



NORTHWEST COOK TRANSIT COORDINATION STUDY

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND BUSINESS PLAN TECHNICAL REPORT

FINAL REPORT – MAY 2025

Prepared on behalf of Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
by SRF Consulting Group, Inc., and T.Y. Lin



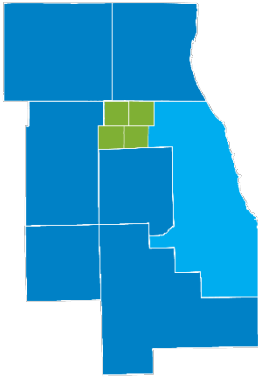
Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

SRF TYLin

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Key Challenges	4
Transit Challenges in Northwest Cook County.....	4
Opportunities for Improvement	9
Transit Coordination Strategies.....	10
Levels of Transit Coordination.....	10
Existing Coordination Activities.....	10
Universe of Alternatives.....	11
Decision-Making Framework.....	12
Peer Case Studies	14
Recommendations.....	21
Overview of Scenarios.....	21
Short-Term Scenario (1-3 Years).....	21
Long-Term Scenario (3-5 Years).....	24
Communication & Marketing Strategies.....	26
Short-Term Scenario (1-3 Years).....	26
Long-Term Scenario (3-5 Years).....	27
Resource Requirements	29
Implementation Responsibilities	31
Funding Opportunities	32
Future Considerations.....	34
Summary and Conclusion	36

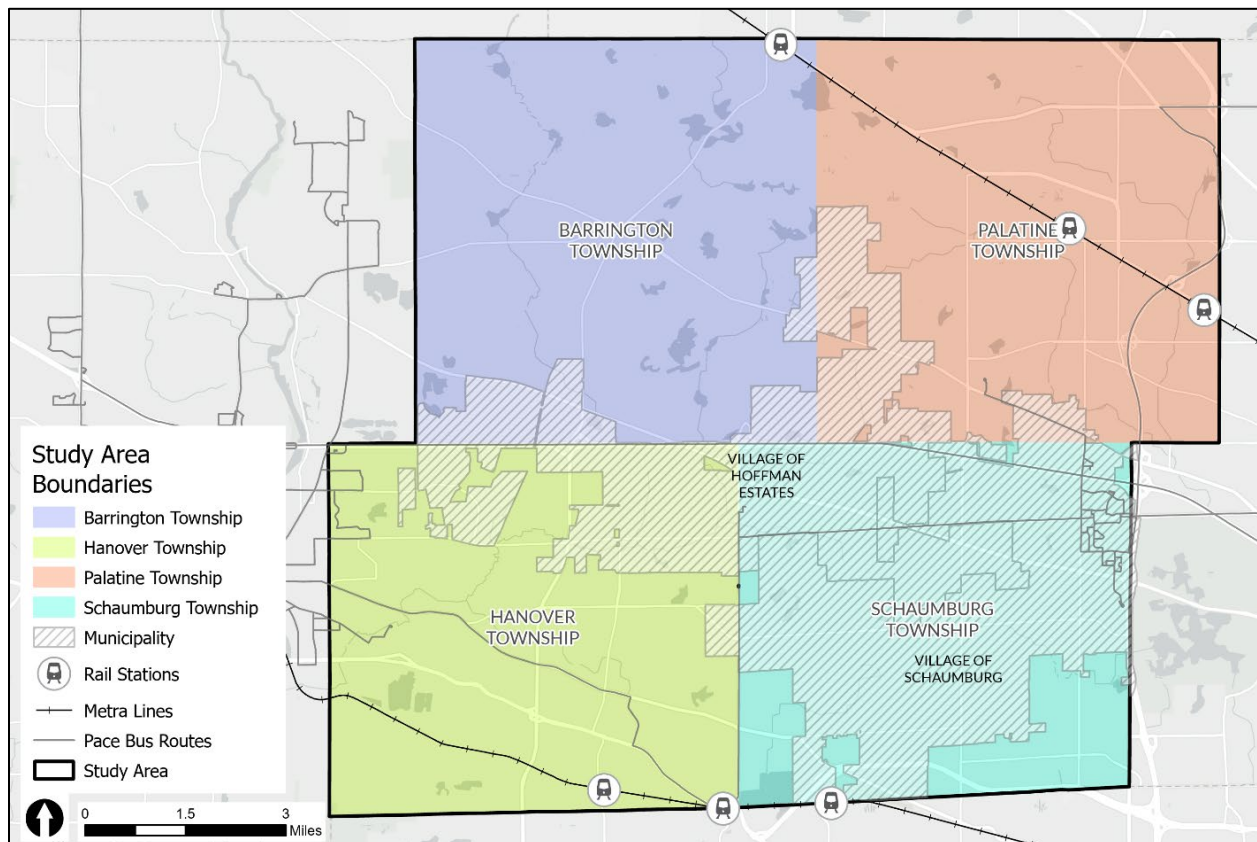
INTRODUCTION



Commissioned by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the Northwest Cook Transit Coordination Study explores opportunities to provide more efficient transit service in Northwest Cook County. The study includes detailed analysis of existing services and transit needs, as well as potential improvements. The Recommendations and Business Plan Technical Report documents the study's key recommendations and serves as a blueprint for future transit coordination and integration in Northwest Cook County.

The Northwest Cook County study area is comprised of Barrington Township, Hanover Township, Palatine Township, and Schaumburg Township. Key project partners include each township, as well as Harper College, the Village of Schaumburg, the Village of Hoffman Estates, Cook County, Pace Suburban Bus, and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). Within the study area, townships, villages, and Pace operate multiple demand-response transportation services with overlapping boundaries and unique eligibility requirements (Figure 1), creating challenges for riders, as well as opportunities for improved coordination.

Figure 1. Study Area Transit Services (Demand Response)



KEY CHALLENGES

This section documents key challenges related to existing services in Northwest Cook County as identified in the Existing Conditions and Market Analysis phases of the study, as well as through public feedback.

Transit Challenges in Northwest Cook County

Transit services in Northwest Cook County are funded and operated by a variety of government agencies, including municipalities, townships, and Pace Suburban Bus. While these services have been designed to meet the needs of local communities, they present riders with a layered network of services that can in some cases be confusing to navigate. Key challenges include service fragmentation, eligibility requirements, service days and hours, and trip reservations.

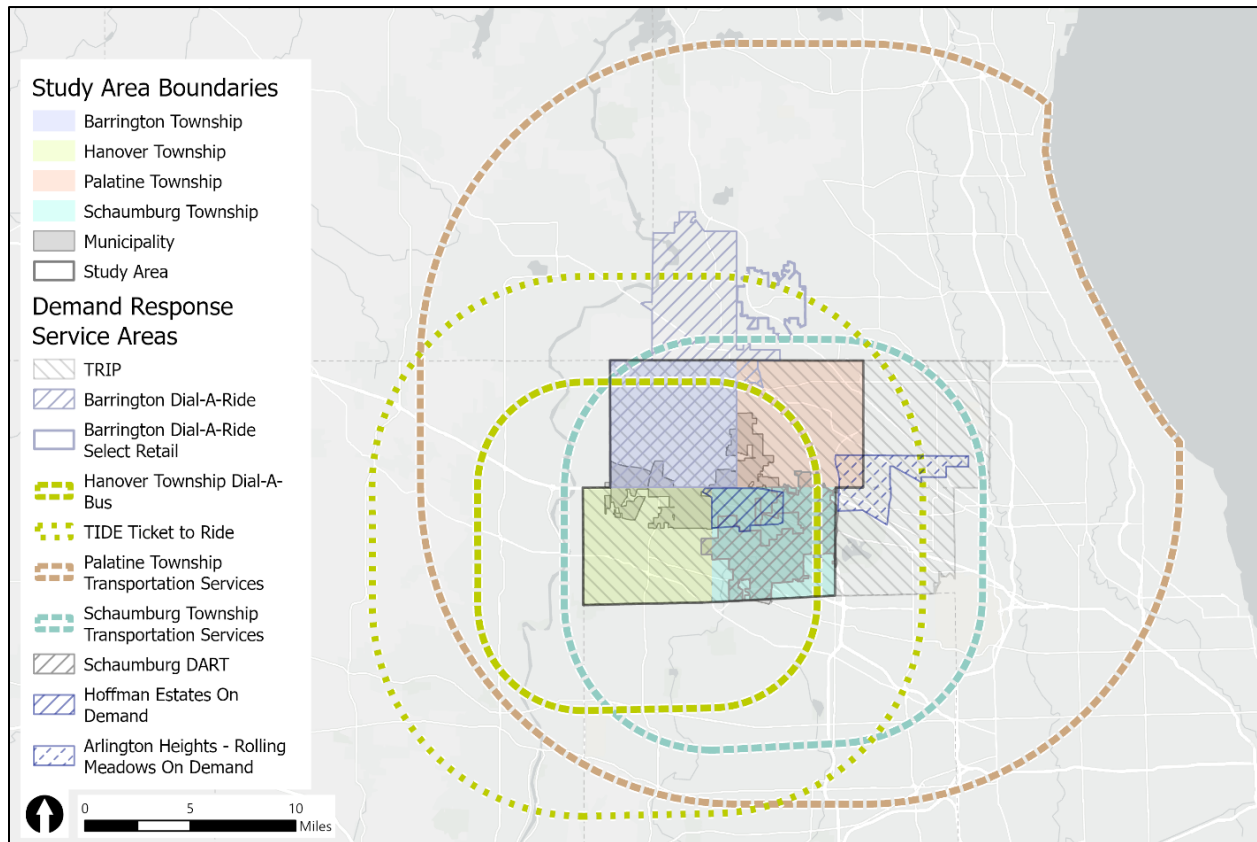
SERVICE FRAGMENTATION

Existing transit services are provided independently, with service areas that often overlap. These include the following:

- Dial-a-Ride services sponsored by individual townships or municipalities,
- The Township Riders Initiative Program (TRIP) for medical appointments,
- Pace On Demand, which operates two zones within the study area,
- Various village- and township-sponsored taxi subsidy programs, and
- Pace I-90 Express and local bus routes, and the Woodfield Trolley.

