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Transportation is the Bridge to Opportunity: CCAM-TAC Addresses Pickaway County Transportation Needs

CIRCLEVILLE, OHIO — Local residents, community leaders and agency partners met recently to discuss ongoing transportation challenges and limited resources in Pickaway County. The session was facilitated by Bill Wagner, Director of the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility – Technical Assistance Center (CCAM-TAC), during a meeting of the Pickaway County Transportation Coordination Council.

“Transportation is the bridge to opportunity,” Wagner told attendees. “Every trip matters — whether it’s to a doctor’s appointment, a job interview or the grocery store. Our role is to help local communities like Pickaway County find practical ways to connect people with the transportation they need.”

CCAM-TAC is a national technical assistance center funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and operated by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). The Center’s mission is to improve transportation access for people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes by strengthening coordination among local, state, and federal partners.

Identifying Gaps and Priorities

The meeting included participants from Fayette, Franklin, Pickaway, and Ross counties, who worked together to identify transportation gaps and opportunities for collaboration. The local request for technical assistance came from Traci Harris, Community Resources Director for PICCA, who began the project while serving as Pickaway County’s Mobility Manager.

“Transportation touches every part of community life — employment, health, education, and social connection,” Harris said. “Our goal is to create a mobility plan that improves quality of life for everyone who calls Pickaway County home.”

Participants identified several key needs, including out-of-county medical transportation (especially to Franklin County), evening and weekend employment routes, rural-to-town trips and accessible vehicles for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Attendees also stressed the need for better coordination and data sharing among transportation providers.

Current Resources and Challenges

Existing transportation options include PICCA Public Transit, the Senior Center’s service (for residents 60 years old or older), Veterans’ Service Commission transportation, private providers such as RAM and Jackson Transportation and Medicaid’s NET program. However, many of these services are limited by funding, eligibility restrictions or operating hours — leaving residents in rural areas and those with late or weekend schedules without reliable options.

The lack of handicap-accessible and bariatric vehicles was also noted as a major gap, particularly for older adults and people with disabilities.

Community Voices

Residents and service providers shared personal experiences highlighting how transportation barriers affect daily life.

A local senior said she hoped to see a nearby bus stop added, saying, “I’d like to see a stop here at KMM before I’m too old to ride. I’m paying almost as much for my car as for rent — it’s just not sustainable.”

Linda Hoover, who manages several apartment complexes and developmental disability units, described the far-reaching impact of the transportation deficit.

“We see it up close,” Hoover said. “Residents on fixed incomes often miss medical appointments, lose job opportunities or face isolation simply because they can’t get where they need to go.”

Jace Conrad, Case Manager with Pickaway County Jobs & Family Services, said transportation is one of the biggest barriers to youth employment.

“Many of my clients don’t have a license or reliable vehicle,” Conrad explained. “Even when jobs are available, they can’t reach them.”

Next Steps for Regional Collaboration

Wagner encouraged participants to continue working together, suggesting informal quarterly “coffee and coordination” meetups among transportation staff to share updates and ideas.

Harris plans to form a steering committee to guide development of a Regional Mobility Plan. A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of the county’s transportation system may be conducted by Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission at the December Transportation Coordination Council meeting, marking the next step toward a more connected and equitable local transit strategy.

“We’re not just identifying problems — we’re building partnerships to solve them,” Harris said. “This is the first step toward a transportation network that truly meets the needs of our residents.”

About CCAM-TAC:

The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility – Technical Assistance Center (CCAM-TAC) is funded by the Federal Transit Administration and operated by the Community Transportation Association of America. The Center provides nationwide support to improve transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes.