U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

TRANSPO (YEARS 1 AND 2)
Reporting Requirements Case Studies and Standardization
Final Report

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Reporting Requirements Case Studies and Standardization
Final Report

Prepared by
Jill Strube
Metropolitan Center
Florida International University
150 SE 2nd Avenue, Ste. 500
Miami, FL 33131
http://metropolitan.fiu.edu

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) - This report will assist federal-level agencies as they seek to conform to the goals Executive Order 13330 on Human Services Transportation Coordination. The research was conducted using interview techniques through “top-down,” “bottom up,” “state uniformity,” and key informant approaches. The research also considers a basic conceptual model for computer software that will facilitate data collection and reporting efforts. The research team recommends several action items in four basic categories: organizational aspects, technical aspects, data collection issues, and output, outcome, and evaluation issues. These include creating a consortium consisting of all key players that meets regularly to discuss and justify the call for specific data, developing a means to disseminate informat and funding opportunities be considered to assist service providers in terms of emerging technologies, and considering evaluation measures that service providers themselves use to measure success, progress, and need for improvement.		

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FOREWORD

Introductory statement: The reporting requirements of the various federal agencies ranked among the top barriers to efficient and effective coordination in regards to two specific issues: 1) entities coordinating various transportation agencies are required to report similar (though not standardized) data leading to higher administrative costs than optimal and 2) several federal programs do not currently collect transportation data, which precludes the ability to evaluate program effectiveness.

Reason for publishing report: The reason this report has been published is to more widely distribute the findings and recommendations in order to facilitate a deeper and broader discussion among a large segment of the human service transportation providing community.

Short summary of contents: The report provides detailed information regarding the various research methods employed and their results, discusses a conceptual model for software to be designed to facilitate the reporting process, and outlines a number of recommendations. Primary among them, we recommend bringing key players to the table to discuss a potential common set of variables and a potential method for designing software (the "conceptual model").

Identify the audience: This report will primarily be useful for the federal-level agencies that coordinate transportation services, individuals involved in the United We Ride efforts and the Coordinated Council on Access and Mobility, and state- and local-level administrators who hope to reduce the burden that reporting requirements can pose for service providers.

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Glossary of Terms

Term / Acronym	Definition
"Agency"	A state- or federal-level organization that requires reports
"Program"	One of the 62 Federal Programs surveyed in this report
"Service Provider"	The human or transportation service provider at the local level
CCAM	Coordinated Council on Access and Mobility
DOT	Department of Transportation
FIU-MC	Florida International University-Metropolitan Center
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
LCTR	Lehman Center for Transportation Research
NTD	National Transit Database
RRAC	Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
TRANSPO	Transportation Needs of Special Populations
UWR	United We Ride

Acknowledgements

The Florida International University-Metropolitan Center and Lehman Center for Transportation Research would like to thank the hundreds of individuals who contributed their time and knowledge to this research. Without their help, this research would not have been possible or comprehensive.

We particularly appreciate the important critiques that several individuals imparted via the Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee and other key interviews. Their "straight shooting" helped to keep this project on track and oriented towards its practical goals; we hope that this document will further the action taken to resolve these issues.

Many thanks are also due to Doug Birnie and Charlene Wilder with the Federal Transit Administration for their dedication as professional project managers. Their guidance has been greatly appreciated.

Reporting Requirements Case Studies and Standardization

Abstract

Many service providers indicate that the required reporting process, data collection efforts, and varied formats are difficult, time consuming, inefficient, and ineffective at truly capturing valuable performance data. The burden of reporting to multiple agencies, all requiring different data, different forms, and different schedules is resource intensive, but do not result in program improvement. This report documents the different forms and data required by the federal agencies providing transportation funding, examines the issues of reporting from several different perspectives, and discusses reasonable solutions to improve the reporting conundrum.

The results of this investigation show that service providers suffer great burdens and frustrations in the reporting process. In addition, many are eager to streamline, standardize, and simplify reporting requirements in order to redirect their resources towards truly improving the quality of their services. They want to develop a set of measures that will enhance performance, rather than collect data for ineffective and unreasonable computations. Lessons from private industry, new technology, and performance measure research can aid in reducing the reporting requirement burden and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the data collected.

This report illustrates how important it is that players come to the table 1) to examine how recent advances in technology can facilitate data collection and 2) to regularly review how data is used to streamline, standardize, and simplify the reporting burden. The suggestions offered here should be considered a springboard to ongoing evaluation and simplification. Several courses of action are recommended in terms of organizational aspects, technical aspects, data collection issues, and evaluation issues.

Summary

Efforts to more efficiently and effectively coordinate transportation services have made some progress over the past few decades, but some of the obstacles to coordination are tenacious. Transportation service practitioners who participated in a focus group sponsored by the National Consortium on Human Service Transportation Coordination ranked federal reporting requirements among the top barriers to efficient and effective coordination. In particular, practitioner concerns centered on two distinct issues. First, entities coordinating various service providers are required to report similar (though not standardized) data to various federal programs. End results include increased administrative costs and excessive time and effort. Second, participants were interested in developing a mechanism to collect transportation data from service providers that currently aren't reporting any data on funded transportation services. This data is needed to evaluate program effectiveness and to determine whether coordinated transportation delivery strategies may offer opportunities for increased efficiency and improved customer access. A third major concern was raised in the course of this research: the reasons for requiring some of the variables are not always transparent, and practitioners do not always see the value in expending resources to collect it.

The Federal Transportation Administration-Coordinated Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) tasked the Metropolitan Center at Florida International University (FIU-MC) to examine these issues from three perspectives:

1) The "Top-Down" approach, through which the FIU-MC Team collected the reporting guidelines and forms that each of the 62[1] federal programs studied require of the service providers they fund;
2) The "Bottom-Up" approach, through which the FIU-MC Team interviewed a number of service providers that receive federal funding to examine their perspective about the myriad reports they are required to submit; and
3) The "State Uniformity" approach, through which the FIU-MC Team asked state-level officials, state coordinators, and regional United We Ride Ambassadors what kinds of standardization, streamlining, and coordination efforts designed to better facilitate the reporting process at the state level are currently and prospectively in use.

Additionally, FIU's Lehman Center for Transportation Research (LCTR) developed a conceptual framework and recommendations for a potential data collection and reporting system. This system would be designed, developed, and established for all agencies that currently require transportation data in their reports and could be extended in the future to all federal programs that are part of the CCAM effort.

[1] When this project was first undertaken, only 62 federal programs existed under the coordination effort. Subsequently, SAFETY-LU codified coordination and also created two new programs for a total of 64; these two new programs are not included in this research.

In the final stages of this project, the FIU-MC Team contacted additional key experts through two efforts. First, a Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee (RRAC) was established as a means of bringing a practical perspective to our report findings and recommendations. Second, the FIU-MC Team facilitated a meeting with representatives from federal agencies interested in the conceptual model to identify their technical, legal, and administrative concerns with its potential implementation.

A. The Approaches to Studying Reporting Requirements

Previous research (completed during the first year of TRANSPO research) revealed that about one quarter of the federal programs studied require local service providers to report information regarding transportation. This preliminary analysis showed that, while many federal programs are under the same federal departments and require similar information, the amount and quality of information differed greatly. Requirements from one federal program to the next range from a single set of questions regarding transportation service finances to many questions regarding financial information, ridership, trip purpose, number of miles traveled, and so forth. TRANSPO Year 1 research also showed that an effective statewide coordination system is in place in Florida, where over 57 million trips were reported in 2004—the highest number ever recorded in a year. However, while larger state programs have been successful in these efforts, smaller programs (i.e., programs with smaller budgets) find it difficult to coordinate with programs that have more funding. The continued research conducted through TRANSPO Year 2 supports these general findings, and provides additional layers of information that help present a more comprehensive view of the issues.

The "Top-Down" Approach: Not all of the federal programs under the CCAM umbrella request transportation-related data. Our research indicates that 18 collect transportation-related data; however, these vary greatly in terms of the data they collect, how they collect it, how many transportation-related variables are of interest, and which specific reports may or may not require it. Six of these are programs under the Department of Transportation requiring that transportation service providers report data through monthly and annual data collection efforts on a number of transportation-related and other variables through the National Transit Database (NTD), an automated uploading collection system, in addition to several program-specific reports. On the opposite end of the spectrum, three request transportation information only as line items in expense reports. The remaining nine programs do not focus their data collection efforts on transportation information, but do ask for some transportation data. In some cases, the form is relatively simple and requires only a few variables, including one or two transportation-related data points. In other cases, the form is extensive, requiring much information, sometimes at the individual level, for which transportation is only one very minor data point. As would be expected, only the Department of Transportation programs request extensive data on transportation-related variables.

The "Bottom-Up" Approach: The majority of human services providers understand that reporting requirements are one of the necessary burdens of instituting any service with public funds. However, several respondents commented that they did not see the point of

collecting certain kinds of data and that it seemed to them to be an exercise in futility to a certain extent. The data they collected did not always seem to accommodate evaluation purposes, and they often did not see a final report that might help them improve their program or understand how it compared to other similar programs. As one key informant emphasized, all data collection comes at a cost, and therefore, it is imperative to ensure that any effort is purposeful and justified. In addition, they often have a multitude of collaborating partners—in once case, the service provider listed 30 other agencies with which they must coordinate. These findings show that current reporting requirements are generally considered unwieldy and have vast room for improvement. These providers have multiple partners, report to multiple parties, and report on a multitude of variables, many of which do not reflect "Reality with a capital 'R,'" as one provider called it. Although most respondents understand the necessity of the reporting process, they would benefit greatly from a regular review of needed data, a standardized and streamlined process, and many would appreciate the ability to create internal reports and comparisons with peers from a national database.

The State Uniformity Approach: Year 1 TRANSPO research indicated that the success of the coordinated transportation system is a direct result of the ingenuity of the local partners, and community transportation operators. For example, each county in Florida requires a human transportation coordinator to collect relevant information, compile it, and send it to the Director of the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged in Tallahassee. The current study further examined the Florida case, and searched throughout the 50 United States to discover any other statewide efforts to streamline and standardize the reporting process. Only a few states have undertaken such an ambitious process, but where they have worked towards a more standardized system, they are better able to provide various functions including monitoring coordination, identifying common barriers, ensuring a minimum level of service, associating performance with population demographics, and identifying gaps in provided services. States that merit consideration for modeling include California, Texas, Washington, and Florida. In addition, several interviews revealed that the reporting requirements at the state level might be more onerous than even federal requirements. In this respect, federal assistance may encourage state agencies to reduce the reporting burden, perhaps starting with those that are already begun this process.

B. Conceptual Model of a Data Collection and Reporting Software System

This section presents a conceptual design that can lead to the development of a web-based software application to assist federal funding programs and receiving service providers with reporting requirements. The conceptual design of the web-based application includes the following elements:

- A Data User Interface that provides assistance to allow any given service provider to submit required reports to requesting federal programs.
- Uploading features that allow data and documents to be collected using common formats. Data will be stored in a chosen database.

- Report generation tools that permit staff and administrators to print submitted documents and to help assess efficiency, effectiveness, and other goals established by the federally funded programs.

Federal programs request that recipient service providers collect data from their everyday operations. The data may come from different sources and may have different formats. For example, some service providers may store their data files in Microsoft Excel, Access Microsoft Word, a text editor, or a different format altogether. While each service provider can easily manipulate its own reports, it is very difficult for federal level administrators to handle data across all providers because they may all use different storage programs and formats.

In order to better share the data with others, uniform standards need to be created. However, instead of forcing every provider to adopt a uniform standard for collecting and storing data, this project aims to upload data using existing formats by ensuring that data from different sources are converted to a common format and stored in a single database. Once in place, both service provider employees and federal administrators can use the database to generate reports and perform comparisons among peer agencies.

Reports will be available based on the data loaded into the database and provider/ program/agency needs. Two types of reports may be created. The first report is based on the reports submitted by the agencies, and the second based on the data stored in the database using Microsoft Reporting Services. For public Internet users, the web application can provide access to the reports designed by the service providers, as well as those generated by the computer application. Administrators will have greater control on the reports and have the capability of uploading, downloading, deleting, and displaying or hiding reports.

C. Additional Key Expert Research

Additional key experts were consulted in the final state of this report in order to "ground truth" our results. The Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee (RRAC) consisted of various professionals in the human services transportation provision field, including local, state, and national-level professionals. In addition, the FIU-MC facilitated meetings and conference calls with representatives from federal agencies interested in the proposed list of common, standardized questions, and the conceptual model to identify their technical, legal, and administrative concerns with its potential implementation.

RRAC members made important comments that can be categorized in terms of data gathering efforts, relevant and important indicators, consensus building, software development, and skepticism regarding the potential success of this project. They also offered some examples to consider when developing recommendations.

D. Synopsys of Recommendations

The FIU-MC Team does not advocate widespread systems change to the status quo, and do not intend these recommendations to disrupt the current system or create an additional burden or more onerous reporting for any of the players involved. In other words, the FIU-MC Team does not advocate adding layers of bureaucracy at the point of service, and does not advocate whole scale software change to the federal databases currently in use at this time. The Team does recommend that all players come to the table to examine how recent advances in technology can facilitate data collection and to regularly review how data is used, or if certain variables could be eliminated from the requirement list, in order to streamline, standardize, and simplify the reporting burden. The suggestions offered here should be considered a springboard to ongoing evaluation and simplification. The FIU-MC Team recommends several courses of action in terms of organizational and technical aspects, data collection issues, and evaluation issues. Each are discussed in more detail in their relevant sections, and are summarized here.

Organizational Aspects

- Bring various representatives to the table to begin a dialog regarding standardization of questions through a common web-based reporting system (initiated with the January 2009 meeting; see Section 6 for more details).
- Develop a process to bring representatives from each participating program, as well as representatives from street-level service providers to the table on a regular basis perhaps through an Annual or Bi-Annual Review Consortium to evaluate how the data is used and how to continue to simplify the reporting process.
- Create and moderate an on-line forum (perhaps through the UWR website) for people interested in streamlining and simplifying reporting requirements to continually seek input and generate areas of discussion that may lead to better results, and certainly will help individuals interested in the subject stay connected with each other through an official, FTA-moderated channel. FTA should assign staff to monitor the discussion groups and work on implementing some of the suggestions that get wide support from the group.
- Regularly, formally, and systematically approach service providers to ask their opinions on the data collection process, data entry methods, uploading options, and variables.
- Show service providers how the required data are needed for specific and relevant purposes.
- Communicate effectively throughout the process of standardizing and simplifying the reporting process by offering timely information, measured progress, and clear, early warnings of any changes to current systems. This element must be a top priority for all staff.

Technical Aspects

- Establish a resource center (perhaps through the UWR website) to disseminate information and provide funding opportunities for private-sector solutions, models, and technology that may be translated to human services transportation provision (such as tracking individuals, storing addresses, and recording

preferences using to real-time locations and last-ordered requests). Seek to help providers collect data at the very point of service; data upload could be basically automatic after each transaction. While some service providers have access to the latest technology, it would be beneficial to assist those who cannot afford to implement these advances. Report the best practices of providers who effectively use state-of-the-art technology and have developed innovative funding solutions.

- Consider how to integrate the reporting process commensurate with the conceptual model regarding a database system report as described in Section 5. Several agencies are already using this kind of standardization and uploading process (see Recommendation #5 in Section 2.3); a resource center could provide assistance for those who are not yet using this technology.
- Because information technologies evolve so quickly, it is important to seriously contemplate which formats are more flexible and can facilitate future updates with greater ease.
- Be sure that guidelines and data definitions are clear and standardized—employ drop-down menus and metadata information (including definitions, units of measure, and justification for each variable).

Data Collection Issues

- Systematically collect data for consistent evaluation and to reduce redundancies. As one participant in the process stated, "You can't manage what you can't measure." On the other hand, as another said, "Garbage in, garbage out"—it is important that the data collected serve an easily understood purpose, that justification for the variables is meaningful, and that the cost to collect data does not outweigh its benefit.
- Allow service providers access to the data used for evaluation, as well as the evaluation reports, so that the staff members asked to collect and report the data understand that their efforts are appreciated and important.
- Develop a standard data collection and reporting web-based system (as described in Section 5), and allow service providers to use the database for their internal reporting needs. Use familiar products and allow service providers to utilize the national database to be able to make their own comparisons.
- Research what data service providers use internally that the federal-level agencies do not currently use to understand what is relevant to service providers. Also, investigate what variables service providers consider irrelevant or useless that they are currently required to report.
- Consider variables that could be used to identify gaps in service (for example, riders eligible for paratransit who do not currently use it) to better target populations and coordinate services.
- Collect qualitative information about customer service to establish and monitor levels of service standards for coordinated transportation.

Output, Outcome, and Evaluation Issues

- Consider including evaluation measures that service providers use themselves. The FTA may want to extend this research effort to examine which variables many service providers currently use that could be considered best practices.
- Be careful about making comparisons between communities. Small communities, service providers with few resources and/or highly dispersed populations are not directly comparable with large or densely populated communities or service providers with greater resources.
- Examine the efforts in California (for analysis), Washington State (for mandating data reporting and consistent data collection), Texas (for the implementation of Excel spreadsheets to simplify the process) and Florida (for enforcing minimum performance standards).
- Consider developing a federal-level database that consolidates various relevant demographic and other data that can help service providers as they identify unmet community needs and establish the rationale for their programming.

