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Edward J. Bloustein School of
Planning and Public Policy



Alan M.
Voorhees
Transportation
Center



CONNECTING TO JOBS BY CONNECTING TO TRANSIT

Final Report
December 2012



**Connecting to Jobs
By
Connecting to Transit**

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2012**

Written by:

Andrea Lubin

Stephanie DiPetrillo

Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

33 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

&

Louis Hoffman

NJ TIP Inc.

5-S Regent Street, Suite 528, Livingston, NJ 07039

Additional contributions by:

Betsy Harvey, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center

Prepared for:

New Jersey Department of Human Services

Division of Disability Services

P.O. Box 700, Trenton, New Jersey 08625

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 - The Arc of New Jersey;
 - Jewish Vocational Service of MetroWest New Jersey; and
 - Samost Jewish Family and Children's Service of Southern New Jersey.

And to persons with disability in New Jersey and throughout the country who are often striving to surmount many obstacles to achieve their goal of securing employment – we hope moving forward that the Connect to Transit program will help reduce the prevalence of transportation issues functioning as one of those obstacles to your employment opportunities.

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CHAPTER 1

STUDY OVERVIEW

Introduction

During an 18-month period, the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers University, in collaboration with the nonprofit, travel training entity NJTIP, Inc., developed, piloted, and refined a transportation orientation/familiarization training program targeted to New Jersey's vocational rehabilitation community that assists persons with disabilities seeking employment. The program is entitled Connect to Transit.

Connect to Transit was implemented at eight host sites located in New Jersey during the pilot period, training a total of 100 vocational rehabilitation professionals on topics including but not limited to: the universe of transportation options available in their respective service area; trip planning guidance and tools; eligibility criteria for certain services; ADA rights as they relate to transportation; transportation advocacy; and an overview of travel training.

This pilot transportation information program was designed to address issues beyond that of public transportation availability, as this is not the only transportation-related impediment to employment for people with disabilities. In fact, being informed of the potential universe of current travel options available in one's locale and being able to understand how to safely access and use those options are also critical concerns that need to be addressed in order to increase employment of people with disabilities in the state.

The intent of this report is to share information on and highlight the development of the Connect to Transit transportation orientation/familiarization program. The report is organized into a series of chapters as follows:

- **Chapter one** provides the introduction and overall context for the study;
- **Chapter two** discusses the core elements of the Connect to Transit program, which is the resource guide/curriculum and associated appendices;
- **Chapter three** shares the main findings from a series of key informant interviews, conducted prior to each Connect to Transit training session with host organizations;
- **Chapter four** presents an analysis of the pre and post Connect to Transit session participant survey findings;
- **Chapter five** outlines plans to promote Connect to Transit program sustainability following the initial successful pilot period;
- **Chapter six** offers concluding summary remarks; and
- **References** cited in the report.

The main product of this research endeavor is not only this summary final report, but also the development of the program over an 18-month period, which culminated in the finalization of the Connect to Transit resource guide/curriculum and associated appendices. These documents can be found in Volume One of the report appendices, as Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

Background

Project Origin

In 2005, VTC developed a Five-Year Transportation Plan for the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services (DDS), entitled *Meeting the Employment Transportation Needs of People with Disabilities in New Jersey* (1). The main goal of the Plan was to identify barriers in transportation to work for people with disabilities in New Jersey seeking competitive employment, and to present recommendations to address those barriers. The Plan is considered a living document and its recommendations focus on addressing the predicament that people with disabilities are drastically underrepresented in the labor market, with transportation issues frequently cited as a significant impediment to gaining and retaining employment.

Since 2005, VTC has committed to collaborations with stakeholders in New Jersey and beyond to pursue several of the Plan's ten key recommendations, with support from DDS, the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University, and other entities. The design and pilot of the Connect to Transit transportation orientation/familiarization program with NJTIP, Inc. was based on the Five-year Plan recommendation that called to "Expand the quality and availability of travel training programs for people with disabilities and the employment/social service counselors that serve them." Specifically, VTC and NJTIP, Inc. focused on developing an initiative that would impart transportation knowledge to the vocational rehabilitation professional community that works closely with persons with disabilities seeking employment.

What is Travel Instruction?

VTC made the decision to partner with NJTIP, Inc. on this study for a variety of reasons, including the organization's excellent reputation and successful record as a leader in offering a continuum of travel instruction services to New Jersey's transportation disadvantaged community. Activities undertaken by NJ TIP Inc. include one-on-one travel instruction, small group travel familiarization, in-school public transit classes for special education students, and train-the-trainer seminars. Since 2007, NJ TIP Inc. has taught approximately 900 individuals to use public transportation and is the only travel training vendor used by NJ TRANSIT.

Travel instruction has been employed since the 1970s and became more widely available with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. As defined by the Association of Travel Instruction (ATI) in 2011, "Travel instruction is the array, continuum, or family of services offered to individuals with disabilities, seniors, and others who need assistance to increase their mobility and travel on public transportation independently. It includes a variety of plans, methods and strategies used by professional travel trainers to increase the independent travel skills of the people they serve" (2). In the same source document, ATI makes three main distinctions among travel instruction as follows:

- *Transit Orientation* is: "group or individual activity conducted for the purpose of explaining the transportation systems; options and services available to address individual transportation needs; use of maps and schedules as resources for trip planning; fare system; or use of mobility devices while boarding, riding, and exiting; vehicular features; and benefits available."

- *Travel familiarization* is: “Individual or small group trip activity to facilitate use of transportation systems with a travel trainer accompanying experienced traveler(s) on a new mode of transportation or route to point out/explain features of access and usability.”
- *Travel Training* is “One-to-one short-term instruction provided to an individual who has previously traveled independently and needs additional training or support to use a different mode of travel, a different route, mode of transit, or travel to a new destination or One-to-one comprehensive, specially designed instruction in the skills and behaviors necessary for independent travel on public transportation provided to an individual who does not have independent travel concepts or skills to go from point of origin of trip to destination and back.”

It is important to recognize that based on ATI’s definitions as detailed above, the Connect to Transit program offers transportation orientation and familiarization through a train-the-trainer course model. It should also be noted that the impacts of travel instruction in all its diverse forms can yield tremendous benefits to the individual, including increased independence, increased mobility options with associated cost savings, and decreased isolation from community. Societal benefits are clearly evident as well and may include cost savings associated with use of fixed-route transit service in place of more costly paratransit services.

Persons with Disability & Employment: A Continuing Challenge

According to the 2010 American Community Survey, approximately 10.3% of non-institutionalized persons in the United States aged 21-64 have a disability (3). The underrepresentation of persons with disability in the labor market is a persistent challenge in New Jersey and throughout the country and has only deteriorated with the economic recession. As stated in a 2012 report from the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions, “While all Americans suffered during the recession, working age Americans with disabilities dropped out of the labor force at a rate five times higher than of workers without disabilities” (4).

Analysis of American Community Survey 2010 data by The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development demonstrated that about 47% of the state’s population with disability aged 18-64 was in the labor force compared to almost 80% of the state’s total 18-64 population being in the labor force (5). The unemployment rate for persons with disability aged 18-64 in New Jersey was almost 20% compared to 10.6% for those aged 18-64 in the state overall. In addition, the 2010 median income of workers with disabilities in New Jersey was 37% less than earnings of workers without disabilities.

To help combat these discouraging statistics in New Jersey, Governor Chris Christie proclaimed New Jersey as the 14th state to adopt an Employment First policy in April 2012. (6). The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy developed this Employment First initiative, which is designed “...to facilitate the full inclusion of people with the most significant disabilities in the workplace and community. Under the Employment First approach, community-based, integrated employment is the first option for employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities” (7).

Why Target Transportation?

Transportation issues are often cited as one factor among many that contribute to the underrepresentation of persons with disability in the labor market (8-11). A 2010-2011 survey of New Jerseyans with disabilities actively seeking work conducted by VTC found that almost 80% of respondents felt strongly that transportation was important for their job search and 40% cited refusing a job offer because of travel difficulties (12). In addition, this research found that a significant portion of respondents used various public transit modes for all trip purposes, including commuting; 63% indicated they would consider public transit to be a potential means of transportation to prospective jobs; and 38% found public transit modes useful in their job search.

Based on the findings from contemporary literature that demonstrate transportation issues serve as a barrier to employment for persons with disability and the 2010-2011 VTC survey data that offered evidence that public transportation modes are being considered and/or used for employment purposes by persons with disabilities in the state, it was clear that developing a transportation orientation/familiarization program would hold great promise for reducing the prevalence of transportation issues inhibiting job seekers with disability.

Development of Connect to Transit

Participant Organizations

Partnering with NJTIP, Inc., the research team designed, piloted and finalized the Connect to Transit program over an 18 month period. Specific elements of the program curriculum are discussed in Chapter two. The main goal of Connect to Transit was to develop a transportation orientation/familiarization training session that could serve as a train-the-trainer module targeted specifically to employment counselors/job coaches with the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). Following the initial implementation of the pilot program at several DVRS offices, the research team received additional funding support to expand the pilot implementation to several nonprofit organizations focused on employment services for people with disabilities.

Table 1 lists the organizations that served as host sites for each of the eight Connect to Transit sessions convened. As evidenced in Table 1, sessions were held at four DVRS field offices and at four nonprofit entities, all located in New Jersey. Additionally, it must be emphasized that staff from three additional DVRS field offices participated in Connect to Transit, with several members of the Elizabeth office staff attending the New Brunswick session and staff from the Thorofare and Westhampton DVRS offices attending the Camden session. Thus, participants from a total of seven of 18 DVRS offices received Connect to Transit training.

In addition to the four nonprofit agencies listed in Table 1 that received Connect to Transit training, representatives from two other entities attended the Samost Jewish Family & Children's Service of Southern New Jersey (JFCS) training session. Specifically, a staff member from Bancroft, a nonprofit provider of specialized services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities attended, as did a representative from 1 Link 4 Senior Care, an organization of health care clinicians that work with families facing problems related to aging illness and disability. Thus, participants from a total of six nonprofit entities received Connect to Transit instruction. Interestingly, experience in the field of vocational rehabilitation services spanned a wide spectrum among the 100 professionals who

participated in the Connect to Transit pilot, with some participants relatively new to the field, while others had been employed in “voc rehab” for twenty plus years.

Table 1 Connect To Transit Host Sites

Host Site	Date
NJDVRS Paterson office	9.11.11
NJDVRS New Brunswick office	11.17.11
NJDVRS Bridgeton office	5.24.12
NJDVRS Camden office	6.22.12
Bridges to Employment, Raritan	7.31.12
Jewish Vocational Service of MetroWest New Jersey (JVS), East Orange	9.13.12
The Arc of New Jersey, North Brunswick	10.4.12
Samost Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Southern New Jersey (JFCS), Cherry Hill	11.13.12

Connect to Transit Intent

The principal intent of Connect to Transit was to empower participants by providing current information to augment their knowledge of the transportation services available in their respective service areas, so they could better guide and support their clients in determining feasible modes to access employment. The program also sought to familiarize participants with how to use these services by methods including instructional lecture and a hands-on bus demonstration. This demonstration provided participants with a rich experience that offered them the opportunity to examine and utilize accessible bus features, as well as to ask questions of the operator and research team on a variety of topics related to fare payment, stop announcements, and vehicle security protocols.

The Connect to Transit program was also intended to provide participants with information on travel instruction and the continuum of services in this field that include one-on-one individualized travel training. NJTIP, Inc.’s facilitators discussed success stories related to both one-on-one training and group travel familiarization work, which many participants reported gave them a new understanding of the issues and obstacles their clients often face when seeking to use public transportation to access employment.

In addition to focusing on the prime goals of building transportation knowledge and familiarity among participants, the research team strived to design the program with “built-in” sustainability measures for participating entities. One such measure focused on establishing a relationship between each agency and their respective Transportation Management Association (TMA). TMAs are nonprofit entities under the direction of a local metropolitan planning organization (MPO), the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). The TMAs are charged with working with communities on initiatives to reduce traffic congestion and promote alternative commute strategies including public transportation, carpooling/vanpooling, shuttles, and walking/biking. There are eight TMAs operating in New Jersey and several TMA representatives attended Connect to Transit sessions as guest speakers. The vocational rehabilitation community should be reaching

out to TMAs as a source of user-friendly and reliable transportation information and in some cases, can avail themselves of the transport services provided by the TMAs.

Another built-in sustainability component of Connect to Transit was the development and dissemination of a resource guide customized for each participating agency, which highlighted specific transportation options available in their respective service area. Each participant was given a resource guide binder, organized with subject tabs, so counselors would have information literally available at their fingertips to direct customers in determining mobility strategies to reach desired employment destinations. These and other program sustainability measures are discussed in greater detail in Chapter five.

