

# Final Report

## Paratransit Coordination Study



**Kane County**



**Kane County  
Division of Transportation**

***MULTISYSTEMS***

January 10, 2003

**Coordination Strategies for Kane  
County Paratransit Services**

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## Introduction

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This project was undertaken to learn about the paratransit needs in Kane County and to develop recommended approaches to coordinate the existing services to best meet those needs.

To identify these issues, qualitative and quantitative analysis was conducted. Discussions with key stakeholders, a focus group meeting with users, and discussions with providers took place. This helped us learn about the issues and perceptions of paratransit service in Kane County today. A detailed survey of providers was conducted and analyzed. This helped us understand the magnitude and availability of service provided in the County. This provided us with a strong foundation to identify the gaps in service today and to identify potential solutions to make improvements in paratransit service.

As the project progressed, several issues became clear. These were the issues that fundamentally guided the recommendations of the project.

- The current paratransit providers do a good job of providing service to those who are traveling at certain hours and between certain places.
- Work trips for people with disabilities are the least well-served trips. Many typical work locations are not served by paratransit and the hours of service are often too short to allow the return work trip.
- The issue of the boundaries of the different systems continues to be a problem. This is particularly acute in the Aurora and Elgin areas, where other counties are adjacent.
- There is not a good understanding of the paratransit services that are available currently. This lack of understanding was noticeable both with consumers as well as with agencies.
- There appears to be some capacity in the system to provide additional trips if certain levels of coordination between the various systems can be established.
- Paratransit should be considered in any transit planning activities in which the County is involved. The existence of fixed route transit service in some of the underserved corridors could substantially alter the paratransit needs because it would expand the service area and service hours for ADA paratransit.

This report is structured as follows:

**Project Recommendations** – a summary of the overall findings of the project and highlights of the recommended approach are presented.

**Project Approach and Summary of Findings** – summary level information on the approach to the project and the key findings of tasks is presented.

During the course of the project, two detailed technical deliverables were developed. Extensive detail on all the project activities are included in those reports. A Technical Memorandum, *Existing Conditions*, contains information on demographics of Kane County, an overview and analysis of current paratransit services, summaries of the stakeholder interviews and the user focus group meeting, and a discussion of the potential

for coordination of transportation services. Profiles of all surveyed paratransit providers are also included. The other Technical Memorandum, *Recommended Coordination Strategies*, presents detailed strategies for coordination representing a wide range of level of coordination. It also details the costs and ridership impacts of these strategies and discusses potential funding sources. These Technical Memoranda are available from the Kane County Division of Transportation staff.

## **Project Recommendations**

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A range of alternative strategies for pursuing paratransit coordination in Kane County were developed. The recommendations represent a range – or a continuum – of options. In effect, the range represents a “blueprint” of potential coordination efforts that could be implemented over time.

The range of recommended alternatives includes the following:

- Establishment of a Kane County Paratransit Coordinating Council
- Development of a Coordinated Marketing Program
- Implementation of a User-Side Taxi Subsidy Program
- Eastern Kane Regional Dial-A-Ride Service

The table on the following page provides a summary of the recommended coordination strategies.

	Coordination Strategies					
	Kane County Paratransit Coordinating Council	Coordinated Marketing Program	Eastern Kane County Dial-A-Ride Service			User-side Taxi Subsidy Program
			Consolidated Dial-A-Ride Service	Uniform Dial-A-Ride Service and Operating Policies	Provision of ADA Trips by Dial-A-Ride Operators	
<b>Main Features</b>	Representatives of key organizations meeting to share information, expand awareness of transportation issues, and identify opportunities for better coordination.	Coordination by Kane County Division of Transportation or committee; Transportation Guide describing services; maps/schedule highlighting connections	Operation of eastern Kane County Dial-A-Ride service by current provider or Pace/contractor; combined fleets and centralized scheduling; inter-community travel; feeder service to fixed routes	Acceptance of eligible Dial-A-Ride customers on all Dial-A-Ride services; transfers between services for inter-community trips; reimbursement between providers	Combination of local trips for ADA customers with those of Dial-A-Ride customers; reimbursement by Pace to Dial-A-Rides; continued provision of long-distance ADA trips by Pace contractor	Use of taxi service for peak periods and currently unserved hours/areas; selection of subsidy level, service policies by agency/municipal sponsors
Difficulty of implementation:	Low	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Impact on agencies (current purchasers)			Medium	Medium	Low	High
Impact on current operators			High	Medium	Medium	Low
Start-up costs	Low	Low	Medium (reservations/scheduling software)	Low	Low	Medium
Lead time required for start up	Low	Low	High	Low	Medium	High
Ongoing operational costs	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Improvement in level of service available	None directly, but will increase success of other strategies	None	High	Medium	Low	High
Improvement in quality of service available	None directly, but will increase success of other strategies	Improvement in ease of use	High	Medium	Medium	Medium to High
Potential for unit cost savings	None directly, but will increase success of other strategies	NA	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Ability to address current/future unmet paratransit needs	None directly, but will increase success of other strategies	NA	Medium	Low	Low	High

A basic description of each of these recommendations follows.

### **Establishment of a Kane County Paratransit Coordinating Council**

This recommendation is considered to be an essential element of moving forward to implement any of the paratransit coordination strategies. This project has been guided by a Steering Committee composed of selected stakeholder representatives. An important byproduct of Steering Committee involvement has been greater recognition and greater understanding of the various paratransit programs in Kane County among the committee members. This group should be expanded to include a broader spectrum of stakeholders and prospective sponsors of a coordinated paratransit system. The new group should continue to meet in order to share information, expand awareness of transportation issues, and identify opportunities for better coordination and operation of paratransit service.

