

# WISCONSIN EMPLOYMENT TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (WETAP)

## Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Departments of Workforce Development (DWD) and Transportation (DOT) jointly sponsor the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP). This program integrates DOT's state funded Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program, DWD's federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Employment Transportation program, and the FTA's Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program into one, coordinated application process.

The goal of the program is to coordinate federal and state resources for employment transportation into one program featuring a single application process. The objectives are to help low-income people access, retain, or advance in employment.

DOT/DWD created a WETAP Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA), which was mailed statewide to interested stakeholders throughout the state and posted on DWD's Website. Applications were due February 1, 2000, and required information on coordination and partnerships, a needs assessment, an analysis of existing resources, a gap analysis, an implementation plan, an itemized budget, a minimum 10% local match, and sign-off by the local Workforce Development Board and by the local/district office of the DOT.

Twenty-two applications were submitted to DWD/DOT for the WETAP Program, representing 49 Counties and 1 Tribe. The applications represented over \$9.66 million in funding requests, of which the state was able to fund just over \$6.12 million.

Challenges continue in rural areas, where many people don't have access to reliable automobiles, public transit is rare or non-existent, and employment opportunities are few and far between.

Urban areas continue to require additional shift service, reverse commute options, and innovative solutions for solving multiple trip issues. Because JARC regulations prevent those funds from being used for car-related projects, WETAP split application requests into two funding categories: "TANF Only" for car related projects; and, "TANF/TDM/JARC Split Funding" for projects which were considered to be mass transit type projects. In the "TANF Only" category, 14 applicants requested \$2,889,793 in funds. WETAP was able to fund 11 projects/services by 8 applicants, covering 31 mostly rural counties throughout Wisconsin, for \$491,244. In the "TANF/TDM/JARC Split Funding" category, 21 applicants requested \$6,770,796 in funds. WETAP was able to fund 44 projects/services by 20 applicants, covering 45 urban, suburban, and rural areas counties and 1 Tribe throughout Wisconsin, for \$5,628,840. The lack of available resources for car-related programs is an ongoing concern. Should DWD be able to shift any additional TANF resources toward this program, they would go to help fund more of these "TANF Only" programs which could not be funded in the first year of the program. This need continues to exist and, without additional resources, will be difficult to meet.

The WETAP program has positioned Wisconsin in the lead with regard to employment transportation planning, coordination, and service implementation. DOT/DWD plans to continue the partnership that has been formed, and to expand it to other agencies that have transportation resources or needs. Coordination of resources is the key in ensuring that the entire population's transportation needs are met in spite of challenges and funding program restrictions.

## Results

While some grantees experienced delays in project start-up, the first quarter results, as reported to WisDOT, were impressive. These results included the following:

The number of new employment sites served directly or within ¼ mile of service	133
The number of connected employers not previously reachable by service	252
The number of connected employers during times not previously served	102
The number of child care facilities, training site and employment support services now directly served or within ¼ mile of service	5,629
The number of welfare recipient or low-income person residences now directly served or within ¼ mile of service	35,077
Total Expenses	\$1,773,114.94
Project Revenues	\$ 999,387.58
Total Ridership	228,297.00
Hours of Service	30,141.65
Total Service Miles	505,625.75

## Background

As early as 1996 the State of Wisconsin recognized the importance of intergovernmental cooperation in addressing the needs of unemployed and underemployed persons to create an effective system of welfare reform and to help supply a dependable labor pool to employers in a strong economy. At that time the state's Departments of Workforce Development and Transportation created an interagency task force to address transportation needs as part of the overall strategy of employment and welfare reform. This interagency group worked to strengthen and improve the existing state-funded Job Ride program, which served people in the Milwaukee County area, and to tap into the TANF program to help eligible persons find work related transportation.

When Congress passed the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21), it provided for employment transportation through the creation of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program. The JARC funds are administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and total \$750 million over the six year span of the reauthorization act and require a dollar for dollar. The first funding cycle of the federal JARC program saw limited participation by Wisconsin transit agencies due to the short application turn-around time and the perceived complexity of the program by agencies not familiar with FTA funding and FTA compliance requirements.

In 1999, as the State of Wisconsin successfully pursued and received its first earmark for JARC funding of \$4 million, the interagency group sought to ease the complexity and workload of smaller agencies by developing a sort of "one-stop" application process to access JARC and eligible matching funds. The effort resulted in the creation of the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program or WETAP. As this process was occurring, both the

Departments of Workforce Development and Transportation were working through the state budget process to secure matching funds to the JARC program. The DWD was able to secure a set-aside of \$2 million of the state's TANF funds to be used for transportation purposes. The DOT was able to target \$470,000 of the state-funded Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program to add to the mix.