CHAPTER 2 CREATING A TRANSPORTATION FAMILIARIZATION PROGRAM

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the core elements and features of the Connect to Transit transportation orientation/familiarization program developed by NJTIP Inc. and VTC. As discussed earlier, the intended audience for Connect to Transit was job counselors/coaches and other professionals in the vocational rehabilitation community. Specifically, the initial four piloted Connect to Transit sessions were convened at targeted NJ DVRS field offices for job counselors/coaches. The audience for the latter four sessions was job counselors/coaches at targeted nonprofit organizations focused on facilitating employment for persons with disabilities.

Each Connect to Transit session was designed as a four-hour class, with an additional thirty minutes included in the program timeframe to permit a lunch break. The format for each session was premised upon the Connect to Transit curriculum, which is described in more detail below.

Curriculum & Course Structure

NJTIP Inc. and VTC designed the Connect to Transit curriculum to be presented in a lecture format, with ample opportunity for participants to ask questions and share input. Overall, the program design allows for the development of a rapport between the session facilitators and the participants. Key elements of the course design include a hands-on bus demonstration, as well as interactive opportunities to experiment and learn how to utilize various mobile and internet trip planning tools.

A typical Connect to Transit training session as piloted progressed as follows: upon participant arrival at the session, both NJTIP and VTC facilitators introduced themselves and the purpose of the Connect to Transit initiative. Each participant was given a resource guide binder containing the Connect to Transit curriculum and appendix. Facilitators emphasized that the main intent of Connect to Transit was to present current and relevant transportation information and trip planning tools that would assist participants in helping their job seeking clients with disabilities determine feasible transportation options to access employment. It was also made clear to participants that Connect to Transit was not a new transportation service, but rather a course designed to better familiarize professionals in working with their clients to utilize both local and state public transportation resources.

Following the facilitator introduction, participants were asked to complete a pre-survey instrument and were given approximately fifteen minutes to do so. Participants then introduced themselves to the group and offered some information on their work responsibilities and personal goals for the Connect to Transit session.

The Connect to Transit curriculum, appendix, and accompanying PowerPoint presentation was written primarily for a lay audience, with little to no knowledge of the state's public transportation system. However, the curriculum does offer information on cutting edge trip planning tools, which appealed to more experienced public transit users in the classes. The curriculum core provides an overview of each public transit mode available in New Jersey by the statewide provider, NJ TRANSIT (bus, rail, light rail & ADA complementary paratransit known as Access Link), as well as

transportation options offered by counties, municipalities, TMAs, and other entities, including private carriers. Basic information on other public transportation agencies serving parts of the region, such as PATCO, PATH, MTA, and SEPTA, is also mentioned.

A detailed overview of each NJ TRANSIT service was provided that included information on accessible features, fare issues such as ticketing and reduced fare options, and step-by-step recommendations for how to successfully use that service. Time in each session was also devoted to explain the numerous service characteristics and procedures necessary to determine eligibility and utilize NJ TRANSIT's ADA complementary paratransit service, Access Link.

The Connect to Transit curriculum also discussed several other topics relevant to job counselors/coaches and their clients, including: an introduction to travel training and NJ TIP's services; the interrelationship of the ADA with public transportation; how to self-advocate related to transportation needs; how to address transit problems; and how to file complaints and commendations related to transit usage experiences.

At several Connect to Transit sessions, a guest speaker representing either the local TMA or county paratransit provider was invited by the research team to share more detailed information on local transportation services and informational resources available in a given locale. For example, Cross County Connection TMA was helpful in discussing their mobile phone application resource, known as "transit locator", which provides transit information for the entire state of New Jersey. They also shared their internet map that depicts all available fixed route transit options in South Jersey and provided detailed information on local shuttles such as the BurLink and other services. Meadowlink and RideWise TMAs also discussed their online mapping tools and provided information about work-related transit programs that they operate in their respective service areas.

Overall, TMA representatives were also very helpful in discussing the carpool/vanpool ride matching programs they manage and their trip planning assistance available via phone. Many Connect to Transit participants complained of difficulties in obtaining current schedules for various transportation services. TMAs offered to distribute these schedules to Connect to Transit participating agencies, as TMAs are major distributors of both NJ TRANSIT and other service schedules.

The Middlesex County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and SEN-HAN, both county transportation operators, also presented at some Connect to Transit sessions. MCDOT serves Middlesex County with paratransit and a robust deviated fixed route shuttle system. Similarly, SEN-HAN provides paratransit and other transportation services for Burlington and Camden counties, under a not-for-profit contract model. Both organizations provided useful information on local shuttle services and discussed their employment transportation offerings.

In full recognition that many individuals learn and assimilate concepts visually, the Connect to Transit curriculum, appendices, and accompanying PowerPoint presentation include many illustrative photographs, images, and other graphics. In addition, the curriculum appendix includes a comprehensive pictorial guide. This guide includes step-by-step instructions on how to use various trip planning tools and how to ride transit vehicles to complete a trip. In order to create these resources, NJ TIP utilized photos detailing each step associated with using a transit vehicle and included text describing what action(s) an individual should perform at each step. NJ TIP has found that utilizing a visually descriptive pictorial guide reduces anxiety of people who have not used public transportation vehicles previously or who are worried about completing certain steps

when utilizing public transit. Using images to teach about various transit modes helps individuals connect the concepts they need to travel to the vehicles they may or may not be familiar seeing on the road. Additionally, the photos demonstrated different access issues that may be encountered when boarding, de-boarding, paying fares, and/or interacting with different technologies like Ticket Vending Machines (TVM) or ticket validators.

A valuable component of the curriculum used at each of the eight Connect to Transit pilot sessions was the NJ TRANSIT bus demonstration. Offering the bus demonstration greatly helped to solidify many of the concepts regarding utilizing transit that were discussed in the classroom. Lesson components of the bus demonstration occurred both outside and onboard the bus. Outside the bus, the bus operator, regional supervisor, and session facilitators noted features of the NJ TRANSIT buses, including location of the bus identification number, route number/destination, and bicycle rack. Once onboard, the session facilitator, in coordination with the bus operator, discussed bus features, with an emphasis on accessibility features. Those features include the bus lift, bus kneeling feature, universal symbol of accessibility, priority seating area, and wheelchair securement area. Operators also demonstrated how these features function and offered participants an opportunity to utilize the bus lift or the bus kneeling feature. The bus demonstration also showed participants how to pay fare, take their receipt, and how to request a bus stop, including courtesy stops. Participants at each of the eight Connect to Transit sessions enthusiastically asked questions of the bus operator and many were excited to try the accessibility features.

A final curriculum component of note was the hands-on trip planning lesson. Information on fixed-route trip planning was provided with the pictorial guide to promote maximum understanding. For example, the facilitators used the pictorial guide to demonstrate how to read both a bus and rail schedule. Discussion also focused on how to plan a public transit trip utilizing various modes including a landline telephone, mobile phone, and web-resources. Landline telephone resources discussed included both automated services and live operators with the Transit Information Center (TIC) at NJ TRANSIT. Detailed instructions were provided in the resource guide on how to navigate the TIC.

A variety of appropriate and useful web-based and mobile trip planning tools, as well as smartphone applications were discussed. At each session the facilitators demonstrated usage of these different mobile planning tools, including the use of text message-based resources. The session facilitator requested participants use their own cell phone or smartphone if they so desired, so that participants could follow along with the facilitator's step-by-step tutorial on using tools such as mybus and cocoo. These text message systems are intuitive and usable by anyone who is familiar with how to send and receive a text message. Facilitators emphasized the benefits of having the numbers for these mobile planning tools stored in counselor phones and those of their clients.

At the conclusion of each Connect to Transit session, participants were asked to complete the post session survey and were given approximately 15 minutes to do so.

Appendix

The appendix created for Connect to Transit is designed to serve as a continuing resource tool for program participants and their clients, providing information on a host of New Jersey transportation issues. In addition to the statewide and regional resources provided in the Connect to Transit resource guide and appendix, NJ TIP also created customized appendix resources for each

participating agency based on available local transportation resources. An effort was also made to include specific information requested by staff from participating organizations during the key informant interview process. For example, the customized section of the resource guide typically included a list of major area employment destinations and the corresponding NJ TRANSIT mybus identification numbers for those destinations and/or other information about other providers serving those destinations.

As discussed above, a pictorial guide was also developed and included in the appendix. The pictorial guide was designed to provide graphic, step-by-step detailed instruction on topics including but not limited to how to read bus/rail schedules; how to use NJ TRANSIT's online trip planner; how to use Google Maps Transit Planner; how to purchase a ticket from a NJ TRANSIT Ticket Vending Machine; and how to ride a NJ TRANSIT bus, train or light rail safely and independently.

Conclusion

The Connect to Transit curriculum, appendix, and associated PowerPoint presentation were all designed to instruct a primarily lay audience of vocational rehabilitation professionals in how to successfully utilize a vast array of public and community transportation options. Viable public transportation information resources were discussed, as were strategies for successfully navigating the trip planning process. The overall course structure was designed as a lecture format, but allowed for the development of a rapport between the session facilitators and the participants. In addition to lecture instruction, a hands-on bus demonstration, as well as interactive opportunities to experiment and learn how to utilize various mobile and internet trip planning tools were provided.

Interestingly, throughout the duration of the course at each of the sites many participants expressed interest in pursuing travel training opportunities for their clients. The facilitators provided information on how clients can pursue such opportunities in locales served by NJ TIP. However, travel training is not currently available in some of the geographic areas where Connect to Transit sessions were piloted, although NJ TIP reported they are striving to expand their service area throughout the state to better meet demand.

Overall, it was a goal of the research team that the Connect to Transit training experience and resources help participants identify and cultivate job opportunities in locations where feasible public transportation options exist and enable clients to access those job sites. A core message the research team continually emphasized to all training participants is that persistence is often needed to successfully explore and determine feasible transportation solutions for transportation disadvantaged populations and that public transit can be a viable and accessible travel mode to/from employment for persons with disability in many cases.

CHAPTER 3 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Introduction

From November 2011 through October 2012, the research team conducted a series of structured telephone interviews with managers of the entities that hosted a Connect to Transit session. In some cases, one or more counselors from the organization also participated in the interview. In general, these structured interviews were conducted a few weeks prior to convening each Connect to Transit training session held. Following this approach allowed the research team time to customize the curriculum and investigate any particular transportation-related questions and/or issues raised by interviewees, so they could be addressed at the Connect to Transit session.

The primary purpose of the interviews was to learn the following: the role of transportation in the job search process at the sites selected to host a Connect to Transit training; transportation modes used by clients; viability of public transit to serve client employment travel needs and issues related to its use; staff knowledge of public transportation options in their respective service area; specific local transportation issues of note; and additional information attendees wanted to learn from the Connect to Transit training.

Interviewees

The research team conducted a total of eight interview sessions, which allowed them to speak with 19 individuals from ten organizations. Due to scheduling issues, an interview was not conducted with the Paterson NJ DVR office, one host site for a Connect to Transit session. Members of the research team facilitated each interview session via telephone, which lasted approximately 30 minutes. A detailed individual report for each of the eight interview sessions was prepared and included in this report's appendix.

Table 2 Key Informant Interviews

Organization Interviewed	Date
NJDVRS Elizabeth office	11.7.11
NJDVRS New Brunswick office	11.9.11
NJDVRS Bridgeton office	5.14.12
NJDVRS Camden, Thorofare & Westhampton offices	6.14.12
Bridges to Employment, Raritan	7.19.12
Jewish Vocational Service of MetroWest New Jersey (JVS), East Orange	9.10.12
The Arc of New Jersey, North Brunswick	9.25.12
Samost Jewish Family & Children's Service of Southern New Jersey (JFCS), Cherry Hill	10.16.12

Regarding the mission of the organizations, NJ DVRS and each of their 18 field offices focus on enabling persons with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes. DVRS offers clients directly or through an approved vendor network vocational counseling and guidance, job placement, supported employment services, on-the-job training, job coaching, and other services. Each of the four nonprofit organizations selected to receive Connect to Transit training also focus on facilitating employment for persons with disabilities. Some details on the work of each of these four nonprofit entities are as follows:

- *Bridges to Employment* offers career services including career assessment, exploration, job placement, and on-the-job training. They extend supportive employment services and a transition program to students in high school. They operate two main employment programs: one provides services to persons with physical, cognitive, emotional, and other disabilities. The second program is a Career Development Center (CDC) that assists persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Bridges to Employment does not work with persons who are visually impaired. The agency is a DVRS approved vendor.
- *Jewish Vocational Service of MetroWest* is a nonsectarian human services and health organization providing diverse programs and services to persons throughout New Jersey who range in age from young adulthood through senior years. The agency's vocational services include but are not limited to vocational evaluation, counseling, and placement. JVS is a DVRS approved vendor.
- *The Arc of New Jersey* is an advocacy organization for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their Project HIRE program helps persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their search for employment. Project HIRE job developers conduct assessments and work with clients at their home residence. After the initial intake meeting where client skills and interests are discussed, the job developer assists the client in their job search and in skill refinement, if needed. Once employment is secured, a job coach works with the client to help ease the transition into the work environment. Both the job developer and coach strive to help the client achieve independence in a supportive environment. Project HIRE is a DVRS approved vendor.
- *Samost Jewish Family & Children Service of Southern New Jersey* is a social services agency that serves South Jersey residents of all ages, faiths, and economic backgrounds. The agency's vocational services include but are not limited to vocational assessments, counseling, job sampling, job coaching, and placement. Samost is a DVRS approved vendor.

