



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Transit
Administration



TAXICAB, LIMOUSINE &
PARATRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Engaging Private Transportation Operators in the Transportation Planning Process

Introduction

Guidebook for Private Transportation Operators

In 2011, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in partnership with the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA), issued a guidebook to assist private transportation operators with their participation in the transportation planning process. “Private Transportation Operators at the Table: A Guide to Participating in the Transportation Planning Process” provides a practical description of the process so that private transportation

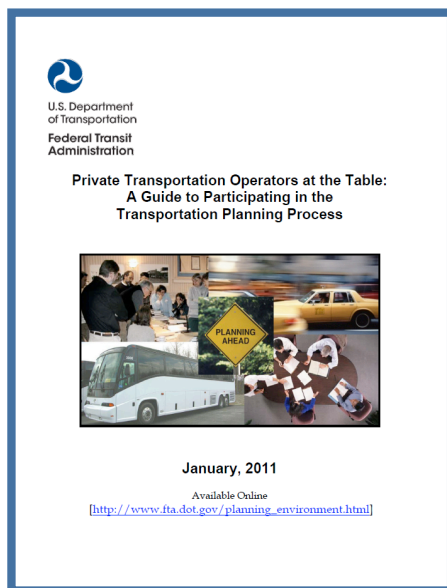
operators can better understand the potential benefits of being involved in the planning process and identify potential opportunities for involvement.

While private transportation operators are the primary audience for “Private Transportation Operators at the Table: A Guide to Participating in the Transportation Planning Process”, the guidebook may also be useful for transportation planning officials in their work with private industry.

This brochure is a companion piece to the guidebook, and serves as a reference tool to assist transportation planners with engaging and including private transportation operators in their local, regional, or statewide transportation planning activities.

Website for Private Enterprise Participation

FTA now offers a website dedicated to private enterprise participation in transit projects (see the “Resources” section later in this brochure for link). This website notes that state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and other agencies can gain valuable insight on customers’ needs and opportunities for



service improvements from locally-based private sector providers. These operators may be aware of mobility needs, and might recognize and be able to take advantage of strategic opportunities to serve those needs by having the equipment and staffing capabilities to serve selected customer markets at lower costs than public providers. Also, they may be able to assemble resources and deliver services more quickly than public providers. Overall, this coordination with the private sector can help build community resources and infrastructure to better meet mobility needs in your community.

Engaging private transportation operators in the planning process is not just a good idea, it's the law. Federal laws and regulations require FTA grantees to involve the private sector in the planning process and encourage private sector participation in delivering transportation service. Federal statutes and FTA regulations mandate that in the annual development of the proposed program of projects, private transportation providers must be consulted; they must be allowed to examine and comment on each project; and those comments must be considered especially when a public provider prepares a final program of projects.

This brochure is provided to help transportation planning agencies meet those requirements, and to go beyond the letter of the law – to fully engage private transportation operators in the transportation planning process and in

efforts to improve and expand mobility options in your community and state.

The Realities

Private transportation operators should play an important role in the transportation planning process by providing their expertise and offering their ideas and suggestions to a community's vision for mobility, but their participation around the country is at best, uneven. A variety of reasons contributes to this reality. For some private operators, the transportation planning processes may seem difficult to interpret. It may not be easy for private transportation providers to determine exactly where they fit in the process. In some cases, outreach by transportation planning agencies may not be sufficient to ensure private transportation operators are aware of meetings and activities. Private transportation operators may also not have staff hours to spare to attend meetings and may even be too busy operating service to provide comments in writing. In some cases, old stereotypes of private transportation operators may affect the way they are perceived even before they arrive at their first transportation planning meeting. These are just a few of the reasons private transportation operators are often not "at the table" during the planning process.

Engaging Private Transportation Operators

So what can transportation planners do to more fully engage private

transportation operators in the planning process? Here are some tips and ideas:

- **Revisit Current Outreach Efforts to Private Transportation Operators**
- **Highlight Opportunities through FTA Programs for Private Transportation Operators**
- **Provide Greater Opportunities through Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Funds**
- **Consider Subcommittees Geared Towards Private Transportation Operators**
- **Provide Easy-to-Use Information on the Transportation Planning Process**
- **Facilitate Relationships between Private Operators and Public Transit Agencies and Human Service Agencies**
- **Examine Stereotypes**
- **Value the Input from Private Transportation Operators**
- **Educate Private Transportation Operators on the Federal Compliance Requirements Associated with Participating in Federally-funded Projects**

Revisit Current Outreach Efforts to Private Transportation Operators

While public participation is a core component of the transportation planning process, the approach planning agencies take to fulfill this requirement can vary from community to community. Your agency may be required to conduct public outreach and facilitate public participation via an established Public Participation Plan (PPP), but it may be time to revisit this

plan to ensure it includes appropriate outreach to truly reach private transportation providers. One consideration is to include information in your PPP outlining how private transportation operators will be notified regarding upcoming meetings.