The participants in this working group, which might be called the Kane County Paratransit Coordinating Council (KCPCC), will determine the specific mission, goals, projects and activities that the council will pursue, which might include one or more of the following:

- Providing a forum for identifying best practices among paratransit providers both within and outside of Kane County, and developing strategies to emulate them
- Encouraging human service agencies and transportation providers to learn about each others' transportation needs, issues and services, and to develop relationships that can lead to solutions
- Overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of this and future transportation studies
- Communicating with local elected officials and transportation decision-makers on behalf of the regional paratransit community
- Obtaining and sharing consumer input on existing and prospective paratransit services
- Serving as an advisory group for the development of county-wide transportation outreach/education and marketing campaigns
- Providing advice and establishing general policy for a user-side subsidy taxi program and/or a coordinated regional paratransit system

The KCPCC could be an informal or a more formal organization. At one end of the continuum, the KCPCC could operate with informal channels of communication among agencies. Support could be provided by the Transportation Division or various county agencies, as needed. At the other end of the continuum is the creation of a consortium, coalition, or some sort of more formal entity.

At the outset, a formal KCPCC would need to adopt a mission statement and bylaws governing such issues as membership criteria and responsibilities, officers and their responsibilities, meetings, voting, and "standing" and "ad hoc" committees. In terms of membership, the KCPCC could be open to all representatives from organizations that provide or are interested in providing paratransit service in Kane County for their clients, constituents or customers.

The DuPage County (IL) Inter-Agency Paratransit Coordinating Council (IAPCC) is an excellent example of how a similar study's Policy and Technical Advisory Committees were combined into a formal body to implement a paratransit coordination effort. The DuPage IAPCC has bylaws and officers, and the county assists by hosting the meetings, preparing the minutes, completing mailings and providing other administrative support.

The KCPCC will require an ongoing time commitment from the participants. There will be minor administrative costs associated with establishing and maintaining the council. These costs will need to be borne by the participants unless Kane County or another entity agrees to underwrite these administrative costs. Membership dues and other member contributions may be necessary and could range from very nominal to more significant amounts, depending on the level of in-kind services offered by the members and on the type of work program that the consortium wishes to adopt.

Establishment of a KCPCC offers several benefits to the providers and sponsors of paratransit services in Kane County. The basic goal of this strategy is to ensure that the Steering Committee continues to share experiences and best practices, and to work together to implement other coordination strategies after this project has been completed. Further, a KCPCC would improve communication between transportation coordinators and local decision-makers, and between providers and paratransit users. While a more formal KCPCC structure may result in a greater commitment of time and effort among its members, the more stable the organization, the greater the likelihood of coordination efforts being implemented.

### **Development of a Coordinated Marketing Program**

The development of a county-wide transportation marketing program would inform current and potential riders (and human service agency personnel) about the fixed route and paratransit services that are available to them and make the services easier to understand and use. Increasing the visibility of public transportation services within local communities would also help to encourage funding support.

The approach to marketing should be coordinated among the various providers either by the county or by a committee established for that purpose. Pace and RTA would be other valuable partners in county-wide marketing activities.

The campaign could include the following elements:

- *Development of a name, symbol and color scheme to identify services and providers as part of a more coordinated transit/paratransit network.* The separate transit and paratransit services that are currently provided in Kane County would present a more unified image within the communities that are served if a uniform name, symbol and color scheme were adopted among providers. While vehicles and public information materials could still identify the municipality or other sponsor of a particular service, the Kane County name and logo would also be displayed, raising awareness of the county's public transportation services among members of the general public and local decision-makers. Vehicles could display the county name and logo by means of decals or magnetic signs.



- *Maps and schedules that highlight connections between services.* Building on the sub-regional maps that Pace produces for Kane County, the county and/or other transportation providers should include information about other services on their public information materials. Connections between services should be highlighted. This information should be accessible from the internet, possibly the County's web site.
- *Development of a Transportation Guide that describes services and how to use them.* A widely distributed Transportation Guide, providing information not only about the availability of fixed route and paratransit services, but also about service and operating policies, and ways to access the services, would encourage use of the existing services by those with travel needs.
- *Preparation of a year-long calendar of marketing activities and promotions.* Possible activities include: transit fairs, or transportation booths at local job fairs or college orientation sessions; bus/van service to special events (Kane County Fair, holiday parades and celebrations, major sporting events, and music or drama festivals); special joint promotions between transportation providers and local businesses; art, slogan, or essay contests held in cooperation with elementary or middle schools
- *Public information/awareness campaign.* Build public support for public transportation by increasing awareness of how public transportation improves quality of life by providing opportunity, freedom, mobility and access for all citizens; increase appreciation for public transportation's contributions to communities; recognize elected officials who have been supportive of public transportation initiatives; reach out and involve local groups and individuals that have a vital interest in public transportation's local, state and federal legislative goals; and communicate the importance of investment in public transportation.

A number of samples and resources for these activities are provided in the technical memorandum developed during the project.

### **Implementation of a User-Side Taxi Subsidy Program**

There were several areas identified through the study where the lack of service affects paratransit users' ability to get to work locations.

- Service in developing sections of the county such as Montgomery and the Randall Road corridor, and in the area to the west of Randall Road
- Service between Kane County communities and locations in DuPage and Cook Counties such as Naperville and Schaumburg
- Service during evening hours and on weekends in all communities, and service beyond mid-afternoon in some areas

Creating a user-side subsidy taxi program in eastern Kane County – where the customer receives a subsidy for transportation, and the provider is paid the market rate for the trip – would be a relatively quick and easy way to address these service gaps. In the short term, a taxi program would not involve changes to existing paratransit services. Over time, however, some agencies that now operate transportation services for clients because there

is no alternative may find it more economical and less time-consuming to use the taxi program to meet all of their clients' transportation needs.

The taxi subsidy program would be overseen by an advisory council composed of representatives of both sponsor agencies and service providers. This group would likely be a subset of the KCPCC. The role of the advisory council would be to establish goals and objectives for the program, set uniform fare and pricing policies, determine system-wide service standards (for onboard travel time and on-time performance, for example), and provide guidance to the program administrator concerning operation of the program and desired modifications or enhancements.