Summary of Findings by Topic

Transportation & Employment

Notably, all interviewees reported that the topic of transportation is discussed early in the job search process, typically at the first client meeting. DVRS Elizabeth explained that prospective clients are asked about the transportation modes they utilize, mode preference, and the distance they are willing to travel for employment at their first meeting, as transportation is a pivotal factor in determining the viability of employment opportunities for clients. Counselors strive to inform clients of the transportation options available to them. A more detailed discussion on transportation

generally occurs after a potential client's eligibility for DVRS services is determined, which can take up to sixty days.

JVS and JFCS emphasized that transportation is an important factor in determining the job search radius for each client. Bridges to Employment added that discussion on this topic typically includes whether or not the client is willing and/or able to access transit stations/stops and detailed transport options are determined prior to any job interviews.

All interviewees emphasized that transportation issues serve as a barrier to employment for their clients. Bridges to Employment noted that often the "perfect" job opportunity for a given client may not be pursued due to transportation obstacles, while the Arc interviewees opined "If they [clients] can't get there, they can't do the job."

Interviewees from the DVRS Bridgeton office explained that transportation issues are consistently a problem and barrier for clients; many have difficulty arranging transportation to/from the DVRS office, training/education opportunities, and jobs. As one interviewee explained, "Transportation obstacles are more of a barrier to employment than a client's disability." The specific lack of public transit options in many suburban and rural areas was described as a reason many persons with disabilities cannot access employment, as many of these individuals are not able to operate a motor vehicle and/or do not have access to one.

Modes used

Interviewees were asked to detail the modes of transportation typically used by their clients. As expected, responses varied both among and within agencies, with interviewees explaining that modes typically vary based on a client's county of residence. The following modes were commonly cited, not in any particular order:

- NJ TRANSIT Bus
- NJ TRANSIT complementary paratransit service (Access Link)
- County paratransit
- County shuttles
- Parents/guardians or friend as driver
- Walking

Overall, less commonly cited modes included rail, light rail, and client as driver. Interviewees emphasized that many of those clients who do utilize public transit have limited awareness of the overall system, as their knowledge base is often restricted to the specific route(s) on which they travel. Not surprisingly, public transit was not cited as a common mode by agencies supporting clients from rural areas, as such options are limited in those locales. Parents/guardians providing transportation for a client was commonly reported by interviewees, regardless of geographic locale. It was noted by several interviewees that parental fear and/or discomfort with their adult children using public transit is a prevalent issue.

Public Transportation

There was much discussion about the viability of public transit options for employment trips. The range of persons using public transit varied by agency geographic locale, with most interviewees unaware of the exact number of clients using transit. Bridges to Employment CDC program, JVS,

and JFCS each specified that slightly less than half to half of their clients utilized public transportation. Arc's Project HIRE staff encourages public transit usage as one means to achieve independence. They estimated that when available, about 70 percent of clients will generally opt to take public transit while 30 percent are not interested. As another interviewee added, the majority of clients are "able and willing" to use public transit if such service exists.

Interviewees determined their opinion on the viability of public transportation as a work mode for their clients based on availability and commonly cited issues/complaints associated with such services. Many interviewees reported that public transportation in their service areas was limited or not available at all. Some interviewees from urbanized areas noted that public transit was not available in the more suburban locales where their clients were seeking employment. In all, the majority of interviewees, as noted above, reported their clients are capable and willing to use public transit if available. Thus assuming availability, the following issues were commonly cited by interviewees as obstacles their clients face in using public transit as their transportation mode to/from employment:

- Limited service hours
- Limited service frequency
- Lack of 'first and last mile' transit options to cover the gap in services that often exists between one's home, the transit station/stop, and workplace.
- Reliability concerns
- Service is available, but not accessible
- Transfer trips
- Parental/guardian concerns
- Personal safety, especially during evening hours
- Costs
- Client unfamiliarity with using public transit

Limited service on weekends and during off-peak hours greatly impacts clients seeking to work in the retail sector and in jobs that require shift work, such as warehouse positions in facilities owned by entities such as UPS and FedEx. Public transportation, including county paratransit, is simply not available or too limited for clients seeking to work the second/third work shifts and on weekends. In addition, when necessary, transfer trips pose difficulties as they impose time, monetary, and convenience costs.

Many interviewees also explained that using public transit can be an emotional and anxiety inducing experience for some clients. For example, transfer trips can cause anxiety among clients due to safety concerns arising from the need to wait for a transfer – especially in a remote, unsheltered locale – and from worry about handling a missed transfer connection. Fears also stem from discomfort with or inexperience in paying fare and understanding schedules, all of which can deter system use. Parents/guardians also often express concerns related to their adult child safely utilizing public transportation. They worry not only about the transit ride itself, but are also fearful of built environment issues associated with transit usage, like street crossing safety. One interviewee explained that a client's parents arranged for him to take a bus route that was one hour longer than

another option because they wanted to avoid their adult child crossing the street to access the bus providing the shorter route.

Some interviewees also mentioned the difficulties many clients have in either qualifying for Access Link services or using said services. Types of usage issues cited involved difficulty planning for the required twenty minute pick-up window and difficulty in establishing subscription trips. It was also explained that for many eligible Access Link customers, their desired origin/destination is beyond Access Link's three-quarter mile service boundary.

Staff Transportation Knowledge

Reported DVRS staff knowledge of available transportation options in their respective service areas varied both between offices and among individual staff at a given office. Overall, DVRS interviewees indicated staff is generally familiar with most of the available transportation options, but all acknowledged staff have difficulty keeping up with the most current service information and schedules. The Project HIRE and Bridges to Employment interviewees echoed these sentiments, while JVS described less than half of their counselors as familiar with public transportation options in their catchment area. JFCS emphasized that newer personnel tend to be less knowledgeable on available transportation options.

Interviewees unanimously reported that the most common transportation information sources used by staff were as follows:

- NJ TRANSIT website, phone
- Google Maps
- County website
- Word of mouth from fellow counselors/staff

The New Brunswick DVRS interviewee indicated that his county one-stop career center had bus schedules and free shuttle information available. He added that some counselors rely on external job coaches (e.g. DVRS approved vendors) to provide clients with transportation information. Bridges to Employment was the only organization interviewed that reported they maintain a resource center located in their office, which offered print transit schedules and information on some other local transportation services.

Notably, only the Thorofare and Westhampton DVRS offices stated they were familiar with their local Transportation Management Association as a source of transportation information and/or services. None of the other interviewees reported awareness of their local TMA. The research team provided information to interviewees on their respective TMA during the interview session and later during each of their Connect to Transit training sessions. Interviewees seemed extremely pleased to learn of a new information resource, especially one from which they could seek expanded information from a staff member.

Travel Training

Interviewees also discussed travel training briefly and several DVRS sites reported either their counselors or external job coaches provide some type of transit familiarization/training if needed. The Elizabeth DVRS office explained that their office previously offered travel training to clients in need of such support but they no longer do so as such work is labor intensive and raises liability

concerns. Each of the four nonprofit organizations reported offering some basic transit familiarization and/or training if needed. JVS reported they partner with NJTIP, Inc. for travel training support.

Local Transportation Issues

All organizations interviewed served different counties and regions in New Jersey and thus, it is difficult to make any broad generalizations regarding local transportation concerns. That said, one generalization regardless of locale is that many interviewees discussed difficulties clients faced in seeking transportation options that traverse county boundaries.

Difficulty accessing employment opportunities in suburban locales was also mentioned by many, including Bridges to Employment, JVS, and the Elizabeth DVR office. Interviewees representing suburban regions primarily added that even clients residing in the suburbs had difficulty accessing jobs in their area due to limited transportation options. In lamenting the difficulties facing his urban clientele, the Camden DVRS interviewee explained that clients sometimes can reach more employment opportunities in Philadelphia through travel upon PATCO service (and made accessible by SEPTA and the RiverLine) than can be reached in New Jersey.

Those located in more rural areas, such as DVRS Thorofare, DVRS Bridgeton, and JFCS reported challenges due to the overall lack of public transportation options available near both a client's origin and desired destination. Some of these interviewees noted specific destinations their clients were seeking to access including vocational-technical schools, county colleges, and various industrial complexes/distribution centers. As described earlier, employment opportunities at industrial complexes pose additional challenges as they frequently require that employees work second and third shifts, at which time public transportation options are limited or not at all available.

Interviewee Goals for Connect to Transit

Interviewees expressed a variety of goals for the Connect to Transit session, not listed in any specific order, as follows:

- Provide an overview of all area public transportation options that may serve clients and explain any usage eligibility criteria;
- Inform participants of transportation options to employment for clients in addition to NJ TRANSIT services and share information on existing transit routes that may serve area employment nodes/centers;
- Provide instruction on trip planning and associated tools, including: print schedules/timetables, the NJ TRANSIT website trip planning tool, and trip planning phone applications (i.e. phone apps);
- Offer participants a strategy for maintaining current transit information at their office location;
- Offer hands on experience touring a bus and using its accessible features;
- Share information on available transit discounts and associated eligibility criteria for persons with disabilities; and

- Share guidance on how to help clients become more familiar with available public transit options and how to pursue travel training for clients if needed.

The research team responded to these requests by explaining that the four-hour Connect to Transit curriculum covered all of these preferred topics, as well as many additional ones designed to benefit their clients seeking employment.

Conclusion

The interview sessions convened for this study yielded important insights and valuable information. Issues discussed included participant knowledge of public transit options in their service area as well as the role of transportation in the job search process and the viability of public transportation to meet employment trip needs. The interviews also provided critical information about the universe of transportation modes used by clients and difficulties clients experience in specifically utilizing public transportation. Determining some of the local transportation issues participant agencies were coping with was also extremely beneficial to the research team in finalizing the Connect to Transit training for each host entity, as was learning specific topical areas they hoped would be covered in the Connect to Transit curriculum.

Despite variation among the organizations, DVRS and the nonprofit entities interviewed did not differ greatly from one another regarding all of the topics discussed. It was both noteworthy and reassuring that interviewees acknowledged the critical role transportation has in the job search process; divulged their practice of addressing transportation early in the job search process with clients; and shared their perspective that public transportation could be an employment travel mode for most clients if available and accessible. It should also be noted that many of the obstacles to using public transportation for clients as reported by interviewees, such as limited service hours, frequency, and general unfamiliarity with using transit are often cited by persons both with and without disabilities.

Finally, the interview sessions confirmed that all of the prospective Connect to Transit host sites and their respective clients could benefit from the information to be taught through the Connect to Transit program, as well as from the numerous information resources that would be shared during said training. The research team also made sure that the Connect to Transit program covered each of the topical areas requested by interviewees, in addition to many others.

CHAPTER 4 CONNECT TO TRANSIT EVALUATION

Introduction

Program evaluation is a critical component of any pilot effort. Evaluation helps to identify program strengths and weaknesses and can illuminate a path to program refinement. Program evaluation also ultimately assists in promoting sustainability and future growth of a given program. It is within this context that the research team undertook an effort to collect data to assess the need for and effectiveness of the Connect to Transit training program.

