per one-way trip.

County van services have been provided with only limited success. They have generally been associated with temporary employment needs to the employment centers served. In past years van service has been provided to the northeast part of the county to support employee needs to a wholesale food distribution company, to the eastern part of the county in the Route 23 corridor and to QVC, which is located in west-central Lancaster county, but outside the six-mile radius for the metropolitan area service.

Recently, RRTA has begun to provide van service to the northeast area of the county to serve a local marketing fulfillment company, which is in the process of consolidating work locations. This company provides jobs to a number of inner city residents who currently travel by bus to work. Bus service is not currently available to the new location. Use of the van service will allow us the opportunity to determine if sufficient demand exists to add additional fixed route service to the area. The long distance and travel time of over one hour to the location may make it impractical to provide fixed route service, unless express services are possible.

The success of the Access to Jobs program in Lancaster does not come without some significant challenges for the future. The last four years of the program have been funded at 50 percent through federal Access to Jobs funding and 50 percent through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Welfare to Work /TANF funds. The Pennsylvania funds are no longer available forcing RRTA to eventually shift other local and state resources to maintain the program. Sufficient funds have been set aside to cover the cost of the program for the next two years. Beyond that, RRTA may be forced to consider eliminating the program due to a lack of funds to match uncertain federal grants or charging the full cost of service to the customer. A \$14.38 one-way trip cost will be extremely difficult to pay for someone who may be earning less than \$10.00 per hour.

Thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the Red Rose Transit Authority's Access to Jobs program. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.