Building a Mobility Management Network: Characteristics and Considerations

April 2022

Introduction

The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) supports the design and implementation of mobility management networks at the state and regional levels through the provision of technical assistance. As indicated in the adjacent text box, mobility management networks reflect the unique organizations and perspectives of the state launching the network. Furthermore, the technical assistance that NCMM provides varies depending on state needs, but most commonly, states that are launching mobility management networks receive technical assistance and supports that include:

> A **Mobility Management Network** is comprised of the agencies, organizations, and/or participants who lead efforts to improve integration across mobility options; make public and private transit more attractive and easier to use, especially for people with disabilities; identify innovative solutions; as well as reduce and re-distribute travel demand to help unlock the capacity of transport systems.

- Providing one-on-one consultation through NCMM Regional Liaisons.
- Encouraging peer-to-peer learning by facilitating relationships across states.
- Developing implementation tools such as environmental scan documents.
- Sharing relevant Federal documents that relate to coordination and mobility management.

Some states such as Connecticut, New Hampshire, Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin have developed their mobility management networks based on the tenets and structure of their state's human services transportation coordination plans. The HST work becomes the foundation for the state's mobility management network, that in some respects, enables the state to operationalize or "put into action" the state's coordination goals and objectives.

Mobility Management to Operationalize Human Services Coordinated Transportation (HST) Plans

Mobility management is active and creates and promotes shared learning, problem-solving, and solution development. Mobility management networks and mobility managers can facilitate the implementation of HST plans by:

- Ensuring that there is opportunity to engage the people and organizations highlighted in HST plans.
- Using the data and research outcomes that characterize the plan.
- Sharing recommendations offered in an HST plan.
- Capturing outcome data regarding the impacts of mobility solutions suggested in the plan.
- Contributing to the development of plans.
- Reducing the duplication of human service transportation services.
- Identifying and suggesting solutions to correct regional and local service gaps.

- Serving as a central repository of information and resources to address HST plan needs and goals.

Typically, Metropolitan Planning Councils or Regional Councils are responsible for HST plan development, although, this is not the case in some states. For instance, in the Chicagoland area of Illinois, the HST plan is developed and administered by the [Regional](#) [Transportation Authority (RTA).](#) In other states, such as Minnesota, [the state DOT and](#) [partners](#) across state agencies develop and administer the plan, or as is the case in Rhode Island, the [Rhode Island Public Transit Authority,](#) as the designated recipient of FTA Section 5310 funds and a transit provider may also be responsible for the plan. [To access](#) [HST plans](#), NCMM maintains links to HST plans around the country.

Regardless of the entity responsible for the plan, the content, people, and recommendations outlined in an HST plan can be valuable to launching a mobility management network. This characteristic, along with the following attributes appear to be key influencers in a state's work to design and implement a network.

Characteristics and Attributes of Launching a Mobility Management Network

- ☐ **Integrate planning activities across topics**. States such as Vermont and New Hampshire reviewed plans developed for non-transportation purposes to identify overlaps and opportunities for collaboration. As mobility managers leaders anticipated the activities characterized by the network, they reviewed recommendations from other plans such as healthy aging plans, ADA Transition Plans, public health plans, and others to build recommendations and related activities for mobility managers.

- ☐ **Engage partners and stakeholders.** As mobility management professionals build networks, it is important to have the perspectives and voices of many, including people with lived experience. In human service sectors, to access social services, the field often describes, "there is no wrong door" – meaning individuals who need services can access these services through multiple ways and a variety of forums. This same attribute can apply to partner and stakeholder engagement. There is no wrong partner or stakeholder. The trick is to make participation compelling for this broad range of participants.

- ☐ **Invite the participation of state and regional agency partners**. In many of the technical assistance sites in which NCMM worked, mobility management professionals solicited the participation of non-DOT partners. For instance, in NH, the state lead representing Rural and Primary Health, and the Administration on Children and Families were active in contributing to the state and regional mobility

management network. The following considerations and practices were important to engaging non-DOT partners:

- o Articulate the "why" of partner involvement. How does the engagement of a non-DOT partner contribute to this work? What is the value or ROI of their participation for their constituents? States such as Indiana, Oklahoma, Ohio, and New Hampshire worked closely to develop a message of engagement that clearly communicated why the participation of colleagues from across sectors was valuable.