As reported earlier, the first four Connect to Transit sessions were conducted for DVRS employees and the second four sessions were conducted for employees at selected nonprofit organizations. Of the 100 total participants in the Connect to Transit pilot, 94 completed evaluation surveys. Of those 94, 49 participated in the DVRS sessions and 45 in the nonprofit sessions. Each participant was requested to complete two surveys: one when they arrived at the session and one immediately following the session conclusion. This dual-survey process helped determine what they learned from the session by asking some of the same knowledge-based transportation questions in both the pre- and post-survey instruments. Three of the 94 who completed pre-session surveys did not submit a post-session survey. As noted, the main purpose of the surveys was to serve as a primary tool for facilitating program evaluation. Several other goals, however, were associated with the survey effort and included the following:

- *Pre-session survey:* gathering data on the demographic profile of session participants; examining the relationship between transportation and accessing employment for participants' clients; and learning about participant knowledge and personal usage of public transit in New Jersey.
- *Post-session survey:* gathering data on participant feedback on the training session; and participant knowledge gain and changing perceptions on public transportation.

The pre- and post-session surveys were designed as confidential survey instruments, with each survey requiring about 10-15 minutes to complete. This chapter will explore the results of the two surveys, drawing conclusions about how successful the program was in achieving its goals. Findings from the first four DVRS sessions are presented first, followed by the results of the four nonprofit sessions, and finally, the combined results of both sessions are discussed. The pre-and post-survey instruments are found in Appendix E.

Pre-Survey Response Analysis, DVRS Sessions

Demographic Profile

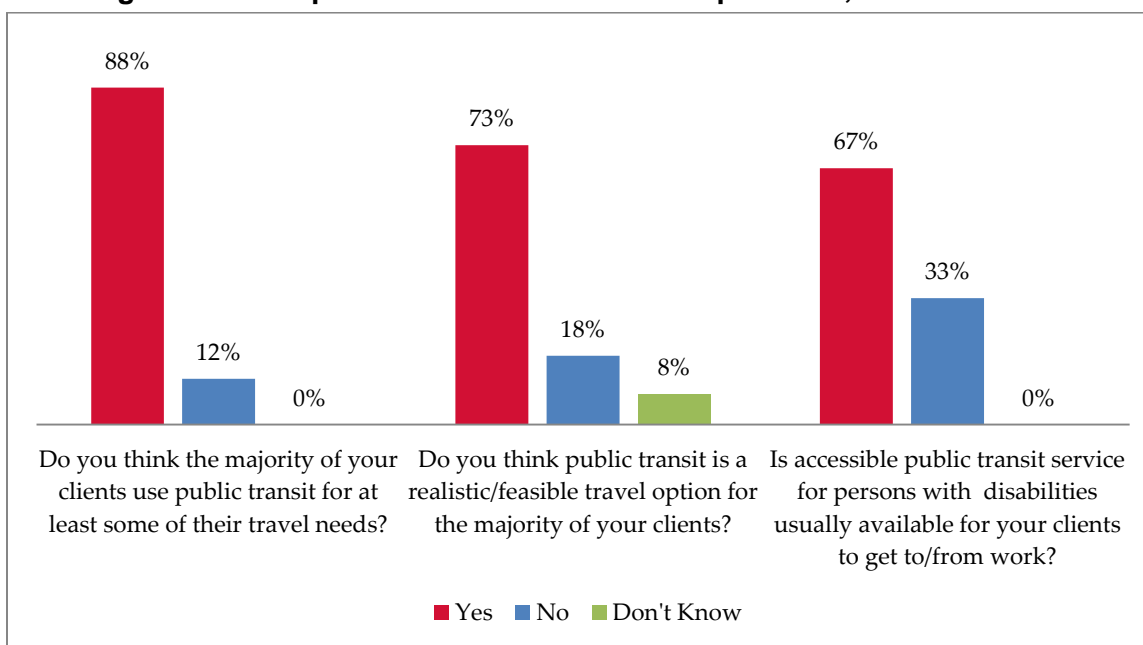
Forty-nine DVRS employees attended the first four workshops, over three-quarters of whom were female. The ages of participants were fairly equally distributed between the age groups, with the largest group between the ages of 45-54 (29%). Nearly all participants had earned a master's degree (90%), and most were White (79%). Interestingly, most had either worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for less than 10 years (56%) or over 20 years (28%).

The Relationship between Transportation and Employment

Based on participant responses, public transportation is vital to disabled job seekers' ability to obtain and retain a job. All respondents in fact said that transportation is "very important" for doing so. The majority of respondents also reported that they typically discuss transportation with their clients most often during the initial screening/intake process. With regard to public transit, almost 90% indicated that the majority of their clients use public transit for at least "some" of their travel needs.

Nearly three-quarters of DVRS respondents said that public transit was a realistic travel option for the majority of their clients, although accessible public transit for persons with disabilities was believed to be less available, with about one-third saying it was not available to get their clients to and from work (see Figure 1). The main reason some felt that public transit was not a realistic travel option for their clients was because transportation was not available near their clients' homes (82%). Other reasons included that transportation was not reliable (9%) and that their clients found using transit difficult (8%).

Figure 1 Participants' Clients & Public Transportation, DVRS Sessions



While DVRS participants recognized the importance of public transportation to their clients, many were not aware of some of the available public transit information resources. The most common responses regarding transportation information resources they would suggest to a client included the NJ TRANSIT website (84%) and the NJ TRANSIT phone line (61%), but many missed key sources such as Transit Management Associations (TMAs) (2%). Overall, participants reported they would encourage their clients to access "official" resources, such as the DVRS office and NJ TRANSIT sources, while more "personal" resources, such as talking to employers or friends/family, were not commonly mentioned. A few respondents named other sources that were not listed as response options in the survey, such as Google Maps and discussing with counselors.

Participants identified numerous public transportation-related obstacles that prevented their clients from getting to and from work. Sixty-nine percent of respondents stated that public transit "requires

too many transfers to make the work trip” for their clients. Other difficulties that respondents named as challenges their clients face included “difficulty getting to the bus stop or train station without help” (59%) and “not knowing how to read schedules” (57%). Respondents were asked to rank the top three most significant obstacles their clients encounter in using public transit to access employment. Analyses of these data indicate that overall difficulty in traveling to a stop/station unassisted and timely availability of transit present nearly the same degree of difficulty for clients, according to the respondents (see Table 3).

Table 3 Ranked Order Analysis, DVRS Sessions
Q: What are the top three most significant obstacles your clients face in using public transit to get to work?

Obstacles to Using Public Transit to Get to Work	Count	Percent	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Aggregate score	Indexed to least
My clients have difficulty getting to the bus stop or train station without help	21	15%	12	8	1	53	53
It is not available when they need it	20	14%	13	6	1	52	52
It requires too many transfers to make the work trip	18	13%	5	9	4	37	37
The cost is too high	17	12%	7	1	9	32	32
Accessible public transportation is not available near their home and/or work location	14	10%	5	7	2	31	31
My clients don't understand how to read schedules	18	13%	1	8	9	28	28
My clients don't know where or how to find transportation information	9	6%	1	5	3	16	16
Their parents/guardian are opposed to their use of public transit	8	6%	3	1	4	15	15
The service is not reliable	6	4%	1	3	2	11	11
My clients have a language barrier as they do not speak English well or at all	3	2%	2	1	0	8	8
My clients are concerned about crime	4	3%	1	1	2	7	7
My clients have difficulty getting on/off trains or buses	1	1%	0	0	1	1	1
My clients don't know how to safely board/disembark from the train/bus	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
My clients are concerned about finding a seat onboard	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
My clients are concerned with driver helpfulness/friendliness	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
Other	5	3%	0	2	3	7	NA
Total	144	100%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Prior Knowledge and Usage of Public Transportation in New Jersey

Prior to Connect to Transit, not all participants had significant experience with and/or knowledge of the public transit system in New Jersey or of travel training. While a fifth reported they currently used public transit at least once a week, the majority used these services only a few times per year. Nearly 70% of respondents who reported they did not currently use public transit did respond they had used it in the past. Additionally, participants were somewhat unfamiliar with travel training – while about 80% said they had heard of travel training before the class, most had never referred any of their clients to a travel training program (71%).

When asked about their familiarity with public transit options in their service region, 63% of respondents reported that they were either “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar”, while more than one-third reported that they were either “not very familiar” or “not at all familiar” with transit options in their area. With regard to their knowledge of specific public transit-related information, about 90% said they could read a schedule, knew that NJ TRANSIT offers reduced fares for people with disabilities, and knew where to purchase tickets. On the other hand, only 2% knew that NJ TRANSIT vehicle operators are *not* required to announce all stops and only 11 of the 17 transportation knowledge questions posed received a correct response rate over 60%. Participants were least familiar with questions pertaining to the use of transit by clients with disabilities (such as whether personal care attendants must pay to ride and if NJ TRANSIT buses are lift-equipped) and alternative travel information resources (such as calling NJ 211 and/or TMAs for assistance).

Participants reported they were most interested in learning from Connect to Transit about transportation information resources for their clients and general information on public transit and travel training in New Jersey. Most important to them was “how to help clients determine what resources offer public transit information” (16%). The second most important topics were “general information about travel training in New Jersey” (14%), and “general information about public transit in NJ” (14%).

Post-Survey Response Analysis, DVRS Sessions

Participant Evaluation of the Training Session

Participants gave high marks to the training session overall, with 61% rating Connect to Transit as “excellent” and 39% rating the session as “good”. 100% stated they found the information shared in the session as either “very helpful/relevant” or “somewhat helpful/relevant”. Also, 100% stated that they planned on sharing the information presented with their clients. Finally, all respondents (100%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement that “Today’s presenters were clear, organized and communicated effectively.” With regard to satisfaction with the information taught during the Connect to Transit session, three of the seven main topics presented received a rating of “excellent” by more than 50% of respondents: the transit system overview; how to ride/take public transit; and the bus demonstration. They were most satisfied with the bus demonstration, with 70% rating it as “excellent”.

When asked what topics they found most informative, participant top choices were the overview of public transit in New Jersey (21%), followed closely by how to plan public transit trips (20%), and the bus demonstration (18%). The survey also sought to determine respondent perception of the transportation technology shared during Connect to Transit (e.g. mybus, mobile apps). The

overwhelming majority said that the information was clear and easy to understand (98%). Ninety-eight percent also said that the technology information was either “very helpful/relevant” or “somewhat helpful/relevant.”

In total, when comparing participant satisfaction with the topics covered to what the participants said they wanted to learn in the pre-survey, it is clear that their desires related to learning more about general transit information was met.

Participant Knowledge Gain

With regards to participant knowledge gain, participants said they learned either “a great deal” (36%) or “some” (64%) during the session; no one said “very little” or “nothing.” Specifically, they had a significant gain in their knowledge about public transit in New Jersey. The average score on knowledge questions increased from 67% in the pre-survey to 88% in the post-survey. Thirty-eight percent of participants scored a 90% or above (up from 6% in the pre-session survey). For all but one of the knowledge questions the number of correct answers given increased: specifically, 90% or more respondents answered thirteen questions correctly, whereas this high level of knowledge was achieved on only two questions in the pre-survey. Knowledge questions pertaining to transit accommodations/features for clients with disabilities and alternative travel information resources, which generally had poor correct response rates in the pre-survey, saw significantly improved response rates in the post-survey.

In the post-session survey, the resources participants said they would likely suggest to clients who are looking for transportation information did not change: the NJ TRANSIT website was first (21%), followed by the NJ TRANSIT phone line (16%). Other resources that were largely ignored in the initial survey were selected however in the post-survey: referring clients to TMAs increased from 2% to 6%, as did calling NJ 211 (12% to 73%, the biggest increase of all the questions). Some responses saw a decreased response in the post survey: recommending speaking to a family member/friend (16% to 4%) and recommending that clients access the NJ Find-a-Ride website (81% to 54%).

About 48% of respondents said that their opinion as to whether transit was a realistic travel option for their clients had changed because of what they learned from the session, while 52% said that it did not. Reasons for this change in opinion included an increase in respondents’ general knowledge of transit and discovering new resources or programs for clients. As they noted in the pre-session survey, though, transportation barriers still existed for their clients. Participants felt that public transit could improve to best meet client needs by increasing the number of bus routes and stops and by increasing the frequency of service.

