

# *Moving Forward:*



## *A Transportation Toolkit for Welfare Reform*

prepared by the

**ATR Institute  
The University of New Mexico**

for the

**New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department  
Public Transportation Programs Bureau**

**Pete Rahn, Secretary  
Chip Fenner, Division Director  
Josette Lucero, Bureau Chief**

in cooperation with the

**New Mexico Human Services Department**

and the

**New Mexico Department of Labor**



February 2000

# Moving Forward: A Transportation Toolkit for Welfare Reform

prepared by the

ATR Institute  
The University of New Mexico

Principal Authors:

Judith M. Espinosa  
Matthew Baca  
Amy Estelle  
Mary White

prepared for the

New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department  
Public Transportation Programs Bureau

Pete Rahn, Secretary  
Chip Fenner, Division Director  
Josette Lucero, Bureau Chief

In cooperation with the

New Mexico Human Services Department

and the

New Mexico Department of Labor

February 2000

---

# A T R I N S T I T U T E

---

The ATR Institute (ATRI) is a research institute at the University of New Mexico, affiliated with the School of Engineering, Civil Engineering Department. The work of ATRI has a single goal: creating realistic, workable solutions in transportation that address current needs while anticipating future demand. The ATRI develops strategies with a constant eye to practicality. Its work ranges from applied to conceptual knowledge developed for a very real world.

Transportation research has come to a crossroads. Researchers face the challenges of raising the efficiency of transportation systems while making them more responsive to human and environmental needs. The ATRI is responding to this challenge through an interdisciplinary approach. Its experts unify the work in their separate disciplines by focusing on a single principle: transportation systems must meet the needs of society as a whole.

The ATRI invites collaboration from government, academic, and private-sector organizations interested in the unique advantages and information products the Institute is developing for the marketplace.

Comments and suggestions on ATRI programs and web site are welcome.

---

Science and Technology Park, University of New Mexico  
1001 University Boulevard SE, Suite 103  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106-4342  
Telephone: 505 246-6410 Fax: 505 246-6001  
Email: atr@unm.edu ❖ Web Address: www.unm.edu/~atr/

---

# Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Preface.....	viii
Introduction.....	x
Chapter One: Quantifying TANF Recipients’ Transportation Resources.....	1
Chapter Two: Travel Patterns and Destinations of TANF Households.....	25
Chapter Three: Public and Human Services Transportation Funding.....	59
Chapter Four: Pulling Together: Best Practices in Overcoming Welfare-to-Work Transportation Barriers.....	73
Chapter Five: Financial Decision-Making and Grant Management Tools.....	101
Chapter Six: The Composite Database of Publicly Funded Passenger Vehicles.....	115
Chapter Seven: A Survey of Transportation Providers Regarding Coordination Barriers.....	149
Chapter Eight: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Legislative Proposals.....	169
Appendices.....	183
Glossary.....	289
Acronyms.....	297
Acknowledgements.....	299

## List of Maps

	<u>Page</u>
2.1 State TANF/WTW Providers, Federal WTW Providers, DOL and HSD Offices, and TANF Household Count by County .....	27
2.2 Statewide Location of Substance Abuse Facilities and TANF Household Count by County.....	31
2.3 Educational and Training Institutions and TANF Household Count by County .....	35
2.4 Job Origin and Destination Travel by County .....	36
2.5 Job Origin and Destination Travel Chaves, Lea, and Eddy Counties .....	38
2.6 Unemployment Rates, Projected New Jobs and TANF Eligible New Jobs by County, 1999-2000 .....	39
2.7 Statewide Location of Licensed Childcare Centers and TANF Household Count by County.....	40
2.8 Overlay of the City of Socorro.....	42
2.9 Socorro County Job Origin and Destination Travel.....	43
6.1 Sum of Head Start and Senior Center Vehicles by County.....	117
7.1 Urban and Rural Public Transit Systems by County.....	156
7.2 Number of School Buses and TANF Household Count by County.....	165

**List of Figures**

	<u>Page</u>
1.1 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients Education Level by Benefit Group.....	5
1.2 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients Household Income by Benefit Group.....	6
1.3 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients Number of Vehicles in Household by Benefit Group.....	8
1.4 Households with Vehicles Receiving Public Benefits Estimated Vehicle Trade-In Value by Benefit Group .....	8
1.5 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients Vehicle Model Year by Benefit Group.....	9
1.6 “(In the last seven days) Why couldn’t you use the vehicle?” .....	9
1.7 Usual Mode of Transportation to Work .....	11
1.8 Have a Backup Plan .....	12
1.9 Time Willing to Spend Commuting (each way) .....	12
1.10 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients Need for Childcare Transportation by Benefit Group .....	14
1.11 Most Helpful Transportation Assistance.....	15
1.12 Comparison of Households with Vehicles by County .....	17
1.13 ISD Reimbursement Rate for TANF Travel-to-Work Activities.....	21
1.14 Transportation Funds Allocated to New Mexico Works Contractors.....	23
2.1 Education Level of Public Benefit Recipients by Benefit Group in New Mexico .....	33
2.2 Percent of TANF Households with Children of Selected Age Groups in Bernalillo-Doña Counties.....	53
2.3 Percent of TANF Households with Children of Selected Age Groups in Eddy-Los Alamos Counties .....	54
2.4 Percent of TANF Households with Children of Selected Age Groups in Luna-San Juan Counties.....	55
2.5 Percent of TANF Households with Children of Selected Age Groups in San Miguel-Union Counties.....	56
2.6 Percent of TANF Households with Children of Selected Age Groups in Valencia County.....	57
3.1 The Three Largest Federal Funding Sources Targeting Transportation Under Welfare Reform.....	63
3.2 FTA Funding Allocated to New Mexico for Selected Public Transit Programs for FY 1998-2000 .....	67
3.3 Allowable Transportation Expenditures Under Federal TANF and Welfare-to-Work Programs.....	69
4.1 Cost for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation per Recipient per Year .....	86
4.2 The Five Main Components of Coordinated Transportation .....	94

**List of Figures (continued)**

		<u>Page</u>
4.3	Ridership is Coordinated.....	94
4.4	Operations are Coordinated.....	94
4.5	Time is Coordinated.....	94
4.6	Maintenance is Coordinated.....	94
4.7	Administration is Coordinated.....	94
5.1	Advantages and Disadvantages of Commuting Options.....	105
5.2	Cost Comparison of Seven Commuting Options.....	106
5.3	Cost Comparison for a Sample Round-Trip Commute.....	108
5.4	Combined Commuting Options for a Sample Round-Trip Commute.....	110
6.1	Number of Seniors Per Senior Center Vehicle in Selected Counties in New Mexico...	119
6.2	Mileage of Eight Head Start Buses in San Juan County.....	120
6.3	Number of Vehicles by Agency in Luna and San Miguel Counties.....	121
6.4	Number of Vehicles Funded in New Mexico by Each Public Program.....	122
6.5	Number of Private, For-Profit Transportation Providers Per County in New Mexico..	125
6.6	Use of Public School Buses in the State of New Mexico.....	127
6.7	Senior Center Vehicles by County.....	128
6.8	Frequency of Transportation Services Offered by Service Providers for the Developmentally Disabled.....	130
6.9	Other Services and Training Offered by Service Providers for the Developmentally Disabled.....	132
6.10	Types of Transportation Services Offered by Service Providers for the Developmentally Disabled.....	133
6.11	Users of Transportation services Provided by Service Programs for the Developmentally Disabled.....	134
6.12	Types of Trips Conducted by Service Providers for the Developmentally Disabled....	134
6.13	Percentage of Service Providers for the Developmentally Disabled that Offer Driver Training.....	135
6.14	Percentage of Service Providers for the Developmentally Disabled that Own or Lease Vehicles.....	136
6.15	Types of Vehicles Owned by Service Providers for the Developmentally Disabled that Own their Vehicles.....	136
6.16	New Mexico Transit Providers Service Information – July 1999.....	138
6.17	New Mexico Transit Providers Vehicle Information – July 1999.....	139
6.18	An Example of Program Vehicle Hours of Use in San Miguel County.....	147
7.1	Barriers to Expanding Transportation Services to Welfare Recipients.....	163
7.2	School Bus Operators.....	164

## List of Appendices

	<u>Page</u>
A. Surveys .....	183
1. TANF Transportation Survey (English) .....	185
2. TANF Transportation Survey (Spanish).....	191
3. TANF/WTW Provider Survey .....	197
4. Transportation Survey of New Mexico Head Start Grantees .....	205
5. Senior Center Transportation Survey.....	211
6. Survey of Providers for the Developmentally Disabled .....	221
7. Metropolitan Transit Survey .....	229
8. Rural Transit Survey .....	239
B. Welfare-To-Work Eligibility Criteria for Fiscal Years 1999 and 2000 .....	247
C. TANF Transportation Survey Methodology .....	251
D. Methodology to Determine Vehicle Trade-in Value.....	255
E. State TANF/WTW Providers.....	259
F. TANF Household Count by County .....	265
G. Job Opportunity Transportation Programs: Possible Solutions and Potential Consequences.....	273

**Terms in bold are defined in the Glossary, beginning on page 289.**

## P R E F A C E

From the Earth to the Moon. From Welfare to Work.

Two challenges, a full generation apart and seemingly as disparate in purpose as is imaginably possible. But not so dissimilar as one may think. Both beginning with an impossible never-before-achieved goal, a short time frame in which to attain it, and a cadre of dedicated people working to tackle the complex problems blocking the way to success. And just as the journey from Earth to the Moon was much more than an Apollo astronaut climbing into the nearest rocket for a three-day trip, so is the journey from welfare to work much more than stepping off the curb and catching the nearest bus. In lieu of heat shields, lunar modules, and beyond state-of-the-art-computers, there will be accessible childcare, professional development programs, sustainable employment opportunities, and a transportation resource enabling welfare recipients to reach their destination—and to keep on reaching it after they have joined the working mainstream.