Reporting Requirements Case Studies and Standardization

Chapter 1. Background and Project Description

Coordination among transportation service providers has long been considered an important element to increased efficiency, effectiveness, and customer satisfaction. In 2003, the General Accounting Office found that some coordination among the then 62 federal agencies expending resources on transportation services had begun, but that better interagency coordination was still needed. They recommended instituting incentives and mandates for better coordination, implementing a clearinghouse website that would facilitate communication and provide guidance, and making federal standards more consistent. In 2004, President George W. Bush followed this report with Executive Order 13330 (Appendix E) on Human Services Transportation Coordination, and in an effort to more directly coordinate transportation to the client bases that need it, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, 2005) legislation offered human service providers that coordinate transportation for their clients the opportunity to receive federal transportation dollars.

The Coordinated Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) oversees the activities and advance the goals of the Executive Order, and the Order requires it to examine areas that may be preventing effective coordination. Among its functions, the CCAM promotes interagency cooperation, seeks to minimize duplication, looks for ways to streamline federal rules and regulations, and implements administrative, policy, and procedural mechanisms to enhance transportation services at all levels. The Secretary of Transportation chairs the Council, and members include the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Interior and Justice as well as the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration and the Chairperson of the National Council on Disability (UWR, 2009).

In support of these goals, transportation service practitioners were asked to participate in a focus group sponsored by the National Consortium on Human Service Transportation Coordination. They ranked reporting requirements among the top federal barriers to efficient and effective coordination. In particular, practitioner concerns centered on two distinct issues. First, entities coordinating various providers are required to report similar (though not standardized) data to various federal programs. End results include increased administrative costs and excessive time and effort. Second, participants were interested in developing a mechanism to collect transportation data from providers that currently aren't reporting any data on funded transportation services. This data is needed to evaluate program effectiveness and to determine whether coordinated transportation delivery strategies may offer opportunities for increased efficiency and improved customer access.

During TRANSPO Year 1, the FIU Lehman Center conducted research that examined federal-level reporting requirements, evaluated the Florida state efforts to coordinate and streamline data collection, and performed two case studies of county-level agencies that

must coordinate human service transportation delivery. That analysis showed that only about one quarter of the federal programs require the providers they fund to report transportation-related data. More importantly, while many federal programs are under the same federal departments and require similar information, the amount of needed information or specific variable attributes are often vastly different. Requirements from one federal agency to the next range from a single set of questions regarding transportation service finances to many questions regarding financial information, ridership, trip purpose, number of miles traveled, and so forth. During TRANSPO Year 2, CCAM asked the Metropolitan Center at Florida International University (FIU-MC) to expand this research by examining these issues from three perspectives:

1) The "Top-Down" approach, through which the FIU-MC Team collected the reporting guidelines and forms that each of the 62[2] federal programs studied require of the service providers they fund;
2) The "Bottom-Up" approach, through which the FIU-MC Team interviewed a number of service providers that receive federal funding to examine their perspective about the myriad reports they are required to submit; and
3) The "State Uniformity" approach, through which the FIU-MC Team asked state-level officials, state coordinators, and regional United We Ride Ambassadors what kinds of standardization, streamlining, and coordination efforts designed to better facilitate the reporting process at the state level are currently and prospectively in use.

Additionally, FIU's Lehman Center for Transportation Research (LCTR) developed a conceptual framework and recommendations for a potential data collection and reporting system. This system would be designed, developed, and established for all federal agencies that currently require transportation data in their reports and could be extended in the future to all federal programs that are part of the CCAM effort.

This report summarizes those efforts. Sections 2, 3, and 4 discuss the methodology and findings for the three approaches and offer specific recommendations towards those areas. The fifth section provides the framework for a data collection and reporting system, specific considerations as it reaches the development stage, and preliminary recommendations as to how to implement it. The sixth section describes our work with the Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee and the federal-level representatives from the programs that currently require service providers to report on some transportation-related data. The final section provides a conclusion and overall summary recommendations.

[2] When this project was first undertaken, only 62 federal programs existed under the coordination effort. Subsequently, SAFETY-LU codified coordination and also created two new programs for a total of 64; these two new programs are not included in this research.

Chapter 2. The "Top-Down" Approach

In order to accommodate the very important need for public accountability, federal-level staff must gather information from the service providers they fund to assess how well the program meets the needs of the clients, to evaluate the cost effectiveness of the program, and to discern which areas could use improvement. Periodic reports that provide the data necessary to perform these tasks are a fact of life for any service provider that receives public funding to justify its existence and to boast about its successes.

2.1 Methodology

The FIU-MC Team examined the 62[3] federal programs as established in 2004 that must coordinate transportation services for their clients. Of those, about two thirds were successfully interviewed and completed the questionnaire—several of these allowed the FIU-MC Team to ask follow-up questions. The FIU-MC Team investigated the remaining federal programs strictly through Internet access to their public websites. Program administrators were asked to provide the FIU-MC Team with information that would allow the Team to analyze their reporting procedures. Many federal agencies complied by giving the Team: 1) URL links to a direct data uploading system, as well as to their forms and guidelines, 2) electronic documentation-like guides or forms in PDF, Word, or Excel files that were emailed to the Team, and 3) paper documents that program administrators use to give guidance or collect data from the service providers they fund that were faxed or mailed to researchers. The FIU-MC Team additionally searched the federal agencies' websites for access to any other documentation or guidance regarding reporting procedures and data, particularly for those that did not provide them or were not available for interview.

2.2 Findings

The guidelines and report forms gathered from these federal programs show a wide variation in what kinds of data they request from the service providers they fund, as well as in terms of the actual means by which data are collected. Most do not require specific information about transportation services, and may only include transportation as a line item in a fiscal report or as an otherwise undefined "allowable expense." Federal programs that did not require any transportation data or did not define it specifically (as in the "allowable expense" category) are not considered in the following findings.

Of the 62 programs examined, 18 collect some kind of transportation-related data; however, these vary greatly in terms of what data they collect, how they collect it, how many variables are of interest, and which of sometimes several reports that specifically request it. Six of these are programs under the Department of Transportation, which

[3] When this project was first undertaken, only 62 federal programs existed under the coordination effort. Subsequently, SAFETY-LU codified coordination and also created two new programs for a total of 64; these two new programs are not included in this research.

require transportation service providers to report data on monthly and annual cycles on a great number of transportation-related and other variables through the National Transit Database (NTD), an automated uploading collection system, in addition to several program-specific reports. On the opposite end of the spectrum, three programs request transportation information only as line items in expense reports. The remaining nine programs do not focus their data collection efforts on transportation-related information, but do ask for some transportation data as a means of tracking finances or services, usually as a very minor point among a great number of other measures. In some cases, the form is relatively simple and requires only a few variables, including one or two transportation-related data points. In other cases, the form is extensive, requiring much information, sometimes at the individual level, for which transportation is only one very minor data point. As would be expected, only the Department of Transportation programs request extensive data on transportation-related variables.

Table 2.1 shows all 62 programs in this study as categorized by the intensity of their data collection efforts. The first 13 require at least some substantial transportation data; the next five require only a total expenditure for transportation in a line-item expense report or otherwise collect information on transportation through budgetary documentation. The remaining programs do not specifically require transportation-related data, although those that consider transportation an "allowable expense" are specifically indicated.

TABLE 2.1 Data Collection Efforts by 62 Federal Programs

Sorted by Intensity of Transportation-related Data

DEPARTMENT	OFFICE	PROGRAM
Federal Programs that collect at least some transportation data (13)		
Transportation	Federal Transit Administration	Capital and Training Assistance Program for Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility
Transportation	Federal Transit Administration	Capital Assistance Program for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities
Transportation	Federal Transit Administration	Capital Investment Grants
Transportation	Federal Transit Administration	Job Access and Reserve Commute Grants
Transportation	Federal Transit Administration	Nonurbanized Area Formula Transit Grants
Transportation	Federal Transit Administration	Urbanized Area Formula Program
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Head Start
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Temporary Assistance for Needy People (TANF)
Health and Human Services	Administration on Aging	Program for American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian Elders
Health and Human Services	Administration on Aging	Supportive Services and Senior Centers Grants

DEPARTMENT	OFFICE	PROGRAM
Health and Human Services	Centers for Medicare and Medical Services	Medicaid Program
Housing and Urban Development	Office of Community Planning and Development	Community Development Block Grant
Veterans Affairs	Veterans Health Administration	VA Homeless Providers Grants and Per Diem Program
Transportation data collected only as line item in fiscal reports or budget information only (5)		
Education	Elementary and Secondary Education	21st Century Community Learning Centers
Education	Office of Innovation and Improvement	Voluntary Public School Choice
Education	Special Education and Rehabilitative Service	Vocational Rehabilitation grants
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Social Services Block Grants
Housing and Urban Development	Office of Community Planning and Development	Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids
Transportation is an "allowable service for reimbursement," but no specific data are collected (13)		
Education	Special Education and Rehabilitative Service	Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities
Education	Special Education and Rehabilitative Service	Centers for Independent Living
Education	Special Education and Rehabilitative Service	Independent Living Services For Older Individuals Who are Blind
Education	Special Education and Rehabilitative Service	Independent Living State Grants
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Refugee and Entrant Assistance Discretionary Programs
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Refugee and Entrant assistance State Administered Programs
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Refugee and Entrant Assistance Targeted Programs
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Refugee and Entrant Assistance Voluntary Agency Programs
Health and Human Services	Health Resources and Services Administration	Healthy Start Initiative
Health and Human Services	Health Resources and Services Administration	Rural Health and Outreach Grants (Rural Health Care, Health Network, and Small Health Care Provider Programs)
Labor	Special Education and Rehabilitative Service	Black Lung Benefits Programs
Labor	Veteran's Employment and Training Services	Homeless Veteran's Reintegration Project Grant
Labor	Veteran's Employment and Training Services	Veterans Employment Programs
	No transportation data collected (27)	
Agriculture	Food and Nutrition Service	Food Stamp Employment and Training Program

DEPARTMENT	OFFICE	PROGRAM
Education	Special Education and Rehabilitative Service	Supported Employment Services for Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Child Care and Development Fund
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Community Services Block Grants Programs (CSBG)
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	Development Disabilities Grants Project of National Significance
Health and Human Services	Administration for Children and Families	State Council on Developmental Disabilities and Protection Advocacy System
Health and Human Services	Centers for Medicare and Medical Services	State Children's Health Insurance Programs
Health and Human Services	Health Resources and Services Administration	Community Health Centers
Health and Human Services	Health Resources and Services Administration	Maternal and Child Services Grants
Health and Human Services	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration	Community Mental Health Services Block Grant
Health and Human Services	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration	Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant
Housing and Urban Development	Office of Housing	Revitalization of Severely Distressed Public Housing
Housing and Urban Development	Office of Housing	Supportive Housing for persons with Disabilities
Interior	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Indian Employment Assistance
Interior	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Indian Employment Training and Related Services
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Job Corps
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Migrant and Seasonal Farm work
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Native American Employment and Training
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Senior Community Service Employment
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Trade Adjustment Assistance-Workers
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Welfare-to-Work Grants to Federally Recognized tribes and Alaska Native
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Work Incentive Grants
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Workforce Investment Act Adult Dislocated Worker Program
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Workforce Investment Act Adult Service Program

DEPARTMENT	OFFICE	PROGRAM
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Workforce Investment Act Youth Activities
Veterans Affairs	Veterans Benefit Administration	Automobiles and Adaptive Equipment for Certain Disabled Veterans and members of the Armed Forces
Veterans Affairs	Veterans Health Administration	Veterans Medical Care
Federal Programs that were no longer active at the time of this research (4)		
Health and Human Services	Health Resources and Services Administration	HIV Care Grants
Health and Human Services	Health Resources and Services Administration	Healthy Community Access Program
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Welfare-to-Work Grant to State and Localities
Labor	Employment Training Administration	Youth Opportunity Grants

Table 2.2 summarizes a sample of reports collected from the various federal programs in this study. This summary provides the reader with some idea of the complexity of the reporting forms and what role transportation data may play for each federal program. In addition, this summary provides information on the report forms and guidelines sent by federal programs that do not request transportation information for a sense of what they seek to measure as a means of helping to determine how to best integrate transportation data into programs that currently do not collect that data.

Table 2.2 additionally illustrates the wide variety of forms and data that funded service providers are required to navigate, and shows how difficult the task of integrating these systems in order to streamline and standardize data collection will prove to be.

TABLE 2.2 Summary of the Electronic and Paper Reports Available to FIU-MC Team

Agency / Program	Type of Report/Form Number and Name	Data Collection Method	Notes on Transportation Data Required
Administration on Aging (AoA)	Title VI Program Performance Report	Data submitted on line	**Yes:** Total number of one-way trips as part of supportive "access" services.
AoA	Title VI Financial Status Report		**No:** No specific line item for transportation—simple one-page form.
AoA	Title III and VII Program Report		**Yes:** Two line items regarding "Assisted Transportation for registered services requiring a summary client profile and "Transportation" for non-registered services with no client profile necessary.
Administration for Children and Families (ACF)	SF-269 Financial Status Report, SF 424 Report SF-272 and SF-272A Federal Cash Transactions Report	(Available on line at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/grants_resources.html)	**No:** No specific data required regarding transportation. These are financial reports that request fiscal info with regard to the year of the report.
ACF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	TANF reports:	(http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/tanfrpts/TDRSindex.htm)	**Yes.** Transportation falls under Section 1: Disaggregated Data Collection for Families Receiving Assistance under the TANF Program - Revised Supportive services for unemployed: Amount and number of months required. See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/data-reports/tanfedit/index.htm for uploading data processes.
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	Accomplishments	(IDIS database)	**Yes:** Transportation falls under Accomplishments Narrative and certain categories of people served (ethnicity and race, age, low- and moderate-income), as well as cost information—This is a small portion of a report that requires much more info in great detail
Community Services Block Grants (CSBG)	Expenditure by Service Category	(Our records only show a faxed page of a PDF file)	**No:** No specific line item for transportation—simple one-page form. Transportation may fit under “Other” service category. Data required is the number of agencies reporting and CSBG Funds by service category and demographic category.
Dept. of Education	Grant Performance Report Cover Sheet (ED 524B)	(Only the guidelines are in our records: PDF File)	**No:** No specific transportation-related questions on this form. Questions involve info about budgeting, grant funds, matching grant funds, performance measurement, and Human Subjects certification

Agency / Program	Type of Report/Form Number and Name	Data Collection Method	Notes on Transportation Data Required
Dept. of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	Annual Report ED(RSA)-7-OB form	(Only the guidelines are in our records: Word Document)	**Yes:** Guidelines with instructions are the first nine pages; Transportation is considered "Other Individual Services" under Section D(3) and "Community Integration" (which can include transportation to/from social functions) under Section D(9). Data required is "Number of individuals receiving each service during this fiscal year" Major data collection effort involves funding, staffing, training, and data on individuals served (socio-demographic info and visual impairment)
Dept. of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	Policy Directive RSA-PD-06-08 Form RSA-2	(Only the guidelines are in our records: Word Document)	**Yes:** Line item (6) in Schedule II - No. of Individuals Served & Expenditures by Service Category. The document includes a 3-page form with number of individuals and amount as the data to be collected, along with 17 pages of instructions.
Dept. of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	Reporting Manual for the Case Service Report (RSA 911) Policy Directive RSA-PD-06-01	Agency can submit reports on line with ID and password	**Allowable:** Transportation is an "allowable" charge for reimbursement; the only mention of transportation is the following: Trainees, Interns or Volunteers who are not employed are allowed to be awarded a stipend to cover transportation (among other things) and Cost of Purchased Services, which can include transportation among other expenditures made to public and/or private vendors, individuals or an organization. However, this database captures info on individual cases, and so will not be appropriate to any standardization effort.
Dept. of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers	FS-10 Detailed Budget	(Our records only show the PDF print out)	**Yes:** Includes transportation expenses.
Head Start	Program Report	Agency submits reports on line with ID and password	**Yes:** In a 30-page report, transportation appears as a required question on page 28 in the section about Family Services (Q47c) and in a "Special Items" section about purchase/lease of buses--when, how many, and whether the service is provided through contract with transportation provider.

Agency / Program	Type of Report/Form Number and Name	Data Collection Method	Notes on Transportation Data Required
HOPWA	Annual Progress Report	(Only the guidelines are in our records: PDF file)	**Yes:** Line item among many other items under Part 3 (HOPWA Project Sponsor Info), Supportive Services (Q2n) -- both a summary table for all sponsors and a table for each sponsor; required data include number of households receiving assistance and amount of funds expended in the project and similarly for NON-HOPWA housing assistance. An appendix also provides information per individuals to help determine percentages of clients in stable housing, etc.
HOPWA	Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)	(Only the guidelines are in our records: PDF file)	**No:** No specific Transportation-related data is required. This is a shorter report that measures project performance based on other criteria.
JARC	Help File on Definitions and FAQs (The PDF file in our possession is a "template" for the website they have on line)	Upload to Web	**Yes:** Definitions include many transportation-related situations, and data required include ridership, cost per ride, mobility management/transportation brokerage info, one-way trip info, and so on. Other information required includes employment, job, and support services related data.
SCHIP	Budget Report	XLS spreadsheet	**No:** Data are not broken into line items. Data requested are Total computable, Federal Share, and State Share by Fiscal Year and Quarter.
SSBG	Post expenditure Report	XLS spreadsheet	**Yes:** Line item for transportation among 29 total categories; this is a simple Excel spreadsheet that automatically tallies the information. Part A: Expenditures and Provision Method; data required include SSBG Expenditures, Expenditures of all other funds, and Provision Method (public or private) Part B: Recipients: data required include Children, and Adults of various categories.
Transportation	NTD	Web-based: http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/	**Yes:** Financial and Service related data required: sources of funds, number of passenger trips, and so on. NTD requires monthly as well as annual reports.

