

**Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS)
Statewide Needs Assessment Study**



**Agricultural Worker Transportation Needs Assessment
Final Report**

May 2003

**BUSINESS TRANSPORTATION
and HOUSING AGENCY**

**CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT
of TRANSPORTATION**



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Division of Mass Transportation

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Principal Authors

**Robert Castaneda, Market Research Consultant
Steven Castaneda, Transportation Consultant**

Project Manager

Virginia Fernandez, California Department of Transportation

Editor

Stephen Mowry, e21 Corporation

Formatting

e21 Corporation

Members of the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services Advisory Committee

California Farm Bureau

Roy Gabriel
Karri Hammerstrom

California Rural Legal Assistance

Lupe Quintero

Kings County Public Transit Authority

Ron Hughes

California Highway Patrol

Lieutenant Jose Gutierrez
Lieutenant Ray Madrigal
Sergeant Pete Camm

California Department of Transportation

Brian Smith, Deputy Director
Planning and Modal Programs

Division of Mass Transportation

Tom McDonnell, Previous Division Chief, Division of Mass Transportation
Debbie Mah, Division Chief, Division of Mass Transportation
Jim Norvell, Acting Division Chief, Division of Mass Transportation
Jim Conant, Senior Transportation Planner
Horacio Paras, Senior Transportation Planner
Glenn Bailey, Associate Transportation Planner
Virginia Fernandez, Associate Transportation Planner

Office of Transportation Planning, District Six

Alan McCuen, Deputy District Director of Planning
Steve Curti, Senior Transportation Planner
Margaret Hokokian, Transportation Planner
Marta Frausto, Associate Transportation Planner

United Farm Workers

David Villarino

Consultant Team

Robert Castaneda, e21
Steven Castaneda, PRM
Daniel Hernandez, PRM
Francisco Hernandez, PRM

Abstract

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) funded the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services Statewide Needs Assessment Study to determine the existence and extent of the unmet transportation needs among the state's agricultural worker population. Additionally, Caltrans wanted a review of a pilot agricultural worker transportation program in four (4) Central Valley counties. The objective of the study was to build upon the limited information compiled on this community, and to recommend strategies to address the outstanding issues surrounding transportation. In order to achieve the stated goals, the consultant team engaged in several data collection activities which included focus groups and community forums with farmworkers and their families conducted throughout the state's major growing regions, telephone and personal interviews with major stakeholder representatives, and mail surveys to the state's licensed farm labor contractors.

To illustrate the location of farmworker housing, transit routes, and major agricultural regions in relation to each other, Geographic Information System (GIS) maps were developed.

Results of the study indicate that there are several transportation and related improvements needed to create sufficient opportunities for farmworkers to avail themselves of safe, affordable, and dependable transportation. Further, fundamental changes in access to vehicle insurance, the introduction of vanpools, modification of federal rules, and greater enforcement of vehicle safety laws will improve the existing situation for the target group of this study.

The report includes 17 recommendations for Caltrans to consider for further review, and implementation. The report also recommends further review of both the AITS Pilot Program, and the Farmworker Driver Safety Program, which were being implemented at the publishing of this report. Both programs represent significant efforts to address access to transportation and vehicle safety issues, and a comprehensive evaluation is warranted.

This report is available through the Department of Transportation, Division of Mass Transportation.

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The tragic 1999 collision of a van transporting field laborers with a semi truck at Five Points, a rural intersection near Fresno, California, caused thirteen farm workers fatalities and became an unfortunate landmark in the history of transportation for agricultural workers in the State of California. This event, which resonates for *campesinos* (farm workers) even today, resulted in a directive from the Governor's Office to establish the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS) Project, initiated in July 2001 with funding from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the United States Department of Transportation (Federal Transit Administration). Its purpose was to address the pervasive absence of safe and viable options for traveling to and from the agricultural worksite for thousands of workers who sustain California's agricultural industry.

Inadequate transportation services for agricultural workers within California limit their ability to obtain and continue employment. In some areas, transportation services for field workers are unavailable, inadequate, unsafe, and unreliable. Limited transportation options in many cases promote a transportation system in which users are exploited and harassed.

The AITS Needs Assessment Project, under the management of e21 corp, embarked on a statewide assessment and analysis of the unmet transportation needs of agricultural workers in major growing regions throughout California. The contract with e21 corp also called for the evaluation the existing AITS Transportation Pilot Project in the Central Valley Counties of Kings, Tulare, Fresno, and Kern.

The main goal of the overall AITS Project effort is the statewide provision of adequate and safe transportation for agricultural workers throughout California and the elimination and reduction of transportation barriers and gaps that impact their community. These and other factors make it difficult for agricultural workers to maintain employment and secure access to basic, safe, and affordable transportation.

Funding sources for the AITS Project and the Agricultural Worker Traffic Safety Education Project were:

AITS Pilot Project - \$8 million total:

Job Access/Reverse Commute (JARC grant) Federal Transit Administration, United States Department of Transportation, \$4.0 million.

Public Transportation Account, California Department of Transportation
\$4.0 million (State Matching Dollars)

Traffic Safety Education Project - \$ 1 million grant to the California Office of Traffic Safety from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, United States Department of Transportation. (Funds transferred to Caltrans via interagency agreement.)

The scope of work for the evaluation contract with e21 corp called for the following:

The AITS needs assessment will be used to guide expansion of the AITS pilot project currently underway in Kern, Kings and Tulare Counties in the San Joaquin Valley into a statewide public transportation service available to farmworkers and meeting the needs of the agriculture industry. The AITS pilot project is demonstrating the viability of utilizing public transportation for agriculture workers. The AITS needs assessment will allow an expansion based upon the identified needs of agriculture workers throughout the state and the experiences learned from the AITS pilot project. This will include evaluating the AITS pilot projects' seatbelt education program and the CHP's inspection program to see whether these programs should be expanded into other areas of the state.

GOAL: Provide safe, reliable and affordable transportation for agriculture workers throughout California and eliminate and reduce transportation barriers and gaps that make it difficult for agriculture workers to maintain jobs and access other basic services.

OBJECTIVES:

- *Evaluate the AITS pilot project*
- *Survey agriculture workers in various regions of California*
- *Develop GIS maps to show the barriers and gaps in service that need to be overcome*
- *Use the study as a decision making tool by state and local entities*

In order to accomplish these objectives the e21 project team designed into its approach and methodology three primary project components. They are:

- 1. Evaluation of the AITS Pilots in Kings, Kern, Fresno, and Tulare Counties.**
- 2. Conduct a Statewide Assessment of Farmworker Transportation Needs.**
- 3. Conduct Statewide Community Forums and Focus Groups.**

This framework provided the foundation for the project team's work plan and resulting execution. Within the overall implementation effort there were additional project components that were designated by Caltrans as assigned tasks and deliverables. They were:

AIT SAC: The AITS Advisory Committee

To complement the overall assessment process, e21 corp established an Advisory Committee consisting of individuals representing employers, workers, service providers, labor unions, law enforcement, transit authorities, government entities, farm bureaus, and community based organizations. AITSAC was established with two primary functions as a body. They reviewed, commented and provided direction on the project team's assessment methodology, work plan and instruments, and they are to review and comment on the final report to Caltrans.

Addressing the unmet needs of the state’s agricultural workforce requires an adequate representation of stakeholder communities, each of whom have relevant perspectives on the agricultural industry transportation issue. These constituencies, through their spokespersons, provided essential information to guide the agricultural worker transportation needs assessment project and served to identify important components and additional targets that were incorporated into the project field research. This input by the AITSAC better ensured that the project’s outcomes truly reflected the reality in the fields and the needs of the community.

Development of an Evaluation Plan for the AITS Pilot Projects

Since the AITS Pilot Projects were designed to establish a demonstration of the viability of utilizing public transportation for agricultural workers, a set of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the AITS Pilot Projects in meeting project goals and objectives needed to be designed and an evaluation plan established. The approved criteria for the evaluation plan of the pilots was implemented and gauged the AITS Pilot Projects from the context of program performance, collaboration, and sustainability.

Qualitative research tools to survey agricultural workers and stakeholders

Research tools were created to garner feedback from a comprehensive cross-section of the statewide agricultural community in assessing the needs, barriers and gaps in transportation availability for the agricultural worker in California.

Geo-spatial maps

These visuals illustrate the travel patterns, locations of agricultural workers, major agricultural regions and available transportation services for the agricultural worker.

Interviews

Extensive interviews were conducted with a cross section of farmworkers, advocates and industry stakeholders throughout agricultural regions in California. Feedback was analyzed and formatted into the final report assessing the need and condition of transportation services and relevant issues impacting agricultural workers across California.

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES TRANSPORTATION SERVICES STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE PROJECT SUMMARY

The California Department of Transportation conducted a Needs Assessment Study to evaluate the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS) Pilot Programs and to analyze the unmet transportation needs of agriculture workers throughout California. The goal of the AITS pilot project is to design a transportation service that will meet the needs of both farm workers and their employers by supplying workers with a safe and cost effective means of getting to work within Kern, Kings, Tulare, and Fresno counties.

The study also included research and analysis into the transportation needs of agricultural workers, including but not limited to farm workers, packinghouse workers, and horticulture workers throughout the state. The Needs Assessment Study included an assessment of the work and travel patterns of agriculture workers, migratory workers, non-migratory workers, year-round and seasonal workers, as well as the time of day workers are employed. The study also looks at regional and seasonal transportation needs.

STUDY BACKGROUND

A study of this nature, that focused on a community which traditionally has been difficult to reach, much less research, required both conventional and non-conventional methods of data gathering and analysis. Beginning with a lack of transportation-related data on this community made it difficult to establish a baseline that could be utilized to develop a research and evaluation model. Prior to this study, much of the data available about the target community was related to labor statistics derived from payroll information provided by employers. Notwithstanding the lack of reliable data sources, the study team developed an assessment tool that combined existing workforce data with agricultural data that reflected seasonality, location, and estimates of labor requirements to more comprehensively develop the final transportation needs assessment findings contained in this report.

ISSUES

The study team conducted its data gathering activities in each of the 31 targeted geographic areas to compile basic existing information on each of the following issues. They are:

- The existence and types of modes of transportation for agriculture workers
- Existence of issues related to transportation
- Barriers to employment created by limited access to transportation

- Impacts to the agricultural industry due to the limited access to transportation
- Suggested roles in transportation programs for stakeholders
- Ability/inability of existing transportation systems to provide solutions
- Recommendations on potential solutions

That information assisted the study team in formulating a specific analysis tool that recognized variables, such as the existence of public and other mass transportation available, as well as accident and other relevant information within each research area.

STUDY APPROACH

The project team divided the overall project into three distinct, yet related project components. These included conducting a statewide agricultural worker transportation needs assessment, soliciting stakeholder input as to transportation needs, and possible solutions via a statewide series of community forums and focus groups, and evaluation of the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS) pilot projects in Kern, Kings, Fresno, and Tulare Counties.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Qualitative research was conducted in the field directly with workers, their families, and stakeholders. Specific research methods tailored to this diverse community were utilized to assure participants that their statements were confidential, and that they could speak freely about the availability of affordable, safe transportation, as well as the unique conditions of the environment, exploitation, and harassment that take place given their transportation needs and what is available to service those needs.

PILOT PROGRAM REVIEW

The current AITS pilot project is attempting to demonstrate the viability of utilizing public transportation for agriculture workers. This project component also included evaluating the AITS pilot project's seatbelt education program, and the California Highway Patrol's inspection program to see whether these programs should be expanded into other areas of the state.

Evaluation of the AITS pilot projects and the agricultural worker seatbelt education program were delayed due to unforeseen issues of postponed funding and contracting, as well as issues of AITS project compliance with state and federal guidelines. Additionally, a longer than anticipated ramp-up period necessary to gain acceptance by employers was encountered.

The evaluation of the seatbelt program was not possible due to the fact that the contracting entity has only just begun their work as this study is being published (June

2003). As for the evaluation of the AITS pilot project, the project team was directed by Caltrans to complete its evaluation with the limited data that is available.

SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

Within the Executive Project Summary there is a delineation and analysis of the conditions and environmental issues that function as contributing factors to accidents, travel demands, and patterns, as well as the transportation needs of the agricultural worker. Additionally, there are findings as to the ability and potential that existing public transit services and the AITS Pilot Project has in meeting those needs. Also, there are key issues identified that impact safety, the exploitation of workers by vehicle operators that utilize needed transportation as leverage, and other existing adverse conditions impacting the agricultural worker with commutes to and from their respective places of employment. Solutions are delineated and recommendations are presented as a result of feedback and analysis generated from stakeholders and the target community.

The findings from this study illuminate the considerable need that both farmworkers and their families have for safe, available, and affordable public transportation in agricultural regions across the state. Highlights of these findings, summarized by project component category, include the following:

Statewide Needs Assessment Study

Review of Existing Transportation Services

- Based on the information gathered, it is quite clear that public transportation agencies throughout the state provide few services to agricultural areas. Service is, for the most part, limited to urbanized areas with minimal service in rural areas.
- In many parts of California residential development has displaced large expanses of growing fields to remote areas of their respective regions. These areas are typically underserved by public transit due to the lack of demand.
- Crop seasonality and the variable schedule of agricultural workers from month to month make it impossible to efficiently and cost effectively provide scheduled service.

Spatial Analysis

A spatial analysis (appendix) was conducted to determine the California's major agricultural growing areas parcels, identifiable farm worker housing facilities, and public transportation service available in 27 targeted counties.

Maps were prepared using geographic information systems (GIS) software and database information provided by the State of California, Department of Conservation, Division of

Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, the United States Bureau of Transportation Statistics, United States Department Housing and Urban Development, and the Subsidized Housing Projects' Geographic Codes.

The analysis yielded the following findings:

- Most public transportation systems do not adequately service California's agricultural areas.
- In the majority of the counties within the state, subsidized housing is in proximity to established transit lines.
- Only in the rural counties is some of the subsidized housing near, or on agricultural lands. In urbanized counties subsidized housing is displaced from agricultural growing areas. In addition, established transit routes generally serve urban areas and do not extend to remote growing areas.
- The highway system adequately provides access to general agricultural areas.

For a high percentage of the areas analyzed in the spatial review, the only methods for agricultural workers to reach job sites appear to be flexible transportation modes such as private vehicles, shuttle vans, farm labor vehicles, and Dial-a-Ride services. At the present time there is an inadequate supply of public transportation to serve the needs of the state's agricultural workers.

Transportation Gaps and Related Issues

- Most non-permanent agricultural workers do not have access to reliable transportation.
- Surveys indicate that less than 50% of workers have access to private vehicles, and most private vehicles used by workers are in poor states of repair.
- Agricultural workers must make other transportation arrangements, such as carpooling with co-workers, or paying for rides from farm labor contractors or raiteros (drivers that own, or have access to a vehicle).
- Other common modes of transportation were bicycles and walking.
- Responses to surveys indicate that approximately 96% of agriculture workers live from 0-50 miles for their place of employment with nearly 40% living from 25-50 miles from work.
- The trend of urban encroachment on much of the state's agricultural growing areas has moved agricultural employment centers further from residential areas making it more difficult to obtain reliable transportation on a regular or needed basis.

- Based on information derived from the stakeholder and spatial analysis, it is quite clear that significant changes to existing public transit would have to be made in order to address the needs of the agricultural worker.
- Relatively few agricultural workers own their own vehicles, and many of the privately owned vehicles are in poor states of repair. Respondents indicated that vehicle breakdowns often cause several workers to miss a day's employment. Other issues involve the lack of safety equipment, and the high cost of properly maintaining vehicles that cause most owners to allow them to drift into disrepair. Additionally, vehicles are often overcrowded, compounding the unsafe nature of vehicle operation.
- The fact that many workers lack legal immigration documents prevents them from obtaining proper training and driver's licenses. Many workers have had their licenses revoked due to driving under the influence and other violations. Drivers unable to obtain licenses cannot purchase vehicle insurance.
- Surveys indicate that agricultural workers must spend \$5.00 to \$8.00 per day on transportation. In many instances, workers must labor in several locations throughout the day causing them to spend more for transportation. Often times they become stranded requiring them to walk long distances to get home after work.
- Respondents indicated that limited-English speaking workers have even greater problems obtaining information regarding available transportation services. Additionally, many transit systems have only a small percentage of Spanish speaking operators.
- Nearly 60 % of survey respondents referred to the availability of public transportation as poor while only 18% rated it as adequate to excellent.
- The majority of the transit services reviewed for this study revealed that relatively few systems operate during the hours farmworkers travel to work. The lack of weekend transportation also represents a significant gap in service.
- Many agricultural workers are required to work in a number of locations throughout the day making it difficult for public transportation to provide adequate services.
- Perhaps the greatest impact caused by the existing agricultural worker transportation conditions effects traffic safety. This situation is most serious because it affects all drivers on California's roads. While the situation is improving due to programs like the California Highway Patrol's Safety and Farm Labor Vehicle Education program (SAFE) there continues to be a major problem caused by unsafe, uninsured, unregistered and overloaded vehicles on California's rural roadways.

Non Transportation Impacts of Limited Transportation

There is no indication that the lack of transportation services available to agricultural workers has placed a strain on California's farming industry. Nearly everyone surveyed from all stakeholder groups believed that there were sufficient numbers of workers available to work in the industry. There were, however, sporadic and isolated incidences of labor shortages due to transportation problems. Research findings indicate that workers are the most impacted by the lack of adequate transportation. It is quite common for individuals, or groups of workers to lose jobs because of their inability to get to work.

Focus Groups and Community Forums

When working with the farm worker community, conventional approaches to information gathering modeled after traditional methods typically result in minimal success. The diverse nature of the agricultural worker in California is reflected in the presence of Spanish-speaking workers of Mexican and Central American origin, but is also comprised of indigenous migrant and stationary workers of Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapotec origins, each with their own unique language and culture.

Because of a lack of information on this population, outreach initiatives, if they are to have impact and achieve desired outcomes, must blend traditional and non-traditional approaches to obtain reliable and accurate data. For the focus group and community events (appendix), the e21 team utilized multilingual techniques and an interactive process. The intention is to gain the respect and trust of each of the participants to initiate and obtain lively and meaningful discourse.

The project team approach employed unique and culturally-based methodologies that acknowledges, validates, and involves stakeholders, i.e., farmworkers, farm labor contractors, and growers as resources, knowledgeable about transportation issue. e21 worked hand-in-hand with the public purpose program outreach workers throughout the state, to define and craft the most effective strategies to obtain information from focus group and community forum participants. The Focus Groups and Community Forums Findings are:

- A total of ninety-six participants from throughout the state took part in 8 focus groups. Six groups had twelve members, two had eleven members; all eight groups consisted of both male and female members, while seven were attended by indigenous farm workers of Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapotec origin.
- A group process was designed that enhanced research outcomes and fostered a sense of *confianza*, shared membership and common purpose that was incorporated into each of the focus groups and community forums.
- A number of factors come into play in conducting focus groups with monolingual, Spanish, and indigenous languages-speaking farm workers of limited educational backgrounds or familiarity with North American mores.

- The majority of the participants were immigrants from Mexico, and two group members were from Guatemala and Honduras respectively. Two other participants were Mexican American.
- 72%, had no transportation of their own, and depended on others to commute to the worksite.
- Twenty-four individuals, or 28% of the total focus group, had their own vehicle, yet only 58% of these workers, i.e., fifteen participants were operating their cars with a valid driver's license, liability insurance, or car registration.
- Eleven workers, or 42% of the vehicle owners, had no license, no insurance, or valid car registration.
- For all options, commuting time ranged from fifteen minutes to two hours.
- When the Farm Labor Contractor (FLC) provides the referral for transportation, riders stated that they "understood" that they must use that particular *raitero* (*driver*) or risk loss of further employment with the FLC. They were not to travel to the worksite with any other provider, or in their own cars; many riders indicated their view that this referral implied a financial arrangement between the FLC and the *raitero*.
- There is no uniformity in the qualifications of *raiteros*. Many were drivers by virtue of their ownership of the vehicle, and according to the participants, others were selected at random by the owners of the vehicles to drive in exchange for a cost-free means of transportation.
- It was not deemed permissible for riders to ask a driver if he or she had a valid California driver's or chauffeur's license, a valid & legal title to the vehicle operated, liability insurance as required under state law, nor seat belts for each passenger in the vehicle.
- When workers were asked if they had the right to ask such questions; everyone said they "knew better" than to ask; to inquire about any of these things would subject them to the loss of transportation.
- Workers using *raiteros* were subject to irregular service; drivers insisted that riders wait for them outside in the early morning hours, or risk losing their ride for that day.
- Frequently, overcrowding of vehicles and unsafe conditions such the lack of seatbelts, or presence of tools and harvesting equipment among the riders are accepted. Most riders are not aware that these tools, in their personal possession while in transport, are violations of the labor code.

- Riders who are hired by Farm Labor Contractors (FLCs) agree to ride in vehicles provided by that FLC. They understand that they are not to ride to the worksite in their own vehicles, or with another *raitero*, lest they risk not working.
- Many drivers carried more passengers than the factory capacity of the vehicle. More commonly, vans had factory seating removed, and replaced with wooden planks placed length-wise or across the cargo area to accommodate more passengers.
- Riders also mentioned the role of “bribes” in securing and maintaining one’s transportation to the worksite. In some cases, the driver, whether a *raitero* or FLC, would indicate the expectation that the crew of riders would pitch in collectively each pay day to purchase a twelve (or twenty-four) pack carton of beer as a token of their appreciation for the driver.
- Other participants listed the practice of many drivers to consume alcohol, or in some cases, drugs while operating the transporting vehicle.
- Section 1653.5 of the California Vehicle code requires driver’s license applicants To provide proof of legal residency to obtain a license. This topic generated heated discussion in focus groups. Some workers, undocumented themselves, stated that recently arrived workers were forced to buy automobiles to get themselves to work, and drove without licenses, insurance, or car registration, and no knowledge of basic traffic laws.
- In other instances, the increase in fares that occurred each time the minimum wage went up, or a climb in the price of gasoline was motivation enough for a worker to find his or her own car to drive.
- Those expressing the highest levels of satisfaction, from 65% to 100%, were those individuals who operated their own vehicles, legally or not, and those who rode with immediate, extended, and bonded family members.
- The opinions (of 72%, who were compelled to ride with the *raiteros* or farm labor contractors) ranged from a 50% satisfaction rate, to a low of zero, or even in the words of one consumer, “minus 10%”.
- Ninety percent, including those workers who used their own cars, stated that the ideal system would be one in which buses or vans were provided by the employer, by the employer in partnership with government, or by government alone.
- Many workers cited the reduction in pollution for society at large if a farm worker transportation system existed that would permit thousands of cars to be idle in favor of using that bus or van to get to work.
- 33% were amenable to paying a nominal fee for transportation service.

- A majority of the group would be receptive to a centrally located boarding area, or an established route of stops.
- Another recommendation was that the transportation systems correspond to the changing, seasonal locations in which work was to be found in their local area.
- There are risks inherent in worksite transportation of workers from one work area to another. One participant cited that flatbed trailers, with no seats or restraints, which often traversed uneven terrain, drawn by farm tractors were used to transport workers from one field to another.
- Other risks include the frequency with which workers are assigned to go to different work areas, and are transported on the implements attached to the back of a farm tractors. Workers were either sitting or standing, with no seats or restraints, also they traversed over uneven terrain.
- Other risks included the prevalence of farm workers using bicycles to get to and from the worksites, posing a danger to themselves, or other vehicles sharing the roadway. They often traveled in foggy conditions, or during hours of reduced visibility (early morning hours), due to no other recourse for getting to work.
- Workers lacking a way to get to work must as a last resort walk, exposing them to many of the same dangers as the workers on bicycles, causing them to arrive at work tired due to the long distances they must travel.

Related Focus Group Comments Concerning Transportation Environment Impacting Agricultural Workers

Sexual Harassment

- The issue of sexual harassment as part of the *raitero* system was raised by the participants at each focus group, with over half of the participants, both females and males reciting that they had either personally experienced, or had been present in instances when such behavior occurred.

