



Highlights of [GAO-03-204](#), a report to the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Why GAO Did This Study

Pursuant to Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), GAO periodically reports on the implementation of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (Job Access) program. The program is designed to assist low-income people in accessing employment opportunities. This report examines the Department of Transportation's (DOT) efforts to evaluate the program and report the results to the Congress. GAO also examined (1) transportation and related services provided by the program; (2) whether the program fosters collaboration between Job Access grantees and others in the design, financing, and delivery of those services; and (3) whether Job Access services would be financially sustainable after the end of Job Access funding.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOT:

- Report to the Congress on the results of the Job Access program, as required by law.
- Base the report on data that fully measures the effectiveness of the Job Access program, including financial sustainability of Job Access projects.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-204.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Katherine Siggerud at (202) 512-2834 or siggerudk@gao.gov.

WELFARE REFORM

Job Access Program Improves Local Service Coordination, but Evaluation Should Be Completed

What GAO Found

Since 1999, DOT has awarded over \$355 million for 352 Job Access grants in 42 states to help low-income people get to job opportunities and job support services, such as training and child care. Job Access grantees used various approaches to provide transportation for this purpose, such as expanding existing bus service, adding new areas to be served by an existing fixed transit route, or enhancing the frequency of the service.

Approach to Transportation Services by Job Access Grantees

Transportation approach	Percentage of grantees
Fixed bus route extension (frequency or location) established	51
New bus service initiated	43
Demand-responsive service established ^a	19
Connection to existing service established	14

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because some grantees provided multiple services.

^aDemand-responsive service takes riders at times they request to places that are not on a fixed route.

Source: GAO analysis of 1999 grantees' services.

The program has met its goal of encouraging collaboration among transportation, human service, and other community-based agencies in Job Access service design, implementation, and financing. However, most of the program's services are not financially sustainable. For example, 12 percent of Job Access grantees indicated that they could continue their services after the end of program funding, while 41 percent reported they would likely terminate or decrease services, and 47 percent were uncertain about their ability to continue those services.

DOT has not evaluated the Job Access program or reported to the Congress, as TEA-21 requires. The department therefore is missing an opportunity to provide timely information to the Congress that could assist it in deciding whether to reauthorize the program in 2003. GAO has several concerns about DOT's plans to evaluate the Job Access program. For its evaluation, DOT initially planned to use one performance measure—employment sites served. However, using a methodology that is based on this measure would yield limited information because it only partially addresses the program's goal of providing transportation to low-income people and does not address other program goals and criteria. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) program officials informed GAO that they also plan to use other performance measures, but they did not provide sufficient detail for GAO to comment on the quality of their evaluation. Moreover, the final report's date of issuance and its contents are uncertain because the report has yet to be reviewed and approved by the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, and the Office of Management and Budget. DOT officials did not provide GAO with an estimated date for submitting the report to the Congress.