Of those that require transportation data, the FIU-MC Team asked a few basic questions about the reports that were required. First, the general types of reports, including fiscal, performance, ridership, satisfaction, and so on, were noted. Next, the distinct number of reports each program required were observed; for example, it was most common that a performance and a fiscal report were both required, but several programs required additional reports either in conjunction with a fiscal and/or performance report, or on their own. Additionally, the frequency with which reports were expected were examined; this data ranged from monthly to annual reports. It is important to remember that five of the programs considered in the lists below request transportation information only as a line item in a fiscal report (see Table 2.1); these may not be good candidates to consider in the attempt to standardize the reporting format as they require very limited and simplified transportation data and the costs to the program to participate in this initial effort may outweigh the benefits of their inclusion at this point.

Number of Distinct Types of Reports per Program

- 1 program requires one report
- 5 programs require two reports
- 2 programs require three reports
- 2 programs require four reports
- 4 programs require five reports
- 1 program requires six reports
- The programs surveyed require 54 distinct reports in total, for an average of 3.4 reports
- (NOTE: 3 did not provide information about number of reports they require)

Types of Reports

- 16 are financial or "expenditure" reports
- 11 are performance, progress, or program reports ("Evaluation," "Progress Report," "Program Goals Report," "Program of Project Status Report," "Performance Report," "Milestone Activity Report")
- 7 are "Ridership Reports," "Access to Care," or "Number of Rides"
- 4 are Satisfaction Surveys
- 3 are National Transit Database (NTD) reports
- 2 are Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) reports
- 3 are various other reports ("TEAM System grant management" and individual case characteristics)
- (NOTE: 5 did not provide information about the types of reports they require)

Frequency of Reports

- The vast majority (33) are annual reports, with an additional 3 that include both annual and quarterly components, and 3 that require an annual report along with monthly components
- 5 are quarterly reports
- 5 are semi-annual reports
- 1 is "by activity"

- 1 is "per term"
- (NOTE: 5 did not provide information about the frequency with which they require reports)

In terms of units, exact definition, question format, and so on for the data that each program requires, while similar across several programs, are not in any respect standardized. The following illustrates some of the different kinds of data that the programs collect. Some programs require data for more than 100 variables. These broad categories only provide examples of the required data across several of the programs that currently require transportation-related data; it is by no means a comprehensive list.

Service Provider and Program Information

- Grant Number(s)
  (In one program, the grant number is established with initial creation of the IDIS case number)
- State and Agency
- Program Name
- Grantee Name
- Sponsor Agency name
- Tribal Organization
- Reporting Period
- Fiscal year
- Address
- Staff (# full and part-time)
- "Cluster" information by client demographic "matrices"
- Three top accomplishments for a system of elder rights
- Three top accomplishments for home and community based programs
- Total focal points and senior centers that received assistance
- Narrative: Project Status, Methods and Approaches, etc.
- Accomplishments Narrative
- Narrative Performance Assessment on Outputs, Outcomes, and Barriers/Recommendations
- Staffing Profile (various categories include total and minority FTEs[4]) by Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and State Unit on Aging (SUA)
- FTE Staff for Administrative, Direct, Support, and Volunteers by State Agency/Contractor and disabilities/minorities
- Detailed Staff /Volunteer Info
- Salary, Education of Staff
- (Director's signature)
- Type of Program (from a list of 10)
- Federal Interest in Facilities
- Contact Information
- Description of Agency

[4] Full-Time Equivalent.

- Religious Affiliation
- Activity Name
- Activity Status
- Accomplishments
- Total Subcontract Amount
- Primary service area
- Annual Performance under Action Plan
- Barriers or Trends overview
- Business Address (city, state, zip)
- Email Address
- Phone
- Website
- Type of Agency
- Type of Grant
- Grantee Name
- Grantee ID Number
- JARC Contact info
- Matching funds
- Financial Partners
- Operating Partners
- Program Evaluation, Accomplishments, and Challenges
- Grant Funding Information (Dates, Grants)

Coordination Information

- Number of Providers in Section II: Utilization and Expenditure Profiles
- Network summary: Total # of Providers (see staffing) including minority and rural providers
- Grant sources for leveraging (see Financial Information)
- Project sponsor info for each sponsor funded by grantee
- Matching Funds
- Financial Partners
- Operating Partners
- Integration Methods
- Community Representatives
- Coordination Efforts

Transportation-Related Information

- Transportation as “access” services: “Total Units of Service” (A Unit of Service for Transportation is considered “1 one-way trip”)
- “Assisted Transportation” (Registered services requiring summary client profile)
- “Transportation” (Non-registered services—no client profile required)
- Amount and number of months of transportation service (note: ambiguous terminology)

- Line item under “Individual Services” in Table 3—considered “self-explanatory” in the instructions—based on number of individuals receiving services during the fiscal year
- Transportation Services are also mentioned in the instructions in terms of coordinating transportation to set up meetings for the Community Integration activities, but data are not specifically required in a line item
- Line item (6) in Schedule II - Number of Individuals Served & Expenditures by Service Category.
- Transportation is a “Special Item”
- Number of Buses Purchased per Month Breakdown
- Lease/Own buses
- Contracts with Transportation Providers
- “Transportation Services” (five “national objective” codes) used to categorize activities for reporting purposes
- Line item among many other items under Part 3 (HOPWA Project Sponsor Info), Supportive Services (Q2n) —both a summary table for all sponsors and a table for each sponsor; required data include number of households receiving assistance and amount of funds expended in the project and similarly for NON-HOPWA housing assistance
- Ridership
- Transportation Services
- Geographic Info related to transportation

Client/Passenger Information

- Age
- Sex (also called Gender)
- Rural
- Poverty
- Live Alone
- Race/Ethnicity
- Caregiver relationship
- “Family’s cash resources”
- Family affiliation
- Date of Birth (DOB)
- Social Security Number (SSN)
- Marital Status
- Employment Status
- Visual Impairments (w/details)
- Education
- Living Arrangement
- Source of Referral
- Financial Info Other than costs
- Enrollment/Turnover
- Age of Children

- Public Assistance
- Language
- Child Care needs
- Medicaid/SCHIP
- Health Insurance
- Dental
- Mental Health
- Disability
- Female-Headed households
- Low/Moderate Income
- Median Income by Area

Financial Information

- A separate financial report is due at the six and twelve month mark (Standard Form 269)
- Utilization and Expenditure Profile
- Financial Matrix
    - X: Title III-E Expenditures, total service expenditures, program income received
    - X: # caregivers serviced, units of service, # providers
    - Y: Caregiver support categories (counseling/training, respite, access assistance, info services)
- Two profiles needed: for Elders caring for children and for Caregivers caring for elderly
- Provider can also describe other services, provide mission info, expenditures, # individuals served and # service units
- Total funds info per category of services provided (by VII-2 funds and "other") -- these are not broken down by line item as the line items are about the number of clients receiving the service
- Costs of services provided for:
    - Individuals with disabilities
    - Groups of individuals with disabilities
- Services purchased and number of individuals served by type of service (9 line items, including transportation)
- Carry-over funds
- Estimated Costs of each activity separately in system
- Budget and grant sources for project leveraging
- Performance and Expenditure info
- HOPWA funds expended in virtually all categories
- Total Funds Invested in each Service

Other Kinds of Information

- Nutrition Services (Meals Delivered)
- Supportive Services (Access, Legal, in-home, Ombudsman…)
- Caregiver Support (Counseling, training, lending closet)

- Personal Care, homemaker, chore, home delivered meals
- Case management
- Nutrition Counseling
- Legal Assistance
- Info and Assistance
- Outreach
- Subsidized Housing
- Medical Assistance
- Food Stamps
- Subsidized Childcare
- Child Support
- Disability Benefits
- Adaptive Aids, Devices, Equipment
- Training
- Various Individual Services
- Public Facilities
- Housing Units
- Job creation/retention
- Legal Services
- Individuals served through Housing Assistance
- Housing Stability
- Access to Care and Support (mainly medical)
- Jobs Reached
- Employment Site
- Employment Support Services

To make matters even more complex, the reporting formats are vastly different for the various programs. Several programs request information on a PDF, Excel, or Word file that can be directly edited in cell format and either printed and faxed or emailed. One Excel spreadsheet, for example, is designed to include the formulas needed to tally the various totals. Other federal agencies have established online reporting systems allowing grantees to log in and directly upload data. These include the FTA, the Administration on Aging (AoA), the Department of Education (DoE), Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Administration on Children and Families (ACF), but these are nonstandard, proprietary data systems that may not be easily integrated into a Microsoft world. In particular, the Housing and Urban Development's Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) grantees must upload their data into the IDIS system, which is driven by codes, is not Windows-based or intuitive, and would require extensive training to navigate successfully.

As an indication of the difficulty street-level service providers may have with the reporting process, the FIU-MC Team asked if reports were generally turned in on time or if they were often late. Most federal respondents asserted that reports are not often turned in late, but when they are, they indicated that the reasons are generally more individualized (reasons included death in the family, computer failure, lack of

communication among the many people who administer the program: see below) rather than systemic problems linked to the reports they require. Of particular note, however, two programs indicated a potential systemic problem regarding grantees needing clarification regarding the reporting guidelines. Below are the comments from those respondents that said reports are not always submitted on time:

- One respondent stated that the reports sometimes contain errors, either because the service provider is unclear as to the instructions, or the data is difficult to obtain, emphasizing that instructions should be clarified. At this program, staff members additionally review files once they are received to help reduce the number of errors in the reports.
- One respondent noted that their grantees have trouble getting data from sub-recipients, as well as a lack of accurate tracking if too many people deal with different aspects of the projects and do not communicate with each other. This program often gets calls for clarification due to the new requirements based in changes based on Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation and the because of the new NTD reporting requirements.
- One respondent noted that grantees report difficulty finding a housing supply that is safe, decent, accessible, sanitary, and affordable, contributing to late reports.
- One respondent noted that nearly all (approximately 95 percent) of their grantees have no trouble getting reports in on time. Reasons reports are late tend to be due to individual circumstances, rather than systematic issues, and have included things like death in the family, computer issues—"all different excuses."
- One respondent reported that about 70 percent of the reports are turned in on time, but offered no explanation to explain why 30 percent are not.

2.3 Discussion and Recommendations

The "top-down" approach has shown a wide variation in the type of required data, the type of submission format, and the range of transportation-related variables of interest, as well as a number of other required data. In order to simplify, streamline, and standardize this process, several issues need to be addressed.

1. Bring various representatives from federal-level offices to the table to begin a dialog regarding standardization of questions through a common web-based reporting system (this recommendation was initiated with the January 2009 meeting; see Section 6 for more details).
    a. Include individual representatives who can provide legal, technical, and legislative perspectives, as well as be knowledgeable regarding other relevant issues that each program must consider as the process moves forward. Service providers should also be invited to participate to provide their views during this process (discussed in more detail below).
    b. Include a review of the reporting process across all participating federal agencies to seek avenues of establishing standards. Begin with what is currently used, find sections that can be standardized, ask questions in a

standard format. Consider reducing the variation in the numbers and types of reports as well.

c. Specifically be mindful of "Data Rich Information Poor" (DRIP) syndrome when considering the data requested under each program. Data must be able to "help lead us where we want to go" as one RRAC member stated, and measure what transportation efforts are trying to achieve and avoid. It must be relevant as a management tool or to assist service providers in terms of justification for future funding. Two adages were mentioned: "You can't manage what you can't measure" and "garbage in, garbage out." RRAC members were adamant that variables be considered in light of their ability to truly evaluate performance, effectiveness, and efficiencies, as well as to plan to meet future needs. One RRAC member in particular was critical of NTD's focus on efficiency in terms of vehicle miles rather than vehicle utilization rates or customer satisfaction ("…we could be really efficient if we didn't pick up any passengers"). Any data requirement must include justification.
d. Develop, circulate, and periodically evaluate and update database metadata that includes definitional aspects, units of measure, and justification for each variable. It will also be valuable to institute the use of a software program (like the model described in Section 5) that utilizes drop-down menus as much as possible to more specifically standardize variable definitions.
e. Consider including a measure of rider satisfaction as an important element to the reporting effort. Several individuals emphasized the need to include a "customer satisfaction" measure as a key point to any evaluation. Operators should consider the quality of the ride. Customer-relevant performance measures that can support this analysis include basic quality questions, how many customers use the system, their responses to changes in fares, level of service, route changes, marketing and promotion, and several other points of satisfaction (Strathman et al. 2008).
f. Develop a method of peer comparison.
    i. The RRAC pointed out that great paradox in federal standardization is that it must capture relevant data for systems that serve a large population through massive public transit programs, as well as small service providers delivering Special Transportation Services (STS), transportation for rural or tribal areas and so on. It's hard to capture data that fits everyone or can provide equivalent measures to compare different providers to each other—Fargo ND is very different than NYC and a small provider that serves a single target population is very different than a large transit agency, even in the same community.
    ii. Also consider the level of support that service providers receive in relation to the amount of data they are required to report. Entities that receive $2,000 may not warrant delivery on the same number of variables as entities that receive $100,000.

iii. Some reports are currently designed to take these differences into account (for example, the NTD requires different data from rural and urban providers); in this effort to streamline and standardize, consider developing different variable templates for different population levels (rural, small, medium, and large urban areas, and so on) and/or target populations, to institute some congruency and some valid comparability.
iv. The NCHRP (2006) offers some guidance in developing rational peer comparisons between service providers that can generate comparison data for selected peer groups; it describes a framework for comparisons using various themes (geography, urban/rural, population demographics, income, and transit services) and weight relevant variables within each theme to develop peer groups. The NCHRP report specifically describes states, but this framework could be extended to individual providers as well.

2. Develop a formal committee and a schedule that brings these representatives to the table on a regular basis (annually or bi-annually) to evaluate how the data is used and how the reporting process may continue to become simplified. See the recommendation above as guidance for these continuing sessions. In addition:
    a. Start with representatives from the federal programs that already require transportation data to discuss standardized definitions, to determine which variables could be utilized across all agencies, and to implement test procedures with participating service providers. Reach out to federal agencies that do not currently collect transportation data as this initial group makes progress.
    b. Consider modeling this task after the Census process through which each question is examined with an explanation of why it was asked in a previous Census survey and how it has been used.
    c. Use the roundtable format to allow individuals from various federal agencies to respond to the need for different variables and to proposals to modify, delete, or expand the data collection effort, thinking about why and if they need each variable.
    d. Work on building consensus towards a common list of variables that all participating federal agencies will use to evaluate the transportation components of projects funded through SAFETY-LU (as well as other and future funding formulas).
    e. Include representatives from service providers in order to help bring any theoretically valid measure down to its practical application in reality. Data collection has an inherent cost, and those who must provide values at the point of service must be able to provide feedback and input regarding how any potential variable would have an impact on their resources as well as how useful the data might actually be.

3. Calls for clarification from street-level service providers that are late to turn in reports should serve as a lesson to all federal agencies. Guidelines need to be clearly written and data variables should be intuitively understandable.

4. Consider how to integrate the reporting process commensurate with the conceptual model regarding a database system report as described in Section 5. Various other public agencies have begun using this kind of standardization and uploading process. For example:
    a. Law enforcement uses a bar-code system both for vehicle registration and drivers' licenses so that an officer may use a device to scan the vehicle registration sticker in the windshield to get vehicle information, as well as the license to get the individual's information. In-car computers and hand-held devices both send and receive information essentially in real time. Both of these technologies could be modified for vehicle inventory to provide information about the transportation provider's fleet and for Smart Card technology to count riders.
    b. Look to new websites, including www.USASpending.gov and www.Recovery.gov as lessons in data collection, software, and transparency.
    c. The Department of Education collects information from a wide variety of partners, including postsecondary schools, financial institutions and other participants in the Title IV student financial assistance programs, through their Federal Student Aid website.[5] The system's output provides information and delivers services that help students and families to learn about options as they seek funding for college.

5. Consider private-sector solutions, models, and technology. RRAC Members mentioned UPS and Papa John's Pizza as places where the private sector uses technology to track individual parcels, addresses, and preferences down to real-time locations and last-ordered requests.
    a. This technology would track vehicles, passengers, trip destinations, origin addresses, on-time performance, and so on in such a way that data would become essentially collected at the very point of service, and data upload would be basically automatic after each transaction.
    b. Some service providers currently use this technology; many do not. Understanding the impediments that providers face (for example, lack of information, lack of technical infrastructure, or lack of funding) will be important to finding ways to assist them in their quest to implement technical solutions that will help automate data collection and ease the reporting burden.
    c. Because information technologies evolve so quickly, it is important to seriously contemplate which formats are more flexible and can facilitate future updates with greater ease.

