



U.S. Department of Transportation

# ITS4US

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**IT'S TRANSPORTATION FOR ALL OF US**

**From Outreach to Enrollment: How HIRTA is Promoting Health Connector Participation**

**Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency  
(HIRTA)**

**April 17, 2024**

# Agenda

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## ▪ Purpose of this Webinar

- This webinar describes HIRTA's outreach approach and highlights specific recruitment materials that will soon be released to foster Health Connector enrollment. This session also covers new and expanded training resources for travelers and shares how HIRTA plans to provide guidance as people begin using the new service.

## ▪ Webinar Content

- ITS4US Deployment Program Overview (Elina Zlotchenko, *ITS JPO*)
- Health Connector Project Overview (*Brooke Ramsey, HIRTA*)
- Outreach Approach and Active Outreach Efforts (*Carl Lingen, Capture Management Solutions*)
- Training Processes and Materials (*Chris Zeilinger, Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)*)
- Q&A

## ▪ Webinar Protocol

- Please mute your phone during the entire webinar.
- You are welcome to ask questions via the chat box and Q&A section.
- The webinar recording and the presentation material will be posted on the ITS4US website.



Source: Elina Zlotchenko

## Elina Zlotchenko

ITS4US Program Manager

USDOT ITS JPO Program Office

# ITS4US Program Overview

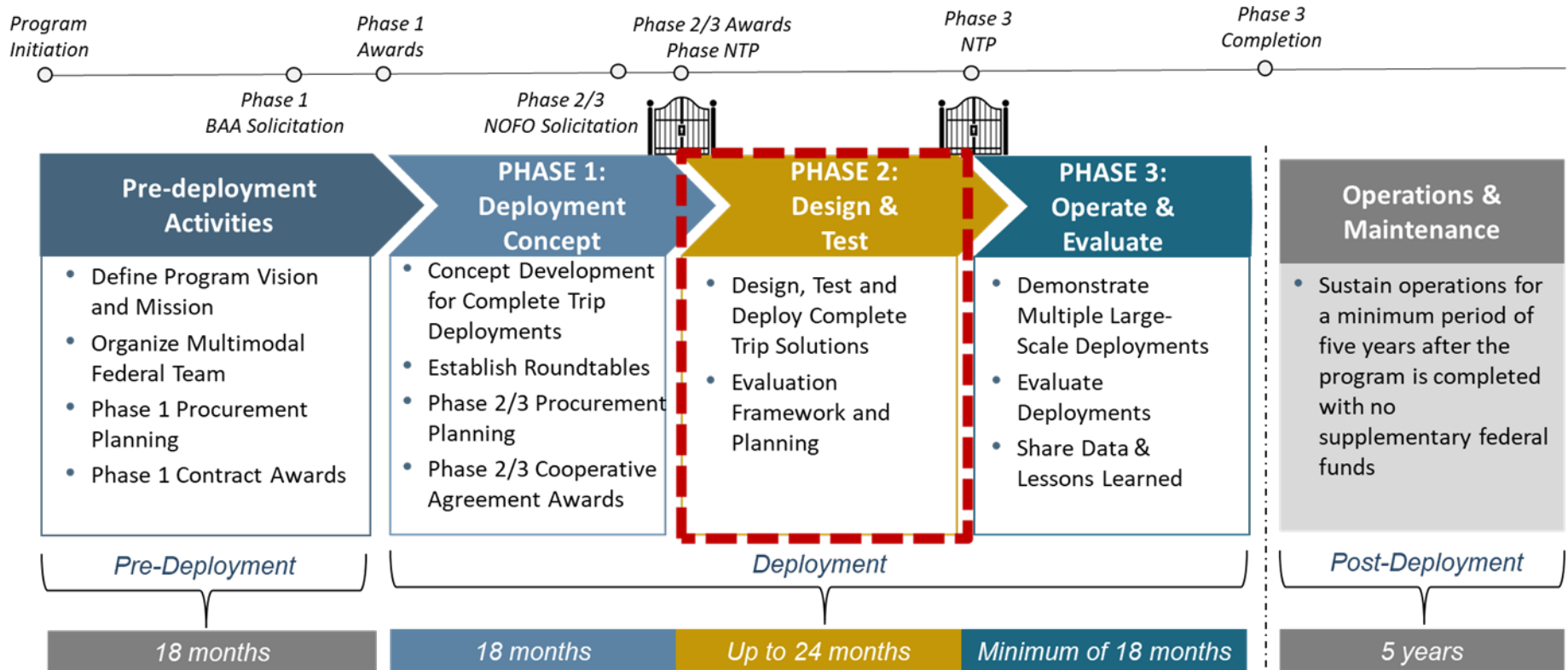
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- A USDOT Multimodal Deployment effort, led by ITS JPO and supported by OST, FHWA and FTA
- Supports multiple large-scale replicable deployments to address the challenges of planning and executing all segments of a complete trip