Another concept is for planning agencies to conduct a periodic “transportation provider census”, that is, for the gathering and cataloguing of quantitative, empirical and statistical information which can serve to describe existing private sector vehicle inventories, as well as physical plant information and technological capabilities. This exercise can also include the transportation assets belonging to non-profit agencies. In this era of mobility management, the most effective use of local resources is achieved only when all those resources are known.

Currently, many outreach efforts, including those involved in creating the FTA coordinated public-transit/human-services transportation plans (usually known as the Coordinated Plan,) wind up including the names of such private and non-profit entities, but not vehicle count, vehicle types, employee count, and vehicle routing and scheduling technology. If a public transit need emerges, and the inventory and expertise needed to meet that need was already present and available in that community, countless thousands of dollars and hours of planning could be saved by having this knowledge.

Highlight Opportunities in FTA Programs for Private Transportation Operators

Several FTA funding programs provide opportunities for private transportation involvement. In particular, the Section 5310, Section 5316 (JARC), and Section 5317 (New Freedom) Programs can serve as funding sources for expanding mobility options and supporting services that are especially appropriate for delivery by private transportation operators. These services include accessible taxi services, late night and weekend transportation services, same-day transportation services, and premium taxi services above and beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Section 5311(f) funding is another key opportunity for private operators to participate in meeting rural mobility needs. States are expected to consult with intercity bus operators and are required to use 15 percent of their Section 5311 Program (rural) funds to support rural intercity bus services unless they certify that rural intercity bus needs are met. Funding can support not only traditional intercity bus services but also feeder service using smaller vehicles to connect to the intercity bus network.

Often, private transportation providers are not familiar with these funding programs, or the opportunities that these programs present. Your local agency may serve as conduit to these programs, through appropriate education and outreach activities to private operators.

Provide Greater Opportunities through JARC and New Freedom Funds

Your agency may administer JARC and New Freedom Program funds, or lead efforts in the development of a coordinated plan that must identify potential projects for funding through these programs. As noted above, these programs offer excellent opportunities to improve mobility through services provided by private transportation operators. For example, Yellow Cab of Memphis was awarded eight accessible taxicabs through New Freedom Program funds administered locally. This opportunity was aided by Yellow Cab's participation on the Memphis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Citizen's Advisory Committee, and in the development of the MPO's "Memphis Area Coordinated Transportation Plan" that identified the need for wheelchair accessible taxis.

So, if your agency is involved in administering JARC and New Freedom Program funds or leading coordinated transportation planning efforts, it is in your best interest to:

- Engage your local private transportation operators in the planning process;
- Embrace their involvement in the planning process;
- Value their input into the coordinated transportation planning efforts;
- Ensure the JARC and New Freedom application process provides them with the opportunity to connect to these programs – and ultimately to

the provision of expanded mobility services.

Consider Subcommittees Geared Towards Private Transportation Operators

One possibility for engaging private transportation operators in the transportation planning process is to establish subcommittees relative to their interests and activities. For instance, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) in Washington, D.C. has both a Private Providers Task Force and a Regional Taxicab Regulators Task Force. The Regional Taxicab Regulators Task Force members represent the local, regional or state taxicab regulating agencies from TPB member jurisdictions. This task force encourages cooperation and information sharing between municipal and county taxicab regulators in the National Capital region and works to resolve common problems. The task force also explores the possibility of developing standards to improve the quality of service for taxicab customers in their respective jurisdictions. Within this broad framework, the task force specifically seeks to develop a regional reciprocity agreement, exchange ideas concerning the regulation of taxicabs, and coordinate efforts to strengthen the alliance between public and private interests. See the Resources Section for a link to more information on the TPB Website.

Provide Easy to Use Information on the Transportation Planning Process

While private transportation operators are transportation professionals, they

may find the various transportation planning processes that your agency deals with everyday difficult to interpret, and therefore often outside their interest. In addition, private transportation operators already have plenty on their plates, so getting involved and going to lots of meetings may not be high on the list – unless there are potential business development opportunities. The result is that often private transportation operators are not “at the table” during the planning process and therefore unable to form the partnerships with planning agencies, transit providers, human service agencies, and others that would allow them to connect with potential funding sources and expand transportation services and options in your community.

But through your public participation efforts, you can help private transportation operators (and others in your community) by ensuring that information on the planning process is easy to use. For example, the Hillsborough County MPO in the Tampa, FL area has developed an easy-to-use citizen’s guide to encourage all citizens in the county the opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process. “The Joy of Looking Ahead to 2035: Recipes for Transportation Planning Success” includes practical information on the MPO structure, the planning processes, and the opportunities for involvement. The guide includes a “grocery list” with information on how local residents, including private operators, can get involved in the transportation planning process.

Facilitate Relationships between Private Operators and Public Transit Agencies and Human Service Agencies

The transportation planning process that your agency leads may be a forum where private transportation operators can meet and network with public transit providers and human service agencies in need of transportation services. The Private Transportation Operators at the Table guidebook highlights the importance of “just showing up” at transportation planning meetings and events.