[5] FAFSA: http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/about/index.html

Chapter 3. The "Bottom-Up" Approach

The goals of the "Bottom-Up" approach were to discuss reporting requirements with service providers and to get their impressions and input on the current system. The FIU-MC Team attempted to identify what types of data the various funding programs ask service providers to collect and to determine the extent of the burden generated by the data collection and reporting requirements. While it is imperative to understand what federal-level programs require, it is equally important to recognize how street-level providers manage those requirements. In addition, discovering what they would change if they could about the current system, and examining their perspective about the data they are required to collect will help make any standardization effort more palatable to the people that must comply with federal regulations.

3.1 Methodology

Using the contact information from the Useful Practices database that the FIU-MC Team had assisted in creating in 2004 using Year 1 funding, a list of 69 transportation service providers that were likely to report to various funding agencies was developed. The FIU-MC Team asked respondents about their coordinating partners, about the number and frequency of the required reports, the type of data they needed to collect for the federal programs, and whether reporting requirements prevented them from seeking additional funding opportunities. The response rate was over 50 percent; 29 agencies did not provide information on this survey for three main reasons: 1) they have since closed or otherwise no longer provide those services, 2) they do not currently receive funds from any federal programs, or 3) despite our repeated attempts to contact them via email and phone to arrange an appointment for an interview, Team members were unable to connect with appropriate staff; essentially, as one RRAC member put it, they were too busy providing services.

Additional funds became available that allowed us to examine this issue through a second survey instrument. The Team considered the above-mentioned effort "Round One" and attempted to capture additional information through a second survey. The survey instrument was revised to ask specifically if reporting requirements presented an undue burden, what they would do to improve the process, and if they collect data internally that federal funders do not require (as a measure of how relevant they feel the federal requirements are). The methodology was revised such that the FIU-MC Team would not request information from the director or head of the program, but would find out which staff person is assigned the task of collecting the data and submitting the reports.

For the second round of interviews, the sample included individuals recommended by the people contacted through the top-down approach, listings in the UWR Useful Practices database that had been added since its inception, as well as certain service providers from our original list (those that had not answered the survey and a few expected to be willing to discuss this issue in more depth). The Team felt it was imperative to make first contact by phone, and only emailed a survey if the respondent requested one. As in the first

round, playing phone tag is inevitable with this kind of survey; with limits on the time available to conduct the survey, the Team decided to reach the individuals on a priority system, giving first priority to service providers that were not on the original list in Round One. Team members attempted to contact staff at least three times, and were able to contact 76 service providers in total. Again, researchers were lost in voice mail as many organizations and several others did not know which staff member would be the correct person to answer our questions. Those who were able and willing to discuss reporting requirements with us provided valuable information.

3.2 Findings

Round One findings indicate that the majority of service providers understand that reporting requirements are one of the necessary evils of instituting any service with public funds. However, several respondents commented that they did not see the point of the data collection efforts, and that the exercise consumed resources they would have preferred go to services: the data they collected did not always seem to clearly meet evaluation purposes, it did not necessarily "fit" their services, and often they never saw a final report that might help them improve their program or better serve their clients.

Most have a multitude of collaborating partners—in one case, a provider listed 30 other agencies with which they must coordinate, and several listed six or more specific partners, but for the most part, the respondents did not provide their partnerships by name. These general partners were mentioned as follows:

- 56 human or social service providers, specifically including:
  - 11 aging consumer advocacy groups or senior services
  - 7 health care providers
  - 4 children's programs
  - 3 employment specialists
  - 2 disabilities services
- 47 transportation providers, including public, private, state DOTs, FTA, and other local providers
- 7 universities, community colleges, or local school districts
- 6 "alphabet soup" agencies at the state and federal levels, including (for example) Medicaid, the Department of Social and Human Services, and the Department of Homeland Security
- 5 local or state governmental offices like cities or governors' offices
- 4 businesses, development districts, and civic organizations
- 3 faith-based organizations
- Other partners included volunteers, families, and several discussed "various" partnerships without going into detail

Table 3.1 shows the frequency with which reports are required for these respondents. Many service providers report to the FTA and state and federal DOTs, which require National Transit Database, ridership, financial, security, and other reports on monthly,

quarterly, and annual cycles. Several of these service providers have software that automatically tallies information, so that responsible staff members only need a few hours to complete each report.

TABLE 3.1 Reporting Frequency of Federal Reports

Frequency of reports	#	%
Monthly	24	30.4
Quarterly	23	29.1
Annually	22	27.8
Every third year	4	5.1
Semi-Annually	2	2.5
"2-4 per year"	1	1.3
"Every 6 years"	1	1.3
"Periodically"	1	1.3
No Specified Frequency	1	1.3
Total	79	100.0

NOTE: Total adds to more than the number of respondents because most are required to submit more than one report.

Frequency of Reports

Four of the service providers surveyed do not report to any federal agencies. The remaining service providers file an average of 3.6 reports. Specifically:

- 6 service providers file 1 report
- 2 service providers file 2 reports
- 4 service providers file 3 reports
- 3 service providers file 4 reports
- 3 service providers file 5 reports
- 2 service providers file 6 reports
- 1 service providers files 8 reports
- 1 service provider files 10 reports

In addition, about one quarter of the service provider respondents say they would seek additional funding opportunities if reporting were not such a heavy burden; however, the majority did not feel reporting requirements have prevented them from seeking additional sources of funding.

Round Two findings support the general results from Round One. Although, like in Round One, several respondents specifically mentioned that they understand the value of the reporting exercise, a few had some serious concerns about the process. The most telling responses are listed below:

- NTD reporting tends to try and fit all transit systems into one mold so you spend a lot time answering questions that are legitimate, but the ways the system reports

the data doesn't fall within certain parameters, resulting in a lot of time spent explaining variances.

- We have lots of trouble finishing our reports in a timely fashion because we receive late notice of changing requirements. If we knew what was required from the beginning of the year, we would know what data we should be collecting. That requirements are constantly changing is frustrating. They should pick one set of criteria and stick with it.
- From a state DOT: The state shouldn't have to do the data entry. The actual operators should be the ones reporting the data. States should be more involved in the process and more communication should take place between those that actually do the data entry and those who collect the data. Local operators should be in communication with the people who manage the NTD database.
- Electronic formatting makes it difficult when a new requirement (new field) is added to the form.
- It is burdensome: We have to provide data on each individual vehicle's five data elements—size, year, manufacturer, capacity, and vehicle length. This is very difficult, because we have to enter each one manually. The state has improved the system by enabling inputting on the web, no longer in hard copy or available for email submission. Federal inputting is still manual. We would like an automatic upload system and one equal system.
- A big improvement would be to streamline the reporting process.

This survey additionally asked if they use different variables for internal reports. These service providers collect the data they need to monitor in order to improve their services for their specific clientele; the Boards of Directors or Executive Directors request data to help them make programmatic decisions. The following expresses their responses in this regard:

- We work with local contractors and try to collect only purposeful data.
- We generate cost reports internally (not required by funding programs).
- Internal data is more extensive (no details provided).
- Our independent data collecting requirements are more robust than federal requirements (no details provided).
- Ridership data is used to decide what runs are most productive; internal data is based on same data used for federal programs.
- Our Board is very interested in ridership data and that data is used extensively to manage the system. We use the same data reported to the FTA just used for different analysis purposes.

The first bullet point in the series above illustrates the frustration many service provider staff described regarding their doubt that the data they collect and report is "purposeful." Federal level administrators should be sure to keep this issue in mind as they develop reporting procedures and determine what data to collect. While some service providers use the data required at the federal level internally for their own decisions, several said that they collect different data than the federal programs require, and one stated that they use the same data for a different purpose. This indicates that certain federal programs

could potentially improve their evaluation ability by deliberately choosing the data that these service providers tend to collect for themselves or in a way they find most useful.

3.3 Discussion and Recommendations

Although most service providers understand their necessity, these findings show that reporting requirements are generally considered unwieldy and should be reviewed in order to better utilize financial resources and staff time. These service providers have multiple partners, report to multiple parties, and report on a multitude of variables, some of which they do not consider to be valuable for evaluation purposes. Based on these findings, our recommendations are as follows:

1. Regularly and systematically approach reporting service providers to ask their opinion on the data collection process, data entry methods, uploading options, and variables. Request feedback from the service providers on the reporting process and the level of difficulty they have in collecting or using the data they are asked to report. This could be done through a number of efforts:
    a. Establish an Annual Review Consortium of street-level service providers to assist with this effort. Include representatives in the regular meetings of the federal program staff, as recommended in Section 2.3.
    b. Coordinate regular focus groups at annual meetings like those sponsored by the Transportation Research Board (TRB), the American Public Transit Association (APTA), or the Community Transportation Association of America, whereby federal program staff and service providers can work together to address specific issues and discuss specific measurements. Participants should be invited to participate prior to the conference, either through a general call or by inviting specific individuals, or both, but FTA coordinators should confirm a number of participants from a wide spectrum of human service transportation providers.

2. Do a more extensive search to find out what data these service providers collect that are not currently requested by federal programs to potentially integrate or change those into the system—these variables will likely be more appropriate and integral for program evaluation purposes from the reality of the street-level service provider perspective. In particular, examine what they do to determine customer satisfaction and how they use that data to enhance performance. During this research phase, also find out which variables providers must collect for federal reporting that they feel are not worth collecting. This will be key in determining which variables to continue to include at the federal level when representatives meet during their standardization efforts, and may indicate that federal agencies must educate their funding recipients about the value and meaning of the data to help them understand why it is important.

3. Include all reporting service providers in the final report process to let them see how the data they provide has been used for some purpose.

4. Communicate with service providers during this process. While most will appreciate a federal-level effort to standardize questions, streamline the reporting process, and reduce the complexity of the reporting process, it is important to remember that federal funders must communicate their justifications, considerations, and changes effectively from the start and throughout the process (timely information, measured progress, and clear, early warnings of any changes to current systems must be a top priority). In addition, it should be clear that evaluation of the data collection process will periodically occur with an emphasis on the importance of input and feedback from service providers.

5. Develop a standard data collection and reporting web-based system (as described in Section 5). Allow service providers to use the database for their internal reporting needs and to utilize the national database to make comparisons with others. Be sure to use familiar products (like Microsoft Word, Excel, and PDF files) to minimize the time, effort, and energy needed to input data and create the reports that can be used to enhance the program and better understand the transportation component of human services.

6. When contemplating comparison reports, consider including variables about the service providers so that small communities/providers with few resources and/or highly dispersed populations are not compared directly with large, compact communities/providers with greater resources. Consider using a framework for peer comparisons developed through themes like geography, urban/rural, population demographics, income, and transit services (NCHRP 2006).

7. Do not require service providers to "double report" their figures. If eligibility is determined by some specific factor, allow service providers to use that data to report on their client base rather than have them re-report or use several forms asking the same questions of their client base to avoid embarrassment and to be less intrusive for those individuals, as well as to be more time-effective for staff.

Chapter 4. The "State Uniformity" Approach

Streamlining, standardizing, coordinating, and otherwise facilitating and efficiently collecting data for the myriad of local- and state-run programs is a daunting task. Several states have undertaken an effort to do so in an effort to better understand issues, simplify data collection and data entry, and get the broader picture of the burden on street-level service providers. The innovations that those states have implemented are useful in helping to determine what might be practical at the federal level.

Research performed during Year 1 showed that an effective statewide coordination system is in place in Florida, where over 57 million trips were reported in 2004—the highest number ever recorded in a year. However, while larger state programs have been successful in these efforts, smaller programs (i.e., programs with smaller budgets) find it difficult to coordinate with programs that have more funding. This research also indicated that the success of the coordinated transportation system in Florida is a direct result of the ingenuity of the local partners, the community transportation operators and transportation operators. Each county requires a human transportation coordinator to collect relevant information, compile it and send it to the Director of the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged in Tallahassee. Current research presented in this report supports these general findings, and provides additional layers of information that help present a more comprehensive view of the issues. This study further examined the Florida case, and searched throughout the 50 United States to discover any other statewide efforts to streamline and standardize the reporting process.

4.1 Methodology

The FIU-MC Team contacted UWR Coordinators, UWR Regional Ambassadors, and state-level officials in DOTs and other agencies in all 50 states, as well as other entities (i.e., the commonwealth, federal districts, and other territories) to inquire about the current state of coordination, standardization, and streamlining efforts regarding reporting requirements. In addition, the FIU-MC Team selected respondents from a list of state-level contacts that the CCAM compiled. This list is continuously revised as officials change employment positions and responsibilities. Using this list ensures respondent's competency in human service transportation coordination and knowledge of CCAM efforts to simplify access, reduce duplication, and enhance efficiencies.

We employed semi-structured interviews to collect information by telephone, which guarantees a higher response rate than physical or electronic mail-out surveys. Semi-structured interviews have the advantage of encouraging informants to define strengths and weaknesses in state coordination while remaining on topic. State-level informants are generally high-level managers and bureaucrats with busy schedules. These professionals are most willing to engage in focused conversations with defined beginning and terminal points and measurable progress through the duration of the interview.

In addition to the improved response rate of personal interviews over paper/electronic questionnaires, interviews accommodate exploration of areas where gaps in logic may lead from the correct conclusion to something different.

4.2 Findings

Year 1 TRANSPO research indicated that the success of the coordinated transportation system is a direct result of the ingenuity of the local partners, the community transportation operators and transportation operators. For example, each county in Florida requires a human transportation coordinator to collect relevant information, compile it and send it to the Director of the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged in Tallahassee. The current study further examined the Florida case, and searched throughout the 50 United States to discover any other statewide efforts to streamline and standardize the reporting process. Only a few states had undertaken such an ambitious process, but where they worked towards a more standardized system, they have met with significant success at reducing duplication and enhancing coordination.

The FIU-MC working definition of "state uniformity" in this context is the effort at the state level (most often at the state Departments of Transportation, but sometimes in other lead agencies) to make reporting a common, standardized process. In some cases, this means a centralized data collection effort. In other cases, it means a "one-stop-shop" model. State Departments of Transportation (DOTs) are most often responsible for coordinating human service transportation. DOTs often require the service providers they fund to submit annual reports including data verified, compiled, and later published as indicators of performance. States standardizing their data collection are better able to:

- Monitor statewide and local levels of coordination;
- Identify common barriers in several service providers;
- Ensure a minimum level of service;
- Associate performance with population demographics; and
- Identify gaps in services provided.

While individual state agencies understand why they collect transportation related data and realize that they report information that often duplicates federal efforts, duplicative patterns have not been identified generally across the 50 rather unique states. Although human service transportation continues to become better coordinated, street-level service providers do not largely provide data on a regular basis or in a uniform fashion to the states. Several states have not been able to secure regulations making standardized reporting mandatory. Other states have been able to establish baseline indicators to carefully measure their progress, and these examples are instructive.

Data commonly collected are generally used for performance measures of cost per trip or cost per mile. These common indicators include:

- Passengers served

- Passenger trips
- Vehicle miles
- Operating revenue
- Operating expense

States leading in standardized reporting collect data tend to emphasize the qualitative nature of services:

- Vehicle condition
- Trip destination
- Time of trip
- Trips by type of vehicle/service (fixed route, deviated fixed route, paratransit ambulatory, paratransit non-ambulatory, stretcher, school board)
- Trip purpose (medical, employment, education/training, nutritional)

4.3 Discussion and Recommendations

Standardized reporting enables states to identify their relative strengths in coordinating transportation. The data can also be used to advocate for funding or state legislation requiring coordination and to inform strategies reducing persistent barriers to coordination. Based on our survey, the FIU-MC Team recommends the following:

1. Study the destinations of existing riders and purpose of their trips. Few variables are currently reported to identify service gaps, but for example, eligible users of paratransit services can be identified by looking at the transportation behavior of existing riders. Once identified, the modes of transportation falling into service gaps can be targeted and better coordinated.

2. Collect qualitative data that can be used to establish and monitor level of service standards for coordinated transportation. While existing data collection efforts often include operating statistics that inform performance indicators, rarely are the qualities of services rendered included as indicators.

3. Further examination of the following states is warranted—the combination of these four states' efforts into one standard policy for data collection can form a solid basis for uniform reporting:
    a. California currently collects information and analyses identifying trip purpose but does not do this consistently because it is not required of service providers.
    b. Washington has mandated data reporting and is able to provide consistent data.
    c. Florida is enforcing minimum performance standards with penalties for repeated or continued poor service delivery.

   d. Texas has developed a simplified reporting system for TXDOT whereby data uploaded into the system are exported into Excel spreadsheets to aid in uniform reporting efforts (the PTN-128).

4. Consider the data below as a potential starting point for reaching consensus at the federal level. Many of these items are currently collected but not systemically reported to state agencies. Uniform reporting can be used to establish conditions of evaluation and reduce redundancies.

   - Passengers served
   - Passenger trips
   - Vehicle miles
   - Operating revenue
   - Operating expense
   - Trip destination
   - Trip purpose (medical, employment, education/training, nutritional)

5. Where data is collected and used for evaluation or other purposes, it should also be widely published. The collection of data is a cooperative effort involving many local service providers; most service providers must be convinced that their efforts are appreciated, important, and useful for specific evaluation purposes.