Pre-Survey Response Analysis, Nonprofit Sessions

Demographic Profile

The latter four sessions were held at nonprofits serving people with disabilities seeking employment. A total of 45 job counselors/coaches attended. Over three-quarters were female and most were White (79%). Overall, personnel at the nonprofit locations were younger, had lower educational achievement, and a briefer work history than their peers at the DVRS offices. Educational achievement was one of the biggest differences between the DVRS and nonprofit participants, as 90% of the former and 26% of the latter had acquired graduate degrees. Distribution

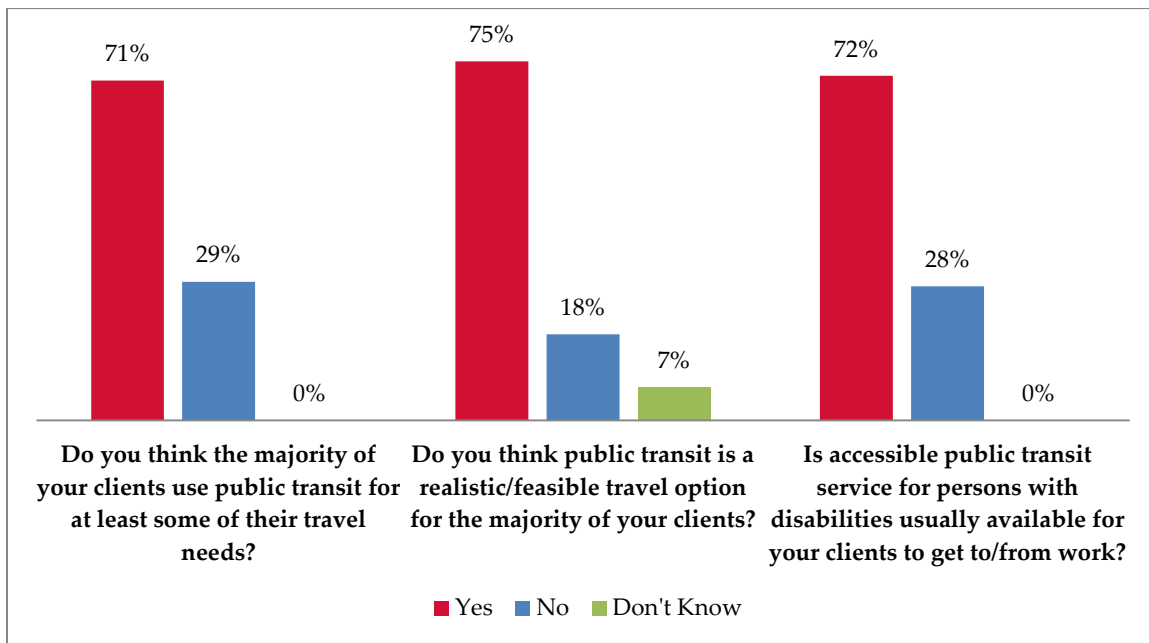
of years of professional experience also varied between the two groups. Unlike the DVRS participants, the nonprofit participants had not worked in the employment counseling field very long, with most having less than 10 years of experience (89%), and only 7% with more than 20 years. The young age of the participants is also borne out in their reported age composition. Seventeen percent were between the ages of 18 and 24, whereas none of the DVRS participants were in that age group.

The Relationship between Transportation and Employment

As expected, almost all participants reported that transportation is “very important” to disabled job seekers’ ability to find and retain a job (98%). The majority of respondents also reported that they typically discuss transportation with their clients during the initial screening process. Seventy-one percent said their clients use public transit for at least some of their travel needs.

Three-quarters of participants also felt that public transit was a realistic travel option for their clients’ work trips, and about the same number said that accessible public transit is available to clients (72%) (see Figure 2). Again, the most common reason that some felt that public transit was not a realistic travel option was that transportation was not available near their clients’ homes. As anticipated, these findings are very similar to the responses given by the DVRS participants.

Figure 2 Participants’ Clients & Transportation, Nonprofit Sessions



Like the DVRS counselors, when asked which public transit information resources they would recommend to their clients, these participants focused primarily on the most well-publicized resources, such as accessing the NJ TRANSIT website (84%), the NJ TRANSIT phone line (42%), and materials available at the counselor’s office (33%). Less known but still key resources, like referring clients to TMAs (4%) and NJ 211 (7%), were generally missed. Although mentioned by some of the DVRS respondents, no nonprofit respondents cited Google Maps or the NJ TRANSIT Resource Center.

Participants identified many obstacles that prevented their clients from using public transit to get to and from work. Sixty-four percent of respondents stated that for their clients “transit [was] not available when they need it”. Other difficulties that respondents named as challenges their clients face include “it requires too many transfers to make the work trip” (51%) and “difficulty getting to the bus stop or train station without help” (49%).

Respondents were asked to rank the top three most significant obstacles that their clients face in using public transit to access employment. Analyses of these data indicate overall that availability of accessible public transportation near home and/or work is the most significant challenge facing clients served by the nonprofits. Respondents ranked both challenges posed by “too many transfers to make the work trip” and by transit “not available when they need it” nearly as important (see Table 3).

Comparing the responses from both the DVRS and nonprofit respondents (Table 3 and Table 4) shows that the lack of accessible public transit near client homes and/or work was the greatest obstacle nonprofit respondents felt clients face in using public transit to get to work, whereas the DVRS participants indicated getting to the train or bus station without help was the most significant client obstacle. Despite this difference, however, an important trend can be identified: clients are hindered more by the lack of accessibility and availability – perceived or actual – of public transit to access employment than about other obstacles.

Table 4 Ranked Order Analysis Table, Nonprofit Sessions
Q: What are the top three most significant obstacles your clients face in using public transit to get to work?

Obstacles to Using Public Transit to Get to Work	Count	Percent	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Aggregate score	Indexed to least
Accessible public transportation is not available near their home and/or work location	17	17%	10	3	4	40	13
It requires too many transfers to make the work trip	13	13%	6	5	2	30	10
It is not available when they need it	13	13%	4	5	4	26	9
My clients don't understand how to read schedules	8	8%	3	4	1	18	6
My clients have difficulty getting to the bus stop or train station without help	7	7%	5	0	2	17	6
My clients don't know where or how to find transportation information	7	7%	2	4	1	15	5
Their parents/guardian are opposed to their use of public transit	8	8%	1	4	3	14	5
The cost is too high	6	6%	1	3	2	11	4
My clients are concerned about crime	4	4%	2	1	1	9	3
The service is not reliable	6	6%	0	2	4	8	3
My clients have a language barrier as they do not speak English well or at all	2	2%	1	1	0	5	2
My clients have difficulty getting on/off trains or buses	2	2%	0	1	1	3	1
My clients are concerned about finding a seat onboard	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
My clients are concerned with driver helpfulness/friendliness	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
My clients don't know how to safely board/disembark from the train/bus	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
Other	5	5%	3	1	1	12	NA
Total	98	100%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Prior Knowledge and Usage of Public Transportation in New Jersey

Nonprofit participants varied widely in their familiarity with travel training and public transit in New Jersey prior to the training session. While two-thirds of respondents had heard of travel training prior to the class, most had never referred a client to a travel training program (84%). Only 20% were “very familiar” with public transit options near their offices and 40% were “somewhat familiar”, while 40% were either “not very familiar” or “not at all familiar” with said options. Also, most respondents reported they did not use public transit at least once a week (74%). However, of those respondents, over three-quarters said they had used it in the past.

Just as in the first four classes, these nonprofit participants were also given assessments before and after the training session to gauge their initial public transit knowledge, as well as to identify what they had learned from the class. As noted earlier, the knowledge assessment component of the survey contained basic questions pertaining to using public transit in New Jersey. Four percent of respondents in the pre-survey assessment scored above 90%. Interestingly, participants in the four sessions held for the nonprofit employees had lower average scores than their DVRS participant counterparts. Examining the individual questions, participants were most knowledgeable on inquiries concerning general transit knowledge, such as whether they knew how to read a transit schedule, how to plan a public transit trip, and how to request a stop onboard a bus. The information they were least familiar with included questions particular to accessible public transit: if NJ TRANSIT vehicle operators must announce *all* stops, whether a personal care attendant has to pay for a seat on NJ TRANSIT, and if NJ TRANSIT buses are lift-equipped. The response rates generally match those from the first four sessions (see Table 7 for assessment scores for all the sessions).

As with participants from the first four sessions, these participants were most interested in learning about how to help clients determine what resources offer public transit information. The second and third most preferred topics were general information about public transit and general information about travel training, respectively. Taken together – the results from the public transportation knowledge assessment and the topics they reported being most interested in learning about – suggests that participants had some basic knowledge about utilizing transit, but not necessarily information that pertained specifically to job seekers with disabilities seeking to access transit.

Post-Survey Response Analysis, Nonprofit Sessions

Participant Evaluation of the Training Session

Overall, participants gave high marks to the training session, with 72% of respondents rating it “excellent” and no one rating it “poor.” Additionally, an overwhelming majority of 86% percent found the information shared to be “very helpful”. Also, 100% stated that they planned on sharing the information presented with their clients. Finally, a majority of respondents (100%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement that “Today’s presenters were clear, organized and communicated effectively.”

With regard to satisfaction with the information taught during the Connect to Transit sessions, none of the topics received a rating of excellent from less than 50% of respondents in the nonprofit sessions, while four topics in the DVRS session did. This discrepancy may reflect the greater base level of transportation knowledge possessed by the DVRS group as demonstrated by their higher

pre-survey knowledge assessment question scores. The most highly rated four topic areas in the nonprofit sessions were: the “bus demonstration” (86%), “how to ride/take public transit” (76%), “transit overview” (71%), and “how to plan public transit trips” (71%) – topics which the nonprofit participants indicated they wanted to learn. These topics all received an “excellent” rating by more than 70% of respondents, a score which none of the topics in the DVRS session received.

When asked what topics they found most informative, participant top choices were: “how to plan public transit trips” (67%), “public transit overview” (61%), and “travel training overview” (51%). The survey also sought to determine respondent perception of the transportation technology shared during Connect to Transit (e.g. mybus, mobile apps). The overwhelming majority said that the information was clear and easy to understand (74%). Seventy-seven percent also said that the technology information was “very helpful/relevant”. Among the suggestions for new topics that were not covered were to include information on shuttle services that are provided by municipalities, and more detail on how to purchase transit passes.

Participant Knowledge Gain

In rating how much they learned overall, responses were positive. Seventy-six percent of nonprofit participants said they learned a “great deal,” compared to 64% of DVRS counselors. In the pre-survey transportation knowledge assessment, only one nonprofit participant achieved a score of 90% or above. As a result of the training however, 14 participants scored this well in the post survey; additionally, those who received a 60% or lower score decreased from 24 to zero persons. In all, the average score increased from 57% to 87%. Like the DVRS participants, the questions with which these participants struggled the most with in the pre-survey assessment were those related to features/accommodations for transit riders with disabilities. These types of questions however, were the ones that participants showed the most improvement in the post-survey assessment; the personal care attendant question, for example, saw a 70% increase in the number of correct responses. In fact, every question saw an increase in correct responses. Overall, nonprofit participants increased their knowledge of public transit significantly from the Connect to Transit training, more so than the DVRS participants. The difference between the average scores for the pre- and post-survey transportation knowledge assessments was 21% for the DVRS employees and 30% for the nonprofit employees. In total, both groups achieved approximately the same average score for the transportation knowledge questions included in the post-survey; 88% for the former and 87% for the latter (see Table 7 for assessment scores for all the sessions).

The transit resources participants said they would suggest to their clients via their pre-survey responses also changed after the training session. The NJ TRANSIT website remained the most common resource they would suggest clients access for transportation information, but selection of other information sources increased, showing that participants added to their resource toolbox. Referring clients to Transportation Management Associations increased the most, from 4% saying they would recommend this resource before the session to 63% indicating they would after the session. Other information resources that saw increases included materials available at the participants’ training office (from 33% to 40%), information from the local train or bus stop (18% to 30%), NJ 211 (7% to 56%), the NJ Find-a-Ride website (13% to 51%), and the NJ TRANSIT phone line (42% to 63%). Those information resources that saw a decrease were primarily word-of-mouth type of resources, such as asking a potential employer (11% to 9%) and asking a family member/friend (31% to 16%). Changes in responses mostly mirrored those from the first four sessions, although

interestingly the likelihood of suggesting that clients access the NJ Find-a-Ride website increased among the nonprofit participants and decreased among the DVRS participants.

Based on what they learned during the session, more respondents said they felt that transit was a realistic travel option for their clients in the post-survey compared to those who expressed that sentiment in the pre-survey. Similar to the DVRS sessions, those who thought public transit was a realistic mode choice increased from 75% in the pre-survey to 83% in the post-survey, while those who said it was not a realistic choice decreased from 18% to 10%. The most common reason given for these changes was that participants discovered new resources, programs, and/or service options for their clients through Connect to Transit. Participants acknowledged however that barriers still existed for their clients. Among the recommendations to improve public transit in New Jersey was the reported need for more transportation options for those who are not currently served by transit, increased transit options that pick clients up at their homes, and increased hours of operation.