**Vision:** Innovative and integrated complete trip deployments to support seamless travel for all users across all modes, regardless of location, income, or disability

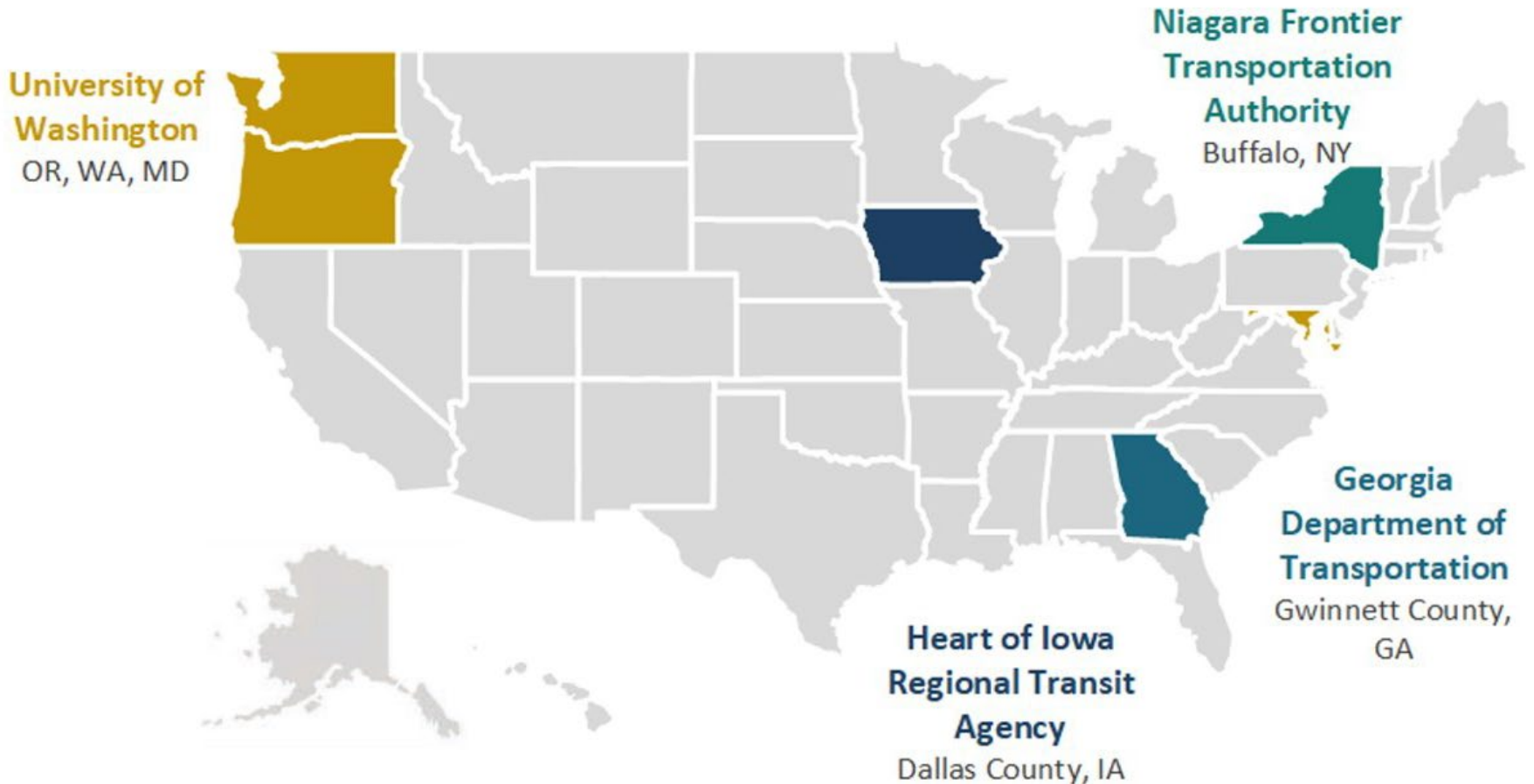
# Deployment Phases



Source: USDOT

# ITS4US Deployment Sites

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Source: USDOT

# ITS4US Team Photo Collage





Source: Brooke Ramsey

## Brooke Ramsey

Project Management Lead

Heart of Iowa Regional Transit  
Agency



# Health Connector for the Most Vulnerable

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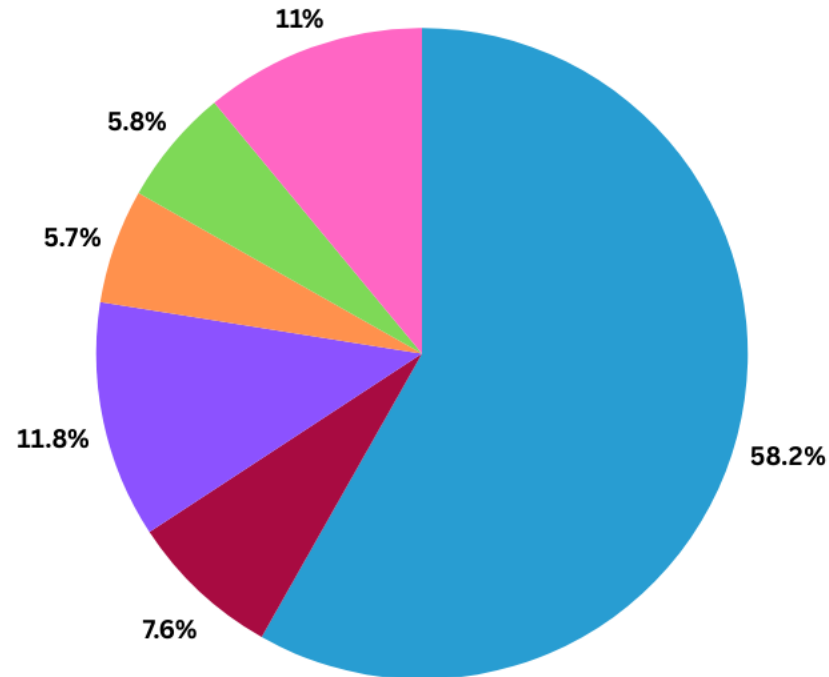
- Deployment area: Dallas County, Iowa
- Implement a scalable and replicable solution enabling transportation access to healthcare for all underserved populations and their caregivers
  - Use advanced technologies to resolve barriers
- Include information and wayfinding services to guide each step of user's trip
- Provide enhanced access to healthcare options for all travelers in Dallas County, a mostly rural county

# HIRTA and Dallas County Overview

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- HIRTA provides demand response services to population in 7 county areas, including Dallas County
- Dallas County grew 36% in the last decade
- Coordination of medical transportation services for underserved is a major challenge