The patchwork of existing services can make it difficult for riders to know which services are available in their jurisdiction, especially when service area boundaries do not neatly align with municipal boundaries or other well-known landmarks.

Figure 2. Study Area Transit Services (Demand Response)



ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Existing transit services in Northwest Cook County are subject to varying eligibility requirements, as shown in Table 1. Most village- and township-operated services are available to seniors and customers with disabilities, but individual age requirements differ. Pace and Village of Schaumburg services are available to the general public with no restrictions. Differing eligibility requirements, especially among similar services, can create confusion among riders.

Table 1. Eligibility Requirements by Provider and Service Type

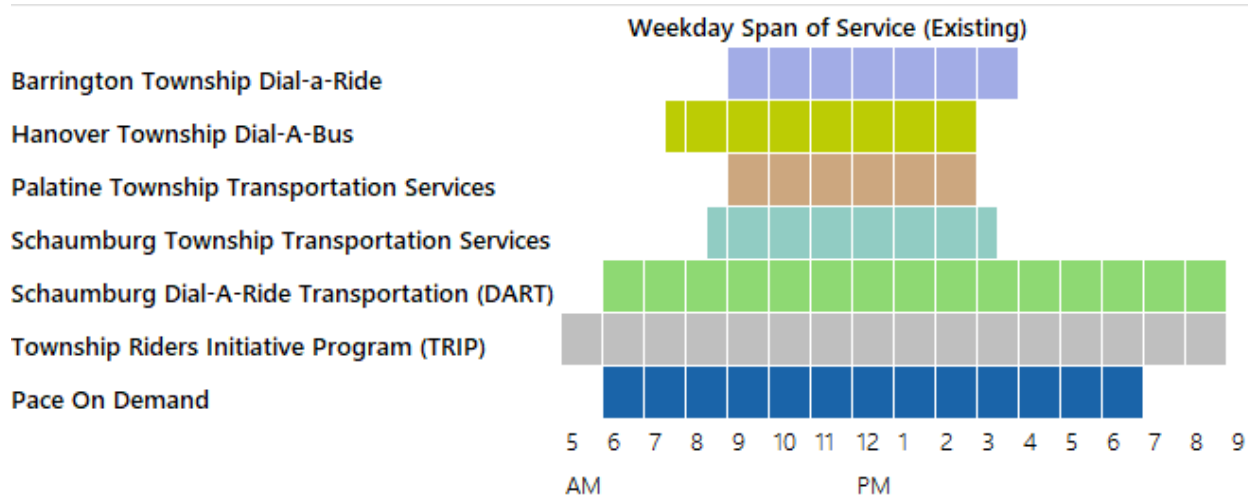
Transit Service	Eligibility Requirements
Barrington Township Dial-a-Ride	Seniors (age 60+) People with disabilities (age 18+) Must reside within Barrington Township Medical and retail trips only
Barrington Township Discount Taxi Program	Seniors (age 60+) Must reside within Barrington Township

Transit Service	Eligibility Requirements
Hanover Township Dial-A-Bus	Seniors (age 55+) People with disabilities (age 18+) Must reside within Hanover Township Medical and retail trips only
Hanover Township TIDE Ticket to Ride Taxi Voucher Program	People with disabilities (age 16+) Must reside within Hanover Township Work and job training trips only
Palatine Township Transportation Services	Seniors (age 60+) People with disabilities (age 18+) Must reside within Palatine Township Work trips only
Palatine Township Taxi Voucher Card	Seniors (age 60+) registered for Palatine Township Transportation Services People with disabilities (age 18+) registered for Palatine Township Transportation Services Must reside within Palatine Township
Schaumburg Township Transportation Services	Seniors (age 60+) People with disabilities (age 18+) Must reside within Schaumburg Township Medical and retail trips only
Village of Schaumburg Dial-A-Ride Transportation (DART)	General public (no restrictions) People with disabilities, seniors (age 65+), children (ages 7-11), and students (through Grade 12) qualify for reduced fare
Village of Schaumburg Taxi Discount Program	Seniors (age 65+) People with disabilities (age 16+) Must reside within the Village of Schaumburg
Village of Hoffman Estates Taxi Discount Program	Seniors (age 60+) People with disabilities People with low incomes Must reside in the Village of Hoffman Estates
Township Riders Initiative Program (TRIP)	Seniors (age 60+) People with disabilities (age 18+) Trips must cross township boundaries and not duplicate other services. Medical trips only
Pace On Demand	General public (no restrictions) Service is geographically limited to a zone serving parts of the Villages of Hoffman Estates and Schaumburg
Pace Express and Local Bus Routes	General public (no restrictions)

SERVICE DAYS AND HOURS

As with eligibility requirements, each provider currently sets its own service hours. Service is available on weekdays from 9 AM to 4 PM in Barrington Township, 7:30 AM to 3 PM in Hanover Township, 9 AM to 3 PM in Palatine Township, and 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM in Schaumburg Township (Figure 3). The TRIP program is available from 5 AM to 9 PM on weekdays and 7 AM to 4 PM on Saturdays. The Village of Schaumburg's DART program is available from 6 AM to 9 PM on weekdays, and Pace's Hoffman Estates and Arlington Heights-Rolling Meadows On Demand zones operate from approximately 6 AM to 6:30 PM on weekdays. When service hours vary across townships, municipalities, and service types, riders who live in different parts of Northwest Cook County encounter varying levels of access to transit.

Figure 3. Span of Service by Provider (Demand-Response Services)



Note: Taxi subsidy programs offered by Barrington, Hanover, and Palatine townships, as well as the Village of Schaumburg and Village of Hoffman Estates, may be accessed during taxi providers' normal operating hours.

TRIP RESERVATIONS

Trips on existing services are reserved separately by calling individual Dial-a-Ride reservation numbers. Even for services operated by Pace Suburban Bus, riders must call a separate reservation line depending on which township or service area they live in. Services not operated by Pace are advertised on township or municipal websites only, making them less visible to potential riders. Within the study area, only Pace On Demand offers online reservations. Reservation policies also differ across services as follows:

- In Barrington Township, riders must reserve trips at least one day in advance. Medical trips may be booked up to one week in advance.
- In Hanover Township, riders must reserve at least 24 hours prior to their trip. Service is offered on a first-come, first-served basis.
- In Palatine Township, riders must reserve at least two days in advance and may reserve up to two weeks in advance.

- In Schaumburg Township, riders must reserve a minimum of 72 hours and a maximum of 30 days in advance.
- In the Village of Schaumburg, riders must reserve at least 90 minutes prior to their trip. Trips to medical appointments and work must be reserved at least 2.5 hours in advance.
- Pace On Demand trips must be reserved at least 10 minutes prior to the trip.

FARE POLICY

Fare levels and fare payment methods vary across village- and municipal-operated services in Northwest Cook County. Fare collection is an important revenue source for service operations, and fare levels may be set based on eligibility criteria, ridership, and availability of other funding sources, among other factors. However, differences in fares and fare payment methods can be confusing for riders.

Table 2. Fare Policy by Provider and Service Type

Transit Service	Fare Level	Fare Payment Method
Barrington Township Dial-a-Ride	\$2.00 one-way	Ventra or cash
Barrington Township Discount Taxi Program	Half-off taxi fare, max discount of \$5.00 per coupon; Up to 10 coupons per month	Per the cab company's policy (Cash or credit card)
Hanover Township Dial-A-Bus	\$1.00 one-way (suggested donation)	Cash or check
Hanover Township TIDE Ticket to Ride Taxi Voucher Program	Reduced taxi fare determined based on mileage to/from work site	Voucher (pre-purchased through TIDE Ticket to Ride)
Palatine Township Transportation Services	\$2.00 one-way	Cash
Palatine Township Taxi Voucher Card	\$4.00 discount off the metered taxi fare per voucher card; Up to 10 voucher cards per month	Taxi voucher card
Schaumburg Township Transportation Services	\$1.00 one-way	Cash
Village of Schaumburg Dial-A-Ride Transportation (DART)	\$4.00 one-way / \$2.00 reduced fare \$0.25 per transfer \$38.00 for 10-ride booklet	Cash; 10-ride booklets can also be purchased with credit card online
Village of Schaumburg Taxi Discount Program	\$5.00 discount off taxi fare for medical trips \$2.70 discount off taxi fare for any other trip	Per the cab company's policy (Cash or credit card)
Village of Hoffman Estates Taxi Discount Program	\$7.00 discount off taxi fare per coupon Up to 10 coupons per month	Per the cab company's policy (Cash or credit card)
Township Riders Initiative Program (TRIP)	\$5.00 one-way per township line crossed, max \$10.00 one-way	Cash
Pace On Demand	\$2.00 one-way (Ventra) / \$1.00 reduced fare Ventra \$2.25 one-way (Cash) / \$1.10 reduced fare cash	Ventra or cash
Pace Express Bus Routes	\$4.50 one-way / \$2.25 reduced fare	Ventra or cash

Pace Local Bus Routes	\$2.00 one-way (Ventra) / \$1.00 reduced fare Ventra \$2.25 one-way (Cash) / \$1.10 reduced fare cash	Ventra or cash
-----------------------	--	----------------

Opportunities for Improvement

Transit providers in Northwest Cook County can improve the rider experience by addressing the challenges highlighted above. Key opportunities for improvement include customer information, service consistency, trip reservations, transit funding, and operations. These opportunities form the basis of the recommendations discussed later in this report.

