

On behalf of the Federal Transit Administration, the Community Transportation Association of America prepares briefs on Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) projects to facilitate a learning network among grantees and others interested in employment transportation. For more information on the JARC program, visit: www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atij/jarc.asp

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Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency Meeting the Mobility Needs of People with Disabilities

The Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency (SETHRA) is using Job Access and Reverse Commute funds to expand the transportation options of Families First (Tennessee's TANF program) clients and other low-income people. Specifically, SETHRA has purchased vehicles, and is operating five new van programs in a nine-county region, taking riders to training, job interviews and jobs. One beneficiary of this new service is the school-to-work program of the Sequatchie Valley Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Ruth and her daughter-- who lives with Spina Bifida -- were both participants in the Sequatchie Valley vocational rehabilitation program. The SETHRA bus, sponsored under the Job Access and Reverse Commute program, took them regularly to STARS, a sheltered workshop that provides worker adjustment training, safety instruction and other work-preparation education. After completing her training program, Ruth was hired by STARS and currently works as a supervisor there. Her caseworker at the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation credits the opportunities provided to Ruth through the transportation program for Ruth's increased self-esteem and job advancement.

The school-to-work program provides services to youths with learning, physical and mental disabilities in the Sequatchie Valley, a very rural area that covers three counties and has a population of 11,000 people. Without transportation, many of the valley's low-income residents would be unable to take advantage of the training and employment opportunities available to them just over the mountains. Because SETHRA can use its Job Access funding to provide transportation to those under 150 percent of the poverty line, DVR clients have been able to ride SETHRA buses and vans to training sites, sheltered workshops, and \$8.00 to \$9.00 an hour jobs beyond the valley.

"Even if we had our own bus," explains School-to-Work Program Coordinator Alise Young, "we would not be able to run all over this mountainous county and provide the coverage that SETHRA can. SETHRA helps expand the opportunities for those without access to cars."

Benefits of the program to persons with disabilities

Alise Young reports that the availability of SETHRA's job access transportation has made a tremendous difference in her ability to achieve results with the program. For every five people who gain employment, she reports, one has been able to do so because of SETHRA's transportation service. Young adds, "If I can place people in an \$8.00 to \$9.00 an hour job before they leave high school, then perhaps this will help break the cycle of poverty here in the valley."

Job Access and Reverse Commute Funding

The State of Tennessee has received Job Access funding in fiscal years 1999, 2000 and 2001. SETHRA is a sub-recipient of a portion of this money.

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