Sanitary Facilities

- Women also decried the practice of foremen moving the portable restrooms designated for workers in the fields, specifically the units earmarked for females, without previously checking to see if someone needed it.

Driver's Licenses for Undocumented Workers

- The other comment that was consistently cited by all the focus groups was that the state or California would soon rescind the existing ban on driver's licenses for undocumented workers.

Agricultural Industries Transportation Services Pilot Project (AITS) Evaluation Report

Throughout the four county AITS Pilot Projects service region evaluated for this study there are two distinct transportation service models being implemented. Two of the target counties (Tulare and Fresno) have aligned with Kings County transit to provide a hybrid transportation service project consisting of procuring vans and buses for transporting agricultural workers exclusively.

The remaining county, Kern, opted to expand its fixed bus route service to outlying areas of the county that had little or no public transit available. The Kern Pilot primarily services the families of farmworkers as opposed to the workers themselves. All AITS Projects have been found to be in compliance with the JARC/AITS grant objectives.

The Kings, Fresno and Tulare County AITS project had the original objective of establishing a for-profit farm labor transportation model utilizing 15-passenger vans to service the transportation needs of farmworkers. This objective ran into significant regulatory roadblocks prior to the scheduled June 2002 kick-off in the City of Hanford, Kings County, California. Changes were made in the design, and execution of the transportation model changing the structure of the operation from a for-profit to a non-profit entity in order to come into compliance with federal Department of Labor regulatory guidelines.

Subsequent to the revelation of significant regulatory roadblocks the next three months of the project were spent collecting data to determine how farmworkers travel to and from work, and how existing drivers comply with the current federal and state laws. That research and the findings that it produced provided a blueprint for how the new structure of the Kings AITS service delivery model should be designed. Research findings also revealed numerous drivers receiving certification as Farm Labor Contractors in violation of Department of Education guidelines. Also, there are numerous drivers that operate vehicles absent of insurance, and charge transportation fees in excess of existing federal laws and statutes.

The AITS program restructure generated compliance with federal and state guidelines for the AITS project, however it presented an uneven playing field especially when it came to the issue of driver recruitment. Drivers operating outside of government laws and guidelines do so for the purposes of added profit. The Kings, Fresno and Tulare AITS

Pilot Project operates as a non-profit, not directly compensating drivers and operates in complete compliance with laws and guidelines ensuring safety of all AITS passengers and other California drivers on the roadways of the Central Valley

Another stumbling block for the project was the requirement for Farm Labor Certification in order to drive a 15-passenger van to the fields. As mentioned, most, if not all of these certified vehicle operators charge a fee as a means of individual profit, irrespective of the fact that they may not be in compliance with state or federal laws.

Despite these obstacles, more than 40 AITS vans are now transporting over 450 farmworkers to fields and packing sheds in compliance with state and federal guidelines. The AITS driver is from the community they serve and known to the passengers. In order to qualify for the AITS driver program, applicants must have good driving records and pass a physical examination. AITS riders can call a local number to report problems. Likewise, drivers can call AITS support staff to report breakdowns or request road assistance. Additionally the California Highway Patrol and local law enforcement has been alerted to the fact that AITS vans are licensed, insured and meet state and federal guidelines.

On June 30, 2003 the Kings County AITS program manager, Mr. Ron Hughes announced the expansion of AITS service into Fresno County. This expansion into Fresno brings 75 more AITS vans that are targeted for transportation services to the county's agricultural workers. This Fresno expansion will bring the total number of vans servicing the worker community to 123. It is projected by this time next year over 1,500 farmworkers will be riding in AITS vans, providing an estimated total of 900,00 trips per year.

Kern County AITS Pilot Project

- The Kern County AITS Pilot Project is an expansion of a fixed route bus service. With the AITS grant the Kern Regional Transit Authority provided for the expansion of existing portions of their transit system to provide services to communities that previously had little or no access to public transit.
- Kern County is roughly the size of the State of Connecticut, and for transportation assessment purposes, it's important to note that the City of Bakersfield is the employment and commerce hub for all of Kern County.
- The expansion of services funded by the AITS grant are to predominantly remote, rural agricultural worker communities that are heavily Hispanic and in need of public transit services to Bakersfield for non-agricultural employment, necessary public services, as well as access to healthcare, education, shopping, and other vital services.
- Only a small percentage of agricultural workers use the current Kern AITS transportation system. Most of the ridership is non-agricultural use by the families of agricultural workers for services such as government, medical, and educational.

- These remote communities are more reliant on these AITS funded services than the communities in the incorporated areas of Kern County.
- It is important to note that agricultural workers are not the major demographic targeted for AITS transit services under this program. Rather, it is the families of the agricultural worker that this pilot program seeks to service with added transportation.
- Kern County believes that the best program to directly address the issues of exploitation connected with agricultural worker transportation is the approach Mr. Ron Hughes of Kings County has with their AITS pilot project. The Kings County AITS program grant was utilized for implementing a revolutionary transit system targeted to, and specifically for, the agricultural worker community in aiding their efforts in accessing safe, affordable transportation to work in an industry that has unique demands on workers, their schedules, and locations of employment.
- The decision was made to expand the Kern Regional Transit (KRT) services with additional AITS funding to provide public transportation to the entire agricultural and non-agricultural community (workers, non-workers, students, and families).
- There is an obvious safety benefit based on the expansion of public transit services in Kern County. This benefit manifests itself by increasing public transit ridership that positively impacts driver and public safety and the overall adherence to existing traffic laws and vehicle codes. Research findings have indicated that when gasoline prices, and/or the cost of ownership of vehicles rise, there is also a corresponding rise in public transit ridership.
- Research feedback from the Kern focus group clearly defines the unsafe conditions of existing agricultural worker transportation, and the need for alternate, safer options of transportation to and from respective places of employment.
- Even though the Kern County AITS Pilot Project has been in program implementation mode less than eleven months (March 2003), ridership has been steadily increasing verifying the demand and need of these services.
- Due to local funding constraints, Kern County must go through the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for funding to expand AITS transit services, and there is considerable anxiety amongst Kern Transit staff on the sustainability of existing AITS transportation services once the current AITS grant sunsets.
- The culture within the Kern County Road Department dictates that roads, and their construction, repair, and maintenance are a higher priority than transportation services.

- Farmworkers, their advocates, stakeholders, and industry leaders have acknowledged that expanded traditional public transit (Kern AITS pilot project) is not a viable solution in servicing the agricultural worker's unique transportation needs to and from their respective places of employment.

Kings, Fresno, and Tulare Counties AITS Pilot Project

- The Kings County Central Valley AITS Pilot Project seeks to service three individual counties in the California Central Valley with targeted transportation services specifically for agricultural workers.
- The Kings County AITS program grant was utilized for implementing a revolutionary transit system targeted to, and specifically for, the agricultural worker community in aiding their efforts in accessing safe, reliable and affordable transportation to work in an industry that has unique demands on workers, their schedules, and locations of employment.
- Via inter-agency agreements with Tulare and Fresno Counties, the Kings AITS project endeavors to deliver transportation services to agricultural workers in all three counties given a unique hybrid system of public transportation that is a combination of public sector managed services and a private sector business model to aid sustainability.
- The Kings County AITS Project involved purchasing one hundred thirty-four 15-passenger vans that are operated by residents in each of the targeted communities.
- Vanpool fares for the Kings AITS Pilot Project is \$60 per person per month and the operating costs of the vehicles are estimated at \$750.00 per month
- The Kings County AITS Project additionally involved purchasing 12 28-passenger buses. Residents of the community operate the buses between the communities, and nearby agricultural employment centers.
- Estimated bus fare is \$3 per person, per day, and service frequency varies (from 4 to 7 days a week) depending upon demand for labor.
- At the time that this study was published, the Kings County Area Public Transit Agency (KCAPTA) pilot project has been confronted with numerous obstacles, barriers, and unforeseen challenges, ironically enough, with government regulations.
- Due to these and other issues full implementation of the pilot has been delayed, but the expectation is that once these regulatory obstacles have been overcome, the model for the Kings AITS Pilot will provide the optimum transit solution for agricultural workers, their employers, and advocates for a safe and affordable transportation to and from the fields.

- Even though the grant for the AITS for Kings County was funded in October of 2001, the movement of both federal and state regulatory agencies has been slow to respond to needed amendments and other issues that constrain service expansion.

What are the Major Barriers in Implementing Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS) in Agricultural Regions across the State?

There are five primary issues that inhibit the growth and viability of the AITS transportation model as a real solution to agricultural worker transportation needs across the state. They are:

- Government regulatory constraints both at the federal and state level that constrain who can operate agricultural transport vehicles, how they are compensated, what they can charge, and how many workers they can transport.
- Access to affordable agricultural labor transport vehicle insurance for the vehicles and their operators.
- The need for greater enforcement and regulatory oversight of unlicensed drivers/operators and non-certified farm transport vehicles. The elimination of unlawful vehicle operators that exploit workers by utilizing access to transportation as a leverage in obtaining work, the charging of excessive fees, forcing workers to travel in unsafe, poorly maintained vehicles, and with operators that may be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Acceptance of the AITS model by employers and their employees. The politics of organized labor and Central Valley growers has greatly influenced the non-participation of this transportation model with suspicions and allegations that have caused most employers to balk when it comes to promoting and endorsing AITS transportation services to their workers.
- Acceptance of this model by Regional Transit Directors as a feasible solution in providing services to the agricultural worker who, to most in the mainstream community, are invisible, and do not have a voice in requesting and receiving needed transportation services.

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

Create Regional Agricultural Worker Transportation Working Groups

The analysis prepared for this report indicates that with few exceptions, the gaps and barriers that workers face are consistent throughout the state. However, there are

differences in factors such as seasons and times, when workers are needed, and the distances between the fields (where people work), and housing (where people live). It also became quite obvious that there were few, if any, existing transportation services that could adequately serve the needs of agricultural workers in any part of the state. It is quite clear that a hybrid system operated by a collaboration of stakeholders would have the greatest success. This type of approach requires transportation and residential development planning, and participation by all stakeholder groups involved in providing employment, programs, and services to this community. A regional workgroup would have the greatest success in designing a holistic approach to transportation services to the agricultural worker community.

Advocate Amendments to Laws Creating Barriers to Solutions

Interviews with grower stakeholders indicate that there are several existing laws that discourage employers from providing transportation to their workers. Requirements regarding when the workday starts, and issues of liability serve to dissuade employers from providing transportation services. These laws should be reviewed, and amended, where appropriate to remove barriers to employer based transportation solutions. Additional amendments to the federal labor code to exclude transit authorities from the definition of farm labor contracting enabling them to provide safe, affordable, and available transportation to and from the fields, or other destinations of agricultural employment.

Expand Public Transportation Services to Early Morning and Weekend Hours

Even for public transit to provide partial service to this community, it is necessary to expand bus service to early and weekend hours. Agricultural workers by the nature of their industry are required to report for work as early as 4:00 am. Most of the transit services reviewed for this study do not provide early morning service. Such limited service makes it difficult to use public transportation to get to work.

Introduce Shuttle Van and Bus Service to Growing Areas

Surveys indicate that the Kings County AITS Pilot Program model is the most sound as it relates to providing transportation to this hard to serve labor group. Although there have been difficulties in launching the program, the design has been endorsed by a majority of all stakeholders interviewed for this study. This type of approach should be expanded in cooperation with community-based organizations that can recruit, and train drivers. Farmworker public purpose program providers could disseminate language sensitive information and conduct targeted outreach.

Housing providers could establish park and ride locations, and employers that can coordinate onsite transportation with shuttle services should be provided incentives to do so.

Train and License Agricultural Workers

State law requires documentation to obtain a California Drivers' License. Though the requirement is used to control immigration, it has led to a growing number of unlicensed drivers that have no formal vehicle operational training. This situation puts all motorists at risk since many of the accidents involving farm labor vehicles are due to infractions of the vehicle code. Bottom line is that our target group will get to work by any means necessary.

Resolve Issues to Make Vehicle Insurance Easier to Obtain

Vehicle insurance is difficult to obtain and afford for many drivers and nearly impossible for agricultural workers. The net effect is that there is a growing number of drivers with no liability insurance on California roads each day. Remedies to resolve this issue should be investigated and pursued.

Findings contained in this report continually point to the lack of available vehicle insurance which serves as a barrier to many farmworker transportation efforts to obtain vehicle liability insurance. A 2002 review of Central Valley insurance companies conducted by Proteus, Inc. (AITS marketing partner) indicates that there are no companies that will provide vehicle insurance to farmworker labor transport vehicles in the Central Valley.

It appears that pooled resources could be one of the few solutions to this issue. Most insurance pools, however, are underwritten at some level, so they are not completely immune from insurance market shifts that may limit access. However, group participation with an insurance pool can mitigate the impact of these market shifts on member organizations seeking to provide needed agricultural worker transportation services. Pools can offer: safety, risk management services, and provide a network of people and organizations sharing a commitment to long-term insurance solutions that reduce the cost of insurance.

No insurance pool will ever have the financial resources of a big insurance company, but they have one thing you won't find anywhere else – a commitment to serve their members without motivation for profit.

Insurance Pool Examples:

CalACT (<http://www.calact.org>)

CalACT is a statewide, non-profit organization that has represented the interests of small, rural, and specialized transportation providers since 1984.

Its membership is comprised of individuals and agencies from diverse facets of transportation, including operators of small and large systems, planning and government agencies, social service agencies, suppliers and consultants. Specifically they have been

successful in assisting entities to establish insurance pools that minimize the cost and exposure to sponsoring agencies.

NonProfits United (<http://www.nonprofitsunited.com>)

Member-owned and operated, **NonProfits' United** is California's oldest transportation self-insurance pool for nonprofit organizations. For over a decade they have been providing quality, cost-effective insurance services for over 300 nonprofit members throughout the state, including senior centers, food banks, health clinics, churches, and disabled service programs.

United's services include claims settlements, driver instruction, safety and loss control services and member award programs.

California Transit Insurance Pool (CalTIP) (<http://www.caltip.org/>)

The **California Transit Insurance Pool (CalTIP)** is a joint powers insurance authority organized under California law in 1987 in response to the lack of liability insurance coverages from the commercial insurance market. CalTIP combines the resources of public transit operators to minimize risk, increase buying power, and provide stable, affordable insurance to its members.

CalTIP is a self-insurance program for public transit operators. CalTIP members pool funds to obtain affordable insurance coverage, claims administration, and safety and loss control programs. CalTIP is governed by representatives of member transit operators which ensures that the programs remain competitive with commercial offering and continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of public transit operators.

Design and Provide Incentives for Growers and FLC's that Provide Transportation

As a practical matter, growers are in the business of growing and harvesting crops, and are typically resistant to providing transportation to part-time seasonal workers. Many do, however, understand the necessity of safe and reliable transportation for their workforce, and would consider providing services if cost cutting incentives were offered. Issues blocking more employers from offering transportation include liability, workers' compensation insurance, vehicle purchase, and operational expenses. Incentives should be designed to relieve added costs and employer liability.

Improve Access to Transportation Information

Community-based organizations and housing providers indicated that they do not regularly provide transportation information to workers. Most indicated that they could, and would be interested in providing this service. Efforts should be made to train, and educate service providers on available transportation services, and enable them to accept,

and report incidences of abuse by individuals providing transportation to agricultural workers.

Design Automobile-Based Strategies for Agricultural Workers

The State of California should offset the high cost of obtaining and maintaining automobiles by offering low-interest loans and offering to sell vehicles at steeply discounted rates. Several auto-based programs have been established around the state to address the transportation needs of Welfare to Work participants. Those vehicle programs should be reviewed and considered for adaptation and implementation for the agricultural worker community as well. Additionally, any program that would rely upon the use of private vehicles should promote and reward the use of carpools and other ridesharing strategies to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles on the roadway.

Expand Vehicle Safety Training and Enforcement

The California Highway Patrol's (CHP) SAFE program has made good progress in removing unsafe vehicles and drivers from California roads. The CHP, along with the California Office of Traffic and Safety working with participating community-based organizations, has made good progress in training and educating drivers and riders on traffic laws and safety. These targeted driver safety programs should be expanded to all growing areas in the state. Efforts to expand this program should be pursued.

AITS Pilot Project Recommendations

There are five key recommendations that would stimulate the growth and viability of the van and bus pool AITS transportation model in Kings, Fresno and Tulare Counties, as a real solution in meeting the transportation needs agricultural workers across the state. They are:

Modification of regulatory constraints (both at the federal and state level) that constrain who can operate agricultural transport vehicles, and how they are compensated, what they can charge, and how many workers they can transport.

Access to affordable agricultural labor transport vehicle insurance for the vehicles and their operators.

Greater enforcement and regulatory oversight of unlicensed drivers/operators and non-certified farm transport vehicles. The elimination of unlawful vehicle operators that exploit workers by utilizing access to transportation as a leverage in obtaining work, charging excessive fees, and forcing workers to travel in unsafe, poorly maintained vehicles with operators that may be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

Acceptance of this model by employers, and the people that work for them. The historic politics of organized labor and the Central Valley growers has greatly influenced the non-participation of this transportation model with suspicions and allegations that

have caused most in leadership positions to balk when it comes to promoting and endorsing AITS transportation services.

Acceptance of this model by Regional Transit Directors as a doable solution in providing services to the agricultural worker who, to most in the mainstream community, are invisible and do not have a voice in requesting and receiving needed transportation services.

Additional ways and means of adding stakeholder investment should be explored and put forth as a means of sustainability and collaboration. Key target groups for investment and collaboration are Growers, Farm Labor Contractors, Labor Unions, and Local Transit Agencies. This language is not be construed as solely monetary, but rather a means to interact with and support the transportation of workers by stakeholder involvement with promotion, communications, advocacy, and access to the target market.

Research on the feasibility of a statewide Transportation CO-OP to work with regional planning groups to identify, analyze, and advocate for cost-effective transportation systems for agricultural workers in other areas of the state where the need exists.

Extended Evaluation and Assessment of the AITS Pilot Projects

Fully tested and evaluated AITS transportation models are needed to convince transit directors of the viability of the approach that these transportation systems have in servicing agricultural communities with needed transportation services. Continued evaluation and research may point to a combination of both pilot project approaches to better serve the entire community. Since the pilot projects have only just begun to service significant numbers of riders, focus groups and community forums alike should also target those rider-groups for feedback. This was not possible when the AITS evaluation phase of this study was concluded in March 2003.

The state standard for the evaluation of transit services for the purposes of revising routes and schedules is two years. The evaluation period for the AITS pilot projects (due to unforeseen delays) has been less than twelve months. In addition to this extended evaluation period, concepts of utilizing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding as potential matching funds for additional AITS grants should be explored and researched.

Evaluation of the Farmworker Driver Safety Campaign

Safety is the primary objective of the AITS program. In the scope of work for this project, it was envisioned by Caltrans that there would be a simultaneous evaluation of the Farmworker Driver Safety Education Program in the same four counties that the AITS pilot projects have targeted for transportation services. However, due to delays in the safety program's launch date, no evaluation was possible. Evaluation, benchmarking, and coordination of data between these separate program efforts (AITS and the Farmworker Driver Safety Program) should be completed as delineated in the scope of

work for this project. The e21 project team recommends that an evaluation model be designed and approved, and that evaluation should take place once the Driver Safety Program has been in program implementation mode for at least two quarters.

CHAPTER ONE

AITIS STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Introduction

High profile and deadly traffic accidents involving farm labor vehicles in 1999 served as the impetus for a statewide dialogue into the largely unknown phenomenon of agricultural worker transportation. In an immediate response, the California Department of Transportation and four San Joaquin Valley County transportation agencies began work on the design and implementation of a hybrid program to utilize privately operated vans and buses. In another section of this report, the progress and effect that the program has had on transportation issues is examined and discussed.

Concurrent to the objective of launching new transportation services in the Central Valley, Caltrans, as the state's transportation department endeavored to investigate the breadth and range of transportation related issues throughout the state's major growing regions. Caltrans commissioned the development of the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services statewide needs assessment.

Essentially, three technical tasks were completed to document the needs and deficiencies in transportation services for agricultural workers. These were:

- An extensive set of stakeholder interviews and surveys to gather information from representatives connected to the agriculture industry on transportation issues.
- An inventory of public and private transportation services available to agricultural workers.
- A series of spatial transportation gap analysis exhibits of California's major growing regions illustrating farming areas within each county, worker housing, and public transportation routes.

The efforts identified unmet needs and barriers in the current transportation system and suggested strategies to provide safe and efficient transportation.

Methodologies to Determine Statewide Farmworker Transportation Needs

e21, working in partnership with their community partners, gathered and processed information to determine transportation needs and gaps of the state's agricultural worker community in the largest growing regions in the state.

Data Gathering

The study team gathered specific information related to the patterns of the farming industry, existing farmworker transportation alternatives, safety issues and seasonality of local crops. The study team conducted its data gathering activities in each of the 31-targeted geographic areas to compile basic existing information on each of these issues. That information assisted the study team in formulating a specific analysis tool that recognized variables, such as the existence of public and other mass transportation available as well as accident and other relevant information within each area.

Data sources were large EDD offices, California Highway Patrol, job training service providers, farm bureaus, farmworker organizations, and public policy development organizations.

This activity gave the study team base information on the needs of the workforce in a specific area that was cross-referenced with available transportation services that provided information on service gaps and related transportation issues.

Interviews

Based on information derived from our data gathering activities and its review, we created an instrument to conduct one-on-one interviews with stakeholders. The purpose of the interviews was to supplement information gathered during the initial process and to ask questions to gain insight into efforts and initiatives planned to bridge transportation gaps. Through the interviews we determined specific needs of each county as they endeavor to meet transportation demands. Also, interviews provided a comprehensive picture of worker travel conditions.

We implemented this level of assessment in the 18 primary target counties. Working with our project partners, we identified key stakeholders in each county. We conducted approximately 100 interviews among the stakeholder groups represented below.

In the remaining 13 secondary target counties, the study team created surveys that were mailed to the same stakeholder categories.

Housing

- Local Housing Authorities/Agencies
- Office of Migrant Services

Employment Services

- Employment Development Department: Significant and Special Circumstance Offices
- Farm Labor Contractors

Transportation

- Farm Labor Contractors
- Growers' Organizations
- Public Transit Agencies
- Private Transportation providers

Farm Worker Advocates

- United Farm Workers
- California Rural Assistance League
- Social Service Agencies specializing in farmworker services

Government Regulatory Entities

- California Highway Patrol

Government Statistics

- Employment Development Department: Labor Market Information Division
- County Agricultural Commissioner Offices
- Department of Food & Agriculture: Agricultural Statistics Branch

The process provided information on employment patterns, worker-housing locations, employment centers, transportation safety trends, available and planned improvements to transportation services for farmworkers and potential abuses within the system.

Farm Labor Contractor Survey

Recognizing that the state's farm labor contractors (FLC's) represent the largest direct employer and transporter of agricultural workers in California, a specific survey tool was created and mailed to all licensed FLC's operating in California.

Spatial Analysis Methodology

The spatial report was formatted into a series of maps identifying population and transportation gaps. Additionally, GIS maps were developed to provide visual relationships between farmworker residences, available transit and employment centers.

The Stakeholder Analysis Process

The purpose of the Stakeholder process was to provide a foundation for the development of the Agriculture Industries Transportation statewide needs assessment (assessment). Specific goals of the process include the identification of transportation-related issues – such as:

- The existence and types of modes of transportation for agriculture workers
- Existence of issues related to transportation
- Barriers to employment created by limited access to transportation
- Impacts to the agricultural industry due to the limited access to transportation
- Suggested roles in transportation programs for stakeholders
- Ability/inability of existing transportation systems to deliver solutions
- Recommendations on potential solutions

A total of 283 interviews and/or surveys were conducted in 31 of California's largest agricultural counties from December 2002 through April 2003. The surveys were conducted via three methods – in person, by telephone, and mail. For logistical and reporting reasons, the state was divided into 8 major agriculture statistics districts as delineated by the California Agricultural Statistics Service. It is important to divide the state into regions in order to understand and analyze any issues that were specific to any one region. Within the Agricultural districts themselves, targeted growing counties were identified and contacts developed.

