

Coordinated Public Transportation Human Service Transportation Plan for Southeastern North Carolina

NEW HANOVER COUNTY



Lead Agency:

CAPE FEAR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

(dba. WAVE TRANSIT)

December 2011

CONTENTS

History of Wave Transit	3
Mission Statement and Goals.....	4
Local Coordinated Plan	5
Planning Process.....	8
Current Available Services	9
Primary Transportation Needs of Local Organizations.....	10
Secondary Transportation Needs of Local Organizations ...	11
Strategies to Meet Current Gaps in Service Levels.....	12
Implementation Priorities	13
Resolution	14
Appendix A: Questionnaire- Human Service Providers	15
Appendix B: Questionnaire- Stakeholders	16
Appendix C: Invitation Letter.....	17
Appendix D: Future Cooperation	19

HISTORY OF WAVE TRANSIT

Created in 1974, the Wilmington Transit Authority (WTA) was initially implemented to provide public transportation to the citizens of the Wilmington area. In December 2002, the WTA adopted the name Wave, as well as a new logo and color scheme for the Authority. This change reflected a new vision for public transportation in Wilmington. Capitalizing on our coastal environment, the name "Wave" allowed greater name recognition throughout the area and positively represented public transportation throughout the region.

Rapid sprawl and rising traffic congestion throughout the region led the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County to enter into an historic agreement in June 2003. The city and county merged the WTA and New Hanover Transportation Services to form the Wilmington/New Hanover Transportation Agency (WNHTA). This agreement merged the respective organizations for one year, in order to provide oversight of both agencies under one public transportation authority. In July of 2004 the WNHTA, the WTA and NHTS were dissolved and a new transportation authority was created. The merged entity officially became the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority, but kept the name Wave Transit.

In an effort to better serve the community, Wave Transit has restructured all fixed routes in the region. The new routes are operated from a modern transfer facility, Forden Station, which is centrally located within the service area. Forden Station opened in May 2011 and is anticipating Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Certification. A new maintenance and administration facility is also nearing construction.

MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS

The mission of Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority (Wave Transit) is to develop and maintain an effective, efficient, and safe system of public transportation services within Southeastern North Carolina which is responsive to the mobility needs of the community. Transportation services provided shall be designed to maintain and encourage the use of public transportation and shall contribute to the economic vitality of the community, the conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment.

The goals of Wave Transit are as follows:

1. Provide cost effective transportation services which optimize the utilization of personnel, vehicles, and other resources and which are operated with a minimum of public subsidy.
2. Provide transportation services which meet the mobility needs of the community, within available financial resources.
3. Develop funding options which assure the continued stable operation of transportation services at a public subsidy level acceptable to the community.
4. Develop policies which assure, as much as possible, that transit services are designed and operated to encourage maximum utilization by the community. Service should be provided first in areas where the greatest potential for use exists.
5. Promote the use of public transportation services within the community. This includes both providing adequate and up-to-date information on services available and aggressively marketing the transit system.
6. Expand public transportation to new areas of the community as demand estimates and population densities indicate that service will be sufficiently utilized within established service standards.

The Goals of Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority will be reviewed and revised (as needed) during the budget development process. These goals and objectives will guide the development of capital and operating budgets, service planning, and operation of transit services.

LOCAL COORDINATED PLAN

Presidential Executive Order 13330 on the Coordination of Human Service Programs issued by the President on February 24, 2004, creates an interdepartmental Federal Council on Access and Mobility to undertake collective and individual departmental actions to reduce duplication among federally funded human service transportation services, increase the efficient delivery of such services and expand transportation access for older individuals, persons with disabilities, persons with low income, children and other disadvantaged populations within their own communities.

As a first principle to achieve these goals, federally assisted grantees involved in providing and funding human service transportation need to plan collaboratively to more comprehensively address the needs of the populations served by various federal programs. In their report to the President on the Human Service Transportation Coordination, members of the council recommended that "in order to effectively promote the development and delivery of coordinated transportation services, the Administration seek mechanisms (statutory, regulatory, or administrative) to require participation in a community transportation planning process for human service transportation programs."

