



**COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT- HUMAN SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION PLAN
FOR BUTTE COUNTY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Submitted to:

**Butte County Association of Governments
Chico, CA.**

Submitted by:



Claremont, CA.

In Association with:



TRANSIT RESOURCE CENTER

Grass Valley, CA.

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COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT- HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR BUTTE COUNTY – Final Report

Executive Summary

A COORDINATED PLAN: MEETING A NEED

The Butte County regional transit authority provides a network of public transit routes and services linking three of the county's primary communities and several of its unincorporated population centers. Although the system is well-conceived and enjoys growing utilization, it is not equipped to meet specialized requirements of the county's substantial low-income, disabled and senior populations. As a result, those who rely on public transportation for non-emergency medical visits, mental health appointments, job training and interviews, and other trip purposes frequently are defeated by the size and largely rural character of the county.

This Plan assesses the challenge of providing point-to-point transportation for Butte County's at-risk populations and proposes an integrated solution to help meet the challenge. The coordinated, incremental approach would draw both from the resources and expertise of the B-Line authority as well as the knowledge and capabilities of the county's human services agencies. The result would be a new class of individualized but cost-effective transportation options that could significantly improve the mobility – and thus the health, welfare and economic status – of the county's most vulnerable citizens.

WHY IS THIS PLAN REQUIRED?

This Plan is prepared in response to the coordinated planning requirements of SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users, P.L. 190-059), set forth in three sections of the Act: Section 5316-*Job Access and Reverse Commute* program (JARC), Section 5317-*New Freedom* program and Section 5310-*Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities* program.

The Coordinated Plan establishes the framework for developing a unified comprehensive strategy for transportation service delivery in Butte County focused on unmet transportation needs of elderly individuals, persons with disabilities and individuals of low-income. The Coordinated Plan must contain the following four (4) required elements, as identified in the implementing circulars FTA C. 9070.1F, FTA C. 9050.1 and FTA C. 9045.1:

1. An **assessment of available services** identifying current providers (public and private);
2. An **assessment of transportation needs** for individuals with disabilities, older adults and persons with low incomes -- this assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on data collection efforts and gaps in service;
3. **Strategies and/or activities and/or projects** to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to improve efficiencies in service delivery;
4. **Priorities for implementation** based on resources (from multiple program sources), time and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

The Plan is prepared on behalf of the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG), the regional transportation planning agency that will oversee its implementation.

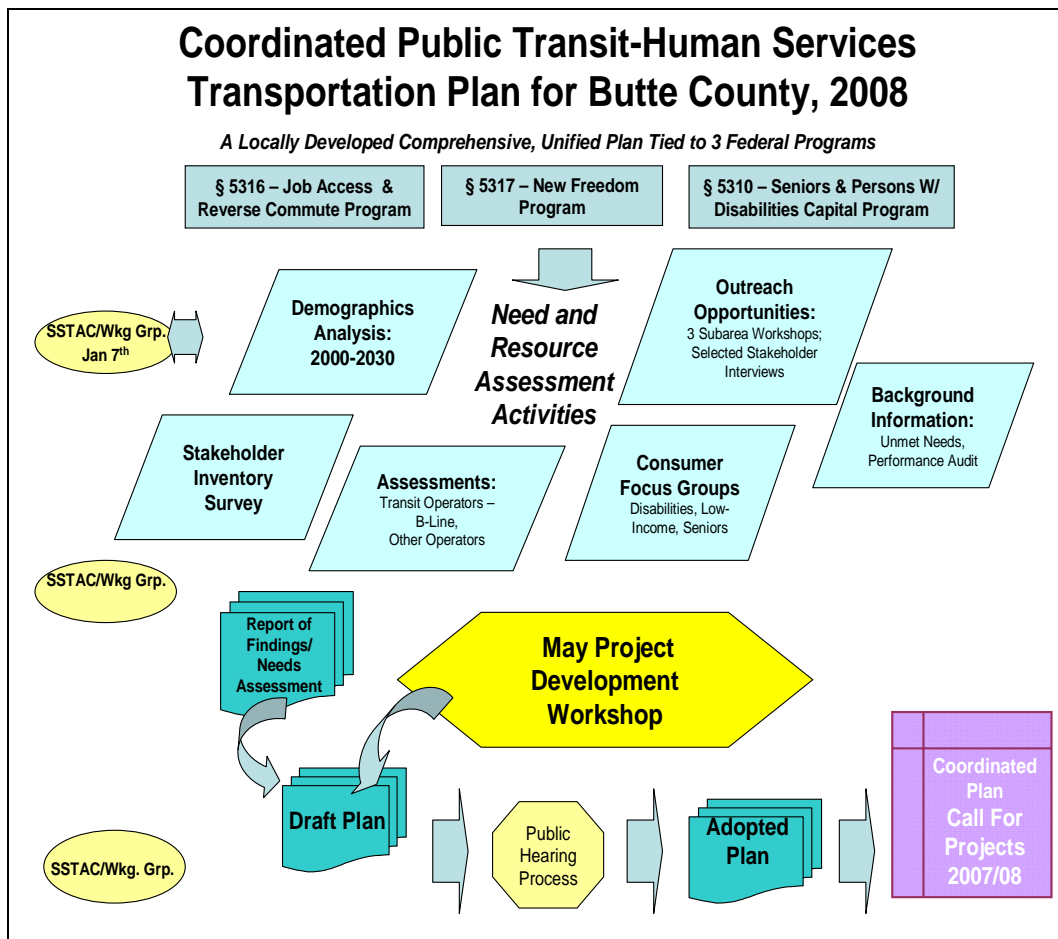
HOW WAS THIS PLAN DEVELOPED?