The following pages describe the welfare to work transportation hurdles in New Mexico, as well as the innovations and programs that can be used to sweep these hurdles to the side. This work is designed as a “toolkit” for both state and local governments; as such it provides a variety of instruments. It is well recognized that the problems facing a state as diverse as New Mexico precludes a single, homogeneous answer. In many instances, transportation challenges will be unique to the particular locale. Our hope is that with the proper tools, each community can initiate the process and procedures necessary to bring its citizens from welfare to work.

Many individuals, working long hours in their effort to help meet the State’s welfare to work goal, have provided assistance and insight. To recognize them in the space allotted is impossible. However, a note of special thanks must be given to

Secretary Pete Rahn, New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department, for his support in promoting innovative public transportation ideas;

Secretary-Designate Robin Otten, New Mexico Human Services Department, and her executive staff for their financial support *for The Toolkit* and expert advice on its development;

Secretary Clint Harden, New Mexico Department of Labor, and his Welfare-To-Work staff for their collaborative efforts;

Senator Linda Lopez, Chair, Legislative Welfare Reform Oversight Committee; and

Representative Luciano “Lucky” Varela, Vice-Chair, Legislative Welfare Reform Oversight Committee.

A more comprehensive list of those who assisted in this first-ever endeavor can be found at the end of the Toolkit. We look forward to continuing to reach for more efficient and better quality public transportation services for all New Mexicans.

Signed,

Josette Lucero, Chief, Public Transportation Programs Bureau

Judith M. Espinosa, Director, ATR Institute

Matthew Baca, Transportation Research Programs Manager, ATR Institute

Amy Estelle, Research Scientist, ATR Institute

February 2000

# **MOVING FORWARD: A TRANSPORTATION TOOLKIT FOR WELFARE REFORM**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every state faces formidable transportation obstacles in welfare reform. Those states that have been the most successful in overcoming these obstacles share several characteristics. They have:

- ❖ Strong leadership and financial commitment from their executive branch;
- ❖ One or more champions in their state legislature;
- ❖ The business community's support for employer-sponsored transit benefits and other initiatives;
- ❖ Program managers and directors who have earned the trust of their colleagues in other departments and agencies.

In short, from governors' offices to county TANF offices, from legislative chambers to chambers of commerce, from state councils to the city councils, these states have resolved that the lack of transportation will no longer prevent a person who wants to work and support her/his family from doing so.

Transportation is the glue that holds together the other pieces of welfare reform. With adequate transportation to access the GED class and literacy program, substance abuse and domestic violence counseling, life skills and job training classes, job searches and interviews, and childcare and Head Start centers, the journey of a family receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) from welfare to work is much more likely to succeed. No matter how excellent the instructors, how supportive the mentors, how capable the job developers, how well-designed the pre-school program, how comprehensive the Head Start curriculum, how great the job opportunity, for determined TANF clients who want to work but who don't have reliable and affordable transportation, these opportunities might as well not exist.

Making these opportunities accessible to transportation-poor people will take an extraordinary level of collaboration between departments, agencies, and programs. But the benefits to TANF families and the State as a whole are equally extraordinary. TANF adults who make the journey from welfare to work will move their families toward not only greater economic self-sufficiency, but also improved physical and psychological health. The parents'

improved self-confidence and self-esteem will extend to their children and provide positive intergenerational effects. As these families move off cash assistance and become wage earners, their hard-earned dollars will enter the State's economy to purchase goods and services that had previously been subsidized by the public coffers. Each family that successfully moves from welfare to work will contribute new tax dollars to the State as well.

Many groups in New Mexico must shoulder the responsibility for the degree of program success attained under welfare reform. A share of the responsibility falls squarely on the TANF clients themselves. Those who can work must work. TANF clients must grasp that the cash assistance entitlement program that they once relied upon is now gone forever. Temporary Aid to Needy Families is, in fact, a temporary program designed to help them and their children enter or re-enter the mainstream economy of the 21st Century. Moreover, new jobs will increasingly require a more educated and skilled work force. Trends in business and technology are placing a competitive premium on education and training, creating opportunities for those workers who have attained higher levels of education and who continue to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

Responsibility falls on the shoulders of the State's executive and legislative leaders who must bring good-paying jobs to New Mexico and ensure the advancement of opportunities for families who are willing to work but who currently live at or below the margins of poverty. Responsibility is shared by program planners, managers, and directors to increase cost-efficiency, avoid duplication of services, and wring out the value of every penny from federal and state program dollars.

A share of the responsibility goes to the business community to invest in economically depressed areas and to share its expertise in these communities by offering apprenticeships, mentoring, and other employer-provided training opportunities. This assistance is in the economic self-interest of business. Research on the economic effects of employer-based training consistently shows significant benefits to firms' productivity.

Finally, with federal dollars to address welfare reform at an all-time high, this may be the State's best opportunity to help its poorest people aim for the American dream. In this period of unprecedented economic growth, it is important that no community or group be left behind. With a unified can-do spirit New Mexicans can get the job done.

## The Era of Welfare Reform

Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Congress reformed decades-old federal welfare law by terminating the entitlement program Aid to Families With Needy Children (AFDC) and beginning a work program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), with a five-year lifetime limit on cash benefits. While the Act gives States flexibility to design their own cash assistance programs, the new federal guidelines also assert that those TANF recipients who are able to work must work. Under the Act, the New Mexico Human Services Department (NMHSD) receives a block grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) to fund New Mexico Works, the State TANF Program.

In addition to TANF, Congress created the Welfare-to-Work (WTW)<sup>1</sup> program in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. WTW is administered by the US Department of Labor (USDOL) and offers intensive support services and training to the hardest-to-employ TANF recipients, approximately 20 to 30 percent of the TANF adults. The WTW formula grant to New Mexico is administered by the New Mexico Department of Labor (NMDOL). When the WTW program was reauthorized by the Welfare-To-Work and Child Support Amendments of 1999, Congress made several significant changes to extend these support services to a broader range of TANF recipients, and to cover for first time, the noncustodial parents of TANF children.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after Congress reformed the welfare system, it passed a national transportation bill that funds highways, bridges, transit, and other transportation programs through the year 2003. Under this legislation, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) offers a new grant to improve people's access to the workplace—the Access to Jobs (ATJ) and Reverse Commute (RC) grant program, to all states and cities over 50,000. ATJ grants are designed to fund transportation services that improve job access for people living at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. RC grants fund transportation solutions for inner-city and rural residents of all income groups to get to jobs in suburban locations. ATJ and RC grants provide the states and cities with important new transportation funding for the age of welfare reform.

---

<sup>1</sup> Welfare-To-Work or WTW in capital letters refers to the formal Welfare-To-Work Program, while welfare-to-work or wtw in lower case letters refers generically to welfare reform. See Appendix B for the eligibility requirements for a noncustodial parent.

<sup>2</sup> The WTW eligibility criteria, before and after the amendment, can be found in Appendix B.

The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD) and its Public Transportation Programs Bureau (PTPB) have long recognized the importance of transportation in maintaining the State's economic well-being and the quality of life for all New Mexicans. Amid the dramatic changes brought about by federal legislation that reshaped public thought about the relationship between welfare and poverty, the PTPB began to investigate transportation barriers affecting the State's TANF recipients.

In November 1998, under contract to the PTPB, the ATR Institute (ATRI) produced a report entitled *Public Transportation: A Priority Link in Moving People to Work*. Using qualitative data collected at seven State-sponsored WTW forums, the ATRI found the lack of adequate transportation to be one of the greatest barriers impeding people's transition from welfare to work.

### **A Transportation Toolkit for Welfare Reform**

In February 1999, again under contract to the PTPB, and with funding from the NMHSD Income Support Division (ISD), the ATRI began to conduct a trail-breaking series of studies and to gather other comprehensive informational resources that would become the tool-building materials necessary to address these transportation shortfalls systematically. The research undertaken either had not been conducted previously or did not exist in a format that would be usable across multiple State agencies. The statewide research ATRI conducted includes:

- ❖ A transportation survey of 440 TANF recipients and 403 recipients of other benefit groups, such as Food Stamps and Medicaid;
- ❖ A survey of 16 rural and 3 urban public transit providers;
- ❖ A survey of 102 senior center program managers;
- ❖ A survey of 35 Head Start providers;
- ❖ A survey of 172 program managers for developmentally disabled services; and
- ❖ A survey of 6 TANF/WTW contractors and 3 nationally competitive WTW providers.<sup>3</sup>

The result of this work is *Moving Forward: A Transportation Toolkit for Welfare Reform*. The *Toolkit* contains several databases derived from ATRI research, such as the composite database of publicly funded vehicles, that will be helpful in transportation planning and decision making. Textual information includes clear and concise explanations of federal funding sources

---

<sup>3</sup> A copy of each survey type can be found in Appendix A.

for welfare to work transportation and tools for financial decision making and grant management. The *Toolkit* presents this enormous amount of information in an organized and easily accessed format, contained in over 220 pages of printed text, maps, figures, and appendices as well as in an electronic database. This *Toolkit* is designed to provide State and local policymakers, planners, and program administrators with the best information currently available about transportation as related to welfare reform. In addition, it provides information to facilitate the public's participation in transportation decision making.