In preparation for the surveys and interviews, five (5) separate survey tools were developed (see appendix). An interview tool was created to survey stakeholders in the eighteen (18) primary target counties. Those stakeholder groups consisted of representatives of seven (7) different stakeholder categories (Farm worker advocates, Grower representatives, Housing representatives, Transportation providers, Employment services and government regulatory/law enforcement agencies).

In the thirteen secondary target counties surveys were created for representatives of the seven stakeholder groups and mailed to each of the contacts identified for the assessment. Finally, a survey was created and mailed to 978 Farm Labor Contractors (FLCs) operating in the State of California. Contact information for FLCs was obtained from the Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE). The DLSE Licensing and Registration is the state agency responsible for issuing licenses and regulating FLCs in California. (See appendix for a complete listing of all targeted contacts and participants in the Stakeholder Analysis Process).

Response summaries derived from the survey/interview process are listed by Agricultural Statistics Region and are specific to each of the stakeholder representatives. Information was then compiled into regional and statewide summaries of each of the issues listed above.

Steve Castaneda and Linda Wagner of PRM Consulting conducted all interviews and administered the mail survey process. Each interview and survey was centered on a common set of questions. (See appendix for interview and survey tools).

Survey results by region

Over 100 separate interviews were conducted with identified stakeholders in 18 primary target counties in four statistical growing regions. The interview questionnaire contained 10 general questions for all participants to respond and a series of specific questions for each of the seven stakeholder categories.

The following is an inventory of prevalent responses to a majority of the general questions regarding issues relating to program need, suggested roles and collaborations for stakeholders, program evaluation, economic impact on the agricultural industry, accident causation, and suggested solutions. Responses to the questions are taken directly from the participants and to the greatest extent possible, consist of raw content.

Responses to additional questions have been analyzed and factored into the needs assessment summary and recommendations.

Responses from Region # 40 Central Coast Targeted Counties – Napa, Marin, San Francisco, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Mateo, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara

Category: Program Need

What are some of the factors leading to a need for a transportation program for Agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Farm workers face a number of issues that leads to the need for a comprehensive transportation program. The lack, or non-existence of public transportation required workers to seek out a number of different rides to each job. In many cases, undocumented workers are unaware of safety requirements and take rides in unsafe and overcrowded vehicles. Oaxaqueños that recently arrive in the state are without driving skills or vehicles and are forced to take whatever transportation is available. Often times, the drivers of those vehicles are under the influence of alcohol and regularly involved in accidents. Consequently, workers are stranded with no rides and are forced to miss work compounding the unemployment problem.

Grower Representatives:

Too many single occupant cars are on the roadway created by workers driving to the fields.

Transportation Agencies:

Workers consider transit fares too expensive.

Employment Services Representatives:

Many prospective employees are unable to look for or access jobs because there are no transportation options available.

Housing Providers:

Often fields are more than 50 miles from housing requiring access to transportation. In many areas there is a lack of safe, dependable transportation. Another interview indicated that no transportation program was needed.

Law Enforcement:

High incidence of collisions involving workers, non-licensed drivers and large numbers of impounded vehicles.

What is the most common way local agricultural workers get to work? In your opinion, what are the major challenges facing the development and implementation of an effective transportation program?

Farm Worker Advocate:

The cost of transportation is exorbitant using the available modes. Typically, foremen and FLC vans are used for transport. In most cases, those services cost \$8.00 per day roundtrip. Workers are required to work for several growers throughout the day so they must pay for several rides.

Vehicles are unsafe, overloaded with passengers often lacking safety belts, and insurance. They are driven by unlicensed and untrained drivers and experience breakdowns, causing the workers to miss out on jobs that are given to the first workers on the site.

Workers when at the fields are transported from field to field with no pay.

Grower Representatives:

Private vehicles are the main source of transportation. Limited use of grower-owned buses.

Transportation Agencies:

Private vehicles are the largest source of transportation. Public transportation does not serve the major agricultural employers. Large employers supply transportation.

Employment Services Representatives:

No comments received

Housing Providers:

Private vehicles are the primary source. Some bus service available. Vehicles are not dependable and unsafe.

Law Enforcement:

Riding with friends and co-workers in private vehicles.

Is the lack of dependable, safe transportation placing a strain on the agriculture industry in your area/California? Is the existing transportation network placing a greater impact on the worker or the employer?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Workers are required to spend a large portion of their income on transportation due to the fact that FLC drivers and others take advantage of a captive audience. With respect to the growers, there does not seem to be a major strain on production caused by the transportation issue. The major impact is to the worker that cannot get to the jobsite on time or at all.

Grower Representatives:

Growers indicated that the transportation issue has not put a strain on the system; they seem to have sufficient access to the worker pool.

Transportation Agencies:

Impact caused by transportation issues is unknown, no visible impact.

Employment Services Representatives:

No adverse impact to growers. Workers are getting to job sites.

Housing Providers:

Unsure about exact impact. The biggest impact has been on safety. In farmworker housing facilities in the area, out of state workers have their own vehicles. Farm worker

housing was initially constructed near fields; urbanization has encroached on many of the fields causing agricultural acreage to contract, which has forced workers to travel farther distances to remote fields. Doesn't seem to be a serious impact on the agricultural industry, as growers don't seem to have a problem attracting workers.

Law Enforcement:

When law enforcement impounds a car it impacts labor availability.

Category: Suggested Roles for Stakeholders

What entity would have the greatest success in providing transportation services? Should the program be run comprehensively by one agency or should a collaborative approach be used to administer the program (i.e., recruitment, outreach, transportation, etc.)?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Difficult to meet all transportation needs. County and/or government provided transportation is the best due to the fact that it would be affordable, safe and reliable. Services should be based on a collaboration between employers and the government.

Growers Representatives:

No responses received

Transportation Agencies:

Ride share vanpools run by County government

Employment Services:

No services currently available to workers.

Housing Providers:

Since Federal law requires workers to be paid during transport when provided by the employer, growers are not inclined to provide services. Employers should invest in a government-run system for agricultural workers.

Law Enforcement:

Biggest need in drivers' education classes for new immigrants.

In your opinion, what would be the most effective way to provide transportation services to agriculture workers in your area? Should existing transportation providers (public/private) be offered incentives to provide specialized services to agricultural

workers? Or, should new services be developed and implemented to specifically serve agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Shuttle services with a system of park and ride facilities would provide the greatest flexibility. Bus service should be expanded into an agricultural worker service in order to provide the flexibility needed. Incentives provided to workers would allow autonomy and the ability to work for a variety of growers.

Growers Representatives:

Workers should be encouraged to find their own transportation. Carpool.

Transportation Agencies:

Public transit system would need to provide a separate service to meet agricultural workers' needs. Lack of resources prevents implementing such service.

Employment Services:

Shuttle vans provided by the State and growers with a series of pick up locations.

Housing Providers:

Rural transit systems would not be successful in remote areas. Employers should be provided with incentives to invest in a vanpool system run by the local government.

Law Enforcement:

Encourage farm labor contractors to provide transportation would reduce the incidence of unlicensed drivers.

Can existing public transportation services be improved and expanded to meet the needs of agricultural workers? Are there any specific routes or areas that should be added or expanded to meet the needs of agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

No transit exists now, anything would help. Buses do not offer the flexibility required by many workers. Routes would have to be extended to fields and hours of service would have to be lengthened to adequately serve agricultural workers.

Grower Representatives:

Expand public transit to serve fields.

Transportation Agencies:

Public transit could potentially serve agricultural workers with enough resources. Biggest obstacles are too many scattered fields dispersed throughout the region and varying work times making service difficult and expensive.

Housing Providers:

There is no existing service to the fields. Buses only serve populated areas. Establish connector routes with shuttle services to the fields and implement more frequent and earlier service.

Law Enforcement:

Public transit as it is now operated is not practical.

What role should private providers, employers and community-based organizations play in providing transportation services to this community?

Farm Worker Advocate:

With personal vehicles being the most prevalent method of transportation, CBO's and labor organizations could advocate for expanded driver training courses and safe vehicles. Additionally advocate for access to drivers' licenses for undocumented workers. Advocate for grower-funded transportation.

Growers Representatives:

Workers should be able to get their own way to work.

Transportation Agencies:

Smaller growers do not have the ability to fund transportation programs.

Employment Services:

Growers are the best suited to provide services.

Housing Providers:

Provide incentives to growers to provide transportation in order to develop specific services for farmworkers.

Law Enforcement:

Growers of major crops should play a role in providing transportation services to agricultural workers. Government can't and shouldn't provide all services.

What type of role do you think your organization can play in this effort?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Obtain input from workers and disseminate information about program services. Work with growers and workers to compile information on needed services. Coordinate service delivery efforts and monitor the operation and results of implemented programs.

Grower Representatives:

Disseminate information to growers

Transportation Agencies:

Provide additional transportation services should the needed resources become available.

Employment Services:

Provide referrals to workers and program information to both workers and employers.

Housing Providers:

Provide information and educate workers. Provide drop-off and pick up locations. Coordinate services. We would play no role.

Law Enforcement:

Provide enforcement to ensure safe operation of vehicles with licensed drivers. Provide information to FLC drivers. Air public safety messages on Spanish language radio. Request grant money to field more drunken driving enforcement details during the evening hours. Partner with outside organizations to educate and inform parents on the use of safety belts and seats. Educate recent immigrants on alcohol and driving.

Category: Program Evaluation

How should the success of the program be evaluated/measured?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Conduct satisfaction level among workers and employers. Monitor Park & Ride locations.

Grower Representatives:

No responses

Employment Services:

Inventory number of system users

Housing Providers:

Survey workers and employers on use and satisfaction rates.

Law Enforcement:

Statistically track drivers. Determine if safety has improved and monitor accident trends.

Questions for Specific Stakeholder Categories

Has the lack of transportation caused a problem with local growers in their ability to obtain sufficient numbers of workers?

Agricultural Industry Stakeholders:

Growers have not said that there is a serious shortage of workers. Workers have complained that post 9/11 there are less workers in the fields.

Grower Representatives:

Issues related to transportation have not caused problems in attracting workers.

What percentage of local growers provide transportation to their workers?

Farm Worker Advocates:

No employers provide transportation to workers except when on fields.

What is the biggest reason that employers do not offer transportation?

Farm Worker Advocates:

Cost. Employers only provide transportation when on fields.

Grower Representatives:

Cost is the biggest issue. Employers that provide transportation must compensate workers while being transported.

What is the largest contributor to vehicle accidents involving agricultural workers?

Law Enforcement:

Driving under the influence is the largest contributor to fatal crashes.

Is there an existing effort to educate agricultural workers on traffic safety?

Law Enforcement:

The Golden Gate Division is operating a Driving Under the Influence education program on a \$40,000 grant from the issuance liquor licenses. There is no Safety and Farm Labor Vehicle Education Program (SAFE) program operating in the region.

Responses from Region # 50 Sacramento Valley Targeted Counties – Solano

Category: Program Need

What are some of the factors leading to need for a transportation program for agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Expense to workers.

Grower Representatives:

No responses received.

Transportation Agencies:

No response received.

Employment Services Representatives:

There is a lack of options available to farmworkers. No public transportation in rural areas.

Housing Providers:

Number of issues for farmworkers. Safety problems, no transportation for work or basic services. Undocumented workers unable to obtain drivers' licenses.

Law Enforcement:

Safety.

What is the most common way local agricultural workers get to work? In your opinion, what are the major challenges facing the development and implementation of an effective transportation program?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Overcrowded vehicles typically driven by unlicensed and uninsured drivers. Vehicles often confiscated.

Grower Representatives:

No response received

Transportation Agencies:

No response received

Employment Services Representatives:

Labor contractors pick up workers. Bus service is not flexible enough for worker schedules. Private vehicles.

Housing Providers:

Most residents of farmworker housing have their own vehicles or have access to one. Friends, carools, and vehicles for hire provide source of transportation.

Law Enforcement:

Network of contractors and friends seems to be adequate to meet the needs of growers and workers.

Is the lack of dependable, safe transportation placing a strain on the agriculture industry in your area/California? Is the existing transportation network placing a greater impact on the worker or the employer?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Farm labor contractors supply transportation that is not always the safest.

Grower Representatives:

No problem attracting sufficient labor.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services Representatives:

No impact to growers.

Housing Providers:

No problem for workers or growers. Housing is more of an issue.

Law Enforcement:

No strain for growers.

Category: Suggested Roles for Stakeholders

What entity would have the greatest success in providing transportation services? Should the program be run comprehensively by one agency or should a collaborative approach be used to administer the program (i.e., recruitment, outreach, transportation, etc.)?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Farm labor vehicles used to provide transportation that was funded by the growers. There are no more labor vehicles.

Growers Representatives:

No responses received

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

A collaborative between the County transit service and a rural shuttle service.

Housing Providers:

City bus service could provide rural service to migrant centers.

Law Enforcement:

Unaware of any interested agencies.

In your opinion, what would be the most effective way to provide transportation services to agriculture workers in your area? Should existing transportation providers

(public/private) be offered incentives to provide specialized services to agricultural workers? Or, should new services be developed and implemented to specifically serve agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Local bus service should provide more service.

Growers Representatives:

No responses received.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Flexible rural transit program.

Housing Providers:

Private cars would provide the greatest flexibility. A system that would not overcharge.

Law Enforcement:

Encourage farm labor contractors to provide transportation in safe vehicles.

Can existing public transportation services be improved and expanded to meet the needs of agricultural workers? Are there any specific routes or areas that should be added or expanded to meet the needs of agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Public transportation is not used or understood by many farmworkers.

Grower Representatives:

No response received

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Some existing bus routes could be expanded through peak growing seasons. Public transportation is not understood, need more bilingual drivers.

Housing Providers:

Transit does not go to the fields in part because rural roads are insufficient to accommodate large buses. Transit should provide service to agricultural areas along major highways.

Law Enforcement:

There is no public transportation in the area to serve agricultural workers.

What role should private providers, employers and community-based organizations play in providing transportation services to this community?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Growers should support transportation programs for agricultural workers.

Growers Representatives:

No responses received.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Community based organizations should operate public programs.

Housing Providers:

Employers should provide transportation. Previously, growers provided transportation to migrant centers; no one provides services now. Some growers provide on site housing for male workers.

Law Enforcement:

Amount of participation by grower should depend on the size of the farm. Large growers could provide transportation for workers. Small growers lack the resources to participate unilaterally.

What type of role do you think your organization can play in this effort?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Inform workers of program services through community based organization (CBO)-owned radio stations.

Grower Representatives:

No response received

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Provide services information in different languages.

Housing Providers:

Provide information on bus service and route changes. Provide pick up point for workers.

Law Enforcement:

Provide education and outreach services to labor contractors, workers, and the media on traffic and driver safety.

Category: Program Evaluation

How should the success of the program be evaluated/measured?

Farm Worker Advocate:

No responses received.

Grower Representatives:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Survey system users. Use sign-in sheets.

Housing Providers:

Survey workers and employers on use and satisfaction rates.

Law Enforcement:

Not sure that transportation program is necessary. Safety is the greatest priority.

Questions for Specific Stakeholder Categories

Has the lack of transportation caused a problem with local growers in their ability to obtain sufficient numbers of workers?

Agricultural Industry Stakeholders:

Growers have not said that there is a serious shortage of workers.

Grower Representatives:

Issues related to transportation have not caused problems in attracting workers.

What percentage of local growers provide transportation to their workers?

Farm Worker Advocates:

No employers provide transportation to workers except when on fields.

What is the biggest reason that employers do not offer transportation?

Farm Worker Advocates:

Cost. Employers only provide transportation when on fields.

Grower Representatives:

Cost is the biggest issue. Employers that provide transportation must compensate workers while being transported.

What is the largest contributor to vehicle accidents involving agricultural workers?

Law Enforcement:

Combination of excessive speed and driving while intoxicated.

Is there an existing effort to educate agricultural workers on traffic safety?

Law Enforcement:

There is an existing safety program to educate workers and labor contractors at places of employment.

Responses from Region # 51 San Joaquin Targeted Counties – Fresno, Tulare, Kern, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Kings

Category: Program Need

What are some of the factors leading to need for a transportation program for agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

High incidence of accidents and farmworker deaths due to declining driver safety. Cost of transportation to fields is exorbitant for low paid workers. Abuse from farm labor contractors that charge as much as \$8.00 per day for transportation. Scattered nature of fields makes it difficult to offer transportation to workers. Many workers cannot obtain licenses or insurance.

Grower Representatives:

Lots of traffic accidents. Safety is being addressed legislatively and regulatorily. Laws for transporting workers is too strict. Cost for insurance is too high. Liability and workers compensation insurance too costly.

Transportation Agencies:

No response received.

Employment Services Representatives:

Rider safety must be improved; often workers must walk in above 100-degree heat for long distances. Vehicle breakdowns cause worker delays and possible worker shortages.

Housing Providers:

Resources for transporting workers are limited. Transit serving migrant housing is limited and does not serve fields. Fields are widely dispersed and remote from residential areas making it difficult to serve with public transportation. Farm labor vehicles are overcrowded and unsafe.

Law Enforcement:

Driver and rider education.

What is the most common way local agricultural workers get to work? In your opinion, what are the major challenges facing the development and implementation of an effective transportation program?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Farm labor vans, private vehicles, unlicensed and uninsured vans. Raiteros purchase vehicles to transport workers. Unmaintained vehicles that are overcrowded and charge workers \$5.00 -\$8.00 per day.

Grower Representatives:

Labor contractors have vans with bench seats and no seat belts. Private vehicles and carpooling.

Transportation Agencies:

No response received

Employment Services Representatives:

Expensive and abusive vehicles for hire. Vehicles are unsafe and have no seat belts and are overcrowded.

Housing Providers:

Fulltime workers have vans that experience mechanical problems. Migrant workers typically have new expensive vehicles. Farm labor contractors provide transportation. Various states of vehicles in varied states of repair. Carpools, workers look for employers that provide transportation.

Law Enforcement:

Personal vehicles and farm labor vehicles.

Is the lack of dependable, safe transportation placing a strain on the agriculture industry in your area/California? Is the existing transportation network placing a greater impact on the worker or the employer?

Farm Worker Advocate:

In 2001, the Delano area faced worker shortages because of limited transportation. No significant impact on growers. Impacts are largely felt by workers.

Grower Representatives:

Rainy seasons cause workers to move on to other employment areas. Transportation is not the issue, water is.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received

Employment Services Representatives:

Vehicle breakdowns create unstable workforce and potential labor shortages.

Housing Providers:

Workers lose work if they don't have dependable transportation. The transportation issue is a big issue for workers.

Law Enforcement:

Unsure.

Category: Suggested Roles for Stakeholders

What entity would have the greatest success in providing transportation services? Should the program be run comprehensively by one agency or should a collaborative approach be used to administer the program (i.e., recruitment, outreach, transportation, etc.)?

Farm Worker Advocate:

State of California should administer a transportation program for agricultural workers. One agency should run the program instead of a fractured approach. Public transit should coordinate service with growers to provide service to central drop off areas.

Growers Representatives:

Community organizations along with California Citrus Mutual and DC Farmers League could start a transportation program. AITS program should be allowed to work. Let undocumented workers obtain licenses.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received

Employment Services:

Community based operations already provide transportation for non-work needs and could expand to work transportation. The (AITS) Van program in Kings County should work and could be expanded to other parts of the region.

Housing Providers:

No program would be effective to serve scattered fields. Community based organizations could receive grants to provide transportation. Bus routes could be expanded but rural roads are not sufficient to accommodate buses.

Law Enforcement:

AITS program should provide adequate services to workers. State grant for traffic safety will help improve transportation system.

In your opinion, what would be the most effective way to provide transportation services to agriculture workers in your area? Should existing transportation providers (public/private) be offered incentives to provide specialized services to agricultural workers? Or, should new services be developed and implemented to specifically serve agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Bus service could be provided through a partnership between farm labor contractors and government. Laws need to be changed in order for labor contractors to provide transportation. Less red tape, and create the ability to charge for rides. Provide incentives to growers who provide dependable and affordable transportation. Train farmworkers to provide rides for a fee.

Growers Representatives:

Require all workers to have valid drivers' licenses, and do not require drivers to have immigration papers. Growers do not believe that they should be in the transportation business. Need for workers is too unpredictable to justify major investment in transportation equipment. AITS program should work.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Establish large pick up areas. Fresno and Mendota areas would be good candidates for van shuttle service.

Housing Providers:

Transit buses in conjunction with shuttle buses would be safe and economical. Develop a multi-faceted approach that utilizes core competencies of all stakeholders. Public transit service buses could work if it provided weekend and early hour's service.

Law Enforcement:

Any transportation that is safe.

Can existing public transportation services be improved and expanded to meet the needs of agricultural workers? Are there any specific routes or areas that should be added or expanded to meet the needs of agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Bus services could be expanded but would have difficulty in providing service to the vast majority of farmworkers. Public transportation does not service fields and could not effectively serve enough territory.

Grower Representatives:

Public transportation does not provide service to agricultural workers. Dial-a-ride system is undependable and ineffective. Buses only serve in-town areas and are inadequate to serve need.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received

Employment Services:

Public transportation will not provide services to fields. Public transportation would have to be too flexible and operate during early hours and observe seasonality of crops.

Housing Providers:

Vans would be more effective in providing service. Buses would need to operate earlier and would not work for seasonal jobs.

Law Enforcement:

Farm workers use buses in the Parlier area, otherwise fields are too far spread apart and schedules and routes do not serve agricultural workers.

What role should private providers, employers and community-based organizations play in providing transportation services to this community?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Growers are willing to consider providing services but not under current regulations and requirements increasing insurance and labor costs. Collaboration between community based organizations and farm labor contractors would be an effective approach.

Growers Representatives:

Growers do provide transportation to permanent employees. Labor rules and distance from housing causes growers not to provide transportation. Expense, liability and paperwork are barriers keeping more farm labor contractors from providing transportation.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Local community based organizations in cooperation with government could provide transportation. Farm labor contractors could train drivers. Growers could provide transportation but the costs are too high.

Housing Providers:

Large employers should provide rides. Community based organizations could assist in providing services.

Law Enforcement:

Growers and farm labor contractors should provide transportation in certified vehicles.

What type of role do you think your organization can play in this effort?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Provide information on vehicle safety. Community based organizations could provide direct transportation services. Supply information to workers. Outreach to stakeholders and provide forum for dialogue.

Grower Representatives:

Educate stakeholders on legislative issues. Identify workers that need transportation and publicize program.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Certifying drivers.

Housing Providers:

Provide information and referrals on bus service and route changes. Assist in coordinating service to pick up and drop off locations.

Law Enforcement:

Provide education and outreach services to labor contractors, workers and the media on traffic and driver safety.

Category: Program Evaluation

How should the success of the program be evaluated/measured?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Survey workers. Record compliance levels. Monitor pick up and drop off locations.

Grower Representatives:

Establish baseline and measure differences to obtain performance. Implement pilot program and survey users.

Employment Services:

Survey users of the system.

Housing Providers:

Inventory usage of the system through sign in sheets and satisfaction surveys of growers and workers.

Law Enforcement:

Survey growers and workers.

Questions for Specific Stakeholder Categories

Has the lack of transportation caused a problem with local growers in their ability to obtain sufficient numbers of workers?

Agricultural Industry Stakeholders:

No impact to growers. There is an overabundance of guest workers. The strain is mainly on the worker that cannot afford transportation.

Grower Representatives:

No major problems in obtaining adequate labor. AITS program could assist remote growers.

What percentage of local growers provide transportation to their workers?

Farm Worker Advocates:

None.

Grower Representatives:

Very few. Growers only provide transportation when on their property.

What is the biggest reason that employers do not offer transportation?

Farm Worker Advocates:

Liability, responsibility. Growers only want more workers not more cost.

Grower Representatives:

Liability and cost of investing in transportation equipment.

What is the largest contributor to vehicle accidents involving agricultural workers?

Law Enforcement:

Violations of driving laws – stop signs, running off road, and no seat belt.

Is there an existing effort to educate agricultural workers on traffic safety?