This Plan reports on efforts over a six-month timeframe to achieve three goals:

- To develop a **comprehensive, unified plan** that promotes the mobility of seniors, persons with disabilities and persons of low-income.
- To establish priorities to **incrementally improve mobility** for the target populations.
- To identify **partners interested, willing and able** to participate in longer-term projects and strategies prioritized by this plan.

Exhibit ES-1, which follows, depicts the Plan’s activities and process.

Exhibit ES-1



WHICH BUTTE COUNTY RESIDENTS NEED TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE?

Population estimates identified Butte County’s target population groups and projects the number of trips these persons potentially need. Detailed in Chapter 3 of the Plan, the U.S. census data detail specific subgroups, identifying **a range of 25,000 to 57,000 persons estimated as the countywide target population size**. These individuals are between ages 16 to 64 and are low-income or disabled or are seniors ages 65 and older. This range, estimated between 12 percent and 28 percent of Butte County’s 2000 population of 203,000 residents, assumes some overlap among the subgroups.

Population projections, based upon the California Department of Finance numbers, suggest that significantly increasing numbers of residents will be within the target population:

- By 2010, between 46,000 and 64,000 persons, up to 28 percent of projected 230,000 residents
- By 2020, between 57,000 and 79,000 persons, up to 28 percent of 281,000 residents
- By 2030, between 69,000 and 96,000 persons, up to 29 percent of 335,000 residents

Average trips per day were estimated for these target groups, suggesting the proportion of these trips that might present for public transit. Public transit trip need was also estimated as a range. Projected annual trip **needs of 752,000 to 2.2 million public transit trips** are estimated, based upon the 2000 Census population base. Contrasted with trips currently provided in FY 2007, B-Line reported almost 1.4 million trips on both paratransit and fixed-route transit; current total trips are approximately **in the middle of the projected range of total trips needed**.

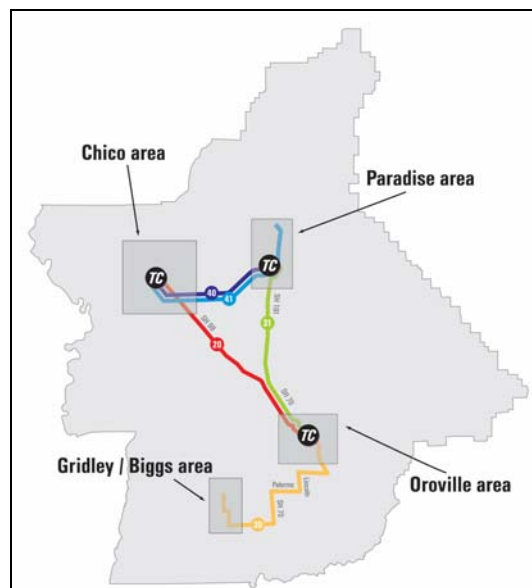
The Plan further hypothesizes that of total public transit trips needed, one in four trips, or 25 percent, requires special assistance. Special assistance could be paratransit or individualized services, or it could be information about fixed-route transit. From among the public transit trips potentially needed by the target populations, a projected **188,000 to 553,000 specialized transportation trips** are estimated as needed annually by the target populations. Contrasted with specialized transit trips of just below 400,000, current specialized transit trips provided sit squarely **within the range of projected specialized trips needed**.