One entity, possibly the Kane County Division of Transportation, would function as the program administrator. Municipalities and/or agencies that would like to make services available to residents or clients would make coupons (or other fare media, such as vouchers, or "smart cards" embedded with computer chips for identifying passengers and debiting fares) available to eligible recipients. While the value of the fare media should be uniform, sponsors could establish the level of subsidy they wish to provide per trip and per customer. Customers would purchase taxi trips with the coupons (perhaps adding cash to the value of the coupons, depending upon program regulations), and the sponsors would reimburse taxi providers (through the program administrator) for the face value of the redeemed coupons, or at the meter rate for the trip.

Initially, each sponsor would determine the service and operating policies that would best suit the needs of its customers: service area, days and hours of service, trip purposes, trip distance, level of assistance, limits on number or distance of trips, and so on. Over time, as patterns become apparent in the characteristics of trips for which customers are using the service, uniform service and operating policies might be adopted by the advisory council. Other sponsor responsibilities would include informing clients or customers about the taxi subsidy program and how to use it, monitoring clients' use of the service and enforcing program regulations, and processing payments to the program administrator or to service providers.

### **Eastern Kane County Regional Dial-A-Ride Service**

The analysis of existing paratransit services resulted in findings that indicate the potential for increased service efficiencies and improved mobility through integration of existing local Dial-A-Ride services into a larger, regional operation. For example, multiple service providers – public bodies and human service agencies -- currently transport similar rider groups in Elgin, the Tri-cities area, and Aurora. Similarly, Pace provides paratransit service to ADA-eligible individuals in the same communities in which municipal Dial-A-Ride programs serve seniors and persons with disabilities. Integration of the local Dial-A-Ride operations in eastern Kane County into one larger regional system would increase the effectiveness of Dial-A-Ride service by combining vehicle fleets and centralizing scheduling, and also address the need for inter-community travel. A regional Dial-A-Ride service could also be used to provide local collector and distributor services to deliver riders to and from fixed route bus stops and rail stations, thereby encouraging greater use of those systems.

However, implementation of a regional Dial-A-Ride system, and the inclusion of some or all ADA trips, is likely to be challenging. At present, there does not seem to be a strong interest in either expansion of services or coordination on the part of some providers, and providers do not always agree with users and stakeholders about the extent of unmet transportation needs. Moreover, municipal providers may be committed to the direct provision of paratransit services for their residents, and reluctant to relinquish control over those services.

We recommend phasing several actions that would provide many of the advantages of regional integration, as well as the opportunity for providers to develop cooperative relationships, without the need for structural changes. These strategies are: 1) the adoption of uniform, or more consistent, operating and service policies among Dial-A-Ride providers; 2) the provision of local trips for ADA-eligible customers by Dial-A-Ride providers rather than by Pace and its ADA service contractor and 3) pilot project implementation of an integrated service among adjacent providers.

### **Adoption of Uniform Dial-A-Ride Operating and Service Policies**

Currently, each paratransit service sets their own parameters for operation. Characteristics such as service hours, days of operation, advance notice requirement, eligibility requirements and fare policy are all set individually, but if providers adopted consistent policies and procedures and arranged passenger transfers between services, better use could be made of the services, and more travel options would be available for customers. Cooperative agreements and reconciliation of the expenses between the operators would need to be provided for. The effect would be similar to an integrated regional Dial-A-Ride system, but would be less disruptive for operators.

In order for transfers between services to work effectively, *service hours* should be uniform. A suggested span of service is 8:00 AM until 6:00 PM for all customers, subscription and non-subscription. This would require a slight increase in service hours on the part of some operations.

*Advance notice requirements* should also be consistent across programs. The Aurora Township service currently requires 48 hours, as does the St. Charles/Geneva service when a customer uses a wheelchair. Reducing these requirements from 48 to 24 hours would result in a uniform policy.

*Eligibility requirements* vary greatly among the current programs. Rather than standardizing eligibility, it is recommended that each provider accept the eligible customers of the other programs. This would allow customers to transfer between systems, but would not take the ability to establish locally acceptable eligibility criteria away from the municipal sponsors.

Local programs would be able to retain their current *fare policy* for local trips, but would need to agree on a uniform fare for trips involving transfers between one or more systems. A simple approach would be to establish a fare for each zone traveled, with each Dial-A-Ride provider's service area comprising a zone. A one-way fare of \$1.00 or \$1.25 per zone would be consistent with most of the local fares currently charged by the municipal programs.

### **Dial-A-Ride Service for ADA Customers**

This approach recommends increasing the coordination between the local dial-a-ride services and the Pace ADA paratransit program. To the extent feasible, provision of local ADA trips by Dial-A-Ride operators, rather than by Pace's ADA contractor is likely to yield some efficiencies. The Pace contractor would continue to provide long-distance trips. This approach would provide many of the advantages of integrating the services, without the need for structural change.

To some extent, this is taking place by virtue of the cost of each type of service to the customer. The local Dial-A-Ride services charge a lower fare than the Pace ADA service, creating an incentive to use the local service. A more formalized mechanism for shifting ADA trips to the local Dial-A-Ride providers, and providing reimbursement, is recommended.

Since this strategy would essentially result in a transfer of Pace funding from the ADA contractor to Dial-A-Ride operators, there would be no effect on net costs to Pace. In other words, Pace would not be subsidizing additional Dial-A-Ride trips.

Since there is another year left in Pace's current contract with Laidlaw/Car Enterprises, the earliest this coordination of service could take place would be 2004.

### **Integrated Dial-A-Ride Service Pilot Project**

The integration of the separate municipal Dial-A-Ride programs and Pace ADA paratransit service into one regional paratransit system for Kane County would offer the most significant benefits to both providers and customers, but would face the greatest implementation challenges.

Creating one or more pilot projects to test the integration of services, identify issues, and showcase cooperation between agencies would be an excellent way to show action in the early stages of developing a more fully realized coordination system, and to familiarize potential partners with the benefits of coordination. Once coordinated service in the pilot area is successfully running, the tested approach could be applied in other areas.