- o Define Roles and Value Contribution. New Hampshire asked their HHS partners to contribute to the mobility management process in substantiative ways. This active participation led to the agency to support funding mobility managers. Partners helped convene their audiences to participate in the mobility management network and support training. For instance, in New Hampshire, ACL convened its TANF counselors to partner with regional mobility managers to identify opportunities and strategies to work together to address the transportation needs of individuals receiving TANF benefits. The relationship between TANF and mobility managers was publicized through various forums, acknowledging the work that the two groups was doing together.

- o Rely on Federal resources and tools regarding the [Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility](#) (CCAM). CCAM can be a strong motivator for states and regions to collaborate across state and regional agencies. For instance, in Ohio, the statewide mobility manager uses the resources produced by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to provide training to mobility managers across the state on practices related to Federal fund braiding and incidental use. The network has invited the participation of national entities, such as NCMM, to provide professional development, and readily shares any updated CCAM-related materials to further the knowledge of the states' mobility managers. In other states, such as Virginia, the mobility management network has used FTA tools such as the [Program Inventory,](#) to review state agency grant programs to identify opportunities for collaboration.

☐ **Implement coalition-building forums**. [Health by Design,](#) a leader in Indiana in helping the state consider launching a mobility management network held a [statewide summit](#) to kick-off plans to implement a statewide mobility management network. A planning team, including human services organizations, metropolitan planning organizations, state agencies such as the Governor's Council for People

with Disabilities and the State Independent Living Council, and NCMM, were catalysts in this work. The forum served to educate and inform diverse audiences about the viability of a network to address transportation access and gaps in Indiana. Among other states implementing a forum or summit to engage stakeholders were Maine ([Moving Maine](#)), Missouri ([MO Rides](#)), and [New](#) [Hampshire](#).

☐ **Implement a mobility management strategic plan or roadmap**. In New Hampshire, a key to the state's launch of its mobility management network was a plan or [blueprint](#) for the "what, how, and who" attributes of the mobility management network. The plan was developed and approved by a heterogeneous group of mobility management stakeholders and will be used as a guide for the state as the work advances. Developing a mission and values for the network, as is the case for the Wisconsin Association of Mobility Managers, is an important foundation for the work.

☐ **Establish timelines**. A blueprint or roadmap can include milestones and timelines. These points are important to serve as benchmarks to progress. Establishing a timeframe can also service as a catalyst for activity, since in some ways, the work to build a network, and progress, can be assessed using this schedule. What we learned is that there is not a common timeline for doing this work. For instance, in some places, even after two years, the work continues to advance. There may be bumps in the road that can impede the attainment of milestones – some of these bumps may be out of the network's control. For instance, leadership changes at the state level, or turnover of the network leadership, might challenge a timeline. However, the mobility management leaders would be quick to say – persevere – don't give up!

☐ **Garner multi-level state participation**. NCMM conducted a 2018 study of [statewide mobility management networks](#) to identify key attributes or features of networks. We followed this study up with more in-depth interviews of key state contacts who provided overview information about the network. Entitled *[Statewide](#) [Mobility Management: Factors Affecting the Creation and Success of Networks](#)*, we learned that in 60% of the states interviewed, the mobility management networks were created through the initiative of a state government department or agency, and that state agency continues to be active and engaged in mobility management activities. This finding about the importance of state agency participation is confirmed in many of our technical assistance activities regarding building mobility management networks. The support of a state agency can be a critical catalyst toward launching a network, as is the case in Connecticut, Maine, or Vermont.

Conversely, limitations in a state's participation – regardless of reason, can delay moving forward with a mobility management network.

