



NEWS

July 6, 2001

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TRANSPORTATION PLAN TO HELP WELFARE FAMILIES REACH JOBS, SCHOOLS, CHILDCARE AND HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

A major \$12.2 million pilot transportation plan forged between MTA and L.A. County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) that will help welfare recipients find and keep jobs, as well as meet other important needs, has been approved by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors.

"This is a victory for thousands of people in Los Angeles County who want to end a cycle, that sometimes lasts generations, of poverty and despair," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, former MTA Board chair. "In many cases a lack of transportation prevented people from moving ahead with their lives, and now this will be remedied. Both the MTA and DPSS should be applauded for their efforts."

Open-ended communications and careful coordination between MTA and DPSS, which received guidance from a policy advisory committee made up of executive management from public and non-profit social service agencies to provide policy direction, resulted in recognition that public transportation must be incorporated into DPSS strategic planning and would improve access to jobs, schools, health and child care facilities.

"I'm proud to say that Los Angeles County is once again on the cutting edge of creative human service initiatives," said Steven J. Golightly, DPSS Interim Director. "The plan is a result of a unique partnership between

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DPSS and the MTA. It presents an historic opportunity to enhance transportation options for our participants, so they can take advantage of wider job searches, greater access to better paying jobs, the ability to get to childcare, to keep medical appointments, and many other elements crucial to a family's self-sufficiency."

Funding for the Welfare to Work Transportation Plan — also developed with input from faith and community-based organizations and other health and human service agencies — included \$4.5 million in grant money the MTA received under the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Job Access and Reverse Commute program. The grants were matched by DPSS.

The plan builds upon the CalWORKS Transportation Need Assessment, the first phase of the plan, which determined the in-depth transportation needs of the participants and resulted in 10 specific proposals, five that deal with transportation-related projects.

There is a total of 107,000 eligible Welfare to Work families currently employed or seeking employment, out of which 63% are dependent on public transportation.

"This is a starting point for people trying to find their first job," continued Burke. The MTA and DPSS plan provides improved mobility for CalWORKS participants in those critical areas identified as being deficient."

Slated for phased implementation to be completed over the coming year, MTA will be implementing five individual public transportation projects. The following is a brief description of the projects:

- A 24-hour, 7-day-a-week safety net for welfare to work participants who encounter unexpected transportation needs including childcare, work requirements or a problem with regular transportation.
- Work with local transit providers and municipal operators to improve safety for riders who use public transit in late evening or night.

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- Provide multi-passenger vehicles to CalWORKS participants involved in a job search and do not have access to a personal vehicle.
- Improve existing service provided by shuttles, vanpools and other supplemental transit services to improve access to work, childcare and health care in areas where demand is the highest plus developing creative solutions.
- Implementation of two pilot programs for three years to make vehicles available to eligible CalWORKS participants to use for trips that are not viable on public transportation including job training or job search, commuting to work, medical trips or childcare.

"The multi-agency input was pivotal in providing policy guidance, addressing long-term solutions and recommendations to the transportation planning process," said MTA Planning and Programming Executive Officer Jim de la Loza. "The ongoing support also promoted the sustainability of the pilot programs if proven successful."

"From the MTA's perspective, we're trying to expand our role as a coordinator of services that improve mobility for social service clients," added de la Loza "This fits in very well with our countywide planning responsibilities."

De la Loza went on to state that the collaboration with DPSS has led to discussions with other L.A. County agencies that have the same need to improve access to jobs, healthcare, schools and specialized training programs.

MTA, in conjunction with other public agencies, has been asked to return to the L.A. County Board of Supervisors in November and report on how the Needs Assessment findings will impact future transit plans in the county.