



# Greater Cincinnati Region Paratransit Coordination

Improving access and mobility throughout the region



Draft Version 10-7-2021

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*Figure 1: Photo from a Greater Cincinnati Region Paratransit Coordination Meeting*



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Photo Credit: Clermont Senior Services



## Paratransit Coordination Introduction

Transportation services for people who have physical, economical, or mental challenges are provided by six transit agencies and thirty-seven human service agencies in the Greater Cincinnati Region. However, the services are typically restricted to specific populations (age, disability type, or income level), bounded by county or state lines, or otherwise contained within an area with minimal overlap with adjacent services.

The 2020 Coordinated Plan published by the OKI Regional Council of Governments, the 2019 Community Health

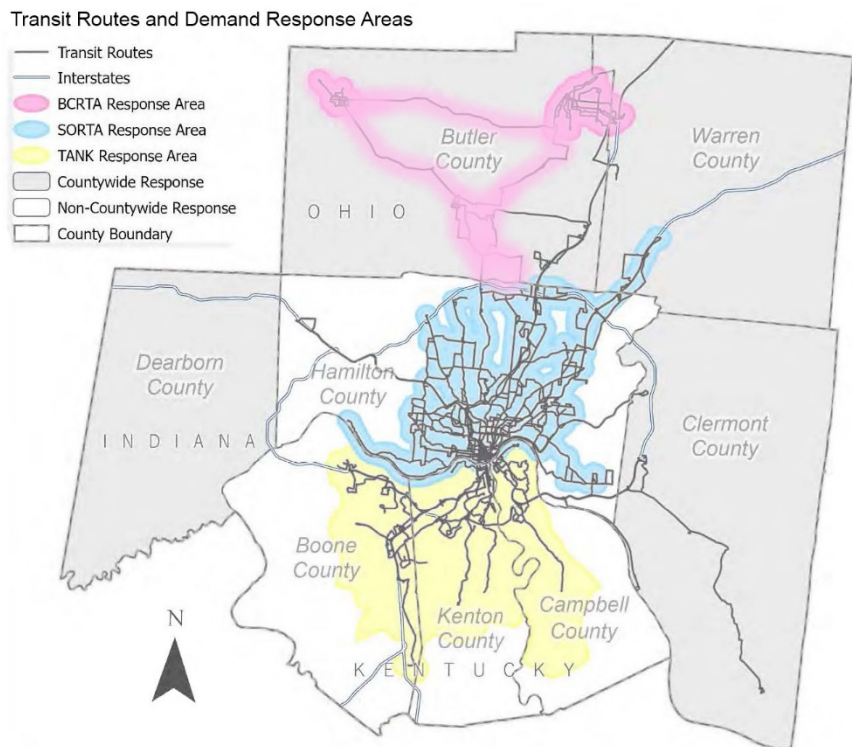
Needs Assessment published by The Health Collaborative, and numerous other regional reports indicate that people dependent on paratransit services in the Greater Cincinnati Region are frustrated in their attempts to access destinations across state and county lines. This frustration was echoed during public workshops convened during the summer of 2021.

A project team of transit planning, and human service agency representatives and members of the general public have participated in virtual and in-person workshops between May and September 2021. Their purpose was to identify the barriers and develop strategies to improve the coordination of paratransit and on-demand services in the Greater Cincinnati Region.

They were able to accomplish their purpose by engaging a broad pool of regional stakeholders, examining relevant literature, issuing a series of surveys, and hosting workshops to develop goals and strategies. The project participants also developed implementation steps and ranked each strategy through a prioritization exercise. This exercise ensured that the implementation team understood the importance and urgency of each strategy to the overall region and make the best use of limited resources.

This document summarizes these activities and describes the resulting strategies with a brief background, examples of similar successful projects, suggested implementation steps, project dependencies, anticipated implementation timeframe, and cost estimate. The Greater Cincinnati Region Paratransit Coordination Plan also includes a coordination schedule and cost summary.

*Figure 2: Transit routes and paratransit service areas*



## Regional Paratransit Coordination Engagement

Over forty (40) people from more than twenty (20) different organizations have participated in various engagement activities to improve the coordination of paratransit services in the Greater Cincinnati Region. These activities ranged from in-person and virtual regional group meetings, individual stakeholder interviews, and region-wide surveys with a focus on transportation providers.

During these engagement activities, the stakeholders verified the results of the existing literature review and surveys, identified paratransit coordination obstacles, developed coordination goals, and prioritized strategies to implement regional coordination across the Greater Cincinnati Region.

### Stakeholder Interviews

During the months between May and July, nine meetings were held with regional stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the real and perceived obstacles to regional paratransit travel and coordination.

These stakeholder conversations were held between SORTA staff, the project consultant, and:

- Travis Miller, Regional Planning Manager and Florence Parker, Environmental Justice/Public Involvement Specialist at the OKI Regional Council of Governments
- Erin Thomas, Executive Director and Michelle Guidice, Director of Catch-A-Ride (LifeTime)
- Gina Marsh, previously the Executive Director of the Human Services Chamber of Hamilton County and current Chief of Staff, Office of Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus
- Judy Eschmann, Vice President, Community and Business Operations CoA Southwestern Ohio
- Kail Clifton, Manager of Special Services and Frank Busofsky, Manager of Planning at TANK
- Lauren Bartoszek, Senior Manager, Population Health Strategies at the Health Collaborative
- Luke Morgan, Director of Operations & Shawn Cowan, Mobility Manager at Butler County RTA
- Phil Pumphrey, Director of the Clermont Transportation Connection
- Susanne Mason, Grants Administrator at Warren County



*Figure 3: Photo of a project planning workshop in July 2021 at OKI*

## Regional Meetings

The Greater Cincinnati Regional Paratransit Coordination project was launched on May 18, 2021, during a virtual Zoom meeting. The participants included twenty-four (24) representatives from transit and human service agencies who were introduced to the project and to some great examples of coordination within the region. The meeting included presentations from OKI staff on the 2020 Coordinated Mobility Plan and the Tri-State Transportation Equitable Opportunity Team (TTEOT); the home52 Transportation program operated by the Southwest Ohio Council on Aging, the Health Collaborative's initiative to measure transportation's impact as a social determinant of health, and the Mobility Ohio initiative to improve the safety, access, and quality of Ohio's health and human service transportation network.

Immediately following the project launch meeting, eleven (11) representatives from the larger transit agencies met to discuss potential Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations, union concerns, and tax dollar usage restrictions that may impact regional paratransit coordination.

On July 27, 2021, twenty-three (23) participants including each of the transit providers and several human service agencies met in person at the OKI Regional Council of Governments Board Room. They met as a large group to share personal stories of challenges in regional travel on paratransit services and to review the survey and interview results. They then broke into smaller groups to develop goals and strategies to improve paratransit service in the region through more coordination among providers.

An Implementation Planning meeting was held on September 22, 2021, at OKI with seventeen (17) participants representing each Greater Cincinnati county. As a group, the participants reviewed each goal, strategy, and implementation step and made some modifications. Each of the strategies was then prioritized during an exercise further explained in the ***Regional Paratransit Coordination Strategies*** section of this document.



*Figure 4: A strategy development breakout meeting.*

## State of Paratransit Services

According to [Mobility Ohio](#), fourteen (14) Ohio state agencies including Ohio Departments of Aging, Developmental Disabilities, Medicaid, Job and Family Services, etc. invest over \$500 million into transportation services each year. Each state agency has its own programs and policies. The lack of coordination among the agencies has led to inefficient use of resources; where there is duplicated transportation services for some riders, there may be no service for others. This inefficiency is occurring nationally, and it is occurring in the Greater Cincinnati Region.

Medicaid trip providers typically transport only passengers eligible for Medicaid-funded trips. The Southwest Ohio Council on Aging transportation providers typically transports only passengers eligible for the senior services tax levy funding. Rural transit agencies typically provide county-wide paratransit or on-demand service, but rarely leave the county. The urban counties with a fixed-route system like Hamilton and the northern Kentucky counties, provide paratransit service for people that are eligible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) only within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the fixed-route service as required by law.

Today, a veteran in northern Kentucky can ride a TANK fixed-route bus into Downtown Cincinnati (Government Square) and transfer to a Metro bus to get to the VA Medical Center, located in the Uptown Cincinnati area. If that veteran cannot, due to physical and mental challenges, ride the fixed-route buses, few alternatives are available. A trip on TANK's RAMP service must be scheduled to take the veteran as far as downtown Cincinnati. A trip on Metro Access service must also be scheduled to travel the final four miles from downtown Cincinnati to the VA Medical Center. If the Access driver arrives earlier than the RAMP driver, the veteran will be counted as a no-show and will miss the final leg of the trip.



Photo Credit: **VA**ntage Point blog

The project team heard similar stories from people who are paratransit service dependent and need to travel from one county to another for medical services, jobs, training, and other services. Darryl Haley, SORTA's CEO, urged the project team to build a regional paratransit network that is better for all customers and goes beyond the ADA's minimal requirements.

Transportation providers in the Greater Cincinnati Region have experienced success in coordinating services and developing innovative solutions to help all people get to their destinations. Before developing new solutions, the project team explored what has been accomplished in the past by reviewing relevant literature, learning more about existing programs, and examining the results of the surveys.



## Relevant Literature Review

The need to coordinate paratransit and other services to improve the lives of those who live in the Greater Cincinnati Region has been documented with recommendations in several existing plans. The following are summaries of the main plans:

### [Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan – 2020](#)

**Commissioned by:** OKI

**Key Findings:** Thirty-seven agencies provide specialized transportation services in the Greater Cincinnati region. Of that total, 35 operate vehicles; 27 provide service to the elderly; 24 provide service to individuals with disabilities and 3 include service to low-income individuals as part of their mission.

The 2019/2020 User Survey identified the following gaps:

- Inadequate number and variety of destination types.
- Inadequate transportation options during weekends.
- Low frequency and long lead time for services.
- Limited collaboration of service providers
- Unaffordable fares.

The results of the planning activities were the development of priorities to improve transportation for target populations including:

- Expand transportation availability to target populations throughout the region.
- Provide amenities at transit stops or pick-up areas
- Improve transportation service to target populations through more coordination among providers.
- Establish a regional mobility management system to improve user access to services of transportation providers.
- Integrate new technologies that improve mobility service accessibility and/or reduce operating costs.
- Better serve people who use wheelchairs or who need physical assistance to travel.
- Make fares more affordable for target populations.



### [Community Health Needs Assessment – 2019](#)

**Commissioned by:** The Health Collaborative and the Greater Dayton Area Hospital Association

**Key Findings:** Transportation was identified as a big issue in both urban and rural settings. These issues include no public transportation; inadequate transportation; or cost of transportation (bus fare, bus transfers, car ownership, and/or gas purchase). The report shared a story of a man who had a care plan for his cancer, but months later had not yet started treatment. He could not find anyone willing to give him a ride back and forth to appointments in another county.