The site for the first pilot project should be an area where there is local interest in coordination. Several paratransit operators expressed an interest in considering this approach. There is clearly a need for the Division of Transportation to play a leadership role in future coordination efforts, by facilitating implementation of a pilot project as well as by encouraging local interest and providing information and technical assistance.

A detailed assessment of the results of a pilot project should be made to determine the economic and customer impact of such a change. Should it be successful, further implementation would be encouraged.

### **Recommended County Role in Implementation**

Through discussions with the Project Steering Committee, attention was focused on potential paths to implementation. It was determined that the essential first step was the establishment of the Kane County Paratransit Coordinating Council. This body would be

representative of the paratransit providers and would work collaboratively to implement coordination strategies.

Clearly, key players in the Coordinating Council must be those who are operating or funding services. At this time, the County is not providing funds for paratransit services. The County, however, is encouraged to play a leadership role in establishing the Coordinating Council. Additionally, the County may want to consider providing incentive or pilot project funding to encourage implementation of some of the coordination strategies. A high level of benefit can accrue from even the most basic of the recommendations being implemented, yet the leadership of some group will be required in order to begin the process of coming together to jointly address these issues.

### Summary of Costs and Potential Funding Sources

The following table summarizes the estimated costs (or a description of anticipated expenses) for each of the recommended coordination strategies.

<b>Coordination Strategy</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
<b><i>Paratransit Coordinating Council</i></b>	Short-term	Staff time of Division of Transportation and council members
<b><i>County-wide Transportation Marketing Campaign</i></b>		
Development of campaign	Short-term	\$20,000, or assistance from local college students
Vehicle signs	Short-term	\$1,200 - \$4,500
Transportation Guide	Short-term	\$21,000 plus
Public awareness campaign	Short-term	Staff time, minor printing costs
<b><i>Taxi Subsidy Program</i></b>		
Start-up and implementation	Medium-term	\$41,000
Ongoing administration	Long-term	\$75,500 Year 1 to \$111,600 Year 3
Trip subsidies	Long-term	Dependent on sponsor policies
<b><i>Eastern Kane Regional Dial-A-Ride Service</i></b>		
Consistent Dial-A-Ride Service Policies		
<i>Days/hours of service</i>	Short to Medium-term	Varies by DAR system -- \$24,000 to \$51,750 per year
<i>Transfers</i>	Short to Medium-term	Varies by DAR system -- \$30,750 to \$124,000 per year
Dial-A-Ride service for local ADA trips	Short to Medium-term	Annual net savings to Pace -- \$75,650 to \$136,200
Dial-A-Ride integration pilot project	Medium-term	Technical assistance grant (50% county, 50% local match) -- \$50,000

Possible sources of the funding needed to implement the recommended coordination strategies are identified below.

*Paratransit Coordinating Council.* The expenses associated with the establishment of a county-wide coordination advisory group would consist of personnel costs for the entity that provides support to the group (the Division of Transportation, for example) and those organizations that participate as members of the council. Since the time commitments should be minimal, it is expected that participating agencies could absorb those costs into their normal operating budgets.

*County-wide Transportation Marketing Campaign.* If local college students are involved in the development of a coordinated transportation marketing program for the county, rather than a professional marketing consultant, expenses will be minimal. Many ideas and sample materials for a public awareness campaign are available free of charge from APTA and other organizations. RTA and Pace may also be potential partners in the development of such a campaign, since they may currently be involved in similar efforts. As a number of transportation providers that responded to the provider survey indicated at least possible interest in participating in a coordinated marketing program, they may be a source of contributions toward the elements of the program that will involve the outlay of funds, such as the Transportation Guide and vehicle signs. Pace, local business organizations, and regional news publications may be willing to donate funds and/or resources to the development, printing and distribution of the Transportation Guide.

*Taxi Subsidy Program.* Once a subsidized taxi program becomes fully operational, more agency sponsors join the program, and the number of trips provided increase, operating and administrative costs should be covered by sponsor contributions. The goal would be to deliver service in such a manner that each sponsor would pay only a nominal fee (10% of the value of a trip coupon or ticket, for example), over and above its desired level of subsidy for trips, to cover administrative expenses. However, in order to fully plan and implement the program, and to support the program until it grows enough to become self-supporting, additional funding will be necessary. Potential sources of start-up funding might include Kane County, sponsor agencies, and organizations that support client groups that are expected to benefit from the new transportation services offered the by the program. For example, the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities contributes to projects designed to increase access to transportation services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Sponsor agencies may be able to identify other organizations that provide similar support for other client groups.

Potential sources of federal funding include the Federal Transit Administration's Job Access and Reverse Commute program and the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program. Federal funding may also be available through IDOT's Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program after the re-authorization of the federal transit funding programs in 2003-2004.

*Adoption of Consistent Dial-A-Ride Service and Operating Policies.* As with the current Dial-A-Ride programs, Pace and the local municipalities would need to provide funding to cover the cost of additional days and hours of service and inter-community trips for Dial-A-Ride customers.

*Provision of Local ADA Trips by Dial-A-Ride Operators.* This strategy would involve the transfer of Pace funding for local trips taken by ADA customers from the current ADA service contractor to the municipal Dial-A-Ride programs. It is expected that such a change in service delivery would result in a savings for Pace, rather than an additional expense.

*Integrated Dial-A-Ride Service Pilot Project.* It is recommended that the Division of Transportation encourage a local test of the integration of Dial-A-Ride services by sponsoring a technical assistance grant for 50% of the cost of a pilot project, up to a maximum project cost of \$50,000. The participating municipalities and transportation providers would be responsible for providing the required match, up to \$25,000. Federal transportation planning funds, matched by county dollars, might be available to Kane County through NIPC.

## **Project Approach and Summary of Findings**

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The remainder of this report provides an overview of the activities and finding that went into the development of the recommendations just discussed. The approach taken in this project is summarized as follows:

**Assessment of Existing Conditions** - including a demographic analysis, stakeholder interviews, interviews with users

**Inventory of Current Paratransit Providers** – through surveys and in-person interviews to understand the full range of the issues facing current providers and learn about their interest in coordination efforts

**Identification of Gaps in Existing Service** – geographic and temporal areas where current paratransit is not adequately serving the needs of current or potential users

**Development of Coordination Strategies** – a fairly wide range, or continuum, of strategies to enhance coordination of paratransit services was formulated. Detail on the implementation requirements of each strategy, in terms of both cooperation and resources, was developed.