In the fall of 1999 the State rolled out the WETAP program, which allowed agencies of all sizes to apply for JARC, TANF, and TDM funds in one application process. The program guidelines required a local review and coordination procedure, which set a limit of one single application per county, although that application could represent a combination of requests from multiple agencies. Multi-county applications were strongly encouraged. The application limit and the local review process were established to encourage cooperation and coordination, and to prevent duplication of services. As part of the local review process, each application was required to include a signoff by the local Workforce Development Board, and by the District Office of DOT.

Applications were reviewed, evaluated, and scored by a panel of DWD and DOT staff. The scoring criteria included the applicants' ability to address:

- Coordination and Partnerships
- Needs Assessment
- Existing Resources
- Transportation Service Gap Analysis
- Transportation Service Implementation Plan
- Budget, Match, Administration, and proposed methodology for Evaluation
- Required signoffs

Following evaluation of the applications, and a preliminary award notice, the Department of Transportation assumed responsibility for preparing the funding application to FTA and the required labor protection information for review by the U.S. Department of Labor. This process was "invisible" to the grantees other than their completion of federal certifications and assurances.

The Departments of Workforce Development and Transportation drafted interagency agreements and a Memorandum of Understanding which prepared the stage for transfer of funds and spelled out each agency's responsibilities in managing the WETAP program. Under the agreement the DWD would be responsible for payment of grant funds and the DOT would be responsible for data collection and FTA reporting. Following approval and award of the earmarked funds by FTA both agencies co-executed a one-year funding agreement with each of the grant recipients. The first-cycle grant agreements began July 1, 2000 and run through December 2001 (to allow for any delays in start-up by grantees).

The first funding cycle resulted in grant awards to twenty-three agencies. The program funds transit service expansion, shared-ride taxi service, childcare transportation, mobility managers, vanpools, the development of an Internet trip planner system, and auto loan and repair loan service. Since the JARC program cannot be used for single passenger/auto based programs, the State set aside 25% of its TANF match to help fund these types of programs. While the setaside reduced the amount of funds available for JARC match, it was decided early in the creation of the WETAP program that auto-based programs are sometimes the only available option to get people to work, particularly in rural settings where no form of public transit exists.

Fourteen applicants requested \$2.9 million in assistance for auto related projects. Given the limited amount of TANF set-aside for these programs, the state was able to fund eleven projects

operated by eight grantees at a level of \$491,244 in TANF funds. The projects cover 31 mostly rural counties and provide the following types of project components:

- Driver Education – vehicle care and preventive maintenance
- Auto Lease and Loan Programs
- Vehicle Repair and Maintenance Loan Programs
- Auto Purchase Programs.

The balance of the WETAP funds consisted of the JARC, TANF and TDM fund mix. Twenty-one applicants submitted requests totaling \$6.7 million. The state was able to fund twenty of those applicants with \$5.6 million of WETAP funds. Those twenty applicants represent 44 separate projects covering 45 urban, rural, and suburban counties and one Indian reservation. Because some of the grantees proposed auto-related projects, as well as mass transit projects, they received awards of TANF only plus awards of WETAP combined funds. The 44 project components consist of the following activities:

- Transit Service Creation and Expansions – shared-ride taxi, van and bus;
- Mobility Manager s;
- Hotline/800 Numbers;
- Internet Trip Planner and other Website services;
- Childcare Transportation;
- Mobility Management Training;
- Marketing;
- Van/car Pools and Ridesharing;
- Centralized Transportation Dispatch/Information; and

- Employer Sponsored Transportation Projects.

### Future

The second cycle of the WETAP program is under way with applications due to the state by March 30, 2001, and contracts expected to commence on July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002.

The state has received notice of a \$4.7 million earmark in JARC funds and intends to again use TANF and TDM funds as match. With the larger earmark, the state is requiring applicants to provide a minimum local match of 20% of program costs, as no additional funds are available through TANF and TDM. The challenge to meet funding requests for auto-related projects will continue as needs in rural areas continue to grow.