Total trips provided are reported as 1.6 million passenger trips, across all modes and including public fixed-route, public paratransit and human service agencies. A breakdown of these 1.6 million trips – represented as 7.5 trips per capita – shows that demand response trips total almost 393,000 and account for 1.8 trips per capita. This current demand response level of 1.8 trips per capita is below the 2.7 trips per capita indicator of trips needed, but not impossibly so **as an increase of 200,000 trips annually could meet this projected demand level**.

What Public Transit Resources Now Exist?

Exhibit ES-2 shows the current footprint for the B-Line services, consolidated from the array of local community public transit programs that existed previously.

Exhibit ES-2, B-Line Countywide System Map, Spring 2008



Beginning in 2001, Butte County initiated consolidation of the multiple programs that made up public transit for its residents. Branded as B-Line, public transit services are now provided within the urban areas and between the urban areas of Chico and Oroville and Chico and Paradise, with some limited service to the rural areas, including Gridley/Biggs. The system-wide map shows the current reach of B-Line fixed-route services, with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services provided within Chico, Oroville, Paradise and Gridley.

In addition to B-Line services, a locally-operated dial-a-ride service, the Gridley Golden Feather Flyer, is available in that community to residents over age 62 or persons with a disability.

WHAT EMERGED FROM THE AGENCY SURVEY?

A survey of potential planning partners develops a picture of specialized transportation resources, needs and gaps in service for Butte County residents. As detailed in Chapter 4 of the Plan, the survey generated a 23 percent return rate with 69 agencies and organizations responding. Respondents included a good mix of public and private, for-profit and not-for-profit, including faith-based groups. One tribal organization participated.

Transportation functions of some type are reported by more than half of respondents (43 agencies-62 percent), including directly providing service, contracting for service, subsidizing bus passes and tokens, arranging for volunteer drivers or arranging transport for the consumer.

Vehicles reported numbered 233, of which 55 (24 percent) are in B-Line operations, 98 (42 percent) are operated by human services and 80 vehicles (34 percent) are reported by schools or commercial providers. Notably, of the vehicles reported by human service agencies, only one-third are lift-equipped, while 100 percent of the public transit vehicles are accessible and lift-equipped. Importantly, respondents indicate that 43 percent of reported vehicles must be replaced within two years and presumably larger numbers of these should be lift-equipped.

Trips provided by human service organizations annualized to 281,000, or 16 percent of total trips reported. B-Line trips accounted for 69 percent (1.2 million trips) and public schools, as well as commercial providers, reporting just under 10 percent (155,000) of all trips reported by this sample. Human service agency-provided trips were considerably longer than were the public transit trips, reflecting both the type and nature of these trips, often provided one-to-one and traveling distances between communities in contrast with public transit's shorter, more efficient trips.

Reported transportation needs found agreement on the top-ranked need across public transit, human services and private-sector organizations – **non-emergency medical trips ranked as the highest need by 64 percent of responding agencies**. After medical trip needs, human service agencies ranked the next top needs as counseling/mental health trips; shopping with multiple errands and trip-chaining needs; training, educationally oriented or job interview trips.

Top-ranked barriers to accessing needed transportation identified by responding agencies included:

- **Funding challenges** for directly operating or contracting for transportation.
- **Difficulty in working with public transit**, in terms of its reliability, and its rules and requirements that sometimes conflict with the individualized needs of consumers.
- **Public transit's availability**, e.g., when it operates and when it does not sometimes represents a mismatch with transit-dependent consumers' needs.
- **Agency restrictions**, due to structure or organizational limits that impact the ability to provide transportation.

- **Geography** of Butte County and the long distances required for some trips.
- **Information assistance** is needed, both to help frail consumers navigate services and to assist those new to public transit in finding their way.
- **Consumers' individualized needs** make it difficult to use available public transit. These needs include assistance in booking trips, gurney transportation and special help for individuals on dialysis or with behavioral health needs.

The highest ranked area of coordination interest, reported through the survey, and on behalf of all agencies was **centralized transportation information**.

Funding is of obvious interest to this review. For FY 2007, public transit expenditures countywide were \$11.9 million. Human service organizations reported \$5.5 million, with the largest proportion spent for direct operations, but also including support for mileage reimbursement, bus tokens and passes, and taxi vouchers. More than a quarter of the transportation-providing agencies, these all human services organizations, report significant funding from "soft money" sources that include fundraising, private donations and client fees. Substantive differences in the funding base exist where public transit reports stable, continuing sources that are likely to increase with time while human services funding, with such reliance upon donations and fees, is reportedly less likely to increase.