Law Enforcement:

SAFE program has two officers that focus on inspecting farm labor vehicles. There is an existing safety program to educate workers and labor contractors at places of employment. SAFE has meant a reduction in accidents.

Responses from Region # 80 Southern California Targeted Counties – Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Imperial Valley and Orange County

Category: Program Need

What are some of the factors leading to need for a transportation program for agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

High cost of housing requires agricultural workers to travel long distances contributing to congestion and air pollution. Cost of transportation to fields is exorbitant for low paid workers. Farm labor contractors overload vehicles with passengers. FLC buses have no insurance causing dangerous driving conditions. In situations where drivers become ill, workers must walk to fields.

Grower Representatives:

Traffic safety. Vehicle parking on fields blocking roadways. High cost of housing in coastal areas requires workers to live far from fields.

In Imperial County, long border delays cause pollution. Many unsafe vehicles on the road cause dangerous conditions. No transportation in IV because FLC's provide transportation. Need inspection of private vehicles.

In San Diego County, there is no problem, most workers live on fields.

Transportation Agencies:

No response received.

Employment Services Representatives:

There is a lack of options available to farmworkers. No public transportation in rural areas. Not enough private vehicles. Expense to workers. Lack of transportation causing higher unemployment. Unlicensed drivers.

In Orange County everyone needs a car.

Housing Providers:

No transportation available to residents at migrant centers. Low use of migrant centers due to the lack of transportation to the centers. Agriculture fields are primarily in remote areas with no access by public transportation. FLC drivers need to be licensed and insured.

Imperial Valley has a unique system that works fine; workers are picked up at a central location (border) and transported to fields.

Law Enforcement:

Accidents involving farm labor vehicles. Non-use of seat belts.

What is the most common way local agricultural workers get to work? In your opinion, what are the major challenges facing the development and implementation of an effective transportation program?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Overcrowded private vehicles typically driven by unlicensed and uninsured drivers charging \$5.00 -\$8.00 per day. Buses, walking, carpooling.

Grower Representatives:

Private vehicles and carpools. Drivers do not follow traffic laws.

In Imperial Valley FLC's provide transportation.

Transportation Agencies:

No response received

Employment Services Representatives:

Overcrowded vehicles, when one person is sick, everyone misses work. Other modes, bicycles and walking.

Housing Providers:

Various states of vehicles in varied states of repair. Carpools, workers look for employers that provide transportation.

Law Enforcement:

Vans owned by different parties that charge fees for rides.

Is the lack of dependable, safe transportation placing a strain on the agriculture industry in your area/California? Is the existing transportation network placing a greater impact on the worker or the employer?

Farm Worker Advocate:

More impact to workers than growers. Growers have plenty of workers.

Grower Representatives:

Labor costs continue to rise. Transportation issue puts the strain on workers and traffic congestion. Documentation/immigration issues more of a problem of employment.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received

Employment Services Representatives:

No impact to growers. More labor available than jobs. In Orange County, transportation problems have created a shortage of workers.

Housing Providers:

Growers have enough workers. Lack of transportation has caused growers to house workers in tents.

Law Enforcement:

Unsure as to the lack of transportation. Growers seem to have enough workers.

Category: Suggested Roles for Stakeholders

What entity would have the greatest success in providing transportation services? Should the program be run comprehensively by one agency or should a collaborative approach be used to administer the program (i.e., recruitment, outreach, transportation, etc.)?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Local government would provide greatest flexibility if the transportation schedules were expanded. Cut flower industry works on fixed hours while the vegetable growers are dispersed throughout the county and have varying hours. Major employers should provide transportation and coordinate with community based organizations to deliver services.

Growers Representatives:

Government agencies could provide transportation. The Imperial County system works with farm labor contractors providing transportation.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received

Employment Services:

Government sponsored bus and shuttle services serving the fields and migrant centers. A collaborative between the County transit service and growers would serve the need.

Housing Providers:

Farm labor contractors have great success in Imperial County and Coachella Valley. The Department of Motor Vehicles should oversee safety, training, and licensing programs for drivers.

Law Enforcement:

No local group or organization provides transportation services for agricultural workers.

In your opinion, what would be the most effective way to provide transportation services to agriculture workers in your area? Should existing transportation providers (public/private) be offered incentives to provide specialized services to agricultural workers? Or, should new services be developed and implemented to specifically serve agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Local bus service should provide a specialized service for agricultural workers. State and local government service would not overcharge for rides and would observe traffic laws. Community based organizations could provide services that would be fair and safe. Employer-owned buses and shuttle vans.

Growers Representatives:

Government sponsored services would have to be significantly expanded to address the needs of all workers. Vanpools would offer the greatest flexibility. No need for new services.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Coordinate efforts between transit service and strategically located park and ride lots in housing areas and growing fields. Workers would have to earn more to afford private vehicles.

Housing Providers:

Create incentives to growers to provide transportation to workers. Publicly run shuttle vans specifically serving agricultural areas. Farm labor contractors are efficient but need safety training.

Law Enforcement:

Whatever transportation is available it must be safe.

Can existing public transportation services be improved and expanded to meet the needs of agricultural workers? Are there any specific routes or areas that should be added or expanded to meet the needs of agricultural workers?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Many public streets in agricultural areas are not good enough to accommodate buses. Public transit is not set up to serve agricultural workers. Existing bus service is too limited to meet the needs of workers.

Grower Representatives:

Public transportation would be required to travel longer distances and run longer hours.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received

Employment Services:

Bus service would have to be expanded to serve agricultural areas. Special fleets of busses/vans would be needed to serve workers. Existing services would not be practical for workers. Commutes to remote areas in excess of 2.5 hours.

Housing Providers:

Transit service does not go to the fields and begins service too late in the day.

Law Enforcement:

Only where fields are adjacent to routes. Unsure if expansion is practical.

What role should private providers, employers and community-based organizations play in providing transportation services to this community?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Collaboration between government and community-based organizations would be able to comply with regulations and serve workers effectively. Bus service could be expanded to specifically serve agricultural regions.

Growers Representatives:

Growers would need incentives to provided services. Labor contractors provide services and growers could provide park and ride locations.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Employers should be subsidized to provide transportation.

Housing Providers:

Employers should play role if provided incentives. Community based organizations and farm labor contractors are best equipped to provide service.

Law Enforcement:

All transporters should be responsible for traffic safety.

What type of role do you think your organization can play in this effort?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Supply information to workers. Lobby for reforms and additional funding.

Grower Representatives:

Support efforts to determine need. Provide information to growers and workers. Advocate for incentives.

Transportation Agencies:

No responses received.

Employment Services:

Provide coordination for growers and workers. Distribute service information and bus passes. Provide services information in different languages.

Housing Providers:

Provide information on bus service and route changes. Assist in coordinating services.

Law Enforcement:

Provide education and outreach services to labor contractors, workers and the media on traffic and driver safety.

Category: Program Evaluation

How should the success of the program be evaluated/measured?

Farm Worker Advocate:

Survey workers. Record compliance levels.

Grower Representatives:

Monitor vehicles parked on fields. Survey workers and growers. Determine impact on labor shortages.

Employment Services:

Caltrans should monitor services to determine effectiveness and financial integrity. Monitor bus system to measure effectiveness in getting workers to fields.

Housing Providers:

Survey workers and employers on use and satisfaction rates.

Law Enforcement:

Track accident statistics.

Questions for Specific Stakeholder Categories

Has the lack of transportation caused a problem with local growers in their ability to obtain sufficient numbers of workers?

Agricultural Industry Stakeholders:

No impact to growers. There is an overabundance of workers.

Grower Representatives:

Major impacts occur when workers park on fields. There are sporadic problems with workers at certain times of the season. Minor problems occur when vehicles breakdown.

What percentage of local growers provide transportation to their workers?

Farm Worker Advocates:

No employers provide transportation to workers except when on fields.

Grower Representatives:

In Imperial County, FLCs provide most of the transportation. Zero to 10% of growers provide transportation.

What is the biggest reason that employers do not offer transportation?

Farm Worker Advocates:

Cost and liability are the biggest issues.

Grower Representatives:

Cost. Growers need to cut expenses. Too many rules from Sacramento.

What is the largest contributor to vehicle accidents involving agricultural workers?

Law Enforcement:

DUI, excessive speed, following too close, non-use of safety belts.

Is there an existing effort to educate agricultural workers on traffic safety?

Law Enforcement:

SAFE program has two officers that focus on inspecting farm labor vehicles. There is an existing safety program to educate workers and labor contractors at places of employment.

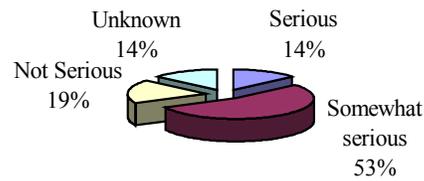
Secondary Target County Survey Results

Surveys were mailed to 115 stakeholders in the 13 secondary counties. The questions ranged from the existence of transportation needs, commute distances, availability of public transportation and areas most in need of improvement. The responses have been tabulated and analyzed.

Perceptions regarding state of transportation for agricultural workers

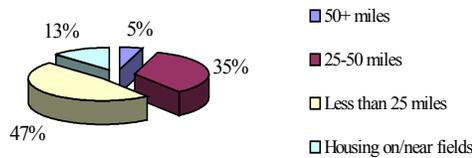
Survey respondents felt strongly about the serious nature of the agriculture transportation issue. Two-thirds of the respondents characterized the situation as serious while only 19% felt the problem was not serious. By contrast, nearly as many respondents were unsure as to the severity of the problem.

What best describes the barrier created by limited transportation to agricultural workers?



Distance between Work and Home

Describe the physical distance between farmworker housing and agricultural employment centers?



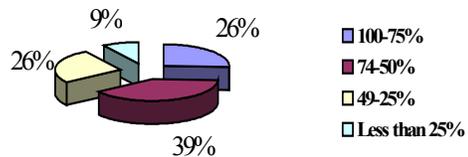
The distance farmworkers must travel to work is increasing. Eighty-two percent of farmworkers live between zero and fifty miles from their place of employment. Thirteen percent live near or on fields. Surveys indicate that a large portion of workers live long distances from their places of employment. Information derived from this study

indicates that commute requirements are becoming longer due to increasing encroachment of residential development in areas zoned for agriculture. This trend has pushed fields to remote areas which are located long distances from residential communities.

Access to Private Transportation

Access to private vehicles isn't viewed as a large problem. Sixty-five percent believed that most farmworkers in their area had access to a vehicle. A very small percentage (9%) felt there was a shortage of private vehicles.

What percentage of farmworkers do you estimate have their own vehicle or access to a private vehicle for transportation to work?

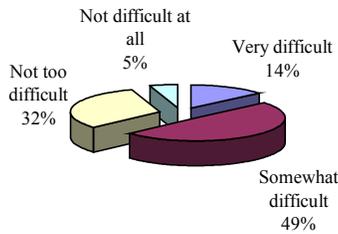


Access to Safe, Dependable Transportation

Though a majority of respondents believe that there isn't a lack of vehicles, their views on the condition of those vehicles and access to safe and dependable transportation

differs.

Describe the ability of workers to obtain safe and dependable transportation?

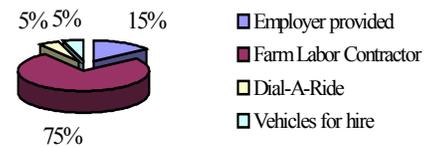


Sixty-three percent viewed the access to safe and dependable transportation as difficult, while only 5% believed there to be no difficulty. A third believed that there was some difficulty in finding safe transportation.

Farmworker Transportation Providers

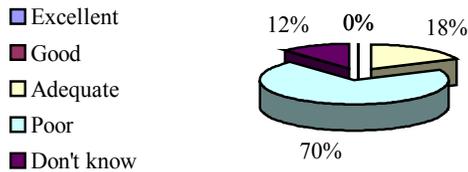
Responses to questions on what entity provides majority of transportation is heavily weighted toward the farm labor contractors. Employer provided transportation was more prevalent once workers were on the job site. Other entities were less likely to provide transportation to farmworkers.

Other than public transportation, what other forms of transportation are available to agricultural workers?



Perceptions on Public Transportation Services to Farmworkers

Rate the availability of public transportation available to agricultural workers?



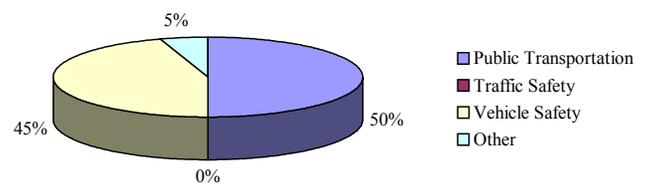
Respondents didn't give public transportation very good marks when it comes to serving the needs of farmworkers. Seventy percent rated service as poor while only 30% rated it as adequate or good. There were no responses that rated it as excellent. Interviews conducted as a

part of this study indicated that public transportation played a very small role in serving farmworkers. Inventories of transit services show that few routes access growing areas and operate during the early hours and on weekends when farmworkers commute.

Establishing Transportation Priorities

Respondents were split on the biggest need of improvement. Responses between public transportation and vehicle safety received the highest number of responses. Other

What is the area most in need of improvement?



suggestions included making insurance easier to obtain and licensing undocumented workers to increase safety.

Farm Labor Contractor Survey Results

Surveys were mailed to the state's licensed Farm Labor Contractors (FLC's) to gain a greater understanding of contractor attitudes and perceptions on the farmworker transportation issue. FLC's are located throughout the state and represent the largest direct employer of farmworkers in California. Their views in aggregate and by region are critical to the development of effective strategies to resolve outstanding issues.

It is important, as well, to cross-reference the FLC findings with responses to similar questions provided by other stakeholders to gain an appreciation for the roles of the FLC and the issues as they relate to their businesses.

A summary of survey findings is below with the complete results included in the report appendix.

Agricultural Employees

An overwhelming majority of the contractors surveyed provide workers to the agricultural industry. Eighty-five percent of the companies responded that all of their workers regularly work in the farming industry.

Transportation Providers

The issue of who provides transportation varies from region to region. Overall, only 15% of FLC's responded that they provide their workers with transportation. That percentage increases to 33% in Southern California largely because most Imperial Valley FLC's pickup and drop off workers each day at the International Border. The percentages for this question vary, however, from the findings in the stakeholder surveys where 75% responded that FLC's provide the majority of the transportation. The difference is most likely attributed the fact that FLC foreman provide transportation in private vehicles which are not sponsored by the contractor. In that case the contractor averts liability for exposure for workers being transported.

Severity of Transportation Issue

Perceptions regarding the serious nature of the transportation issues vary from the general stakeholders as well. Thirty percent responded that the issue was not serious and Nearly 20% perceived the issue to be serious. By contrast, 67% of general stakeholders viewed the situation as serious.

Areas in need of improvement

Vehicle and traffic safety were the areas in the highest need of improvement. Expansion of public transportation was also viewed as a significant need.

Survey Analysis

Review of Existing Transportation Services

Through the stakeholder analysis process, several of the state's public transportation providers were interviewed as well as a review of transit routes available through the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics to provide information for this section as well base data for the compilation of the GIS maps in this report.

Based on the information gathered, it is quite clear that public transportation agencies throughout the state provide few services to agricultural areas. Service is, for the most part, limited to urbanized areas with minimal service in rural areas. In many parts of California residential development has displaced large expanses of growing fields to remote areas of their respective regions. These areas are typically underserved by public transit due to the lack of identified demand.

Other issues that contribute to the lack of public transit in growing regions is the poor and inadequate state of many rural roads, instability of passenger demand, hours of service, the widely dispersed nature of growing fields, and impacts to fare box recovery rates. Universally, transit operators are concerned about wear and tear to transit buses and other equipment that is not designed nor equipped to travel poor and narrow rural roadways. Crop seasonality and the variable schedule of agricultural workers from month to month make it impossible to efficiently and cost effectively schedule service. Agricultural workers are required to report for work at extremely early hours, and often must adhere to variable work schedules in a myriad of locations in a single day adding complexity and cost to serving this market.

Spatial Analysis

A spatial analysis (appendix) was conducted to determine the states major agricultural growing areas parcels, identifiable farmworker housing facilities, and public transportation service available in 27 targeted counties. Maps were prepared using geographic information systems (GIS) software and database information provided by the State of California, Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, the United States Bureau of Transportation Statistics, United States Department Housing and Urban Development, and Subsidized Housing Projects' Geographic Codes.

The analysis yielded the following findings:

- Most public transportation systems do not adequately service the agricultural areas.
- In the majority of the counties within the state, subsidized housing is in proximity to established transit lines.
- Only in the rural counties is some of the subsidized housing near or on agricultural lands. In urbanized counties subsidized housing is displaced from agricultural growing areas. In addition, established transit routes generally serve urban areas and do not extend to remote growing areas.
- The highway system adequately provides access to general agricultural areas.

For a high percentage of the areas analyzed in the spatial review, the only methods for agricultural workers to reach job sites appear to be flexible transportation modes such as private vehicles, shuttle vans, farm labor vehicles and Dial-a-Ride services. While the Dial-a-ride model offers sufficient flexibility, they are limited to urban areas and not typically accessible to the farmworker for transportation to work.

At the present time there is an inadequate supply of public transportation to serve the needs of the state's agricultural workers.

Transportation Gaps and Related Issues

Summary of existing conditions

Based on the information developed in the three technical tasks, the characteristics of the state's agricultural workers, their travel needs, related issues and the public transportation environment are listed below.

Travel patterns of agricultural workers

Most non-permanent agricultural workers do not have access to reliable transportation. Surveys indicate that less than 50% of workers have access to private vehicles and most private vehicles used by workers are in poor states of repair. As a result, agricultural workers must make other transportation arrangements, such as carpooling with co-workers, or paying for rides from farm labor contractors or raiteros. Other common modes of transportation were bicycles and walking.

Responses to surveys indicate that approximately 96% of agriculture workers live from 0-50 miles for their place of employment with nearly 40% living from 25-50 miles from work. As a result of urban encroachment on much of the state's agricultural acreage, growing areas have been displaced to remote locations of many California counties. This

trend has moved agricultural employment centers further from residential areas making it more difficult to obtain reliable transportation on a regular basis.

Lack of public transportation serving rural and agricultural areas

Based on information derived from the stakeholder and spatial analyses, it is quite clear that significant changes to existing public transit would have to be made in order to address the needs of the agricultural worker. Nearly 60 % of survey respondents referred to the availability of public transportation as poor while only 18% rated it as adequate to excellent.

Limited transit service during early hours and on weekends

The agricultural worker's schedule is dictated largely by Mother Nature. Additionally, the heat of the midday sun requires much of the field labor to be accomplished during the early hours. The majority of the transit service reviewed for this study revealed that relatively few systems operate during the hours workers travel to work. The lack of weekend transportation also represents a significant gap in service.

Limited access to reliable and safe automobiles

Relatively few agricultural workers own their own vehicles. Many of the privately owned vehicles are in poor states of repair. Respondents indicated that vehicle breakdowns often cause several workers to miss a day's employment. Other issues involve the lack of safety equipment. The high cost of properly maintaining vehicles cause most owners to allow them to drift into disrepair. Additionally, vehicles are often overcrowded, compounding the unsafe nature of vehicle operation.

Many workers unable to receive driver training and licenses

The fact that many workers lack legal immigration documents prevents them from obtaining proper training and driver's licenses. Many workers have had their licenses revoked due to driving under the influence and other violations. Drivers unable to obtain licenses cannot purchase vehicle insurance.

High cost of daily rides

Surveys indicate that agricultural workers must spend \$5.00 - \$8.00 per day on transportation. In many instances, workers must work in several locations throughout the day causing them to spend more for transportation. Often times they become stranded requiring them walk long distances to get home.

Agricultural workers typically required to work at several sites throughout the day

Many agricultural workers are required to work in a number of locations throughout the day making it difficult for public transportation provide adequate services. This type of

arrangement increases transportation costs and requires workers to rely on any type of available transportation.

Uncoordinated approach to transportation information dissemination

Stakeholder surveys indicate that there is no uniform or coordinated effort to provide workers with information on available transportation services. Respondents indicated that limited-English speaking workers have even greater problems obtaining information regarding available transportation services. Additionally, many transit systems have only a small percentage of Spanish speaking operators.

Non Transportation Impacts of Limited Transportation

There is no indication that the lack of transportation services available to agricultural workers has placed a strain on the state's farming industry. Nearly everyone surveyed from all stakeholder groups believed that there were sufficient numbers of workers available to work in the industry. There were, however, sporadic and isolated incidences of labor shortages due to transportation problems.

Workers are the most impacted by the lack of transportation. It is quite common for individuals or groups of workers to lose jobs because of their inability to get to work.

Perhaps the greatest impact caused by the existing agricultural worker transportation structure is to traffic safety. This situation is most serious because it affects all drivers on California's roads. While the situation is improving due to programs like the California Highway Patrol's SAFE program there continues to be a major problem caused by unsafe, uninsured, and overloaded vehicles on California's rural roadways. Reports for the Highway Patrol indicate that the majority of vehicular accidents and sustained injuries by agricultural workers are due to speeding, disregarding traffic controls, driving under the influence, unsafe and overloaded vehicles, and nonuse of safety restraints. Unlicensed and uninsured drivers continue to operate vehicles transporting agricultural workers.

Recommended Improvement Strategies

Create Regional Agricultural Worker Transportation Working Groups

The analysis prepared for this report indicates that with few exceptions, the gaps and barriers that workers face are consistent throughout the state. There are however differences in factors such as seasons and times, when workers are needed, and the distances between fields and housing. It also became quite obvious that there were few, if any, existing transportation services that could adequately serve the needs of agricultural workers in any part of the state. It is quite clear that a hybrid system operated by a collaboration of stakeholders would have the greatest success. This type of approach requires transportation and residential development planning and participation by all groups involved in providing employment and servicing this community. A regional workgroup would have the greatest success in designing a holistic approach to transportation services.

Advocate Amendments to Laws Creating Barriers to Solutions

Interviews with grower stakeholders indicate that there are several existing laws that discourage employers from providing transportation to their workers. Requirements regarding when the workday starts and liability serve to dissuade employers from providing services. These laws should be reviewed and amended where appropriate to remove barriers.

Expand Public Transportation Services to Early Morning and Weekend Hours

Even for public transit to provide partial service to this community, it is necessary to expand bus service to early and weekend hours. Agricultural workers by the nature of their industry are required to report for work as early as 4:00 am. Most of the transit services reviewed for this study do not provide early morning service. Such limited service makes it difficult to use public transportation to get to work.

Introduce Shuttle Van and Bus Service to Agricultural Areas

Surveys indicate that the AITS Pilot Program model is the most sound as it relates to providing transportation to this hard to serve group. Though there have been difficulties in launching the program, the design has been endorsed by a majority of the stakeholders interviewed in this study. This type of approach should be expanded in cooperation with community-based organizations that can recruit and train drivers, housing providers that can disseminate information and establish park and ride locations and employers that can coordinate onsite transportation with shuttle services. Though the findings contained in this report support transportation strategies that offer maximum flexibility, each region requires tailored approaches that should be researched and designed by local transportation working groups.

Train and License Agricultural Workers

State law requires legal residency status documentation to obtain a California Drivers' License. Though the requirement is intended to control immigration, it has led to a growing number of unlicensed drivers that have no formal vehicle operational training. This situation puts all motorists at risk since many of the accidents involving farm labor vehicles are due to infractions of the vehicle code.

Resolve Issues to Make Vehicle Insurance Easier to Obtain

Vehicle insurance is difficult to obtain and afford for many drivers and nearly impossible for agricultural workers. The net effect is that there are a growing number of drivers without liability insurance on California roads each day. Remedies to resolve this issue should be investigated and pursued.

Findings contained in this report continually point to the lack of available vehicle insurance which serves as a barrier to many farmworker transportation efforts to obtain vehicle liability insurance. A 2002 review of Central Valley insurance companies conducted by Proteus, Inc. (AITS Marketing partner) indicates that there are no companies that will provide vehicle insurance to farmworker labor transport vehicles in the Central Valley.