CUSTOMER INFORMATION

Information on existing transit services in Northwest Cook County is fragmented across multiple township, municipal, and regional websites. Coordinated customer information is a common focus of transit coordination plans and could help riders more easily discover the services that are available and choose the most applicable program for their trips.

SERVICE CONSISTENCY

Existing transit services in Northwest Cook County have various eligibility requirements, hours, and service areas that offer different levels of transportation access. Transit providers could strengthen their ability to jointly market service by setting consistent standards for dial-a-ride services across Northwest Cook County, especially for programs serving older adults and people with disabilities. Services marketed toward the general public should be easily discoverable through RTA or Pace resources.

TRIP RESERVATIONS

Existing transit services could benefit from greater coordination in reservation policies, procedures, and systems. While services are currently reserved separately and primarily via telephone, opportunities exist to utilize technology to offer a streamlined reservation experience for riders via a single call-in number or smartphone application.

TRANSIT FUNDING AND OPERATIONS

Existing transit services in Northwest Cook County are funded and operated independently according to the specifications of each sponsor agency, including townships, municipalities, and Pace. Transit providers and local governments can and should explore ways to gain efficiencies through coordinated or consolidated services, a strategy recommended in CMAP's ON TO 2050 Regional Plan.

TRANSIT COORDINATION STRATEGIES

This section outlines the types of transit coordination activities explored as part of the Northwest Cook Transit Coordination Study, as well as the process undertaken to develop key recommendations.

Levels of Transit Coordination

Figure 4 outlines the purpose of the Northwest Cook Transit Coordination Study, as well as the levels of transit coordination activities that transit agencies can undertake to better address these customer needs. Transit coordination activities can be broadly organized into four levels of intensity: **Networking, Cooperation, Coordination, and Consolidation.**

Networking is the least formal type of coordination, consisting of simple information-sharing across providers. Cooperation involves informal or formal operational assistance, including providing trips across jurisdictional boundaries. Formal coordination involves agreements to share resources or jointly deliver elements of transit service. The most intensive type of coordination, consolidation, involves merging transit functions to gain operational efficiencies.

Figure 4. Study Purpose / Levels of Transit Coordination.

Study Purpose	Levels of Transit Coordination
• Summarize existing services and travel patterns in Northwest Cook County. • Analyze transportation needs in Northwest Cook County, and identify service gaps. • Develop strategies for improved coordination and service provision. • Establish priorities for implementation based on need and available resources.	• Networking - Sharing information and referring customers across providers. • Cooperation - Operational assistance with passenger trips across jurisdictional boundaries. • Coordination - Formal agreements for sharing resources or jointly operating transit services. • Consolidation - Merging services, funding, or governance to improve efficiency.

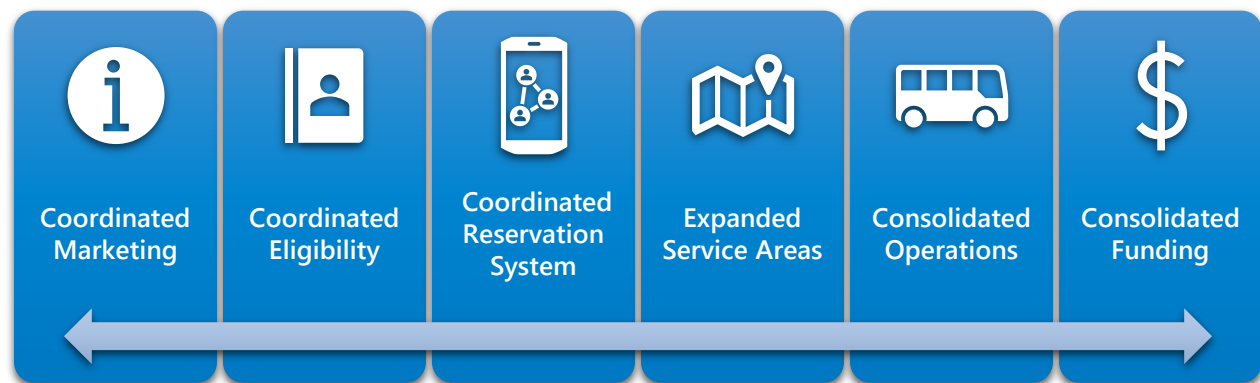
Existing Coordination Activities

Before establishing future recommendations, agencies should always consider coordination activities or practices that are already underway and assess how they meet customer needs. In the Northwest Cook County study area, project partners are already engaged in networking, including by providing information jointly and by frequently referring customers across jurisdictions. In addition, the four townships in the study area have cooperated since the early 2000s to sponsor the Township Rider Initiative Program (TRIP), which provides medical trips within Barrington, Elk Grove, Hanover, Palatine, Schaumburg, and Wheeling townships, as well as to select V.A. medical facilities and Cook County's John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital in Chicago. Since the intent of this study is to build on existing activities, the recommendations considered in the following section will focus on more intensive coordination approaches.

Universe of Alternatives

The Northwest Cook Transit Coordination Study considers seven main approaches for coordination and consolidation (Figure 5). The simplest alternatives involve coordinating marketing materials and eligibility requirements while maintaining separate transit services. Further alternatives explore consolidation of various transit functions, including trip reservations (booking), service areas, transit operations, and funding. Finally, the most intensive coordination alternative would explore the creation of an integrated, multi-county demand-response system, which some metropolitan areas use to deliver seamless mobility across jurisdictional boundaries.

Figure 5. Universe of Alternatives Considered



The following section outlines each potential alternative in greater detail.

1. Coordinated Marketing

- Develop a single website with information on all providers
- Maintain and update materials regularly via designated staff at a lead township or agency
- Coordinate with Pace Community Relations and mobility management staff for rider outreach and education

2. Coordinated Eligibility

- Establish consistent eligibility requirements for age, disability, and trip purpose across township-operated services
- Clarify transfer points between dial-a-ride systems

3. Coordinated Reservation System

- Establish a single call center (either through Pace or a joint township operation)
- Utilize a single dispatch software platform
- Provide a customer-facing trip reservation management app (based on dispatch platform)

4. Expanded Service Areas

- Allow trips from each township to travel throughout Northwest Cook County
- Individual trips could be funded based on the trip origin, destination, operator, or where the rider resides
- Would not require consolidated operations, but may benefit from consolidated booking

5. Consolidated Operations

- Utilize a single transit service provider for a consolidated service area
- Operator could be contracted by a lead township or Pace
- Would not necessarily require consolidated funding; participating townships or municipalities could share in costs based on ridership

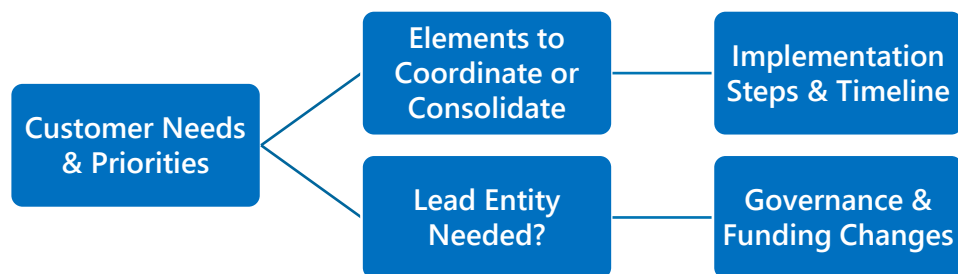
6. Consolidated Funding

- Single funding partner for a fully consolidated service, as in Lake and McHenry counties
- Lead agency would provide full local share of operations and maintenance costs
- Pace subsidy would be redirected from individual townships to the funding partner

Decision-Making Framework

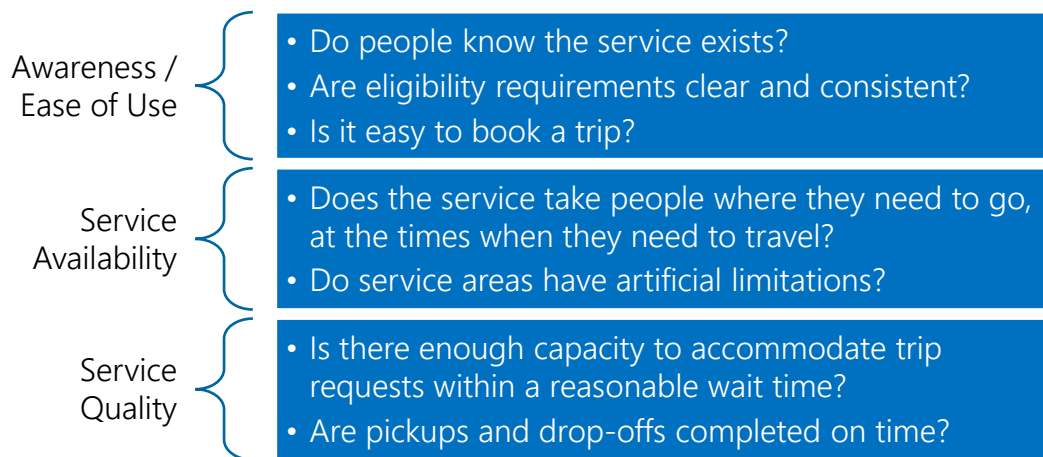
In evaluating recommendations and future coordination strategies, CMAP and project partners examined the customer experience, identified needs, and assessed the organizational structures required to implement improvements. These factors informed the development of short- and long-term scenarios for transit investment (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Decision-Making Framework