In August 2005, the President signed legislation consistent with this recommendation to reauthorize federal public transportation and federal highway programs that contained provisions to establish a coordinated human services transportation planning process. This legislation, the Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), created a requirement that a locally developed, coordinated public transit/ human service planning process and an initial plan be developed by 2007 as a condition of receiving funding for certain programs directed at meeting the needs of older individuals, persons with disabilities and low-income persons. The plan must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation providers and public, private and non-profit human service providers and participation by the public.

Coordination of public/private transit and human service transportation is vital in stretching transportation dollars and maximizing services for persons with disabilities, older adults and individuals with low incomes.

Effective in 2008, the Federal Transit Administration required a coordinated plan of local transit services in order to apply for funds from the Elderly and Disabled Individuals Transportation Program (FTA Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (FTA Section 5316) and New Freedom Program (FTA Section 5317). New Hanover County developed a Local Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan in December 2008, and is renewing this plan in December 2011.

As the regional public transportation provider to the Wilmington urban area, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority (Wave Transit) is the lead agency in this Local Coordinated Plan. As the lead agency, Wave Transit organized a Coordinated Plan meeting for all local agencies and organizations to provide ideas of transportation needs in the area. Although Wave Transit organized this meeting, delivered surveys to local agencies, and received their respective feedback, all agencies understand it is their responsibility to apply directly to NCDOT for applicable funding through the Local Coordinated Plan.

Projects competitively selected for New Freedom (49 CFR §5317) or Job Access Reverse Commute (49 CFR §5316) funding shall be derived from this plan. The written record of the activities and decisions made at the planning workshop with the stakeholders is the basis of this coordinated plan.

The principal goal of the Wave Transit Local Coordinated Plan is to establish a permanent Coordinated Working Group charged with coordinating the efforts of providers and users of specialized transportation. The scope of the group's activities has included working with human service providers (i.e. medical services, social services, assisted living centers, etc.) to coordinate demands for transportation.

Wave Transit formed the Coordination Working Group consisting of representatives from the following:

- Specialized transportation providers (Wave Transit)
- Human services agencies with special needs clients
- Advocates for people with special transportation disadvantages
- Colleges with special programs

The following groups have demonstrated needs addressed in this coordinated plan effort:

- Needs of the elderly
- Needs of minors
- Needs of developmentally disabled individuals
- Individuals with behavioral health disabilities
- Needs of low-income population
- Emergency transportation
- Provide assets to be available for the physically disabled individuals

Wave Transit provides services for physically disabled passengers with fixed route buses and paratransit services. All Wave Transit vehicles used for transportation are ADA compliant to serve physically disabled passengers.

It is the goal of Wave Transit to provide safe, reliable, and affordable transportation to citizens of New Hanover and Brunswick Counties. Wave Transit will do everything possible to implement this plan and cooperate with all organizations and agencies involved in this Local Coordinated Plan.

PLANNING PROCESS

The coordination of specialized transportation services is a process in which two or more organizations interact to jointly accomplish their transportation objectives. For the purpose of this plan, coordination is defined as “a process through which representatives of different agencies or client groups work together to achieve any one or all of the following goals: more cost-effective service delivery; increased capacity to serve the unmet needs; improved quality of service; and, services which are more easily understood and assessed by riders.”

Coordinating transportation means obtaining more results with existing resources through working with other individuals from different agencies, each with unique perspectives and goals. Wave Transit is the lead agency with this plan, in which we have organized local agencies to develop common and differing transportation needs to have a more complete community wide mission of improving transportation in New Hanover County, the City of Wilmington, and Southeastern North Carolina. In addition, by delivering surveys to agencies and receiving their responses as to the local transportation needs, we have been able to assess a wide range of existing transportation needs in our area for a thorough report.

A planning workshop was held on November 10, 2011. Wave Transit invited 75 public, non-profit and government agencies to the workshop. There were 26 participants in the planning meeting and an additional 18 agencies who submitted surveys to demonstrate their transportation needs.

While Wave Transit has organized agencies and organizations to develop common goals and ideas for the Local Coordinated Plan, each individual agency has been instructed to submit applications to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for Elderly and Dis-abled Individuals Transportation funds (§5310), New Freedom (§ 317) or Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC §5316) funds for the respective project or program to be chosen by that agency. As further evidence of cooperation by Wave Transit, we have notified agencies that our staff would be willing to assist with questions or their projects should there be issues that arise during the planning process in obtaining funding.