It appears that pooled resources could be one of the few solutions to this issue. Most insurance pools, however, are underwritten at some level, so they are not completely immune from insurance market shifts that may limit access. However, group participation with an insurance pool can mitigate the impact of these market shifts on member organizations seeking to provide needed agricultural worker transportation services. Pools can offer: safety, risk management services, and provide a network of people and organizations sharing a commitment to long-term insurance solutions that reduce the cost of insurance.

No insurance pool will ever have the financial resources of a big insurance company, but they have one thing you won't find anywhere else – a commitment to serve their members without motivation for profit.

Insurance Pool Examples:

CalACT (<http://www.calact.org>)

CalACT is a statewide, non-profit organization that has represented the interests of small, rural, and specialized transportation providers since 1984. Its membership is comprised of individuals and agencies from diverse facets of transportation, including operators of small and large systems, planning and government agencies, social service agencies, suppliers and consultants. Specifically they have been successful in assisting entities to establish insurance pools that minimize the cost and exposure to sponsoring agencies.

NonProfits United (<http://www.nonprofitsunited.com>)

Member-owned and operated, **NonProfits' United** is California's oldest transportation self-insurance pool for nonprofit organizations. For over a decade they have been providing quality, cost-effective insurance services for over 300 nonprofit members throughout the state, including senior centers, food banks, health clinics, churches, and disabled service programs.

United's services include claims settlements, driver instruction, safety and loss control services and member award programs.

California Transit Insurance Pool (CalTIP) (<http://www.caltip.org/>)

The **California Transit Insurance Pool (CalTIP)** is a joint powers insurance authority organized under California law in 1987 in response to the lack of liability insurance

coverages from the commercial insurance market. CalTIP combines the resources of public transit operators to minimize risk, increase buying power, and provide stable, affordable insurance to its members.

CalTIP is a self-insurance program for public transit operators. CalTIP members pool funds to obtain affordable insurance coverage, claims administration, and safety and loss control programs. CalTIP is governed by representatives of member transit operators which ensures that the programs remain competitive with commercial offering and continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of public transit operators.

Design and Provide Incentives for Growers and FLC's that Provide Transportation

As a practical matter, growers are in the business of growing and harvesting crops and typically resistant to providing transportation to part-time seasonal workers. Many do, however, understand the necessity of safe and reliable transportation for their workforce, and would consider providing services if cost cutting incentives were offered.

Issues blocking more employers from offering transportation include liability, workers' compensation insurance, vehicle purchase, and operation expense. Incentives should be designed to relieve cost liability.

Improve Access to Transportation Information

Community-based organizations and housing providers indicated that they do not regularly provide transportation information to workers. Most indicated that they could and would be interested in providing this service. Efforts should be made to train and educate service providers on available transportation services and enable them to accept and report incidences of abuse by individuals providing transportation to agricultural workers.

Design Automobile-Based Strategies for Agricultural Workers

The State of California should offset the high cost of obtaining and maintaining automobiles by offering low-interest loans and offering to sell vehicles at steeply discounted rates. Several auto-based programs have been established around the state to address the needs of Welfare to Work participants. Those programs should be reviewed and considered for adaptation and implementation. Additionally, any program that would rely upon the use of private vehicles should promote and reward the use of carpools and other ridesharing strategies to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles on the roadway.

Expand Vehicle Safety Training and Enforcement

The California Highway Patrol's SAFE program has made good progress in removing unsafe vehicles and drivers from California roads. The CHP, along with participating community-based organizations, has made good progress in training drivers and riders on traffic laws and safety. Operation of this program should be expanded to all growing areas in the state. Efforts to expand this program should be pursued.

CHAPTER TWO

AITS STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY

Focus Group and Community Forum Farmworker Transportation Assessment

As a component of the AITS Statewide Needs Assessment Study, a Field Research Team was organized to coordinate and implement a series of eight language specific focus groups and four language specific community forums in the state's eight major southern, central, and northern growing regions. The objective was to solicit and incorporate the experiences, opinions, and recommendations of stakeholders, i.e., farmworkers and community members, into the AITS Statewide Needs Assessment Study. Focus groups and community forums were implemented to gather input about the types of transportation used by field workers to gauge their degree of satisfaction with existing systems, and to define, with their assistance, an *ideal* system of transportation for state agricultural workers.

When working with the farmworker community, conventional approaches to information gathering modeled after traditional methods typically result in minimal success. The diverse nature of the agricultural worker in California is reflected in the presence of Spanish-speaking workers of Mexican and Central American origin, but is also comprised of indigenous migrant and stationary workers of Mixteco, Triqui and Zapotec origins, each with their own unique language and culture.

Because of a lack of information on this population, outreach initiatives, if they are to have impact and achieve desired outcomes, must blend traditional and non-traditional approaches to obtain truthful and unbiased data. For the focus group and community events, the e21 team utilized multilingual techniques and an interactive process. The intention is to gain the respect and trust of each of the participant to effectuate lively and robust discourse.

The project team approach employed unique and culturally-based methodologies that acknowledges, validates and involves stakeholders, i.e., farmworkers, farm labor contractors, and growers as resources, knowledgeable about transportation issue. e21 worked hand-in-hand with the public purpose program outreach workers throughout the state, to define and craft the most effective strategies to obtain information from focus group and community forum participants.

Eight counties throughout California were initially identified for the implementation of these events:

- Central Valley: Kern, Kings, Tulare and Fresno
- Northern growing regions: Stanislaus and Monterrey

- Central Coast: Santa Barbara
- Southern region: Riverside
- Community forums were projected for two Central Valley Counties, Kern and Fresno and for two Central and Northern Counties, Santa Barbara and Monterey.

A broad range of community-based agencies, organizations, and gatekeepers serving farmworker constituencies were recruited to assist, support, and insure maximum grassroots participation and representation at each location. A number of these entities accepted an invitation for membership on the AITS Advisory Committee (AITSAC).

AITSAC: The AITS Advisory Committee

AITSAC members recommended that the focus groups and community forums each:

- Consist of a balance of male to female participants.
- Include indigenous farmworkers.
- Provide interpreters for Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapotec-speaking participants.
- That a focus group be scheduled for Madera County. (Would replace the focus group in Hanford for a more accurate reflection of transportation issues for the Central Valley).

* These recommendations were all incorporated into the field research design.

AITS: Statewide Coordination

Implementing a statewide schedule of focus groups and community forums in the AITS targeted counties required networking with farmworker community gatekeepers, services agencies and staff with established contacts within target populations. To promote AITS credibility and secure the desired levels of participation of male, female and indigenous, non-Spanish speaking farmworkers, a statewide effort consisting of Caltrans staff in Sacramento and Fresno, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), and the Field Research Team joined to make the proposed events successful.

In addition, Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional (FIOBE), a statewide indigenous immigrant advocacy organization, offered support and assistance as did Lideres Campesinas, a farmworker women's leadership program, and United Farm Workers (UFW) union representatives in target counties.

As the coordination effort expanded, additional contacts evolved across the state, including Catholic Charities of Fresno, Coalition for Community Justice in Madera County, and the farmworker housing advocacy group, Self-Help Housing, Inc., developers of Los Adobes de Maria in Santa Maria, CA, and of Villa Guadalupe in

Cutler-Orosi, CA. Three of the entities which provided critical leadership and advisory input, CRLA, UFW and Caltrans Fresno are members of AITSAC.

AITS: Coordination – Local Target Communities

Seven of the AITS counties targeted for focus group and community forums had one resource in common: the presence of a local CRLA office staffed by a Community Worker (CW), the agency's outreach representative. The Executive Director of CRLA, Mr. Jose Padilla, was approached by AITS and approved the collaboration of CW's in accessing networks of community gatekeepers, groups, and organizations in the target counties. Ms. Lupe Quintero, CRLA Director of Community Workers, was designated as the CRLA representative on AITSAC and attended all AITS events.

The Field Research Team contacted each CW via e-mail and an initial orientation meeting was held with each office regarding AITS goals and projected activities. The CW's agreed to support focus groups and community forums by recruiting local farmworkers and identifying appropriate meeting facilities and resources. Target dates for each event were scheduled and successful outcomes resulted in each target county.

The CW's recruited a balance of male, female, and indigenous farmworkers, secured indigenous language interpreters for Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapotec speaking participants and contacted local food vendors who provided meals for each event. AITS activities would not have been possible without the support of CRLA, specifically Fausto Sanchez and Ignacio Macino as well as other Community Workers.

Focus Groups & Community Forum Design

The AITS focus groups and community forums had two goals: gather farmworker perspectives using focus groups on transportation issues, and inform target counties of the AITS and its pilot project by inviting local input on transportation issues through a community forum format.

A number of factors come into play in conducting focus groups with monolingual, Spanish and indigenous language-speaking farmworkers of limited educational backgrounds or familiarity with North American mores. Conventionally, focus groups convene participants and initiate discussion on the topic(s), under the direction of a group leader. Discussion is promoted by a subtle, North American cultural orientation: expressing one's opinion among strangers.

Discussion among Spanish speakers is governed initially by formal modes of address because group members have not established *confianza*, i.e., the 'mutual trust' that sanctions speaking freely. Conversation is more expansive when group members feel they are *familiar* with one another. To get accurate input about the transportation needs of agricultural workers, it was important to conduct each focus group in a manner that enabled the development of *confianza* among participants and with the group leader. Participants had to be acknowledged, get to know one another, and feel validated as contributors.

A group process design that addressed these outcomes and promoted a sense of *confianza*, shared membership and common purpose, was incorporated into the focus groups and community forums. Participants introduced themselves, shared information on their origins, backgrounds and work experiences as a prelude to their input on transportation issues. Each group was asked for permission to record the proceedings on audiotape, and all participants signed forms acknowledging that their input was voluntary.

Focus Groups Locations

Eight focus groups were held from December 2002 to February 2003 in various counties throughout California. The focus groups occurred chronologically in Arvin (Kern County), Fresno (Fresno County), Santa Maria (Santa Barbara County), Greenfield (Monterey County), Orosi-Cutler (Tulare County) Madera (Madera County), Modesto (Stanislaus), and Coachella (Riverside).

Summary Of Focus Group Data

A total of ninety-six participants took part in the focus groups statewide. Six groups had twelve members, two had eleven members; all eight groups approximated a balance of male and female members, while seven were indigenous farmworkers of Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapotec origin. Translation by indigenous-speaking interpreters was provided. Sessions of two hours were scheduled at various times during the day and evening, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons and evenings, based on hours that were most convenient for the participants.

Three questions were translated into Spanish and distributed to participants in a handout:

1. What mode of transportation do you use to get to and from work?
2. What is your level of satisfaction with the mode of transportation that you use to get to and from work?
3. In your opinion, what is the *ideal* system of transportation for farmworkers?

Participants were asked to expand on their initial answers to these questions in the course of the session and all sessions were recorded.

Focus Group Participants

Ninety-six farmworkers from the eight target counties took part in the focus groups. The information below reflects their national origin vehicle ownership, driver's license, and insurance status:

National Origin

| Participants | Origin | Percentage |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 90 | Mexican | 95.80% |
| 2 | Mexican American | 2.10% |
| 1 | Guatemalan | 1.05% |
| 1 | Honduran | 1.05% |
| TOTAL =94 | | TOTAL =100.00% |

Vehicle Ownership

| Participants | Status | Percentage |
|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 70 | No transportation needed | 72.00% |
| 26 | Own vehicle | 28.00% |
| TOTAL =96 | | TOTAL =100.00% |

Driver's License, and Insurance Status

| Participants | Status | Percentage |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 15 | License/Liability Insurance/Car Registration | 58.00% |
| 11 | No License/Liability Insurance/Car Registration | 42.00% |
| TOTAL =26 | | TOTAL =100.00% |

The majority of the participants were immigrants from Mexico, and two group members were from Guatemala and Honduras respectively. Two other participants were Mexican American, and 72%, had no transportation of their own and depended on others to commute to the worksite. Twenty-four individuals, or 28%, had their own vehicle, yet only 58% of these workers, i.e., fifteen participants were operating their cars with a valid driver's license, liability insurance, or car registration. Eleven workers, or 42% of the vehicle owners, had no license, no insurance, or valid car registration.

QUESTION ONE - What mode of transportation do you use to get to and from work?

A majority of focus group participants in all eight counties indicated that they depend on others for daily transportation to and from the worksite. Three options were identified:

1. Paying a “*raitero*”, literally a “ride provider”, an informal, independent, untrained “entrepreneur” who makes space available, in a vehicle, for a set fee which varies from \$2.50 to \$7.00 based on distance, for the daily commute to and from the worksite (the term “*raitero*” derives from the Spanish phonetic approximation of the English word “ride”)
2. Signing on with a farm labor contractor who, in addition to providing work, recruits those hired as passengers in a van.
3. Riding free or at minimal shared cost with immediate or extended family members, *compadres or comadres*, i.e., bonded family members linked by religious ceremonies

Response Breakdown of Feedback by Region

ARVIN FOCUS GROUP 12-13-02 (Twelve Participants)

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Use Own Vehicle | 75% |
| Use Raitero | 17% |
| Use Public Transportation | 8% |

FRESNO FOCUS GROUP 12-14-02 (Eleven Participants)

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Use Own Vehicle | 73% |
| Use Raitero | 27% |
| Use Public Transportation | 0% |

SANTA MARIA FOCUS GROUP 01-25-03 (Twelve Participants)

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Use Own Vehicle | 42% |
| Use Raitero | 58% |
| Use Public Transportation | 0% |

SALINAS/GREENFIELD FOCUS GROUP 01-30-03 (Eleven Participants)

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Use Own Vehicle | 8% |
| Use Raitero | 92% |
| Use Public Transportation | 0% |

TULARE/CUTLER-OROSI FOCUS GROUP 02-01-03 (Twelve Participants)

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Use Own Vehicle | 0% |
| Use Raitero | 100% |
| Use Public Transportation | 0% |

MADERA FOCUS GROUP 02-07-03 (Eleven Participants)

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Use Own Vehicle | 55% |
| Use Raitero | 45% |
| Use Public Transportation | 0% |

MODESTO FOCUS GROUP 02-22-03 (Twelve Participants)

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Use Own Vehicle | 0% |
| Use Raitero | 100% |
| Use Public Transportation | 0% |

COACHELLA FOCUS GROUP 02-27-03 (Twelve Participants)

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Use Own Vehicle | 25% |
| Use Raitero | 75% |
| Use Public Transportation | 0% |

For all options, commuting time ranged from fifteen minutes to two hours. A less common mode of transportation was the worker's use of their own vehicle, A smaller contingent of workers resorted to riding bicycles to and from work, while two or three acknowledged that they walked to work. This is in contrast with the near three quarters of respondents, who predominately seek out providers on a daily or weekly basis. In addition, the demarcation between *raiteros* and farm labor contractors is not always evident. Each alternative for transportation above corresponds to a particular set of circumstances resulting in varying degrees of effectiveness in meeting the needs of the user.

Raiteros, as providers, are independent drivers, who through informal, verbal arrangement use their own (or an owner's) vehicle to transport groups of farm laborers to worksites. They use cars, mini-vans, vans, sports utility vehicles, or pick-ups, for a fee that varies, depending on the location in the state, from three to six dollars a day for the round trip. Riders find these providers through local contacts such as relatives or *paisanos* (people from the same source community in Mexico or Central America), co-workers, or in most cases, via a referral from the same farm labor contractor (FLC) by whom the rider is hired. When the FLC provides the referral, riders stated that they "understood" that they must use that particular *raitero* or risk loss of further employment with the FLC. They were not to travel to the worksite with any other provider or in their own cars; many riders indicated their view that this referral implied a financial arrangement between the FLC and the *raitero*.

There is no uniformity in the qualifications of *raiteros*. Many were drivers by virtue of their ownership of the vehicle, and, according to the participants, others were selected at random by the owners of the vehicles to drive in exchange for a cost-free means of transportation, according to the participants.

Unedited Comment:

“In the area where we come from, there are some one hundred thousand farmworkers and no more than two or three drivers have licenses, own the cars, or have the car papers in order. So where does that leave the rest of us who have to find a way to get to work...”

Others commented on the condition of drivers who worked all day in the fields alongside their riders:

“They finish work as tired as we do, and then they get in the van and take the wheel. You can’t tell me that they’re in the best condition to drive and pay attention to the road, much less be responsible for a dozen people or more.”

Many expressed fear at boarding these vehicles:

“Yeah, we’re scared, but we have no choice. We just get in and make the sign of the cross and ask God to take care of us, and face whatever may befall us.”

Everyone who had to pay for a ride saw himself or herself as being at the mercy of drivers. Many noted that *raiteros* selected riders on the basis of the amount of time required to get to the rider’s home or pick-up point. A rider was always at risk of losing a ride if the driver found another fare that required less time for pick-up. The first rider would be summarily dumped without an explanation.

It was not deemed permissible for riders to ask a driver if he or she had a valid California driver’s or chauffeur’s license, a valid & legal title to the vehicle operated, liability insurance as required under state law nor seat belts for each passenger in the vehicle.

When workers were asked if they had the right to ask such questions; everyone said they “knew better” than to ask; to inquire about any of these things would subject them to the loss of transportation. Riders knew they were risking life and limb riding under such conditions, but said the priority of supporting their families took precedence over safety:

“I can tell you that those of us who are riders will rarely question the driver. We need the ride and you just put up with things as they are.”

Workers using *raiteros* were subject to irregular service; drivers insisted that riders wait for them outside in the early morning hours or risk losing their ride for that day. Many riders complained they were not notified ahead of time, when the driver would be absent. They would wait in vain outside the residence or pick up point for as long an hour.

In addition to the lost time waiting, the worker lost a day's wage and the lack of timely notification precluded finding another way to get to work. The provider would arrive the next day as usual, without any explanation for the previous day's absence. Complaining might antagonize the driver and risk losing the ride to work so the rider kept didn't complain, kept silent and boarded the vehicle.

Frequently, overcrowding of vehicles and unsafe conditions such the lack of seatbelts or presence of tools and harvesting equipment among the riders are accepted because most riders are not aware that these are violations of the labor code. Riders cited that any complaint would be met with a standard response:

“If you don't like it, there are plenty of others ready to take your place.”

The same statement is heard by those who might complain about the manner in which the provider is driving, i.e., speeding, recklessness, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, etc.

Riders who are hired by Farm Labor Contractors (FLCs) agree to ride in vehicles provided by that FLC. They understand that they are not to ride to the worksite in their own vehicles or with another *raitero*, lest they risk not working:

“Many times the foreman will tell us that there is work, that some twelve or fifteen people will be hired but one has to ride with the contractor if you want to be hired. You can say ‘I'll take my car,’ and the contractor says, ‘you can drive if you want, but I'm going to take care of my people first’.

If you take your car, you may get work, but only if there's any jobs left after the contractor's people are hired.”

Another worker indicated his perception of why the FLC wanted those hired to ride in the vehicle he or she provided:

“It's a way for the contractor to control the workers. If I drive my car to the fields and I don't like the work or how much they are paying, I can get in my car and leave. The ones who ride with the contractor have no choice. They have to stay and do the work, whether they like it or not.”

The condition of the vehicles in which workers were transported left much to be desired. While some enjoyed individual seats and seat belts, most were subjected to overcrowding of vehicles to such an extent that riders were bunched up against one another, many without the benefit of seat belts. Often, a van was said to have seat belts only in the two front bucket seats, with one seat occupied by the driver. As more riders boarded, the likelihood of having an actual place to sit during the commute was reduced. Many drivers carried more passengers than the factory capacity of the vehicle. More commonly, vans had factory seating removed and replaced with wooden planks placed length-wise or across the cargo area.

Many riders rode in vans that had nothing in that area but floor space. Neither arrangement included seat belts, and riders were compelled to spend the average commuting time of an hour on bare wood or the floor boards, with as many as twenty fellow riders. One worker recounted her experience:

“One contractor had the habit of changing vans during the start of the grape season, when he knew that inspections were stepped up. While we regularly rode in a van without seats and seat belts, he would start using the one with seats and seat belts for about two weeks, in case he got stopped for inspection. When he knew it was over, he would put us back on the floor.”

Frequently, in addition to the crowded conditions, tools and equipment used in field work such as harvesting knives, long handled hoes, harvesting buckets and carts shared space, unsecured, among the workers. While a few workers indicated riding in vehicles in which tools and equipment were stored in a separate compartment, the majority of farmworkers rode among tools and equipment.

In cases where the FLC (or *raitero*) provided pick-up trucks as the transporting unit, riders reported overcrowding, lack of seating and seat belts, presence of tools and equipment, and an added deficit: the lack of an enclosure such as a camper shell. Often, when the truck had a camper shell, it had no rear hatch door or its windows were broken, subjecting passengers to the elements during lengthy commutes of up to two hours.

Riders also mentioned the role of “bribes” in securing and maintaining one’s transportation to the worksite. In some cases, the driver, whether a *raitero* or FLC, would indicate the expectation that the crew of riders would pitch in collectively each pay day to purchase a twelve (or twenty-four) pack carton of beer as a token of their appreciation for the driver. On other occasions, riders were obligated into a “*cooperacha*”(kitty) for the purchase of beer for the commute home, in addition to the fare that each would have to pay. Older workers cited the practice of having to offer additional money to the driver or FLC in order to secure their opportunity to ride and work.

Other participants listed the practice of many drivers to consume alcohol, or in some cases, drugs while operating the transporting vehicle. Over half of the participants had experienced such behavior, most often at day’s end, during the return trip home. Riders had no recourse except to try to find another provider.

To a lesser extent, riders who utilize *compadres*, immediate or extended family members, have the most favorable transport situations because the rider-provider relationship is based on a cultural or familial bond. There is a reciprocity in these arrangement that is not found in the *raitero* transportation option, and the mitigating factor is the communication of *respeto*, i.e., respect or “due consideration.” *Compadres* and immediate or extended family members will accommodate reasonable delays if the rider is not on time for pick up.

The cost of transportation, in many cases, is less than the *raitero* is charging and the cost of fuel may be shared among the riders. On days in which the provider will not be going to work, the rider is notified or aware, affording an opportunity for securing another way to get to work. As commendable as this option may be, the number of riders who may enjoy this is minor compared to riders subject to the *raitero* system.

Workers who operated their own vehicles and had a valid driver's license generally had either secured it after becoming citizens, or if undocumented, were granted one fifteen to twenty years ago, before citizenship status was an issue in securing state permission to operate a motor vehicle. A majority of these individuals acknowledged that they did not hold a chauffeur's license, and operated as *raiteros*, 'under the radar.' Two individuals had valid class I licenses secured in other states. One had gotten his in Oregon and the second had received one in Washington State. Their input illuminated a growing trend (and trade) of undocumented farmworkers who live in California spending up to \$600.00 to travel north, where an ally, for a fee, will provide a local address, assist in completing the necessary paperwork and secure a valid driver's license. Both states accept the consular identification card issued by the Mexican government as valid for such purposes. One of these licensed drivers recounted an interaction with a California Highway Patrol officer, who immediately issued the farmworker a ticket for an invalid license. During the court appearance, the presiding judge threw out the case, saying that the Oregon license was valid in all fifty states.

California's policy of denying licenses to undocumented workers was a topic that generated heated discussion in focus groups. Some workers, undocumented themselves, stated that recently arrived workers were forced to buy automobiles to get themselves to work, and drove without licenses, insurance or car registration and no knowledge of basic traffic laws. Some of those license-less drivers are workers who initially utilized *raiteros* but became disillusioned with time lost waiting for the driver to arrive, the insecurity of knowing that the driver might not show, time lost in the commute while the driver picked up other fares or overcrowding and the unsafe driving that characterized this mode of transportation.

In other instances, the increase in fares that occurred each time the minimum wage went up or a climb in the price of gasoline was motivation enough for a worker to find his or her own car to drive. Others purchased a vehicle and secured someone with documented status to register and insure the car under a name other than the person who would actually be driving the vehicle. Vehicles were relatively easy to acquire and were available from co-workers, private, one-on-one sales and automobile auctions. Once the vehicle was purchased, it was put into operation without transfer of title, fees or insurance coverage.

A chance encounter with law enforcement might result in a ticket and the confiscation of the vehicle. The unlicensed driver would simply purchase another vehicle and repeat the cycle. Several focus group members admitted that they had already lost one vehicle to authorities but were already driving another.