Data gathered from surveys of the transportation resources and needs of TANF recipients and those in the "Other Benefit Group," who receive Food Stamps and/or Medicaid, have been analyzed and summarized in figures. These figures present quantified information on the transportation needs and resources of some of New Mexico's poorest rural and small-town residents. By comparing responses from the TANF and Other Benefit Group, human service managers can better understand the relationships between the two groups studied and develop policies based on information provided directly by their clients. Planners can use the information to evaluate regional transportation options. The NMDOL and the NMHSD can use the information to compare the transportation resources and needs of New Mexico's welfare recipients with those of other welfare recipients across the nation. The information about New Mexico, in comparison with information from other states, will help determine the appropriate allocation level of transportation dollars. Finally, the information will help strengthen the case in the NMSHTD's applications for federal transportation funds from ATJ and RC grant program sources.

Another survey was used to identify transportation providers' and program managers' perceptions of the barriers to transportation coordination across programs and departments. This information will be helpful in transportation planning because it provides insights from those that deliver transportation services and have actual experience with overcoming the hardships of creating and maintaining operations that work well.

The task of creating the *Toolkit* was extremely complex and expensive. Because no organization had ever tried previously to assemble so much comprehensive information about publicly and privately owned vehicles, transportation services, TANF clients, job opportunities, and support services, information was difficult to obtain from some groups.

For instance, no statewide composite database of publicly funded vehicles had ever been undertaken previously. The data-gathering methods were expensive and extensive. Another problem encountered in creating a composite inventory of publicly funded vehicles was the lack of uniformity among agencies in the types of information recorded in their vehicle inventories. Among the differences, some programs record compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)<sup>4</sup> or vehicle mileage, and condition while others do not. Moreover, much of the information about publicly funded vehicles supplied by State, local, and nonprofit agencies was incomplete.

Negotiating the use of NMHSD TANF data while maintaining strict client confidentiality was an involved process. Protocols were established and carefully followed. It took months to receive the data and additional weeks to correct the State's data-entry errors. Data cleanup was imperative to produce useful statewide maps. Nearly 90,000 individual TANF records were matched by physical household address to determine the characteristics of the household. Geographic information systems (GIS) software was used to count and plot geographical information.

Despite the inherent difficulties of the research, the findings obtained will be invaluable in the development of State and local programs to assist TANF and WTW families in overcoming transportation barriers from welfare to work. A 38-page Executive Summary is available in printed form and will soon be available on CD-ROM and on the Institute's web page <http://www.unm.edu/~atr/>.

---

<sup>4</sup> The guidelines for ADA compliance can be found at the Federal Transit Administration web site: <http://www.fta.dot.gov/office/program/gmw/15ADA.html#Q1>.

## CHAPTER ONE

### QUANTIFYING TANF RECIPIENTS' TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

Under Public Law 104-193, known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), Congress has mandated welfare reform. While the Act gives states flexibility to design their own welfare programs, the new federal guidelines mandate a lifetime limit of five years of assistance for each individual and also assert that those able to work must work. The Act transformed Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) from an entitlement program to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a work program with a lifetime limit on cash benefits. The overarching goal of PRWORA is to help welfare recipients enter the work force and become economically self-sufficient.

While it sounds simple enough that those able to work should work, a number of factors determine whether able individuals can actually enter the workforce. The first requirement is the existence of new entry-level jobs. A second requirement is adequate quality childcare and before- and after-school programs. The third, the focus of this report, is TANF families' access to reliable, affordable transportation. From the President's Cabinet in Washington, DC to welfare offices in rural New Mexico, the story is the same: for welfare reform to succeed, states must address the transportation barriers that prevent people from gaining access to jobs and work-related support services.

In November 1998, under contract to the Public Transportation Programs Bureau (PTPB) of the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD), the ATR Institute (ATRI) produced a report entitled *Public Transportation: A Priority Link in Moving People to Work*. The report documented the transportation barriers that impede people who want to leave the welfare rolls and join the payrolls in New Mexico. At seven State-sponsored Welfare-To-Work (WTW) forums, the ATRI gathered qualitative information from job developers, TANF caseworkers, employers, transit providers, and welfare recipients from almost every County. People reported that the two biggest obstacles to welfare reform are the lack of transportation and childcare.

In February 1999, the ATRI began to develop *Moving Forward: A Welfare-to-Work Transportation Toolkit for Welfare Reform* for the PTPB that would help planners and policymakers at the local and State levels determine how best to address these transportation

barriers. One of the first project tasks was to quantify the transportation resources and needs of New Mexico's TANF households. This chapter summarizes and interprets the data collected for this first project task.

## **Determining Transportation Resources and Needs of TANF Households**

### ***Background Information***

A Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) individual is an adult or child who is eligible to receive cash assistance under the **New Mexico Works** program (the State TANF program). A TANF case is made up of one or more adults and their dependent children who live together and constitute a TANF household.<sup>1</sup> The most common TANF household (or case) in New Mexico is composed of three members: a single parent (usually female) and two dependent children. A noncustodial parent of a minor is eligible to participate if he or she meets certain requirements.<sup>2</sup> The number of New Mexico TANF cases fluctuated in 1999 from approximately 23,000 to 25,000. For the purposes of this report, June 1999 data reflecting 24,200 reported cases will be used as the general case load number.<sup>3</sup>

Eighty-five percent of the State's 24,200 TANF cases (20,570) are headed by a single parent, and 15 percent (3,527 cases) are headed by two parents. In June 1999, there were 76,589 TANF individuals. Of these, 64 percent (48,983) were children under the age of eighteen, and 36 percent (27,606) were adults. Thus for every TANF adult who may need transportation to and from work, there may be twice as many children who need transportation to and from Head Start, childcare, or before- and after-school programs.

### ***The TANF Transportation Survey***

Before successful welfare-to-work transportation strategies can be designed and implemented, research and assessments must be conducted to determine the extent of the problem. Qualitative information is valuable, but by itself it does not provide the level of detail necessary to make multimillion-dollar decisions. For example, if the school-age population in a county is growing rapidly, crowded classrooms and long lunchroom lines might point to the need

---

<sup>1</sup> For exceptions, see "New Mexico Works: New Mexico's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Plan, July 1, 1998–December 31, 1999."

<sup>2</sup> See the New Mexico Works Plan for the eligibility requirements for a noncustodial parent. Available from the Human Services Income Support Division Office.

<sup>3</sup> State of New Mexico, Human Services Department, Monthly Statistical Report, August 1999 issue.

for building additional facilities. However, the school board would not rely on these two observations alone to decide whether to build additional classrooms or a new school. More detailed quantitative information would be gathered instead to determine whether changing class schedules and staggering lunch periods, adding new classrooms, or building a new school were indeed necessary. If quantitative research determined that a new school was needed, additional information would then be gathered to determine its size, location, design, and cost.

Likewise, before the State makes policy and program changes in public transportation systems, a clearer, quantitative picture of the transportation requirements and resources of TANF recipients is needed. To gather the necessary information, the ATRI used a voluntary, anonymous, self-administered questionnaire to assess clients' privately owned transportation resources.<sup>4</sup> The questionnaire identified clients' personal transportation resources, such as the number of vehicles in the household; the year, make, and model of the vehicle; and the number of days it was available for them to use. The questionnaire also identified the impact that a lack of transportation has on finding and keeping a job, the type of transportation assistance clients desired most, and their need for childcare transportation. Two adult populations receiving public benefits were surveyed: those receiving TANF and those not receiving TANF but receiving other benefits, such as Food Stamps and/or Medicaid. The former population is called the "TANF Group," and the latter is referred to as the "Other Benefit Group."

Through several County Income Support Division (ISD) Offices and the five TANF prime contractors, the ATRI surveyed 440 adult TANF clients and 403 adult Other Benefit Group clients between June and September of 1999. As similar surveys were recently completed in Bernalillo County (1997) and Doña Ana County (1998),<sup>5</sup> the ATRI did not resurvey clients in these Counties, but focused instead on clients living in rural areas and small towns, where people have few transportation options.

Several important sampling biases in the survey should be mentioned. First, the populations surveyed were not selected randomly. Clients who participated in the survey had some transportation resources because they physically arrived at an ISD office or NM Works program on the day(s) during the survey period. Secondly, although the questionnaire was

---

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A.1 and A.2 for copies of the TANF Transportation Survey, which was available in both English and Spanish.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Noonchester, City of Las Cruces Transit Director, and Leora Jaeger, LJS Consulting, in Bernalillo County provided important insights to the ATRI on the TANF Transportation Survey design.

available in English and Spanish, only those clients who could read and write were able to participate. In addition, the regions of the State are not represented in proportion to the number of benefit recipients in each region. Some regions are oversampled (for example, San Juan County) and others are undersampled (for example, Valencia County). The number of questionnaires collected depended, in large part, on the degree of cooperation and interest in the project expressed by the local ISD director and/or the WTW or TANF provider. Finally, the investigators' biases were also evident in the survey question design and scales. For example, in a question concerning the client's educational level, the option for the lowest level of education was "some high school." Some respondents wrote in "less than high school." See Appendix A.1 and A.2 for a copy of the questionnaire and Appendix C for the survey methodology.