WHAT DID STAKEHOLDERS REPORT ABOUT MOBILITY NEEDS?

An extensive outreach process, depicted in ES-1, directly involved both agency representatives and consumers and is described in Chapter 5 of the Plan. Three workshops were held early across the county and a late countywide Project Development Workshop convened to report and discuss Plan findings. On-site interviews were conducted with representative agencies. Three consumer-focused discussion groups were held, with senior residents of Chico's Jarvis House, low-income individuals at the Jesus Center and participants in the Paradise Day Treatment Center. Twenty-two outreach opportunities involved almost 250 individuals who directly contributed to the Plan.

Outreach findings are summarized into the following key areas, with considerable detail reported in Chapter 5 of the Plan. These are:

1. **Issues with the public transit network** with need for increased frequency, increased coverage, improved reliability, improved customer service and easier information access.
2. **Requirements for additional services and more transportation assistance** than is currently available, including same-day service, non-emergency medical transportation, special shuttles and directed group trips.
3. **Affordability of transportation** is a significant challenge, particularly in light of rising fuel prices. Paying even the subsidized bus fare is very difficult for the lowest income individuals.
4. **Agency personnel needs** that include transit information and transit trip planning education for case workers and front-line staff who have little knowledge of B-Line services.
5. **Agency transportation provider needs** that include driver training, driver recruitment, insurance availability, vehicle replacement and brokered or shared-ride opportunities to improve availability and cost-effectiveness of services.
6. **Unserved areas of the county exist** that will never be effectively served by public transit but where multiple human service agencies have clients with mobility needs.

WHAT ARE THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS, SERVICE DUPLICATION AND GAPS?

All of the Plan data collection activities are discussed in Chapter 6 in terms of three dimensions:

1) Individualized needs of consumers, 2) organizational issues and requirements of human service agencies and public transit agencies, and 3) infrastructure issues. Duplication and service gaps in the transportation network were identified as:

- **Achieving efficient use of the many vehicles** operating daily across Butte County, estimated at 250 vehicles from survey respondents alone.
- Redefining the **role of public school transportation providers** in a coordinated service model.
- Recognizing that the **existing B-Line service footprint in Butte County is limited** by farebox requirements to achieve certain efficiencies, as required in State regulation, limiting responses to low-density areas of the County.
- Recognizing the **challenges of two very different service systems** – public transit and human services – which each share some responsibility for the mobility of the three target groups.
- Recognizing that **there is no infrastructure**, and limited mechanisms in place, to bring together those human service agencies with public transit to facilitate meeting some of these mobility needs.

What Funding Exists to Address These Mobility Needs?

Chapter 7 documents various funding sources. New funding available through Section 5316, *Job Access and Reverse Commute* program is approximately \$51,000 annually and through Section 5317, *New Freedom* program is approximately \$30,000, for a total of just over \$80,000 annually. These escalate slightly annually through 2010, the final year of the authorizing legislation, SAFETEA-LU. The continuing Section 5310 program has \$12 million available statewide, and Butte County applicants may be awarded between \$50,000 to \$150,000 annually through this competitive process.

Other transit Federal funding sources are identified, with an additional \$2 million annually in total. The important State funding source is the Transportation Development Act, providing an annual allocation estimated at \$6.8 million, the largest single source for public transit.

State and Federal funding to the human service agencies was detailed to the extent that this was reported or could be determined. Notably, the larger funding sources for transportation include the Department of Developmental Services (Far Northern Regional Center), Department of Education (secondary schools), Department of Rehabilitation and the Calworks/GAIN program. Additionally, the Tobacco Settlement Revenue (First Five) and Proposition 63-MSSP (Department of Behavioral Health) are providing some limited transportation funding.

