

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

New Mexico's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients have many transportation needs, but few personal transportation resources. On a typical day, members of the participant's family may leave home and return at different times and travel to and from scattered destinations. TANF families' transportation problems are compounded by the State's low population density, the concentration of job growth along the Rio Grande corridor, long commutes from communities with low-cost housing to job areas, critical shortages in transportation for young children, and lack of regional public transportation systems. In rural areas, especially, the State faces a severe challenge in addressing the transportation needs of TANF recipients.

While the challenges are great, the opportunities are plentiful for agencies and departments to create partnerships that will remove some of these transportation barriers. Through Memoranda of Understanding and changes in standard operating procedures, departments and programs that offer transportation services can pool existing resources, eliminate duplication, and provide expanded services with increased cost-effectiveness. In addition to the organizations that provide urban and rural public mass transit, human service agencies provide transportation for senior citizens, developmentally disabled people, and Medicaid recipients; the New Mexico State Department of Education (NMSDE) provides transportation for public school students; and federally funded Head Start programs offer limited transportation service for three- to five-year-old children from low-income families. Meshing these resources into a safe, coordinated transportation service would serve the community better and take a great stride forward in addressing the problems of the State's transportation-disadvantaged residents.

Conclusions

Conclusions from Chapter One: Quantifying TANF Recipients' Transportation Resources

Securing reliable and affordable transportation is a major dilemma for TANF recipients and their families. For every adult TANF individual who needs transportation to and from jobs and support services, there are, on average, two dependent children who may need transportation

to pre-school or after-school programs, Head Start, or childcare. Sixty-five to 85 percent of TANF households surveyed reported needing transportation for their children.¹

While 79 percent of TANF recipients surveyed reported having one or more vehicles in their household, 41 percent of TANF recipients with vehicles reported that for three or more days during the previous week, they were unable to use any vehicles. The reasons given most frequently were (1) I had no money for gas, (2) the vehicle was not working, (3) someone else was using it, and (4) the insurance had lapsed.

While most TANF families consider a privately owned vehicle as their only transportation solution, the reliability of their vehicles is questionable. The median TANF vehicle model year is 1987, and the median vehicle trade-in value is \$620. Moreover, the transportation resources are not much better for the low-income working families who do not qualify for TANF but receive Food Stamps or Medicaid. Unreliable transportation can severely affect a person's employment opportunities and ability to maintain employment. Fifty-three percent of TANF clients reported that they had missed out on getting a job, and 41 percent reported that they had lost a job because they lacked transportation.

In the past, TANF adults' transportation needs were addressed with individualized, short-term approaches, which did not adequately cover the costs of transportation to work, did not apply to TANF children, and did not provide long-term solutions. The NM Human Services Department (NMHSD), Income Support Division (ISD) has begun implementing systemwide transportation support services for TANF individuals to address these unmet needs.

Conclusions from Chapter Two: Travel Patterns and Destinations of TANF Households

The typical TANF case is composed of a single mother and two dependent children. Lack of transportation that is affordable and reliable is a major barrier to the success of welfare reform in New Mexico. Rural residents are especially vulnerable. They have the fewest job opportunities, the longest commute distances, and the fewest transportation alternatives to private vehicles. The critical job-related transportation needs of such a family can be divided into four areas: the transportation of adults to support services, educational programs, and work,

¹ The range is due to interpretation of responses. In addition to the 65% of respondents with children age 12 and under who reported that they needed transportation to childcare, another 20% with children in the age group did not know whether they would need transportation. Most of these adults were not working at the time of the survey.

and the transportation of children. Adults may need transportation to support services, such as ISD Offices, WorkForce Development Centers, TANF and Welfare-to-Work (WTW) providers, substance abuse treatment facilities, and domestic violence counseling. They may also need transportation to educational and literacy programs, as well as job-preparation and work-simulation classes. They will also need transportation to conduct job searches, to apply and interview for jobs, and finally, to get to work. Long-term transportation support is critical for job retention. TANF recipients tend to cycle in and out of jobs quickly,² placing pressure on these people to secure another job quickly as NM Works requirements limit the length of unemployment acceptable for continued eligibility. Because most TANF recipients qualify only for entry-level jobs, and the wages for these jobs are low,³ most recipients do not earn enough money to buy or operate a reliable vehicle. Without ongoing transportation assistance, those with low-wages are vulnerable to a transportation “Catch-22”: people need reliable and affordable transportation to get and keep most jobs, yet people need to have a job to pay for reliable and affordable transportation.