# Dallas County Underserved Population



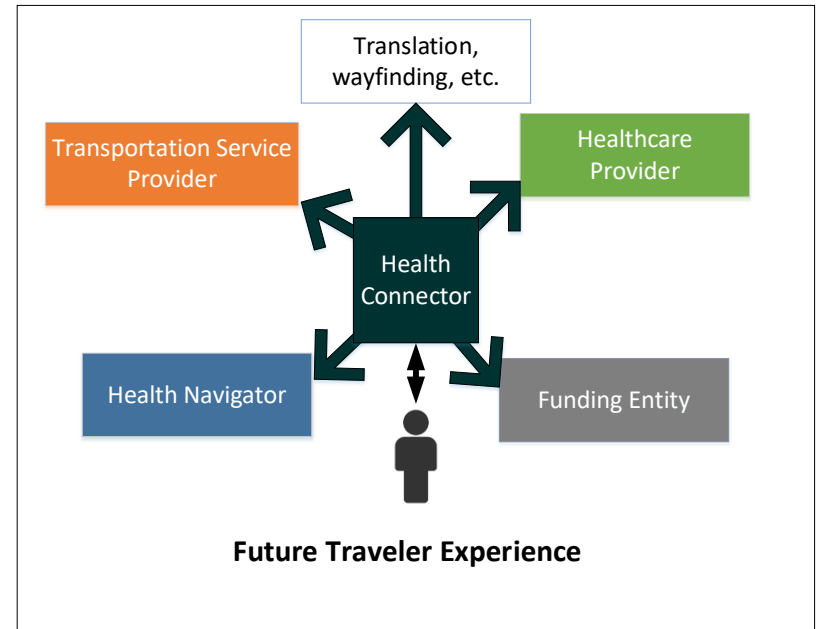
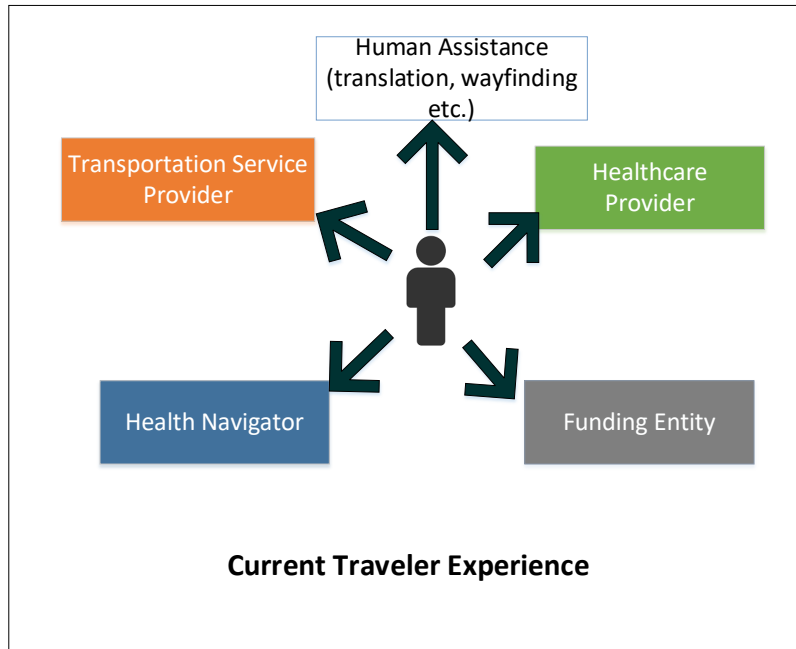
Source: HIRTA