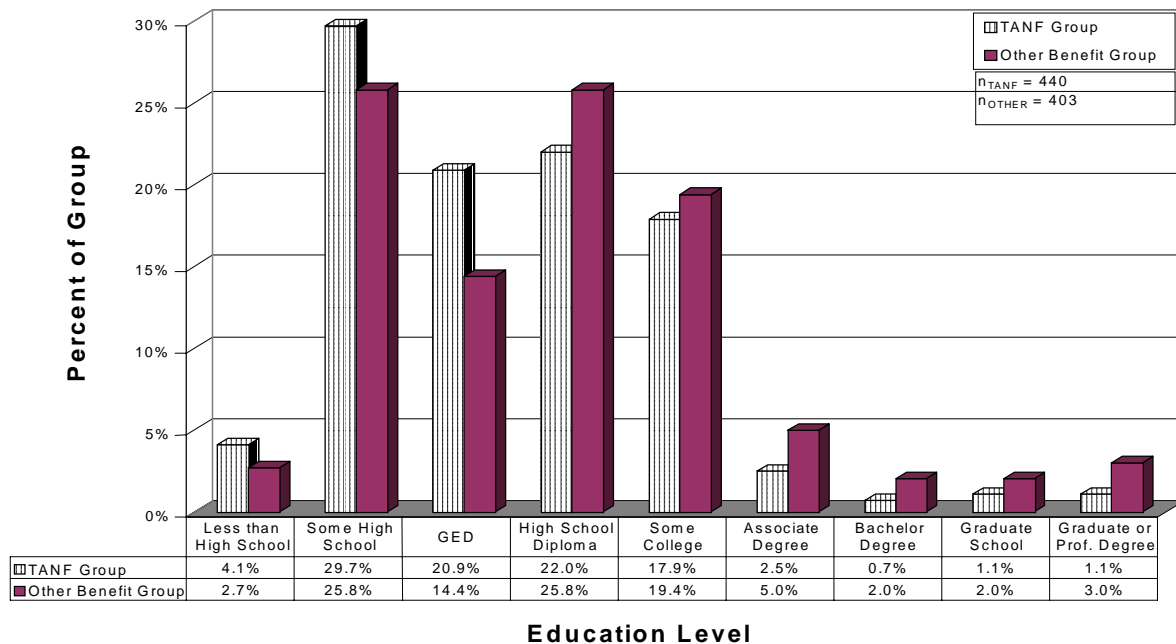
The questionnaires provide valuable information. For the first time, transportation and human service planners and program managers have quantified information on the transportation needs and resources of some of New Mexico's poorest rural and small-town residents. By comparing questionnaire responses from the two population groups, human service managers and policymakers can better understand the relation between TANF recipients and recipients of Food Stamps and/or Medicaid. Local planners can use the survey information to evaluate transportation options that best fit their region. The New Mexico Human Services Department (NMHSD) and the New Mexico Department of Labor (NMDOL) can use the information to compare the transportation resources and needs of New Mexico's welfare recipients with those of welfare recipients across the nation. The information will also help these two departments and the PTPB to decide where and how to allocate transportation dollars. Finally, the information will help the State Highway and Transportation Department build its case when applying for additional federal transportation funds, such as the Federal Transit Administration's Access to Jobs and Reverse Commute grants.

Because the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, with no positive or negative consequences for clients' cooperation, the investigators expected respondents to answer questions honestly. Rather than basing policy on the public's or an agency's perception of TANF clients' transportation resources and needs, policy can now be based on information provided by the clients as they speak for themselves.

## Demographic Profile of Groups

The demographic profiles of the two groups, TANF and Other Benefit Group, are not very different. The median age of a TANF recipient is 31 years, while for the Other Benefits group, the median age is 33 years. In terms of gender, both groups are composed largely of females; 89 percent of the TANF Group and 81 percent of the Other Benefit Group are female. The average number of dependents for each group is two. The percentage with a household income of \$8,000/year or less is 75 percent of the TANF Group and 62 percent of the Other Benefit Group. Eight thousand dollars is approximately one-third of the median household income for New Mexico (\$25,086/year).<sup>6</sup> The educational data showed that 34 percent of the TANF Group and 29 percent of the Other Benefit Group have less than a high school education, while 43 percent of the TANF group and 40 percent of the Other Benefit Group have a high school diploma or a general equivalency degree. *Figures 1.1 and 1.2* below illustrate these findings.

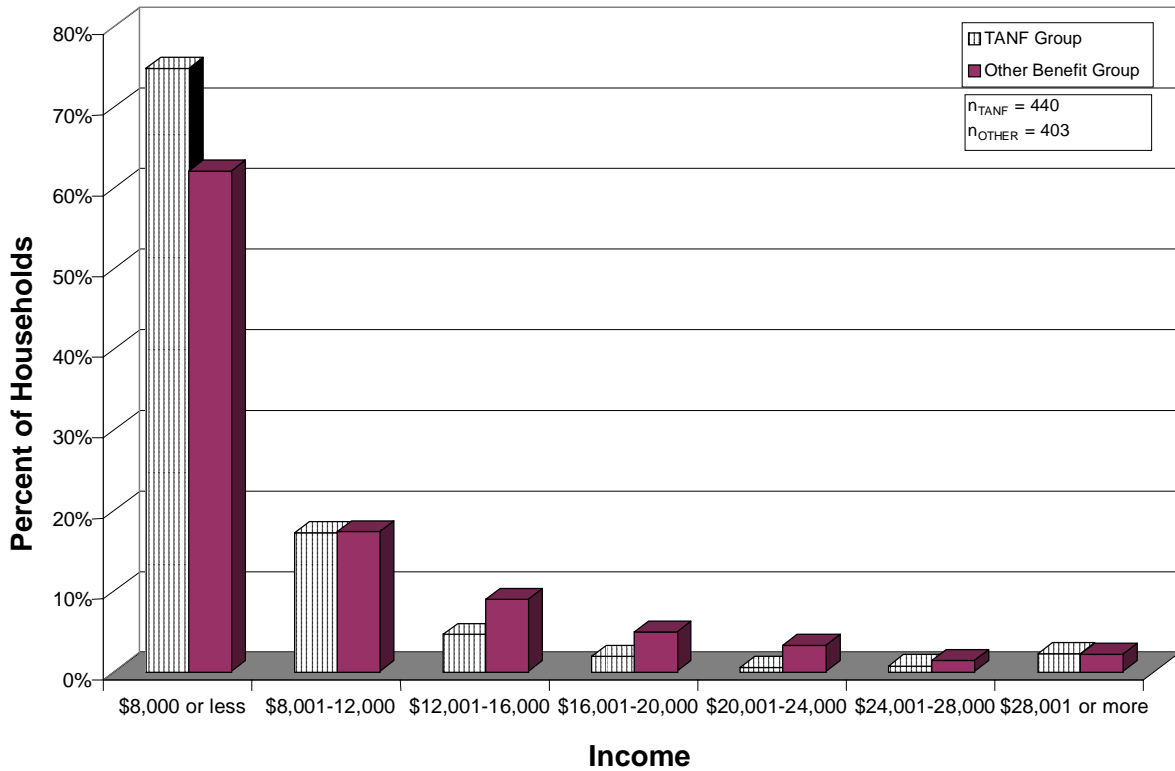
**Figure 1.1 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients Education Level by Benefit Group**



Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

<sup>6</sup> 1998 Statistical Abstract of the US Bureau of the Census.

**Figure 1.2 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients Household Income by Benefit Group**



Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

***Personal Transportation Resources***

According to a 1997 US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) study, 94 percent of welfare recipients nationally do not have access to a vehicle. The vehicles belonging to the other six percent were worth \$620, on average, in 1995.<sup>7</sup> Local transportation planners, however, question whether this often-quoted national statistic applies in New Mexico. An old saying goes, “If it applies in the rest of the nation, it doesn’t apply in New Mexico.” As a young rural woman from northwestern New Mexico said, “People may not have a television, a telephone, or running water, but they have a car or truck. It is essential.”<sup>8</sup>

The predominance of the private vehicle as the main personal transportation resource is evident from the questionnaire responses. When asked, “**How many vehicles does your household currently have?**” only 21 percent of the TANF Group and only 16 percent of the

<sup>7</sup> *Welfare to Work: Most AFDC Training Programs Not Emphasizing Job Placement* (GAO/HEHS-95-113, May 19, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Conversation with Misty Billy, tribal member of the Navajo Nation, September 9, 1998.

Other Benefit Group reported having none. Sixty-two percent of the TANF respondents reported having one vehicle in the household, and 17 percent reported having two or more vehicles.