The children’s ages determine their travel destinations. For example, children between the ages of three and five, inclusive, may go to Head Start, while children between the ages of six and twelve, inclusive, may go to before- and after-school programs or childcare. Transportation for all of these programs is in critically short supply. As destinations and schedules vary among TANF household members, transportation options must be flexible to meet those demands.

Conclusions from Chapter Three: Public and Human Services Transportation Funding

Prior to welfare reform in 1996, two federal agencies provided the principle funding for transportation services for the general public and special populations. The US Department of Transportation (USDOT), through its Federal Transit Administration (FTA), has funded general transportation, including mass transit systems in urbanized and rural areas, transportation services for the elderly and disabled, technical assistance for rural transportation, and urban and

² Berg, Olson, and Conrad (1992), as quoted in *Jobs for Welfare Recipients*, by Timothy J. Bartik.

³ The TANF recipients who do not have a GED or high school diploma do not qualify for some higher-paying service sector jobs, such as the Wal-Mart Distribution Center and the Rio Rancho call centers. Interviews with New Mexico Department of Labor (NMDOL) WorkForce Development Center Directors in Sandoval, Bernalillo, and Valencia Counties indicate that most TANF recipients are being placed in clerical jobs (November 1999).

state transit planning. The US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) has funded transportation for the following groups: Medicaid recipients, people undergoing vocational rehabilitation, disadvantaged preschoolers attending Head Start or Early Head Start Programs, senior citizens, and disabled adults and children.

With the reform of federal and state welfare programs, a new transportation need emerged: transportation both for people moving from welfare to work and for those in other benefit groups, such as the recipients of Food Stamps and the working poor. Rather than continue separate transportation services, these three federal agencies adopted a new philosophy of transportation planning and programming.

In December 1998, these two departments, along with the USDOL issued *Interagency Guidance: Use of TANF, WTW, and Job Access Funds for Transportation*. In effect, they offered the states greater flexibility in program design, while also requiring state agencies and departments to coordinate transportation planning and program implementation. Prior to this mandate, most states addressed the lack of WTW transportation at the individual TANF-client level instead of taking a systematic approach. States must now demonstrate a level of transportation coordination that integrates human services' transportation and public transportation programs.

States have begun to collaborate across departments and programs to resolve transportation shortages, reduce per-trip costs, expand and improve services, become more efficient and cost-effective, and reduce the duplication of services. Transportation coordination is especially important in New Mexico because of the lack of State-funded public transit.

Conclusions from Chapter Four: Pulling Together: Best Practices in Transportation of TANF and WTW Clients

Welfare reform in New Mexico is occurring in accordance with federal mandates. In 1998, the major funding sources of welfare-to-work (wtw) transportation—the USDHHS, the US Department of Labor (USDOL), and the USDOT—issued joint guidelines to states for transportation spending. These guidelines call on states to coordinate transportation planning and program implementation to provide better transportation services to more people while reducing program costs. The best welfare-to-work transportation practices are those that best serve the clients' immediate needs, while operating within fiscal restraints and fostering clients' long-term self-sufficiency.

New Mexico can learn from experiences of other states in solving WTW transportation problems. Instead of operating fragmented transportation programs for the general public, school students, Medicaid recipients, Head Start attendees, developmentally disabled people, seniors, and TANF clients, many states are coordinating human service and public transportation programs. Coordination can occur, to a lesser or greater extent, from cooperation in sharing information and riders to jointly using the same dispatcher or maintenance facilities or consolidating all operations and administration. Coordination of services leads to many benefits: it eliminates duplication of service, produces economies of scale, improves quality of service, increases the amount of service offered, and reduces overall costs.