The remainder of this section provides a high-level summary of the project approach and a summary of the findings. Two detailed technical memoranda, *Existing Conditions* and *Recommended Coordination Strategies* were developed during the course of the project and are available from the Kane County Division of Transportation.

### **Assessment of Existing Conditions**

#### **Approach**

Developing a solid foundation – with a detailed knowledge of the current conditions and services that are in place – is crucial to developing recommendations for future changes that are sound and are able to be implemented.

A full understanding of the existing conditions was gathered through quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis reviewed existing data on demographics, including the location and size of potential transit/paratransit user groups. The demographic analysis helps highlight where some of the greatest need for services might be.

Qualitative evaluation of the existing conditions included one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders – or decision leaders. These interviews were useful for learning about the broader context in which implementation decisions will be made. Paratransit users provided input to the development of recommendations through a focus group format.

#### **Key Findings**

*Demographic analysis* of population density, elderly population, mobility limited population, auto access, household income and the density of households and



employment was conducted. These demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Kane County communities were compared with the service areas of current paratransit providers. One key finding is that fixed route transit – and hence ADA paratransit service – has not kept pace with the development in Kane County. There are key corridors where no transit or paratransit service is available.

*Stakeholder interviews* were conducted with people representing a range of perspectives. Through the stakeholder discussions, there was a general sense on the part of providers that there are many needs for transportation and for the most part social service agencies or the existing services are filling many of those needs. It was also apparent that there is not a solid understanding of what services are available today and how to use them.

The biggest issues in terms of service gaps were related to the newly developing areas (west of Randall Road, South Elgin, the south and western areas of Aurora). One of the big problems with these areas is that there is generally no transit service available, and therefore there is no ADA paratransit service. In the Aurora area, much of the rapid growth is to the south of Aurora in Kendall County, which is not part of the RTA service area, and therefore is highly unlikely to receive services from Pace (which are funded by the RTA sales tax). To some extent, the Elgin area experiences service coordination issues because of the multiple counties adjacent to the north and west; however all of those areas are located in the transit region where Pace is involved in funding services.

Stakeholders involved in delivering services to people with disabilities in general were interested in seeing an expansion in the service hours. People were interested in reasonably basic service to support pre-planned travel needs to jobs, shopping, and medical facilities. Access to jobs is seen as one of the biggest needs in Kane County.

*Paratransit users* participated in a focus group to discuss paratransit issues. The participants represented a range of disabilities, parts of the county and perspectives. The key findings of this focus group are summarized below.

- The current system of paratransit serves some areas and types of trips well, while other locations or trip types are unserved.
- Accurate information about paratransit options is hard to obtain.
- The ability to access jobs, once a person with disabilities leaves the school system, is limited.
- Reliable options, even at a lower level of subsidy than that of paratransit that is provided by transit agencies (i.e., service that would be more expensive to the user than public paratransit service), is desired.
- The lack of a transportation link limits the ability of people with disabilities to live independently.
- Significant issues with the borders of different paratransit providers frustrate many users. This is particularly acute for work trips.
- Some service quality concerns with paratransit service providers were raised.
- Focus group participants believe that current services could be provided more efficiently.

- Many ideas for utilizing resources in the community were identified.

### **Inventory of Current Paratransit Providers**

To develop a full understanding of the paratransit services that are in place today, a detailed survey of transportation providers was conducted. A total of 16 providers participated in the survey. Information from this survey was used for several purposes:

- Develop a current inventory of specialized transportation services in Kane County
- Identify service gaps and overlaps
- Obtain information about unmet transportation needs from organizations that provide transportation service or assist clients with transportation issues

### **Approach**

A list of providers was developed with the assistance of the Kane County Division of Transportation and the Association for Individual Development. (A number of those providers participated in the paratransit brainstorming session conducted in September 2001 as part of Phase I of this project.) Organizations operating large transportation programs or purchasing significant numbers of trips were interviewed on-site during the week of May 20, 2002. A questionnaire was sent to providers in advance of the interviews to guide the discussions. Other providers submitted written responses to the same questionnaire.

### **Summary of Findings**

The Appendix to this report includes two tables that summarize the characteristics of paratransit service currently available in Kane County and present detail on each of the providers. Key findings are summarized below.

*A significant amount of paratransit service is currently provided in the county.* Information supplied by the 16 organizations interviewed indicate that at least \$1 million is spent annually to operate or purchase approximately 178,000 one-way passenger trips for elderly or disabled residents of Kane County. Some providers were unable to report ridership and/or expense data. Expenditures and the number of trips provided annually in Kane County likely exceed the estimates noted here by some amount.

*Eligibility requirements vary.* There are publicly provided services (townships, Pace) where meeting a particular eligibility criteria is what provides access to the service - and privately provided services (Association for Individual Development and others) where access to the service is a function of being a client of the agency.

*Paratransit service areas* are concentrated in the more populated eastern section of the county. When the service areas of each of the providers are overlaid on a map, a complex patchwork of services can be seen. There are also geographic gaps where services may not be available at all. This is especially notable in the western portion of the county.

Most providers serve an area with a defined radius around one municipality (a township, village or city), or several municipalities. Multiple providers operate in Elgin, the Tri-cities area, and Aurora – often serving different groups of people. Several providers make service available throughout Kane County and beyond, in order to accommodate the origins and/or the destinations of their clients, patients or residents.

*Operating hours* for nearly all of the transportation services in Kane County are weekdays during normal business hours. Services begin between 7:00 and 9:00 AM, and end between 4:00 and 6:00 PM. The exceptions are Pace’s ADA service, which mirrors the hours of operation of fixed bus routes, which run as early as 5:30 AM and as late as 7:00 PM and on Saturdays in some areas, and the seven-day service provided by the Association for Individual Development (AID) and the Elgin Mental Health Center (EMHC) for their clients.