Pre-Survey Response Analysis, All Sessions

Demographic Profile

This final section of analysis will consider the combined survey results from all eight Connect to Transit training sessions. The majority of all respondents were female (77%) and White (79%) (see Table 5). The largest age group represented was those aged 45-54 (32%). Interestingly, 74% of all respondents reported they had worked in the field for less than ten years. The participants were also highly educated, with nearly two-thirds (60%) having acquired a graduate degree.

Table 5 Respondent Characteristics, All Sessions

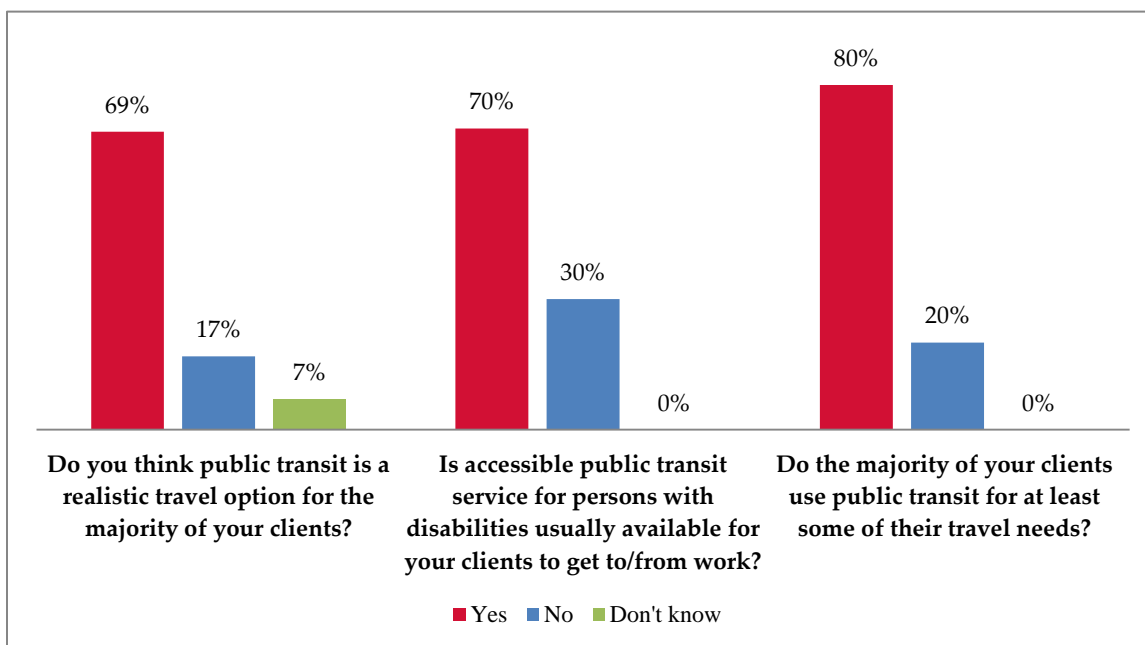
	All Respondents	DRVS Employees	Nonprofit Employees
Sex			
Male	23%	22%	24%
Female	77%	78%	76%
Age			
18 - 24	8%	0%	17%
25 - 34	17%	17%	17%
35 - 44	17%	26%	7%
45 - 54	32%	32%	31%
55 - 64	24%	26%	21%
65+	3%	0%	7%
Race			
White (not Hispanic)	71%	71%	72%
Black (not Hispanic)	12%	17%	7%
White Hispanic	8%	8%	7%
Black Hispanic	1%	0%	2%
Asian	6%	2%	9%
Two or More Races	2%	2%	2%
Other	0%	0%	0%
Completed Education			
Less Than High School Degree	0%	0%	0%
High School Graduate/GED	2%	0%	5%
Trade or Technical School	0%	0%	0%
Some College	3%	2%	5%
2-Yr College Degree	5%	2%	9%
4-Yr College Degree	24%	2%	49%
Graduate Work (No advanced degree)	5%	4%	7%
Graduate Degree	60%	90%	26%
Years of Professional Experience			
0 - 5 Years	43%	26%	63%
6 - 10 Years	31%	36%	26%
11 - 15 Years	4%	9%	0%
16 - 20 Years	3%	2%	5%
More Than 20 Years	18%	28%	7%
N	94	49	45

The Relationship between Transportation and Employment

Virtually all 94 participants from the eight sessions who completed surveys reported that transportation was “very important” to their clients’ ability to find and retain a job. The majority of respondents also reported that they typically discuss transportation with their clients during the initial screening process. Regarding public transportation, 80% of respondents stated that the majority of their clients used such services for at least some of their travel needs. Notably though, their clients’ need for public transit may not accurately reflect its availability, whether because the clients and/or counselors are not aware of its presence or because there truly is a dearth of accessible

public transit. For example, prior to the training, 17% of respondents believed that public transit was not a realistic travel option for most of their clients, and 30% said that accessible transit in particular was not usually available for their clients to get to and from work (see Figure 3). The most common cited reason for public transit not being a realistic option was that it was not available in the vicinity of client residences.

Figure 3 Participants' Clients & Transportation, All Sessions



Whether or not these opinions on public transit were based on a lack of knowledge of these services in their region or a true deficit of travel options was not immediately clear from the pre-survey findings alone. An assumption of the research is that these opinions are partly due to the former reason, with the goal being that travel orientation/familiarization sessions such as Connect to Transit will provide counselors with better information to offer their clients during their job search.

One way that the survey examined the extent of counselor knowledge gain from Connect to Transit involved asking which public transportation resources they would recommend to clients looking for information on public transit. In the pre-survey, their responses were limited to a few, well-publicized resources. Topping the list, as might be expected, was the NJ TRANSIT website (89%), followed by the NJ TRANSIT phone line (52%), and materials available at the counselor's office (44%). Of the informational resources listed in the survey, TMAs (3%) and NJ 211(8%) garnered the fewest responses. Participants were permitted to write in other informational resources that were not specified in the survey, and those added by respondents included Google Maps and discussing options with counselors. That many respondents did not select important resources like TMAs suggests that they were aware of the basic public transit information resources available in New Jersey, but not other information sources that may be of particular help to job seekers with disabilities. After all, the more resources counselors have at their disposal, the easier their task of helping clients make job and transportation choices that meet their needs.

Participants were also asked to identify the obstacles that their clients face when using public transit to get to work. Sixty-one percent of all respondents stated that public transit required clients to make

too many transfers for their work trip (61%). Other obstacles cited included transit not being available when they needed it (56%) and difficulty getting to the stop/transit station without help (54%). Participants were also asked to specify the three top obstacles that they thought were most significant in preventing their clients from taking transit to work. Analyses of these data indicate that overall transit was not available when needed by their clients. Respondents ranked a dearth of accessible public transportation near home and/or work as well as an excessive number of transfers required to make the work trip nearly as highly. These responses suggest that the respondents believed, overall, that what prevents their clients from using public transit to get to work involves issues including service availability – whether because the transit schedules do not meet their needs or because accessible transit is not available near home or work or because trips require multiple transfers. Accessibility – the inability to reach the stops/stations because of their disabilities or other limitations – did not rank as highly. Social-related aspects of using transit (such as driver helpfulness/friendliness or presence of a language barrier) were not considered as important (see Table 6).

Table 6 Ranked Order Table, All Sessions
Q: What are the top three most significant obstacles your clients face in using public transit to get to work?

Obstacles to Using Public Transit to Get to Work	Count	Percent	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Aggregate score	Indexed to least
It is not available when they need it	33	14%	17	11	5	78	20
Accessible public transportation is not available near their home and/or work location	31	13%	15	10	6	71	18
It requires too many transfers to make the work trip	31	13%	11	14	6	67	17
My clients have difficulty getting to the bus stop or train station without help	25	10%	17	5	3	64	16
My clients don't understand how to read schedules	26	11%	4	12	10	46	12
The cost is too high	23	9%	8	4	11	43	11
My clients don't know where or how to find transportation information	16	7%	3	9	4	31	8
Their parents/guardian are opposed to their use of public transit	16	7%	4	5	7	29	7
The service is not reliable	12	5%	1	5	6	19	5
My clients have a language barrier as they do not speak English well or at all	10	4%	3	2	5	18	5
My clients are concerned about crime	8	3%	3	2	3	16	4
My clients have difficulty getting on/off trains or buses	3	1%	0	1	2	4	1
My clients don't know how to safely board/disembark from the train/bus	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
My clients are concerned about finding a seat onboard	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
My clients are concerned with driver helpfulness/friendliness	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
Other	9	4%	2	3	4	16	4
Total	243	100%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Prior Knowledge and Usage of Public Transportation in New Jersey

The several questions that investigated participants' knowledge of public transportation in New Jersey revealed that while it varied widely among participants, generally they were well-versed in basic transit information, but less knowledgeable about information specific to jobs seekers with disabilities. Most had heard of travel training (72%), but few had ever referred a client to a travel training program (23%). Additionally, only 22% used transit at least once a week and about one-fifth had never used it. Also, less than one-quarter were "very familiar" with public transit options near their offices, while almost 40% reported that they were either "not very familiar" or "not at all familiar" with local transit options. This finding alone demonstrates the current and continuing need for transit familiarization for job counselors/coaches who work with people with disabilities so the former can best inform clients.

In the assessment of their public transit knowledge via 17 targeted questions, participants scored on average just below 67%. Only 4% of respondents received a score above 90%, while 43% received scores below 60%. They were fairly knowledgeable about trip planning in general and some aspects of Access Link, but not so regarding ridership issues pertaining to persons with disabilities. The most problematic question for participants was, "Are NJ TRANSIT vehicle operators required to announce all stops?" with 10% of respondents correctly answering "no." Other knowledge gaps included, "If you need to ride with a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) or guide on an NJ TRANSIT vehicle, does that person have to pay for his/her seat?" (23%)¹ answered correctly and "Can county paratransit vehicles take people to/from work?" (40%)² answered correctly. While considered individually, correct knowledge of questions like these may not be critical but when considered together, lack of accurate information in this regard can significantly hinder persons with disabilities seeking to use public transit to access jobs.

The survey also asked participants which topics they were most interested in learning. Above all, they reported they wanted to learn "how to help clients determine what resources offer public transit information" (74%). "General information about public transit" (65%) and "general information about travel training" (61%) were also desirable topic areas.

Post-Survey Response Analysis, All Sessions

Participant Evaluation of the Training Session

Participants from all eight sessions were extremely pleased with Connect to Transit. Sixty-six percent gave the session a rating of "excellent" and 33% rated it "good." Additionally, 83% found the information taught to be "very helpful/relevant". With regard in particular to the technology topics that were discussed, 69% found that information "very helpful/relevant" and most "strongly agreed" the technology presentation was "clear and easy to understand" (64%) (see Figure 4).

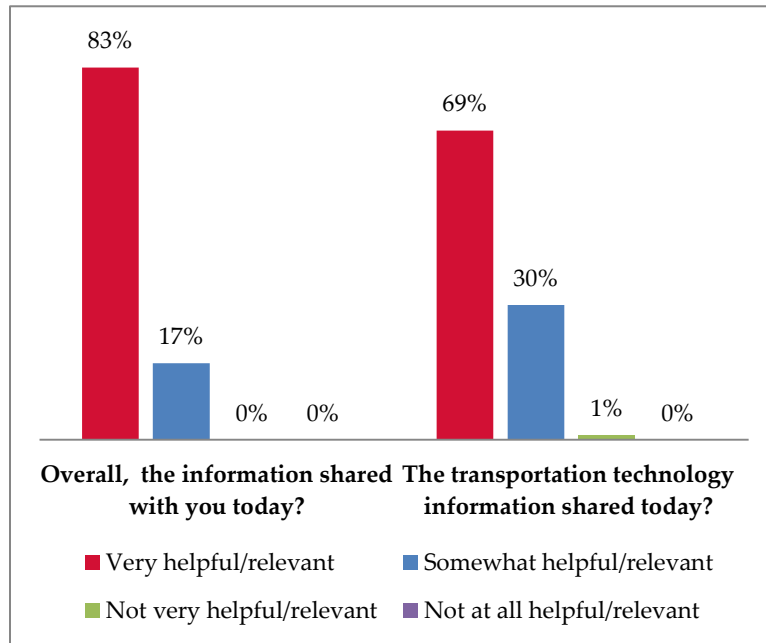
The value of Connect to Transit was also demonstrated by the finding that a majority of participants from all sessions rated six of the seven major topical areas presented as excellent. The one topic that did not achieve an "excellent" rating by the majority was advocacy skills. No topic area received a

¹ There is no charge for a Personal Care Assistant, provided that the primary passenger has been approved for a reduced fare card due to disability and has indicated that s/he may require a PCA.