In 1986, the USDOT and the USDHHS formed a coordinating council to work together to address regulatory barriers and solve common problems related to the coordination of transportation. Since that time, agencies in many other states have followed suit by forming coordinating councils to facilitate the coordination of human services transportation in their states. If appropriately applied, as it has been in other states, coordination can lead to significant reductions in per-trip operating costs for transportation providers, while increasing ridership and allowing the smaller companies that provide transportation services an opportunity to expand their businesses.⁴

To meet the federal mandate of coordinating TANF, WTW, and Access-to-Jobs (ATJ) transportation funding,⁵ New Mexico must undertake at least level-two coordination—joint use.⁶ The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD); the NMHSD; the NM Department of Labor (NMDOL); the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (NMCYFD); the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH); the State Agency on Aging (SAOA); the Economic Development Department; and the NMSDE are appropriate agencies to forge Memoranda of Agreements that would facilitate and implement transportation coordination by addressing regulatory obstacles and turf issues. By doing so, publicly funded vehicles could be used jointly and funding streams could be leveraged to provide affordable, dependable transportation for all public-transit-dependent people.

⁴ Federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. "Why Coordinate?" [online] <http://www.ccamweb.org/benefits_and_costs.html>. (Accessed 1999, December 3).

⁵ Idaho Transportation Department. (Undated). *Coordinated Transportation*, Chapter 1, and Ohio Department of Transportation. (1997, October). *A Handbook for Coordinating Transportation Services*, Chapters 4-5.

⁶ Under *joint use*, clients from one agency may ride in another agency's vehicles. Each agency pays for its own clients.

In addition to coordinating transportation, communities throughout New Mexico can test other innovations and adapt them to their local needs:

1. Charity car programs may be used in remote regions where this option is the most cost-effective;
2. Commuter-driven carpools and vanpools, combined with feeder services,⁷ can be started in rural areas where workers must commute long distances and public transit is not available or cost-effective;
3. The NMHSD's regional councils can begin negotiating with local school boards and school bus operators to permit the transportation of some New Mexico Works participants on school buses;
4. State and local governments can locate facilities for human service, education, training, and childcare in close proximity to each other where practical;
5. Each community can designate public facilities to serve as community centers;
6. The NMDOL and NMHSD can adopt guidelines that suggest ways in which transportation services can be systematically integrated into statewide WTW and TANF initiatives; and
7. Finally, policymakers and program managers can establish program prerequisites to ensure that the transportation needs of TANF children are met. The integration of transportation for parents and children could smooth some of the bumps caused by the TANF parents' transition from welfare to work. With transportation for TANF children who attend childcare, after- and before-school programs, and Head Start guaranteed by adequate program funds, TANF adults can more easily focus on issues of securing and retaining a job as well as acquiring new job skills.

Coordination of transportation services offers many opportunities for the State of New Mexico. Examples of these benefits are: that remote areas and underserved populations can be reached and serviced better; that cost savings through economies of scale can be realized; and that transportation services can be improved to provide riders with greater comfort and safety. New Mexico has the added opportunity to benefit from the experiences of many other states in designing new programs so that the programs implemented in New Mexico can be tailored to the

⁷ A feeder service uses a local vehicle, such as a school bus or senior center van, to pick up riders at various locations and drop them off at a central location. This location becomes the pickup point for transportation to work on an intracounty or intercounty commuter-driven vanpool or carpool.

State's needs. Establishing an interagency coordinating council could also spur further interagency cooperation in other areas. Demonstration of joint-use coordination of transportation would keep New Mexico in compliance with TANF, WTW, and ATJ guidelines for funding. The benefits derived from coordination could include positive solutions to many of the transportation problems of moving people from welfare to work.

Conclusions from Chapter Five: Financial Decision-Making and Grant Management Tools

The importance of financial tools in welfare-to-work reform cannot be overstated. Three main funding sources for different transportation services are available for Welfare-to-Work and TANF recipients.⁸ Because many of the individualized methods of funding, such as vouchers and one-time emergency funds, have proven ineffective in fully addressing welfare-to-work transportation barriers, more systemic solutions are needed.

A major component of funding is cost—primarily capital, operating, and administrative costs. To ensure that each program pays its fair share, costs incurred from each agency must be attributed correctly. The three-variable model is the preferred method of cost allocation in some states, such as Ohio, because the approach gives a more accurate and complete look at the cost allocations. This method accounts for three categories of operating costs: those related to vehicle miles (fuel, tires, vehicle depreciation, and insurance), those related to vehicle hours (operator wages and fringe benefits), and those related to fixed costs (administrative staff wages and benefits, plus rent and utilities). The need for certainty in determining the true cost of service is crucial in contract pricing given that the financial stability of a coordinated transit system depends on recovering the actual program expenditures incurred while providing contracted services. Public transit fare structures, for instance, differ substantially from contract rates. Therefore, public transit systems that contract with other agencies and departments to provide rides for TANF or WTW clients must negotiate a rate that is equivalent to the true cost per trip.