*Annual trips* totalling 177,903 (one-way) are provided by all surveyed operators. The Association for Individual Development provides nearly 84,000 trips annually, the largest number of any provider.

*Financial data* available from the providers surveyed was limited, as is often the case in surveys like this. Providers reported a variety of sources of *operating funds*, including:

- Township and/or municipal tax revenues
- Pace grants
- Grants from state human service agencies such as the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Offices of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities of the Illinois Department of Human Services
- General organization operating funds
- Participant fees

*Capital funding* is provided by Pace, grants from state human service agencies, township tax revenues, private foundations, Illinois Fund for Infrastructure, Roads, Schools and Transit (Illinois FIRIST), and special fund-raising activities.

*Formal coordination* between providers in Kane County is limited. There are some cases of informal coordination occurring. The informal coordination happens when one provider of paratransit services is under contract to several different sponsors of paratransit service to deliver that service. Several agencies use Elgin Dial-A-Ride for client transportation, for example. To the extent that Elgin Dial-A-Ride is able to group trips for clients of different agencies, efficiency is improved.

Some aspects of Dial-A-Ride operation are coordinated through Pace, which offers a centralized source of driver training and technical assistance for providers.

Another example of coordination that occasionally occurs between providers is the facilitation of passenger transfers between the service of the Aurora Township Dial-A-Ride and the Batavia Township Dial-A-Ride vehicle, and between Aurora Dial-A-Ride and the services available in Naperville Township. In other circumstances, customers are responsible for making their own arrangements to transfer between services -- to make an

ADA trip that begins in Kane County and ends in DuPage County or Chicago, for example.

Virtually all of the agencies that were interviewed or responded to the survey expressed an interest in future service coordination. Over half of the organizations that rated potential coordination strategies expressed interest, or possible interest in these possible approaches to improving coordination:

- Coordinating activities such as procurement, training, vehicle maintenance or public information with other providers
- Consolidating the operation of transportation services with other entities
- Consolidating the purchase, or contracting, of transportation services with other entities
- Participating in a county-wide transportation marketing program

Providing feeder service to allow passengers to make connections with fixed route bus or train service, and coordinating schedules and vehicle operations with other providers to facilitate passenger transfers were of interest to just under one-half of the responding providers.

## **Identification of Gaps in Existing Service**

### **Approach**

By combining the results of the inventory of providers and the qualitative information from the stakeholder interviews and the user focus group meeting, patterns emerged that indicated specific gaps in paratransit service in Kane County.

### **Key Findings**

- There is a gap between what transit and paratransit services are available and what people are aware of.
- There are areas of the County without any paratransit services, especially the six townships in the southwest part of the County.
- Where paratransit services are available, the hours are often too short or there is not enough service to be able to get a ride when needed.
- County and municipal borders defining services are not always consistent with the travel needs of County residents.

*Times* where gaps in service have been identified were most strongly associated with transportation options for work trips. They include:

- Evenings (beyond 4:00 or 5:00 PM)
- Weekends

- Additional service between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. would benefit seniors, individuals with developmental disabilities, and those participating in park district programs and activities

*Trip purposes* where needs have been identified for service include:

- Service to and from day programs, work, churches, shopping, medical facilities and recreational activities for individuals with developmental disabilities
- Medical trips from nursing home to doctors' offices
- Medical and shopping trips for seniors, including wheelchair-accessible service
- Non-emergency dialysis trips
- Evening trips to group meetings, doctors' appointments, therapy sessions, other activities for individuals with mental illness

*Geographic areas* where there is a need for additional service were also identified. In many cases, providing paratransit options in these areas will require coordination with other areas outside of Kane County. The areas identified include:

- Randall Road, Montgomery, Oswego, Yorkville, Dundee, Carpentersville, Algonquin, West Kane County, mid-valley (Tri-Cities) to Aurora and Elgin, Fox Valley Mall and stores on Rte. 59, to and from West Chicago
- Tri-cities to Naperville to Oswego
- From Oswego and Sugar Grove into Aurora Township; expanded Naperville Township service
- Service from Countryside Care Centre to shops and doctors' offices within 2-3 mile radius (especially at Mercy and Copley campus)
- Northern Kane County and western Cook County
- Tri-City and Streamwood areas
- Fox Valley area, Geneva, Batavia, St. Charles
- Naperville
- Between Sherman Hospital in Elgin and areas in St. Charles and Hoffman Estates
- Crystal Lake Metra station and Woodfield Mall, from Algonquin

## **Development of Coordination Strategies**

### **Approach**

Based on all of the information gathered earlier in the project, a set of potential coordination strategies was formulated. These strategies represent a fairly wide range, or continuum, of coordination options. Detail on the on the implementation requirements of each strategy, in terms of both cooperation and resources, was developed.

Many different entities are currently providing paratransit service in Kane County. Some are providing transportation services to enhance the mobility of the population. Others have a primary mission of a social services nature, but have found it necessary to operate (or purchase) transportation services in order to provide access to their programs and services for clients.

Several characteristics are needed for a successful coordinated transportation system. Besides interest on the part of the agencies and organizations that might participate in coordination strategies, potential financial benefits (or the potential for providing more trips for the resources that are invested in transportation), and a high enough number of trips to make a coordinated system financially viable and attractive to participants, there should be a strong network of potential service providers available to the system.

To determine the coordination strategies that would best meet the needs of both providers and customers, there are several additional factors to consider:

- *Service overlaps.* Where, and in what ways, do current services overlap with one another? Do providers cover the same service areas? Operate during the same days and hours? Carry similar types of riders? Are there opportunities to reduce duplicative administrative costs?
- *Unused capacity.* Are current vehicle fleets and drivers fully utilized? Could unused capacity be matched to unmet needs or service gaps to broaden the range of service that is available?
- *Service costs.* Are any providers incurring very high unit costs? Are there opportunities for increasing the use of lower-cost providers, or improving service productivity, to achieve cost reductions?
- *Potential use of fixed route service.* Are there travel needs that could be effectively met by use of existing fixed routes, rather than by more expensive paratransit services?

