

Chapter 4

Strategies to Improve Transportation for Target Populations

4.1 The Context for Strategy Development

As a metropolitan planning agency, OKI is responsible for long range transportation planning as well as for developing a coordinated plan for transportation services to target populations, and work on both plans was undertaken during the same time period. While the purpose of the OKI 2050 Regional Transportation Plan is to improve the transportation system for the entire population of the region, and the focus of the OKI Coordinated Plan is to improve transportation for target populations in the region, the broad goals of the OKI 2050 Plan were also considered as this Plan was developed. As additional strategies to improve specialized transportation are identified, they should be consistent with these regional transportation goals:

Figure 4-1: OKI 2050 Regional Transportation Plan Goals

- **Safety**
- **Infrastructure Condition**
- **Mobility and Congestion**
- **Environmental Sustainability**
- **Economic Vitality**

Safety

The transportation system should work to reduce the risk of crashes that cause death or injuries. The plan will consider recommendations to address problem crash locations for all travel modes, with the goal of reducing vehicle accidents.

Infrastructure Condition

This plan's foundation is preserving and optimizing the region's existing transportation system and infrastructure. In addition to improvement projects to meet this goal, the 2050 Plan includes a roadway maintenance and transit operation budget.

Mobility and Congestion

This goal can also be referred to as System Performance or how well people and commodities can move with greater speed and less congestion to improve efficiency.

Environmental Sustainability

Strategies that promote the effective and efficient use of natural resources would reduce mobile source emissions, and they would benefit other environmental issues and quality of life. Transportation recommendations that increase green infrastructure and promote multimodal travel alternatives while reducing vehicle trips can help address this goal.

Economic Vitality

In addition to the four performance goals presented in MAP-21 and continued in The FAST Act, OKI has added a fifth goal of Economic Vitality. The transportation network can support the economic vitality of the region by enabling global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency.

4.2 Developing Strategies to Address Gaps and Needs

Strategies for improving transportation for target populations in the OKI region should address the service gaps and user needs identified in Chapter 3 if they are to be effective. As described previously, these gaps and needs were based on information obtained from geographic analysis, responses to the public survey and responses to the survey of agencies operating transportation services or social services for the target populations.

OKI developed strategies to address the gaps and needs with guidance from the 5310 Oversight Team, and by considering the 5310 Specialized Transportation Program, the primary federal funding program available to support Plan implementation. In addition to other eligible activities, the Specialized Transportation program provides federal funds for the purchase of equipment to support transportation services for the elderly and people with disabilities where existing transportation is unavailable, inappropriate, or insufficient.

Not all strategies are activities specifically eligible for funding under the existing programs, nor is it expected that sufficient funding will be available to achieve every strategy identified. In addition, regional stakeholders will need to provide support and commit to pursuing the strategies if they are to be accomplished. Nonetheless, these strategies have been tailored to seven primary gaps and needs identified in the OKI Region, as described below.

Identified Need #1:

To expand transportation availability to target populations throughout the region.

Strategies:

- Prioritize funding requests that expand existing providers' capabilities by increasing areas of affordable service and capacities to serve more individuals

Identified Need #2:

To improve transportation service to target populations through more coordination among providers.

Strategies:

- Establish a regional mobility management system to improve user access to services of transportation providers

- Continue support of the TriState Transportation Equitable Opportunity Team (TTEOT), a forum for transportation and social service providers and funding entities to network with one another, to share information about relevant programs and policies, and to identify opportunities for coordination
- Establish a coordinated and sustained resource for users to learn about opportunities/programs that could serve their needs
- Ensure coordination of projects/programs by requiring funding applicants to:
 - identify any other agencies in the service area for the proposed project and demonstrate an attempt to coordinate;
 - compare service hours and areas of nearby agencies with those that are being proposed in the application;
 - review and describe any impediments to coordination, such as funding or agency restrictions; and
 - document any coordination efforts

Identified Need #3:

To better serve people who use wheelchairs or who need physical assistance to travel.

Strategies:

- Prioritize funding for new vehicles capable of transporting an individual in a wheelchair
- Prioritize training programs for those serving disabled individuals (drivers, traveler’s aides, etc.)
- Prioritize projects including amenities at transit stops or vehicle pick-up areas for disabled individuals
- Improve connectivity to transit stops through surrounding communities and neighborhoods

Identified Need #4:

To operate transportation services for target populations on a schedule that is more reliable and more frequent than currently available, during late nights and weekends, and coordinated with work shifts.

Strategies:

- Prioritize funding for transportation providers who increase travel options for target populations during late nights and weekends
- Prioritize funding for transportation providers who increase travel options coordinated with second and third shift employment

Identified Need #5:

To increase the types of destinations offered to target populations.

Strategies:

- Prioritize funding for providers offering multiple destination types
- Prioritize funding for providers offering multiple destination types on a single trip

Identified Need #6:

To make fares more affordable for target populations.

Strategies:

- Support programs providing fare subsidies or vouchers to users
- Support programs and partnerships that enable more affordable services

Identified Need #7:

To better serve target populations for travel to/from jobs and job-related destinations (such as training programs).

Strategies:

- Prioritize programs that offer affordable fares to/from employment and job-training sites
- Prioritize funding for projects/programs that provide transportation for second and third shift employment
- Prioritize funding for projects/programs that provide transportation for weekend employment
- Prioritize funding for projects/programs that improve transportation to areas of concentrated employment and job centers

Identified Need #8:

To integrate new technologies that improve mobility service accessibility and/or reduce operating costs.

Strategies:

- Prioritize programs that include technology integration that improves system performance

4.3 Implementing Strategies to Address Gaps and Needs

Implementing these strategies should be considered a dynamic process subject to ongoing review by the Oversight Team and responsive both to new opportunities for funding and collaboration and to the development of new organizations and technologies.