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

⁸ Three Acts in particular have created a watershed of opportunity to fund transportation initiatives that benefit Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, Welfare-to-Work (WTW) clients, and other low-income people: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Restoration Act of 1996 (PRWORA), the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA), and the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21), which was signed in 1998.

have strong leadership and financial commitment from their executive branch; they have one or more champions in their state legislature; they have secured the business community's support to offer employer-sponsored transit benefits and other initiatives; and program managers and directors have earned the trust of their colleagues in other agencies.⁹

Conclusions from Chapter Six: The Composite Database of Publicly Funded Vehicles

The ATR Institute (ATRI) conducted detailed surveys of the State's public and human services transportation providers regarding their vehicle inventories and use of their vehicles. Organizations contacted included Head Start providers, centers for senior citizens, community service providers for the developmentally disabled, and urban and rural public transit systems. Vehicle information provided by the NMSDE and SAOA was also used. The ATRI updated and compiled vehicle information into a statewide composite database, never before completed in New Mexico, which can be used in the future to track vehicle model year, condition, mileage, passenger capacity, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, and base location (city and county).

The total number of publicly funded vehicles in the programs inventoried as of September 1999 was 697 vans and 3,441 buses, which includes 3,023 school buses. Many of these vehicles, such as school buses and senior citizen vans, are used for limited hours during the week and sit idle on the weekends. The total number of publicly and privately owned school buses—3,023—exceeds, by far, the number of vehicles of all other programs combined. Senior center vans makeup the second largest vehicle fleet—566. The composite database can be used to identify where a vehicle shortage exists and where transportation services need to be expanded, as well as to coordinate transportation services between programs. Knowing the number, locations, and condition of vehicles, as well as the days and times of vehicle use, will enable the Public Transit Programs Bureau (PTPB) of the NMSHTD to set priorities concerning where the additional vehicles may be needed. The database may also be a useful tool for developing and writing grant and funding proposals. The composite vehicle database will aid the State in identifying more efficient ways of distributing federal funds, thus enabling the State to

⁹ ATRI summary based on presentation by Dr. Toye Brown, Director of the Massachusetts Access to Jobs Program, American Passenger Transportation Association Annual Meeting, Access to Jobs Panel, Orlando, FL, October 12, 1999.

implement cost-effective coordinated transportation services for WTW clients using transportation resources that are currently available.

**Conclusions from Chapter Seven:
A Survey of Transportation Providers Regarding Coordination Barriers**

To assess the perspectives of various program operators toward coordinating transportation services, the ATRI sent questionnaires to 338 of these operators. The questionnaire asked about the transportation services provided and asked the operators to identify obstacles to providing coordinated transportation services. These transportation providers in New Mexico report the following as the major barriers to coordinating transportation services with other programs: the need for additional vehicles, the difficulty of finding drivers who are willing to work late hours, and funding requirements that prohibit sharing program vehicles. The continuing need many programs have for additional vehicles is due to the expansion of program service areas. To solve the problem of prohibitions against sharing vehicles, the funding sources will need to coordinate efforts with each other, as well as with State and local governments.

Recommendations and Legislative Proposals

The ATRI analysis of the information gathered in the *Toolkit* has yielded recommendations for several entities that have an interest in providing transportation for New Mexico's welfare recipients. These include the members of the Welfare Reform Oversight Committee and the other State Legislators, the policymakers and program managers in the executive branch departments involved in welfare reform or public and human services transportation, metropolitan and regional planning organizations, local governments, and the general public.

The following fourteen steps emerged as recommendations from the ATRI's careful analysis of the detailed data collected during the study period (March - December 1999). These recommendations are advanced for the purpose of public policy discussion and program development.

1. The executive departments could improve access to services and reduce transportation costs by co-locating facilities such as schools, before- and after-school programs, childcare centers, Head Start, and literacy programs, USDOL One-Stop WorkForce Development Centers, and

Income Support Division offices.¹⁰ Co-location would reduce the transportation demand of TANF recipients by clustering passengers and destinations. In rural areas, local governments could develop school-based community centers to facilitate access to services and to lower transportation costs.