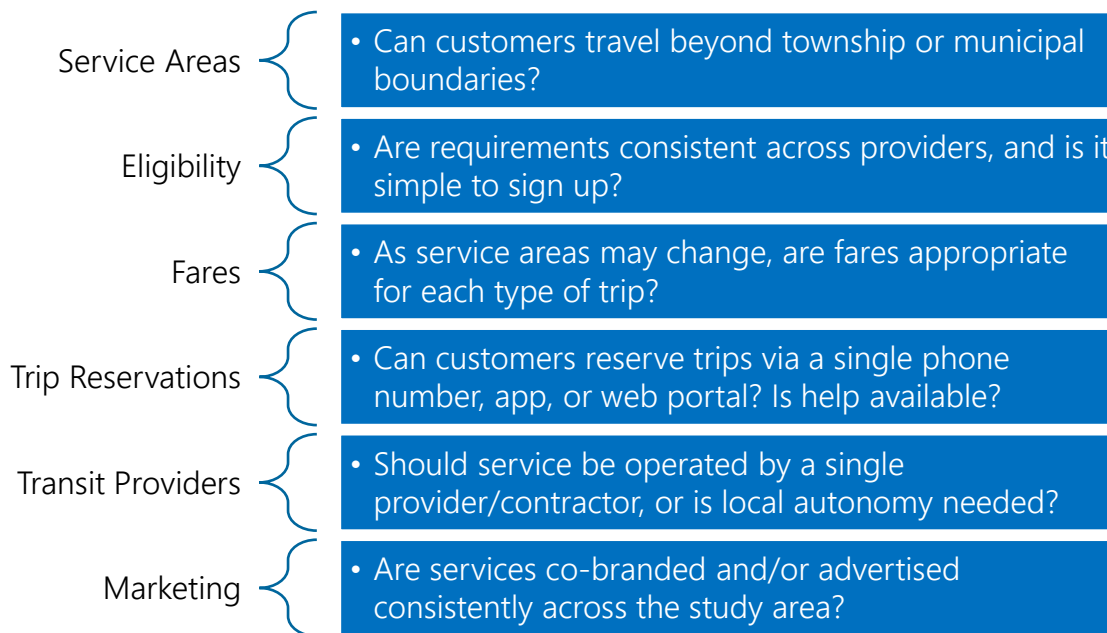
Public outreach efforts, including a rider and community survey, helped reveal elements of the customer experience most in need of improvement. These include three main topics: Awareness and ease of use, service availability, and service quality. Key considerations related to each element of the customer experience are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Key Considerations - Customer Experience



When identifying elements of each service to consider for coordination or consolidation, the project team engaged existing transit providers for their perspectives on service characteristics. Key considerations related to elements of transit operations are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Key Considerations - Transit Operations



In evaluating the organizational impacts of service coordination or consolidation, the project team considered first whether each recommendation would require a lead agency. Depending on the approach, some elements of coordination could be led by townships, while others might require increased involvement by Cook County, Pace, or RTA. The same is true for funding: certain recommendations could be

implemented independently by each township or municipal sponsor, but others might more easily take place with a pooled funding approach or via new, sustained investment by regional partners. The type of governance and funding needed may determine whether some recommendations are feasible in the short-term or long-term scenarios. Key considerations related to governance and funding are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Key Considerations - Governance and Funding



Peer Case Studies

To inform the development of future scenarios, CMAP and the project team explored efforts to coordinate transit services in peer communities across the state and country. The project team conducted three in-depth case studies into program models that are best suited to address Northwest Cook County's transit coordination needs. Those case studies include Kane County and Lake County in the Chicago region, as well as in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Findings from these case studies, as well as a literature review of additional peer programs, are described in the following sections.

KANE COUNTY, ILLINOIS – RIDE IN KANE

The Ride in Kane case study research included reviews of public documents about the program, analysis of a 2023 rider survey, and interviews with the program’s managers from Kane County and staff from a Township that sponsors the program.

The Ride in Kane program manages subsidized demand-response transit services throughout much of Kane County, on behalf of municipal and non-profit “sponsors;” Pace operates the services. The program is funded through federal 5310 funds, trip fares, a Pace subsidy, and local match provided by program sponsors. The program has been in place since the mid-2000s.

The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Eligible riders can travel anywhere within the service area, which covers the eastern two-thirds of Kane County and is determined by sponsor entities. Certain eligible residents can also use the service for work trips throughout the county. Trip fares are \$5 one-way for the first ten miles, and then \$1.50 per mile thereafter.

Eligibility for service depends on a variety of factors, including where residents live, demographics of residents, and their trip purpose. This is because sponsor entities contribute varying funding levels to the program, depending on their interest and ability in providing the service to residents. Sponsors determine which trips and people will be eligible based on their budget (sponsors with smaller budgets result in more eligibility restrictions). Sponsor entities also register riders after validating their eligibility. Once they are registered, riders must also sign up with Pace to book trips.

All Ride in Kane sponsors make the service available to residents of their jurisdictions who have disabilities and seniors ages 65 and over. Some sponsors additionally sponsor rides for people with low incomes and people who are temporarily disabled.

As of 2024, there were twenty sponsor entities, including townships, non-profit organizations, and the county. In addition to providing funding and registering riders, local sponsors may contribute to marketing the program and assisting customers. Kane County manages the administrative requirements of the program. These include drafting intergovernmental agreements with sponsors and Pace, billing tasks, applying for grants, providing customer service, marketing the program, and recruiting new sponsors. Kane County Department of Transportation employs a full-time staff person to manage the program. Kane County took over administration of the program from the Association for Individual Development, a non-profit organization that originated the program in 2006, because the administrative burden of the program was too high for AID to manage. The move to County ownership also had political support; the Kane County Chair deemed that supporting demand-response transit program aligned with county priorities.

Pace operates the call center through which customers book rides and provides the services. Pace operates the service with around 98% on-time performance, above their 95% benchmark. However, according to the rider survey and a township sponsor, riders have been experiencing lower trip reliability in recent years. This discrepancy may be explained in part by Pace’s recent change in the period it defines as on-time in the

suburbs, from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.¹ Many riders are unsatisfied with the required pre-ride booking time and the 60-minute pick-up window. Finally, some riders have noted that call center staff are not always familiar with specific eligibility criteria of the program or with local destinations.

The sponsorship model has some benefits and drawbacks for the local township sponsors. On the one hand, the collective model creates a larger service area and longer hours of operation than any one township could support through a municipal program. Most riders are generally satisfied with Ride in Kane's service area and trip payment options, which are Ventra, TripCheck, and cash.

On the other hand, township sponsor staff spend substantial time facilitating the program, including fielding customer complaints and arranging eligible rides for passengers into other counties. Because sponsors pay per passenger without economies of scale, increasing program popularity and ridership within a township also increases the funding that townships must pay. In recent years, at least one township had to restrict eligibility for riders to balance their budget for the program. Taking away a public service from constituents who previously had access can be politically difficult; thus, the requirement for each township to determine their own eligibility can be a burden for townships. Additionally, inconsistent eligibility rules are confusing for customers and could be a barrier to using the service.

Sources: [Ride in Kane 2023 Rider Survey results](#), [Ride in Kane program page \(Pace\)](#), [Ride in Kane program expansion announcement \(RTA\)](#), [Ride in Kane 5310 application](#), [Ride in Kane program PowerPoint](#), [Ride in Kane Sponsors](#), [Ride in Kane program PowerPoint](#)

LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS – RIDE LAKE COUNTY

The Ride Lake County case study was informed by a review of public documents on the program and an interview with the program's managers from Lake County.

Lake County Department of Transportation manages, and Pace operates, the Ride Lake County program, which is demand-response transit across Lake County. The program is funded by 5310 federal funds with a local match from Lake County, a Pace subsidy, and fares.

Transit services are available from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. except holidays for any trip type, for people with disabilities and seniors (ages 60 and older) residing in Lake County. The service area is all of Lake County, plus the extensions of Lake County municipalities into other counties in Illinois. Fares are determined by the trip length, ranging from \$2 to \$6 one-way. Eligible residents are certified and registered through the RTA. Registered riders can book rides through Pace's call center. The county-wide service launched in May 2022, consolidating dozens of individual services operated by municipalities and non-profits, with varied hours of operation and fare levels, smaller service areas, and a range of eligibility requirements.

The process to consolidate the demand-response services originated over a decade previously, when a steering committee formed to advocate for a county-wide service. The steering committee conducted an

¹ https://cmap.illinois.gov/wp-content/uploads/PART_recommendations-b11-demand-responsive-transit-services.pdf

extensive market study to understand how demand-response services could be improved in the county. The study recommended consolidating service as one potential solution. In 2018, county elected officials prioritized improvements to transit service and set out to implement a county-wide service. Lake County raised some funding through a local gas tax and additionally, it asked jurisdictions to redirect their Pace subsidies to the county.

These funding streams provided the necessary resources for Lake County DOT to manage Ride Lake County; employees are responsible for program administration, applying for grants, marketing, and interfacing with Pace, though program management does not require any employee's full time.

Many jurisdictions had been using Pace subsidies to support their own demand-response services; some retired their services with the introduction of Ride Lake County while some, like Highland Park, continued to fund and support municipal transit through other means.