However, don't underestimate your potential role in facilitating these networking opportunities and working relationships. In many communities across the country the planning process is the forum where various providers connect. And you can help private transportation operators make connections that will ultimately help improve coordination between the various transportation providers in your community. To facilitate these relationships, you may need to restructure meetings and events and provide opportunities for transportation operators to discuss their services and for human service agencies to discuss their transportation needs. You'll also need to be aware of any past issues between participants that may hinder positive relationships, and be prepared to handle any situations that may arise.

Examine Stereotypes

In conjunction with encouraging these professional relationships, it may also be the appropriate time to examine any

stereotypes of private transportation operators – held either individually or by your agency. If your image of private transportation operators is one based on a fictional character from a television show or a movie, it may be time for you to interact with the owners and managers of private transportation companies in your community or visiting their dispatch and operations centers.

When examining your own stereotypes, you'll need to be aware that private transportation providers may have their own stereotypes regarding government or planning officials. Together, hopefully you can learn more about each other's priorities and interests to develop positive working relationships that, in the long run, will benefit your community through better transportation coordination and expanded mobility options.

Value the Input from Private Transportation Operators

Private transportation operators can provide useful and valuable input into the transportation planning process. Obviously, they bring firsthand knowledge of the local transportation environment and can offer important comments on potential long term improvements to the highway and transit networks.

Don't overlook private transportation operator's involvement into shorter term plans such as the design of future transportation facilities. For example, the design of intermodal terminals

should have the input of private transportation operators to help ensure transfer connections to taxis and others services are possible and efficient.

Educate Private Transportation Operators on the Federal Compliance Requirements Associated with Participating in Federally-funded Projects

While your agency knows well all the federal regulations that impact the transportation planning process and federal funding programs, private transportation operators (like most people in the general public) will not be nearly as knowledgeable. Private operators may be unaware of the competitive selection process required for funding projects through the New Freedom Program, or the federal certifications and assurances that are required of subrecipients. You'll need to educate them on the efforts your agency must consider to ensure compliance with federal requirements, and help them navigate the various regulations that may impact their company (particularly if they decide to apply or partner in the service delivery of federally funded services).

Provide the Guidebook to Private Transportation Operators

The "Private Transportation Operators at the Table" guidebook includes easy-to-use information on the transportation planning process and potential opportunities for private transportation providers. The guidebook can be helpful when engaging private operators, especially to help them develop a working knowledge of the

process, which can serve as the foundation for more involved interaction with your agency and local or statewide planning efforts. See the Resources Section for a link to download the guidebook.

Resources

- "Private Transportation Operators at the Table: A Guide to Participating in the Transportation Planning Process": http://www.fta.dot.gov/planning_environment.html
- Federal Transit Administration "Private Enterprise Participation in Planning and Service Delivery": http://www.fta.dot.gov/planning/programs/planning_environment_7013.html
- The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Washington, D.C. region: <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/committee/>
- Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization Citizen's Guide: http://www.hillsboroughmpo.org/aboutmpo/aboutmpo_folders/foldercitizensguide/

Continued Support

For more information and technical assistance for engaging private transportation operators in your local or statewide transportation planning processes, contact:

Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association
3200 Tower Oaks Boulevard
Suite 220
Rockville, MD 20852
<http://www.tlpa.org>
Phone: (301) 984-5700
Fax: (301) 984-5703
Email: info@tlpa.org

About TLPA

Established in 1917, the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA) is a non-profit trade association of and for the private passenger transportation industry. Membership spans the globe to include 1,100 taxicab companies, executive sedan and limousine services, airport shuttle fleets, non-emergency medical transportation companies, and paratransit services.

The TLPA mission is to provide our membership with a network of programs, services and support that will enhance their ability to effectively and profitably serve local public transportation needs. We are the leading information, education, and legislative resource in the passenger transportation industry serving our members by:

- Representing common federal legislative interests.
- Protecting and expanding industry rights and opportunities.
- Collecting, interpreting, and disseminating industry information.
- Providing forums for professional development and education.
- Advancing the image of the industry before the media and general public.

Acknowledgements

In October 2007, FTA entered into a cooperative agreement with TLPA to assist private for-hire vehicle operators in understanding and becoming involved in their local MPO and statewide planning processes – and in identifying the opportunities for business that may follow. Mr. Harold Morgan, Executive Vice President, managed this program for TLPA.

A key component of this technical assistance program was seminars to help equip private operators with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to more fully participate in these planning processes, to understand the benefits of getting involved, and ultimately to identify opportunities to tap into additional revenue opportunities and expand services. TLPA contracted with the KFH Group, Inc. and J.M. Rubino Transit Consulting to conduct 11 seminars. A manual from the seminars was the foundation for the guidebook and this document. The development of the seminars and guidebook was guided by a TLPA Technical Working Group (TWG). A full list of TWG members is included in the guidebook.