2. The NMDOL, in conjunction with the NMDOH, could determine the feasibility of operating mobile substance abuse treatment facilities in underserved areas by conducting a cost-benefit analysis.
3. By establishing a “Voluntary Relocation Fund,” the NMHSD could reduce welfare-to-work transportation costs by assisting New Mexico Works participants in moving to communities where employment, transit, and/or ridesharing are more readily available.
4. By executing a Memorandum of Understanding, the NMSHTD, the NMHSD, the NMDOL, the NMSDE, the SAOA, the NMCYFD, and the NMDOH could facilitate public and human services transportation coordination.
5. The transportation needs of both the adult clients of TANF and WTW programs and their dependent children could be addressed by all programs that receive TANF and WTW funds if the NMHSD and NMDOL required those programs to do so. The NMHSD and NMDOL could require all TANF and WTW-funded programs to provide on-site or nearby childcare and include in their future funding proposals a detailed plan to address the transportation needs of adult TANF and WTW clients, as well as those of their dependent children.
6. State departments could jointly pilot innovative and cost-effective transportation initiatives by doing the following:
 - a. Using feeder services combined with carpools or vanpools for transportation to work.
 - b. Contracting with a transportation broker (which may be a WTW/TANF provider, public transit agency, or nonprofit organization) to screen callers for human services transportation and make referrals to the most cost-effective transportation provider.
 - c. Building partnerships with local automobile dealers for no-interest used vehicle loans for eligible New Mexico Works participants.

¹⁰ Co-location (Also called One-Stop Shopping): The general concept that services can be made more accessible and service delivery can be more efficient through establishing a common site and coordination of services that are normally provided by more than one agency.

- d. Supporting, through the NMDOL and the Small Business Administration, the development of entrepreneurial businesses to provide local or regional transportation services.
 - e. Establishing charity car programs on a pilot-study basis in remote areas of the State where that option is the most cost-effective transportation alternative.
 - f. Creating a license category under the Public Regulation Commission Certificate of Convenience and Necessity for shared shuttle service (a subscription ride service operated by a private for-profit organization).
7. To collect, maintain, and standardize information reported in the composite database of publicly funded passenger vans and buses, the Legislature could allocate funds for this to the PTPB. The PTPB could then establish a standard form for the composite vehicle inventory so that important vehicle characteristics, such as condition, mileage, age, and ADA compliance could be tracked. In addition, to increase efficiency and to monitor costs across program and region, transportation providers could record costs per trip, per mile, and per hour.
 8. A *uniform transportation assessment* of all New Mexico Works applicants could be done during the initial intake session at the offices of either the local ISD of the NMHSD or the TANF/WTW provider. This information could be used to assess participants' transportation needs and resources, as well as to adjust funding levels for transportation programs.
 9. As needed, the NMHSD and NMDOL could extend transportation support services to the WTW and NM Works client for up to one year after the participant's first date of employment.
 10. A "New Mexico Transportation Coordinating Council" (NMTCC) could be established and funded through legislation drafted by the WROC. The NMTCC's duties would be to:
 - ❖ Facilitate the coordination of public and human services transportation;
 - ❖ Provide a single coordinated funding stream accessible to local areas to aid them in providing wtw transportation;
 - ❖ Establish uniform guidelines for allowable transportation expenses and standardized reporting requirements for all agencies and programs that receive federal or State transportation funds;

- ❖ Evaluate local and regional wtw transportation and ATJ proposals for compliance with coordination criteria and, where applicable, make funding recommendation decisions;
- ❖ Identify initiatives on the State level to facilitate implementation of cost-effective transportation services. (For example, bulk purchases of capital equipment, auto insurance pools, and payment plans for New Mexico Works participants and other low-income individuals would help); and
- ❖ Identify long-term transportation funding strategies to ensure that workers do not lose their jobs due to lack of reliable transportation once federal WTW and TANF program funds are exhausted.

The position of “Coordination Manager for Human Services Transportation” could be created, and this person could be given sufficient support staff and funding to administer all aspects of human services transportation coordination, contracts and grants management, training, reporting, and performance monitoring. The Manager could staff the Transportation Coordinating Council. Other duties of the Manager would include convening statewide and regional human services transportation trainings and monitoring local programs to ensure that State coordination requirements are met.