Pace operates the call center through which customers book rides and provides the services. Pace operates the service with around 99% on-time performance. The program initially experienced significant reliability issues because of understaffing of Pace operators, a symptom of the lingering Covid-19 pandemic. Reliability has improved over time as Pace's operator shortfall has receded.

On the other hand, factors related to Covid-19 caused the cost per trip to double compared to previous programs. The program's government sponsors have largely absorbed the cost rather than passing it on to riders. Consolidation to a larger service area did not impact the cost per ride.

The consolidated demand-response service is simpler to navigate for eligible riders than the fragmented system that preceded it; no matter where they live or where they are going in Lake County, they can travel with Ride Lake County and the process to book and pay for rides will be the same.

While the program has generally been viewed positively by constituents, it has a few drawbacks. Some of the program's new policies allow for greater operational efficiencies but are difficult for riders. For example, residents with disabilities must prove their eligibility for Ride Lake County through the RTA's ADA assessment. This requires people to travel to RTA's offices in the Chicago Loop for an in-person interview and assessment, which can be a barrier for some people. Some Pace riding policies are different than previous services, causing confusion among riders. Connections outside the service area cannot be accommodated; better connections into Cook and McHenry Counties in particular are desired.

Sources: [Ride Lake County website](#), [Paratransit Market Study for the Lake County Region](#), [Pace, Lake County launch county-wide Dial-a-ride service](#), [Ride Lake County Paratransit Service](#), [Celebrating Two Years of Countywide Service](#) Celebrating Two Years of Countywide Service

BERKSHIRE COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS - MUNICIPAL SERVICES COORDINATION PILOT

Public documents were reviewed to learn more about the Berkshire County transportation coordination program. An information request was sent to a program sponsor but it was not answered. Because additional data and interview were not available, there is limited information available about this case study.

As part of a six-month pilot, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) in Massachusetts worked with medical transport providers for 32 municipalities in Berkshire County to coordinate elements of the demand-response riding experience. The BRPC reimbursed providers that fulfilled rides that crossed over their service boundaries, simplifying rides for customers from two-seat to one-seat rides. Additionally, one provider took over booking and tracking rides on behalf of all providers, so that customers could call one phone number to request rides with any of the providers. Behind the scenes, BRPC and service providers examined contracts to reconcile liability for cross-jurisdictional trips.

The six-month pilot had grant support from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center. After the pilot ended in 2017, coordination efforts continued; however, at the time of writing, it is unclear if any elements of the program are still in place.

This case study proves the possibility of coordinating elements of the customer experience – like booking and expanding one-seat rides – while keeping providers’ operational processes separate. This lighter-touch effort was designed and implemented on an accelerated schedule, quickly delivering benefits to riders. (Exact timing is not known, but presumably the pilot’s design took similar or less time than the pilot itself, which was six months.) Additionally, the pilot led to stronger cross-jurisdictional relationships, a major side benefit.

Similar to other models explored, this program required a heavy lift from some agencies, including the planning commission, which led the coordination efforts, and Elder Services, the service provider that took on booking and ride tracking on behalf of all other providers.

A potential challenge with this model is the need to contractually define which parties are responsible for passengers that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Formalizing such agreements may require writing or amending contracts or creating MOUs. Additionally, because this pilot was never made into a formal program, it is unknown how successful or sustainable the model was. Compared to the Northwest Cook Study Area, Berkshire County is more rural and less densely populated, leading to a low (and manageable) volume of rides fulfilled through the program.

Sources: [Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative feature on Berkshire Transportation Program](#), [Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative Pilot Announcement](#), [Removing Barriers to Transportation & Expanding Senior Mobility](#), [NADTC Rural Transportation Best Practices](#), [NADTC Rural Transportation Best Practices](#)

OTHER PEERS

The project team researched the transit service coordination efforts of several other peers at a high level:

- McHenry County Dial-a-Ride (MCRide) is a dial-a-ride service open to all in McHenry County, Illinois. Trips can be requested anywhere in the county or to specific destinations outside the county. Because this program is open to everyone, it is a substantially larger operation than any existing service in Northwest Cook County.
- Metro Council Transit Link is a coordinated demand-response transit program in the Twin Cities region, with service areas made of one or two full counties. The service area spans the entire Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN metro area, much larger than Northwest Cook County.
- DART (Dallas) Go-Link On-demand service enables point-to-point travel for customers anywhere within a designated zone. There are more than 30 zones throughout the Dallas metro region. Rides can be requested via an app, and Uber or DART-operated vehicles may fulfil rides. This program is similar to Pace's On Demand program.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PEERS

Key lessons learned from the peer assessment include the following:

- Eligibility requirements have benefits and drawbacks for riders. Requirements restrict some people from using the service. In the Ride in Kane sponsorship model, growing ridership may force local sponsors to restrict eligibility, a difficult and unpopular decision to make. At the same time, restricting the pool of eligible riders frees up more resources for each rider. Therefore, requirements may allow for more expansive service for eligible riders. Ride in Kane is able to offer 24/7 service in part because eligibility requirements keep the program size manageable.
- Forming a region-wide service does not preclude more specialized municipal or non-profit services from operating. Some townships in Lake County continue to operate demand-response services in addition to Ride Lake County.
- Increasing the service area does not substantially increase the length, cost, or reliability of trips. The cost per ride in Ride Lake County and Ride in Kane County is about \$40 per trip. The cost to sponsors in Kane County is about \$15 per trip. On the other hand, demand response programs have become more expensive to operate since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Customers appreciate the expanded service area that gives them greater liberty to travel. Customer perceptions of both Ride in Kane County and Ride Lake County have been positive. Customer responses to the Berkshire County pilot program were also positive.
- Some users of the Kane County program find the sponsor-based eligibility to be confusing. Kane County is exploring further consolidating so that eligibility requirements are unified across the county.
- The sponsor model allows for more localized policy, in which municipalities can determine how much they want to invest in demand-response services. On the other hand, the sponsorship model

leaves sponsors with less control over the program than if they managed a municipal program, and without the benefit of consistency that customers of consolidated programs receive.

- There is a substantial administrative burden associated with the sponsor model. Kane County employs a full-time person to manage IGAs, invoices, and relationships associated with engaging sponsors in its Ride in Kane program. Staff at townships that sponsor Ride in Kane also spend substantial time facilitating the program. Management of Ride Lake County is not a full-time job for Lake County staff, because the program does not require an extensive list of formal agreements with other government entities.
- There have been few impacts to operations from the expansion. Pace's benchmark for on-time performance is 95%. It delivers 98% of trips on-time for Ride in Kane and 99% of trips on-time for Ride Lake County. For Ride in Kane, the pickup window is a 60-minute buffer, and this wait time is challenging for some riders; additionally, some riders are dissatisfied with the reliability of their rides. Reliability has become less of an issue for customers of the Ride Lake County program since its first year in 2022.
- The coordination model used in Berkshire County allowed for quick improvements to the customer experience. While customers experienced a more streamlined booking and riding process, each municipality's operational procedures were kept separate, simplifying program rollout. The program relied on grant funding and was not able to continue when funding ran out.
- In each of these case studies, entities have stepped in to lead coordination efforts across different municipalities, taking on new responsibilities and workload to ensure the program's success. These lead entities have included county-level government agencies and local transit providers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section outlines the recommendations included in the short- and long-term scenarios, including actions related to service, technology, and policy. Each scenario is based on the types of transit coordination and key decision points mentioned in previous sections and has been developed in consultation with Northwest Cook County transit operating partners.

Overview of Scenarios

Key thematic recommendations of the short- and long-term scenarios are shown below in Figure 10. The short-term scenario represents actions that could be taken with minimal investment over the next 1-3 years. The long-term scenario represents actions that may require additional investment or operational changes but could be implemented within 3-5 years.

Figure 10. Recommended Scenarios

Short Term (1-3 Years)	Long Term (3-5 Years)
• Coordinated Marketing • Coordinated Eligibility	• Coordinated Reservation System • Expanded Service Areas • Performance Monitoring

Short-Term Scenario (1-3 Years)

In the short-term scenario, independent transit providers would increase coordination while focusing on efforts that could be completed within a one- to two-year time horizon. From the universe of alternatives, it is recommended that the short-term scenario includes two main coordination approaches: Coordinated Marketing and Coordinated Eligibility. These improvements could be implemented to improve public awareness and customer service without requiring major changes to technology, funding, or governance.

1. COORDINATED MARKETING

Coordinated marketing efforts are intended to raise awareness of the services available in the study area and make it easier for riders to find the transit service that best meets their needs. Recommendations for coordinated marketing include the following:

1A. Formalize an ongoing working group to guide implementation of the plan.

This recommendation addresses the need for agencies to communicate regularly as they begin to implement transit coordination improvements. An ongoing working group could be composed of the Northwest Cook Transit Study's key partners – the four townships, Pace, Harper College, Cook County, the Village of Schaumburg, and the Village of Hoffman Estates – or a subset of these partners most focused on transit operations. In the short term, it is recommended that the working group meet at least quarterly.

1B. Coordinate existing public information to ensure consistency and to better cross-promote services.

Existing township and municipal websites provide information primarily on their own services, with incomplete or in some cases outdated information on services provided by other townships, municipalities, or Pace. Pace's website includes service descriptions and telephone numbers for services operated by Pace itself, but it does not provide information on non-Pace services.

At minimum, each partner should provide links to up-to-date information on all township- and village-operated services in Northwest Cook County. For services sponsored by multiple partners, like TRIP, a single partner (a township or Pace) should maintain a webpage with current service information, rather than having duplicative pages at each township.