One woman recounted her experience with a *raitera*, a female driver who had led her to believe that she was a licensed driver:

“One day, on the way to work, she was in a hurry because we were late. At an intersection she drove onto the shoulder to make the turn, hitting another person who was also turning. She left the scene of the accident in a panic. When I told her she should go back, she told me she couldn’t because she didn’t have a drivers license.”

A majority of the workers felt that the state policy against driver’s licenses for undocumented workers contributed to the increase in drivers without licenses, thus creating unsafe, uninsured, unregistered vehicles, untrained drivers, and hit and run collisions.

For agricultural workers, a component of the transportation issue centered on the lack of transportation for those injured on the job and who require medical attention. Participants expressed distress at the hostile or indifferent reception of foremen and FLCs at the worksite when instances of bodily harm occurred:

“One thing we’re seeing more and more of is that the growers are shifting their responsibility onto the contractors who don’t care or don’t want to be bothered when we tell them that we’ve gotten hurt. They don’t want to tell the grower that the workers have been injured.”

Raiteros are not available to transport injured workers because they are busy working alongside their fares and will not take a loss of wages. Workers bristle at recalling instances in which the foreman or contractor, who is not qualified to assess the severity of a workplace injury, tells the worker to “take a Tylenol and it will pass.” Many others reported being ordered to wait until the end of the workday before being transported to the necessary medical attention. Two reported instances of injury in which they waited until day’s end, only to be taken by a company employee to a parking lot and told to exit the vehicle. When they protested, they were told, “my orders are to leave you here.” Some acknowledged timely and concerned response from company foremen in times of injury, including the provision of cost-free medical attention, but the majority of workers indicated that staff was more concerned about company equipment or the day’s work order than the injured worker.

When family emergencies arise at home or away from the fields, workers are not able to respond. *Raiteros* are not willing to provide a ride while they themselves are working and few foremen are willing to assist. The worker is forced to leave work and is left to his or her own devices to reach their needy relatives.

The varied responses of participants to Question I: “What mode of transportation do you use to get to and from the fields?” and the elaboration of details when asked to amplify their answers, is both eye-opening and instructive for anyone who is not involved in the day to day realities of farmworkers in the State of California.

QUESTION TWO - What is your level of satisfaction with the mode of transportation that you use to travel to and from work?

Response Breakdown of Feedback by Region

The second question sought to gauge the current level of satisfaction of focus group participants with the particular mode of transportation used by each to travel to and from the worksite.

ARVIN FOCUS GROUP 12-13-02 (Twelve Participants)

- (6) Somewhat Satisfied
- (4) Not Very Satisfied
- (2) Dissatisfied

FRESNO FOCUS GROUP 12-14-02 (Eleven Participants)

- (5) Somewhat Satisfied
- (5) Not Very Satisfied
- (1) Dissatisfied

SANTA MARIA FOCUS GROUP 01-25-03 (Twelve Participants)

- (5) Somewhat Satisfied
- (6) Not Very Satisfied
- (1) Dissatisfied

SALINAS/GREENFIELD FOCUS GROUP 01-30-03 (Eleven Participants)

- (4) Somewhat Satisfied
- (4) Not Very Satisfied
- (3) Dissatisfied

TULARE/CUTLER-OROSI FOCUS GROUP 02-01-03 (Twelve Participants)

- (5) Somewhat Satisfied
- (6) Not Very Satisfied
- (1) Dissatisfied

MADERA FOCUS GROUP 02-07-03 (Twelve Participants)

- (6) Somewhat Satisfied
- (3) Not Very Satisfied
- (3) Dissatisfied

MODESTO FOCUS GROUP 02-22-03 (Twelve Participants)

- (5) Somewhat Satisfied
- (4) Not Very Satisfied
- (3) Dissatisfied

COACHELLA FOCUS GROUP 02-27-03 (Twelve Participants)

- (6) Somewhat Satisfied
- (4) Not Very Satisfied
- (2) Dissatisfied

Those expressing the highest levels of satisfaction, from 65% to 100% were those individuals who operated their own vehicles, legally or not, and those who rode with immediate, extended and bonded family members. This group attributed their degree of satisfaction to the autonomy they enjoyed in being free of the *raitero* and the vagaries of that system of transport. This contingent also indicated that the downsides to using one's vehicle were the costs associated with this option, tags and insurance for law-abiding drivers. Also, the cost of maintenance, repairs and downtime when mechanical problems occurred, and ultimately, the cost of fuel had an effect (gas cost between \$1.25 per gallon in the Central Valley to a maximum of \$1.55 per gallon in the other counties during the period in which the focus groups were conducted).

The opinions of the remaining constituency of 72%, those who were compelled to ride with the *raiteros* or farm labor contractors, were marked by a tendency to the other extreme. It ranged from a 50% satisfaction rate to a low of zero, or even in the words of one consumer, "minus 10%". Their partial satisfaction level of 50%, time and time again, was contained in the knowledge that they had the opportunity to work to support their families and that a way to get to work existed that permitted each to meet their responsibilities. Their dissatisfaction arose from the conditions to which they were subjected, i.e., the indifference or hostility of drivers, contractors, and employers, the lack of safety represented by untrained, unlicensed drivers, and their reckless driving. The prevalence of alcohol and drug use, increasing fares, overcrowding, sexual harassment, inattention to workplace injuries and lack of enforcement of applicable labor laws & regulations were also cited.

One woman was quite articulate in expressing a view shared by many of her co-workers:

"We've been putting up with these things for some twenty years, and when one of us goes into a store all covered with dirt, people just look at us and try to avoid us, and don't realize that thanks to us, the dirty ones, they have their fruits and their vegetables and everything. But they don't acknowledge us for what we are – people just like them. We're only inferior in what we earn."

QUESTION THREE - In your opinion, what is the ideal system of transportation for farmworkers?

The third and final question in the search for answers to the issue of farmworker transportation asked the workers themselves to define their vision of what would be the *ideal* system of transportation for farmworkers.

Response Breakdown of Feedback by Region

ARVIN FOCUS GROUP 12-13-02 (Twelve Participants)

Employer Provided Bus System (5 each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Central Pick-up Point (7 each)

FRESNO FOCUS GROUP 12-14-02 (Eleven Participants)

Own Car Use (6 each)
Own Car Use w/ Employer Subsidy (1each)
Employer Provided Bus System (2each)
Employer/Government Provided Bus System (2each)

SANTA MARIA FOCUS GROUP 01-25-03 (Twelve Participants)

Employer Provided Bus System (8each)
Employer/Government Provided Bus System (2 each)
Licenses for Undocumented Workers (2each)

SALINAS/GREENFIELD FOCUS GROUP 01-30-03 (Eleven Participants)

Employer Provided Bus System (3each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Central Pick-up Points (2each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Multiple Pick-up Points (1each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Safety Enforcement (2each)
Increased Vehicle Safety Enforcement (1each)
Non-Responsive (2each)

TULARE/CUTLER-OROSI FOCUS GROUP 02-01-03 (Twelve Participants)

Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Safety Enforcement & Certified Drivers (1 each)
Drivers Licenses for Undocumented (2 each)
Drivers Licenses & Vehicle Ownership
for Undocumented (4 each)
Increased Driver Certification & Safety
Enforcement (2 each)
Increased Driver Certification (1 each)
Access to Funding for Vehicle Purchase (1 each)
Unresponsive (1 each)

MADERA FOCUS GROUP 02-07-03 (Eleven Participants)

Employer Provided Bus System (2 each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Nominal Fare (4 each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Central Pick-up Points (1 each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Home Pick-up (2 each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Driver Certification & Seat Belts (2 each)
Unresponsive (1 each)

MODESTO FOCUS GROUP 02-22-03 (Twelve Participants)

Government Provided Bus System (5 each)
Employer Provided Bus System (2 each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Certified Driver & Seat Belts (2 each)
Employer Provided Bus System
w/ Central Pick-up Point (1 each)
Employer/Government Provided Bus System (1 each)
CALTRANS Provided Bus System (1 each)

COACHELLA FOCUS GROUP 02-27-03 (Twelve Participants)

Employer Provided Bus System (7 each)
Employer/Government Provided Bus System (1 each)

Freeway Overpasses (not stoplights on Freeway)* (1 each)
Kings County Vans Model (1 each)
Unresponsive (2 each)

*reduce incidence of farmworker vehicle accidents attempting cross freeway (Highway 86)

Ninety percent, including those workers who used their own cars, stated that the ideal system would be one in which buses or vans were provided by the employer, by the employer in partnership with government, or by government alone. They wanted to get safely to and from work without risking life and limb, in properly maintained and secure vehicles with dependable drivers who had the required training, certification, and licensing for each unit in which they rode. Workers wanted to have their own individual seat, with seat belts, without fear of tools or equipment loosely strewn about the passenger area, and absent of alcohol or drug use, by drivers or riders.

Another cited the reduction in pollution for society at large if a farmworker transportation system existed that would permit thousands of cars to be idled in favor of using that bus or van.

While most said the ideal system would be free, a third were amenable to paying a nominal fee for the service. The majority expressed a preference for home pick-up by the transporting vehicle, but indicated they would be receptive to a centrally located boarding area or an established route of stops. Another recommendation was that the transportation systems correspond to the changing, seasonal locations in which work was to be found in their local area.

In closing this summary of responses to the three questions, it is appropriate to include the parting words of one farmworker at the end of a focus group:

“I have one thing to say. To express appreciation, that all of you, as an agency, are concerned for our people. We are hopeful that what you are doing will someday make a difference and validate the sacrifices we are making to improve our lives. Perhaps someday, this sad history of the farmworker will change for the better.”

Community Forums

Four counties were targeted for AITS Community Forums: Kern, Fresno, Monterey, and Santa Barbara. Since focus groups were also scheduled in these areas, community forums were scheduled to take place within one or two weeks of the initial focus groups.

Participants in the focus groups were asked to disseminate information locally about the purpose of AITS and share their experiences in focus groups, extending invitations to family members, neighbors, co-workers and interested parties to attend the forums and offer their input.

A total of 122 people attended the community forums held in the four counties. Meeting locations used for the focus groups were also used for the forums and coffee, *pan dulce* (Mexican pastry) and juice welcomed those who attended and dinner was also served at the end of the session.

The first forum in Arvin, on Friday, December 13, 2002, 5 pm to 7 pm, drew 40 members from the Arvin, Lamont, Shafter and Bakersfield area. Many of those attending were indigenous farmworkers of Mixteco and Triqui backgrounds and translation was provided accordingly. A representative of Kern County Adult Schools Program attended and asked to address the assembly. Because she spoke only English, a four-way translation was effected to transmit her message regarding ESL and citizenship classes. She spoke English, which the focus group facilitator translated into Spanish and the CRLA community worker translated into Mixteco. One of the three Triqui-speaking individuals translated for his two guests. In addition, the multi-purpose room provided by Arvin High School had recently had a food drive and had twenty cartons of free food left over, which were distributed among the families attending the forum that evening.

The community forum in Fresno was opened with a description of the purpose of the AITS, its components, and current approaches underway to address farmworker transportation issues. That input was simultaneously translated into the indigenous languages. Those in attendance shared their own experiences with farmworker transportation, and those proved to be very similar to what was discussed in the focus groups. The second forum, in Fresno on Saturday, December 14, 2002, 3 pm to 5 pm, drew a total of twenty people, the majority of who were indigenous farmworkers of Mixteco origin. Frente Indigena Oaxaqueno Binacional (FIOBE) provided the conference room next to their offices in downtown Fresno and its representatives also provided translation services. Participants offered their perspectives on the transportation issues that impacted the Fresno area and their responses mirrored those cited in the previously held focus group.

The third forum took place on Thursday, January 30, 2003, 6 pm to 8 pm, at the United Farm Workers union hall in the rural community of Greenfield, located in Monterey County. Twenty local farmworkers and their families attended the forum and offered their input on the realities of the *raiteros*, farm labor contractors and licensed or unlicensed drivers in their part of the state. This was the only forum at which no indigenous farmworkers were present.

Caltrans staff from Sacramento and staff from the Kings County AITS Pilot Project each made presentations, in Spanish, regarding potential approaches to the transportation issues that prevail across the state. Participants also provided input and were keenly interested in the Kings County Pilot strategy being utilized in Monterey County.

The final forum, in Santa Maria on Saturday, February 8, 2003, 6 pm to 8 pm, had the largest attendance, forty-two farmworkers. At least half of were of indigenous, i.e., Mixteco origin. A Mixteco CRLA Community Worker provided translation.

The community center at Los Adobes de Maria, a farmworker housing project was the meeting location. Four issues of note in relation to farmworker transportation were identified: They are:

1. The risks inherent in worksite transportation of workers from one work area to another on flatbed trailers, with no seats or restraints, which often traversed uneven terrain, drawn by farm tractors.
2. The frequency with which workers are assigned to go to a different work area and are transported on the implements attached to the back of a farm tractor, either sitting or standing, with no seats or restraints, also over uneven terrain.
3. The prevalence of farmworkers using bicycles to get to and from the worksites, posing a danger to themselves or other vehicles sharing the roadway, often in foggy conditions or during hours of reduced visibility, due to no other recourse for getting to work.
4. Workers lacking a way to get to work must as a last resort walk, exposing them to many of the same dangers as the workers on bicycles, causing them to arrive at work tired.

Community Forum Locations and Attendance

| City | Number of Participants |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Arvin | 40 |
| Fresno | 20 |
| Greenfield | 20 |
| Santa Maria | 42 |
| TOTAL | 122 |

Focus Group and Community Forum Conclusion

The goal of the AITS focus groups and community forums component was to complement a data base of quantitative information on farmworker transportation issues with qualitative, experiential input from the people who must use the existing modes for getting to and from work on a daily basis, usually six days a week, if not seven.

The field research team had a mandate to conduct events in eight counties, coalescing the effort with those networks, agencies, organizations, entities and individuals whose main focus is the farmworker constituency. The linkage with California Rural Legal Assistance and its staff was critical to the success of all that was to be accomplished, as this permitted access to local networks and ensured that the recommendations of the AITS Advisory Committee membership which called for a balance of male-female participation, the inclusion of indigenous farmworkers, the provision of language specific presentations and translation as required, and an accurate reflection of the statewide reality of farmworker transportation issues from the perspective of the workers themselves, would be achieved.

Related Focus Group Comments Concerning Transportation Environment Impacting Agricultural Workers

Sexual Harassment

The issue of sexual harassment as part of the *raitero* system was raised at each focus group, with over half of the participants, both females and males acknowledging that they had either personally experienced or been present in instances when such behavior occurred. Many workers felt that foremen and contractors were key in that they “set the tone” for what was permissible, though offensive. Women complained and men acknowledged that staff, ogled, offered unsavory comments, made unwanted advances and actually touched females, particularly younger, attractive workers, under guise of their authority.

During commutes in which female workers rode with male counterparts, it was not uncommon for them to have to endure vulgar language or unsavory comments. When asked for instances in which women complained to drivers, they described being told to “ignore it, find another ride, or drive your own car.” A second woman told of her ordeal at being subjected to sexual harassment for over three months; when she got no response to her complaints from the foreman, she went to the main office and complained, which resulted in the firing of the offending male. After a lull in the work schedule, she reported back to work, “but they told me that there was no work for me because I couldn’t get along with people.”

Female workers raised another concern: the propensity of male co-workers to relieve themselves in the open during stops in transit at convenience stores when restrooms were in great demand. Workers were concerned with the prevalence of sexual harassment offered a model for intervention drawn from their experience of having been given “schooling” by employers on topics such as pesticide use, etc., before entering the fields. They proposed that sexual harassment issues be addressed in the same manner: by the provision of training sessions for workers using the *raitero* or contractor-provided modes of transportation.

Sanitary Facilities

Women also decried the practice of foremen moving the portable restrooms designated for workers in the fields, specifically the units earmarked for females, without previously checking to see if someone was using it. In addition to the shock during a moment of personal necessity, women suffered the embarrassment of being the source of amusement for the entire work crew, including the foreman, who saw it as a laughing matter.

Driver’s Licenses for Undocumented Workers

The other vision that was consistently cited by all the focus groups was that California would soon rescind the existing ban on driver’s licenses for undocumented workers.

CHAPTER THREE

AITS PILOT PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

AITS Pilot Project Evaluation Introduction

e21 Corporation has been contracted by the California Department of Transportation to perform and produce a Statewide Transportation Needs Assessment for the Agricultural Industry. The overall contract with e21 Corporation has three primary components as deliverables. They are:

- A statewide transportation needs analysis, complete with localization of comprehensive quantitative and qualitative research findings and geo-spatial mapping to illustrate transportation gaps and locations.
- Qualitative research findings via a series of statewide focus groups and community forums to quantify and qualify community needs, input, and feedback on transportation options, availability, and safety.
- Evaluation of the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITs) Pilots Projects that are ongoing in Kings, Tulare, Fresno, and Kern Counties. The AITS pilot project evaluation will have, at its core, evaluation criteria consistent with project performance, collaboration with social service agencies, and other relevant public service stakeholders, and the sustainability of transportation services beyond the initial grant funding.

The Agricultural Industry Transportation Needs Assessment project seeks to quantify and qualify the needs of agricultural workers for safe and available transportation to and from their respective places of employment. Furthermore, this project will evaluate existing AITS transportation pilots ongoing in the Central Valley.

Finally, the project will produce research findings specific to the transportation needs of agricultural workers by retrieving relevant feedback at the community level via statewide focus groups and community forums.

Caltrans received a federal Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant from the United States Department of Transportation (Federal Transit Administration) in November of 2000 to implement an Agricultural Industry Transportation Services (AITs) Pilot Projects in Fresno, Kern, Kings, and Tulare Counties. Thee pilot project is in response to a series of accidents involving farm labor vehicles in the San Joaquin Valley—specifically, the death of 13 farmworkers.

The primary purpose of the AITS Pilot Projects is to improve the safety and increase the availability of cost conscious agricultural worker transportation services and provide for a viable agricultural worker transportation model that other transit directors would implement in meeting the transportation needs of agricultural workers in their respective districts.

The AITS Projects have key objectives with the placement of transportation services with farmworkers, and their families. The Kern County AITS Pilot Project has targeted families of workers with expanded bus routes to outlying communities that previously had little or no public transit available.

The Kings, Fresno, and Tulare AITS Pilot Project has targeted workers with a hybrid transportation service model that lowers their cost for flexible transportation while at the same time positively impacting the quality of life for agricultural workers by providing safe, reliable, affordable, exploitation-free transit to and from their places of employment. Kings County research has found that the average daily cost to workers given the “*raitero*” system on average ranges from \$5 to \$6 dollars a day for services that are notoriously unreliable, and by accounts of workers themselves; unsafe and exploitive in nature. On the other hand, the AITS transportation service cost is \$2.50 per day with a monthly cost to the worker of \$60.00 per month for safe reliable service based on six days per week.

The other AITS program is the Kern County AITS Pilot Project that utilizes its AITS funding to expand traditional public transit services to underserved communities in the county that are predominantly Hispanic, rural and agricultural. These AITS funded transportation services models seek to serve the entire agricultural worker family, not just the worker with transit services so they may access needed healthcare, public services, and higher education.

Funding sources for the AITS Project and the Agricultural Worker Traffic Safety Education Project was:

AITS Pilot Project - \$8 million total:

Job Access/Reverse Commute (JARC grant) Federal Transit Administration, United States Department of Transportation, \$4.0 million.

Public Transportation Account, California Department of Transportation
\$4.0 million (State Matching Dollars)

Traffic Safety Education Project - \$ 1 million grant to the California Office of Traffic Safety from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, United States Department of Transportation. (Funds transferred to Caltrans via interagency agreement.) The evaluation of these pilot programs will have three core criterion that will be delineated in more detail as part of the AITS Pilot evaluation questions and survey. That evaluation criteria are: AITS project performance, project sustainability, and collaboration amongst other public service programs and providers. In addition, the

consulting team will also make specific recommendations as to how these objectives can be better met by future grantees of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (AITS) Grant Program.

The following is the project evaluation results for the AITS pilot programs in the Central Valley Counties of Kings, Tulare, Fresno, and Kern.

Kern County AITS Pilot Project

The Kern County AITS Pilot Project is an expansion of a fixed route bus service. With their use of the AITS grant, the Kern Regional Transit Authority provided for the expansion of existing portions of their transit system to provide services to communities that previously had little or no access to public transit. Previously, service consisted of one fixed route bus serving the Lamont/Weedpatch communities, one demand responsive bus (dial a ride), and an intercity commuter bus linking Lamont with the Bakersfield area.

Expansion of services under the AITS pilot project consisted of a second intercity bus operating in the communities of Arvin, Weedpatch, and Lamont six days a week with limited service provided on Sundays. An additional bus was placed into service for the Lamont/Weedpatch communities providing improved service for residents that required transit services to jobsites. A North County Express Service was also introduced to the communities of McFarland, Shafter, Wasco, and Delano.

Due to the Kern Pilot Project beginning operation in May 2002, current data collected by the district reflects ridership trends thru the final two quarters of FY 2002 only. Unfortunately, at the time that this evaluation was published those two quarters of data from Kern was all that was available for evaluation.

Kern County is roughly the size of the state of Connecticut, and it's important to note that the city of Bakersfield is the employment and commerce hub for all of Kern County. The expansion of services funded by the AITS grant are to predominantly remote, rural agricultural worker communities that are heavily Hispanic and in need of public transit services to Bakersfield for non-agricultural employment, necessary public services, as well as access to healthcare, education, shopping, and other vital services.

Kern County AITS Pilot Evaluation Report Findings

Under the leadership of Mr. John R. Wilbanks, Associate Planner for the Kern County Regional Transit District (KCRT), the expansion of public transit services funded by the AITS grant began on May 13, 2002, with services to Kern north county communities. Services to the south county communities began on June 16, 2002. These AITS services are an integrated transportation service model of demand and response, as well as fixed route services. Kern County communities that are targeted for transportation service enhancement are Delano, McFarland, Wasco, Shafter, Lamont, Weedpatch, and Arvin.

The project team created an evaluation plan and tool for the purposes of assessing the individual AITS Pilot Projects from the context of program performance, collaboration,

and sustainability. Listed below are the responses and feedback from meetings, surveys, and a questionnaire with Mr. Wilbanks on the Kern County AITS Pilot Project. The survey questions put to Mr. Wilbanks and his unedited responses are as follows:

Can you provide a brief description of transportation services as a direct result of implementation of the AITS Pilot?

The AITS Pilot for Kern County is a public transit service expansion to the Lamont, Arvin, and Weedpatch communities in Kern County, California. Additional target populations for AITS services include the communities of Delano, McFarland, Wasco, and Shafter on the north county service and Lamont, Weedpatch, and Arvin for the Lamont/Weedpatch south county service.

What are the demographics of the targeted communities?

Target populations include Delano, McFarland, Wasco, and Shafter on the north county service and Lamont, Weedpatch, and Arvin for the Lamont/Weedpatch south county service.

Are these AITS sponsored transportation services consistent with the target markets as identified in the AITS grant?

The communities served by the AITS funds are major farming communities with very few transportation services available. For that reason, these communities were targeted under the AITS program and are consistent with the goals of the Job Access Reverse Commute funding.

What are some of the tangible benefits of the extension of public transit services in Kern County in regards to safety and compliance issues? Please explain.

In the communities of Lamont and Weedpatch, farm laborer's working in the local processing plants are able to now utilize the transit services where there was none provided prior to the AITS program. Additionally, a greater number of local residents are able to access social, medical and educational services in the Bakersfield area where service was limited prior to AITS.

How has your pilot project collaborated with local and state human service organizations as to outreach and services coordination?

In the Lamont/Weedpatch service, KRTD (Kern Regional Transit District) is an active member of the South Valley Partnership, which is a community-based group, which includes local businesses, county services such as Employer's Training Resource and the Dept. of Human Services, and local schools. Outreach and services coordination is accomplished through this organization. For the North Kern services, KRT works directly with the Employer's Training Resource to incorporate any service needs for the route.

Is the pilot project marketed? How is outreach done?

