

Connecting to Jobs by Connecting to Transit

During an 18-month period, the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers University, in collaboration with the nonprofit, travel training organization NJ TIP 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: Program Background & Objectives

Persons with disabilities are dramatically underrepresented in the labor market both in New Jersey and the nation. Transportation issues are often cited as one factor among many that contribute to this condition.

The Connect to Transit pilot initiative was designed to empower the professional vocational rehabilitation community by offering them a four-hour course designed to augment their knowledge of the transportation services available in their respective service areas so they can better guide and support their clients with disabilities in determining feasible modes to access employment.

Other key objectives of the Connect to Transit program included:

- Familiarize participants with how to use public transportation services through a variety of educational methods, including an instructional lecture and a hands-on bus demonstration.
- Provide participants with information on travel instruction and the continuum of services in this field that include one-on-one individualized travel training.
- Design the program with "built-in" sustainability measures for participating entities, such as facilitating the establishment of a relationship between each agency and their respective Transportation Management Association (TMA).

Connect to Transit Program Highlights

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. The research team convened sessions for staff from seven New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Service field offices, as well as with several nonprofit organizations focused on employment services for people with disabilities, including The Arc of New Jersey, Bridges to Employment, Jewish Vocational Service of MetroWest New Jersey, and Samost Jewish Family & Children's Service of Southern New Jersey.

Topics addressed in the Connect to Transit curriculum included but were not limited to:

- The universe of transportation options available in each participating agency's respective service area;
- Transportation information resources;
- Trip planning guidance and tools, including web-based and mobile trip planning resources;
- Eligibility criteria for certain services;
- ADA rights and advocacy related to transportation; and
- An overview of travel training.

Each participant was given a resource guide containing the Connect to Transit curriculum and appendix. The research team designed both the guide and appendix to serve as a resource tool for program participants and their clients, providing information on a host of New Jersey transportation issues. In addition, researchers created customized appendices for each participating agency based on available local transportation resources.

The research team administered a pre and post survey effort to participants to evaluate the success of this pilot initiative. Findings demonstrated Connect to Transit achieved the goals and intentions that guided its development:

- 66% of respondents gave the session a rating of "excellent";
- 83% found the information taught to be "very helpful/relevant";
- A majority of participants from all sessions rated six of the seven major topical areas presented as excellent; and
- 70% of respondents said they learned a "great deal" from Connect to Transit.

With the conclusion of this pilot effort, VTC and NJ TIP Inc. are committed to pursuing Connect to Transit expansion among the professional vocational rehabilitation community and beyond.

For More Information Contact:

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A final report is available online at: <http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/new/>