In addition to coordinating online information, each transit provider should ensure that its customer service agents and dispatchers are trained to help customers navigate the multiple services available in Northwest Cook County so they can refer riders when needed.

1C. Establish a shared website for all Northwest Cook County transit services.

Given the complexity of maintaining separate websites and webpages for each service, there could be an advantage to developing a single, dedicated website for all transit services in Northwest Cook County. If a single partner (such as a municipality, township, or Pace) were willing to arrange the design and hosting of a new website, riders would be able to see all available transit services in one place. Each partner could then refer riders and community members to the shared website when promoting transit in Northwest Cook County.

At minimum, a website should include a description of each transit service, a map of its service area, a list of eligibility requirements, and information on how to book a trip (including phone numbers and links to any relevant web reservation portals). A more robust website could feature an interactive map where customers would be able to see the boundaries of all services together or even enter an address to view all services available at a specific location. These features could help riders discover the transit services that best meet their needs.

By providing convenient access to transit information, providers can improve ease of use for existing customers and make it easier for new potential riders to access services. In the long term, better public information can be expected to increase ridership on transit in Northwest Cook County.

2. COORDINATED ELIGIBILITY

Coordinated eligibility requirements across similar services could help ensure that riders in each township or municipality have the same access to transit regardless of where they live in Northwest Cook County. Recommendations for coordinated eligibility include the following:

2A. Standardize age requirements for township-sponsored services.

Currently, each township is responsible for setting the minimum age thresholds for the transit services they operate or sponsor. Dial-a-Ride service in Hanover and Schaumburg townships is available to seniors aged 55 or over, while service in Barrington and Palatine townships is available to seniors aged 60 or over. The TRIP program, which is sponsored by six townships in total, also serves seniors aged 60 or over. Differences in eligibility requirements can lead to confusion for riders, who may face different age limitations even within a single municipality that happens to cross township boundaries.

Within the next two years, townships should work to standardize the age thresholds for each service available in Northwest Cook County. This could be accomplished by raising the age of eligibility in Hanover and Schaumburg townships, or by lowering the age of eligibility in Barrington and Palatine townships and for the TRIP program.

If age thresholds are raised, townships could consider granting eligibility to all current riders between the ages of 55 and 60 to avoid negatively impacting those who rely on the service today. If age thresholds are lowered, project partners could work together to anticipate fiscal impacts by examining the percentage of trips in Hanover and Schaumburg townships that are made by customers between age 55 and age 60.

2B. Standardize hours of service for township-sponsored services.

As with age requirements, each township currently sets its own service hours. Service is available on weekdays from 9 AM to 4 PM in Barrington Township, 7:30 AM to 3 PM in Hanover Township, 9 AM to 3 PM in Palatine Township, and 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM in Schaumburg Township. The TRIP program is available from 5 AM to 9 PM on weekdays and 7 AM to 4 PM on Saturdays.

Since varying operating hours can make it difficult for passengers to navigate services, it is recommended that the four townships work together to identify a service window that could be acceptable to each township. Implementation of standardized hours of service may increase operating costs for some townships while reducing them for others, so the goal should be to balance the fiscal impacts across the four townships with the needs of their riders. At minimum, the proposed span of service should encompass the hours currently operated by all four townships, or 9 AM to 3 PM.

Given the TRIP program's specific focus on medical trips, it is recommended that this service maintain its current schedule as long as it remains acceptable to the six sponsoring townships and Pace.

2C. Standardize fare policy for township-sponsored services.

In addition to hours of service, each township currently sets its own fares for Dial-a-Ride programs. Fares are \$2.00 per one-way trip in Barrington and Palatine townships; \$1.00 per one-way trip in Schaumburg Township, and a suggested donation of \$1.00 per one-way trip in Hanover Township.

In conjunction with any change to eligibility requirements, it is recommended that the four townships work together to set a consistent fare structure. This would require moving from a suggested donation to a mandatory fare in Hanover Township, as well as establishing a single one-way price for all

townships. If desired, the townships could work to offset the burden of any fare increases by offering discounted multi-ride passes, similar to Schaumburg Township's 18-ride pass.

Long-Term Scenario (3-5 Years)

In the long-term scenario, independent transit providers would deepen their collaboration by coordinating key functions within the next three to five years. From the universe of alternatives, it is recommended that the long-term scenario include two main coordination approaches: a **Coordinated Reservation System** and **Expanded Service Areas**. These improvements could be implemented without requiring major changes to funding or governance, but they could also lay the groundwork for further consolidation in the long term.

3. COORDINATED RESERVATION SYSTEM

Coordinated reservation systems allow riders to reserve trips across a variety of services using a single phone number, website, or smartphone application. Currently, riders book trips on the various services in Northwest Cook County via a patchwork of different phone numbers and web portals, making it difficult for riders to find and make trips on the services that best meet their needs. Implementing a coordinated reservation system could improve the customer experience for demand-response transit riders without requiring consolidation of transit operations or service areas.

3A. Seek grant funding to hire a mobility manager.

When beginning more intensive coordination activities, partners should explore grant funding to hire a mobility manager to guide the process. Mobility management is an eligible task for federal transit grants, meaning sponsors would only fund a portion of the position's salary. The mobility manager could aid in communication (convening the working group), operations (managing contracts for service and technology), and marketing (with an emphasis on web material and rider education).

3B. Establish a single call center for locally sponsored services.

Option 1: Township- or Municipally Operated.

For township- or municipally sponsored dial-a-ride services, two options exist for establishing a single reservation system. The first involves townships and municipalities designating a lead agency to handle trip reservations and dispatch for all four township-operated services, as well as the Village of Schaumburg's DART service. This lead agency (likely a township) would then hire reservation agents, if they are not already present, and would procure transit dispatch software for use by all four townships.

A township- or municipally operated call center would likely require additional full-time staff resources, as well as a federally compliant procurement process and ongoing contract for reservation software. This method would likely be more expensive for the township or municipal operators than the current phone-based reservation approach and would require additional investment by the project partners.

Option 2: Pace-Operated.

The second option would be for all participating townships to transition to using Pace's regional call center, which has the technology and staff capabilities to manage reservations for independent services.

For locally sponsored services currently operated by Pace (including in Barrington and Hanover townships and the Village of Schaumburg), reservations could transition to a single phone number with no additional changes.

For locally sponsored services that operate independently, each township or municipality would need to contract with Pace for the costs associated with handling reservations. By doing so, they would save on administrative expenses associated with current in-house functions or those provided by existing contractors. Given the economies of scale that Pace has been able to achieve with the implementation of the regional call center (handling one of the nation's largest paratransit services), utilizing Pace's existing services is likely the lowest-cost option.

Pace is also moving toward the implementation of trip reservations via web-based and smartphone-based tools. Utilizing Pace's regional call center would allow locally sponsored dial-a-ride services to share in technology improvements as they are made available.

4. EXPANDED SERVICE AREA

An expanded service area would allow riders to travel throughout participating Northwest Cook County communities without transferring between services. Implementation of a consolidated service area can build on consolidated booking by allowing trips to be reserved across township or municipal boundaries.

4. Establish a single, expanded service area for township-sponsored dial-a-ride services.

In the long term, townships should work to standardize and consolidate their service areas to allow riders of each service to travel throughout Barrington, Hanover, Palatine, and Schaumburg townships. This can be completed through policy changes without necessarily consolidating operations. It is suggested that each township-sponsored service be responsible for carrying riders whose trips (1) occur fully within the township, or (2) originate within the township but travel elsewhere in Northwest Cook County. Assignment of trips could be completed automatically by the software used for the single call center recommended in 3B.

A consolidated service area would be similar to the current approach in Kane County in that individual sponsoring agencies would separately fund trips from their own jurisdictions, but without Kane County's consolidation of transit operations. This approach could be seen as a step that allows individual townships to retain operational control while offering service that is broader and more useful to riders.

5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

After implementing a shared reservation system and/or establishing an expanded service area, partners should work together to monitor efficiency, effectiveness, and service quality over time.

5. Establish key performance indicators and monitor over time.

The mobility manager and working group should establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to track data from the reservation system, as well as customer satisfaction. Potential KPIs could include on-time

performance, cost and subsidy per trip, and passengers per revenue hour. If possible, the software solution procured should allow riders to rate their trips to provide real-time feedback to dispatchers and service operators. Once identified, KPIs should be reported at least quarterly to the working group and service sponsors. Performance should be assessed relative to KPI targets to identify when service changes might be needed to align with sponsor expectations and available funding.

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING STRATEGIES

Stakeholders should consider implementing the following communication and marketing strategies during each phase of the project to improve aid customers in navigating services and understanding program specifics, benefits, and improvements. The following list describes communication and marketing strategies, along with the stakeholder party that should be responsible, according to the phase of implementation.

Short-Term Scenario (1-3 Years)

PUBLIC WEBSITE

- Develop a public website as a “one-stop shop” for information on dial-a-ride transit services in the region. The website should list all services operating in the region and their eligibility criteria, service characteristics, and customer service contact information. (Responsibility of the working group)

Additional considerations:

- Consider including countywide services operating in bordering counties.
- Explore repurposing the project website maintained by CMAP.
- Include website translation into other languages, including Spanish and Polish.
- Consider including an interactive search function that allows customers to search for the services for which they are eligible based on their place of residence, age, and ability.