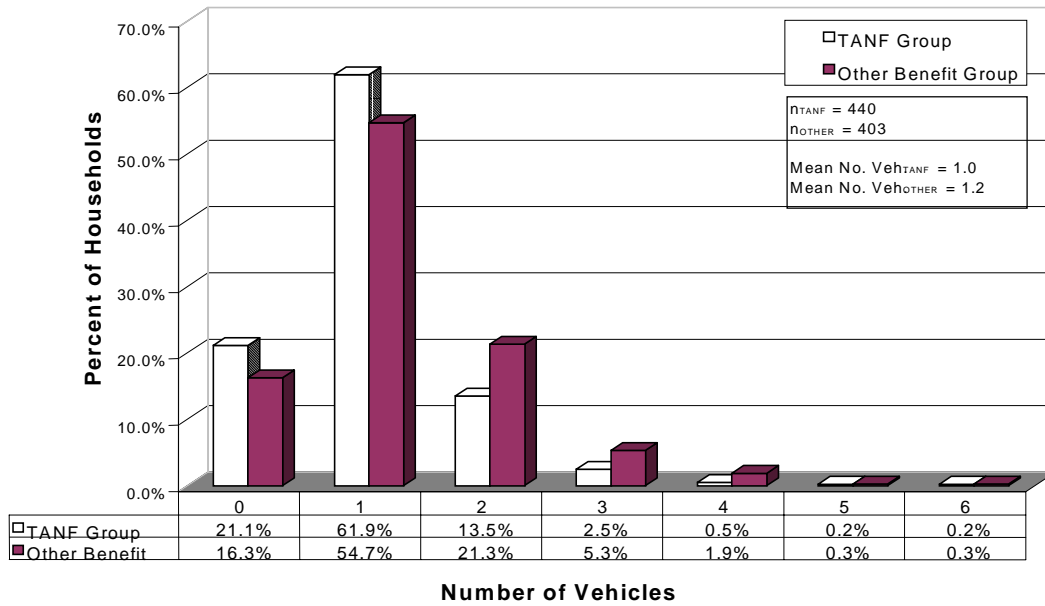
For TANF clients, the median vehicle model year is 1987. Seventy-seven percent of their vehicles are 1990 models or older. The greatest number of vehicles owned by TANF recipients--43 percent—had a trade-in value of between \$100-\$500. The median trade-in value of their vehicles is \$625.<sup>9</sup> For the Other Benefit Group, the median model year is also 1987, and the median trade-in value is slightly higher at \$700. Rather than spend large amounts of money to repair old vehicles, some clients simply buy another old, unreliable vehicle. Consequently, when asked how many vehicles were in their household, they often reported more than one. Some reported five or more. But having one or more vehicles in the household may not accurately depict the TANF recipient's transportation resources. Michael Noonchester, City of Las Cruces Transit Director, observed in remarks based on a 1998 Doña Ana County transportation study of welfare recipients, "Most of those five vehicles in the household are up on blocks in the yard." Or as a former TANF recipient reported, "We have two vehicles. One is in Arizona at my in-laws' house. It is not running right now." With only 20 percent of the TANF recipients surveyed reporting access to a vehicle four or more days per week, and with the median TANF vehicle valued at \$620, planners and policy makers cannot rely on the private vehicle as a reliable transportation solution for the majority of TANF families. *Figures 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5*, on pages 8 and 9, show the number of vehicles per household, the estimated vehicle trade-in value, and the vehicle model year for each benefit group.

Owning a vehicle and having the use of that vehicle are two different things. A nonworking vehicle, for example, is not available for its primary use as a mode of transportation. (See *Figure 1.6*, on page 9, for reasons given by the TANF adults surveyed as to why their vehicles were not available for use.) A family may also give one particular adult member the right to use the family's vehicle, so when he or she exercises that right, any other adult (a potential wage earner) may be left without access to transportation. One female TANF recipient reported having a vehicle registered in her name, but also wrote on the questionnaire that her ex-husband has it, so she has no access to it. When asked, **"Do you usually have a vehicle to drive yourself where**

---

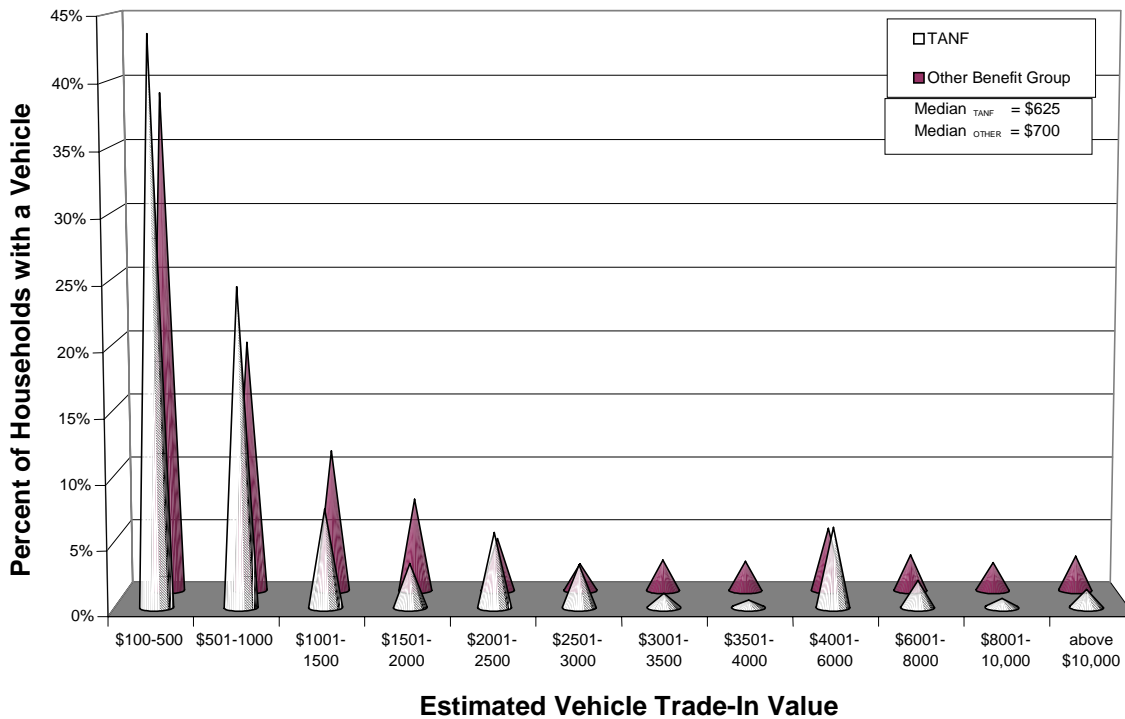
<sup>9</sup> See Appendix D for the detailed methodology of how vehicle trade-in value was calculated and why the median (rather than the mean) is reported.

**Figure 1.3 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients  
Number of Vehicles in Household by Benefit Group**



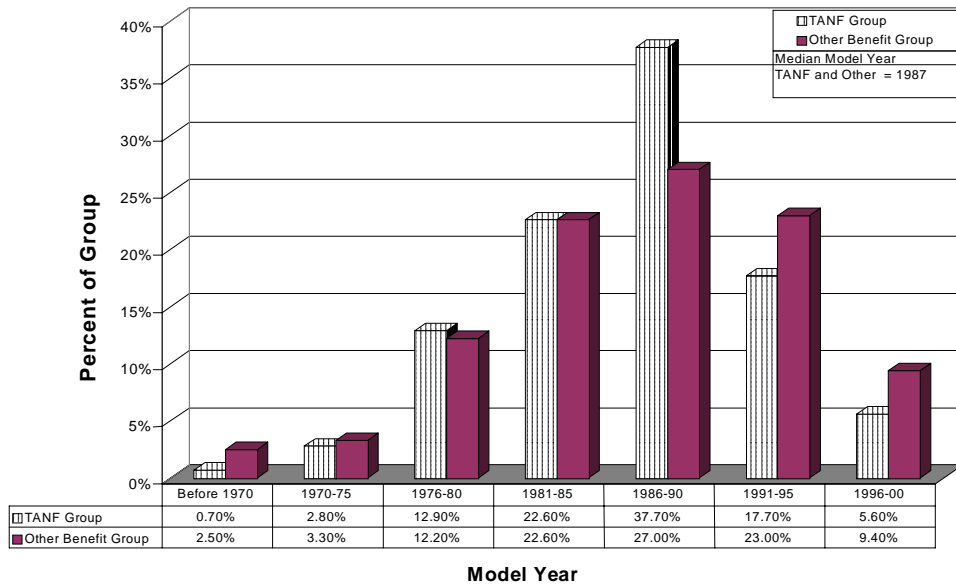
Data Source: ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

**Figure 1.4 Households with Vehicles Receiving Public Benefits  
Estimated Vehicle Trade-In Value by Benefit Group**



Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

**Figure 1.5 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients  
Vehicle Model Year by Benefit Group**



Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

**Figure 1.6 “(In the last seven days) Why couldn’t you use the vehicle?”**

TANF Group		Other Benefit Group
(440)		(403)
40%	I don’t have gas money	45%
32%	The vehicle is not working	34%
24%	Someone else used it	22%
17%	The insurance has lapsed	15%
9%	The registration has expired	5%
7%	My driver’s license has been revoked	3%
1%	The vehicle does not pass the emission test	0%
14%	Other reasons prevented me from using the household vehicle	12%

Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999  
(Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could select more than one reason.)

**you need to go?”** 59 percent of the TANF Group and 62 percent of the Other Benefit Group answered yes. Forty-one percent of TANF group and 38 percent of Other Benefit Group answered no. Among the primary reasons cited as to why they did not have use of a vehicle were: no gas money, a nonworking vehicle, the vehicle was in use by someone else, lapsed insurance, a revoked driver’s license, and expired registration.

Operating a vehicle with lapsed insurance, an expired registration, a failed emissions test, and driving without a valid driver’s license violate New Mexico statutes. Drivers are required to hold a valid driver’s license and have a minimum amount of liability insurance. A motor vehicle insurance policy must include bodily injury and property damage liability coverage. The policy must also include uninsured motorist coverage, unless as statute permits, the insured rejects this coverage.<sup>10</sup> The minimum amount of coverage in New Mexico is \$10,000 for property damage, \$25,000 for bodily injury to one person, and \$50,000 for bodily injury to two or more persons.<sup>11</sup>

Sixty-five percent of TANF recipients and 66 percent of Other Benefit recipients surveyed have a valid driver’s license. Nineteen percent of the TANF Group and 20 percent of non-TANF had one in the past even though lacking one now. Sixteen percent of TANF and 14 percent of the Other Benefit Group reported never having a license. Several clients who did not have a current driver’s license wrote on their questionnaire that they “drive anyway.” Of all those from both the TANF Group and the Other Benefit Group who drive their own vehicles to work (or would do so in the future), approximately 25 percent (193) self-reported that they have dropped or failed to purchase automobile insurance for financial reasons during the last year. It is not clear from the data whether these respondents drove while uninsured.