Wave Transit and NCDOT staff reviewed the process of submitting grants to NCDOT concerning the release of the above mentioned FTA grants in November 2011.

CURRENT AVAILABLE SERVICES

1. Fixed route public transit service in New Hanover and Northern Brunswick County
2. Complementary ADA paratransit services within ¼ mile of fixed routes (Dial-A-Ride Transportation: DART)
3. Brokered paratransit services offered by Wave Transit throughout the county and to specialized medical facilities in Chapel Hill and Durham.
4. One ADA compliant taxicab
5. A small number of human service vans or light transit vehicles to provide private and non-profit transportation services

PRIMARY TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. Fixed route bus service needed in Hampstead and Burgaw in Pender County, Porter's Neck and Scotts Hill on the New Hanover/Pender County line and fixed route service in other rural areas of the above counties (i.e. out of county transportation program).
2. Expanded service hours for fixed route buses.
3. Fixed route bus service needed in northern New Hanover County in the Ogden area (Park and Ride).
4. Pedestrian safety improvements, such as crosswalks, wheelchair ramps, and sidewalks, needed near bus stops.
5. Fixed route bus service needed for more low income areas in New Hanover County.
6. Special transportation services and emergency pick up services are needed for victims of domestic violence.
7. More amenities (benches, shelters, and lighted bus stops) are needed along fixed bus routes in New Hanover County.
8. Special transportation services needed for initial employment periods for individuals who may not qualify for the New Hanover County Work First Program.
9. Cooperation between organizations in the area needs to be established rather than each organizations working independently of one another.
10. Low income individuals need low cost or free transportation service.
11. Promotion of WAVE transit services to choice riders to include information about taking advantage of tax incentives for alternative commuting.
12. Express bus service for key routes to tie in with key destinations (including park & ride locations)
13. Bicycle accommodations along roadways within 3 miles leading up to transit stops
14. Pedestrian facilities within 1/2 mile leading up to fixed transit stops
15. Pedestrian crosswalks & crossing facilities for arterials and busy collector streets within 3 miles of fixed transit stops to serve cyclists and pedestrians.

SECONDARY TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. Bus service needs more frequent routes in New Hanover County and the City of Wilmington.
2. Taxi cabs need to offer more accessibility and services to individuals.
3. There is a need for more bi-lingual transit information to be offered (i.e. bus maps and marketing materials printed in Spanish).
4. All local organizations need translators for individuals who may not speak English.
5. Education to notify individuals about local transit services is needed.
6. Programs need to be implemented for individuals who have a serious mental illness.
7. Food delivery services need to be implemented for those individuals who do not have the ability to get food on their own.

NOTE: All of the above priorities will be more specified in detail as agencies and organizations develop their specific transportation needs.

STRATEGIES TO MEET GAPS IN LEVELS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The committee and those surveyed who did not attend the planning meeting were confident that the structure and service offerings of Wave Transit were meeting many of the needs of the community. By operating as a single entity, Wave Transit offers the ability to more efficiently, economically and effectively manage a complex public transportation program with a variety of offerings.

As with any program, there were gaps identified. Most of the deficiencies could be met by providing expanded fixed route public transportation services. This includes: more frequent service (reduced headways); later evening service; expanded weekend service; and a larger service area. To address this deficiency, the authority is working on legislation that would allow a local option sales tax to improve public transportation. Should these efforts be successful, the committee would be asked to prioritize the needs based on specific revenue levels.

To meet the pedestrian safety needs identified, the authority will rely on the MPO to lead the effort to make the area more pedestrian friendly. To meet the shortfall in amenities, the authority is embarking on a plan to partner with private interests in an effort to increase available benches and shelters at fixed route bus stops. The authority has also identified the need to work with surrounding counties to prevent duplication of services and streamline access to available public transportation programs. Finally, cooperation between all interested agencies could be accomplished by keeping the coordinated planning group involved and engaged as additional funding becomes available.

PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

In developing the order of needs for our area, Wave Transit used surveys sent to agencies prior to the Coordinated Plan workshop and formed steering committees to discuss important needs for services. The steering committee members and those organizations and agencies involved in the plan have had continuous input to Wave Transit staff in developing this comprehensive plan. In summary, Wave Transit has met the criteria for developing this Local Coordinated Plan 2011 by adhering to the following guidelines:

- 1) Identified Lead Agency
- 2) Formed Steering Committees
- 3) Prepared for Local Coordinated Plan Workshop (invitations, surveys, committees)
- 4) Conducted Local Coordinated Plan Workshop
- 5) Developed draft of Local Coordinated Plan and planned implementation procedures

Following the workshop, Wave Transit will continue to work with local agencies and organizations in the development of "calls for projects" to ensure efficient outcomes and no duplication of services for our area. In addition, Wave Transit will take a lead role in notifying agencies when NCDOT has released the application to apply for the respective funds, and will continue to work with these agencies throughout the application should that need arise.

RESOLUTION



Introduced by: Matthew Kunic, Director of Planning and Development

Date: December 15, 2011

RESOLUTION ADOPTING NEW HANOVER COUNTY/WAVE TRANSIT COORDINATED HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

WHEREAS, the federal SAFETEA-LU transportation authorization passed by Congress in 2005 requires a “locally developed, coordinated public transportation-human services transportation plan” intended to improve the transportation services for persons with disabilities, individuals who are elderly, and individuals with lower incomes; and

WHEREAS, the Authority assumed the role of lead agency in coordinating and preparing the plan to ensure eligibility of funds that required adoption of said plan; and

WHEREAS, Wave Transit held a retreat on November 10, 2011 that included representatives from human service providers and advocates, special transportation providers, and others concerned with transportation in New Hanover County, the City of Wilmington, and Southeastern North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, Wave Transit has created summaries of special transportation needs, and the various existing transportation programs, services, and other assets for transportation disadvantaged groups necessary for development of the Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan by Wave Transit;

NOW, THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED that the Wave Transit Board of Directors hereby adopts the New Hanover County/Wave Transit Human Service Transportation Plan.

Adopted at a regular meeting
on December 15, 2011

Don Betz, Chairman

Attest:

for Andy Koeppel, Secretary

(seal) est. 2004



APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Human Service Providers
Special Transportation Needs and Resources

Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority (Wave Transit) has begun the effort to better understand the need for special transportation services in New Hanover County, and to understand how those needs are currently met or unmet. Many organizations in the region operate small-scale transportation services for members or clients, or offer other kinds of transportation support; however, we would appreciate feedback pertaining to the services provided by Wave Transit.

Please take the time to assist Wave Transit in understanding these issues as they relate to your organization by answering the following questions and returning the questionnaire to:

Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Attn: Matthew Kunic, Director of Planning and Development
P.O. Box 12630
Wilmington, NC 28405
E-mail: mkunic@wavetransit.com

Name of human service agency or advocacy group: _____

1. What client groups does your agency serve?
2. Would you characterize some or all of your clients as “transportation disadvantaged?”
 - A. If so, how many persons would you consider to be “transportation disadvantaged?”
 - B. In what ways may these persons be “transportation disadvantaged?”
3. Does your organization provide or subsidize transportation for some or all of your members or clients?
 - A. If so, to what degree? (Estimate the number of clients and/or the degree of help your agency provides—i.e. number of rides/year, % of subsidy).
4. What program(s) does your agency use to help provide or pay for transportation for your clients?
 - A. If your agency is primarily a transportation provider, what are its’ principal sources or revenue?
5. What restrictions apply to these programs? (i.e. definitions of need, limitations of destination or trip purpose, geographic boundaries).
6. In what ways (if any) are the transportation needs of your clients not currently met?
7. Do transportation issues interfere with the effectiveness of your agency? If so, please explain.
8. What are you hoping the Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan will produce?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Special Transportation Needs and Resources

Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority (Wave Transit) has begun the effort to better understand the need for special transportation services in New Hanover County, and to understand how those needs are currently met or unmet. Many organizations in the region operate small-scale transportation services for members or clients, or offer other kinds of transportation support; however, we would appreciate feedback pertaining to the services provided by Wave Transit.