Advertising for the AITS transportation services have been published in the local newspapers. Additionally, KRTD works with local community groups and adjusts bus scheduling to meet community needs. KRTD is currently working on a Memo of Understanding with the Employers Training Resource to provide additional marketing and outreach services. These services will include Spanish radio spots as well as additional ads in local community newspapers. It is important to note that most of the agricultural communities are indigenous populations that do not speak English or Spanish. Literacy rates are low and traditional means of bilingual outreach and marketing have proven to be ineffective.

How is the ridership data collected as to targeted communities served via the Job Access Reverse Commute grant?

Ridership data is collected using a passenger/fare count sheet.

Is the pilot project monitored? How?

Yes – numbers are reviewed on a monthly basis and routes operated under AITS funding are monitored on a weekly basis including weekend service. This is accomplished by physically following the buses and performing time checks.

Issues of Transportation Access and Service

How many agricultural workers used AITS Pilot Project services?

Only a small percentage of agricultural workers use the current AITS transportation system. Most of the ridership is non- agricultural use by the families of agricultural workers for services such as social, medical, and educational.

Was AITS vehicle ridership at or near capacity for comparable transit services? If not, please explain.

YES—AITS transportation services are an expansion of services to traditionally underserved communities located in the unincorporated areas of the county. These communities are more reliant on these AITS funded services than the communities in the incorporated areas of Kern County.

What were the primary hours of operation for AITS vehicles?

North Kern Express Route: 5:55 am – 7:50 pm Monday through Friday; 7:00 am – 6:45 pm Saturday & Sunday

Lamont/Bakersfield Intercity Route: 4:50 am – 6:55 pm Monday through Saturday

Lamont/Weedpatch Route: Fixed Route and demand response service operates 4:30 am – 7:03 pm Monday through Saturday; Sunday demand response service operates 8:00 am – 8:00 pm

Arvin/Lamont/Bakersfield Intercity Route: operates on Sunday 8:00 am – 7:45 pm

Were AITS vehicles available to transport workers to and from multiple agricultural employment sites within the county within the same workday?

Service is provided to a packing operation in the Lamont area only. Workers are able to use the service during the stated times of operation.

Analysis of AITS Pilot Project Transportation Services for Non-Employment Related Activities

What non-employment related transportation needs were met by AITS vehicles/funding?

Many of the families of farm labor employees in the areas served by AITS have limited transportation or are completely public transit system dependent. As such, without the AITS funding for the expansion of transit services, support to these agricultural communities would be limited. Most of the medical and social services available to these families is only available in Bakersfield. Additionally, adult training programs, the local community college, Bakersfield College, and Cal State Bakersfield are located in the City of Bakersfield.

How were agricultural workers informed of the availability of AITS vehicles/services for non-employment related uses?

Information dissemination was done by advertisements in local papers and through community effects (word of mouth). Further outreach will be performed when a Memo of Understanding is completed between Kern Regional Transit and Employer's Training Resource.

Were AITS vehicles available during the workday for non-employment related services? At night? On weekends?

Transit services were made available to area residents under the AITS program seven days a week generally between the hours of 5:00 am to 7:00 pm. Some services operated until 8:00 pm.

How many agricultural workers used AITS vehicle transportation services for non-employment purposes?

Data is unavailable due to the limited evaluation period. The state usually provides a period of two years to gather and research data to determine passenger demographics, suitability of routes, scheduling, etc.

Transportation Cost Effectiveness for Kern County

Analysis of cost of transportation to agricultural workers versus other comparable modes of transportation.

Was the cost of transportation service to agricultural workers for modes of transportation under pilot project less than, equal to, or greater than other comparable modes of transportation?

Cost for AITS Transportation Services was generally equal to other public transportation services currently in operation.

What is the AITS per participant cost?

System average of cost per passenger is \$7.22.

What was participant cost for other comparable modes of transportation?

Same as the above cost of \$7.22 per passenger.

Analysis of Fare Box Receipts

Was the AITS Pilot Project Transportation Services utilized or under-utilized?

Data is inconsistent and limited to two quarters only, but overall we believe the AITS expansion of services is being well utilized.

Were logs maintained and collected by the county transit agency to track fare box receipts?

Yes.

How were services priced for employment related transportation services?

Existing fare structure for expansion of service remained the same as existing transit services, which have been unchanged since inception of original route service.

Was there a different pricing structure for non-employment related AITS transportation services than the pricing structure for AITS employment related transportation services?

No.

Transportation Reliability/Consumer & Industry Satisfaction

The analysis of passenger feedback with the Kern County AITS Pilot Project County was performed by the issuance of comment cards, analysis of ridership traffic patterns and toll free numbers for customer service and feedback.

Were agricultural workers generally satisfied with AITS Pilot Project transportation services?

Yes.

Were agricultural workers able to get to and from work sites on time?

Yes.

Were non-employment related transportation needs met by AITS vehicles?

Yes.

Were AITS transportation services available for non-employment transportation needs when promised?

Yes.

Did agricultural workers believe transportation costs under the AITS Pilot Program were reasonable?

Yes.

Were participating agricultural employers generally satisfied with AITS Pilot Project transportation services?

No employers were directly connected to this program.

Were agricultural workers picked up on time at the end of the workday?

Yes, but it is important to note that agricultural workers are not the major demographic targeted for AITS transit services under this program.

Did agricultural employers feel transportation costs under pilot were reasonable?

No employers were directly connected to this program.

Were community-based organizations generally satisfied with the AITS Pilot Project?

Yes.

Did the AITS Pilot Project make a measurable difference in reducing the exploitation of farmworkers in regard to their transportation to and from their respective places of employment?

In Kern County, no. KRTD believes that the best program to directly address the issues of exploitation connected with agricultural worker transportation is the approach Mr. Ron Hughes of Kings County has with their AITS Pilot Project.

Kern County Questionnaire and Responses

Survey on issues of performance, collaboration, and sustainability
(Answers to the questions are highlighted in red)

How are the AITS project fare box receipts used?

Included as part of the match for job access

(X) Used to support operating costs of Job Access Project

Returned to organization's general fund

Other *(Please specify)*

Not applicable—do not have fare box receipts

How many employers are involved with either the funding or implementation of this AITS project?

Employers provide some of the matching funds for the service

Employers provide additional funding—beyond the project match funding—for services

Employers make in-kind contributions such as vehicles, maintenance for vehicles, or fuel

Employers pay fares for employees who are passengers receiving services

Employers supplement the service by supplying emergency rides for special circumstances (i.e. family emergencies)

Employers have adjusted work schedules to accommodate the operating limitations of the Job Access Service

Employers provide vans or shuttle buses to take workers from the end of the transit service to the workplace

Other *(Please identify)*

(X) No employers are involved with the implementation of this project

Overall, how satisfied or not, are you with how your AITS project has enabled your organization to help people get to work?

(X) Very Satisfied

Generally Satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Generally satisfied

Very dissatisfied

How has participation in the AITS Program affected coordination and collaboration with social service organizations in your service area?

Greatly increased

(X) Generally increased

Slightly increased

No change

Slightly decreased

Generally decreased

Greatly decreased

If your AITS project funding should end, will your organization continue to provide transportation services that were previously provided through the grant?

Yes, with expanded services

Yes, at the same level of services

(X) Yes, at a reduced level of services

Uncertain, will completely discontinue services if other sources of funds are not obtained

No, will discontinue services

If your AITS project funding should end, what sources of funds does your organization expect to use to pay for continued operations of the services that were started or expanded under the program?

Other federal transportation funds

State TANF funds

(X) State transportation funds

Other State funds

Local government funds

Local transit operator funds

Private non-profit organization donations

(X) Fare-box revenue

Employer donations

Kern County AITS Pilot Evaluation Report Summary

Program Performance—Sustainability—Collaboration

AITS funding for the pilot project in Kern County is utilized for the expansion of existing transit services to Kern communities that have been underserved due to funding constraints. The communities targeted for the AITS expansion of transit services are: Delano, McFarland, Wasco, Shafter, Lamont, Weedpatch, and Arvin.

From the county perspective, the decision was made to expand the Kern Regional Transit services with additional AITS funding to provide public transportation to the entire agricultural and non-agricultural community (workers, non-workers, students, and families). Public transit is now available in those communities for getting to and from work as well as servicing additional transportation needs (outside of the commute to the workplace) that the overall community has.

With federal JARC grants nationally, the expansion of existing transit services with this federal funding is common. What makes the Kern AITS program unique and valuable is that the Kern AITS Pilot Project is a traditional approach of expanding transportation services to underserved communities in the county that are rural and agricultural in nature, as opposed to the neighboring Kings, Tulare, and Fresno AITS Pilot Project which is a hybrid transportation services model tailored specifically for, and marketed to, agricultural workers to better meet their primary needs for safe, affordable transportation to and from the workplace or fields. In other words, the Kern AITS program seeks to serve the broader community (families of agricultural workers) where the Kings AITS program is a targeted approach to serve agricultural workers specifically.

This dichotomy in the approach of both AITS programs provides a wealth of information as to how great the transportation needs, are and how widespread the lack of available transportation is for agricultural workers and their families throughout the Central Valley.

In evaluating the Kern County holistic market approach in expanding the public transit services, it was disclosed that the demographics in the targeted communities are heavily

Hispanic. However, there has been only a small percentage of agricultural workers that use the current Kern County AITS transportation system. In Kern most of the riders are the families of agricultural workers requiring transportation in accessing public services, medical attention, shopping venues, and access to higher education.

This is significant when you recognize that Kern County as a geographic area is about the same size as the State of Connecticut, and its communities in the unincorporated areas of the county are rural with populations that are spread out across vast stretches of the county.

Ridership data reveals that the demands for transportation services are present, but the ability that Kern County has to service those regional needs are limited due to available funding. Kern is not eligible for Section 5307 or 5309 of Title 49 of the United States code due to the lack of eligibility based on the population size of the unincorporated areas of that county. That is not the case with neighboring Kings County that has this federal funding eligibility due to its population numbers in their unincorporated areas.

Even though there may be some debate as to acceptable target market results for the Kern County AITS Pilot, the communities served by the AITS funds are major farming communities with few public transportation services available. For that reason the Kern County Regional Transit AITS Program goals are consistent with the objectives of the federal Job Access Reverse Commute funding.

There is an obvious driver safety benefit based on the expansion of public transit services in Kern County. This benefit manifests itself by increasing public transit ridership that positively impacts driver and public safety and the overall adherence to existing traffic laws and vehicle codes. These safety outcomes are in keeping with AITS project goals of providing safe, adequate, affordable transportation options that reduce transportation barriers and gaps impacting the overall agricultural community.

Research feedback from the Kern focus group clearly defines the unsafe conditions of traditional agricultural worker transportation and the need for alternate, safer options of transportation to and from respective places of employment. A car, or a relative that owns a car, is the preferred means of transportation by our target group. However, data also reflects that most of the drivers are unlicensed, and the vehicles are not in compliance with safety and operational codes set by the state. This is important information when you consider that whenever there has been an increase in enforcement and/or the cost of ownership of a vehicle in respect to its registration and fuel, there has also been a simultaneous increase in ridership with available public transit. Any and all of this means that our target group will do the right thing if a viable public transportation option is presented to them. Those facts are part of a pattern that has been corroborated by both the California Highway Patrol and local transit directors across the state. These and other factors speak directly to the primary benefit of expanding public transportation services to these communities when other commute options are not safe, available, affordable, or in compliance with the law.

Even though the Kern County AITS Pilot Project has been in program implementation mode less than eleven months (at the time that this report was published), ridership has been steadily increasing. The marketing efforts have only begun, and to date the pilot program outreach has utilized traditional methods only to disseminate information about the expanded transportation services.

According to the county, traditional methods of outreach for passenger awareness of transportation service availability, schedules, and the nuances of using public transit are more than satisfactory as evidenced by the steady increase in passenger traffic and recidivism of passengers in the targeted communities. Basically, the demand for these services by underserved communities in Kern County far outstrips the supply. According to John Wilbanks, Associate Planner with Kern Regional Transit and the Project Manager for the AITS Pilot in Kern County, “AITS funding has provided an extension of transit services that are badly needed by these communities, but the issue here has been and will continue to be available funding to support those added services.”

Feedback from the focus group and the community forum held in Kern County was mostly positive amongst the attendees that were familiar with the additional AITS services. The AITS focus group and the community forum were conducted in the City of Arvin and there were comments about the lack of transportation services with scheduling to accommodate Arvin commuters going to work and needing to run errands before and after their work day schedule. Arvin is an incorporated city with its own transit authority and transportation delivery system. Even though transportation is the jurisdiction of that City, Kern County recognized the need that the Arvin community has for additional public transit and added services to that City with their AITS grant, even though the county is not necessarily mandated to meet the needs and fill the gaps in transportation services to the city of Arvin.

With the Kern County AITS program there is an important distinction to make with their providing additional transit services as opposed to the Kings County approach of a targeted transportation services model for agricultural workers only. Kern County must go through the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for funding to expand AITS transit services and there is considerable anxiety amongst Kern Transit staff on the sustainability of existing AITS transportation services once the AITS grant sunsets. That is not the case with Kings County due to their eligibility to apply for certain federal transportation funds directly from the federal government.

The General Accounting Office with the federal government has done a national evaluation of Job Access Reverse Commute Grantees across that nation and has centered its criterion on the maxims of program performance, sustainability, and collaboration. These same criterion are being utilized by the e21 project team for the AITS Pilot Project evaluation component of the needs assessment study. The Kern County AITS Pilot project has met the threshold of all three, including the scope of service language in the grant application that the California Department of Transportation (DOT) filed with the United States Office of Federal Transit Assistance. In DOT’s application, the Project Summary reads:

“The two-year Farmworker Transportation Services pilot project (FTSPP) will be implemented in the counties of Fresno, Kern, Kings and Tulare in California’s San Joaquin Valley, also known as the Central Valley. The project will start in Kern, Kings and Tulare counties the first year, and expand to include Fresno County in the second year.

The primary goal of the FTSPP is to ensure that farmworkers will have unimpeded access to jobs given the current, vigorous enforcement of state laws regarding the operation of farm labor vehicles in this region. Its secondary goal is to provide safe and efficient transportation services to residential, seasonal farmworkers commuting to/from the multiple work sites (farms) within the region. This effort is being undertaken to ensure unimpeded access to jobs and to mitigate the growing number of injuries and fatalities, due to vehicle collisions, being incurred by farmworkers throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

To achieve these goals, the FTS pilot project will implement a vanpool program, a fixed-route service, and a Dial-a-Ride program within the designated areas of the San Joaquin Valley. Whenever feasible, these new transportation services will be made available to farmworker families for employment-related, childcare, health and/or social purposes.

Delineated in the Scope of Work of the Caltrans contract with e21 for evaluation of the AITS Pilot Projects, it reads:

“The AITS needs assessment will be used to guide expansion of the AITS pilot project currently underway in Kern, Kings and Tulare Counties in the San Joaquin Valley into a statewide public transportation service available to agricultural workers and meeting the needs of the agriculture industry. The AITS pilot project is demonstrating the viability of utilizing public transportation for agriculture workers. The AITS needs assessment will allow an expansion based upon the identified needs of agriculture workers throughout the state and the experiences learned from the AITS pilot project. This will include evaluating the AITS pilot projects’ seatbelt education program and the CHP’s inspection program to see whether these programs should be expanded into other areas of the state.

GOAL: Provide adequate and safe transportation for agriculture workers throughout California and to eliminate and reduce transportation barriers and gaps that make it difficult for agriculture workers to maintain jobs and access other basic services.”

Kern County has admitted that the use of its AITS pilot project by agricultural workers as a viable option of transportation to and from work is limited. Kern County is aware of this desired agricultural worker oriented transportation services model as the primary goal that was established by Caltrans. However, they are content with their AITS program results that provide a more adequate and safe transportation service model for the entire agricultural worker family throughout their service jurisdiction. These services aid in the elimination and reduction of transportation barriers and gaps that confront the entire agricultural worker family. Without these added services it would be difficult if not impossible to get access to healthcare, public services, and higher education for agricultural worker families that reside in the outlying regions of the county.

Kern County AITS Conclusion

The culture within the Kern County Road Department dictates that roads and their construction, repair, and maintenance are a higher priority than services. Additional research finds that is the prevailing attitude amongst most local transportation officials across the state. This sentiment was also shared with the e21 project team by Caltrans staff at the inception of this assessment and evaluation project. e21 was not asked nor instructed to research this issue, but it is important to understand the institutional mindset on implementing additional non-traditional transportation service programs, at a time when dollars are tight, and when recommended non traditional transportation solutions models are not fully evaluated and completely tested over a period of time that is deemed adequate by local transportation officials. Fully tested and evaluated AITS transportation models are needed to convince leery transit directors of the viability of the approach and methodology of these models in servicing agricultural communities.

The state standard for the evaluation of transit services for the purposes of revising routes and schedules is two years. The Kern County AITS Pilot project has been in operation less than eleven months. However, after only eleven months, the Kern County AITS Pilot project has provided a useful model of how public transit can best expand services to meet the needs of the entire community in regions that are underserved and predominantly rural and agricultural in nature.

Mr. Wilbanks has commented that more time and data is needed for a proper evaluation that can define issues of demographics, peaks and valleys in passenger traffic, seasonality, and other impacting factors that can allow for revisions in the transportation service delivery system to better meet AITS program goals.

Feedback from the Kern AITS Pilot Program Manager has revealed that few actual agricultural workers are meeting their unique transportation needs given this AITS public transit business model. Given the dynamics of labor in the fields, time constraints, seasonality, the transitory nature of the work, and other factors, it is accurate to say that most, if not all public transit systems cannot meet this unique need adequately with transportation services that are available when needed, coupled with the destination locations and frequency of schedules to meet the unique demands of the agricultural industry.

Farmworkers, their advocates, stakeholders, and industry leaders have acknowledged that expanded traditional public transit is not a viable solution in servicing the agricultural worker's unique transportation needs to and from their respective places of employment. However, that sentiment should not dilute the fact that Kern County has taken a significant step in servicing the transportation needs of the entire agricultural worker family with needed transportation services that are critical in maintaining transportation options that are safe, affordable, and available.

Kings, Fresno, and Tulare Counties AITS Pilot Project:

The Kings County Central Valley AITS Pilot Project seeks to service three individual counties in the California Central Valley with targeted transportation services specifically for agricultural workers. Via inter-agency agreements with Tulare and Fresno Counties, the Kings AITS project endeavors to deliver transportation services to agricultural workers in all three counties given a unique hybrid system of public transportation that is a combination of public sector managed services and a private sector business model to aid sustainability. The Kings AITS Pilot Project targets transportation services to the agricultural worker in the counties of Kings, Tulare, and Fresno. They have collaborated with Proteus the leading service provider in the region and have designed their pilot program with the potential of inherent sustainability given a business model of affordable fares and controlling program overhead costs.

The Kings County AITS Project involved purchasing 134 15-passenger vans that are operated by residents in each of the targeted communities. These residents are trained and certified to safely operate the AITS vanpool vehicles. The operators of these vehicles both drive the vans and work at agricultural fields and packing facilities in the designated services area. Vanpool fares for the Kings AITS Pilot Project is \$60 per person per month and the operating costs of the vehicles are estimated at \$750.00 per month. The Kings AITS Pilot Project has researched the average cost of transportation for agricultural workers given alternate means of transit and has estimated that per day costs to the workers at \$5.00 on average. These and other business dynamics make the Kings AITS program beneficial to the community, the employer and achieve the sustainability objectives that the AITS grant seeks.

The Kings County AITS Project additionally involved purchasing 12 28-passenger buses. Residents of the community operate the buses between the communities and nearby agricultural employment centers. Estimated bus fare is \$3 per person, per day and service frequency varies (from 4 to 7 days a week) depending upon demand for labor.

At the time that this study was published, the Kings County Area Public Transit Agency (KCAPTA) pilot project has been confronted with numerous obstacles, barriers and unforeseen challenges. A few examples of these barriers are the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) regulations barring the project from charging passengers the estimated fares, limits on the number of passengers that can be transported in these vehicles by drivers that are also workers and other impediments that have prevented the pilot project from being fully implemented.

The KCAPTA Transit Manager, Mr. Ron Hughes, has retained a labor attorney to resolve with the USDOL the conditions wherein a transit authority must comply with farm labor contractor regulations. Additionally, there has been ongoing communication with Caltrans concerning state regulatory issues impacting whom can be eligible for driver training and certification for the transport of farmworkers utilizing the Kings AITS Pilot project vans with more than 9 passengers.

The number of paying passengers in a single vehicle and what they can be charged directly impacts the sustainability of the Kings AITS program. Federal Department of Labor regulations mandate transportation fares charged to farm laborers cannot result in them earning less than the Federal Minimum Wage regardless of the fact that the AITS fee of \$60.00 per month are significantly less than charges for unsafe, unregulated transport to and from the fields.

Due to these and other issues full implementation of the pilot has been delayed, but the expectation is that once these regulatory obstacles have been overcome, the model for the Kings AITS Pilot will provide the optimum transit solution for agricultural workers, their employers, and advocates for a safe and affordable transportation to and from the fields.

Kings, Fresno, and Tulare Counties AITS Pilot Evaluation Report Findings

Mr. Ron Hughes, Project Manager for the AITS Pilot Project, provided the AITS program design, strategic planning, media and oversight as to vehicle purchases, acquisition of insurance, driver training and certification. He also functions as the project lead with identifying gaps and the specific transportation needs of both employers and employees. Most importantly he is the individual in charge of overcoming barriers and constraints in implementing the AITS transportation service model that agricultural stakeholders want and need for safe affordable transportation. Ownership of a project to a large degree speaks to its success and Mr. Hughes has assumed that role. Hughes has worked with state and federal officials in adjusting passenger counts in AITS vehicles, allowing those vehicles and their drivers to meet state and federal codes. Additionally, he has worked hard to secure insurance and train as well as certify AITS drivers.

The Kings AITS program has joined with Proteus, the leading agricultural worker community-based-services organization in the Central Valley, and Hughes has secured this organization in marketing the AITS pilot project to the community, as well as accessing the Proteus network for driver candidates and utilization of their workforce development expertise in training candidates as certified drivers of AITS vehicles.

The Kings AITS project has modified its approach in the operation of its labor transport vans as vanpools by having less than ten passengers per vehicle thus alleviating the need to comply with farm labor contractor regulations. This is not the ideal scenario envisioned by the Kings AITS pilot, but until the regulatory issues with the State of California and the U.S. Department of Labor can be resolved, at least some transportation services can be implemented.

There has been an ongoing issue with the acquisition of insurance in the Central Valley due to the fact that in Kings and Tulare Counties there are no insurance providers of farm labor vehicles. However, because of KCAPTA's existing operations, it was able to secure insurance for the program through Lancer's Insurance Company out of New York.

Again, not the ideal scenario, but at least the vans are covered, permitting their operation.

In June of 2002 bus service between Avenal and Paramount Farms began. In the following month van service began operations from Avenal, Kettleman City, and Stratford. Given the fact that agricultural workers often carry their own tools it is also important to note that the California Highway Patrol denied an application for a tool carrier for the AITS vans. Even though the grant for the AITS for Kings County was funded in October of 2001, the movement of both federal and state regulatory agencies has been slow to respond to these and other issues that constrain service expansion.

The project team created an evaluation plan and tool for the purposes of assessing the individual AITS Pilot Projects from the context of program performance, collaboration, and sustainability. Listed below are the responses and feedback from meetings, surveys, and a questionnaire with Mr. Hughes on the Kings County AITS Pilot Project. The survey questions put to Mr. Hughes and his unedited responses are as follows:

Analysis of Kings County Transit Agency Pilot Project Implementation

What was the county transit agency selection process for vehicle drivers?

Two or less points on a DMV printout, 25 years of age and clean physical.

Has Kings AITS awarded contracts to driver operators serving agricultural workers most in need of transportation assistance within the county?

Most riders are Hispanic and were paying at least \$5 per day prior to using the AITS van.

Has the county transit agency provided necessary start up and technical assistance to vehicle operators?