² County paratransit services often can provide employment trips.

“poor” rating. The highest rated topical area was the bus demonstration segment, with seventy-seven percent of respondents giving that feature a rating of “excellent” (see Figure 5).

Figure 4 Q: How would you rate the following? All Sessions



When provided the chance to share open commentary on the session, less than a third of participants commented it was too long, but felt they benefitted from the comprehensive way in which topics were presented and taught. Other comments and recommendations included:

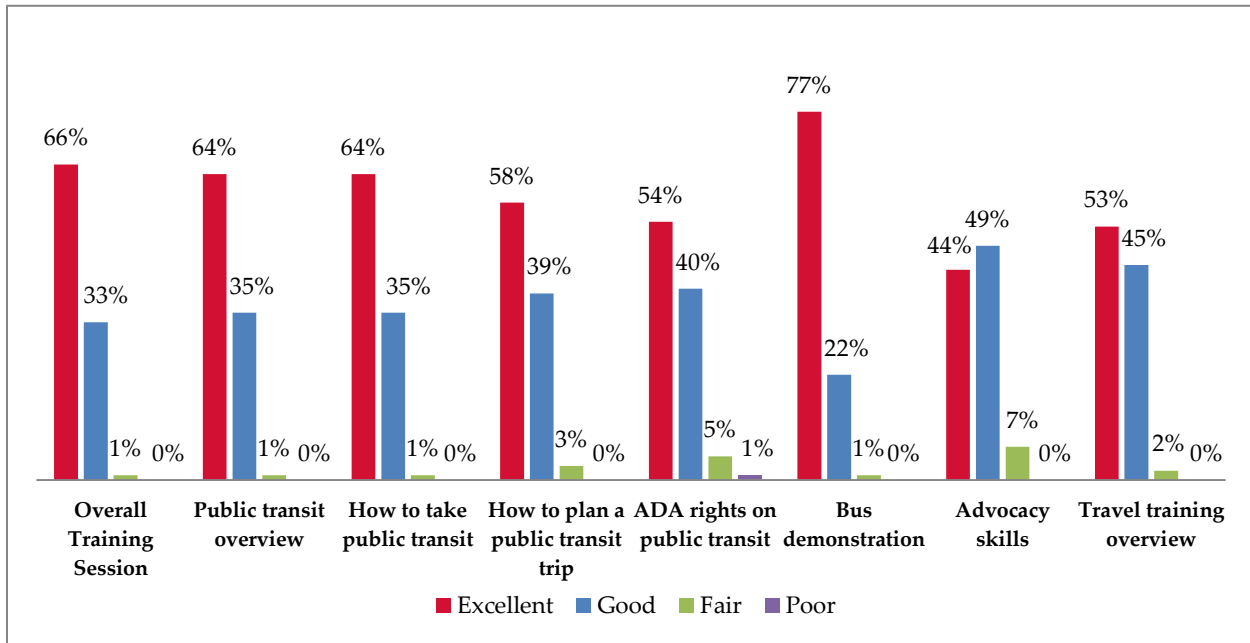
- Incorporate more hands-on activities
- Spend more time on the technology section
- Include more information on NJ TRANSIT options in other counties
- Offer more information on shuttle services provided by municipalities
- Offer more information specific to deaf/hard-of-hearing travelers

Overall, students were very satisfied with the class. Typical comments included:

- “Very good training, lots of good resources to share”
- “Facilitators were informative and articulate”
- “Very thorough information”
- “Everything was informative. The book provided was very helpful. Also the presenters were informative.”
- “It was a very informative course and NJTIP did a great job. All speakers were knowledgeable and did a good presentation.”
- “TMA info was very valuable”

- “You covered all topics – great job”
- “Very good, informative, visual technology good”

Figure 5 Q: How would you rate your satisfaction with the training session overall and each of the topic areas discussed today? All Sessions



Participant Knowledge Gain

Comparing the pre- and post-survey assessments demonstrates that participants’ knowledge of public transit in New Jersey increased significantly from Connect to Transit (see Table 7). Seventy percent said they learned a “great deal,” and an additional 29% said they learned “some.” The average score for the transportation knowledge questions on the post surveys was 87%, up from 62% on the pre-survey (see Table 7). In the pre-session survey, only 4% of participants received a 90% or above; that number improved to 35% with the post survey. In fact, every question saw an increase in correct responses, the most being with those inquiries pertaining to riders with disabilities in particular, such as whether a personal care attendant must pay fares on NJ TRANSIT and whether NJ TRANSIT buses are lift-equipped. That the percentage of attendees who answered these questions correctly – the ones focused on the type of transit information especially important to job seekers with disabilities – grew by 30% or more demonstrates the successful outcomes that travel orientation/familiarization courses like Connect to Transit can generate.

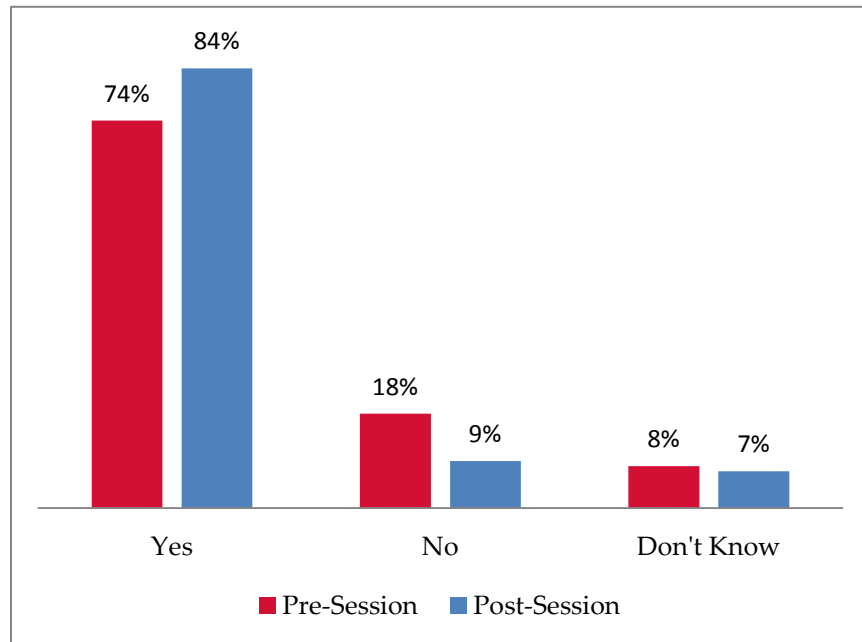
Table 7 Respondent Assessment Scores, All Sessions

	DVRS Respondents		Nonprofit Respondents		All Respondents	
	Pre-Session	Post-Session	Pre-Session	Post-Session	Pre-Session	Post-Session
Avg. Score	67%	88%	57%	87%	62%	87%
90-100%	6%	38%	2%	33%	4%	35%
80-89%	16%	52%	5%	48%	11%	49%
70-79%	35%	6%	20%	19%	28%	12%
60-69%	10%	2%	18%	0%	14%	1%
Below 60%	33%	2%	55%	0%	43%	1%
N	49	48	44	42	94	90

The resources the respondents said they would recommend to their clients seeking public transit information also changed after the training session, suggesting that Connect to Transit was able to provide participants with additional information and resources of which they were not previously aware. Those who said they would recommend that their clients use the NJ 211 help line increased from 8% to 65%, the biggest jump of all of the resources. Additional resources participants said they would utilize following Connect to Transit included contacting the client’s local TMA (from 3% to 33%), and contacting NJ Find-a-Ride (from 16% to 53%). Potential resources that did not see big increases were those commonly identified in the pre-survey (such as using the NJ TRANSIT website or materials available in the counselor’s office) or those that were write-in responses (such as using Google Maps). Overall, participants found that there were many resources of which they were not previously aware that could help their clients find transportation to work.

Based upon what they learned during the class, the number of participants who felt that public transit was a realistic option for their clients increased from 74% to 84%. Those who did not feel this way decreased from 18% to 9%, and those who did not know decreased slightly as well, from 8% to 7% (see Figure 6). Fifty-two percent of participants reported that their opinion changed on this matter based on what they learned from Connect to Transit. Reasons given for why participant opinion changed on the feasibility of transit for clients was that Connect to Transit provided them with useful new information on programs, services, or other resources for their clients, as well as an increase in their general knowledge about public transit in New Jersey. They did note, however, that barriers continue to exist that prevent clients from getting to and from work using public transit. Chief among the suggestions to ameliorate this problem was to provide improved access to transit, especially by adding more routes and stops, and increasing service frequency.

Figure 6 Q: Is public transit a realistic option for the majority of your clients? All Sessions



Conclusion

Based on the survey results gathered from 94 participants from the eight total training sessions, it is clear that the transportation orientation/familiarization module designed as Connect to Transit achieved the goals and intentions that guided its development. Specifically, survey responses demonstrated that Connect to Transit did empower participants by providing them with current information designed to augment their knowledge of the transportation services available in their respective service areas. Using this information, participants now have the opportunity to better guide and support their clients in determining feasible modes to access employment. The program also sought to familiarize participants with how to use these services by methods including instructional lecture and the hands-on bus demonstration.

Pre-survey results demonstrated that less than one-quarter of all respondents were very familiar with the public transit options in their office’s service area and few had personal experience regularly using transit. Researchers asked a series of 17 public transportation knowledge-based questions in the pre-survey and the average score among all respondents for these 17 questions was 62%, with over 40% of respondents scoring below 60% on the questionnaire. So while almost all pre-survey respondents recognized that transportation was very important to their clients’ ability to secure and maintain employment and they were aware that 80% of their clients used public transit for at least some of their travel, the participants’ own knowledge on transit was limited. Their restricted knowledge on public transit was also demonstrated by their selection of only a few, well-publicized informational resources when asked to report all such resources they would suggest clients access for transit information.

In the pre-survey, respondents also indicated that they were most interested in learning from Connect to Transit about public transit informational resources; general information about public transit in New Jersey; and information about travel training.

The findings from the post-survey reveal a more informed and aware participant audience and permit an overall evaluation of Connect to Transit. Sixty-six percent of respondents rated Connect to Transit as “excellent” and 83% reported that the information taught was very helpful/relevant. A majority of participants from all sessions also rated six of the seven major topical areas presented as excellent, including the public transit system and travel training overviews.

In terms of knowledge increase, the post-survey shows that participants increased their knowledge about accessible public transit in New Jersey significantly. They learned about programs and services of which they were not previously aware. For example, seventy percent of all respondents reported they learned a “great deal” from Connect to Transit and their scoring on the knowledge questions confirmed that finding. In the post-survey, participants were again asked the same 17 transit-focused questions originally presented in the pre-survey. The average score for the transportation knowledge questions on the post-surveys was 87%, up from 62% on the pre-survey. In fact, every question saw an increase in correct responses compared to the pre-survey results.

Going forward, the information that the counselors learned from Connect to Transit will be helpful and empowering for their clients as they seek to successfully navigate New Jersey’s public transit system as a means to attain their career goals. Also, it must be emphasized that the data collected from the pre-survey regarding client obstacles in using public transit could also prove helpful when shared with NJ TRANSIT and local community transportation providers. For example, the most commonly cited reason participants reported that public transit was not feasible for their clients was because service was not available near their home. This sentiment was echoed in the responses to the question that asked for the top three obstacles clients face in using public transit. Specifically, responses revealed that the main obstacles were that service was not available when needed; clients had difficulty getting to the stop/station; and accessible services were not available on the origin and/or destination end of their work trip. These responses demonstrate that transportation providers should focus attention on issues including a need for more accessible first mile/last mile feeder services, which can address the service gaps between home, transit stops/stations, and work sites for persons with disabilities and other transportation disadvantaged populations.

Finally, the data gained through the administration of the pre- and post-survey should prove useful in a further iteration of Connect to Transit. Once additional training opportunities are determined for continued implementation of Connect to Transit, data gathered through the survey effort will be used to refine the curriculum and fine tune topical areas covered to meet the needs of new audiences.

CHAPTER 5

MOVING FORWARD: ADVANCING PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

Introduction

A core consideration in the development and refinement of the Connect to Transit initiative was to determine feasible strategies to promote program sustainability following the pilot study effort. The need for a program offering transit orientation/familiarization to the professional vocational rehabilitation community was confirmed during the key informant interview process described in Chapter three and the benefits and positive perceptions of the pilot Connect to Transit initiative were determined through the analyses of the pre and post program participant surveys, as detailed in Chapter four.