### ***Questions on Employment Transportation***

Many questions related to employment transportation. Employers require their employees to be dependable; that is, they are expected to show up for work on time every day. This basic employer requirement underscores the importance of transportation to work. For people with unreliable or no transportation, meeting this standard requirement is very difficult, if not impossible. The following questions were asked to find out more about the employment transportation needs of TANF recipients and Other Benefit Group recipients.

---

<sup>10</sup> New Mexico Statutes Annotated, Chapter 66, Pamphlet 104, 66-1-4.11 (J), 1998 Replacement Pamphlet.

<sup>11</sup> New Mexico Statutes Annotated, Chapter 66, Pamphlet 104, 66-5-215, 1998 Replacement Pamphlet.

When asked, “**How do you usually get to work now? Or (if not employed), how do you plan to get to work in the future?**” respondents indicated that using a private vehicle is the most common mode to work, as *Figure 1.7* shows. Alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, bicycling, and taking the bus are used much less frequently. This result is not surprising. Many respondents live in rural areas or small towns, where the distance from home to work may make walking or bicycling impractical or impossible. Furthermore, small towns and rural areas generally do not have public transit systems.<sup>12</sup> Readers should note that the sum of the percentages in the table below exceeds 100 percent because many respondents use more than one mode of transportation.

**Figure 1.7 Usual Mode of Transportation to Work**

TANF Group (440)		Other Benefit Group (403)	
55%	Drive my own vehicle	58%	
26%	Ride with someone else	21%	
14%	Borrow a vehicle	10%	
13%	Walk	13%	
4%	Bicycle	4%	
2%	Take a bus	2%	
6%	Don't know	6%	
6%	Other	4%	

Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

*People living in Fort Sumner and Vaughn cannot find work locally. There is no means of transportation on a regular basis to bigger towns, such as Santa Rosa and Tucumcari, where training and jobs are located. People referred to work at the Wackenhut Corrections Center in Santa Rosa have quit, citing the long commute as their main reason. Meanwhile, City and County governments have been reluctant to work together towards a cooperative regional transit agreement.*

(Source: Interview with Diane Chavez, ISD Director for De Baca, Quay, Union, and Guadalupe Counties, Fall 1999.)

In answer to the question “**If that (primary way to work) falls through, do you have a backup plan?**” more than 50 percent of each group reported that they do not have a backup transportation plan. Backup plans require resources and planning. The fact that so many respondents do not have backup plans demonstrates the limited personal transportation resources possessed by each group.

<sup>12</sup> There are 16 rural and three urban transit systems in New Mexico. See Chapters Three and Six for a detailed discussion of these systems.

Generally, personal vehicles are the mode of choice, but when they break down, they are costly to repair or replace. Very few welfare recipients have a spare working vehicle in their household that they can use for backup, as *Figure 1.8* shows. Recipients in urban areas may have better opportunities for developing backup plans with the use of alternative transportation, such as city transit. There are also more opportunities to develop backup plans when population density is high and jobs are close to home. This is seldom the case in rural areas. Recipients often rely on relatives, friends, or neighbors who also have limited transportation resources for backup. Many recipients in rural areas simply may not have enough personal transportation resources to enable them to have a backup plan.

**Figure 1.8 Have a Backup Plan**

<b>TANF Group</b>		<b>Other Benefit Group</b>
(440)		(403)
48%	Yes	49%
52%	No	51%

Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

The average travel time to work for New Mexicans is 19 minutes.<sup>13</sup> But public assistance recipients are willing to travel longer times and distances. The questionnaire asked respondents, **“How much time would you be willing to spend traveling from home to work (one-way)?”** The amount of time both groups were willing to spend traveling from home to work each way was 30-40 minutes, as *Figure 1.9* shows. This would be a total round-trip time of about one hour to one hour and 20 minutes. Thus, clients in both groups are willing to commute longer times (and distances) than the average commute.

**Figure 1.9 Time Willing to Spend Commuting (each way)**

<b>TANF Group</b>	<b>Other Benefit Group</b>
(440)	(403)
mean = 40 minutes	mean = 33 minutes
median = 30 minutes	median = 30 minutes

Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

<sup>13</sup> US Census Bureau, Population Division, Journey-to-Work and Migration Statistics Branch, 1990.

Longer commutes cost more. Persons using their own vehicles must factor in added costs for vehicle depreciation, gas, insurance, maintenance, and repair because their vehicles are being driven more miles. Time spent commuting extracts another price. Longer commute times also mean that a parent has fewer hours to spend with her/his children and less time to maintain the physical and mental health of the household.

Finding employment takes considerable time and effort, as well as requiring transportation. Recipients must first locate job vacancies. This may mean visiting a TANF provider or a Workforce Development Center. Recipients must then submit applications to employers. They must attend job interviews. A person with limited transportation resources must find a way to negotiate these preliminary steps even to have the opportunity to earn a paycheck.

When asked, **“Have you ever missed out getting a job because you did not have transportation to get there?”** over half of the TANF Group (53 percent) and nearly half of the Other Benefit Group (45 percent) reported yes. In a follow-up question, recipients were asked, **“Have you ever lost a job because you did not have transportation to get there?”** Of those who had secured employment, 41 percent of the TANF Group and 37 percent of the Other Benefit Group reported that they had lost a job because they did not have transportation to get there.

These two questions measure just how high the transportation barriers are for New Mexico’s poorest households, and they uncover the transportation “Catch-22”: people need transportation to find, get, and keep jobs, yet people need jobs to be able to afford transportation. The percentage of those who have lost a job is lower than that for those who have missed out on a job. This could be because the initial process of securing a job requires transportation. Those who lost a job had enough transportation resources to complete the preliminary steps to secure employment, but they may have lost their primary transportation while employed.

*A woman in her 20s was desperate to move from welfare to work. She got a job at Pizza Hut, working days, but the manager soon changed her to the night shift. She had trouble getting childcare at night, so she had to quit. She got another job at a local restaurant and rode her bicycle to work. When her bicycle was stolen, she lost her job. She has applied for a job for which transportation is provided, but she doesn't know if she will get it.*

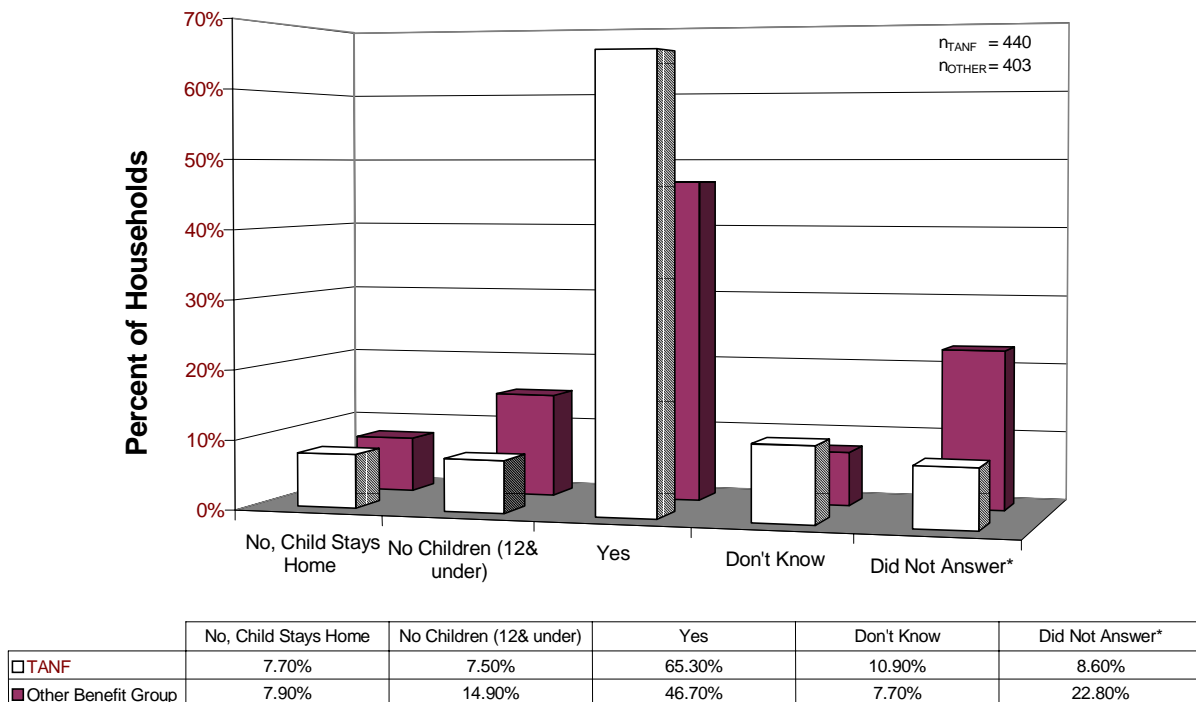
Source: Mickie Cooper, Carlsbad Municipal Transit System, and Cindy Vook, Job Developer, NM Works (1999, November 15).

### Transportation for Children

It is easy to think of the welfare-to-work transportation problem as just getting adults to and from jobs. Yet 64 percent of New Mexico’s TANF recipients are children. Consequently, transporting children is a major issue in welfare reform. Children are considered dependent until they reach the age of 18, or if in high school, until the age of 19 or the date of graduation, whichever comes first. Children no longer in school are considered dependent until the age of 18.