PRINTED MATERIALS

- Design a pamphlet or brochure that lists all services operating in the region and their characteristics (see above). Translate materials into other languages, including Spanish and Polish, to ensure that all residents can understand the information. Distribute pamphlets in public places where potential customers are likely to frequent, such as senior centers, libraries, grocery stores, and health care facilities. (Responsibility of the working group)

TRAINING

- Provide reference material to customer service agents that explains all transit services in Northwest Cook County and neighboring areas. (Responsibility of the working group)
- Update customer service agent protocol and training to include helping customers to navigate all regional transit services. This can include answering the question “which services am I eligible for?” or transferring customers to the booking line for the service that best meets their eligibility and trip needs. (Responsibility of Pace/local service partners)

Long-Term Scenario (3-5 Years)

PUBLIC OUTREACH

- Conduct a public outreach campaign to introduce how the customer experience will change as a result of upcoming service coordination and to allow constituents to comment, share concerns with, or ask questions of officials about the change. The campaign can double as an effort to market services to constituents who are not aware of them or who are not using them. (Responsibility of local service partners, Pace, Mobility Manager, Working group)
 - Material should list all elements of service that customers experience and describe how it will or will not change. Consider creating bespoke material for customers of each jurisdiction to reflect the nuances of existing services.

For example:

Confirming eligibility for transit services	<i>There are no changes to the process to confirm eligibility for service. Customers will continue to confirm eligibility through the Township</i>
Booking a trip	<i>All customers will book trips using the XXX hotline, 888-888-8888</i>

- Materials and their manner of distribution should take various forms to reach as many constituents as possible. *Ideas include:*
 - Printed posters hung in spaces frequented by service constituents (in vehicles of existing demand-response services, libraries, health care centers, senior centers, community centers, grocery stores, pharmacies, retail centers)
 - Announcements on websites and social media channels of existing demand-response service providers, including banner updates on website home pages that invite visitors to click through to the announcement page
 - Announcements run in local newspapers and outlets
 - Announcements and comment periods at town halls
 - Public meetings to verbally present customer experience changes and allow constituents to ask questions, comment, or share concerns
 - Materials translated into other languages spoken by the community, including Spanish and Polish

ONGOING MARKETING STRATEGIES

- Establish ongoing marketing and communication strategies for new coordinated services. (Responsibility of mobility manager)

Ongoing strategies include:

 - When hiring for the mobility manager, prioritizing candidates with the ability to speak other languages, including Spanish or Polish.
 - Advertising an open line of communication to the public by phone and email and devoting a portion of staff time to responding to questions and comments about using the

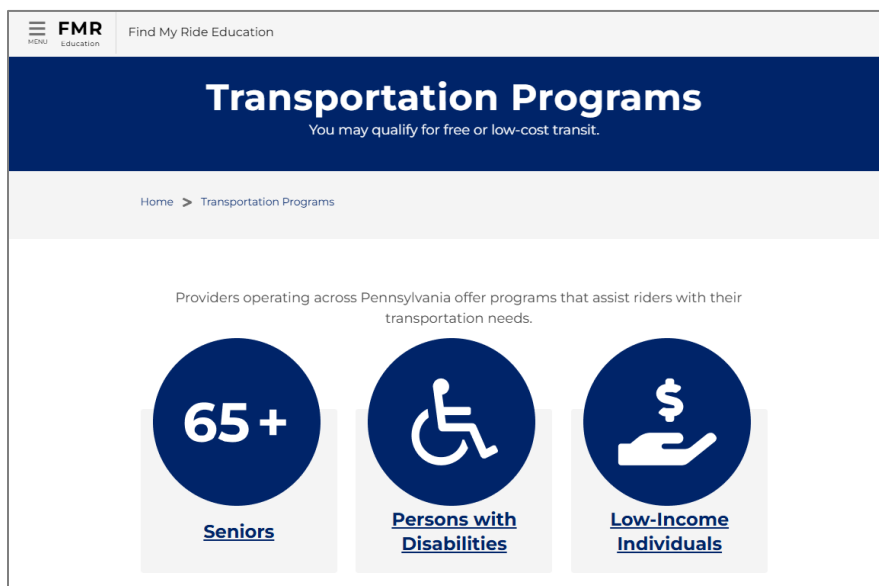
coordinated service. Managing a single website for new coordinated service: keeping website up to date, working with local service partners to include references or redirects on their websites to the new coordinated service website.

- Designing up-to-date print materials about services and distributing them to community partners to disseminate to their constituents (such as libraries, health care centers, senior centers, community centers, grocery stores, pharmacies, retail centers). Materials should be translated into other languages spoken by the community.
- Coordinating with local bodies to provide regular updates and reminders about coordinated service at relevant public meetings such as town halls, council meetings, or business association meetings.
- Building relationships with influential community members - including staff of local media outlets, influencers, advocates, religious leaders, and community organizers – to increase touchpoints with potential riders.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

- Integrate all demand-response service into regional trip planning apps like Ventra, Transit App, and TripCheck. Pace has already integrated other community demand-response services into these trip-planning apps, providing a model to follow. (Responsibility of Pace)
- Develop a one-stop shop website that integrates customer functions like identifying services based on location and eligibility, booking rides, and tracking rides for all transit services in the region. Such a website allows customers to navigate using transit services regardless of where they live, reducing confusion about what can appear to customers as arbitrary boundaries. The Pennsylvania [Find My Ride](#) website is a good model. IDOT could consider developing a similar statewide resource to enable customers to better discover transit options across Illinois. (Responsibility IDOT)

Figure 11. PennDOT Find My Ride website (findmyride.penndot.pa.gov)



EXPAND AWARENESS OF SERVICES

- Use enrollment with other social services – such as Medicare, Medicaid, or SNAP – to confirm eligibility and automatically enroll people in paratransit and on-demand services in the region. Precursors to implementing this process are an analysis of the resources required for implementation and negotiations with corresponding social services organizations. (Responsibility of RTA)
- Activate an ongoing public awareness campaign about the availability and benefits of public transit services in the region, leveraging relationships with influential community members to spread the message widely. (Responsibility of mobility manager)

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

The following section documents changes in resources that can be expected to implement the recommendations of the short- and long-term scenarios.

Some of the steps to support service coordination have potential resource implications for the transit partners, including townships, municipalities, and Pace. Some steps will only require the staff time for sponsors to discuss a policy topic with other stakeholders, compare potential strategies, and reach consensus on a recommended change. Other steps will have a modest cost, such as preparing digital or printed communications materials. Steps with a more significant cost may include hiring a mobility manager (which would ideally be covered by grant funding) and deploying a combined booking/reservation system.

For several of the coordination steps, a range of resource impacts are possible depending on the policy choices made. For example, if all partners decide to align eligibility and service hours at a very generous level, they should expect increased operating costs. On the other hand, if partners choose a more restrictive policy they should expect cost savings. In addition, some partners may elect to provide a higher level of service than the rest of the group, at their own expense. In the long term, coordination should improve overall efficiency by reducing redundant work by each program sponsor. Thus, it may be possible to create a simplified customer travel experience in Northwest Cook County while also reducing costs associated with the current fragmented structure.

Policy choices can be revisited based on future transit service performance. At any degree of coordination or consolidation, project partners can and should monitor the productivity of services provided, as well as measures of cost and service quality. To ensure sustainable programs, project partners should consider the following risk factors:

- **Ridership and capacity.** Expanding transit service areas and even improving awareness could cause riders to make more trips than they do today. While increased ridership is generally a positive development, it could cause services to reach capacity, resulting in longer wait times or an increase in trip denials. Addressing these constraints may require additional vehicles, drivers, and funding, or fare changes that incentivize the most efficient trips.

- **Service quality.** Transitions in transit reservation systems and/or transit operators can lead to concerns about service continuity and quality, in addition to cost. When pursuing a technology investment or transition to regional reservation systems, project partners should monitor customer satisfaction, trip denials and cancellations, and ensure that operating contracts include performance measures and/or performance-based payment.

Table 3 describes the potential resource impacts of implementing the proposed recommendations.

Table 3. Resource Requirements

Recommendation	Resource Requirements
Formalize working group	Feasible within existing staffing requirements
Coordinate public information on websites (potential combined website)	Low cost – up to \$5,000 to develop the website, plus ongoing hosting and domain costs of up to \$400 annually
Design, print, and distribute pamphlet	Low cost – up to \$2,000 to design the document, plus printing costs of 65¢ to \$1.50 per page
Train customer service agents on all NW Cook transit services	Feasible within existing staffing requirements
Implement standardization of eligibility, service hours, and fare policy	This will vary based on the specific standardization proposed and whether it represents an increase or decrease for each service. Analysis of operating cost impacts should be completed before any standardization proposal is approved.
Working group to identify structure for coordination	Feasible within existing staffing requirements
Seek grant funding to hire a mobility manager	The grant application would only require staff time. The actual mobility manager could require salary and fringe benefits totaling \$90,000 to \$150,000 annually.
Establish a combined service area without transfers	Staff time to develop policy Operating costs could increase due to longer trips or decrease due to reduced transfers. Other counties did not see a major change in cost per ride.
Deploy a combined booking/ reservation system	Moderate cost for software, offset by savings from current systems.
Monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of coordinated technology and service over time	Moderate cost. To be led by mobility manager with support from transit operators.

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Improvements to transit services in Northwest Cook County will require coordinated and individual actions from different stakeholders in the region. Actions are listed by scenario (short- and long-term), along with the stakeholders that will need to be involved in each. For each action, a lead stakeholder or set of stakeholders is identified to take primary responsibility for implementation and outcomes.

Initial actions focus on improved communications and joint study of potential service standardization, followed by the steps to standardize service for customers. Subsequently, a new mobility manager position would be hired to guide further integration, including the pursuit of a joint reservation system, creating a seamless experience for customers. Beyond the actions below, partners can continue working to assess the effectiveness of changes and plan for future improvements.