6. Focus on state-level requirements to find ways to simplify the process. One of the RRAC members contends that state level requirements are often even more onerous than federal requirements with less benefit. Based on discussions with the federal-level administrators during the January 2009 meeting, it was determined that the FIU-MC Team would investigate the possibility of working with one or more of the states that are currently trying to simplify the process, as they may have more control over what can be done to change reporting and data collection procedures, number and definition of variables, and/or frequency reports are due.

Chapter 5. Considerations for a Database System

As part of the Continuation Grant, the FIU Lehman Center for Transportation Research assigned a staff member to act as an advisor in helping to plan for a reporting interface on the internet and to present a conceptual design that the Team hopes will lead to the development of a web-based software application. The conceptual design of a web-based application addresses the following issues: 1) menu items that link to the specific reports required by any given federal program, 2) uploading features that allow data and documents to be collected using common formats and stored in a chosen database, and 3) report generation tools for staff at any level that will help assess efficiency, effectiveness, and other criteria. The final product must be 508-complaint for visually challenged users per Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

On January 12, 2009, the conceptual model for this database input and reporting system was presented to a group of federal-level agency representatives along with basic findings from the three approaches as discussed in the sections above. This facilitated meeting was designed to provide a forum in which the individuals that must abide by legal, technological, and implementation realities could discuss their practical considerations and concerns for their data collection needs, as well as to discuss a reasonable means of standardizing reports that would accommodate their needs, while reducing the burden on the street-level agencies. Fifteen different programs administered by five different federal agencies with very different current reporting formats and need for data were asked to come to the table to begin a process that intends to ultimately simplify and streamline data collection and reporting efforts. The original conceptual model was modified as a result of their input, and the final version is presented below.

5.1 Overview

The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM), in an effort to help increase the quality of life of individuals who need social and health services assistance, is promoting interagency partnerships to coordinate travel needs. This includes sharing information about the programs or projects that can help improve the delivery of services. This document presents a conceptual design that can lead to the development of a web-based software application to assist federal funding agencies and receiving service providers with reporting requirements.

Although we highly recommend that all federal agencies determine a common list of variables that they can all use, we also recognize that each have very different goals and purposes. In other words, it is not realistic to expect that they can all agree on exactly the same variables to evaluate programs that are reaching for very different programmatic goals; housing, transportation, veterans programs seek to provide different services and serve different clients, and the variables by which they can show success or seek areas that need modification will be very different as well.

In addition, the FIU-MC Team recognizes that different programs currently use specific software to collect, store, and produce reports, which are not likely to be compatible across all programs potentially interested in participating in this project. Changing current software systems at this point is not recommended. For this reason, the conceptual model must include a way to channel the data from the different service providers to specific areas linked to each federal program in the database.

5.2 Application Framework

In order to assist with the Federal reporting requirements, standards should be established, and a web-based software application should be developed. Metadata explaining variables, column headings, and transformation definitions should be used to guide the process. The application framework plays an important role in the system development. Figure 1 displays our recommended data flow for this project.

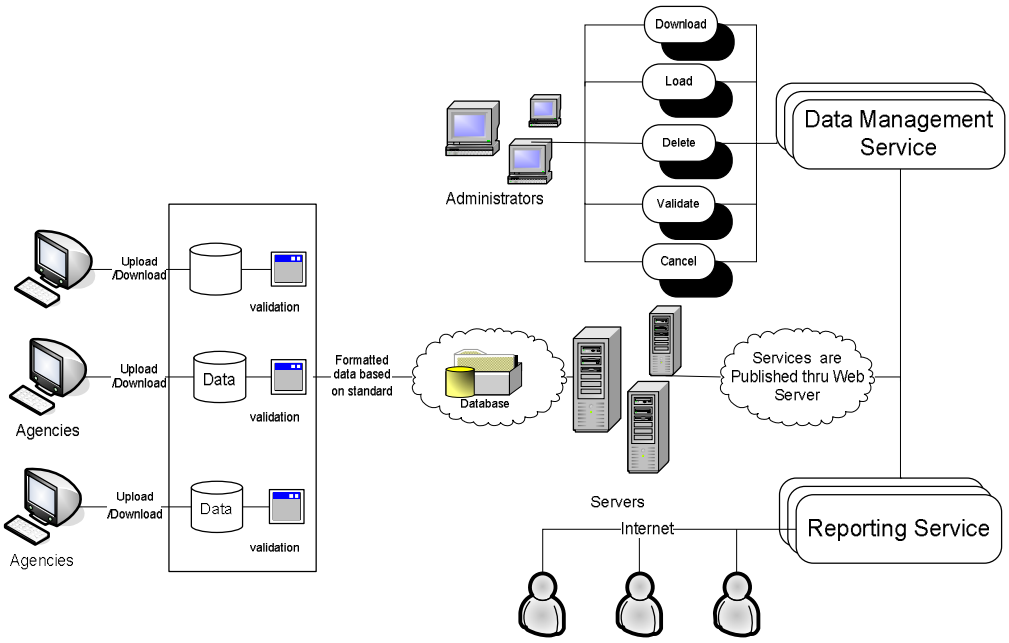

FIGURE 5.1 Reporting Services Data Flow

5.2.1 Data Collection Process

Federal agencies and recipient service providers collect data from their everyday operations. Different federal programs often require quite different data; this system

should be sensitive to these different needs and assist users with the data upload process, so that the data is stored in specific areas of the database.

The fact is that different local providers will use different electronic file formats. In order to better share the data with others, this effort should establish standards, which should be easy to use and clearly understood. Depending on the complexity of the applications and data sources at the different service providers, these standards can be applied at the point of service or incorporated into the web application process. Standardizing these procedures will ensure that data from different sources are converted to a common, applicable format.

5.2.2 File Extensions

The web application should be able to process all common data formats. Most of the reporting software local service providers currently use will be able to provide data output in one of these formats, which can then be uploaded from that output file. Table 5.1 displays all formats that the application should support. When service providers generate data, they should follow the data format specifications listed below:

TABLE 5.1 File Extensions

File Extensions	Description	Software Used
*.xls	Spreadsheets	MS Excel
*.csv	Text Files	Text Editors
*.doc	Documents	MS Word
*.mdb	Databases	MS Access
*.pdf	Portable Document Format	Adobe Acrobat

5.2.3 Data File Formats

Even though the same file extension can be used to collect data, some rules must be followed to assure that the data is collected properly. These exact conventions must be followed; a separate application will need to be developed to handle exceptions that are too complex to conform to required standardization. If these conventions are not standard, agencies will not be able to import data into the database. In addition, a transformation table similar to Table 5.2 must be prepared and used as guide for all data sets from all of the different service providers. For instance, the column names “fname” and “fn” will need to be converted to the standardized nomenclature “First Name.” If naming conventions and structure are not standardized, the data cannot be imported into the federal-level database.

TABLE 5.2 Column Transformation Table: Naming Convention

Column Name	Standard Name	Description	Data Type
fname	First Name	User's first name	string
fn	First Name	User's first name	string

While the uploading process will be available to a wide variety of source data files, the main database will require specific formats of these files, as described below.

*EXCEL (Extension *. xls):* The upload process will support one worksheet. All data to be loaded into the database should be stored in the first worksheet. The programs in the web application will only process the first worksheet of the file. The first row must contain the standard names. If not, the data cannot be imported into the database.

*COMMA SEPARATED VALUES (Extension *. csv):* The upload process will support comma-separated files. The first row must contain standard names. If not, the data cannot be imported into the database.

*MICROSOFT WORD (Extension *. doc):* The upload process will support Word documents. The naming convention and the structure of these documents must be standardized. If not, the data cannot be imported into the database.

*MICROSOFT ACCESS (Extension *. mdb):* The upload process will support Access databases documents. The fields in the access database tables must contain standard names. If not, the data cannot be imported into the database.

*ADOBE PORTABLE DOCUMENT FORMAT (Extension *. pdf):* This file format is included for completeness and could be used when other data formats are not available. Note that the PDF file cannot be encrypted and must contain text information. Images will not be processed. Further, the data fields in this file must be properly formatted. If not, the data cannot be imported into the database.

5.2.4 Validation

A data validation process should be followed after the data has been collected. In order to reduce errors based on uploading procedures, the data should not be loaded into the database unless the data have been validated. An automated web process should be created to validate the data that the user uploads. Invalidated data should be discarded and will not be loaded into the database. Error messages should be prompted to provide guidance to users on how to upload the data correctly.

5.2.5 Tasks

To assist with data collection, two internal processes are suggested—one for uploading the data and the other for validating the data. In addition, database storage and the ability (for this page, please find pictures to transport into document to download the dataset are

Comment [JS2]: I don't have any photos to fulfill this request.

important elements to this conceptual model. Each of these aspects provides the software with the needed capability for all users.

Data Upload. The program may have the ability to upload the files into the destination database. This process does not store the data into the database; it will only upload the data, which must be validated before it can be stored into the database.

Suggested Step by Step Process

Step 1: The user can browse for folders and files in a local computer.
Step 2: When the file is selected, the user is required to submit files by clicking on the Open button.
Step 3: Files will be assigned a name including the date and time of submission.

Data Validation. The web application will read the data standards and compare them with the submitted data. If the submitted data follow the standards, the data will be uploaded. If not, the program will report warnings or errors identifying what went wrong. The data standards can be stored in the database. Administrators can create new standards and new datasets, or modify existing ones. Table 5.3 presents simple example of data standards.

TABLE 5.3 Column Transformation Table: Data Type

Column Name	Data Type
Standard	String (Characters)
Column Index	Integer (Numeric)
Type	String (Characters)
Column Title	String (Characters)

Suggested Step by Step Process

Step 1: The program will read the standard table from the database.
Step 2: When validating the data, users are required to use a standard file name.
Step 3: The program will read the actual data and compare it to see if it follows the standards.
Step 4: Outputs, warnings, or errors, if any, will be generated.
Step 5: Users will be able to upload the data again after errors are corrected.

Database Storage. If the validation process is successful, a program will be executed to store the data into the database. A roll back process can be created to return to the previous step. This process can help users reverse the step of loading the data into the database if needed. Only properly formatted data can be stored in the database. Therefore, data should first be formatted according to set standards. A transformation table will also need to be created in order to avoid naming or data type conflicts.

Download the Dataset. The application should be capable of allowing users to download the datasets; this could be the original dataset, the dataset after a transformation, or both.

If a user tries to download the original dataset, the application can provide a direct link to the dataset for download. If the user tries to download the data that has been already uploaded to the database, a query can be generated to download the data from the database.

5.3 Suggested Sample Application

This sample application consists of two parts. One is the user management interface; the other is the administration interface. Tables 5.4 and 5.5 present a suggested process for this sample application.

TABLE 5.4 Suggested Application Process for Users at the Point of Service

User Interface	Description
Login	Each service provider can log into the online application.
File Management	Service providers are allowed to manage the data file they uploaded. They may upload, download, update (replace), or delete data files.
Rollback	Service providers should be able to delete data they previously loaded. In some cases, the same data may be loaded twice or more, so service providers should be able to rollback to previous stages to correct any mistakes.

TABLE 5.5 Suggested Application Process for Administrators

Admin. Interface	Description
Login	Web administrators can log on to the online application.
Conflict Management	Administrators should be able to review all data files that service providers upload. As some data files may have conflicts with each other, administrators should be able to correct any errors.
Reports Control	Administrators should be able to have more control in uploading, downloading, deleting, or displaying reports.

One of the key features in data file management of the user interface is uploading data. During the uploading process, the following steps should be carefully considered when developing the application.

Step 1: Service providers should be able to browse their local files through the online application to select and upload data.

The application should provide two methods for uploading the data files. One is uploading through the web application. This is usually used for small files, generally limited to 2MB. Uploading data through a web application is unreliable for larger files because the webpage may time out, close, crash, or encounter other problems during the uploading process. Therefore, when the

user wants to upload large files, a File Transfer Protocol (FTP)[6] process is recommended because it is more reliable and saves time. Figure 5.2 depicts this process.

Step 2: When the service provider finishes uploading data, the online application should return to a data file management control page that allows the user to manage the data files. Users can then validate the data, load it to the database, or rollback the data. Figure 5.3 displays a sample control panel that could be included in the data file management feature. The icon in the action column includes five action buttons: [**Delete**], [**Validate**], [**Load**], [**Rollback**], and [**Download**]. These five buttons can be made available with a pop up window by clicking the icon in the action column.

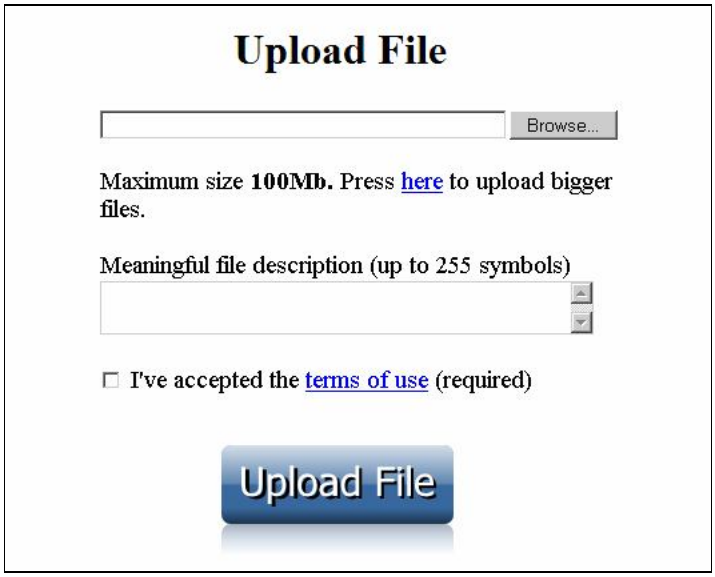

FIGURE 5.2 Open Data File for Uploading

[Delete]: Staff can delete the original data file from the server.
[Validate]: The data file will be validated to see if it follows the standards. This process may need manual intervention, but should be designed to initially work automatically.
[Load]: If and only if the data file is validated, the data can be loaded into database.
[Rollback]: After the data is loaded to database, the user also has the ability to roll the database back into the previous status.

[6] The File Transfer Protocol (FTP) is a network protocol that allows the transfer of data across the Internet.

[Download]: Service providers can download the data from the server. They can either download the original data file or the transformed data file.

Ref Number	Ending	Year	Submit Date	Agency	By	Last Action	Action
2008050301	May-07	2007	20080503	BCT	Tom	Load	Load
2008050302	Apr-07	2007	20080503	BCT	Tom	Download	Load
2008050303	Mar-07	2007	20080503	BCT	Tom	Rollback	Load
2008050304	Feb-07	2007	20080503	BCT	Tom	Download	Load

FIGURE 5.3 Data File Management User Interface

Step 3: The service providers should be able to take actions using the control panel. When the user loads the data to the database, a rollback value should be assigned to the records that will be imported into the database.

Reporting services. Reports will be available based on the data loaded into the database and reporting needs. The user may create two types of reports: one based on the reports that the service providers must submit to federal agencies using those agency standards for reports, one based on the data stored in the database that service providers may specifically customize or tailor to their own needs using Microsoft Reporting Services. The program should be designed so that service providers can upload pre-made reports. The second type of reports is an automatic process that depends on the specific format of the uploaded data (e.g., Excel, Word, etc.).

5.3.1 Administration Side

Reports made by service providers. Service providers will be in charge of making reports relevant for their specific needs; the formats may include PDF, Word, or Excel files. The process to publish a report should use the following steps:

Step 1: Service providers should be able to browse their local files through the online application to select and upload the report file as needed.
Step 2: When the service provider finishes uploading a report, the online application should return to the "reports management control page," which allows the user to manage the reports. Users will be able to decide if they want to show or hide the reports they upload (**Hide**), delete them (**Delete**), or publish the reports (**Publish**).

Computer-based reports. Some pre-made report templates can be stored in the application, and can be used with the data that service providers upload. For these reports

to be generated, data need to be stored in the database. If the required dataset does not exist in the database, the report (and its status) will not be available.

Comparisons between reports. The application should also provide the capability of viewing different reports and comparing them. One solution to implement this feature is to set a "report type" value for each report. Only the reports that have the same report type value could be compared. For instance, Provider A generates a financial report (Report A) and is assigned a "report type value" = 11. If the next month they submit data for Report B, which has the same report type value (in this example, 11), then Report B is formatted using the same fields and "look" as Report A. In this case, Reports A and B are comparable. This may also be true if two agencies want to compare data through the same reporting process using the "report type" feature. Otherwise, the application will report warning saying that that two reports cannot be compared.

5.3.2 Public Internet User Side

The application should provide the web page links to the reports that are published through the above two methods, similar to the web page depicted in Figure 5.4. The public will thereby also have access to the same reporting capabilities that the software program can offer the federal, state, and local personnel interested in reading them.