Fortunately, national policy initiatives, such as the [Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM)](), have created heightened regard for the support of transportation service across Federal sectors. NCMM Regional Liaisons encourage the participation of multi-state agencies in building mobility management networks. We leverage Federal guidance on CCAM, and its funding, braiding, and incidental use policies to support departments of transportation in states to invite the participation of their sister state agencies. For instance,

- o Health & Human Services (HHS). The importance of transportation to access health care can make it compelling for the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and their state counterparts to invest in transportation.
- o Labor (DOL). The significance of transportation to individuals securing meaningful and inclusive employment can prompt interest by the US Department of Labor and state affiliates to consider investments in transportation.
- o Education. When students with disabilities leave high school, they often cannot access higher education, or jobs because of transportation challenges.
- o Housing (HUD). A focus on public and Indian housing can strengthen the interest of housing professionals to build relationships with transportation planners and providers to facilitate access to community services by residents of public housing units.

A key for mobility management professionals is to create a compelling need for these diverse funding sources to invest in transportation. A case needs to be made that the populations served by these diverse agencies will benefit from the transportation investment. These opportunities for funding come through a variety of ways such as direct funding for capital including vehicles, voucher programs to participants and riders, or using funds from across Federal agencies, called braiding funds. The [CCAM tools]() developed by the FTA are useful in identifying Federal programs that can support transportation, and obtain guidelines about the Federal braiding provisions allowable by FTA and other Federal agencies. States with advanced mobility management networks appear to garner and sustain the support of state or regional agencies, and their programs and grantees, beyond transportation departments.

Funding can also come from non-Federal resources such as private businesses, foundations, or philanthropies. In one mid-western state, Minnesota, a large family-owned business in the northern part of the state provided an agency with the funds to support the

launch of a regional mobility management network. In some national philanthropic efforts, foundations will fund programs that focus on building community well-being and economic prosperity. Transportation, as a [social determinant of health (SDOH),](#) certainly can lead to this economic and community well-being. Mobility management professionals need to help funders "see the connections" – relying on the ROI as the impetus for the investment.

Conclusion

This information brief is based on the specific technical assistance experience and activities of one NCMM Regional Liaison. And as has been said, mobility management is so variable and unique to a state or region, that when considering some of the attributes described above, mobility management professionals need to align solutions with their own circumstances and conditions. Those of us in the mobility management field always say there is not a one-size approach to mobility management. And this holds true with the factors identified in this brief. We hope this can be a beginning to your journey to launch a viable and sustainable statewide or regional mobility management network. Other tools produced by NCMM such as its [information briefs](#) and [e-learning training](#) can be valuable complements to this product.

Resources

The following FTA-funded national technical assistance centers can provide free support and resources to help improve mobility options for individuals and communities.

- ☐ **National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP).** https://www.nationalrtap.org/. Call for resources and info: 1-888-589-6821 or email: info@nationalrtap.org. This center supports the Grants for Rural Areas Program.
- ☐ **National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM).** https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/ phone: 1-866-846-6400 email: info@nc4mm.org. This center supports mobility management, which means helping communities and individuals create and manage their mobility options. NCMM supports grantees, mobility managers, and partners in promoting customer- centered mobility strategies that advance good health, economic vitality, self- sufficiency, and community.
- ☐ **National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC).** https://www.nadtc.org/ phone: 1-866-983-3222 email: contact@nadtc.org. This center supports the Grants for Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program.
- ☐ **National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT**). https://n-catt.org/. The mission of this center is to translate emerging transportation technologies for states and localities across the United States. Contact us: https://n-catt.aura-software.com/contact/.
- ☐ **Shared Use Mobility Center (SUMC).** https://sharedusemobilitycenter.org/. The Shared-Use Mobility Center is a public-interest organization dedicated to achieving equitable, affordable, and environmentally sound mobility across the US through the efficient sharing of transportation assets. By connecting the public and private sectors, piloting programs, conducting new research, and providing policy and technical expertise to cities and regions, SUMC seeks to extend the benefits of shared mobility for all. Contact us: info@sharedusemobilitycenter.org.