# ***Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP)***



***A Coordinated Approach to Meeting  
Employment Transportation Needs in  
Wisconsin***



***Jointly Sponsored by the Wisconsin***

# ***WETAP Goals and Objectives***

## **Goals**

**Coordination of federal, state, and local employment transportation resources**

**Help low-income people:**

**Obtain employment**

**Retain employment**

**Advance in employment**

**Help employers access workers**

## ***WETAP Process***

**Advance planning notice issued mid-Oct**

**SGA issued Jan, posted on DWD web**

**Applications due end of March, including:**

**Coordination and partnerships, Needs assessment,**

**Existing resources inventory, Gap analysis,**

**Implementation plan**

**Itemized budget & min 20% local match**

**Required signoffs by DOT District office RPC/MPO  
and WDB**

**Review team scores app's**

**DOT/DWD Interagency makes final decisions**

# **Coordination and Partnerships**

**BORPSAT**

E&T community

Transportation community

Transit agencies

Private transportation companies

Medical, E&D, etc

Planners (MPO's, RPC's)

Human/Social Service

Employers, Chambers, etc

## ***Needs Assessment***

Qualitative and Quantitative

Benefiting population

***DEFINE*** (is it W-2 only? All low income?)

***COUNT*** (how many are in need of service?)

Need (How many own cars? Where do folks live? Where are jobs? Childcare?)

Employers

What are their needs? Whom do you hope to serve?

## ***Existing Resources***

Assess existing resources

**FINANCIAL** (Are there other sources you can put toward the program?)

**TRANSPORTATION** (What other programs/services exist in your area?)

Vanpools

Transit

Auto programs

Carpool / Ridesharing programs

## Gap Analysis

The gap between *NEEDS* and *EXISTING RESOURCES*

### Spatial Mismatches

Where does population live vs where jobs are

Service (coverage) gaps

### Temporal Mismatches

Transit goes there, but when? Shifts?  
Wkends?

Time gaps

## ***Implementation Plan***

Based on gap analysis, what do you need?

Look to expanding existing services first

Transit

Group transportation options (rideshare, carpool, vanpools, etc)

Auto related programs (vehicle donation, repair, etc)

Creating new systems, services

Same prioritization as above...

## ***Applications Received***

**17 applications representing 53 counties  
and 1 tribe**

**JARC and TDM cannot be used for auto  
related programs, TANF ok**

**Split into 2 categories:**

**“TANF Only” for car related projects and**

**“JARC/TDM/TANF Split” for all group  
transportation projects**

## ***TANF Only - Auto Projects***

**10 applicants requested \$1 million**

**WETAP will fund:**

12 projects/services

9 applicants

Covering 31 mostly rural counties

\$500,000 total

## ***TANF Only - Awards***

**Auto mobility managers**

**Drivers education training**

**Auto lease and loan programs**

**Vehicle repair and maintenance**

**Car purchase**



## ***JARC/TANF/TDM Split Projects***

**24 applicants requested \$7.5 million**

### **WETAP will fund:**

44 projects/services

20 applicants

Covering 45 urban, rural, and suburban counties and 1 tribe

\$5.6 million total

# **JARC/TANF/TDM Awards**

## **Information Dissemination**

Mobility managers

Websites

Internet trip planner

Centralized transportation  
information/dispatch

Hotline

1-800 Numbers

# **JARC/TANF/TDM Awards**

## **Transit Creation and Expansions (Shared Ride Taxi, Van, and Bus)**

Milwaukee and Waukesha

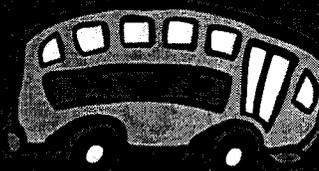
Bad River Tribe

Fox Cities (Appleton and Oshkosh)

Sawyer County

La Crosse

Marathon County



# ***JARC/TANF/TDM Awards***

## **Other innovations:**

Dane County Livable Communities

Employer sponsored transportation

Childcare transportation

Vanpools, carpools, and ridesharing

Marketing



## ***Implementation***

**Award (and denial) letters out to applicants in late May**

### **Contracting mechanism**

DOT/DWD Joint MOU

Invoice/Payment System via DWD

Reporting System via DOT

### **Technical Assistance**

Most applications needed clarification/tightening

FTA Section 5311 and 5307 certifications and

## ***Geographic***

### **Equity Funding:**

Every WDA

Every DOT Transportation

District

## ***Next Steps***

Develop contracts with grantees

Deliver Information to FTA & DOL

Implement Services

Continue Training

Continue to locate additional funding sources

## Results from First 6 Months

- 10 regional mobility managers
- 8 donated cars and 30 car loans
- 270 trainings with 350 attendees
- 365,000 website hits
- 2,500 employer contacts
- 14,000 referrals

## Results from First 6 Months, Cont.

- ★ 300,000 riders/quarter

- 22,000 hours of new service

- New service to 35,000 low income residents

- New childcare service to 6,000 families

- 1,200 childcare trips/day

## Keys to Success

DOT/DWD Interagency Task Force (joint letterhead, good relationships, etc)

Statewide set-aside of TANF

Local match

Non-categorical funding (TDM)

Ongoing technical assistance

***For more information:***

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