

## Massachusetts Special Needs Student Transportation Initiative 2009-10

### Midyear Status Report

DESE has provided MOEC with \$100,000 to help sustain the statewide efforts of the special needs student transportation task force. Grant funds have been used to provide staff training and technical assistance to networks and/or individual Collaboratives that meet the following criteria:

- Have a measurable evidence of commitment to participate
- Have a reasonable chance to succeed
- Have a plan of action that includes action steps, timetable, and outcomes
- Have a plan to generate sufficient income to support the ongoing network administrative services

Several proposals were submitted and awards have been granted. To date, approximately 60% of the funds have been obligated. Current recipients are Blackstone Valley, Southern Worcester, FLLAC, BICO and Southeastern Massachusetts Collaboratives.

In addition to providing this assistance, MOEC is providing a number of additional services. These include:

- Updating the transportation link of the MOEC website with information and material for providers and school districts
- Preparing reports as requested by DESE and task force members
- Exploring additional opportunities for savings such as coordinating transportation of residential students and using district-operated vehicles to offer transportation to similar destinations to students from other districts
- Monitoring relevant legislative and regulatory actions and providing this informing to task force members

## January 2010 Status Report by Region

### Metro Boston Region

The network was established as a result of the grant initiative. The Metro Boston Region includes districts that belong to one or more of these three Collaboratives: LABBB, EDCO and CASE. The region was created when several LABBB and EDCO districts agreed to work together to establish the Metro Boston Inter-collaborative Transportation Network. LABBB serves as the lead Collaborative for Network transportation. This year, the Network transported approximately 329 students from six LABBB and EDCO districts in 102 vehicles. The network is fully self-sustaining. The network has saved member districts more than \$323,000.

Other Collaborative-managed transportation in the region:

- LABBB leases 73 vehicles to transport students to its own programs.
- CASE Collaborative provides transportation for 502 students.

### Metrowest Region

The Metrowest Region includes districts that belong to one or more of the following Collaboratives: ACCEPT, TEC, BICO, and SPOKE. At the present time there is no inter-collaborative network. Limited grant funds have been made available to BICO this year to try to expand their transportation-contracted services to include TEC districts that contract with the same vendor. Other transportation is provided by Collaboratives. This includes BICO contracting with one vendor to transport 139 students from eight districts. The same vendor transported an additional 133 students from four TEC districts.

Other Collaborative-managed transportation in the region:

- ACCEPT transports 400 member district students to out of district programs.
- Two SPOKE districts contract to transport out-of-district students.
- TEC transports students to their own programs.

### Southeast Region

The Southeast Region includes districts that belong to one or more of the following Collaboratives: North River, South Shore, Pilgrim Area and CHARMS. As a result of the grant initiative, many of their member districts agreed to establish the Southeast Inter-collaborative Transportation Network, with North River Collaborative (NRC) serving as the lead Collaborative. The network owns or leases 35 vehicles to transport 216 students, an increase of over 130% from its first year. This has saved its participating districts approximately \$600,000. Using the administrative revenue it has generated, the Southeast Network has become fully self-sustaining.

Other Collaborative-managed transportation in the region:

- Charms Collaborative contracts with a vendor to transport about 396 students from 18 districts to out-of-district programs.

### Northeast Region

The Northeast Region includes districts that belong to one or more of the following Collaboratives: SEEM, GLEC, North Shore, and MECSPED. As a result of the grant initiative, these Collaboratives organized the Northeast Inter-collaborative Transportation Network. SEEM Collaborative is the lead

collaborative. Since its inception, the network has saved its districts over \$1,400,000. Presently the Network's provider transports 873 students from 70 districts on 183 routes. The network is fully self-sustaining from the administrative revenue it generates.

Other Collaborative-managed transportation in the region:

- MECSPED transports 151 students primarily to its own programs.
- GLEC transports students to its own program.
- The North Shore Consortium has 17 vehicles used primarily to transport students to its own programs.

### Central Massachusetts Region

The region includes districts that belong to one or more of the following Collaboratives: FLLAC, CAPS, Southern Worcester, and Blackstone Valley. Initial efforts to establish a single inter-collaborative transportation network were not successful largely because of the sizeable geographic area and the variety of different needs of the districts. However, several of the Collaboratives have opted either to continue their own networking or in a few cases to expand services to include new districts. Grant funds are being used to support three of the initiatives in this region:

- Blackstone Valley transportation services were established this year as a result of the initiative and saved participating districts over \$300,000, or more than 35%, from the previous year. Plans are underway to generate the revenue that will allow this initiative to be fully self-sustaining.
- Southern Worcester Collaborative is receiving help to extend its services to include the City of Worcester and additional Southern Worcester districts.
- Technical assistance is being provided to the FLLAC Collaborative to offer networked services to districts in Northern Worcester County. The Collaborative is exploring the possibility of working with MART, the regional transit authority that transports a number of the students from their Collaborative districts.

Other Collaborative-managed transportation in the region:

- CAPS Collaborative transports students to its own programs.
- Assabet Valley Collaborative contracts for transportation services for over 350 students from nine member districts.
- Southern Worcester Collaborative transports approximately 80 students, mostly to their own collaborative classes.

### South Coast Region

The region includes districts that belong to one or more of the following Collaboratives: READS, Southeastern Mass, South Coast and Cape Cod. Grant funds have been made available to assist in establishing the South Coast Inter-collaborative Network. Presently many of these districts from this region have agreed to explore participation in networked transportation.

Other Collaborative-managed transportation in the region:

- Cape Cod has a long history of transporting special education students in its own vehicles.
- Southeastern Mass Collaborative owns or leases vehicles that transport students to their own programs.

## Western Massachusetts Region

Efforts to establish network transportation systems in Western Massachusetts were unsuccessful. Lower Pioneer Valley Collaborative has transported both special education and regular education students from its member districts for many years.

### Summary

- Many school districts are now routinely sharing transportation services
- New opportunities for transportation sharing are being created
- The costs of student transportation are being better managed
- Student transportation services have been improved