

## **Wake County Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Grant**

### **Program Description**

The JARC grant program is a relatively new federal grant to assist in expanding transportation services in connecting at-risk populations with jobs and employment related services. The funding is relatively small nationwide, but it is growing in size annually with support from the President and from Congress. The program is expected to leverage other funds that are eligible to be expended for transportation and encourage a coordinated approach to transportation services. There is a 50/50 matching requirement.

### **Our Goal**

It is our goal to use these funds to: 1) increase at-risk peoples' ability to access employment opportunities; 2) increase at-risk peoples' economic independence and self-sufficiency; 3) enhance employers' ability to recruit and sustain an adequate workforce; and 4) provide a reasonable and affordable alternative to the single occupant vehicle by providing a coordinated demand response transportation service.

### **Wake County Funding Allocation**

Wake County made a request for JARC funds to expand our demand responsive TRACS program, and received an earmark for \$767,770 over two years from The Federal Transit Administration. The amount of funding recognized the following cost factors: 1) Wake County has the largest rural population (170,000) in the state; 2) Wake County has a large geographic area to cover; 3) It is difficult to group trips with many origins and many destinations; and 4) There are many small businesses and entry level employment opportunities available, but hard to access, during evening and weekends.

### **Service Plan**

It is expected that employment trips will become the "backbone" for the transportation service, with other trip needs being coordinated into the trip schedule. Wake County Human Services will expand and alter the TRACS program in several ways in response to the availability of these funds. The existing three zones will be redesigned, and a fourth zone would be created in southern Wake County. Days and times of service will be increased to seven days in order to accommodate entry level and service jobs during the evening and on weekends. The service will continue to be coordinated and demand responsive. Operation of service will continue to be contracted out to vendors who have qualified to provide the service. Trips will be zone based, allowing for trips that cross zones. In zone trips will cost \$2 per person each way, while out of zone trips will cost \$4 per person each way, promoting personal responsibility. On time performance is critical for employment trips, and will be closely monitored as part of a performance program. When appropriate trips will be coordinated with the CAT, C-TRAN and TTA services, with TRACS serving as a "feeder" to the fixed route services. This will increase productivity for the fixed routes and increase mobility for many people who have no other options now.

### **Partnerships**

Numerous agencies, programs, towns, and local chambers of commerce have aided in planning and expressed their support for this program. Some of our partners include: Rolesville, Fuquay-Varina Chamber, Resources for Seniors, Wake County Housing and Community Revitalization, Wake Enterprises, Garner, Wake County Human Services Work First Program, Holly Springs, Apex, NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Services, Wake County Human Services Developmental Disabilities Vocational Services, Knightdale, The Wake County Business Advisory Council, NC Services for the Blind and the Capital Area Workforce Development Board. Other partners support the program, but have not yet put that support in writing.

### **Continuation of Funding**

We will use the two years of grant funding to demonstrate to area employers how the service benefits them through a more stable employee base, and improved customer access to their business. We will explain how the employer can take advantage of available tax credits and offer this benefit to their employees. We will seek funding from these employers to continue the service. We will also demonstrate the success of the program and seek new and additional grant funds for the program, including seeking continuation JARC funds.