### [Access Ohio 2045 – 2020](#)

**Commissioned by:** ODOT

**Key Findings:** Ohio's population grew older between 2000 and 2015 and this trend is expected to continue through 2045, with the share of Ohioans over age 65 projected to increase from 15.9 to 20.8 percent. This trend is consistent with national demographic trends and is expected to impact all areas of the state to varying degrees. All Ohio counties are projected to experience an increase in the percentage of their population over age 65 by 2045.

The age distribution of the population is an important consideration for transportation planning because transportation needs vary among different age groups. For example, older populations may be more likely to need access to public transit, including both fixed route and paratransit services. As the population of Ohio continues to grow older, it is anticipated that larger numbers of people may become transportation-dependent, increasing the need for alternative transportation options to driving alone.

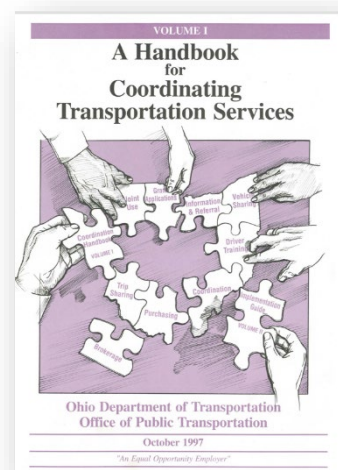


### [Handbook for Coordinating Transportation Services – 1997 and reissued 2003](#)

**Commissioned by:** ODOT

**Key Findings:** Coordination occurs when individuals and organizations work together to expand one or more transportation-related activities. Coordination can be as simple as referrals about transportation choices among several agencies or it can be as complex as a fully consolidated community transportation system serving human service agency clients and the general public. The document includes multiple examples of transportation coordination and identifies the benefits of transportation coordination as:

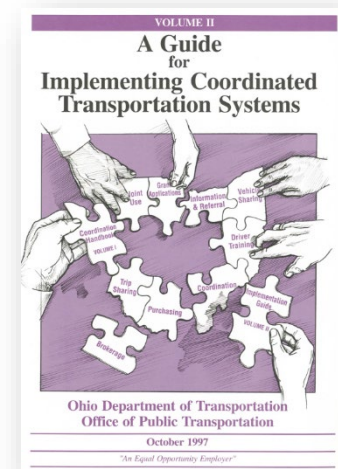
- Eliminates duplication of service
- Provides more trips
- Reduces administrative costs
- Provides access to additional funding sources
- Helps meet federal and state mandates, including Ohio Works First, Ohio's welfare reform initiative



### [A Guide for Implementing Coordinated Transportation Systems – 1997 and reissued 2003](#)

**Commissioned by:** ODOT

**Key Findings:** This document is a companion guide to the Handbook for Coordinating Transportation Services. It contains step-by-step guides, checklists, and sample agreements, policies, and procedures.



### *ODOT Guide to Compliance with Interstate Passenger Transportation Regulations – 2003*

**Commissioned by:** ODOT

**Key Findings:** The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) provides oversight of all commercial vehicles including passenger vehicles that cross state lines. It requires agencies providing passenger travel across state lines to register with FMCSA to obtain authority to operate. It also has a few safety regulations that transit agencies and Section 5310 grantees already follow.

The obstacles for some agencies may be the insurance requirements:

- Vehicles carrying 15 or fewer passengers including the driver are required to carry \$1.5 million in insurance.
- Vehicles carrying 16 or more passengers including the driver are required to carry \$5 million in insurance.

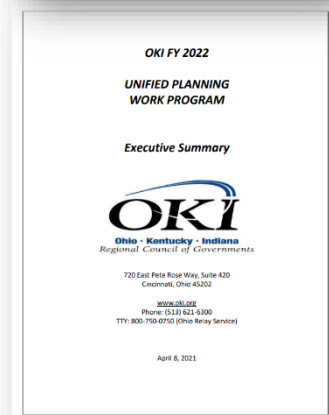
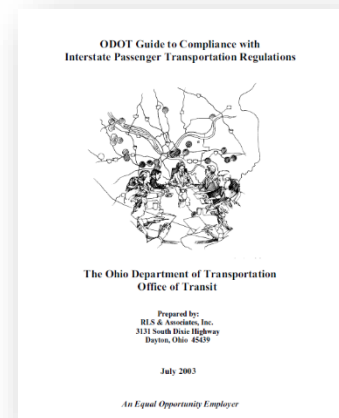
### *Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – 2021*

**Commissioned by:** OKI

**Key Findings:** The overall goal for transportation planning is the implementation of balanced and efficient intermodal and multimodal transportation services for the OKI region while involving a broad spectrum of agencies and the public in all aspects of the process.

A few relevant goals from the UPWP are:

- “5) Assist in implementation of specific transportation projects.
- Serve as the designated recipient for FTA's Specialized Transportation Program (Section 5310).
  - Evaluate local social service agency applications for 5310 funding.
  - Develop and maintain a coordinated transit plan for the region consistent with the 5310 program.
  - Assist local communities and transit agencies in establishing park-and-ride lots for carpooling, vanpooling, and transit.
  - Assist in the development, implementation, and coordination of bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities and programs throughout the region.”
- “6) Provide travel demand forecasting, transportation planning information, and technical assistance in support of development and implementation programs.
- Arrange and conduct seminars and/or develop educational materials for county, township, and municipal staff and officials.
  - Provide transit planning assistance to transit agencies.
  - Continuation of the planning and implementation requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
  - Provide process-related assistance in arranging and conducting public meetings, and in promoting issue identification and understanding, goal setting and prioritization, and community outreach activities.”



## Paratransit Survey Results

Two surveys were distributed during this seven-month project. The goal of the first survey was to identify the challenges faced by paratransit passengers and providers while crossing state and county lines. The second survey focused on paratransit service capacity and coordination needs. Fourteen (14) transportation providers responded to one or more of the surveys.

The agencies were asked to identify the types of services they provide. Their responses are illustrated in *Table 1: Types of Service Operated* with the service types defined below the table.

*Table 1: Types of Service Operated*

Agency	Types of Services				
	Fixed Route	Flex Route	Paratransit	Demand Response	Other
Butler County RTA	X		X	X	
Cancer Justice Network			X		
CoA / home52			X		
Clermont Transportation Connection (CTC)	X		X	X	2 express routes
Catch-A-Ride				X	
Maple Knoll Communities			X		
Meals on Wheels		X	X		
SORTA	X		X		
TANK	X		X		
Warren County Transit		X		X	

These services are defined by the [National Transit Database](#) as:

- **Fixed Route** - Services provided on a repetitive, fixed schedule basis along a specific route with vehicles stopping to pick up and deliver passengers to specific locations.
- **Deviated Fixed Route (Flex Route)** - Transit service that operates along a fixed alignment or path at generally fixed times but may deviate from the route alignment to collect or drop off passengers who have requested the deviation.
- **Paratransit** - Types of passenger transportation that are more flexible than conventional fixed-route transit but more structured than the use of private automobiles. Paratransit most often refers to wheelchair-accessible, demand response service. In the Greater Cincinnati Region, the term paratransit is typically used for services available to only certain eligible populations.
- **Demand Response** - A transit mode comprised of passenger cars, vans, or small buses operating in response to calls from passengers or their agents to the transit operator, who then dispatches a vehicle to pick up the passengers and transport them to their destinations. In the Greater Cincinnati Region, the term Demand Response is typically used for services available to all populations within the service area.



Six survey respondents reported that they do transport passengers across state and county lines. However, there are limitations. For example, Clermont Transportation Connection (CTC) and Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK) can only transport paratransit passengers within ¾ mile of their fixed route services because they lack the resources to overlap services that are provided by another transit agency. Catch-A-Ride (LifeTime Resources) can only take passengers from Indiana to Cincinnati on Wednesdays in a small van due to limited resources and inter-state requirements on vehicle size. Northern Kentucky Area Development District, home52, and Maple Knoll Communities reported funding agency restrictions on service areas and eligibility.

The survey respondents reported that regional trips require multiple transfers. It is difficult to coordinate paratransit transfers due to the 30-minute window in pick-up and drop-off times, the lack of communication between drivers and dispatchers of different agencies, and the limited number of potential transfer locations.

We learned that all providers offer their clients the ability to book their trips by speaking with a call center agent. However, very few alternative methods such as an interactive voice response (IVR) or internet-based systems are available for passengers to book their trips. No provider currently offers clients the ability to book a complete regional, multiple-provider paratransit trip.

*Table 2: Paratransit Booking Options* inventories the results to the Paratransit Booking Option survey question.

*Table 2: Paratransit Booking Options*

How do your paratransit clients book their trips?	Speak w/Call Center	Schedule via an Interactive Voice Response (IVR)	Request via website	Schedule via website	Schedule Mobile App
Butler County Regional Transit Authority (BCRTA)	X		X		X
Cancer Justice Network	X	X			
Catch-A-Ride (LifeTime Resources)	X		X		
Clermont Transit Connection (CTC)	X		X		
Clovernook Center for Blind and Visually Impaired	X				
CoA / home52	X	X	X		X
Maple Knoll Communities	X				
Northern Kentucky Area Development District	X				
Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA)	X				
Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK)	X				
Warren County Transit Service	X				

Paratransit service providers stated that one of the biggest hindrances to service area expansion is the lack of resources (drivers, vehicles, and funding). The second survey took a closer look at the resources available throughout the region.

The second survey demonstrated that the region has a total of 202 paratransit and on-demand vans and cutaways as illustrated in *Table 3: Fleet Revenue Vehicles*. This total does not include buses, trolleys, and trains. The peak paratransit and on-demand vehicle requirement are 151 vehicles. This leaves about 51 daily vehicles in reserves for maintenance and backup.

*Table 3: Fleet Revenue Vehicles*

Agency	Fleet Revenue Vehicles					Peak Paratransit Vehicles
	Sedans	Vans	Cutaways	Buses	Other	
<b>BCRTA</b>	0	10	29	23	3	18
<b>Catch-A-Ride</b>	0	11	22	0	0	21
<b>CTC</b>	0	1	18	4	0	16
<b>CoA / home52</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Meals on Wheels</b>	1	2	5	4	0	8
<b>SORTA</b>	0	0	56	356	0	46
<b>TANK</b>	0	0	28	109	0	23
<b>Warren County Transit</b>	0	0	19	0	0	19
<b>Total</b>	1	24	177	496	3	151

As with so many other agencies, there is a shortage of staff, especially drivers. Survey respondents also reported a need for specialized mechanics, particularly for the electronics that are unique to paratransit and on-demand vehicles. Most providers in the region rely on local mechanics. Butler, Clermont, TANK, and SORTA have in-house mechanics.

Survey respondents also shared the software platforms they are using to manage their clients, trips, fares, and employees. This is shown in Table 4: Software Platforms.

*Table 4: Software Platforms*

Agency	Client & Trip Mgmt	Route Planning	Trip Info	Fare Collection	Employee Mgmt
<b>BCRTA</b>	Ecolane	Remix, Doublemap changing to GMV/OPTIBUS	Transit, BGo Mobile	Braintree, EZfare	Paycom
<b>CTC</b>	Trapeze	Trapeze	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>CoA / home52</b>	NovusMED	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Catch-A-Ride</b>	Easy Rides	Easy Rides	Easy Rides	Easy Rides	MIP's HR Module
<b>Meals on Wheels</b>	Ecolane	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>SORTA</b>	Trapeze	Hastus/Trapeze	Transit	GenFare/EZfare	Trapeze
<b>TANK</b>	QRYDE		Transit	GenFare/EZfare	FleetNet
<b>Warren County Transit</b>	n/a	NOVUS	n/a	n/a	n/a

## Innovative Projects In and Around the Region

Paratransit Coordination in the Greater Cincinnati Region is likely to see immediate successes because the transportation providers have already begun working together to improve transportation services for all people. There are also several innovative projects being implemented within the region and sponsored by state agencies.

These innovative projects include:

- NEORide
- Home52
- Mobility Ohio

### NEORide

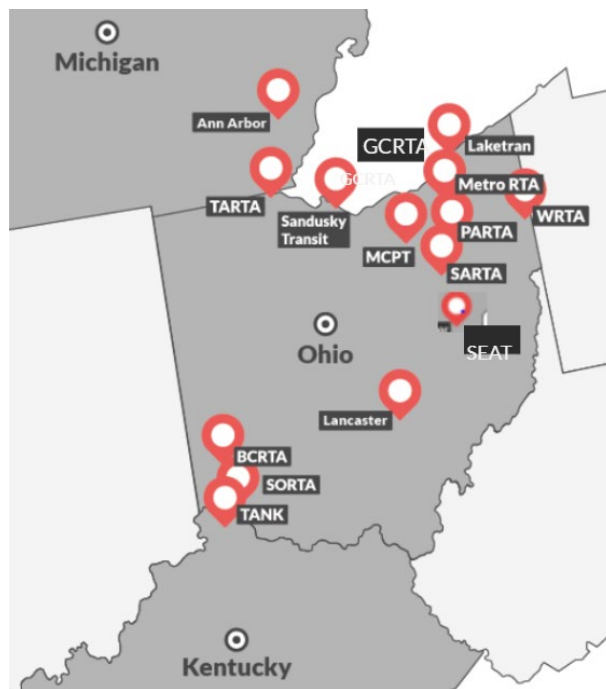
NEORide is a consortium of transit agencies in Ohio and adjacent states. *Figure 4: Illustration of NEORide member agencies* demonstrates where these agencies are located. These members include BCRTA, SORTA, and TANK.

Established as a Council of Governments (COG), the purpose of NEORide is to plan, promote, further and enhance transportation options within the jurisdictions of members and in the State of Ohio by encouraging cooperative agreements and coordination action among the members, and between the members and other governmental agencies, private persons, corporations, or agencies.

The consortium's flagship project is the EZFare system now being used by BCRTA, SORTA, and TANK as well as other NEORide member agencies. NEORide is currently working with transit agencies in the Greater Cleveland area to determine how to best coordinate/consolidate transit signage and with agencies in northeast Ohio to conduct a technology and feasibility study to look at the development of a call center that would centralize all paratransit booking. The consortium also helped the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) obtain an Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) grant of \$1.9 million from the FTA to develop an innovative alternative payment system for mobility, business and personal applications targeted to low-income, disadvantaged, disabled, student, elderly, and other underserved populations. In 2022, the consortium plans to develop an obsolete parts database.

Their long-range objectives include:

- Multi-State Regional Mobile Maas System
- Feasibility study for Ohio Medicaid Transportation Dispatching Coordination
- Statewide/Regional Procurement Coordination

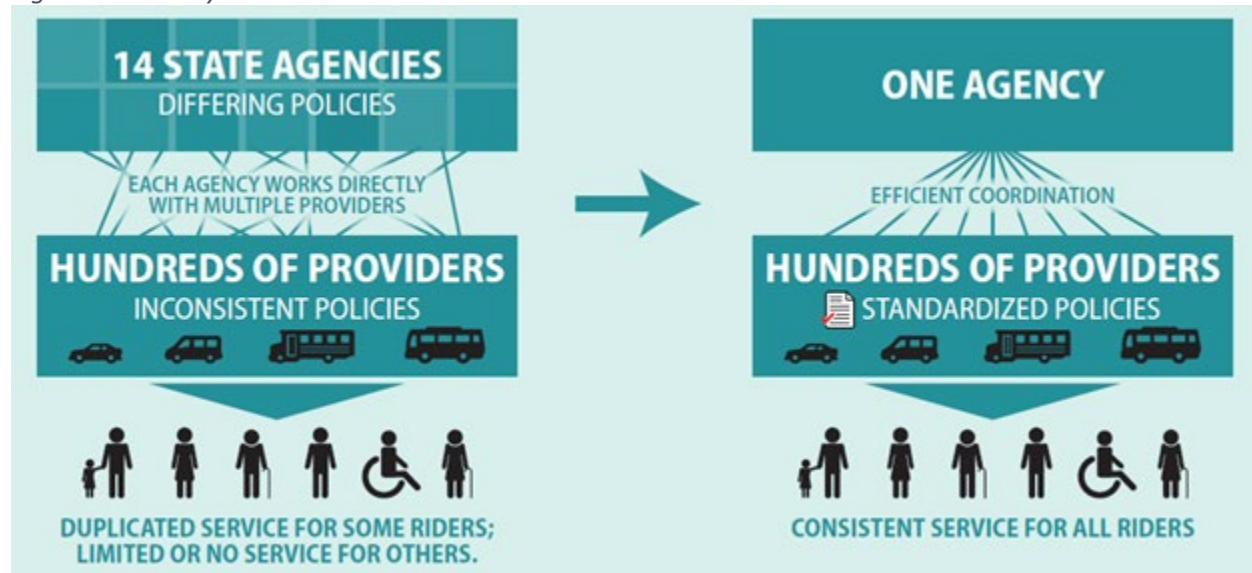


*Figure 5: Illustration of NEORide member agencies*

### Mobility Ohio

Mobility Ohio is a multi-agency effort to improve the safety, access, and quality of Ohio's health and human service transportation network while mitigating fraud by establishing a consistent and effective oversight structure and increasing inter-agency coordination. It is led by ODOT.

Figure 6: Mobility Ohio Illustration



The Mobility Ohio Fact Sheet states that federally funded vehicles and transportation resources can be shared with other Federal and community agencies that have a transportation role, as long as costs can be allocated appropriately. The barrier standing in the way of effective sharing of transportation resources is often accurate cost allocation. Hence, establishing a consistent method for setting transportation rates is the first task of Mobility Ohio. They have already launched the first pilot rate-setting project in the mid-eastern portion of the state.

Their other initiatives include:

- Establishing a statewide governance structure for coordinated health and human service transportation.
- Adoption of consistent driver and vehicle standards.
- Retention of local investment in public and human service transportation.
- Development of DRIVES (Driver Regulations Inventory Vehicle Entry System), a comprehensive statewide database of all transportation providers, drivers, and vehicles.

Chuck Dyer, Administrator, ODOT, participated in a project meeting and stated that Mobility Ohio is a disruptor. The alliance is trying to eliminate the state policies that inhibit coordination in a top-down approach. Coordination works when agencies put their egos and territories aside and work towards the greater goals. He would like to see Mobility Managers not only work with passengers to find trips, but to work with agencies to better coordinate services.



### Home52 Transportation

**Home52** is a subsidiary of Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio (CoA). The agency is the Area Agency on Aging for Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, and Warren counties. Leveraging the Older Americans Act, and county tax levies, and other funding sources, the agency can provide transportation services to older adults in the region.

Looking at transportation through a social determinant of health (SDoH) lens, the CoA created a model to reduce no-show and deadhead miles for transportation companies, improve client access to medical care and assist medical providers with serving vulnerable patients, and reducing last-minute cancellations. The model was created with the feedback received from clients, transportation companies and health care partners.

The new model is person-centered and is great for seniors, disabled adults, and vulnerable populations. It allows riders to get the additional hands-on support they need when traveling. Not all seniors require or want the additional support, but it is available if they need it. Riders may request same-day and on-demand service.

When the on-demand trip is requested, the transportation provider is selected by the software based on the most appropriate vehicle type, vehicle location, and the cost of the trip. This reduces vehicle deadhead miles and saves the funding agency money.

The driver is required to go to the door to meet the client. If the client is not immediately present, the driver calls the home52 dispatch center. The dispatch center will first try to call the client and if no response, will call the emergency contact person. They also call riders to gain feedback on the trips.

The home52 Transportation program launched on May 3, 2021, in Hamilton County. Clients are telling the agency that the drivers are offering friendly transportation services that help them feel confident about traveling again. The medical providers love the heads up the dispatchers give them if the client is running late for any reason.

The agency received an FTA grant to create a transportation coordination service to meet the unique needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. They purchased the NovusMed product, a transportation coordination system from TripSpark. Eight transportation providers responded to the RFP and provide the service. All drivers are required to complete PASS and DRIVE training.



The agency is hoping to place more transportation providers under contract and obtain additional service contracts and funding.

Photo credit: home52 Transportation



## Regional Coordination Goals

Based on the literature review, survey results, and discussions of innovative projects in and around the region, the project team developed four key goals to improve the coordination of paratransit services in the Greater Cincinnati Region.

**These goals are further explained below and include:**

**Goal 1:** Improve the coordination of paratransit administrative functions.

**Goal 2:** Integrate new technologies regionally.

**Goal 3:** Coordinate and expand service availability throughout the region.

**Goal 4:** Create regional marketing opportunities.

### Goal 1: Improve the Coordination of Paratransit Administrative Functions

Each of the six transit agencies and most of the 37 human services transportation providers in the region must maintain back-office support staff, technology, facilities, and a host of other resources necessary to operate a transportation program.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has hit the transportation industry and the Greater Cincinnati Region hard. Every agency in the region has reported concerns with staffing, particularly with hiring and retaining drivers. The project partners recognized that coordinating the back-office administrative paratransit tasks can help minimize these issues while increasing the relationships and coordination efforts of all transportation providers in the region.

### Goal 2: Integrate New Technologies Regionally

Transit technology has changed dramatically during the past decades, morphing from costly proprietary systems strictly used by transit agency staff to open source and customer-friendly solutions. Almost all aspects of transit operations may have a technology component, from traveler information and fare collection to operator bids and asset management.

Robust technology is expensive to procure, implement, and maintain – especially if each agency is completing these tasks individually. Coordinating the acquisition and implementation of regional technological solutions will create a better customer experience and save agencies a lot of time and money. Managing this technology and keeping informed of the latest advancements and experiences of other agencies is one of the biggest hurdles for smaller agencies.

### Goal 3: Coordinate and Expand Service Availability Throughout the Region

In regions where transportation providers share riders and have overlapping or adjacent service areas, it makes sense to coordinate service planning. Riders should be able to seamlessly travel throughout the region – from home to work, as well as to and/or from medical appointments, shopping, entertainment, and to/from the airport. Seamless journeys will encourage more travel on public transit. If any portion of the journey presents an obstacle, most potential riders will seek an alternative.

The project participants stated that all the agencies could do a better job at coordinating the public transit systems. Sometimes when they must wear so many hats, it is hard to keep up with what is going on with

Transit planning processes should be expanded to integrate individuals' plans with regional plans. New data sources like the Transit App could improve the regional planning process by providing insights on how people travel and where they are going. Data from The Health Collaborative (which includes data on missed medical appointments due to transportation issues) and the Green Umbrella (data that identifies food deserts) could demonstrate how transit is improving the quality of life in the Greater Cincinnati area.

A carefully thought-out marketing program, coupled with ADA-centered route planning, can lead to more people with disabilities choosing to ride services available to the general public. A regional marketing program can help simplify passenger (or potential passenger) understanding and recognition of the service. It could also garner additional support and funding for expanded services.

The Greater Cincinnati area already has some experience in regional marketing with their transit + EZ fare promotions.

# Plan. Pay. Track. Do it all with transit + EZfare

## Plan

your trip with transit

## Pay

for your fare on your phone

## Track

your bus in real time

## Activate

ticket as your bus approaches

## Show

your active ticket to your operator when boarding

Travel throughout the region using one app.  
New: Metro/TANK day pass only \$5

Free download for Apple and Android devices

## Regional Paratransit Coordination Strategies

The project team developed strategies to support each goal during in-person workshops held in July and September. The first workshop included three breakout sessions where smaller groups were able to hold candid conversations about each goal and brainstorm potential strategies to implement each goal.

The strategies and the goals they support are:

### Goal 1: Improve the Coordination of Paratransit Administrative Functions

1. Share information and best practices between agencies.
2. Clarify interstate passenger transportation regulations for transportation providers.
3. Develop a shared support services and specialists program.
4. Implement a regionally accepted ADA eligibility program.



*Figure 8: Photo from a project breakout session*

### Goal 2: Integrate New Technologies Regionally

1. Expand the mobile fare application for use on paratransit and to more agencies.
2. Procure and implement a unified scheduling system.
3. Implement a one call regional platform.

### Goal 3: Coordinate and Expand Service Availability Throughout the Region

1. Establish a cost allocation method to facilitate shared trips.
2. Pilot one-seat ride projects to test potential long-term solutions.
3. Improve the accessibility and wayfinding of transfer hubs.

### Goal 4: Create Regional Marketing Opportunities

1. Provide joint transit marketing and messaging.
2. Coordinate travel training programs regionally.
3. Create a regional mobility management program.

Each suggested strategy was investigated, examples of similar successful projects were found, implementation steps suggested, project dependencies identified, costs estimated and placed in a draft document. The document was sent to the project participants in advance of the September meeting.



During the September meeting, each strategy was reviewed in detail, and some were modified before gaining acceptance from the team. A prioritization exercise was then conducted to ensure that emphasis is being placed on projects that are most important to the region, especially when resources are limited.

Each team member was given 36 dots to place on the strategies that were most important to them. They were instructed to use all their dots and could divide their dots evenly, place them all on one strategy or any combination.

The highest ranking strategy was **Create a Regional Mobility Management Program** with 62 dots.

The other strategies were ranked as follows:

2. **Develop a Shared Support Services and Specialists Program** with 50 dots
3. **Procure and Implement a Unified Scheduling System** with 46 dots
4. **Implement a One Call Regional Platform** with 43 dots
5. **Share Information and Best Practices Between Agencies** with 43 dots.
6. **Coordinate Travel Training Programs Regionally** with 36 dots.
7. **Provide Joint Transit Marketing and Messaging** with 31 dots.
8. **Establish a Cost Allocation Method to Facilitate Shared Trips** with 30 dots.
9. **Clarify Interstate Passenger Transportation Regulations for Transportation Providers** with 27 dots.
10. **Pilot One Seat Ride Projects to Test Potential Long-Term Solutions** with 25 dots.
11. **Improve the Accessibility and Wayfinding of Transfer Hubs** with 25 dots.
12. **Implement a Regional Accepted ADA Eligibility Program** with 23 dots.
13. **Expand the Mobile Fare Application for Use on Paratransit and to More Agencies** with 22 dots.

The following pages further describe each strategy with examples of similar successful projects, implementation steps, project dependencies, implementation time, and a cost estimate (\$ = less than \$50,000, \$\$ = between \$50,000 and \$200,000, \$\$\$ = more than \$200,000).



*Figure 9: Photo of the Prioritization Exercise*

## Create a Regional Mobility Management Program

Mobility management is a customer-first approach towards trip planning and coordination. The mobility manager or navigator examines all mobility options and service providers to suggest the most appropriate options. They may also coordinate with providers to achieve a more efficient transportation service delivery system. Mobility managers may serve as operations service brokers to coordinate transportation services among all customer groups, service providers, and funding agencies.



The [National Center for Mobility Management](#) is a national technical assistance center operated through a consortium of three national organizations—the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), and Easter Seals Inc. Their website has a large collection of materials and peer exchanges to support Mobility Management Programs.

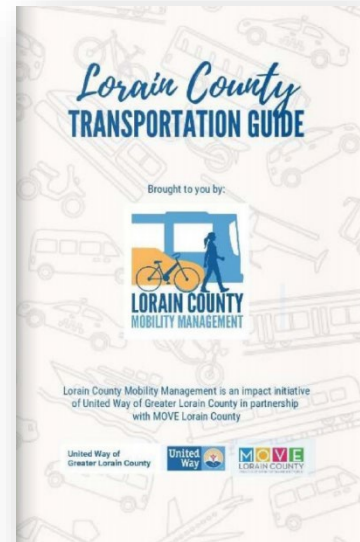
Former APTA President, Bill Millar is quoted as stating, “From a business perspective, mobility management offers greater efficiency in the use of transportation resources, with potential cost savings and increased service effectiveness—a combination that can be used to reduce bottom-line operating costs, or increase services, or both.”

### *Examples:*

- a. The Cancer Justice Network (CJN) is a private non-profit agency that helps low-income and minority populations in the Cincinnati area access early screening and treatment for cancer. The Network includes 20 partner agencies. Transportation services are provided through a partnership with Cincinnati Area Senior Services (CASS) as well as with Uber and Lyft. CJN initiated a mobility management program in 2018 that provides “Navigational Support” to people who are elderly or have mental and physical disabilities in addition to the transportation rides. Many are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- b. BCRTA has a mobility manager on staff assisting Butler County’s elderly and disabled populations with travel training on fixed routes and demand response. Specific services include assisting with application completion for paratransit services, as well as trip planning, booking trips and tracking their vehicle. BCRTA mobility management conducts public outreach, participates on various transportation committees as well as attempts to find transportation solutions for individuals where public transit does not always work.
- c. The Northern Kentucky Area Development District (NKADD) is a government agency serving clients in Northern Kentucky including the counties of Boone, Campbell, and Kenton. NKADD’s mobility management program was initiated in November 2017. Since that time, the NKADD has implemented a centralized call center for elderly/disabled transportation services. The call center is fully functional and has been scheduling transportation with several transportation providers for members of the community as well as connecting individuals with non-participating services providers and walking them through the process for obtaining those services. Due to the challenges of Covid-19 on transit,

the NKADD is shifting focus of the mobility management program from small scale transportation pilot programs to the implementation of a regional scheduling software. This software is being piloted in Owen County, Kentucky.

- d. The United Way of Greater Lorain County (Ohio) in partnership with MOVE (Mobility & Opportunity for a Vibrant Economy) Lorain County seeks to increase awareness of transportation options, ensure transportation options are included in planning efforts, collect transportation data, coordinate educational training programs, and develop pilot projects that improve unmet needs and gaps in transportation services. Their Mobility Management program produced a [Transportation Guide](#) filled with contact information for all local transportation providers and tips on how to schedule a ride. They also host quarterly Transportation Advisory Committee meetings and update the Coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans.
- e. The Maumee Valley Planning Organization sponsors the [Northwest Ohio Mobility](#) program. This program serves as the regional mobility manager, supports the development of the Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Plan, shares best practices, provides monthly “Stakeholder Reports”, and hosts fundraising events to support the program and provide local match funds.
- f. The Nebraska Department of Transportation implemented a state-wide Mobility Management program in 2015. The agency published a [Mobility Manager Handbook](#) complete with Mobility Manager job descriptions and best practices.



#### *Implementation Recommendations:*

1. Create a mission statement and goals for the mobility management program.
2. Define Mobility Manager position and responsibilities.
3. Develop performance measures based on program goals.
4. Obtain funding and implement programs.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Create Regional Marketing Opportunities* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy may be enhanced with the joint transit marketing and messaging strategy, the coordinated travel training program, and additional technologies such as the One Call Regional Platform and Unified Scheduling System.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy could be implemented within two to three years depending on the final project scope and funding availability.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$\$ = between \$50,000 and \$200,000.

## Develop a Shared Support Services and Specialists Program

Shared support services and specialists can play a large role in improving mobility for people across the region. The delivery of safe and efficient paratransit service has a lot of moving parts. It includes customer service and reservations, driver training, grant writing, procurement specialists, vehicle and facility maintenance, service planning, etc. Specialists are needed within these services. Not all mechanics are able to diagnose and correct wheelchair lift issues. Agencies with a limited number of vehicles may be able to afford automated farebox equipment, but not a dedicated farebox equipment specialist. The sharing of staff with specialized skills will allow all agencies to have access to highly skilled individuals at a much lower cost.



Coordinated grant writing allows agencies to access a wider range of funding programs and local match opportunities, as well as reducing the cost of pursuing grants. Regional driver training can promote regional service acceptance and consistency as drivers get to know each other during training and subsequent refresher courses and are operating in the same manner.

The country is in the middle of a staffing shortage. Missed trips and on-time performance issues are being reported by transit and human service agencies across the nation due to a shortage of available drivers. Locally, the Southwest Ohio Council on Aging (CoA) is struggling to persuade more transportation providers to respond to their home52 program Request for Proposals to provide senior services levy trips.

The pool of contractors and transportation providers in the region may be maximized by a regional procurement, MOUs, or other agreements. Transit agencies and other service providers would then have the opportunity to use an alternate provider if they do not have enough drivers on a particular day and are at risk of missing a trip. This could also allow the CoA's home52 program to use transit providers and other resources for their senior services levy trips.

### *Examples:*

- a. [NEORide](#) is a consortium of 16 transit agencies in Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan. Their purpose is to plan, promote, further and enhance transportation options within the jurisdictions of Members and in the State of Ohio by encouraging cooperative arrangements and coordination action among the Members, and between the Members and other governmental agencies, private persons, corporations, or agencies. They have created the Ohio Transit Risk Pool, employee benefits and health care pool, and obtained funding for and coordinated innovative projects like the Transit App and EZFare for their BCRTA, TANK, and SORTA members. The consortium continues to manage the app contract and distribution of fare revenue from the app.
- b. The [Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation](#) (SMART) in Detroit, Michigan has operated a Community Partnership Program since 1996 to support its 73 partners who complement SMART's directly operated paratransit service. The Community Partnership Program support services include community forums, coordinated dispatching, preventative maintenance, joint capital purchases, and travel training.



- c. [Ride Connection](#) is a private non-profit transportation provider in Portland, Oregon that has created open-source software applications (Wiseguide, a CRM for rider training programs and RidePilot, a dispatching and ride coordination tool) shared on GITHUB and offers coordinated transportation operational assistance to other transportation providers. This assistance includes grant writing, customer service monitoring, staff training, data management, reporting support, and centralized service scheduling.
- d. The Atlanta Regional Commission in Atlanta, Georgia staffs a Regional Transit Committee which focuses on issues of regional transit planning, funding, and governance. A 3-year, \$3M work program allowed ARC to leverage federal funds with annual member contributions to fund a work program with 5 main tasks:
- Regional Transit Planning = \$1,000,000
  - Regional Transit Coordination = \$300,000
  - Regional Transit Data & Analysis = \$700,000
  - Regional Fare Policy & Collection Coordination = \$750,000
  - Regional Transit Marketing Analysis & Strategy Development = \$250,000

*Implementation Recommendations:*

1. Poll transportation providers and human service organizations identify common needs for technical assistance and any specialists they may have available.
2. Review existing pay, benefits, and licensing requirements of transportation providers in the region to identify opportunities for improvement.
3. Develop a transit driver training curriculum and programs.
4. Work with the procurement staff and partners to develop a pilot operator pool program.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Improve the Coordination of Paratransit Administrative Functions* goal.

**Project dependencies:** While this strategy is not dependent on any other recommended strategy, it could be supported by the “Share information and best practices between agencies” strategy.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy could be implemented in stages beginning immediately with some aspects wrapping up in 2 years.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$ = less than \$50,000.

### Procure and Implement a Unified Scheduling System

A unified scheduling system coupled with a CAD/AVL (computer aided dispatch / automatic vehicle location) system, and a cost allocation method will facilitate a one-seat paratransit ride from each passenger's origin to destination, even if they must cross county or state lines. It will also allow one provider to support another during emergencies or employee shortages.



#### *Examples:*

- a. The state of Pennsylvania has a state-wide trip planning and booking system that is expected to include human service agencies in the new future.
- b. Seven transit agencies serving nine Florida counties use a single Trapeze system via a secure Citrix web interface hosted by the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA). Using security settings and separate "Provider" designations, each agency manages its own clients and trips. During local emergencies or staff shortages, permissions can be quickly changed to allow one agency to support another. Once the emergency was over, permissions were changed back. The smaller agencies no longer had to worry about server upgrades, hardening their data storage area, and securing backup data.
- c. The Los Angeles County Consolidated Transportation Services Agency ("CTSA") administers the Access Paratransit Program on behalf of the County's 45 public fixed-route operators. This service is limited within the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile area of the fixed-route service area of over 1,950 square miles.

#### *Implementation Recommendations:*

1. Complete a feasibility study with a cost/benefits analysis.
2. Draft a concept of operations.
3. Obtain funding.
4. Procure software.
5. Install, test, and implement system.

#### *Relevant notes:*

Butler County's contract with Ecolane will be expiring in 2022 and they are planning to go out to bid for new software that can be used for the on-demand as well as the paratransit service.

TANK has just completed a bid process with a 5-year contract with a new software company that has the capacity for real-time trip scheduling.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Integrate New Technologies Regionally* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy is not dependent on any other recommended strategy. It could be supported by the regional fare application and supports the One-Call Platform.

**Anticipated implementation:** This is a long-term strategy that may take up to 5 years.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$\$\$ = more than \$200,000.

## Implement a One Call Regional Platform

The limited areas served by the Greater Cincinnati Region's paratransit and human service transportation providers often confuse passengers. Too frequently, callers are told that they must call a different number to schedule all or portions of their trip. If all transportation call centers in the region were equipped with the same information and have access to the same scheduling software, all residents in the region could have access to their trip booking needs with one phone call.



A single regional phone number does not have to be connected to one physical location. The calls can be directed to the most appropriate call taker based on the caller's current location. It was suggested that a Teams phone system could easily be modified to create a regional call system with one phone number that can be answered by any agency or call center representative. As one of the project participants put it, if pizza delivery companies can figure out how to accomplish this, we should be able to do so too!

### *Examples:*

The [National Center for Mobility Management](#) lists several One-Call/One-Click resources on their website including in-depth descriptions of established systems and best practices.

- a. San Bernadino County in California has linked their one-call center with their 211 system to offer planning assistance for all public, private, and human service transportation providers.
- b. [Way to Go Connecticut](#) created a single point of access mobility management program for all services available in the north-central region of Connecticut.
- c. The [NEORide Consortium](#) is working with Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA), Western Reserve Transit Authority (WRTA), Community Action of Wayne and Medina Counties, and Trumbull County Transit in Ohio to complete a technology and feasibility study to look at the development of a call center that would centralize paratransit booking.

### *Implementation Recommendations:*

1. Document resources for all transportation services within the region, including service area, eligibility verification, fare, and use restrictions.
2. Complete a feasibility study with a cost/benefits analysis and concept of operations.
3. Identify potential grant opportunities, apply on the behalf of the region, and obtain funding.
4. Procure software.
5. Install, test, and implement system.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Integrate New Technologies Regionally* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy is dependent on the regional fare application and the unified scheduling system.

**Anticipated implementation:** This is a long-term strategy that may take up to 5 years.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$\$\$ = more than \$200,000.

### Share Information and Best Practices Between Agencies

Regularly scheduled meetings between agencies that serve people who may be transportation disadvantaged and transportation providers encourage inclusive discussions and offer opportunities to integrate plans, share best practices and build rapport between agencies. Regularly scheduled meetings with meaningful content could serve as a foundation for regional paratransit coordination efforts.



A Wiki page, SharePoint, or other internet-based file sharing system should be built to share best practices, policies, procedures, and contact information between providers.

#### *Examples:*

- a. The Tristate Transportation Equitable Opportunity Team (TTEOT) was created in 2017 and includes transportation providers and human service agency members from eight counties and three states and is hosted by the OKI Regional Council of Governments. The TTEOT typically meets quarterly.
- b. The Kansas City Regional Transit Coordinating Council (RTCC) is an advisory body to the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), and local jurisdictions. KCATA and MARC co-staff the RTCC to support coordination of regional transit operations and services, planning, and related transit activities.
- c. In October 2020, the state of New Jersey passed legislation to implement a “Best Practices” pilot training program for paratransit providers, require greater coordination among paratransit service providers, and establish regional paratransit coordinating councils. The coordinating councils are to meet at least quarterly and share best practices among paratransit providers within the State. They are also required to establish a system to exchange information between paratransit providers and to share budget information.

#### *Implementation Recommendations:*

1. OKI staff will continue to support the Tristate Transportation Equitable Opportunity Team (TTEOT), convening meetings more often. Other agencies may assist OKI in developing content for the TTEOT meetings.
2. Feature the TTEOT on agency websites as a supported committee.
3. Develop a file-sharing network, Wiki page, or SharePoint to house best practices and other information.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Improve the Coordination of Paratransit Administrative Functions* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy is not dependent on any other recommended strategy. However, it could spur the completion of all other strategies.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy could be implemented immediately.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$ = less than \$50,000.

## Coordinate Travel Training Programs Regionally

A regional Travel Training program can help people understand all transportation options available to them and help them to choose the best trip option for each trip they make. Travel training can be offered to older adults, people with disabilities, students, and all members of the public. The travel trainers can travel to different activity centers (senior centers, community centers, medical centers, and non-profits) and events to offer one-on-one and group experiences.

Expanding awareness of transportation resources can increase the confidence and independence of all riders. Travel Training could help existing paratransit riders choose to travel on more cost-effective fixed-route service and other non-traditional services.

### *Examples:*

- a. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in Chicago offers a Travel Training Program that teaches individuals with disabilities and older adults how to use Metra, Pace, and CTA buses and trains. Travel Training is free except for the cost of transit fares. Group Transit Orientations and Mobility Outreach staff are available to events and resource fairs.
- b. The State of Massachusetts hosts a website for people to find travel trainers to fit their needs throughout the state. The website at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-to-ride-transit-with-travel-instruction> includes links to travel training programs supported by transit and human service agencies and by school districts. Each program generally teaches the same program. However, some agencies may have a particular focus such as a transit agency may focus on the services they provide, while a human service agency may teach focus on the abilities of their clients (i.e., agencies supporting clients with low vision may place an emphasis on listening skills and sound identification).
- c. Way to Go Connecticut has created a single web page at <http://waytogoct.org> to share Regional Mobility Guides, legislative information and connect people to Mobility Managers and travel trainers throughout the state.

### *Implementation Recommendations:*

1. Identify Travel Trainers in the region and any program focus they may have.
2. Complete a scope and concept of operations.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Create Regional Marketing Opportunities* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy is dependent on the joint marketing and messaging strategy.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy could be implemented within a year or two depending on the final project scope.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$ = less than \$50,000.



### Provide Joint Transit Marketing and Messaging

Many transportation options are offered throughout the Greater Cincinnati region. However, residents may not be aware of all the options that they may be eligible to use. Travelers who are new to transit or need to travel across the region using different operators would benefit from a brand or mark that will identify regional service providers and facilities.

A coordinated appearance of transit vehicles, bus stops, shelters, and other amenities can increase the appearance of a cohesive regional system and increase the visibility, promotion, and utilization of services. This will improve the overall customer experience and help travelers make better use of available services. The Greater Cincinnati area is already doing a bit of this with the Transit App marketing.

Regional marketing could also be extended to elected officials to inform them of the collaborative activities. This could be achieved by presenting the activities to the OKI Board of Directors and during opportunities in which agencies engage with their elected representatives.

#### *Examples:*

- a. San Francisco has 27 different transit operators. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission in San Francisco created regional signage design standards within nine San Francisco counties. San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission provide clear information to passengers on paratransit travel options to all the surrounding counties on their website and brochures.
- b. The Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA) provides no transit services. They work to advance regional transportation needs in Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas counties – including regional transit marketing for 6 transit agencies.