Table 4. Implementation Responsibilities

Action	Scenario	Lead	Other parties
Form working group with representatives from local and regional partners and partners	Short-Term	Local partners	CMAP, RTA, Pace, Cook County
Design and launch website	Short-Term	Working group	Pace
Design and distribute pamphlet	Short-Term	Working group	Local partners, community services
Train customer service agents	Short-Term	Local partners	Working group
Implement standardization of service attributes	Short-Term	Local partners	Pace
Determine coordination structure	Long-Term	Working group	Pace, RTA, CMAP, Cook County
Seek grant funding to hire a mobility manager	Long-Term	Pace, CMAP or other lead	Working group; RTA as potential funding source
Design invoicing process to cover costs for trips originating in one township and ending in another.	Long-Term	Mobility manager	Working group, local partners, Pace
Write IGAs as needed to govern service standardization	Long-Term	Mobility manager	Local partners
Market standardized service changes to customers	Long-Term	Mobility manager	Local partners, working group, community services
Deploy a combined booking and reservation system	Long-Term	Local partners and/or Pace	Mobility manager, local partners
Launch service in an expanded service area	Long-Term	Local partners, Pace	Mobility manager
Establish key performance indicators and monitor over time	Long-Term	Mobility manager, local partners	Pace

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following section summarizes grant programs that may be relevant to implementation of the plan's recommendations. Included are a description of each program, eligible recipients and activities, local match requirements, and any other limitations. CMAP and project partners can explore applications to competitive grant programs to fund planning, operations, and capital improvements, as well as investments in mobility management staff and marketing efforts. By taking full advantage of these funding opportunities, partners can maximize the return on investment on local dollars contributed toward transit.

Table 5. Funding Opportunities

Program	Description	Eligible Recipients	Eligible Activities	Federal Share
FTA Section 5310	Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities	Direct recipients include states, local government authorities, and designated recipients. Subrecipients include private nonprofit organizations, states or local government authorities, and operators of public transportation.	Capital projects including purchasing, replacing, or rehabilitating buses and vans; wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement devices; transit-related IT systems; mobility management programs; and acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other agreement. Additional activities include capital and/or operating projects that go beyond the scope of ADA paratransit designed to assist older adults and people with disabilities.	80 percent for capital, 50 percent for operating assistance, 80 percent for mobility management.
FTA Section 3006(b)	Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) Pilot Program	Organizations eligible to be recipients and subrecipients of the FTA Section 5310 Program.	Innovative capital projects for the transportation disadvantage that improve the coordination of non-emergency medical transportation services.	80 percent.
FTA Section 5312	Accelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM)	Public transit agencies, state and local government DOTs, and federally recognized Indian tribes. These agencies can partner with other private nonprofit or for-profit entities.	Activities leading to the development and testing of innovative mobility, such as planning and developing business models, obtaining equipment and service, acquiring or developing software and hardware interfaces to implement the project, operating or implementing the new service model, and evaluating project results.	80 percent.
	Enhancing Mobility Innovation (EMI)	Public transit providers, private for-profit and nonprofit providers, local government agencies, and higher education institutions.	Technology projects that focus on the traveler experience and encourage people to ride transit, such as integrated fare payment systems and user-friendly software for demand-response public transportation.	80 percent.

Program	Description	Eligible Recipients	Eligible Activities	Federal Share
	Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI)	Public transit agencies, state and local government DOTs, and federally recognized Indian tribes.	Activities that lead to demonstration of new business approaches and technology solutions that support integrated mobility, including planning, hardware and software, transit equipment and service, operations, and performance evaluation.	80 percent.
Other FTA-Supported Grant Programs	National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC)	Varies.	The NADTC invests in community solutions focused on increasing accessible transportation options as the critical link to employment, health care and other community services for older adults and people with disabilities. Community grants will target areas with high need and limited resources.	Varies.
	National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)	Nonprofit organizations or government agencies, except for prior NCMM grant recipients.	These grants are meant to enable “multi-sector community teams to pilot promising mobility solutions, the development of which was inspired and informed by the results of community research”.	Varies.
	Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility Initiatives	Varies.	The CCAM undertakes a variety of interagency efforts to improve the availability, accessibility, and efficiency of transportation, including United We Ride (2004), Mobility Services for All Americans (2005), Veterans Transportation Community Living Initiative (2011), and Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) pilot program.	Varies.
Invest in Cook	Cook County program for transportation-related projects	Cook County municipalities	Transportation projects consistent with prioritizing transit, promoting equal access to opportunities, and maintaining and modernizing existing transportation infrastructure and/or programs	N/A – regional program.

Source: FTA <https://www.transit.dot.gov/grants>; RTA <https://www.rtachicago.org/communities/toolkits-and-education/funding-guide>; Cook County <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/investincook>; IDOT <https://idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/public-transportation-providers.html>.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Beyond the time horizon of this study, project partners (including townships, municipalities, Pace, RTA, and CMAP) should continue to advance service improvements that benefit riders. This section outlines potential avenues for further study that the partners could choose to eventually pursue. As with the short- and long-term recommendations, these topics are presented for consideration with the intent that future service changes should be implemented using a voluntary, consensus-based approach.

Once the project partners have implemented the recommendations of this study, many of the options remaining to better coordinate transit service would involve deeper integration of operations and funding. As noted in the peer agency case studies, similar transit service providers have opted to pursue consolidated operations and/or consolidated funding to improve the availability, legibility, and geographic reach of transit service while being mindful of cost, efficiency, and administrative capacity. Considerations related to these consolidation topics are discussed below.

CONSOLIDATED OPERATIONS

Consolidated operations would involve a single transit provider assuming the responsibility of delivering transit service for all of Northwest Cook County. The advantage of consolidated operations is the greater efficiency that could be achieved if vehicles can be dynamically dispatched regardless of township or municipal boundaries to best meet riders' trip requests on any given day. As with reservations and dispatch, there are multiple options for implementing consolidated operations.

Option 1: Township- or Municipally Operated.

If a township or municipality has been identified as the lead agency in Recommendation 3A, this township or municipality could also take the lead in managing a single operations contract for the entirety of Northwest Cook County. This would require intergovernmental agreements with each of the other participating townships and municipalities who sponsor service within their jurisdictions. These could be coordinated by the mobility manager, if hired.

Option 2: Pace-Operated.

If townships and municipalities have transitioned to the use of the Pace regional call center in Recommendation 3B, they could opt for Pace to assume operations of a combined Northwest Cook County dial-a-ride service. Townships could retain responsibility for funding trips and be billed by Pace based on their start and end locations, but Pace would have the opportunity to achieve additional efficiency by utilizing its existing paratransit contractor to operate a unified service with no internal service boundaries.

CONSOLIDATED FUNDING

Consolidating ADA funding and operations at the county level is recommended as a part of CMAP's [Plan of Action for Regional Transit \(PART\)](#), and could eventually be considered in Cook County. Transitioning to a

single funding arrangement could be completed concurrently with or following the transition to a single transit operator in Northwest Cook County.

Models for funding consolidation have been demonstrated in McHenry and Lake counties, where the county government has opted to assume the funding responsibility for the local share of services that are broader than a single municipality. Both counties have transitioned over time to fully countywide service, which offers greater accessibility than any program currently available in Cook County.

For funding consolidation to take place in Cook County, individual townships relinquish the subsidy they currently receive from Pace, and this subsidy would be instead redirected to the consolidated program. Cook County would likely need to play a leading role in administering and in providing the local share of funding for countywide operations, which would require sustained effort to build political support and funding capacity for this program.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This Key Recommendations and Business Plan Technical Report documents the recommendations of the Northwest Cook Transit Coordination Study and provides a blueprint for future implementation.

Recommendations are based on a decision-making framework that reflects the numerous conversations and concerns raised by the study's key partners, and implementation activities are organized into short- and long-term scenarios to reflect appropriate and achievable timelines. Key recommendations from each scenario are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Key Recommendations by Scenario

Key Recommendation	Scenario
1A. Formalize an ongoing working group to guide implementation of the plan.	Short-Term
1B. Coordinate existing public information to ensure consistency and to better cross-promote services.	Short-Term
1C. Establish a shared website for all Northwest Cook County transit services.	Short-Term
2A. Standardize age requirements for township-sponsored services.	Short-Term
2B. Standardize hours of service for township-sponsored services.	Short-Term
2C. Standardize fare policy for township-sponsored services.	Short-Term
3A. Seek grant funding to hire a mobility manager.	Long-Term
3B. Establish a single call center for locally sponsored services.	Long-Term
4. Establish a single, expanded service area for township-sponsored dial-a-ride services.	Long-Term
5. Establish key performance indicators and monitor over time.	Long-Term

Along with implementing key recommendations, project partners should continue to implement marketing and communications strategies that ensure riders are aware of existing services and receive accurate information about service changes when they are implemented. Most marketing and communications recommendations can be implemented using existing staff or through the hiring of a mobility manager, which can be partially offset via state and federal grants.

As project partners continue to advance coordination efforts, the most basic suggestions still apply: regular, ongoing communication between project sponsors; effective information-sharing and customer referrals between transit operators; and attention to service effectiveness and customer satisfaction. By partnering with CMAP to complete this study, transit sponsors in northwest Cook County have taken an initial step toward more seamless service for riders. Through their combined efforts, along with support from CMAP, RTA, and Pace, the project partners can continue to improve transit service for their constituents and better connect residents throughout the Chicago region.