Translating Needs Into Projects

Exhibit ES-3 following presents a matrix of needs by target population sub-group, suggesting strategies for translating these needs into projects eligible for JARC or New Freedom program funding of for the existing Section 5310 capital grant program for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Exhibit ES-3, Target Population Transportation Needs, Resources & Possible Responses

Target Population	Special Transportation Needs and Concerns	Transportation Modes	Potential Transit or Transportation Projects/ Solutions
Seniors, Able-Bodied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of knowledge about resources - Concern about safety and security - Awareness that time when driving might be limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fixed-route transit - Point deviation and deviated FR - Senior DAR - Special purpose shuttles: recreation, nutrition, shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single point of information - Educational initiatives, including experience with bus riding <u>before</u> it is needed - Buddy programs; assistance in “trying” transit - Transit fairs, transit seniors-ride-free days or common pass
Seniors, Frail and Persons Chronically Ill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assistance to and through the door - Assistance with making trip arrangements - On-time performance and reliability critical to frail users - Assistance in trip planning needed - Need for shelters - Need for “hand-off” for very frail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ADA Paratransit - Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation - Escort/Companion - Volunteer drivers - Special purpose shuttles - Mileage reimbursement service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Escorted transportation options - Door-through-door assistance; outside-the-vehicle assistance - Increased role for volunteers - Technology that provides feedback both to consumer and to dispatch; procedures to identify frailest users when traveling - Individualized trip planning and trip scheduling assistance - Expanded mileage reimbursement program - Driver sensitivity training - Appropriately placed bus shelters
Persons with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service quality and reliability - Driver sensitivity and appropriate passenger handling procedure - Concerns about wheelchair capacity on vehicles/ pass-bys - Need for shelters - Sometimes door-through-door or issues of “hand-off” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fixed-route transit - ADA Paratransit - Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation - Special purpose shuttles - Escort/Companion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single point of information; information as universal design solution - Continuing attention to service performance; importance of time-sensitive service applications - Driver education and attention to procedures about stranded or pass-by passengers with disabilities - Aggressive program of bus shelters - Vehicles, capital replacement
Persons of Low-income and Homeless Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy access to trip planning information - Fare subsidies (bus tokens or passes) that can be provided in a medium that is not cash - Breaking down the culture of poverty that uses transportation as the difficulty for not moving about the community - Difficulties of mothers with multiple children - Need to bring along shopping carts - Difficulties with transfers within and between systems; long trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fixed-route transit - Point deviation and deviated FR - Special purpose shuttles (work, training, special education, Headstart, recreation) - Van pools, ride sharing, car sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creative fare options available to human services agencies - Increased quantity of bus passes available - Universal pass for services across county - Bus passes available to those searching for jobs or in job training programs; cost-effective - Special shuttles oriented to this population’s predictable travel patterns - Education about transit to case managers, workers with this population - Feedback to transit planners on demand; continued work to improve transit service levels (coverage, frequency, span of hours) - Training of staff to train consumers - Vanpool assistance, ride-sharing connections
Persons with Sensory Impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulty in accessing visual or auditory information - Possible door-to-door for visually impaired - Driver sensitivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fixed route transit - ADA Paratransit - Demand response - Volunteers/ mileage reimbursement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single point of information; information in accessible formats - Guides (personal assistance) through information - Driver training critical to respond to needs
Persons with Behavioral Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medications make individuals sun-sensitive and waiting in the sun is not an option. - Medications cause thirstiness; long hour waits can lead to dehydration. - Mental illnesses can make it frightening to be in public spaces. - Impaired judgment and memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fixed route transit - ADA Paratransit - Special purpose shuttles - Escort/Companion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possibly special shuttles oriented to these known predictable travel needs - Driver training projects to provide skills at managing/ recognizing behaviors of clients - Aggressive program of bus shelters - “Hand-off” can be critical for confused riders, passing them off to a responsible party - Important that driver understand rider conditions

Federal guidance suggests that coordination-friendly policies must be developed by regional public transit agencies and organizations to ensure that projects seeking funding can be incorporated into the regional Program of Projects (POP), the tool by which Federal funding is assured. Implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Plan's Chapter 8 will assist BCAG and other organizations in Butte County in establishing a "culture of coordination" to promote projects addressing needs this Plan identifies. The wide-ranging individualized needs emerging from agency staff, consumers and through analysis begin to suggest project responses, as identified in ES-3.

LEADING TOWARDS RECOMMENDATIONS

This Plan documents the characteristics of unmet need for transportation assistance in Butte County on behalf of persons who are low-income, are disabled or are elderly. Needs are considered in terms of:

- the characteristics of the consumers themselves and their highly individualized requirements;
- the geography of Butte County and its dispersed, rural areas and low-density communities; and
- the differing missions and regulatory requirements of two service industries: public transit and human services agencies and organizations.

It is this last issue, the different cultures of human services and public transit, that represents the greatest challenge as these organizations must come together in some fashion to build the capacity in Butte County toward addressing identified needs, growing the quantity and quality of trips provided. It is presumed that coordinated solutions that lie between public transit and the human services systems can result in the cost-effective, responsive services required. To build such expanded capacity, both public transit and human services agencies must be active partners in larger capacity-building effort.

Particularly challenging to Butte County, as with other largely rural counties, is that the SAFETEA-LU funding supporting coordination initiatives is modest. Chapter 8 of the Plan examines two key "tools" by which to promote such coordination. One is the Federal construct of **Mobility Management**, described in detail in the implementing circulars and funded as capital at the 80 percent Federal, 20 percent local match level. The second is California's Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA), provided for in the Transportation Development Act (TDA) and potentially eligible for 5 percent of TDA funding to the County. These "tools" are important to facilitating implementation of the Plan's recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This Plan sets forth a Vision statement and identifies three implementing goals, providing a framework for potential strategies and projects.

VISION: TO IMPROVE MOBILITY FOR BUTTE COUNTY SENIORS, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND PERSONS OF LOW-INCOME THROUGH COORDINATED PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS.

GOAL 1: FACILITATING LEADERSHIP AND INFRASTRUCTURE – The formation of a regional Mobility Manager/CTSA entity is recommended with decisions taken regarding the structure, organizational location, membership and funding to be developed. This Mobility Manager/CTSA provides the infrastructure necessary to further coordination of human service agency transportation and facilitates appropriate integration with B-Line's network of services.

GOAL 2: BUILDING SERVICES – Working collaboratively, the regional Mobility Manager, human service agencies and the B-Line can grow the capacity of existing services, develop and test new services and build creative mobility responses to gaps in the existing service fabric.

GOAL 3: ENHANCING INFORMATION PORTALS – The regional Mobility Manager/CTSA becomes a clearinghouse for information on transportation options, both human service transportation and public transit services. Expanded information roles could involve trip-arranging for the most frail populations and mobility training to teach all potential users, including youth, seniors and other transit-dependent persons how to use Butte County's public transit network.

Chapter 8 of the Plan includes a matrix further detailing these goals in terms of 12 objectives and 37 strategy areas for moving toward the proposed Vision. These strategies intend only to suggest potential projects, to further evolve as the County's response to this Coordinated Plan unfolds.

HOW TO PRIORITIZE AND SEQUENCE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS?

This Plan strongly recommends that BCAG and its strategic planning partners move forward expeditiously with decisions around a regional Mobility Manager/CTSA for Butte County. This is seen as the missing piece that can, to a significant degree, promote and nurture the coordination potential that exists in Butte County. This entity can provide the leadership necessary to leverage existing resources and to promote new efficiencies and cost-effective alternatives by which the needs documented in this Plan can be addressed.

BCAG can establish a process for decision-making around the Mobility Manager/CTSA structure, governance and funding base, as well as initial membership and functions. Potentially a modest organizational planning study is indicated. Any adopted structure should ensure a flexible, responsive organizational design that allows the Mobility Manager/CTSA functions and membership to develop with time.

The Federal circulars require that a competitive process be undertaken to identify and select those projects to which JARC and New Freedom funding should be directed. This is complicated for Butte County, again as with other small counties, where the total funding levels are modest, at no more than \$80,000 for the first funding year. Therefore, the following actions are proposed:

1. Recommend that BCAG seek discretionary funding to move to decisions regarding the regional Mobility Manager/CTSA organizational structure and related issues.
2. Recommend that either alternative funding such as TDA Article 4.5 be sought to fund the Mobility Manager or that no more than half of the annual JARC/New Freedom funding be used to underwrite the regional Mobility Manager.
3. Recommend a competitive Call be offered to BCAG's planning partners, inviting projects either in defined areas or left open to the interest and willingness of prospective applicants.
4. Recommend that BCAG enter into discussion with its own member agencies about providing graduated funding, based upon TDA Article 4.5 provisions for those who cannot use conventional transit, to establish a baseline operations budget for the CTSA. Such graduated funding levels could accommodate very modest beginning initiatives that might grow subsequently.

Each of these actions involves considerable implementation detail. All of BCAG's planning partners concerned with the content of this Plan are encouraged to participate and to assist with the steps that this will entail, as appropriate to each organization. Notably, where reallocation of resources is involved, it is a complicated and difficult process at best, and more so when the statewide budget picture is not favorable. Making choices among equally worthy alternatives requires developing consensus and supporting policy makers in moving forward.