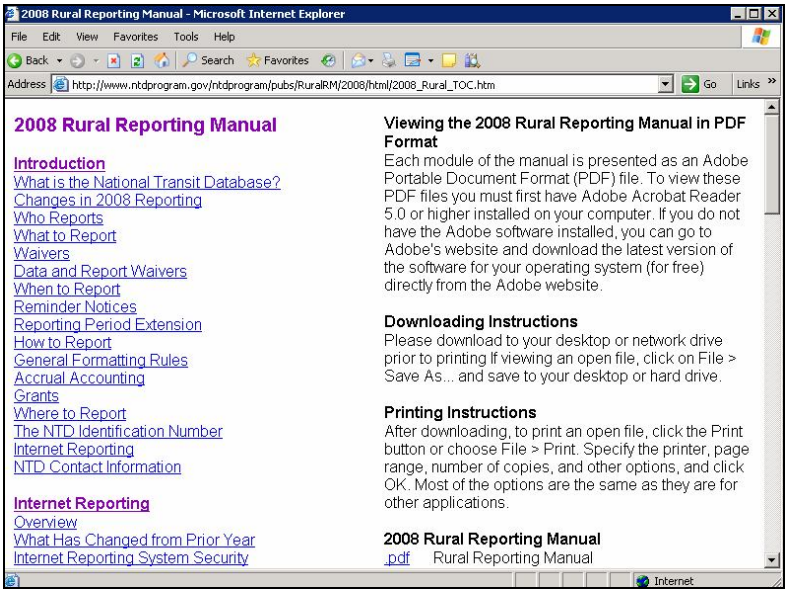

FIGURE 5.4 Reports Published by the Service Providers.

5.4 Discussion and Additional Considerations

This conceptual model has been developed to outline recommended features of an uploading process for service providers once participating federal programs have established a set of common variables. Additional issues that must be considered include the following:

1. This software should work in conjunction with the software currently in use. It should not disrupt current systems. It should help standardize the process, and should help to integrate the system down the road.

2. It should not become an additional layer of bureaucracy, but should become a seamless “gatekeeper” that allows service providers to upload data to all federal programs that require it. As federal program representatives agree on a first set of variables that can be standardized among them, these would be uploaded as a “first page” screen, that would channel users to the additional webpages that will allow them to upload their data to specific federal programs.

Chapter 6. Additional Key Expert Research

In the final stages of this project, the FIU-MC contacted additional key experts through two efforts. First, a Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee (RRAC) was established as a means of bringing a practical perspective to the report findings and recommendations. Second, the FIU-MC facilitated a meeting with representatives from federal agencies interested in the conceptual model to identify their technical, legal, and administrative concerns with its potential implementation. The seven RRAC members represented various backgrounds and perspectives, including street-level service providers who must perform the reporting activities, state-level administrators who have experience with coordinating reports and data collection, federal-level administrators who have knowledge regarding legal, technical, and administrative issues, individuals who feel that reporting requirements are extremely burdensome, and those who see ways it can be improved (see Appendix D). Primarily, these individuals responded to an early draft of this report in December 2008, as well as to a draft of this report as modified after the meeting with various representatives from various federal programs interested in the conceptual model presented in January 2009. Their interviews and comments have been integrated as appropriate throughout this document and are summarized below.

6.1 Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee Input

Although most Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee (RRAC) members expressed their appreciation for this report's comprehensive examination of the issues, several were very skeptical about the ability to improve the reporting process (one likened it to "rearranging chairs on the Titanic"). It is important to note that the reporting burden is an issue that raises its head periodically, and that limited progress has been made under each effort. One member noted that where progress has been made, it has mainly been due to the efforts of a high-profile champion who can get cooperation from various agencies and help bring them to consensus. Several RRAC members appreciated the FIU-MC Team's goal to bring the various federal agencies and service providers to the table to build a common list of variables, the emphasis on service provider insights and perspectives, and the trepidation regarding gathering data strictly for data's sake; these were considered crucial elements to successfully taming the reporting dragon.

RRAC members made the following comments that can be categorized in terms of data gathering efforts, relevant and important indicators, consensus building, software development, and skepticism for the outcomes of this report, as well as some examples to consider while examining the issues and developing recommendations.

Data gathering efforts

- Data gathering should not be onerous; what agencies choose to collect has to help lead them where they want to go. "Garbage in, garbage out" is an important adage to keep in mind during this process.
- Currently, the frequency of federal reports are a drawback; "some folks are reported out" and feel the federal requirements are very burdensome.

- Federal and state agencies often request information on outcomes that are difficult to measure, sometimes giving the impression that this is data collection for its own sake but serve no useful purpose. Program staff need to review their reasons for requesting data, should include justifications when mandating data collection, and should try to understand the reality of what is happening in the field. Good information will allow providers to identify what resources they may use in the future; currently, information is not coordinated, leading to too much duplication of efforts and not enough information about how to get funding to meet the demand for services throughout the community. Coordination will help service providers request the amount of resources they need rather than leave them "under-resourced."
- The private sector may not have all the answers, but have some very compelling solutions (see UPS, Papa John's Pizza examples). Some agencies have already embraced this technology, but many are not aware of it or cannot afford it; although it may cost money up front, it will save money in the long run. Some transit agencies already do utilize new technology (such as knowing addresses and last trip scheduled based on a telephone-based interface, like pizza companies); increasing the frequency of use of these technologies should become an important priority for federal funders. In addition, RRAC members emphasize that the technology needs to "talk to itself" to be most productive.
- Demographic information is important and appropriate, but two issues need to be considered: 1) confidentiality can be very important and problematic—for example, the disabled community in one area is concerned that counting visually impaired riders may lead to discrimination; and 2) some of the variables may need to be counted through a cross-tabulation of different client types (for example, children in rural areas; employment status by disability; seniors that use Medicaid, etc.), which could become very complicated in the standardization process.
- Do not require service providers to "double report" data—for example, if a person must be a certain age to be eligible for program benefits or must have Medicaid, use the eligibility data already in the system rather than re-report that information through other reporting methods. It can be potentially embarrassing for the individual to have to report that information on several forms or over time. The use of something like an ID card with a number associated to an individual's file that contains all the relevant information would be less intrusive.
- UWR technology does not currently 'talk' to other agencies. It would be helpful to find ways for it to work together with what others use.

Examples they cited include the following:

- Consider the UPS model in scheduling (the driver has a "central brain" is in his/her hand): might transit agencies use this to find every rider in the U.S.? If so, it could improve accountability—in addition, all data would be instantly recorded and service providers could use the data to look for specific patterns—where delays exist or other systematic or consistent issues.

- Papa John's Pizza identifies the caller's addresses and last order; could transit agencies identify the point of origin and the last ride of any given passenger using this technology?
- The "Google Approach" may help unify the field.
- LoneStar technology should be considered. Law enforcement and car rental agencies use bar codes on vehicle registration stickers that allow them to use a device that reads all the information about that vehicle as well as codes on a drivers' license that reads all information about the individual—this technology could also be used more widely for passengers through the use of existing "smart card" programs.

Relevant and important indicators

- Federal programs ignore the way service providers do business and don't deal with how data is collected. They must understand that all data comes at a cost and must consider "Reality with a Capital R"—one member complained that state and federal administrators don't really know what is going on at ground level and wouldn't know what makes a solid, relevant, easily collectable measurement.
- One RRAC member stated that industry standard measures of success include: 1) trips per hour, 2) cost per mile, 3) cost per client, and 4) average speed of vehicle. A second member mentioned 5) on-time performance and 6) ride time as two indicators that the aging, Medicaid, HIV, and work programs could agree were important in work he had conducted to coordinate those programs—in particular, finding what influenced on-time performance was important to that group. However, another member questioned if on-time performance would be important to federal agencies.
- Many providers understand how important good performance measures can be to evaluating success and seeking ways to improve their programs. In an email message, one member wrote, "While the process may be burdensome, the information could be an invaluable management tool if we could have more uniform data. YOU CAN'T MANAGE WHAT YOU CAN'T MEASURE. Our [senior care] programs bring so much intrinsic value—it is hard to measure what it feels like to have independence and go where you want to go—that we struggle with measurements that are relevant… There is real relevance to providing data that demonstrates cost efficiencies and effectiveness… I would urge that it be directed toward not only demonstrating what is taking place, but providing information for future planning."
- "Measures must say what we are trying to achieve and what we are trying to avoid." They are trying to achieve courtesy and accountability; they are trying to avoid squandering resources and over/under supplying service to different areas in their jurisdiction.
- Data must be used as a management tool or as a justification for future funding.
- Including data that describe the transportation consumer's experience (the ride experience) is an important element to any reporting effort.
- The great paradox in federal standardization is that it must capture relevant data for systems that serve a large population through massive public transit programs, as well as small organizations delivering Special Transportation Services (STS),

transportation for rural or tribal areas and so on; it's hard to capture data that fits everyone or can provide equivalent measures to compare different service providers to each other—Fargo, ND is very different than New York City, and a small service provider that serves a single target population is very different than a large transit agency, even in the same community. It may be worthwhile to consider developing different variable templates for different population levels (rural, small, medium, and large urban areas, and so on) and/or target populations, to institute some congruency and some valid comparability.

- In addition, differences in reporting guidelines may be warranted for service providers that receive small amounts of federal dollars versus large amounts of funding. A provider that receives $2,000 should not be expected to account for the same amount of data as a provider that gets $100,000.
- Customer satisfaction must be an important indicator. Using performance data (like on-time performance) can be an important part of this equation. Operators should consider the quality of the ride; for example, it may be more appropriate and easier on a chemotherapy patient to use fixed route bus service to get to her appointment, and have a volunteer take her home rather than two paratransit trips.
- Service providers need to re-examine the cafeteria plan (transportation on demand) as discussed 20 years ago to build in a mix of services that would individualize the best modes for each client. In a system that only provides for transportation from home to hospital, for example, Medicaid patients are not allowed to stop and wait at the pharmacy to pick up their prescriptions—a system that would allow passengers to schedule an additional trip or would deliver medication when it's ready would better serve this population.
- Service providers need to be able to think creatively to solve transportation issues for their clients to make the system work. Too often, standardization efforts run contrary to creative solutions.

Examples they cited include the following:

- The Florida Department of Elder Affairs lists a menu for statistics and reports for the state as a whole as well as for each county, essentially providing a running demographic profile that can be used as rationale and support for needs and basically provides the service providers with a "to do list" in terms of unmet needs (see http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/english/pubs_stats.php). This kind of data would be extraordinarily helpful if provided at a federal level.

Consensus building

- Getting some consensus about the important transportation variables will be imperative in this process; having potential variables in place for federal representative reactions will help further this goal. Using the January 2009 meeting to initiate a dialog regarding several core elements that all can accept is essential, particularly because transportation is a key issue only to a minority at this point and all have other important masters. Deriving a list of core elements as well as a set of "optional" variables would be helpful to move the process forward.

- Various transportation agencies were able to build consensus around two big indicators: on-time performance and ride time.
- "No time is a good time to do reports," but most providers are used to reporting to grant providers on an annual cycle, which may be a good starting point for consensus regarding the frequency of required reporting.
- To be successful, all federal agencies involved must buy into these ideas. In addition, significant opportunities for input from and information exchange with service providers are essential.

Software development

- The web-based approach is important, but it is only a tool that must be used correctly to be truly useful and to achieve significant improvements.
- Creating software that uses familiar products is a key element for acceptance in that it helps minimize the time/effort/energy needed to input elements and create the reports that can be used to enhance the program and better understand the transportation component of human services.
- The software must be able to address 508-compliance issues so that it will be available to visually impaired users.
- It will be important to use drop-down menus and to establish a set of defined characteristics related to each menu for the sake of consistency—people may not necessarily understand the question until they see the set of choices in the drop-down menu, and answers may vary across a number of dimensions without them.
- Technology is always a difficult master—by the time the software is complete, it will be outdated. Flexibility will be important.
- Data collection from different types of routing and scheduling software may be difficult. For example, "Trapeze" software, which paratransit providers throughout the nation generally use industry-wide, must be compatible with the software to be developed. Other databases like this will prove difficult as well, and it may be difficult to move that staff who use them to a new system.

  Examples they cited include the following:

- See the State of Virginia's efforts in developing a web-based approach to data collection.
- The Capital Area Rural Transit System (CARTS) uses a client card that includes all relevant client information and is collected at point-of-service, automatically uploaded into a database.

Skepticism toward the outcomes of this report

- Although the goal is laudable and continuing to try to reduce the burden that reporting requirements pose, this is like "rearranging chairs on the Titanic."
- These efforts arise periodically (see, for example, the 1977 report from the Comptroller General of the United States, and the 1999 and 2003 GAO reports). One view of this was that any success in relieving various issues in coordination is due to the efforts of a strong champion in a position of power.

- Rural transit was established 30 years ago precisely to cobble together funding sources and coordinate transportation, but every time the federal government "rediscovers coordination," the outcome is to make things less coordinated and more burdensome. Whatever they put into effect makes it harder to actually coordinate; meanwhile, they talk a good game about coordination without improving anything.
- Even if we solve the problem at the federal level, state-level reporting is a larger and more significant problem—once the states get the money from federal programs to disburse, they require data that costs too much to collect for too little reward. The state agencies are too far removed from understanding client needs and want providers to use measurements that are too "touchy-feely" and unrealistic. They don't have a clue about what is really going on or how to measure it effectively.

These comments raise important issues that must be considered. First and foremost, the skepticism the FIU-MC Team encountered will not easily be addressed; their complaints are well-founded and point to some very difficult concessions, as well as federal- and state-level investment of time and outreach to develop better relationships with local level providers to better understand what is "Realistic with a Capital R" in terms of data collection and ability to measure what it intends to measure. This will take some time. Input and feedback from service providers must be meaningful and well publicized.

Second, consensus among federal-level agencies will be difficult. Each program is very different in terms of clients, services provided, programmatic goals, and so on. Bringing agency representatives to the table is often an elusive, but important first step in this process; hashing out potentially common variables also means a great investment in time and resources, often with low expectations for workable results. Finding a credible champion in this respect might be a helpful means of getting the ball rolling, and if done well, the momentum may carry the effort towards a better outcome.

Third, private and public sector ideas, especially for technological solutions, should be carefully examined for possible use. Seeking more automation to improve efficiency will greatly benefit all programs, staff, and clients. More resources can be directed towards programming, less staff time and effort will be required for reporting efforts, and more efficient, cost effective, and coordinated transportation services can result if technology can be more effectively utilized.

6.2 Conversations with Federal-Level Agency Representatives

One of the goals of this and other projects is to facilitate coordination at the local level. Executive Order 13330 on Human Services Transportation Coordination mandates that the CCAM examine areas that may be preventing effective coordination; among its functions, the CCAM is to promote interagency cooperation, minimize duplication, and implement administrative, policy, and procedural mechanisms to enhance transportation services at all levels (George W. Bush Executive Order, February 24, 2004: Appendix E). Therefore, bringing federal-level agencies together to discuss obstacles and common

themes was considered an important element to beginning a dialogue regarding simplifying, coordinating, and streamlining reporting requirements.

On January 12, 2009, the FIU-MC Team met with federal representatives from several of the programs that currently collect transportation-related data through their various reporting processes. This initial effort included representatives from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and the Administration on Aging (AoA). This meeting was the direct implementation of our first recommendation from the "top-down" process that various representatives from appropriate agencies come to the table to try to find a "short list" of common variables that they could agree might initially work to test in a pilot program.

All concurred that this is a complicated task. All federal-level agencies are accountable to legislated goals, and the language that defines the measurements may be a part of that legislation. In addition, most programs use specific software applications and will not be amenable to the prospect of changing their current systems. While the FIU-MC Team does not advocate widespread systems change to the status quo, this reinforced the need to clarify the recommendation regarding the conceptual model. These recommendations are NOT intended to disrupt the current system or create an additional burden or more onerous reporting for any of the players involved—in other words, adding layers of bureaucracy at the point of service or whole scale software change to the federal databases currently in use are not being advocated here. Most importantly, recommend that all players come to the table to examine how recent advances in technology can facilitate data collection to review how data is used regularly, and to consider potential methods that may best streamline, standardize, and simplify the reporting burden.

The FIU-MC Team presented representatives a list of variables including organization, client, financial, programmatic, and transportation questions as a point of departure, which representatives at the January meeting were encouraged to discuss and develop. These were based on their commonality across many of the federal agencies that require transportation-related data as discussed in Section 2, the recommendations of the service providers interviewed in Section 3, and the evaluation of state-used variables as discussed in Section 4. Note that metadata that includes definitional aspects, units of measure, and justification for each variable should be developed, circulated, and periodically evaluated and updated, and that the software that may be developed should utilize drop-down menus as much as possible in order to more specifically standardize variable definitions.

The following discussion examines some examples of data that were similar, but not necessarily exact in definition or units, across several of the federal programs examined throughout this research. These were presented to the federal agency representatives in order to begin a discussion regarding the possibility of reaching consensus around one or more of them. Again, it is important to remember that the process should not require providers to upload or enter any of this information in more than one report (addressed through the conceptual model) and that each variable requires justification on the part of the programs that require it.

Provider Organization and Contact Information. The FIU-MC Team believes this organizational and contact information could be relatively easily standardized across various federal programs. Currently, nomenclature is not standard, but the reports uniformly require this kind of information:

- Grant Number Identifier
- Fiscal Year/Reporting Date
- Provider Organization Name, Physical/Mailing Address, Website
- Department Representative and Contact Information
- Funding Sources

Representatives at the January 12, 2009 meeting were most intrigued by the idea of collecting information about funding sources; however, they said that it might be difficult to derive standard definitions for even the most commonly used kind of data, like contact information and grant number identification. Because the Executive Order requires CCAM to determine what obstacles are in place to prevent coordination, standardizing nomenclature for contact and identification and other common kinds of variables may become one area that federal programs could potentially seek as a goal.