### **Key Findings**

After a review of the demographic characteristics of Kane County communities, existing transportation services, and comments from stakeholders and paratransit users, several alternative strategies for improving coordination among the county's paratransit services were developed. They include:

- Establishment of a paratransit coordinating council
- County-wide transportation marketing campaign
- User-side taxi subsidy program
- Eastern Kane County Dial-A-Ride service

Several of the alternatives would be beneficial to paratransit providers and users regardless of whether more comprehensive coordination strategies move forward. The creation of a paratransit coordinating council and development of a county-wide marketing program are in this category. A joint user-side subsidy taxi program, while

involving coordination among participating program sponsors, could be implemented without changes to the other paratransit services that are now available in the county.

The remaining strategies involve coordination among Dial-A-Ride services, and between Dial-A-Ride and ADA paratransit services, that would require changes to the way in which those services are delivered. While these strategies would provide more opportunities for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of paratransit service in the county, their implementation would be more complex, challenging, and time-consuming than that of the three strategies previously mentioned.

Detail on these recommendations have been presented in the Project Recommendations section of this report. Additional detail can be obtained from the Technical Memorandum *Recommended Coordination Strategies*.

## **Appendix**

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The following tables display Kane County Transportation Service Information collected through the provider survey.



**Table 1: Public and Private Transportation Service Availability in Kane County**

Community	Provider/Service	Trip Purposes	ADA	Seniors	Persons with Disabilities	Other	General Public	Agency Clients/ Facility Residents Only
<b>Algonquin</b>	Village of Algonquin (5-mile radius for medical trips)	No restrictions		○			✓	
<b>Aurora</b>	AID (specific routes)	No restrictions			● ●			✓
	Aurora - Batavia Dial-A-Ride	No restrictions		○	○		✓	
	Countryside Care Centre	Recreation		● ●	● ●			✓
	Fox Valley Park District	Recreation		○	○		✓	
	Jennings Terrace, Inc. (and 20-mile radius)	Medical Recreation		✱	✱			✓
	Pace ADA (3/4 mile around fixed bus routes)	No restrictions	●				✓	
<b>Batavia</b>	AID (specific routes)	No restrictions			● ●			✓
	Aurora - Batavia Dial-A-Ride	No restrictions		○	○		✓	
	The Holmstad	Medical Recreation Shopping		○	○			✓
	Pace ADA (3/4 mile around fixed bus routes)	No restrictions	●				✓	
<b>Carpentersville</b>	Easter Seals	Pre-school Recreation Social service			○			✓
	Sherman Health Systems	Medical				○ *		✓
<b>Dundee</b>	AID (specific routes)	No restrictions			● ●			✓
	Dundee Township Park District	No restrictions		○	○		✓	
	Easter Seals	Pre-school Recreation Social service			○			✓
	Sherman Health Systems	Medical				○ *		✓

**Table 1: Public and Private Transportation Service Availability in Kane County**

Community	Provider/Service	Trip Purposes	ADA	Seniors	Persons with Disabilities	Other	General Public	Agency Clients/ Facility Residents Only
Elgin	AID (specific routes)	No restrictions			● ●			✓
	Easter Seals	Pre-school Recreation Social service			○			✓
	Ecker Center for Mental Health	No restrictions			×			✓
	Elgin Dial-A-Ride	No restrictions		×	×		✓	
	Pace ADA (3/4 mile around fixed bus routes)	No restrictions	●				✓	
	Sherman Health Systems	Medical				○ *		✓
Geneva	The Holmstad	Medical Recreation Shopping		○	○			✓
	Pace ADA (3/4 mile around fixed bus routes)	No restrictions	●				✓	
	St. Charles - Geneva Dial-A-Ride	No restrictions		○			✓	
St. Charles	St. Charles - Geneva Dial-A-Ride	No restrictions		○			✓	
	Pace ADA (3/4 mile around fixed bus routes)	No restrictions	●				✓	
Eastern Kane County	Aurora Manor Nursing Home	Medical		● ●	● ●			✓
	Elgin Mental Health Center	No restrictions				○ **		
	Provena Pine View Care Center	Medical			NR			✓
Northwestern Kane County	Northwest Kane Dial-A-Van	No restrictions				× ***		

\* Income-eligible patients

\*\* Patients

\*\*\* General public

○	Weekday service only
●	Monday through Saturday

● ●	Monday through Sunday
	Evening service (after 6:00 p.m.)
×	Partial weekday service only