Now, to move the program forward, the sustainability plan outlined below will help build upon the initial success of Connect to Transit so that this promising initiative can expand and be implemented for the benefit of a wider audience of vocational professionals and others striving to assist persons with disabilities seeking gainful employment opportunities.

Building Program Sustainability

Sustainability for the Pilot Training Sites

Prior to determining a plan for Connect to Transit expansion post the pilot period, the research team first considered how to create a sustainable link between the pilot participant training sites and the transportation community. To achieve that critical goal, each entity that was a recipient of a Connect to Transit pilot training session was advised to contact NJ TIP Inc. and other members of the VTC research team with any remaining and/or new questions/issues related to employment transportation that arise among the consumers they serve.

Perhaps most importantly, the research team also focused on fostering a relationship between the entities who received Connect to Transit pilot training and the Transportation Management Association (TMA) serving their respective service region(s). The intent of this action was to provide the vocational entities who participated in Connect to Transit with a consistent and reliable contact in the transportation sector. Participants at each of the eight training sites were extremely pleased and excited to learn about and have access to their respective TMA for transportation information, guidance, and services post Connect to Transit training. As discussed earlier, TMAs are nonprofit entities under the direction of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, which is one of New Jersey's three federally authorized Metropolitan Planning Organizations. TMAs are charged with working with communities on initiatives to reduce traffic congestion and promote alternative commute strategies including public transportation, carpooling/vanpooling, shuttles, and walking/biking.

A TMA representative either attended or their contact information was shared at each of the eight Connect to Transit training sessions convened. The research team recommended that one point contact at each of the training entities be selected and charged with the responsibility of maintaining contact with their respective TMA as a means to develop a relationship with the latter. To help advance this effort, the research team contacted each TMA that presented at a Connect to Transit session emphasizing the importance of their cooperation moving forward in serving as a vital

information resource to the vocational rehabilitation community. Further, the research team also reached out to the statewide TMA membership body, the Transportation Management Association Council (TMAC), and informed their leadership of the Connect to Transit initiative and the importance of building relationships between TMAs and the vocational rehabilitation sector.

Expanding Connect to Transit

The study team identified two primary means by which Connect to Transit expansion will be pursued. The first is focused on disseminating information on the program and the success of the pilot initiative to a wide audience, both within New Jersey and beyond. The second means of promoting sustainability through expansion will involve assisting NJ TIP Inc. in securing new funding support to implement the program beyond the pilot participants.

Share Program Success with a Broader Audience

Disseminating information on the successful pilot of Connect to Transit will encompass a multi-prong approach to be pursued by VTC and NJ TIP Inc., as detailed below:

- The study team will share information on the successful pilot implementation with a variety of community transportation, disability, and workforce stakeholders statewide including but not limited to NJ TRANSIT, NJ Council on Special Transportation (NJ COST), the eight Transportation Management Associations serving New Jersey, the 21 county transportation agencies, and the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Information will be shared both informally through professional contacts maintained by the research team and formally through presentations with targeted entities including the NJ TRANSIT ADA Task Force and NJ COST. The research team will also seek to share information on the study with stakeholders nationwide including the Community Transportation Association of America, the Center for Workers with Disabilities transportation workgroup, and the Association of Travel Instruction.
- A web presence for the Connect to Transit program will be developed on the NJ TIP Inc. and VTC websites, which will encompass the program resource guide and associated appendices. Contact information for the NJ TIP Inc. project manager will be highlighted on any web presence so that those interested in hosting and/or supporting a Connect to Transit training and/or learning more about the program will have access to the appropriate point of contact.
- Information on Connect to Transit will be shared via the social media tools housed under the DiscoverAbility NJ umbrella, which uses a blog platform, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook accounts to disseminate current information related to employment issues affecting persons with disability in the state. DiscoverAbility NJ is maintained by the NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services and the web address is: <http://www.discoverabilitynj.org/>.
- The study team will prepare a paper detailing the findings and experiences of the Connect to Transit NJ pilot and submit for journal publication. Pursuing this approach will be extremely instrumental in informing a nationwide audience of the program's value and benefit.
- The study team will seek to present Connect to Transit findings at the summer 2013 Association of Travel Instruction annual conference. Sharing information on Connect to

Transit at this nationwide gathering of travel instructors should open avenues for expanded program implementation and evolution.

Seek New Funding Support

The federal Medicaid Infrastructure Grant program that funded the Connect to Transit pilot has concluded and thus new funding mechanisms must be identified and pursued for the realization of program expansion. The research team is confident that the evidence-based results of the pilot effort places NJ TIP Inc. in good stead to achieve success in proactively seeking and acquiring new funding to facilitate program expansion.

It is estimated that the total cost for each four-hour Connect to Transit training session with 10 to 20 participants is approximately \$4,000 - \$4,500. This cost estimate includes staff time for preparation, customization, and implementation of each training session and relevant meeting expenses, including staff travel, materials, and refreshment. Host facility costs are excluded as recipient agencies are required to host. It is important to note that with this cost determination per session, the expenses for implementing Connect to Transit could be borne by one or more funding agencies, or by structuring a participant fee that would help to cover program costs.

One funding mechanism that will permit program expansion is through three existing federal New Freedom program grants NJ TIP was awarded in Hudson, Passaic, and Union counties. One of these grants is active through 2013 and the other two will conclude in December 2014. In each of these three counties, NJ TIP is committed through their New Freedom grants to conduct three to four seminars that will train a total of 50 vocational professionals (e.g. vocational rehabilitation counselors/developers, employment specialists, and special education personnel) per year.

The research team also plans to seek funding to permit the expansion of Connect to Transit to the 11 NJ DVRS field offices that did not benefit from the pilot training sessions. To achieve this goal, funding will be sought from NJ DVRS directly. One approach may be to pursue a DVRS Innovation and Expansion grant. Another may involve the pursuit of a grant from the local field offices themselves, as they have funding to devote to special projects. The research team may also pursue a technical assistance grant from the Division, which would permit implementation of Connect to Transit to field offices on a quarterly or twice yearly basis. If these direct approaches are not successful in securing funding to offer Connect to Transit to the remaining DVRS field offices, the study team will investigate other potential sources of funding, including federal grant programs.

The research team is fully aware that Connect to Transit can benefit numerous other vocational professionals employed by nonprofit or for profit entities in the state that solely or partially focus on assisting persons with disabilities seeking employment. As such, the team will continue to identify these entities moving forward and approach them as potential partners for Connect to Transit training. Also, organizations that provide training for supported employment vendors, such as the Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, may also be possible partners for program implementation.

In addition, Connect to Transit holds promise as a transit orientation/familiarization program model that can benefit a stakeholder population beyond solely professionals helping adult job seekers with disabilities. The program has the potential to educate persons assisting other transportation disadvantaged populations as well. Based on feedback received from participants in the pilot sessions and from other input received, as well as from analyses conducted by the research team, the

following potential program expansion opportunities will be investigated further in the coming months:

- Consider Connect to Transit for an audience of staff members associated with entities that provide a broad array of support services to persons with disabilities, such as the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and its centers for independent living, located throughout the state.
- Consider Connect to Transit for an audience of parents/guardians of both young and adult children with disabilities to inform and empower this population with vital and current transportation information, resources, and trip planning tools that will assist both parents and their children coping with disabilities. Funding to support this effort and/or assistance in identifying host agencies and participants can be sought from disability-focused organizations including the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, The Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), Caregivers of New Jersey, The Jewish Federation, The Arc of New Jersey, and the Henry H. Kessler Foundation.
- Consider Connect to Transit for an audience of teachers at both public and private schools statewide who work with special needs teenage students about to embark on the transition from school to other opportunities, which may or may not include employment.
- Consider Connect to Transit for an audience of professionals working with the elderly population, including homecare professionals as well as familial caretakers, who want to better understand the transportation options and trip planning tools that could guide their consumers or family members in meeting a diverse range of travel needs.
- Consider refining Connect to Transit for an audience of adults with disabilities seeking employment to offer them the same transportation resources and tools the program has offered the vocational professional community supporting these persons with disabilities.
- Consider refining Connect to Transit for the professional employment specialists who support New Jersey's working poor population at the state's One-Stop Career Centers, located in each of the 21 counties. Lack of knowledge on transportation options and familiarization greatly impacts these persons seeking employment.

In all, promoting the expansion of Connect to Transit to a broader audience than originally intended will enable the research team to cast a wide net in seeking the necessary funding support for program advancement and continued success. Evaluation of these efforts will be necessary to gauge the efficacy of the program to new audiences and to maintain the integrity of the information imparted.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this undertaking has been to create and sustain a transportation orientation/familiarization program for the professional vocational rehabilitation community that provides counselors with information that will help their clients with disabilities travel to and from employment. The realization of this goal was achieved in development of the Connect to Transit program. Sustainability is vital to the success of this program – both to support the entities and individuals trained through the pilot and to expand the project to new audiences. The research team has endeavored to accomplish both of these tasks. The first task was achieved by establishing

relationships between entities receiving this training and transportation information resources and by continued promotion of this work. To address the second task, bringing Connect to Transit to a broader audience, the research team has determined potential audiences for the program. The next step for the research team is to identify specific funding and partners necessary to bring the program into its next phase of broader implementation – a step that will be eagerly pursued in the future.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

*“Know where to find the information and how to use it - That’s the secret of success.”
Albert Einstein*

The intent and purpose in designing and piloting the Connect to Transit program was to provide a transportation orientation/familiarization training session targeted to the vocational rehabilitation community who focus on assisting persons with disability seeking employment throughout New Jersey. In short, Connect to Transit was created to give these professionals current and relevant transportation information and trip planning tools and resources so they could better help their consumers determine viable transportation options to use in their quest for and securement of sustained employment. Providing thorough, relevant, and current information on a variety of transportation modes and issues was one critical goal of the curriculum, while making sure that the information taught was understandable to a lay audience and easy to use was another. As noted earlier, Connect to Transit was also designed to familiarize participants with how to use these transportation services by methods including instructional lecture and hands-on learning via a bus demonstration.

Eight Connect to Transit sessions were provided during the 18-month study, with a total of 100 participants trained. Four of the sessions were conducted with vocational rehabilitation professionals from NJ DVRS field offices and four with vocational rehabilitation professionals from several nonprofits that focus on employment for persons with disability. Interviews with participating entities conducted prior to their respective Connect to Transit session demonstrated that most were interested and looking forward to learning more about area public transportation options that may serve client employment trip needs, as well as trip planning tools and strategies that could assist clients. Through the interview sessions, the research team also learned that these vocational professionals understood the critical role transportation has in the job search process. Interviewees also explained that they seek to address transportation with clients early in the job search and conveyed their perspective that public transportation could be an employment travel mode for most clients if available and accessible.

These findings shared by interviewees on topics including desired outcomes of their participation in Connect to Transit and the role of transportation in the search for employment were reiterated in the findings gathered from a participant pre-survey effort that was also undertaken by the research team. The pre-survey results also revealed that while participants believed about 80% of their clients used public transit for at least some of their travel, the participants’ own knowledge on transit was limited. In fact, less than one-quarter of respondents were very familiar with the public transit options in their office’s service area and few had personal experience regularly using transit.

The Connect to Transit program offered transportation orientation/familiarization in the form of a four-hour course, with instruction led by the professional travel trainers of NJ TIP Inc. Innovative course components, including a live bus demonstration, guest speakers, and interactive classroom exercises yielded extremely positive feedback from participants gathered from a post-survey effort. In the post session survey, sixty-six percent of respondents rated Connect to Transit as “excellent” and 83% reported that the information taught was very helpful/relevant. In addition, seventy percent of all respondents reported they learned a “great deal” from Connect to Transit and their

scoring on a series of transportation knowledge questions posed in both the pre- and post-survey confirmed that finding. Specifically, in the post-survey participants were asked the same 17 transit-focused questions originally presented in the pre-survey and every question in the post-survey saw an increase in correct responses compared to the pre-survey results.

The post-survey findings confirmed the research team's assessment that the Connect to Transit pilot was an unequivocal success. Moving forward, the research team is committed to promoting the sustainability and expansion of Connect to Transit by disseminating information on the program's success to a variety of stakeholders within New Jersey and beyond, by both informal and formal means, including development of a program web presence through which the curriculum can be shared. The study team is also focused on pursuing additional grant opportunities to facilitate the expansion of Connect to Transit to the remaining NJ DVRS field offices, as well as to other public and private entities engaged in helping transportation disadvantaged populations attain employment. Ultimately, this program could serve not only persons with disabilities and those who provide support and aid to this population, but Connect to Transit can be refined to also help the elderly and working poor to meet their work-related and other transportation needs.

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