Please take the time to assist Wave Transit in understanding these issues as they relate to your organization by answering the following questions and returning the questionnaire to:

Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Attn: Matthew Kunic, Director of Planning and Development
P.O. Box 12630
Wilmington, NC 28405
E-mail: mkunic@wavetransit.com

Name of Organization: _____

1. Does your organization include members who might be characterized as “transportation disadvantaged?”
 - A. If so, how many persons would you consider to be “transportation disadvantaged?”
 - B. In what ways may these persons be “transportation disadvantaged?”
2. Does your organization provide or subsidize transportation for some or all of your members or clients?
 - A. If so, to what degree? (Estimate the number of clients and /or the degree of help your agency provides—i.e. number of rides/year, % of subsidy).
3. If you answered “yes” to question 2, how does your organization pay for transportation or subsidy that you provide? (i.e. donations, volunteers, grants)
4. What restrictions apply to these problems? (i.e. definitions of need, limitations on destination or trip purpose, geographic boundaries)
5. In what ways (if any) are the transportation needs of your members or clients not currently met?
6. Do transportation issues interfere with the effectiveness of your organizations? If so, please explain.
7. What are you hoping the Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan will produce?

APPENDIX C

October 7, 2011

Department of Social Services
1650 Greenfield Street
Wilmington, NC 28402

Dear Department of Social Services:

Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority (Wave Transit) is ready to begin the process of developing our Local Coordinated Plan (LCP-2011).

The primary goal of the Wave Transit Local Coordinated Plan (LCP) is to establish a permanent coordinated working group of organizations charged with documenting the efforts of providers and users of specialized transportation. The scope of the group's activities will also include working with human service providers (i.e. medical services, social services, assisted living centers, etc.) to coordinate demands for transportation.

Wave Transit recommends that the Coordinated Working Group consist of representatives from the following:

- Specialized transportation providers (Wave Transit)
- Human services agencies with special needs clients
- Advocates for people with certain transportation disadvantages
- Colleges with special programs

The following groups will have their needs addressed in this coordinated plan effort:

- Needs of the elderly
- Needs of minors
- Needs of developmentally disabled individuals
- Needs of emotionally disabled individuals
- Needs of low-income population
- Emergency transportation
- Provide assets to be available for physically disabled individuals

Wave Transit will feasibly attempt to implement portions of this plan and cooperate with all organizations and agencies involved with the LCP-2011. In order to coordinate our efforts in receiving feedback from the necessary participants, your organization has been chosen to have **one** representative to be present at our Local Coordinated Plan meeting to be held at the following date, time, and location:

DATE: **Thursday, November 10, 2011**

TIME: **9:00am-2:00pm**

LOCATION: **University of North Carolina Wilmington- Madeline Suite**
(601 S. College Rd., Wilmington, NC 28403)

In addition to attendance at this meeting, please complete and return the included survey that will allow us to have information about your organization that we can use in the formation of the completed LCP-2011. Please return the survey to me at the contact information found on the survey form no later than **Friday, November 4, 2011 at 4:00pm.**

Wave Transit greatly appreciates your time and effort in participating in this Local Coordinated Plan that will improve the quality of life for residents of Southeastern North Carolina. **Please RSVP if one representative from your organization will be able to attend this meeting by Friday, October 28, 2011 at 4:00pm and include the following information about the attendee: organization, name of attending individual, e-mail, and phone number.** If your organization does not respond to this invitation by Friday, October 28, 2011, we assume your organization will **not** be participating in our Local Coordinated Plan meeting. You may RSVP or contact me with any questions via e-mail, mkunic@wavetransit.com, or by phone, (910)343-0106, ext. 2057.

Sincerely,

Matthew Kunic
Director of Planning and Development

APPENDIX D

As stated in the final Local Coordinated Plan report, Wave Transit has cooperatively worked with local organizations and agencies that are human service providers or those stakeholders with an interest in transit projects to develop a comprehensive local plan to address the primary transportation needs in our area.

We have provided these agencies with the opportunity to make comments, suggestions, and feedback before submitting this report to NCDOT. All comments were taken into account when providing NCDOT with this Local Coordinated Plan document.

Wave Transit will continue to provide our local organizations and agencies with all updates regarding this Local Coordinated Plan as it relates to specified FTA grants (5310, 5316, 5317).