

Equity Through Access (ETA) Summary of Public Outreach Activities

To create an equity-focused, comprehensive update of the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP), the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission’s (DVRPC) ETA project designed a public participation and outreach plan to involve, engage, and connect the region’s stakeholders. This was done through mini-workshops with people with disabilities, low-income, older adults, or are transportation vulnerable as well as transportation providers, convening an advisory committee, and a feedback survey. The information collected from each outreach method helped build, evolve, and reprioritize the FY2020 “Gaps and Bridges” document, which is the primary CHSTP policy document for the ETA project and is used by the region to allocate 5310 funding.

The following is an annotated process report on the ETA public participation and outreach plan. It outlines the foundations of ETA’s findings and shares practices and ideas for those who would like to replicate this process.

Mini-workshops with Transportation Users and Providers

A list of stakeholder groups that represent various interests and experiences with transportation issues in human services was put together as possible hosts for ETA’s mini-workshops to collect feedback. The workshops were kept short, flexible, and easy to conduct so the outreach team could fit into existing meetings of stakeholder groups or shift the format to meet the needs of workshop attendees. Stakeholder groups made up of or representing transportation users were prioritized with the goal to have at least 50% of the mini-workshops scheduled be with people and communities who use human services transportation. The list was gathered from DVRPC’s existing network, as well as through online research of persons and organizations connected to transportation services, seniors, low-income communities, and persons with disabilities, totaling about 35 stakeholder groups.

Between August 2019 and January 2020, 10 mini-workshops were held to meet with transportation riders and providers, give background on the “Gaps & Bridges” document, discuss attendees’ experiences, and collect feedback on issues and solutions DVRPC could explore. Each mini-workshop was held at the host location and was facilitated by two to three ETA team members.

The roadshow hosts included:

- Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Bucks County Senior Advisory Council
- Bucks-Mont Collaborative
- Camden United We Ride
- Community Agency for Senior Citizens (CASC) in Coatesville, PA

- Freedom Valley Disability Center
- Inglis House
- Mercer County Coalition for Coordinated Transportation
- NJTRANSIT Senior Citizen and Disabled Residents Transportation Advisory Committee
- Senior Adult Activities Center of Montgomery County

The conversations in these mini-workshops were recorded by the ETA staff on flipboards and by roadshow attendees on worksheets. The roadshow discussion was coded and analyzed for common trends, issues, ideas, and new additions.

Steering Committee

The steering committee was made up of representatives from county transportation stakeholders, human services transportation providers, and planning agencies in the region. The committee met for a workshop to hear about the insights from the mini-workshops, share insights from their own work with their colleagues, and propose possible innovations and solutions in human services transportation for the region.

At the advisory committee workshop the ETA team presented a history of the CHSTP, the ETA project landscape for the coming year, and the trends found in the mini-workshops with people who use and run human services transportation services. Advisory committee members then did a “People of ETA” activity where attendees centered the experiences of the populations they serve, thought deeply about the particular barriers, shared these concerns with the committee, and learned about the issues faced by other vulnerable groups in the region. With this framing in mind, the attendees then divided into small discussion groups to rank the Gaps & Bridges, share which elements would most impact their community, and brainstorm DVRPC Planning Work Program ideas that could be incorporated in the coming years. At the end of the workshop, all the breakout groups shared their top Work Program ideas on sticky notes and placed them under the Bridge that the proposed idea most aligned with. All attendees reviewed these ideas in an open house forum and had 3 dot stickers each to vote their priorities.

All the information collected from the steering committee workshop, the mini-workshops interviews, and the research done by ETA team members was then compiled, assessed, and analyzed. The ideas from these sources helped improve and evolve ETA’s “Gaps and Bridges.”