To quantify the need for childcare transportation, recipients were asked, **“If you are currently employed, or if you went to work tomorrow, would you need transportation to take your children (age 12 and under) to childcare or an after- or before-school program?”** Survey findings indicate that 65 percent of the TANF Group and 47 percent of the Other Benefit Group need transportation to take their children aged 12 and under to childcare or before- and after-school programs (as shown in *Figure 1.10*). Eleven percent of the TANF Group and eight percent of the Other Benefit Group did not know where their young children would go for childcare (and consequently did not know whether they would need transportation). Nine

**Figure 1.10 New Mexico Public Benefit Recipients  
Need for Childcare Transportation by Benefit Group**



Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

percent of TANF respondents did not answer the question, even though they have children in this age group who could not stay at home with a relative. TANF respondents in this nine percent were currently unemployed. Researchers infer that the respondents have simply not thought far enough ahead to know what they would do with their young children when they went to work. Accordingly, a more accurate percent of TANF respondents who need transportation for children to childcare is probably 85 percent (the sum of 65 percent yes, plus 11 percent don't know, plus 9 percent with children that age but no other older relative in home). Only eight percent of TANF clients reported that they could leave their children aged 12 and under at home with an older sibling or relative.

Finally, to understand better what transportation assistance recipients want most, the questionnaire asked, “**What types of transportation assistance would help you the most?**” Respondents could check as many choices as they wanted. Not surprisingly, the majority checked items related to operating a privately owned vehicle—the preferred transportation choice of the general public, as *Figure 1.11* shows. Both groups wanted help with gas money, vehicle insurance, vehicle maintenance, and help to buy a car.

**Figure 1.11 Most Helpful Transportation Assistance**

<b>TANF Group<sup>14</sup></b> (440)		<b>Other Benefits Group</b> (403)
49%	Coupon for gas	44%
41%	Help with car insurance	45%
40%	Help to buy a car	27%
35%	Money for car maintenance	28%
10%	Free bus pass	14%
10%	Transportation to childcare	6%

Data Source: the ATR Institute, TANF Transportation Survey, 1999

In many areas of the State, public transit does not exist. In most towns with a public transit system, passengers must call in advance to schedule a ride. And even where public transit is well-established, service may not be offered to the destinations and on days and at the hours when people without vehicles need access to the workplace. In addition, very few respondents

<sup>14</sup> Percentages exceed 100 because respondents could choose as many options as they wanted.

have had experience with carpools or vanpools. Consequently, few chose free bus passes or riding in carpools or vanpools.

Interestingly, only ten percent of TANF recipients and only six percent of the Other Benefit Group chose assistance with “transportation to childcare”. This seems to contradict the information respondents gave when asked specifically whether they needed transportation for their children to childcare. This response may indicate that for most TANF parents, transporting their children is simply below the horizon of need in the parent’s current mindset because the parent is not working.

### **Comparison of the ATRI TANF Transportation Survey Results with Other Databases and Surveys**

During the TANF intake procedure at County ISD Offices, applicants report whether they have a vehicle in the household. The ATRI took this ISD data for TANF households in June 1999 and sorted the households with vehicles by county. Comparative information for the percent of all households with vehicles by county was taken from 1990 US Census data. *Figure 1.12*, on page 17, compares the percent of TANF households with vehicles to the percent of all households with vehicles by county. In 13 counties, less than 60 percent of TANF households own a vehicle. In only two counties, Catron and DeBaca, do more than 80 percent of TANF households have a vehicle. These are both rural counties with small numbers of TANF households. For all households, the results are very different. In 30 counties more than 90 percent of all households own a vehicle. Only in Cibola, Guadalupe, and McKinley Counties do fewer than 90 percent of *all* households own a vehicle. Another NMHSD profile of TANF recipients aged 16 or older found that only 40 percent had a vehicle.<sup>15</sup> TANF clients in rural areas are more likely than clients in urban areas to have a vehicle. In fact, among the most rural Counties of the State—Catron and DeBaca—almost 100 percent of TANF clients have a vehicle in the household.

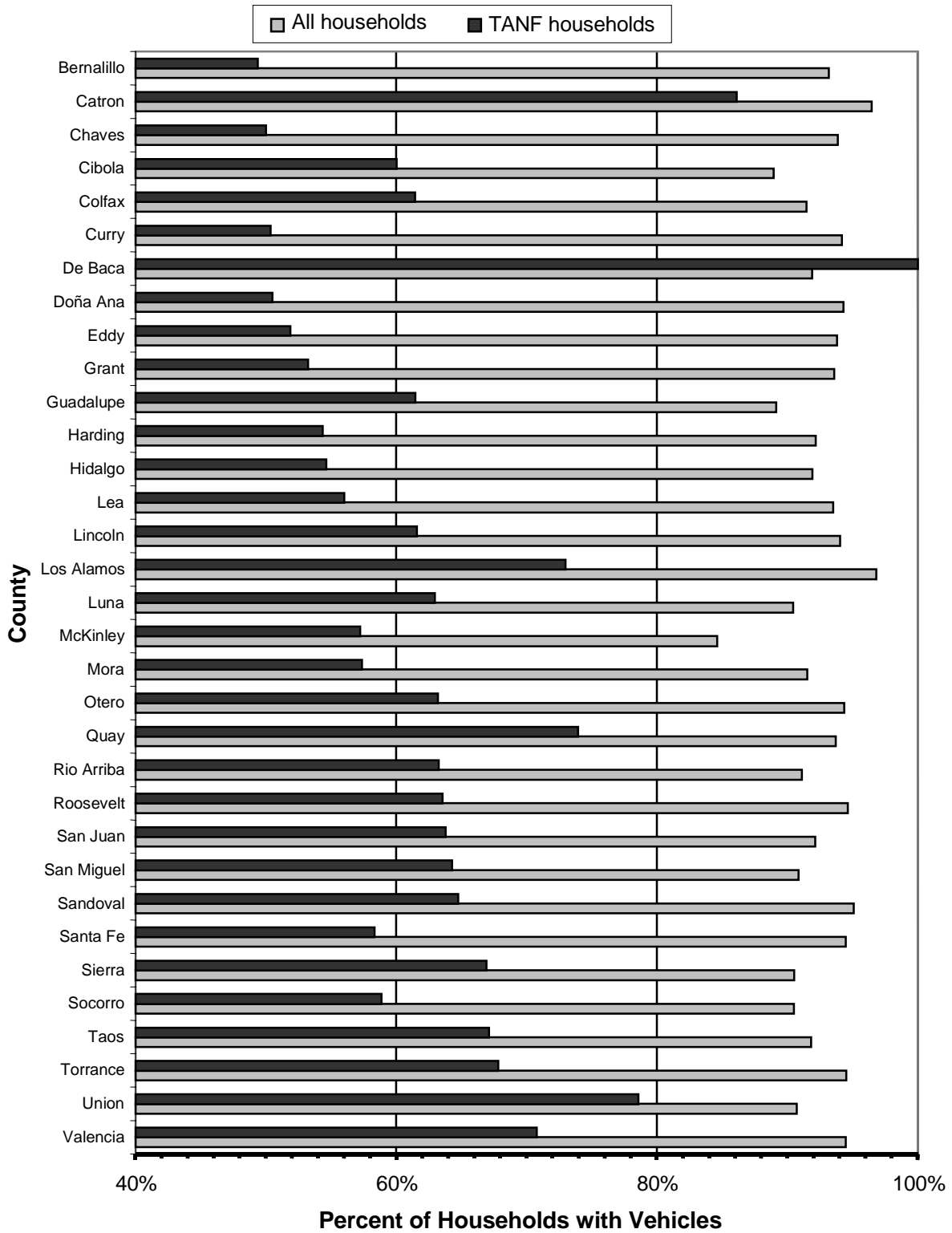
#### ***Doña Ana County Survey***

In 1998, the City of Las Cruces Transit Department surveyed 300 people at the Doña Ana and Sierra County ISD Offices, the NMDOL Offices in Las Cruces and Sunland Park, and the

---

<sup>15</sup> *Implementing Welfare Reform in New Mexico: A Partnership Plan of the Human Services and Labor Departments*, (1998, November), p. 15.

**Figure 1.12 Comparison of Households with Vehicles by County**



Data Source: Human Services Department, Income Support Division, TANF database, June 1999, and US Census Bureau, Travel to Work Characteristics for 50 Largest Cities in the US by Population, 1990 Census

Mesilla Valley Community of Hope who receive public assistance. Although the survey did not segregate responses by type of public assistance received (Medicaid, Food Stamps, General Assistance, or TANF), the information identifies a significant lack of transportation. A summary of the Doña Ana County survey results follows:

- ❖ 17 % of all respondents do not have a vehicle (n = 300)
- ❖ Greatest Transportation Problem
  - 31% getting to the doctor/hospital
  - 30% getting to shopping areas
  - 27% getting to work
- ❖ 17 % of all respondents do not have a vehicle (n = 300)
- ❖ Greatest Transportation Problem
  - 31% getting to the doctor/hospital
  - 30% getting to shopping areas
  - 27% getting to work
- ❖ Jobs and Transportation
  - 28% of respondents have been unable to accept a job due to lack of transportation
  - 18% of respondents have lost a job due to lack of transportation
- ❖ How People [Without a Vehicle] Travel to Work
  - 13% ride with a friend or relative
  - 10% walk
  - 9% ride the bus

Mike Noonchester, the Las Cruces Transit Department Director, reports that many welfare recipients have vehicles, but the vehicles do not work or are unreliable. Moreover, those that do run are not likely to meet air emissions standards in effect for parts of the El Paso, Texas, and Las Cruces, New Mexico, air shed. Taking these vehicles off the road would improve air quality, but make accessing jobs services even more difficult for low-income drivers.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Noonchester , Mike. Transit Director, City of Las Cruces . Interview. (1998, August 6).