Each driver is walked through vehicle operation, including location and use of fire extinguisher, the first aid kit, roadway flares, the two way radio and equipment for changing a flat tire. Method of collecting and paying monthly or weekly payments are discussed and established.

How does your pilot provide transportation services to pilot participants?

Provides van to driver who in turn provided rides for up to 9 fellow workers.

How has your pilot project collaborated with local and state human service organizations as to outreach and services coordination?

There is a minimal contact with welfare departments. Few farmworkers use the welfare system. Focused on working through Proteus contacts, flea markets and direct contact with firms that primarily hire farmworkers.

Analysis of Kings County Transit Agency Driver Contracts

Are the AITS Pilot Project goals and objectives part of the training of drivers?

It was initially when it was thought that AITS trained drivers would be able to operate vehicles while collecting some compensation for transporting others to work. Since this is no longer possible due to government regulations the focus is on establishing training sites with the goal of collecting enough money to make them self sustaining.

Are agreements or contracts made with drivers for the AITS program?

All drivers sign an agreement spelling out the conditions for operating the vans.

Are there provisions to terminate agreements of driver operators found to be engaged in practices that jeopardize rider safety or employment?

Provisions are contained in the agreement signed by the driver.

Have county transit agency agreements clearly stated prohibitions against activities intended to defraud AITS agricultural workers and included provisions to terminate agreements of driver operators found to be engaged in fraudulent activities?

Yes.

Analysis of Kings County Transit Agency AITS Vehicle Safety Monitoring Program

Are background checks conducted by county transit agencies on AITS vehicle drivers?

A 10 year driving history is required.

Were driver logs kept and reviewed?

The drivers do not maintain a log. A GPS system was installed for that purpose.

Describe the process to monitor vehicle safety?

Staff monitors the GPS activity that shows location and speed as well as conducting random field checks.

Were county transit agencies tracking AITS vehicle driver records for traffic violations and/or accidents during the pilot project?

We are exploring setting up a pull program where we are notified of any driving citations. Presently the agreement requires the driver to report citations or accidents or lose the privilege of driving the van.

Were county transit agency methods to monitor vehicle safety effective?

Yes.

Analysis of Kings County Transit Agency Driver Recruitment, Education and Training

How did county transit agencies recruit AITS drivers?

As stated earlier, outreach occurs at places of employment, flea markets, through Proteus contacts, and placement agencies.

Did county transit agency driver recruitment efforts include identifying culturally diverse driver candidates? Multi-lingual driver candidates?

Yes, all outreach is in Spanish first and English second. Most drivers speak Spanish and very little if any English.

How did county transit agencies ensure that AITS drivers received the necessary education and training?

Those in classes for Farm Labor Certification classes get the required 20 hours of training until they are able to pass the required California Highway Patrol tests.

How was the county transit agency training developed?

Training utilizes the existing Farm Labor Certification program. A portion of this program is only available in English. This has subsequently been converted to Spanish for classroom use.

Analysis of Kings County Transit Agency/Proteus Education and Outreach to Agricultural Industry

How was the agricultural industry educated about AITS Pilot Project?

Door to door contacts in the target county areas. Reception has been cold due to perception that the program is affiliated with the United Farm Workers (UFW) and the desire on the part of the agriculture industry to distance itself from transportation to avoid litigation, costs, and liability.

Were education and outreach materials/programs culturally competent?

All material, print, radio, and outreach was conducted in Spanish.

Was county and agricultural industry stakeholder input obtained in the development and implementation of education and outreach efforts?

Minimal input was received.

Have marketing tactics been effective in reaching the target population?

Mixed results. Target population is receptive but hesitant to step forward.

Has there been an overall decline in traffic violations and accidents in AITS Pilot Project counties targeted by education and outreach when compared to other major agricultural counties?

Data is limited due to the level of van and bus traffic to date.

Analysis of Kings County Transit Agency Data Collection and Monitoring Activities

How was data collected by the Kings AITS project?

Collection of weekly or monthly receipts from drivers. Van mileages come from use of fuel cards that require mileage entry each time the van is fueled.

How did Kings County transit monitor AITS Pilot Project progress toward meeting goals and objectives?

Initial placement of vans occurs where someone expresses the desire to be a driver and has several riders willing to ride. The AITS driver is told that they have several months to begin filling the van and that each rider has to pay a set fee (typically \$60 per month) during this period. After several months the ridership is evaluated. If the van is full, the operation continues as established. If the van is not full the monthly price is raised to encourage more ridership and to offset the cost. The van may be removed if the riders are unwilling to pay the increased amount.

Transportation Access

Analysis of whether transportation access has been increased

How many agricultural workers used AITS Pilot Project services?

Most if not all of the users are agricultural workers.

Was AITS vehicle ridership at or near capacity for comparable transit services? If not, please explain.

There is not transportation service that is comparable.

What were the primary days of operation for AITS vehicles?

Monday thru Saturday.

Were AITS vehicles available 24 hours a day?

Yes.

Were AITS vehicles available to transport workers to and from multiple agricultural employment sites within the county within the same workday?

Yes, the smaller vans now operate in this fashion.

Analysis of County Transit Agency Grievance Process

What mechanisms were in place for agricultural workers to express grievances about AITS transportation services?

A toll free number is available and onsite monitoring is conducted with the goal of soliciting comments.

How were agricultural workers informed about the grievance process?

By outreach activities of the AITS staff.

Which local agency administered the grievance process?

A formal process has not been established.

Was the complaint process confidential?

Yes.

Were county transit agency grievance processes accessible to non-English speaking persons?

All outreach occurs in Spanish.

What actions were taken in response to grievances?

We have had no grievances.

Analysis of AITS Pilot Project Transportation Services for Non-Employment Related Services

What non-employment related transportation needs were met by AITS vehicles/funding?

Emergency medical trips by van drivers.

Were agricultural workers informed of the availability of AITS vehicles/services for non-employment related uses?

Yes.

Were AITS vehicles available during the workday for non-employment related services? At night? On weekends?

No insurance coverage is available for this type of use.

How many agricultural workers used AITS vehicle transportation services for non-employment purposes?

Few.

Kings County Pilot Transportation Safety Component

Analysis of AITS Pilot Project impact on agricultural worker safety

Were AITS drivers screened and trained?

Trained drivers generally purchase a van of their own so that they can collect daily fees from their riders.

Did AITS drivers maintain the appropriate vehicle licenses?

For the vans now going to the fields the only requirement is a class “C” license. (Less than nine passengers)

Were AITS vehicles appropriately maintained?

Service is performed every 6,000 miles using the mileage reported at the time of fueling. Spot inspections occur between the service intervals.

Did AITS vehicles have seatbelts?

Yes.

Were agricultural workers required to use seat belts?

Yes.

Transportation Cost Effectiveness for Kings County AITS Pilot Project

Analysis of Cost of Transportation to Agricultural Workers versus other Comparable Modes of Transportation.

(Note that Kings AITS has one bus operating as well as the vans at the time that the evaluation findings were published. Each vehicle application is somewhat unique)

Was the cost of transportation service to agricultural workers for modes of transportation under the pilot project less than, equal to, or greater than other comparable modes of transportation?

The AITS program is less than the \$5 per day fare that is typically charged. There is no other comparable mode of transportation.

What was the per participant cost for other comparable modes of transportation?

There are no other modes of transportation other than the existing system of transportation except for illegal farm labor vans.

Analysis of fare box receipts

Was the AITS Pilot Project transportation services utilized or under-utilized? Why?

At present they have been under-utilized as originally envisioned. This is due to Federal DOL regulations.

Were logs maintained and collected by the Kings County Transit Agency to track fare box receipts?

Yes.

How were services priced for employment related transportation services?

Prices have been set at the low end to encourage participation.

Was there a different pricing structure for non-employment related AITS transportation services than the pricing structure for AITS employment related transportation services?

Non-employment transportation services are not available.

Kings County Questionnaire and Responses

Survey on issues of performance, collaboration, and sustainability
(Answers to the questions are highlighted in red)

How are the AITS project fare box receipts used?

Included as part of the match for job access

(X) Used to support operating costs of AITS Project

Returned to organization's general fund

Other *(Please specify)*

Not applicable—do not have fare box receipts

How many employers are involved with either the funding or implementation of this AITS project?

Employers provide some of the matching funds for the service

Employers provide additional funding—beyond the project match funding—for services

Employers make in-kind contributions such as vehicles, maintenance for vehicles, or fuel

Employers pay fares for employees who are passengers receiving services

Employers supplement the service by supplying emergency rides for special circumstances (i.e. family emergencies)

Employers have adjusted work schedules to accommodate the operating limitations of the Job Access Service

Employers provide vans or shuttle buses to take workers from the end of the transit service to the workplace

Other *(Please identify)*

(X) No employers are involved with the implementation of this project

Overall, how satisfied or not are you with how your AITS project has enabled your organization to help people get to work?

Very Satisfied

(X) Generally Satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Generally satisfied

Very dissatisfied

How has participation in the AITS Program affected coordination and collaboration with social service organizations in your service area?

Greatly increased

Generally increased

Slightly increased

(X) No change

Slightly decreased

Generally decreased

Greatly decreased

If your AITS project funding should end, will your organization continue to provide transportation services that were previously provided through the grant?

Yes, with expanded services

Yes, at the same level of services

Yes, at a reduced level of services

Uncertain, will completely discontinue services if other sources of funds are not obtained

No, will discontinue services

(X) Program will continue and expand if the model is sustainable.

If your Job Access project funding should end, what sources of funds does your organization expect to use to pay for continued operations of the services that were started or expanded under the program?

Other federal transportation funds

State TANF funds

State transportation funds

Other State funds

Local government funds

Local transit operator funds

Private non-profit organization donations

(X) Fare-box revenue

Employer donations

Other (*Please specify*)

Kings County AITS Pilot Evaluation Report Summary

Program Performance--Sustainability--Collaboration

The project team had previously noted in the evaluation of the Kern County AITS Pilot project that their AITS funding was used for the expansion of county transit services to agricultural families in remote communities of the county that had been previously underserved. With the Kings County AITS program their grant was utilized for implementing a revolutionary transit system targeted to, and specifically for, the agricultural worker community in aiding their efforts in accessing safe, affordable transportation to work in an industry that has unique demands on workers, their schedules, and locations of employment.

The Kings County AITS project performance has been clearly hampered by unforeseen barriers, oddly enough with existing state and federal regulations that in most cases are outdated and in dire need of reform. Insurance for the vehicles and their operation has also been the cause of a significant delay in the implementation of its fleet of vans and buses, as well as the political environment of labor and growers that has slowed necessary endorsements and access to workers at their respective places of employment. Accordingly, the Kings County AITS program initially purchased 48 vans, delaying procurement of the remaining vans until April 2003 due to the aforementioned barriers to program implementation.

A single bus and 34 vanpools are currently in operation as of June 1, 2003, limiting the overall passenger count for this pilot program. Even though the passenger numbers are low and the coordination of this program amongst employers and other vital stakeholders is slow to take place, the potential for a significant success story are present. Currently, numbers of passengers and employers embracing the program are growing.

There are five key recommendations that would stimulate the growth and viability of this AITS transportation model as a real solution to agricultural worker transportation across the state. They are:

Modification of regulatory constraints both at the federal and state level that constrain who can operate agricultural transport vehicles and how they are compensated, what they can charge, and how many workers they can transport.

Access to affordable agricultural labor transport vehicle insurance for the vehicles and their operators.

Greater enforcement and regulatory oversight of unlicensed drivers/operators and non-certified farm transport vehicles. The elimination of unlawful vehicle operators that exploit workers by utilizing access to transportation as a leverage in obtaining work, charging excessive fees, and forcing workers to travel in unsafe, poorly maintained vehicles with operators that may be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

Acceptance of this model by employers and the people that work for them. The historic politics of organized labor and the Central Valley growers has greatly influenced the non-participation of this transportation model with suspicions and allegations that have caused most in leadership positions to balk when it comes to promoting and endorsing AITS transportation services.

Acceptance of the AITS model by Regional Transit Directors as a doable solution in providing services to the agricultural worker who, to most in the mainstream community, are invisible and do not have a voice in requesting and receiving needed transportation services.

Research findings in the field amongst all stakeholders reflect overwhelming sentiment for a similar transportation model, and the actual results/outcomes from the Kings County AITS pilot project would be greatly enhanced if these recommendations were to be enacted. This model has overwhelming support from the workers and stakeholders that the project team has interviewed and surveyed. Mr. John Wilbanks, project lead with the Kern County AITS Pilot project, has also been very clear when he cites the Kings County AITS model as the preferred approach in dealing with agricultural worker transportation specifically, and the numerous issues of exploitation and transportation access that this underserved community confronts everyday.

Coordination efforts amongst local service providers and the Kings County AITS Pilot project have been in place from the outset. However, that coordination has limited itself to marketing and outreach services only. Coordination at the local and state level with identifying additional federal matching (WIA and TANF) funds for the purposes of accessing needed funding to sustain the AITS projects here in Kings and other agricultural counties needs to take place. Also, it was the original intent of the Kings pilot to create a financial incentive for drivers of the AITS vehicles to transport and recruit passengers ensuring additional program performance and sustainability. Current governmental regulations prohibit that original concept from taking place. Clearly, the Legislature needs to take the lead with the necessary reform and issue resolution that constricts what can be accomplished by this AITS pilot effort.

A recent federal GAO report to the U.S. Congress has indicated the viability of utilizing federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding as matching funds for future Job Access Reverse Commute (AITS) grants. In addition to achieving greater sustainability of statewide transportation services,

this collaboration of social service agency programs and funding better integrates and coordinates all of the needed services and programs to the working poor including the agricultural worker community. The coordination of social services from separate categories of service activity to coordinated actions on the part of the state and the counties presents a real catalyst for garnering acceptance by local transit directors, elected representatives, and local government, where the absence of stable funding and public policy towards the agricultural worker community have left a void in services including transportation.

Kings, Fresno, and Tulare Counties AITS Pilot Evaluation Conclusion

Kings County AITS program performance outcomes are limited due to the reasons that are delineated above. The key to improved performance and the establishment of this model as a proven transportation solution is increased acceptance by employers and the removal or modification of bureaucratic obstacles at both the federal and state level.

The Kings AITS business process model is compelling, and given evaluation criteria of collaboration and sustainability the Kings County AITS Pilot project, has done an exceptional job with planning and implementing a revolutionary transportation services pilot that seeks to provide the agricultural worker with transportation that is available, affordable, and safe. There is no similar model of transit services that exists to benchmark the Kings AITS Pilot Project against. Nor is there anything existing in the state that comes close to meeting the objectives established by Caltrans for safe, affordable transport of agricultural workers to and from their places of employment.

The Kings AITS Pilot has been embraced by workers, local community service providers, legislators, the media, and the California Highway Patrol as the single best effort in meeting the transportation needs of both the agricultural industry and the people that work for them.

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES TRANSPORTATION SERVICES STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Create Regional Agricultural Worker Transportation Working Groups

The analysis prepared for this report indicates that with few exceptions, the gaps and barriers that workers face are consistent throughout the state. However, there are differences in factors such as seasons and times, when workers are needed, and the distances between the fields (where people work), and housing (where people live). It also became quite obvious that there were few, if any, existing transportation services that could adequately serve the needs of agricultural workers in any part of the state. It is quite clear that a hybrid system operated by a collaboration of stakeholders would have the greatest success. This type of approach requires planning, and participation by all stakeholder groups involved in providing employment, programs, and services to this community. A regional workgroup would have the greatest success in designing a holistic approach to transportation services to the agricultural worker community.

Advocate Amendments to Laws Creating Barriers to Solutions

Interviews with grower stakeholders indicate that there are several existing laws that discourage employers from providing transportation to their workers. Requirements regarding when the workday starts, and issues of liability serve to dissuade employers from providing transportation services. These laws should be reviewed, and amended, where appropriate to remove barriers to employer based transportation solutions. Additional amendments to the federal labor code allowing AITS vehicle operators to charge the prescribed fares to workers in providing safe, affordable, and available transportation to and from the fields, or other destinations of agricultural employment.

Expand Public Transportation Services to Early Morning and Weekend Hours

Even for public transit to provide partial service to this community, it is necessary to expand bus service to early and weekend hours. Agricultural workers by the nature of their industry are required to report for work as early as 4:00 am. Most of the transit services reviewed for this study do not provide early morning service. Such limited service makes it difficult to use public transportation to get to work.

Introduce Shuttle Van and Bus Service to Growing Areas

Surveys indicate that the Kings County AITS Pilot Program model is the most sound as it relates to providing transportation to this hard to serve labor group. Although there have been difficulties in launching the program, the design has been endorsed by a majority of all stakeholders interviewed for this study. This type of approach should be expanded in cooperation with community-based organizations that can recruit, and train drivers. Farmworker public purpose program providers could disseminate language sensitive information and conduct targeted outreach.

Housing providers could establish park and ride locations, and employers that can coordinate onsite transportation with shuttle services should be provided incentives.

Train and License Agricultural Workers

State law requires documentation to obtain a California Drivers' License. Though the requirement is important to control immigration, it has led to a growing number of unlicensed drivers that have no formal vehicle operational training. This situation puts all motorists at risk since many of the accidents involving farm labor vehicles are due to infractions of the vehicle code. Bottom line is that our target group will get to work by any means necessary.

Resolve Issues to Make Vehicle Insurance Easier to Obtain

Vehicle insurance is difficult to obtain and afford for many drivers and nearly impossible for agricultural workers. The net effect is that there is a growing number of drivers with no liability insurance on California roads each day. Remedies to resolve this issue should be investigated and pursued.

Findings contained in this report continually point to the lack of available vehicle insurance which serves as a barrier to many farmworker transportation efforts to obtain vehicle liability insurance. A 2002 review of Central Valley insurance companies conducted by Proteus, Inc. (AITS Marketing partner) indicates that there are no companies that will provide vehicle insurance to farmworker labor transport vehicles in the Central Valley.

It appears that pooled resources could be one of the few solutions to this issue. Most insurance pools, however, are underwritten at some level, so they are not completely immune from insurance market shifts that may limit access. However, group participation with an insurance pool can mitigate the impact of these market shifts on member organizations seeking to provide needed agricultural worker transportation services. Pools can offer: safety, risk management services, and provide a network of people and organizations sharing a commitment to long-term insurance solutions that reduce the cost of insurance.

Design and Provide Incentives to Growers and FLC's that Provide Transportation

As a practical matter, growers are in the business of growing and harvesting crops, and are typically resistant to providing transportation to part-time seasonal workers. Many do, however, understand the necessity of safe and reliable transportation for their workforce, and would consider providing services if cost cutting incentives were offered. Issues blocking more employers from offering transportation include liability, workers' compensation insurance, vehicle purchase, and operational expenses. Incentives should be designed to relieve added costs and employer liability.

Improve Access to Transportation Information

Community-based organizations and housing providers indicated that they do not regularly provide transportation information to workers. Most indicated that they could, and would be interested in providing this service. Efforts should be made to train, and educate service providers on available transportation services, and enable them to accept, and report incidences of abuse by individuals providing transportation to agricultural workers.

Design Automobile-Based Strategies for Agricultural Workers

The State of California should offset the high cost of obtaining and maintaining automobiles by offering low-interest loans and offering to sell vehicles at steeply discounted rates. Several auto-based programs have been established around the state to address the transportation needs of Welfare to Work participants. Those vehicle programs should be reviewed and considered for adaptation and implementation for the agricultural worker community as well.

Expand Vehicle Safety Training and Enforcement

The California Highway Patrol's (CHP) SAFE program has made good progress in removing unsafe vehicles and drivers from California roads. The CHP, along with the California Office of Traffic and Safety working with participating community-based organizations, has made good progress in training and educating drivers and riders on traffic laws and safety. These targeted driver safety programs should be expanded to all growing areas in the state. Efforts to expand this program should be pursued.

AITS Pilot Project Recommendations

There are five key recommendations that would stimulate the growth and viability of the AITS transportation model, as a real solution in meeting the transportation needs agricultural workers across the state. They are:

Modification of regulatory constraints (both at the federal and state level) that constrain who can operate agricultural transport vehicles, and how they are compensated, what they can charge, and how many workers they can transport.

Access to affordable agricultural labor transport vehicle insurance for the vehicles and their operators.

Greater enforcement and regulatory oversight of unlicensed drivers/operators and non-certified farm transport vehicles. The elimination of unlawful vehicle operators that exploit workers by utilizing access to transportation as a leverage in obtaining work, charging excessive fees, and forcing workers to travel in unsafe, poorly maintained vehicles with operators that may be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

Acceptance of this model by employers, and the people that work for them. The historic politics of organized labor and the Central Valley growers has greatly influenced the non-participation of this transportation model with suspicions and allegations that have caused most in leadership positions to balk when it comes to promoting and endorsing AITS transportation services.

Acceptance of this model by Regional Transit Directors as a doable solution in providing services to the agricultural worker who, to most in the mainstream community, are invisible and do not have a voice in requesting and receiving needed transportation services.

Additional ways and means of adding stakeholder investment should be explored and put forth as a means of sustainability and collaboration. Key target groups for investment and collaboration are Growers, Farm Labor Contractors, Labor Unions, and Local Transit Agencies. This language is not be construed as solely monetary, but rather a means to interact with and support the transportation of workers by stakeholder involvement with promotion, communications, advocacy, and access to the target market.

Research on the feasibility of a statewide Transportation CO-OP to work with regional planning groups to identify, analyze, and advocate for cost-effective transportation systems for agricultural workers in other areas of the state where the need exists.

Extended Evaluation and Assessment of the AITS Pilot Projects

Fully tested and evaluated AITS transportation models are needed to convince leery transit directors of the viability of the approach that these transportation systems have in servicing agricultural communities with needed transportation services. The state standard for the evaluation of transit services for the purposes of revising routes and schedules is two years. The evaluation period for the AITS pilot projects (due to unforeseen delays) has been less than twelve months. In addition to this extended evaluation period, concepts of utilizing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding as potential matching funds for additional AITS grants should be explored and researched.

Evaluation of the Farmworker Driver Safety Campaign

Safety is the primary driver for the AITS program. In the scope of work for this project, it was envisioned by Caltrans that there would be a simultaneous evaluation of the Farmworker Driver Safety Education Program in the same four counties that the AITS pilot projects have targeted for transportation services. However, due to delays in the safety program's launch date, no evaluation was possible. Evaluation, benchmarking, and coordination of data between these separate program efforts (AITS and the Farmworker Driver Safety Program) should be completed as delineated in the scope of work for this project. The e21 project team recommends that an evaluation model be designed and approved, and that evaluation should take place once the Driver Safety Program has been in program implementation mode for at least two quarters.

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES TRANSPORTATION SERVICES STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

During the course of this project there has been much uncovered in the way of quantitative and qualitative findings that has revealed that the agricultural worker community in California lacks basic public transportation services that are safe, affordable, reliable, and available.

The gaps in providing basic public transportation services for this community are due to conditions of location, economic status, political will on the part of the public sector, and the financial ability of local transit districts to fund needed public transit services expansion, and/or design transportation programs to service these rural communities, and their unique needs.

Research has also indicated that the traditional transit service model does not meet the needs of agricultural workers due to issues of varying work schedules, seasonality of the work itself, and early morning hours that public transit would need to make itself available.

The goal of the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS) program was to implement public transportation programs that better meet the transportation needs of farmworkers and their families. These AITS programs have barely just begun, and there are still outstanding issues concerning sustainability and program design that challenge their respective program managers. Continuing efforts of evaluation and revision by these AITS program managers should pay dividends in providing successful pilot program models that should be replicated across the state's agricultural regions.

The agricultural worker community over the last century has represented the hard realities, the causes, and the passion that most of us feel when we define the working poor in California, and it is hard to imagine that any Californian that wants to work, and needs to work, should not have available transportation options open to them. Given the evolution of the Welfare to Work agenda, and the comprehensive blanket of services and programs that this public purpose agenda offers in its efforts to transition people from welfare to work, it appears that the farmworker community has been either forgotten, or simply ignored as to their blatant need for adequate transportation to and from their places of employment. The Caltrans AITS transportation program is the first of its kind anywhere in California, and should continue.