#### *Implementation Recommendations:*

1. Work with OKI to present regional coordination activities to their Board of Directors.
2. Collaborate with partner organizations, social services, and city and state representatives to identify opportunities for coordinated engagement, creation of a regional message and brand as well as production of educational materials.
3. Develop and produce regional marketing materials.
4. Share information on billboards and at libraries, senior centers, hospitals, training offices, clinics, job locations, and on the web and social media.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Create Regional Marketing Opportunities* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy could be achieved in conjunction with the shared support services, expanded mobile fare application, unified scheduling system, one-call platform, one-seat ride pilot project and improved accessibility and wayfinding of the regional transfer hubs.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy designed within 6 months will implementation occurring in conjunction with each of the regional projects.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$\$ = between \$50,000 and \$200,000 in conjunction with other projects.

### Establish a Cost Allocation Method to Facilitate Shared Trips

According to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), fourteen Ohio state agencies invest over \$500 million annually in transportation services for their clients. Typically, each agency has its own programs, policies, requirements, and contracts with providers that transport only that agency's clients.

The Mobility Ohio Fact Sheet states that federally funded vehicles and transportation resources can be shared with other Federal and community agencies that have a transportation role if costs can be allocated appropriately. The barrier standing in the way of effective sharing of transportation resources is often accurate cost allocation. Hence, establishing a consistent method for setting transportation rates is the first task of Mobility Ohio. They have already launched the first pilot rate-setting project.

There are many resources available to help agencies allocate costs. The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) offers a [recorded course](#) along with worksheets and handouts on cost allocation for human services transportation providers and transit operators. The Transit Cooperative Research Program published a [Sharing the Costs of Human Services Transportation](#) report and toolkit. Most recently, a [Cost Allocation Technology for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation](#) report was published by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Mobility Ohio demonstration project is featured in this report.

These methods coupled with a shared dispatch system to schedule trips, allocate cost, and manage client eligibility would help create a person-centered transportation system.

#### *Examples:*

- a. [Mobility Ohio](#) is a multi-agency effort led by ODOT to increase inter-agency coordination. The first Mobility Ohio initiative is a Rate-Setting Pilot in eastern Ohio. A rate-setting tool has been created to assist transportation providers in pricing service based on their fully allocated costs by incorporating an Excel spreadsheet program that allows transportation providers to enter expense data and easily perform calculations to generate pricing by unit of service (service hour, service mile, one-way passenger trip, or passenger-mile).

#### *Implementation Recommendations:*

1. Ask Chuck Dyer and staff from ODOT to help facilitate this effort as a part of their Mobility Ohio project.
2. Determine criteria, calculation methods, and thresholds for the purchase of transit service.
3. Identify potential pilot agencies.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Improve the Coordination of Paratransit Administrative Functions* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy could support the one-seat ride pilot projects.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy could be implemented in one year with the support of ODOT and national resources.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$ = less than \$50,000.

## Clarify Interstate Passenger Transportation Regulations for Transportation Providers

The requirements for an agency to transport people across state lines are perceived differently by each transit provider. Project participants also feel that the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration (FMCSA) auditors have different perceptions of the annual reporting requirements.

The FMCSA regulates and provides safety oversight of motor freight and passenger transportation companies. The FMCSA's regulatory coverage over passenger transportation carriers extends to public entities, private, for-profit organizations, and private nonprofit transportation companies that engage in interstate transportation, regardless of whether the entity is a recipient of Federal funds.

ODOT has published in 2003, a [\*Guide to Compliance with Interstate Passenger Transportation Regulations\*](#). The guide and the FMCSA website, however, do not specifically address public transportation providers.

### *Examples:*

- a. Most TANK fixed routes serve three Northern Kentucky counties and connect with each other and SORTA routes in Downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. TANK has crossed the Ohio River into Cincinnati since 1984. As a public agency, TANK may be exempt from FMCSA regulations.
- b. Catch-A-Ride by LifeTime Resources is the public transportation provider for six southeast Indiana counties. The agency transports passengers from Indiana to Cincinnati in minivans to avoid FMCSA regulations. Although they are required to complete annual reports to the FMCSA.
- c. SORTA does not serve bus stops across state lines and staff believes that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other related documentation is necessary to do so.

### *Implementation Recommendations:*

The project participants recommended that the FMCSA be invited to a future meeting to clarify the requirements to cross state lines as well as the annual reporting requirements.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Improve the Coordination of Paratransit Administrative Functions* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy is not dependent on any other recommended strategy. It can be implemented in conjunction with the "Share information and best practices between agencies" strategy.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy could be implemented immediately.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$ = less than \$50,000.

## Pilot One Seat Ride Projects to Test Potential Long-Term Solutions

Paratransit service-dependent riders in the Greater Cincinnati Region must transfer between transit agencies to access destinations, not within their home service area, or find an alternative service. For example, a disabled veteran in Northern Kentucky must transfer from a TANK service in Downtown Cincinnati to another service to travel an additional four miles to get to the VA Hospital.

Because each paratransit service maintains a 30-minute window for passenger pick-ups and drop-offs, a passenger transferring between two paratransit services runs the risk of missing the connection or waiting over an hour in the elements for their connecting vehicle.

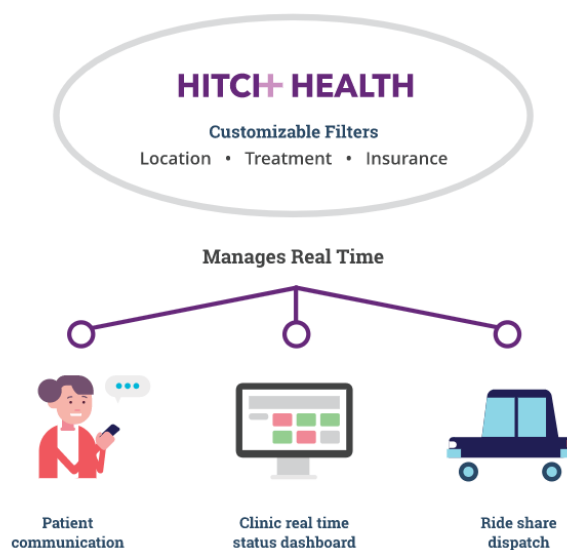
Several potential options for a one-seat ride were suggested by project participants:

- One agency can bill another for the portion of the trip they provide to adjacent counties. This gives the passenger a one-seat ride and reduces the coordination hassle of a street-side transfer.
- A zonal system could be implemented to require passengers to pay a higher fare when passing through two or more zones. The zones could be county-based so that a passenger would pay a higher fare to travel to a destination in another county.
- A pilot project could be launched in certain areas or with certain populations such as high-risk pregnant women.

### Examples:

- [County Connection](#) in Concord, California began piloting a One-Seat Regional Ride Program in October 2020 with four paratransit providers (County Connection LINK, Tri-Delta WestCat, and LAVTA). The pilot program aims at eliminating required transfers for trips that cross multiple transit service areas and give passengers a one-seat for the entire duration of their trip. If either the origin or destination of the trip is outside the areas served by the participating agencies, their home agency will assist the passenger in booking a transfer trip and coordinating all arrangements between the agency and any connecting agencies.
- [Hennepin Healthcare Clinic](#) in Minneapolis partnered with Hitch Health and Lyft to offer free rides to patients who face transportation obstacles. The pilot was effective in reducing appointment no-shows by 27%. Because the clinic lost an average of \$100 for each no-show and paid an average of \$15 for a Lyft trip, the clinic reported a project savings of \$270,000 annually.
- The Matanuska-Susitna Borough in Alaska received Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) funding to implement a platform that centralizes dispatch, fleet management, call-taking, and payment across four providers. The system will assign trips to the lowest-cost, eligible provider and allow riders to book a one-seat ride with flexible payment options.

Figure 10: Hitch Health illustration



#### *Implementation Recommendations:*

1. Complete a quick study to identify the level of service (door-to-door service, door-through-door) offered by each transportation provider.
2. Complete a feasibility study with a cost/benefit analysis and concept of operations.
3. Obtain funding.
4. Implement pilot project.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Coordinate and Expand Service Availability Throughout the Region* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy could be implemented as a stand-alone project. However, it would benefit greatly from a regional cost allocation method and regional technologies.

**Anticipated implementation:** This is a strategy that could be implemented in one to two years.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$\$ = between \$50,000 and \$200,000.

Figure 11: A County Connection One-Seat Ride pilot flyer

It's as easy as  
**1-2-3...**

## Reserve Your One-Seat Ride Today!

**Introducing** a new premium service that allows you to travel between participating partner transit authority service areas without having to transfer, saving time and hassle!

1. Call 925-680-2134 to reserve your one-seat ride
2. Pay the driver your total agreed upon fare
3. Travel your One-Seat Ride directly to your destination in a clean, socially distanced and passenger limited vehicle!

- We are discounting the premium fare level during a 3-6 month pilot project period to gauge interest and demand during the pandemic
- Temporarily, the total fare is simply the paratransit fare for each transit agency covered by your One-Seat Ride
- View the status of your One-Seat Ride at all times using the MyTransitManager App

Participating Agencies:

**Watch for additional agencies to join soon!**

**CENTRAL CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT AUTHORITY**



## Improve the Accessibility and Wayfinding of Transfer Hubs

The experience of transferring from one transit vehicle to another can have a significant impact on the mode of transportation people choose. Many people who are eligible for paratransit service prefer to use fixed-route if the path of travel along the entire journey is accessible. Well-designed transfer hubs can attract paratransit riders to use the fixed-route system and help make them feel more comfortable, relaxed, and informed.

The Greater Cincinnati Region has 24 Park-N-Rides (16 in Hamilton County, 4 in Butler County, 2 in Warren County, and 2 in Clermont County) and five major transit centers (4 in Hamilton County and 1 in Covington, Kentucky). However, transfers between systems can be physically demanding and confusing for riders who have limited mobility or do not know their way around the city.

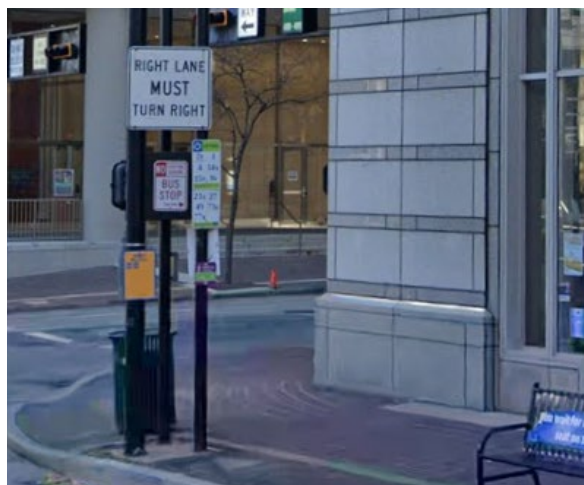


Figure 12: A shared METRO and TANK bus stop in Downtown Cincinnati (Sycamore and 4<sup>th</sup>).