## ***Bernalillo County Survey***

In 1997, the Bernalillo County Public Works Department conducted a transportation survey of 500 welfare recipients and homeless people in the County. The following is a summary of the findings:

- ❖ 42 percent of welfare recipients and 91% of homeless residents either do not drive or only have a car available occasionally.
- ❖ 75 percent of welfare recipients who are employed full-time usually have a car available, as compared to only 56% of welfare recipients who are unemployed and looking for work.
- ❖ 48 percent of welfare recipients who reported that they usually have a car available also reported that the vehicle is unavailable an average of one day per week due to various factors, such as maintenance problems or lack of gas money.<sup>17</sup>

As a whole, the surveys conducted by the ATRI, as well as Bernalillo, and Doña Ana Counties, along with the information provided by the ISD suggest that transportation barriers are significant for TANF recipients in both rural and urban areas. Furthermore, the number of vehicles in a household does not indicate accurately the availability of reliable transportation. Many welfare recipients have missed out on getting a job or have lost a job because they lacked reliable, affordable transportation. In areas where public transit systems exist, they do not always provide services to the destinations or at the times that clients need them most.

### **Current HSD Income Support Division (ISD) TANF Transportation Policies**

#### ***Exemption of Vehicle***

Under the New Mexico Works program, certain assets are exempted from the calculation of an applicant's income and liquid assets. These exemptions include the value of a home, a vehicle, and individual development accounts. There is no maximum on the value of the vehicle that can be excluded from the asset calculation.<sup>18</sup> This provision reemphasizes the importance of privately owned transportation in securing and maintaining employment.

---

<sup>17</sup> *Inventory of Transportation Service Providers: Bernalillo County New Mexico*. Prepared for the Bernalillo County Department of Public Works by LJS Consulting, June 1999.

<sup>18</sup> McFadden, Marise, NMHSD ISD, (1999, September 17).

### ***One-Time Emergency Funding***

TANF recipients can also receive up to \$300 in a one-time emergency grant from the ISD to pay for personal items necessary to accept a legitimate job offer or to retain employment. The funds can also be used for car repairs, special work clothing, fees for licensing and drug testing required by the employer, tools needed for the job, or costs of bringing a home into compliance with certification requirements of the Child Care Food Program. Costs must be incurred during the first thirty days of employment to qualify for this grant.

TANF recipients find out about the one-time-only \$300 emergency fund through their caseworkers and/or the New Mexico Works service provider. The caseworker or NM Works service provider can help recipients apply for this assistance. A request must be made on the Work Participation Agreement Form, and supporting documentation of the expense must be included. Car insurance payments are not covered by this one-time emergency grant. The one-time payment may be made as a reimbursement or made prospectively based on a billing statement for the expense. During fiscal year 1998, the ISD issued \$44,899.47 for 176 warrants for employment-related expenses.

### ***Reimbursement for Travel to Work Activities***

Through a local ISD Office, a TANF recipient may apply for a transportation subsidy in order to travel to or from a work activity. Work activities are outlined as follows:

- ❖ Unsubsidized employment
- ❖ Subsidized private-sector employment
- ❖ Subsidized public-sector employment
- ❖ Work experience
- ❖ On-the-job training
- ❖ Job search and job readiness assistant
- ❖ Community service
- ❖ Vocational education, as provided by the federal act
- ❖ Job-skills training activities directly related to employment
- ❖ Education directly related to employment for a participant who has not received a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency

- ❖ Satisfactory attendance at a secondary school or course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalency in the case of a participant who has not completed secondary school or received such certificate; and
- ❖ The provision of childcare services to a participant who is participating in a community service program.<sup>19</sup>

Transportation subsidy reimbursements are issued to the client only if requested and indicated on the Work Participation Agreement Form during the completion of the initial assessment. The mode of transportation (bicycle, bus, vanpool, carpool, private vehicle, or other) does not affect whether a client receives a travel reimbursement. The typical turnaround time for a TANF recipient to receive a travel-to-work-activities reimbursement is eight to ten working days. *Figure 1.13* shows the rate at which the ISD reimburses clients according to the number of eligible miles driven to work-related activities each month:

**Figure 1.13 ISD Reimbursement Rate for TANF Travel-to-Work Activities**

<u>Monthly Mileage</u>	<u>Amount</u>
0 – 499 miles	\$25
500 – 1,499 miles	\$50
1,500 – 2,499 miles	\$100
2,500+ miles	\$150

Data Source: Marise McFadden, NMHSD, ISD. September 17, 1999

During the 1998 fiscal year, the ISD paid out a total of \$248,088.38 to clients for work activities transportation.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Transportation for TANF Children***

The cost of a TANF child’s transportation is covered under the above policy, if the dependent child (or children) needs transportation to childcare, Head Start (or a similar program), and if the child accompanies the TANF parent, who is traveling to or from a work activity, as defined by NM Works. If dependent children travel to childcare, a before- or after-

<sup>19</sup> New Mexico’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Plan, July 1, 1997–December 31, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> McFadden, Marise. NMHSD, ISD, (1999, December 14).

school program, or Head Start and do not ride in the same vehicle (public or private) as the parent, the child's transportation costs are not reimbursed by the ISD.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Income Disregard***

Under the New Mexico Works Plan, the ISD differentiates part-time and full-time employment from a work activity (see list of work activities on pages 20-21). The ISD does not reimburse transportation costs for TANF individuals who are employed part-time or full-time. Under these circumstances, the ISD allows a fixed \$150-per-month **income disregard**, which is intended to offset expenses related to work, such as transportation. A TANF recipient who is employed has \$150 of her or his monthly gross income "disregarded" as long as the recipient's gross income is at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.<sup>22</sup> This means that the first \$150 of monthly gross income is not counted when determining the client's income level for calculation of monthly cash benefits. For example, if a TANF adult's income from work equaled \$800 per month, only \$650 of it would be used to calculate the amount of monthly cash benefits he or she received from the State.

### ***Short-Term Transportation Assistance for New Mexico Works Participants***

Under the contract funding formula negotiated with its five prime TANF providers for fiscal year 1999-2000, the ISD allocated \$75 per client to address each client's short-term, emergency transportation needs. Funds are intended to cover such needs as getting to a TANF provider for an assessment or traveling to a few training classes. However, the TANF prime contractor is free to use this allocation for any transportation solution, for example, purchasing transit passes or starting a vanpool or carpool for New Mexico Works participants. The amount of funding each prime contractor received is based upon an annual fee of \$75 per mandatory participant multiplied by the number of mandatory TANF participants residing within the contractor's service area as of March 31, 1999. The total transportation funds allocated to the five contractors are listed in *Figure 1.14*, on page 23.

---

<sup>21</sup> McFadden, Marise. NMHSD, ISD (2000, January 10).

<sup>22</sup> **Federal Poverty Level**—(Also known as the federal poverty threshold) is issued each year in the Federal Register by the US Department of Health and Human Services. The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use in administrative purposes—for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. The 1999 poverty threshold is \$8,667 for one person, \$11,483 for a family of one adult and one dependent child, \$13,423 for a family of one adult and two dependent children, and \$16,895 for a family of two adults and two dependent children. US Census Bureau. <<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/poverty.htm>>.

**Figure 1.14 Transportation Funds Allocated to New Mexico Works Contractors**

HSD Region	Prime Contractor	Number of Mandatory Participants	Transportation Funding/Participant	Transportation Funding Total
I	New Mexico Highlands University	2,241	\$ 75	\$168,075
II	San Juan Community College	4,834	\$ 75	\$362,550
III	New Mexico State University	4,567	\$ 75	\$342,525
IV	Eastern New Mexico University	3,637	\$ 75	\$272,775
V	University of New Mexico Continuing Education	4,722	\$ 75	\$354,150
<b>TOTAL</b>		\$20,001		\$1,500,075

Data Source: Marise McFadden, NMHSD, ISD (1999, September 15)

***Exemptions from New Mexico Works Participation***

The State must provide transportation assistance to clients who request it and who are participating in a work program. There is no exemption from work allowed in the New Mexico Works Cash Assistance Program for lack of transportation unless a client qualifies for a transportation waiver. New Mexico Works participants will be evaluated on an individual basis and must demonstrate “good cause” to qualify for a transportation waiver to avoid being sanctioned for nonparticipation.<sup>23</sup> Parents with a child under the age of six may be exempted from work participation if unable to obtain appropriate childcare or if they lack transportation.<sup>24</sup> The Child Care Services Bureau of Children, Youth, and Families Department (NMCYFD) determines childcare needs and availability under the preceding conditions.

***No Time Limit***

There is no time limit on how long an adult TANF recipient receives ISD transportation support if the individual meets his/her monthly participation standard of 29 total hours per week, 20 of which must be spent in a primary work activity.

**Summary of Chapter One**

Securing reliable and affordable transportation is a major hurdle for TANF households. For every adult TANF recipient who needs transportation to go to work, educational and training locations, counseling services, or to attend to family tasks, there are on average two dependent

<sup>23</sup> McFadden, Marise. NMHSD, ISD. (1999, December 14).

<sup>24</sup> McFadden, Marise. NMHSD, ISD. (1999, December 14).

children who most probably need transportation to pre-school or after-school programs, Head Start, or childcare. With only 20 percent of the TANF recipients surveyed reporting access to a vehicle four or more days per week, and with the median TANF vehicle valued at \$620, planners and policy makers cannot rely on the private vehicle as a reliable transportation solution for the majority of TANF families.

In the past, the ISD has implemented multiple types of transportation assistance directed to TANF individuals. But these programs do not meet the costs of everyday transportation; they do not apply to transportation of TANF children; and they do not address the long-term transportation needs of TANF families and other low-income working families who are trying to stay off public assistance.

The following chapter describes the travel patterns and destinations of a typical TANF household and introduces the complexity of transportation planning in welfare reform.