Client Information. Many programs require some information about their client demographics. Federal representatives might consider common definitions of target client groups and using drop-down menu items to standardize their definitional aspects. Current UWR target populations and other important client groups include:

- Children and Youth
- Older Adults
- People with Disabilities
- People with Low-Income
- Employment Status
- Tribal Nation
- Rural Population
- Medicaid Passengers

These were presented to federal program representatives but, at this point, it would be too difficult to standardize their definitions or resolve other technical issues (such as crosstabulating two categories of clients) across all participating agencies.

Fiscal Information. Cost effectiveness and efficiency are important in all publicly funded entities. The variables below were common for many of the federal programs, although the format and units again were quite different among them:

- Administrative Costs
- Capital Costs
- Operating Revenue
- Operating Expense

- Costs of Services Provided
- Costs of Services Purchased
- Expenditure of Service by Number of Individuals Served
- Carry-Over (If applicable)

Service efforts and accomplishments research (Wallace 1990) points to a number of input indicators that may provide some additional guidance, including the dollar cost of service (in constant dollars) to monitor expensed resources and growth over time, and expenses related to staff to evaluate operating expenses in relation to productivity.

As with all required data, federal agencies should pay close attention to what service providers find offers the best evaluation for the costs of collecting the data. In this respect, two variables stand out: cost per mile and cost per client. Defining and accounting for "costs" must still be resolved. Should other variables be considered necessary, it is essential that the price of data collection is worth the effort.

Transportation Information. With regard to transportation-related information, federal programs had a wide variation in how much they required from a single line item in a fiscal report to the great number of variables in the National Transit Database. The following are a few examples that, although not common across all agencies, are currently collected by more than just the USDOT. These were presented to the federal representatives as well as RRAC members:

- Number of Daily Passenger Trips
- On-Time Performance
- Number of People Served/Passengers Served
- Rider Satisfaction
- Purpose of Trip
- Vehicle Miles
- Trip Destination/Origin Category
- Ride Time

Federal representatives felt that consensus could be built around the first variable (number of trips), but units and definitions need further discussion. At this point, a one-way trip is the unit of measure for some programs while a round trip is the unit of measure for others. In addition, based on conversation with RRAC members, most of the variables above may be too difficult to measure and not worth the cost of collecting. Instead, service providers are more likely to measure success in terms of 1) trips per hour and 2) average speed of vehicle. Regardless, variables should be clearly defined and use standard units, and federal program administrators must offer reasonable justification for their use.

Rider satisfaction, while many consider integral to measuring outcomes, is difficult to obtain and must be conducted as a survey of riders rather than strictly estimated by provider staff. At the January 12, 2009 meeting, in fact, the AoA representatives pointed out that they use a consultant to annually survey their customers to measure client

satisfaction. This should be more closely examined as a potentially standard procedure. According to research, key characteristics that consumers find most relevant include proximity, frequency, travel time, dependability, trip quality, and information based on specific routes (Wallace 1990).

Other Qualitative Programmatic Information. Several federal programs also allowed service providers to describe their programs and various successes within the reporting period through a narrative. Qualitative data may be useful in explaining certain aspects of service delivery and how specific issues are handled by each service provider. As one RRAC member stated, one size does not fit all. For example, although NTD does request different types of data depending on provider characteristics (for example, rural and urban), one service provider said some of the NTD data try to fit too many systems into one mold, so that when data does not fall within certain parameters, staff must take a lot of time to explain the variances. In this respect, program narratives can become a double-edged sword: they provide the space to discuss the program in detail and to explain how certain issues are resolved or why numbers don't look "normal," but on the other, they require too much effort and time of administrative staff at the point of service when resources could be better spent on providing services.

Issues raised at these sessions included the following:

Organization

- All were concerned that this effort meant to supplant the data collection systems already in use. The FIU-MC Team does not recommend disrupting the current system.
- The AoA uses a consultant to annually survey user perceptions of services; this model should be investigated for other programs.

Technical

- Even within a single program, data collection varies—for example, the AoA requires much more information for their clients needing "assisted transportation" in contrast to "transportation."
- Any software must be compatible with the programs' internal systems.

Coordination

- Set up an internet discussion forum that all participants can provide input and feedback to move the conversation forward.
- It might be possible for the federal agencies to provide their transportation data directly to FTA, rather than expect to collect transportation data at the point of service.

Consensus

- Many program heads would say, "We are unique," but this is the very issue the FIU-MC Team is attempting to resolve. Finding some way to coordinate very different and unique programs is the goal of this research.

- Consider running just one or two variables run through the system to see if this process might work. The representatives at the January 12, 2009 meeting thought that using two variables as a pilot might be helpful: 1) number of trips and 2) sources of funding.

Representatives agreed that the more appropriate focal point at which to coordinate a standardized system might be the state level, because states have more power over what they must collect (in other words, they have fewer restrictions through the legislative process for specific language and more freedom to experiment), and changes at the state level might have a bigger impact.

6.3 Discussion and Recommendations

Simplifying the reporting process is not a new endeavor. Because it has not met with outstanding success in the past, several of our interviewees are skeptical that this report will make a difference. Some would consider federal efforts to simplify the process as having had the opposite effect, causing additional burdens for service providers. Bringing busy people together to make changes to a current system, even if those changes will make their own lives easier, is often daunting; that the FIU-MC Team did not have a resounding success in this area does not bode well for the future of this project.

Nevertheless, our research efforts illustrate that many service providers, state and federal agency representatives, and other experts with strong opinions will dedicate a good deal of their time to helping this project reach for success, which is encouraging for future simplifications to the current system. Based on the interviews of and meetings with these key informants, the FIU-MC Team recommends the following:

1. Establish a Working Group including representation from local, state, and federal levels; the perspectives of street-level service providers that must submit data and the state- and federal-level agencies that require data are important to finding a way to tame this beast.
    a. Sponsor regular group meetings so that various issues can be discussed and resolved understanding the needs of all players involved in the reporting process, as well as the “Reality with a Capital R” of the practical implications of data collection. Working together to get consensus across the spectrum from bottom to top will be invaluable in obtaining truly purposeful measures. Understand that all data collection comes at a cost; therefore, all measures must be meaningful for evaluation purposes.
    b. The UWR website should establish an electronic discussion to facilitate communications between working group members (federal agency representatives and participating service providers), as well as other persons interested in working on these issues.

2. Develop a technical assistance resource center. Although many service providers do use state-of-the-art technology to a great degree, not all are able to afford the improvements needed to enhance their services, and some may not be aware of

some of the latest technology. Helping service providers best utilize new technologies, helping them stay current with technology, establishing funding opportunities, and providing implementation guidelines for new systems, will become increasingly important as technological advances become integrated into virtually all aspects of our lives.

   a. Continue to look at the technologies currently in use by private companies (like UPS, Papa John's Pizza, LoneStar, and Google) that could be incorporated into emerging transportation technologies (like SmartCards, bar-code information on vehicle registration stickers and IDs, and brokerage dispatch).
   b. Examine Best Practices by service providers in this (and other areas, such as best uses of funding and service quality). If this resource center were developed as an extension of the already established UWR Useful Practices database, service providers themselves can upload information and advice through a moderated system. Consider providing incentives like awards for the most innovative use of technology, partnerships, or funding solutions.
   c. Reach out to assist service providers that do not currently use appropriate technologies. Both fiscal and implementation issues may stand in the way of using various technologies.

3. Work with the states that are currently trying to coordinate reporting to learn from their efforts. Consider seeking a certain level of conformity among them as well.

4. Examine the AoA customer satisfaction survey process to determine if other federal agencies should consider implementing it as well.

5. Test the standardization process on two key variables (funding sources and number of trips) with participating agencies to see how well a more extensive integrated, coordinated effort might work.

6. Consider developing a federal-level menu of statistics and reports that could assist service providers in working on needs assessments like the Florida Department of Elder Affairs (see http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/english/pubs_stats.php).

Chapter 7. Summary and Final Recommendations

Improving coordination among transportation providers and human service providers that offer transportation has long been a priority of federal programs. Most recently, the General Accounting Office (2003) found various obstacles that continue to hinder cooperative efforts, an Executive Order (2004) was issued, and SAFETEA-LU (2005) legislation was passed, which provides human service providers that coordinate transportation for their clients the opportunity to receive federal transportation dollars. In addition, a National Consortium on Human Service Transportation Coordination focus group indicated that reporting requirements are significant barriers to effective and efficient coordination. As a result, the Federal Transportation Administration-Coordinated Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) tasked the Metropolitan Center at Florida International University (FIU-MC) to examine these issues from three perspectives ("Top-Down," "Bottom-Up," and "State Uniformity" efforts), as discussed in detail in earlier sections, to comprehensively study the issues related to reporting requirements in order to best address them.

The findings from the "Top-Down," "Bottom-Up," and "State Uniformity" approaches converge on the complexity, redundancy, and disorder of the current system. Most street-level administrators generally accept reporting requirements as a fact of life, but these respondents indicated that standardization and creating a common database system would be a valuable means of improving productivity, enhancing program evaluation, and monitoring performance. The FIU-MC's assessment of the federal agencies that require reports shows the vast differences in reporting forms, variables, units, topics, and data entry methods among them; standardizing the reporting format will help to reduce the burden reporting requirements currently pose, and using a common set of variables will allow for better cross-program coordination and evaluation. State efforts to this point can offer some guidance regarding analysis methods, mandates, using data for minimum performance standards, and specific common variables. Discussed in more detail in the sections above, the recommendations from each approach are summarized below:

Organizational Aspects

- Bring various representatives to the table to begin a dialog regarding standardization of questions through a common web-based reporting system (initiated with the January 2009 meeting; see Section 6 for more details).
- Develop a process to bring representatives from each participating program, as well as representatives from street-level service providers to the table on a regular basis perhaps through an Annual or Bi-Annual Review Consortium to evaluate how the data is used and how to continue to simplify the reporting process.
- Create and moderate an on-line forum (perhaps through the UWR website) for people interested in streamlining and simplifying reporting requirements to continually seek input and generate areas of discussion that may lead to better results, and certainly will help individuals interested in the subject stay connected with each other through an official, FTA-moderated channel. FTA should assign

staff to monitor the discussion groups and work on implementing some of the suggestions that get wide support from the group.
- Regularly, formally, and systematically approach service providers to ask their opinions on the data collection process, data entry methods, uploading options, and variables.
- Show service providers how the required data are needed for specific and relevant purposes.
- Communicate effectively throughout the process of standardizing and simplifying the reporting process by offering timely information, measured progress, and clear, early warnings of any changes to current systems. This element must be a top priority for all staff.

Technical Aspects

- Establish a resource center (perhaps through the UWR website) to disseminate information and provide funding opportunities for private-sector solutions, models, and technology that may be translated to human services transportation provision (such as tracking individuals, storing addresses, and recording preferences using real-time locations and last-ordered requests). Seek to help providers collect data at the very point of service; data upload could be basically automatic after each transaction. While some service providers have access to the latest technology, it would be beneficial to assist those that cannot afford to implement these advances. Report the best practices of providers who effectively use state-of-the-art technology and have developed innovative funding solutions.
- Consider how to integrate the reporting process commensurate with the conceptual model regarding a database system report as described in Section 5. Several agencies are already using this kind of standardization and uploading process (see Recommendation #5 in Section 2.3); a resource center could provide assistance for those that are not yet using this technology.
- Because information technologies evolve so quickly, it is important to seriously contemplate which formats are more flexible and can facilitate future updates with greater ease.
- Be sure that guidelines and data definitions are clear and standardized—employ drop-down menus and metadata information (including definitions, units of measure, and justification for each variable).

Data Collection Issues

- Systematically collect data for consistent evaluation and to reduce redundancies. As one participant in the process stated, “You can’t manage what you can’t measure.” On the other hand, as another said, “Garbage in, garbage out”—it is important that the data collected serve an easily understood purpose, that justification for the variables is meaningful, and that the cost to collect data does not outweigh its benefit.
- Allow service providers access to the data used for evaluation as well as the evaluation reports so that the staff members asked to collect and report the data understand that their efforts are appreciated and important.

- Develop a standard data collection and reporting web-based system (as described in Section 5), and allow service providers to use the database for their internal reporting needs. Use familiar products and allow service providers to utilize the national database to be able to make their own comparisons.
- Research what data service providers use internally that the federal-level agencies do not currently use to understand what is relevant to service providers; also, investigate what variables service providers consider irrelevant or useless that they are currently required to report.
- Consider variables that could be used to identify gaps in service (for example, riders eligible for paratransit who do not currently use it) to better target populations and coordinate services.
- Collect qualitative information about customer service to establish and monitor levels of service standards for coordinated transportation.

Output, Outcome, and Evaluation Issues

- Consider including evaluation measures that service providers use themselves. The FTA may want to extend this research effort to examine which variables many service providers currently use that could be considered best practices.
- Be careful about making comparisons between communities. Small communities, service providers with few resources and/or highly dispersed populations, are not directly comparable with large or densely populated communities or service providers with greater resources.
- Examine the efforts in California (for analysis), Washington State (for mandating data reporting and consistent data collection), Texas (for the implementation of Excel spreadsheets to simplify the process) and Florida (for enforcing minimum performance standards).
- Consider developing a federal-level database that consolidates various relevant demographic and other data that can help service providers as they identify unmet community needs and establish the rationale for their programming.

The conceptual model for data collection and reporting presented above is one important step towards standardizing the actual system. This includes a means of standardizing the uploading process for a variety of common data collection formats (such as Excel worksheets, Access databases, Word or PDF files, and so on), the ability to accommodate the visually impaired (Americans with Disabilities Act "508-compliance"), as well as a sensitivity to the variation in software currently in use among federal agencies. Although the FIU-MC Team highly recommends that all participating federal agencies determine a common list of variables that they can all use, it must be recognized that each have very different goals and purposes. In other words, it is not realistic to expect that they can all agree on exactly the same variables. For this reason, the conceptual model must include a way to channel users to specific federal agency upload pages.

Another important step is to standardize questions and variables of interest across federal agencies as essentially a "first page" approach to data collection; collecting a common set of variables for all agencies that fund transportation services will greatly enhance their ability to improve services and evaluate programs using a common language and a

standard system. Based on the findings above, the FIU-MC Team recommends using the specific organization, client, financial, and transportation questions as a point of departure discussed in Section 6, which representatives from all key groups (federal- and state-level administrators, service providers, technical, administrative, and legal staff) can discuss and develop. These are based on their commonality across many of the agencies that require transportation-related data as discussed in Section 2, on the responses from service provider surveys described in Section 3, and on the evaluation of state-used variables as discussed in Section 4. Note that metadata including definitional aspects, units of measure, and justification for each variable should be developed, circulated, and periodically evaluated and updated, and that any software developed from this effort utilize drop-down menus as much as possible in order to more specifically standardize variable definitions.

Finally, the FIU-MC recommends that this document be used as a guide for continuing efforts into the future, such that data requirements and data collection methods be evaluated and updated periodically through an inclusive process. A Consortium should be formed to include technical, legal, administrative and other representatives from federal programs, state agency personnel attempting to coordinate and standardize data collection, and street-level service providers responsible to report the data. This Consortium should meet on a regular, periodic basis (perhaps annually or bi-annually) to review the need for specific variables, to discuss terminology and word choice, and to further standardize data requirements as much as possible.

Administrators at all levels should be aware of the “Data Rich, Information Poor” syndrome that collecting data for the sake of collecting data can drive. Data must serve very specific purposes, and all parties should be aware of the purposes they serve. Street-level service providers should not be left feeling that they are performing exercises in futility; their efforts should provide direct, clear rewards in allowing them to make their own program assessments.

The FIU-MC Team is confident that these recommendations, if implemented, will begin the process towards reducing the reporting burden by creating more efficient data collection methods, better indicators, and a systematic way to improve reporting requirements. The Executive Order mandates that the CCAM search for areas that are obstacles for better coordination, and a number of them have been identified in this report. Coordination means better communication among all players, and must come first—the lines of communication must be open and accessible for coordination to occur. Bringing representatives of each group to the table to come to consensus about definitions and nomenclature for a set of common variables will be an important first step; each step forward will lead toward the successful implementation of a rational reporting system. The FIU-MC Team hopes that these recommendations will be helpful in the current effort.

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Appendix A: Top-Down Approach Survey

Initial Script

Hi, my name is {student name}. I am calling from the Florida International University Metropolitan Center with a project we're doing for the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM), part of the Federal Transit Administration.

The FTA has contracted us to research the reporting processes federal agencies use to keep the service providers they fund accountable to their goals and to monitor their progress. Our understanding is that the Department of {NAME OF DEPARTMENT} funds local service providers to coordinate transportation as an eligible activity under {NAME OF PROGRAM}. Is this true?

- **YES (transportation related)**
- **NO (not transportation related)**

{IF NO} Thank you for your time.

{IF YES} The main purpose of this project is to help improve transportation services that service providers coordinate for their clients that may have difficulty traveling. The FTA's objective here is to examine any obstacles that service providers may run into as they try to get the funds they need to coordinate transportation for their less mobile clients. We are looking into reporting requirements to try to establish whether getting funds and reporting progress can be simplified.

{IF THEY DON'T KNOW} Can you refer me to someone in your department who could help me?

{CONTACT INFO—NAME, PHONE, EMAIL}
_____

I would like to email you a list of questions to verify the information that we have already gathered and request information that we do not have. I would like to call back in about an hour. Will that be convenient for you?