### Examples:

- The NEORide Consortium is helping the [Cleveland Coordination Committee](#) determine how to best coordinate and consolidate transit signage in the City of Cleveland. This will help transit riders access five transit systems that provide service to and from Cleveland.
- The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) in Florida has opened a downtown regional transportation center that has space for fixed-route and BRT buses, regional shuttles, paratransit, rideshare, bike share, taxis, and transportation network companies (TNCs). Amenities include publicly accessible restrooms and café, meeting and incubator space for non-profit agencies, and transit customer service and security. There is also a covered walkway above the street to connect the center with an intercity bus terminal used by Greyhound, Megabus, and other intercity services.
- Los Angeles's Union Station serves as a regional transportation hub with connections between LA Metro, Amtrak, Greyhound, Metrolink regional rail, the LAX Flyaway Shuttle, Megabus, taxis, TNCs, and ZipCar. LA Metro platforms and the bus terminal are equipped with user-friendly wayfinding signage to help passengers navigate transfers.

### Implementation Recommendations:

Identify potential regional transfer locations and complete a study of opportunities for accessibility and wayfinding improvement.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Coordinate and Expand Service Availability Throughout the Region* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy is not dependent on any other recommended strategy.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy could be implemented in one to two years.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$\$ = between \$50,000 and \$200,000.

## Implement a Regionally Accepted ADA Eligibility Program

The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) ensures that individuals with disabilities are not excluded from, denied the benefits of, or subject to discrimination in any programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. The regulations define criteria for determining whether individuals with disabilities are ADA paratransit eligible based on their ability to use fixed-route services - if they are unable to use or navigate the transit system independently or are unable to reach a boarding point or destination.

SORTA, TANK, and BCRTA are the only agencies in the region operating regular fixed-route services and are required to provide complementary paratransit service. Each agency has its own eligibility office and requirements. These agencies have talked about creating regional eligibility forms and processing in the past.

The ADA regulations state that each public entity shall treat as eligible for its complementary paratransit service, all visitors who present documentation that they are ADA paratransit eligible in the jurisdiction in which they reside. The service must be made available for any combination of 21 days during any 365-day period beginning with the visitor's first use of the service during the 365-day period.

### Examples:

- a. Led by the North Central Texas Council of Governments, three transit agencies (DART, The T, and DCTA) in the Dallas/Fort Worth area developed a regionally accepted certification for clients eligible under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Today, customers in the region are required to complete the certification process only once. Each transit agency recognizes the certifications of the other agencies, greatly reducing administrative efforts.
- b. Most of the transit agencies in the San Francisco Bay area use the same ADA paratransit application form, follow a common certification process, and recognize the certifications of other agencies.

### Implementation Recommendations:

Compare eligibility forms and processes, develop, and implement a regional program.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Coordinate and Expand Service Availability Throughout the Region* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy is not dependent on any other recommended strategy.

**Anticipated implementation:** This strategy could be implemented within a year.

**Cost estimate scale:** \$ = less than \$50,000.



Figure 13: San Francisco paratransit brochure

## Expand the Mobile Fare Application for Use on Paratransit and to More Agencies

Multi-agency regional fare applications have demonstrated considerable benefits to passengers and transit agencies alike. The applications have improved the convenience of riding transit while reducing the overall trip cost. They provide better data on transit travel patterns for transit agencies while reducing the cost and risks of cash handling. Regional fare applications also allow for incentives, loyalty programs, discounted fares, sponsored fares, and expanded partnerships with employers and human service agencies.

In the Greater Cincinnati Region, the Transit App is currently available only for SORTA, TANK, and Butler County's fixed routes services. The Transit App helps people plan their trip, transfer between systems, and pay for their trip. The cost to use multiple systems is still steep. A monthly Metro/TANK pass is \$105. A \$5-day pass has recently been implemented to make it more affordable for somebody using multiple services for a short time. A new scanner system to read the passes is currently being installed on all buses.

Paratransit and reduced fare options are not yet available on the Transit App. The system is account-based and may have the capability to do that as well as fare capping and gamification. An expansion of the App to other transit agencies and to on-demand and paratransit services would help manage cost allocation between providers and expand mobility options for residents in the entire region. This could be especially beneficial for Clermont Transportation Connection and Catch-A-Ride who do not have fareboxes or electronic ticketing methods. Passengers in Butler County can use the BCRTA BGo App (created by Ecolane) to book and pay for their ADA or BGo trips using a credit or debit card.

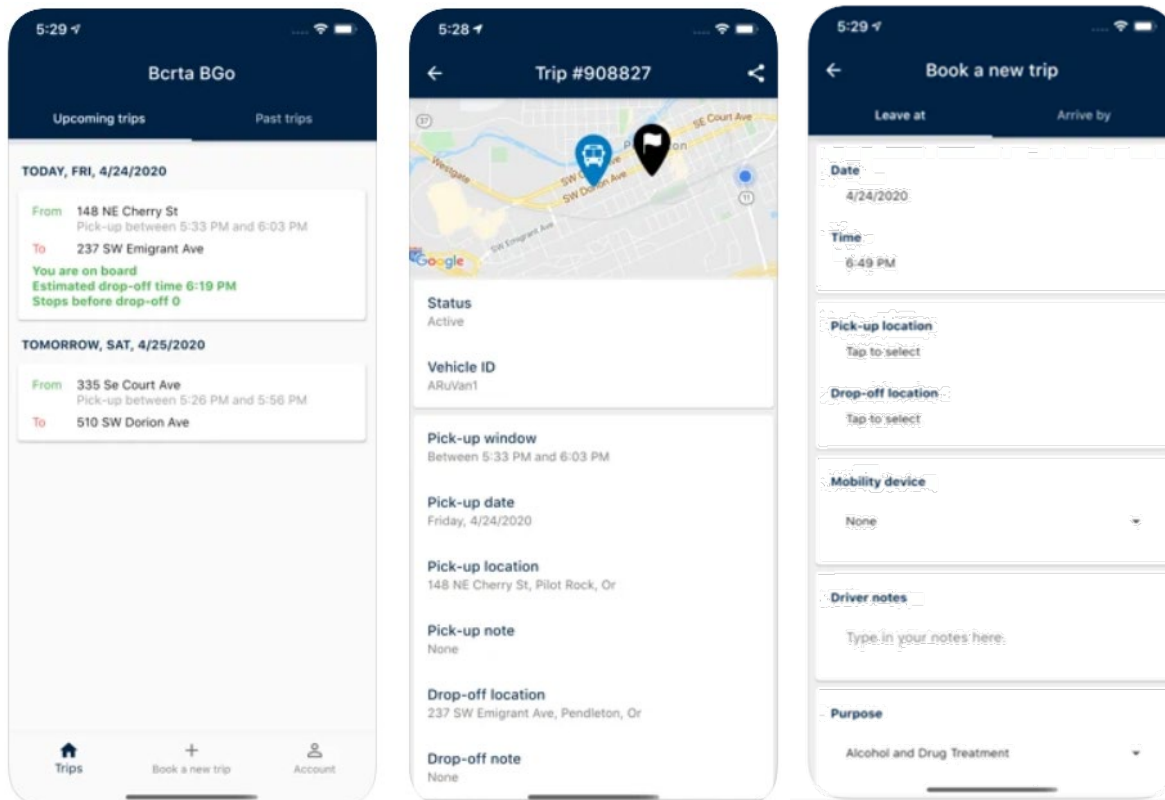


Figure 14:  
Images of  
the BCRTA  
BGo App on  
an iPhone

Examples:

- a. Seattle's One Regional Card for All (ORCA) regional pass can be used on Community Transit, Everett Transit, King County Metro, King County Water Taxi, Kitsap Transit, Monorail, Pierce Transit, Seattle Streetcar, and Sound Transit. These diverse operators accept the ORCA card on their buses, ferries, rail cars, and paratransit vehicles. Each operator has its own fare structure, from distance or zone-based fares to flat fares or fares that vary by peak and off-peak times of the day.
- b. Los Angeles has a virtual fare payment, trip-finding, multimodal program information system that can be used on 26 different transportation providers including bike-share programs. Named Tap LA, the system can be used on smartphones and smartwatches. The application is available for reduced fares for students, seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income riders.

*Implementation Recommendations:*

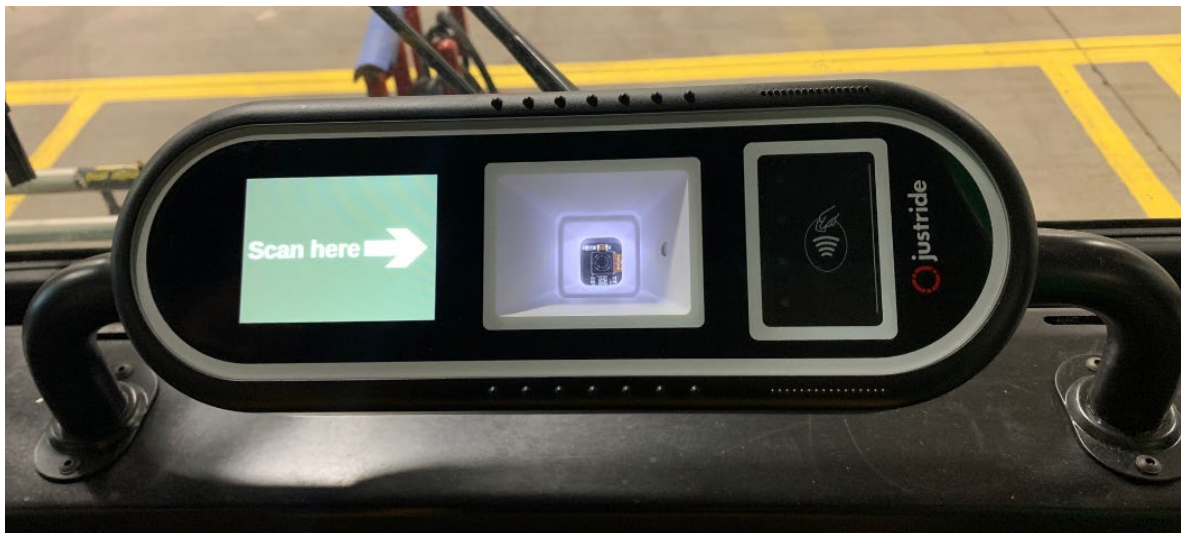
1. Complete a study on the cost/benefits of using the fare application on paratransit service.
2. Meet with Clermont and Catch-A-Ride staff to discuss the potential system expansion.
3. Work with vendors to obtain quotes for additional app programs (incentives, loyalty programs, and discounted fares) and inclusion of human service agency transportation services.

**Goal:** This strategy supports the *Integrate New Technologies Regionally* goal.

**Project dependencies:** This strategy is not dependent on any other recommended strategy. However, it can help support the implementation of a unified scheduling system and a One Call Regional Platform.

**Anticipated implementation:** Because the mobile fare application is already implemented in three systems, it is likely that this strategy could be implemented in one to two years.