**Table 2  
Kane County Transportation Service Information**

Service Provider	Type of Service	Service Area	Eligibility	Trip Purposes	Level/Span of Service	One Way Fare	Annual Transportation Operating Budget	Annual Pass. Trips	Fleet Size	Vehicle Accessibility
Association for Individual Development	Fixed route/ fixed schedule service between residences and day programs; staff also transports clients for other types of trips	Dundee to Elgin; Yorkville to Aurora; Batavia to Batavia and Aurora; Elgin to Aurora; Aurora to Elgin to West Chicago	Agency clients only	No restrictions	M-F 7 am - 6 pm Sat 8 am - 10 pm Sun 8 am - 6 pm	Vanpool route - \$45/month Janitorial program - \$.85 to \$1.75/day, depending on distance	\$162,440	83,360	17 vans 14 minivans 3 station wagons	5 vans
Aurora Manor Nursing Home	Arrange medivan services that transport residents to medical appointments	Most of Kane County and Naperville	Residents only	Health/medical	As needed	None	NR	NR	NA	NA
Aurora-Batavia Township Dial A-Ride	Demand response	Aurora -- up to 3 miles beyond township boundaries	Aurora -- Township residents with a disability or over age 60	No restrictions	M-F 7 am - 6 pm	Aurora -- \$.75 within township \$1.50 if pick-up or destination is outside of township	\$389,300	33,083	7 Pace minibuses 1 Pace van	7 minibuses
Countryside Care Centre	Agency vehicle operated by program staff	Aurora city limits	Agency clients - seniors, usually over age 65	Recreation	As needed	None	No transportation budget - program staff use agency vehicle	500	1 van	1 van
Dundee Township Park District	Agency vehicle operated by transportation staff  Pace vanpool service	6-mile radius of Dundee Township -- Carpentersville, Dundeas, Algonquin, Lake in the Hills, parts of Hoffman Estates	Dundee Township taxing body residents -- seniors, persons with disabilities, assistants	No restrictions	M - F 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	Fixed reduced fares for seniors and persons with disabilities; higher rate for others; children under 7 free	\$150,000	8,200	1 van 1 minibus	1 minibus
Easter Seals Jayne Shover Center	Agency vehicles operated by transportation staff	Carpentersville, Elgin, South Elgin, Dundee, Bartlett, Streamwood, Hanover Park, Wayne	Agency clients -- children with disabilities, parents	Pre-school Recreation Social service	M - F 9:00 am - 5:00 pm	\$7.50 plus \$.52/mile	NR	NR	3 vans	3 vans
Ecker Center for Mental Health	Purchased fixed route, fixed schedule service  Agency vehicles operated by program staff	Catchment area -- Kane and western Cook Counties  Transportation provided in Elgin only	Agency clients -- adults diagnosed with mental illness	Health/medical Recreation Education/training Employment Shopping Social service	M - Th 8:15 am - 3:15 pm	\$.25 donation requested for some recreational trips	Contracted service - \$4,500 Agency service - \$32,800	Contracted service - 1,152	2 vans	None
Elgin Township Dial-A-Ride	Demand response, operated by Pace River Division	Dial-A-Ride: City of Elgin Subscription service: Elgin and South Elgin	Seniors age 65 and over, persons with disabilities	NR	Dial-A-Ride: 9:00 am - 2:30 pm Subscription: 7:30 am - 9:00 am, 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	\$0.65	NR	28,546	3 15-passenger buses	NR

Service Provider	Type of Service	Service Area	Eligibility	Trip Purposes	Level/Span of Service	One Way Fare	Annual Transportation Operating Budget	Annual Pass. Trips	Fleet Size	Vehicle Accessibility
Elgin Mental Health Center	Agency vehicles operated by transportation staff	Northeastern Illinois	Patients currently under treatment at EMHC	Health/medical Recreation Education/training Shopping Social services Legal, forensic evaluations, and court Delivery of food and supplies on grounds	Daily 6:00 am - 4:00 pm	None	NR	NR	15 vans 1 bus	1 van
Fox Valley Park District	Agency vehicles operated by transportation staff	Between community center and activities	Depends on program -- seniors (over age 55), adults, children	Social/recreational	M - F 9:00 am - 4:00 pm	\$5 for local activities; \$10 for trips	NR	NR	4 vans 1 bus 1 minibus	1 minibus
The Holmstad	Agency vehicles operated by agency staff	Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles	Agency clients - facility residents	Health/medical Recreational Education/training Shopping	M - F, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm	Shopping trips -- no charge Medical trips \$5	NR	NR	1 minibus 1 van 3 sedans	1 van
Jennings Terrace, Inc.	Purchased service from Aurora Township Dial-A-Ride Agency vehicle operated by program staff	20-mile radius of Aurora	Agency clients -- facility residents and participants in Krug School outings	Health/medical Social Recreation Education/training	M - F 8:00 am - 2:00 pm	None	No budget at this time	180	1 van	None
Northwest Kane Dial-A-Van	Burlington, Hampshire and Plato Townships, to and from destinations in Elgin	General public	NR	One daily round trip M - F 7:00 am - 9:00 am and 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	\$2.00 full fare \$1.00 reduced fare	NR	2,479	1 van	NR	
Pace ADA Service - Kane County	ADA complementary paratransit service -- provided by contractor and Pace River Division	3/4 of a mile around Pace fixed bus routes (primarily in eastern Kane County)	Persons with disabilities who meet ADA eligibility requirements	No restrictions	Matches fixed bus routes in area -- generally M - F 5:30 am - 7:00 pm; Sat 6:00 am - 7:00 pm	\$2.50	\$627,775	23,828	8 minibuses	8 minibuses

Service Provider	Type of Service	Service Area	Eligibility	Trip Purposes	Level/Span of Service	One Way Fare	Annual Transportation Operating Budget	Annual Pass. Trips	Fleet Size	Vehicle Accessibility
Provena Pine View Care Center	Purchased service from private operators	No limits	Persons with disabilities	Health/medical	NR	NR	NR	NR	NA	NA
St. Charles/Geneva Dial-A-Ride	Demand response	St. Charles, St. Charles Township, Geneva, Geneva Township	Residents over age 62	No restrictions	M - F 8:15 am - 4:00 pm	\$1 within city, \$1.25 outside*	\$185,888	12,000	2 Pace minibuses	2 minibuses
Sherman Health Systems	Purchased service Pace VIP Van service Subsidized bus tickets/passes	Elgin, South Elgin, Carpentersville, Bartlette, Streamwood, Dundee, Sleepy Hollow, part of Hoffman Estates	Sherman facility patients unable to obtain or pay for transport	Health/medical Employment	M - F 6:00 am - 6:00 pm (Pace van to employee remote parking 6:00 - 8:30 am and 3:00 - 6:00 pm)	None	\$109,200	3,600	1 van	None
Village of Algonquin	Agency vehicle operated by transportation staff	Village of Algonquin and five-mile radius for medical trips; Village of Algonquin only for other trip types	Village of Algonquin residents over age 55	Health/medical Nutrition Social Recreation Education/training Shopping Social service Special events	M - F 8:30 am - 4:30 pm	Incorporated residents \$1; unincorporated residents \$2.00; \$.50 per stop	\$6,000	New service -- estimate 12,000 trips per year	1 minibus	1 minibus

NA Not applicable  
NR Unavailable; no response

\* Both fares are scheduled to increase by \$.50 beginning of June or July 2002