{IF YES} Great. Can you verify / give me your email address? _____

{IF NO} When would be a better time to contact you? {date/time} _____
I'd like to send you the questions by email today—can you please verify / give me your email address? _____

Thanks so much for your time. I'll be in touch at {AGREED UPON DATE/TIME}

Blank Survey and Instructions
All blanks are filled in as much as possible prior to contacting agency representative.

Reporting Requirements Questionnaire
I. CCAM Top-Down Approach

Agency: *STUDENT types in Agency Name before sending*
Program Title: *Type in Program Title*
Contact Information: Name: *Jane Doe* Phone: *(555) 555-5555*
Email: *jdoe@email.com*

Does the *Agency Name* fund local & state coordination efforts through other federal level programs in addition to *Program Title*?
____ No ____ Yes (If "Yes" please identify what they are)

What is your total budget for *Program Title*? $ _____

What kind of information do you require agencies you fund to report back to you?
____ Financial
____ Ridership
____ Satisfaction Survey
____ Program Goals
____ Other *(Please explain*)

How do agencies submit their required reports to you?
____ Paper form: *May we have a copy?*
____ Electronic form: *Can you send it or direct me to the correct Internet site?*
____ Other: *Please explain; may we have a copy?*

What kinds of reports do you require, how often do you require them, and when are they due?

	Financial Reports	Month/s Due	Progress Reports	Month/s Due	Other *(Please Explain)*	Month/s Due
Annually						
Semi Annually						
Quarterly						
Other *(Explain)*						

NOTE: "Financial" reports are concerned with accounting for costs while "Progress" reports are designed to keep track of other kinds of program accountability, such as client satisfaction, ridership levels, and various program goals.

Are agencies usually able to provide reports on schedule or are they often late?
____ On time ____Late

What kinds of problems or issues would you say the agencies you fund encounter the most when they have to prepare these reports? Do you get calls for clarification or do you review files that have many errors?
If you have any questions, please call me at (305) 349 1251.

Reporting Requirements Questionnaire
II. CCAM Bottom-Up Approach Assistance

For another part of this project, we would like to contact local- and state-level service providers that receive funding from you to examine what additional reporting requirements they face from other federal-level agencies.

Please provide the following information on each of the service providers you fund through Program Title. If it is too difficult to collect information on all of them, we would like to contact the three service providers that receive the most funding.

- Name of Local- or State-Level Service Provider
- Name of Funded Transportation Coordination Program
- Amount of Funding
- Contact Person Name, Phone, and Email

If you have any questions, please call me at (305) 349 1251.

Please send paper and email files at your earliest convenience to {STUDENT}:
Email: {STUDENT EMAIL}
Office fax: (305) 349 1271
Address: FIU Metropolitan Center
150 SE 2nd Avenue, Suite 500
Miami, Fl 33131

I will call you to follow up on this survey as scheduled.

We understand that you have a very busy schedule; on behalf of CCAM and myself, I would like to thank you for your time and cooperation.

Research Assistant
Metropolitan Center

Solicited agencies

Transportation
- Capital and Training Assistance Program for Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility
- Capital Assistance Program for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities
- Capital Investment Grants
- Job Access and Reserve Commute Grants
- Non-Urbanized Area Formula Transit Grants

Agriculture
- Food Stamp Employment and Training Program

Education
- Voluntary Public School Choice
- Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities
- Centers for Independent Living
- Independent Living Services For Older Individuals Who are Blind
- Independent Living State Grants
- Supported Employment Services for Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities
- Vocational Rehabilitation grants

Health and Human Services
- Child Care and Development Fund
- Community Services Block Grants Programs
- Development Disabilities Grants Project of National Significance
- Head Start
- Refugee and Entrant Assistance Discretionary Programs
- Refugee and Entrant assistance State Administered Programs
- Refugee and Entrant Assistance Targeted Programs
- Refugee and Entrant Assistance Voluntary Agency Programs
- Social Services Block Grants
- State Council on Developmental Disabilities and Protection Advocacy System
- Temporary Assistance for Needy People (TANF)
- Supportive Services and Senior Centers Grants
- Program for American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian Elders
- Medicaid Program
- State Children's Health Insurance Programs
- Community Health Centers
- Healthy Community Access Program
- Healthy Start Initiative
- HIV Care Grants
- Maternal and Child Services Grants
- Rural Health and Outreach Grants (Rural Health Care, Health Network, and Small Health Care Provider Programs)
- Community Mental Health Services Block Grant
- Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant

Housing and Urban Development

- Community Development Block Grant
- Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids
- Supportive Housing for persons with Disabilities
- Revitalization of Severely Distressed Public Housing

Interior

- Indian Employment Assistance
- Indian Employment Training and Related Services

Labor

- Job Corps
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Work
- Native American Employment and Training
- Senior Community Service Employment
- Trade Adjustment Assistance-Workers
- Welfare-to-Work Grants to Federally Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native
- Welfare-to-Work Grant to State and Localities
- Work Incentive Grants
- Workforce Investment Act Adult Service Program
- Workforce Investment Act Adult Dislocated Worker Program
- Workforce Investment Act Youth Activities
- Youth Opportunity Grants
- Black Lung Benefits Programs
- Homeless Veteran's Reintegration Project Grant
- Veterans Employment Programs

Veterans Affairs

- Automobiles and Adaptive Equipment for Certain Disabled Veterans and members of the Armed Forces
- VA Homeless Providers Grants and Per Diem Program
- Veterans Medical Care

Appendix B: Bottom-Up Surveys

Round One Script and Survey

Part I: Contact Information

Organization name: (TO BE FILLED IN BY STUDENT)_____
Address:_____
_____
City:_____State: _____ Zip: _____
Agency Website: _____
Contact First: □ Mr. □ _____ Last: _____
Contact Phone: _____ Contact Email: _____
(Add Other Contacts as needed)

Part II: Program Information

DOT Region: _____

Size of Community:

- □ Non-urbanized area (< 50,000)
- □ Small urbanized area (50,000-200,000)
- □ Medium urbanized area (200,000-1,000,000)
- □ Large urbanized area (>1,000,000)

1. Number of Programs this Agency Provides to the Public in Total: _____

2. Number of Programs that Require Coordination with Other Agencies (LIST AGENCIES IF POSSIBLE):
□ All □ Most □ Some □ None

Part III: Reporting Requirements

3. Do you think that the required reports are too burdensome? □ Yes □ No
If yes, what recommendations would you make to reduce the burden?

4. Please Describe the Reporting Requirements for Federal or Other Agencies

	Report Required by	Reporting Frequency (#/yr)	Data Required for Report*
1			
2			
3			

(Please add more as necessary)
* Type of data could include ridership, financial, satisfaction, progress, outcomes, etc.

5. Would you like to apply (have you tried to apply) for any other Federal/other programs for funding but have not because the requirements are too cumbersome? □ Yes □ No

If Yes, which programs?

To what degree are the following issues barriers to coordination efforts?

Program Requirements	Definition	Barrier that was overcome	Barrier that was NOT overcome	Not a barrier
Local Planning Process	Requirements for a local planning process that may or may not include coordination across agencies.			
A Local Planning Process with Transportation a component of the Process	If transportation is a component of the planning process or specific requirements (e.g., public hearings, local coordination) pertain to transportation, please provide the appropriate link.			
Cost Sharing	Requirements for "fair allocation" of costs among cooperating agencies/programs and/or specifications for costs that can be shared. The intent is to focus on Cost Sharing between or among federally-funded programs that would be relevant in any way to coordination of local transportation services.			
Reporting	Requirements with respect to elements to be included in reports and/or timing of reports.			
Physical Accessibility	Vehicle requirements for physical accessibility such as for wheelchair lifts or disability provisions.			
Vehicle Operating Specifications	Requirements for specifications related to such characteristics as reliability, safety, performance, structural integrity, fuel economy, and noise.			
Vehicle Testing	Requirements for vehicle testing with regard to such things as safety, performance, structural integrity, fuel economy, noise.			
Buy America	Requirements for Buy America related to such items as iron, steel, and manufactured products, total cost of domestic components as a percentage of all components, location of final assembly.			
Employee Background Checks	Requirements for background checks and/or types of information to be included.			
Employee Drug or Alcohol Testing	Requirements that specify drug or alcohol testing will be conducted, the types of tests that can be used, and/or the items to be screened.			
Employee Training	Requirements for special vehicle training such as training for school bus drivers or other training such as first aid or other paramedical skills.			

Program Requirements	Definition	Barrier that was overcome	Barrier that was NOT overcome	Not a barrier
Vehicle Sharing	Requirements or provisions for sharing vehicles with other agencies or programs.			
Ride Sharing	Requirements or provisions for ride sharing with other agencies or programs; that is, participants in more than one program can ride in vehicle at the same time.			

Please add a brief explanation of any other requirements that might make local coordination of transportation services difficult.

Requirement 1: _____
Requirement 2: _____
Requirement 3: _____
Requirement 4: _____
(Please add more as necessary)

Would you be willing to talk to someone else about these barriers? □ Yes □ No
Would you be the appropriate person to speak to regarding those issues? □ Yes □ No
If not, whom should we contact?
Contact First: □ Mr. □ Ms. _____
Contact Last: _____
Contact Phone: _____
Contact Email: _____

Thank you for your time and effort!

Round Two Script and Survey

Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling from the Metropolitan Center at Florida International University. We are working with the Federal Transit Administration's United We Ride program to try to identify the data you must report to the federal agencies that fund your program in order to standardize, streamline, and coordinate the federal data collection effort. Ultimately, we hope to create a set of reporting requirements that will be less burdensome for the service providers that must collect and provide data about their programs.

1. Are you involved in collecting data and meeting reporting requirements?

(IF YES, CONTINUE)
(IF NO, ASK IF THEY CAN PROVIDE THE NAME OF THE PERSON WHO IS MORE APPROPRIATE—IF THEY CANNOT GIVE YOU A NAME, THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME)

2. It should take only about ten minutes to go through this survey. Will you be able to discuss data collection, type of data, and reporting issues today?

(IF YES, CONTINUE)
(IF NO, ASK IF THEY WILL HAVE TIME ANOTHER DAY AND SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT)

3. In your experience, are reporting requirements very burdensome?

   ____ Yes ____ No

3a. Please elaborate:

4. How would you improve the reporting process?
   Prod: Variables, data collection logistics, reporting cycles, etc.

5. Does your organization use any data internally or does the board request any specific data that help you manage and improve your services?

5a. Please elaborate:
   Prod: Are they different than what you are required to report for federal programs?

5b. May we have a copy (electronic, faxed) of these internal reports?

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. We are creating a Reporting Requirements Advisory Board to help us in this effort, and we would like to invite you to participate. If you are interested, I can have our project manager call you to explain this in more detail.

Appendix C: State Uniformity Guiding Questions

* Have you implemented a state uniformity plan? Who would be the best person to contact for more details about the plan?

* Are you in the process of developing a state uniformity plan? Who would be the best person to contact for more details about the plan?

* Are you considering developing a state uniformity plan? What are the major issues you're currently facing?

* Are there any specific reasons you are not considering developing a state uniformity plan?

If you do have a Statewide Plan implemented, could you provide me the following details:

* In a few words could you describe the State uniformity rules, guidelines or procedures related to transportation disadvantaged programs or agencies.

* Who abides by these guidelines; are only the local agencies and programs part of this coordination effort or does it also apply to State agencies?

* Where can we find current information on the coordination effort?

* Could we get a copy of the reporting guidelines? Could your office send us a link, fax or email these to us?

* How do you enforce these procedures for coordination?

* How do local programs or agencies provide feedback concerning the Statewide coordination effort? For instance, if they are having difficulty providing some data, who would they explain this to, a different governmental office?

* Are there distinct differences between programs and agencies? If there are differences which relate to funding, what is the criteria for each?

* Could you give us further information on similar coordination efforts at the Statewide level in other States? Contact name and number.

Appendix D: Reporting Requirements Advisory Committee

Name		Organization
Jeff	Arndt	Texas A&M University
Cathy	Brown	St. John's Council on Aging
Linda	Cherrington	Texas A&M University
Ed	Collins	TX DOT
Nancy	Crowther	Capital Metro (Austin, TX)
Rex	Knowlton	UWR Ambassador (Region 3)
David	Marsch	Capital Area Rural Transit Service (CARTS)

Guiding Questions

1. Overall Reaction
2. Response to Recommendations from Top-Down, Bottom-Up, and Summary
    a. Do they capture the right points?
    b. Are they clearly expressed?
    c. Additional suggestions?
    d. Additional companies or agencies to follow as an example/model?
3. Response to State Uniformity
    a. Is this clear?
    b. Are you aware of anything else going on in states that we should note?
4. Response to the Conceptual Model
    a. Is it missing anything?
    b. Is it clear?
5. Response to the initial suggestions of standardized variables
    a. Anything missing or not needed?

Appendix E: Executive Order (Human Service Transportation Coordination)

Executive Order 13330

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
February 24, 2004

Executive Order Human Service Transportation Coordination

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to enhance access to transportation to improve mobility, employment opportunities, and access to community services for persons who are transportation-disadvantaged, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. This order is issued consistent with the following findings and principles:
(a) A strong America depends on citizens who are productive and who actively participate in the life of their communities.
(b) Transportation plays a critical role in providing access to employment, medical and health care, education, and other community services and amenities. The importance of this role is underscored by the variety of transportation programs that have been created in conjunction with health and human service programs, and by the significant Federal investment in accessible public transportation systems throughout the Nation.
(c) These transportation resources, however, are often difficult for citizens to understand and access, and are more costly than necessary due to inconsistent and unnecessary Federal and State program rules and restrictions.
(d) A broad range of Federal program funding allows for the purchase or provision of transportation services and resources for persons who are transportation-disadvantaged. Yet, in too many communities, these services and resources are fragmented, unused, or altogether unavailable.
(e) Federally assisted community transportation services should be seamless, comprehensive, and accessible to those who rely on them for their lives and livelihoods. For persons with mobility limitations related to advanced age, persons with disabilities, and persons struggling for self-sufficiency, transportation within and between our communities should be as available and affordable as possible.
(f) The development, implementation, and maintenance of responsive, comprehensive, coordinated community transportation systems is essential for persons with disabilities, persons with low incomes, and older adults who rely on such transportation to fully participate in their communities.

Sec. 2. Definitions.
(a) As used in this order, the term "agency" means an executive department or agency of the Federal Government.
(b) For the purposes of this order, persons who are transportation-disadvantaged are persons who qualify for Federally conducted or Federally assisted transportation-related programs or services due to disability, income, or advanced age.
Sec. 3. Establishment of the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility.
(a) There is hereby established, within the Department of Transportation for administrative purposes, the "Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility"

("Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council" or "Council"). The membership of the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council shall consist of:
(i) the Secretaries of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and the Interior, the Attorney General, and the Commissioner of Social Security; and
(ii) such other Federal officials as the Chairperson of the Council may designate.
(b) The Secretary of Transportation, or the Secretary's designee, shall serve as the Chairperson of the Council. The Chairperson shall convene and preside at meetings of the Council, determine its agenda, direct its work, and, as appropriate to particular subject matters, establish and direct subgroups of the Council, which shall consist exclusively of the Council's members.
(c) A member of the Council may designate any person who is part of the member's agency and who is an officer appointed by the President or a full-time employee serving in a position with pay equal to or greater than the minimum rate payable for GS-15 of the General Schedule to perform functions of the Council or its subgroups on the member's behalf.

Sec 4. Functions of the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council. The Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council shall:
(a) promote interagency cooperation and the establishment of appropriate mechanisms to minimize duplication and overlap of Federal programs and services so that transportation-disadvantaged persons have access to more transportation services;
(b) facilitate access to the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation services within existing resources;
(c) encourage enhanced customer access to the variety of transportation and resources available;
(d) formulate and implement administrative, policy, and procedural mechanisms that enhance transportation services at all levels; and
(e) develop and implement a method for monitoring progress on achieving the goals of this order.

Sec. 5. Report. In performing its functions, the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council shall present to me a report not later than 1 calendar year from the date of this order. The report shall:
(a) Identify those Federal, State, Tribal and local laws, regulations, procedures, and actions that have proven to be most useful and appropriate in coordinating transportation services for the targeted populations;
(b) Identify substantive and procedural requirements of transportation-related Federal laws and regulations that are duplicative or restrict the laws' and regulations' most efficient operation;
(c) Describe the results achieved, on an agency and program basis, in:
(i) simplifying access to transportation services for persons with disabilities, persons with low income, and older adults;
(ii) providing the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation services within existing resources; and
(iii) reducing duplication to make funds available for more services to more such persons;
(d) Provide recommendations to simplify and coordinate applicable substantive, procedural, and administrative requirements; and
(e) Provide any other recommendations that would, in the judgment of the Council, advance the principles set forth in section 1 of this order.

Sec. 6. General.
(a) Agencies shall assist the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council and provide information to the Council consistent with applicable law as may be necessary to carry out its functions. To the extent permitted by law, and as permitted by available agency resources, the Department of Transportation shall provide funding and administrative support for the Council.

(b) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, or legislative proposals.
(c) This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

GEORGE W. BUSH
THE WHITE HOUSE,
February 24, 2004.

Office of Research, Demonstration, and Innovation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C.
www.fta.dot.gov/research
Report No. FTA-FL-04-7104-2010.08