The Council should include:

- ❖ The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department;
- ❖ The New Mexico Human Services Department;
- ❖ The New Mexico Department of Labor;
- ❖ The New Mexico Department of Children, Youth, and Family Services;
- ❖ The New Mexico Department of Health;
- ❖ The State Agency on Aging;
- ❖ The New Mexico State Department of Education;
- ❖ Urban Transit Providers;
- ❖ Rural Transit Providers;
- ❖ The Association of Developmental Disability Providers; and
- ❖ The New Mexico Head Start Association.

Working groups could also include ad hoc members and advisors from other organizations, such as, but not limited to, faith-based social services, advisory groups, the automobile sales industry, educational institutions, economic development agencies, regional

planning organizations, metropolitan planning organizations, TANF and WTW providers, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the NMSDE.

11. To ensure that the community's interests are well served in rural areas, the NMHSD's regional councils could spearhead transportation planning. The regional councils could partner with the regional and local planning organizations to develop interagency plans and grant applications for human services transportation and ATJ. Such plans could be fully integrated with the regional transportation plan and could conform to statewide coordination policies. In urban areas, regional councils could work with metropolitan planning organizations and local governments for a similar purpose.
12. Because the cost of Medicaid transportation dwarfs that of transportation provided by other State human services programs, the NMHSD and NMDOH could conduct a comprehensive, statewide nonemergency Medicaid transportation study. At a minimum, the study could address the coordination issues presented in this report.
13. The PTPB could conduct an assessment of insurance pools for low-income drivers and for commuter-driven vanpools.
14. The NMDOL and NMHSD could conduct an economic analysis of hourly wages and transportation costs for urban and rural New Mexico Works and WTW participants who have been placed in entry-level jobs. This analysis of hourly wages could help determine how long transportation support services would be offered to TANF and WTW clients.

Based on research and analysis performed by the ATRI for the PTPB in the last year, proposals for transportation legislation for the 2000 State legislative session have been reviewed by the WROC. The proposed legislation includes:

- ❖ An appropriation of \$150,000 to the NMSHTD to be used to design and implement a pilot "charity car" program to assist New Mexico Works and WTW participants in meeting work and training requirements.
- ❖ An appropriation of \$350,000 to the PTPB to be used to design and implement a "coordinated feeder service" and a "commuter-driven vanpool," using existing State-purchased and State-leased vehicles, by which commuters from rural areas of southern Doña Ana County would be transported to urban jobs centers in Las Cruces and El Paso.
- ❖ An appropriation of \$100,000 to the ATRI to be used to create and maintain a standardized composite vehicle inventory of passenger vehicles purchased by federal,

state, local, and tribal governments, for the purpose of coordinating transportation for the public and improving the efficiency of transportation services and providing cost-effective programming.

- ❖ An appropriation of \$125,000 to conduct a comparative analysis of hourly wages and transportation costs to determine what transportation support services are necessary for New Mexico Works and WTW participants who have been placed in entry-level jobs.

The ATRI asks that the following bills, which were passed by the New Mexico House of Representatives and the New Mexico Senate in the 1999 Legislative Session, but vetoed by the Governor, be reintroduced:

- S37 Relating to Public Assistance; Donating Certain School Buses to the New Mexico Works Program; no appropriation.
- S616 Creating a Transportation Coordinating Council; Providing for Coordination of State and Local Transportation Resources.

The above two bills would need to be amended after reintroduction, or comparable substitute bills would need to be prepared for the first committee. S616 would require an appropriation.

Conclusion

As New Mexico addresses the significant transportation challenges that impede TANF families in their move toward self-sufficiency, the rewards will become apparent. Agencies and departments can create partnerships that will remove some of these transportation barriers, meshing scarce resources into a safe, coordinated transportation service that could better serve communities. Doing so would resolve many problems for the State's transportation-disadvantaged residents. By supporting hard-pressed working families and helping people to make the transition from welfare to work, all New Mexicans would be encouraged to accept responsibility for their families and their future. Providing a systematic approach to addressing the lack of transportation options for TANF and WTW families would help expand opportunity, help strengthen the State's economy, and help create a healthier future for all New Mexicans.