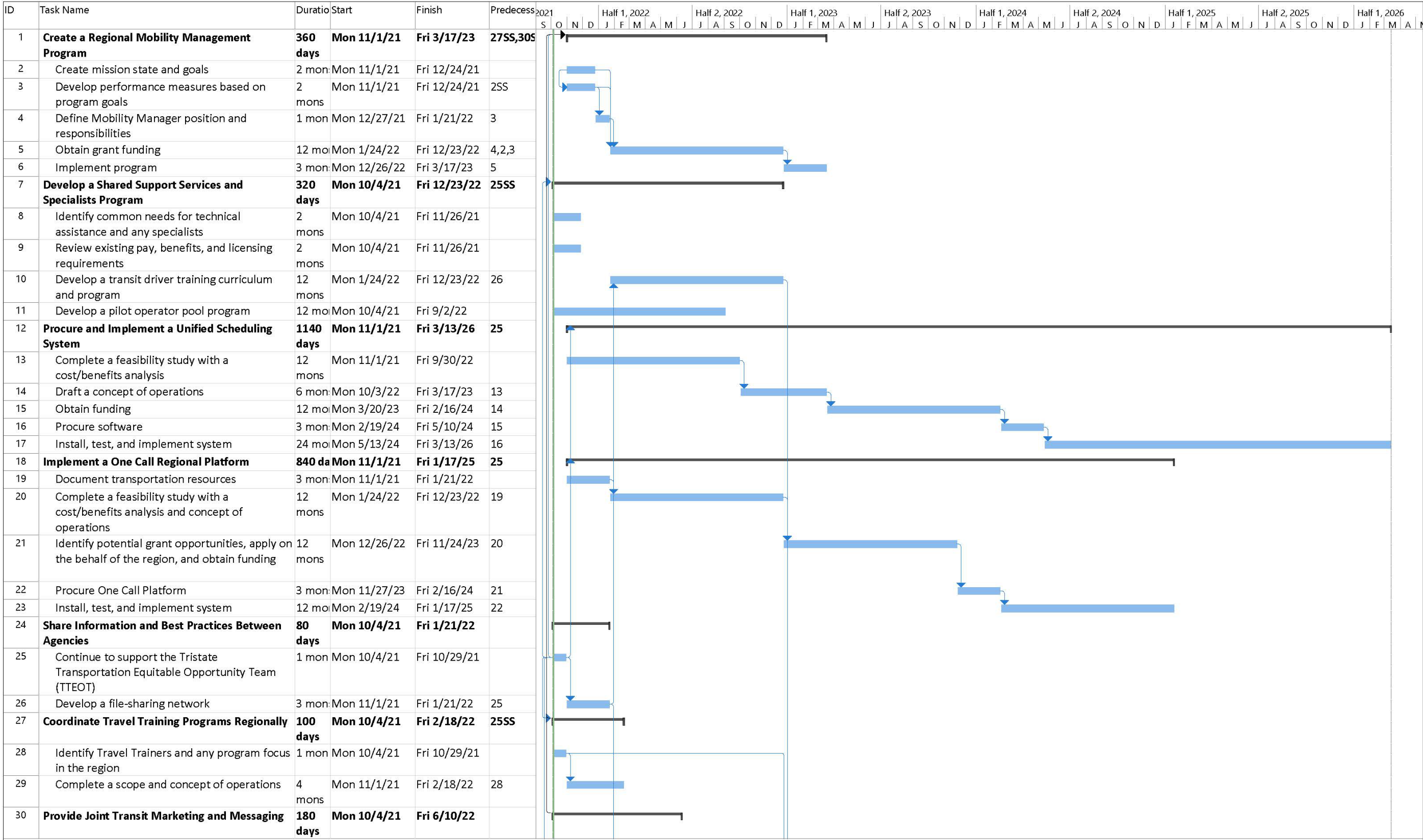
**Cost estimate scale:** \$\$ = between \$50,000 and \$200,000.



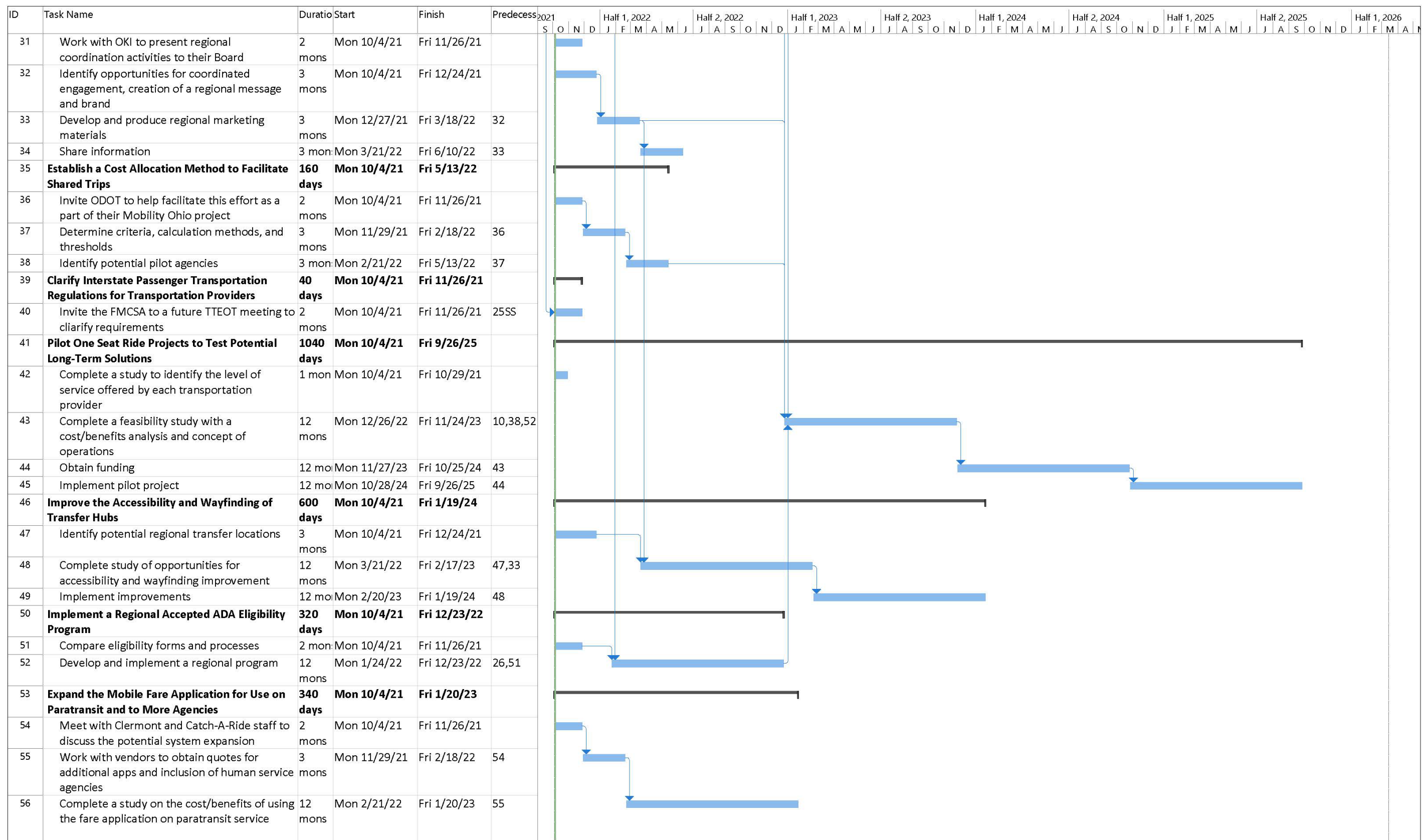
*Figure 15: Photo of a fare validator on a bus*



Paratransit Coordination Schedule Strategies are listed in priority order







## Paratransit Coordination Cost Estimate

Task	Min	Existing	\$10,000	\$50,000	\$200,000
	Max	Resources	\$50,000	\$200,000	\$2,000,000
<b>Create a Regional Mobility Management Program</b>					
Create mission state and goals		X			
Develop performance measures based on program goals		X			
Define Mobility Manager position and responsibilities		X			
Obtain grant funding		X			
Implement program				X	
<b>Develop a Shared Support Services and Specialists Program</b>					
Identify common needs for technical assistance and any specialists		X			
Review existing pay, benefits, and licensing requirements		X			
Develop a transit driver training curriculum and program			X		
Develop a pilot operator pool program			X		
<b>Procure and Implement a Unified Scheduling System</b>					
Complete a feasibility study with a cost/benefits analysis			X		
Draft a concept of operations			X		
Obtain funding		X			
Procure software		X			
Install, test, and implement system					X
<b>Implement a One Call Regional Platform</b>					
Document transportation resources		X			
Complete a feasibility study and cost/benefits analysis			X		
Draft a concept of operations			X		
Obtain funding		X			
Procure One Call Platform		X			
Install, test, and implement system				X	
<b>Share Information and Best Practices Between Agencies</b>					
Continue to support the TTEOT		X			
Develop a file-sharing network		X			
<b>Coordinate Travel Training Programs Regionally</b>					
Identify Travel Trainers and any program focus		X			
Complete a scope and concept of operations		X			

Task	Min	Existing Resources	\$10,000	\$50,000	\$200,000
	Max		\$50,000	\$200,000	\$2,000,000
Provide Joint Transit Marketing and Messaging					
Present regional coordination activities to OKI Board		X			
Identify opportunities		X			
Develop and produce regional marketing materials			X		
Share information		X			
Establish a Cost Allocation Method to Facilitate Shared Trips					
Invite ODOT to help facilitate this effort		X			
Determine criteria, calculation methods, and thresholds			X		
Identify potential pilot agencies		X			
Clarify Interstate Passenger Transportation Regulations for Transportation Providers					
Invite the FMCSA to a future TTEOT meeting		X			
Pilot One Seat Ride Projects to Test Potential Long-Term Solutions					
Identify the level of service offered by each provider		X			
Complete a feasibility study			X		
Obtain funding		X			
Implement pilot project				X	
Improve the Accessibility and Wayfinding of Transfer Hubs					
Identify potential regional transfer locations		X			
Complete study of opportunities			X		
Implement improvements				X	
Implement a Regional Accepted ADA Eligibility Program					
Compare eligibility forms and processes		X			
Develop and implement a regional program		X			
Expand the Mobile Fare Application for Use on Paratransit and to More Agencies					
Meet with Clermont and Catch-A-Ride staff		X			
Obtain quotes		X			
Study cost/benefits			X		

Task	Min	Existing Resources	\$10,000	\$50,000	\$200,000
	Max		\$50,000	\$200,000	\$2,000,000
<b>Count</b>		28	11	4	1
<b>Cost Estimate</b>		\$0	\$550,000	\$800,000	\$2,000,000
<b>Total Estimate</b>		<b>\$3,350,000</b>			