# High-Level Findings from Stakeholders

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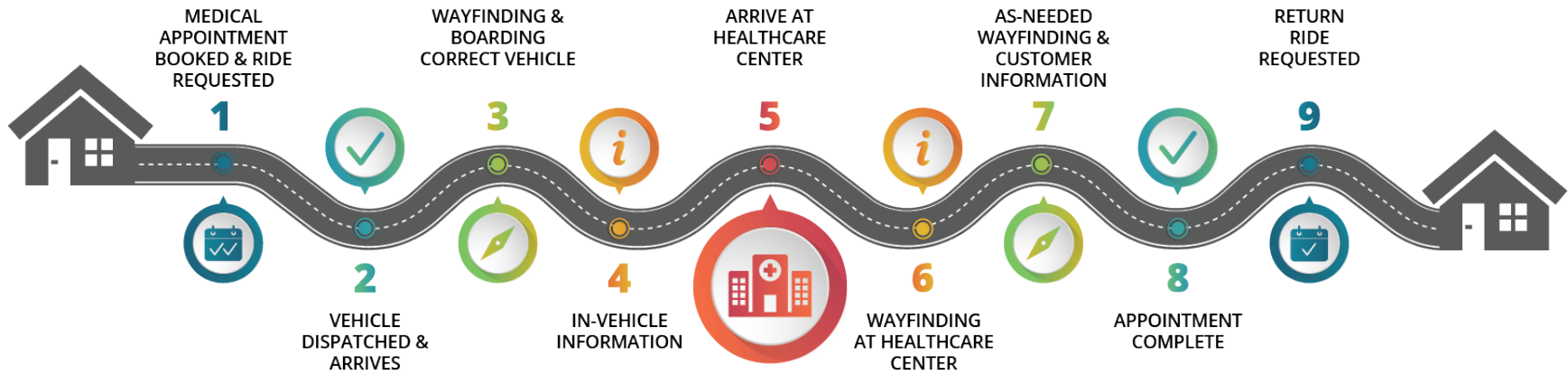
- Lack of awareness on transportation options
- Lack of integrated booking and trip management experience
- Limited capabilities in current modes to meet the needs of underserved
- Limited wayfinding capabilities
- Service management challenges with return trips
- Same-day and after-hours service issues
- Limited data sharing and reporting to measure the performance of healthcare transportation

# System Vision



Source: HIRTA

# Concept Overview



Source: HIRTA



*Source: Carl Lingen*

# Carl Lingen

## President

## Capture Management Solutions

# Overview of Outreach Strategies

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- Two target audiences
  - Stakeholders / partners
  - Travelers
- Multiple touchpoints
  - Website
  - Public meetings and conferences
  - Social media
  - Journal articles
  - On-site events
  - Local community outreach
  - Training workshops



# Marketing Materials for Partners

## HIRTA'S HEALTH CONNECTOR

An inclusive mobility experience from beginning to end

### WHAT IS HEALTH CONNECTOR?

Health Connector is a program that makes it easier than ever to get reliable and affordable transportation to healthcare destinations in Dallas County.

Community health navigators, healthcare staff, and travelers can simultaneously book healthcare appointments and the necessary transportation. Travelers can schedule additional health-supportive trips along the way, including to pick up personal companions or prescriptions.

#### KEY FEATURES

- Extended transit service hours
- Vehicles that support individual mobility needs
- Wayfinding support to help navigate to and around healthcare facilities
  - Turn-by-turn navigation
  - Visual and audio directions in 34 languages

**Simplified Scheduling**

No need to book a ride months in advance! Easily schedule from your phone in just a few taps.

**Cost-Effective Transportation**

LESS than the cost of a taxi, EQUAL to the price of typical HIRTA services.

**Complete Trip Service**

A one-stop shop for healthcare trips, with a wayfinding app and infotainment devices in all vehicles.

WEBSITE  
[www.ridehirta.com/its4us](http://www.ridehirta.com/its4us)

PHONE  
1 (877) 686-0029

Health Connector is funded through the USDOT ITS JPO.

Source: HIRTA

## HIRTA'S HEALTH CONNECTOR

An inclusive mobility experience from beginning to end

### INTENDED USERS

Participants will fit within one or more of the following categories:

- Dallas County resident (particularly in rural areas)
- 60+ years old
- Has a disability
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
- Resides in a low-income household
- Veteran

### BENEFITS

These are a few of the benefits:

- Reduces missed appointments
- Reduces Medicare readmission penalties
- Improves preventive care appointment attendance
- Improves the patient discharge process

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE

1. Go to [www.ridehirta.com/its4us](http://www.ridehirta.com/its4us)
2. Provide basic traveler details
3. Consider joining us for a training to learn more about how Health Connector works
4. Start scheduling appointments and transportation!

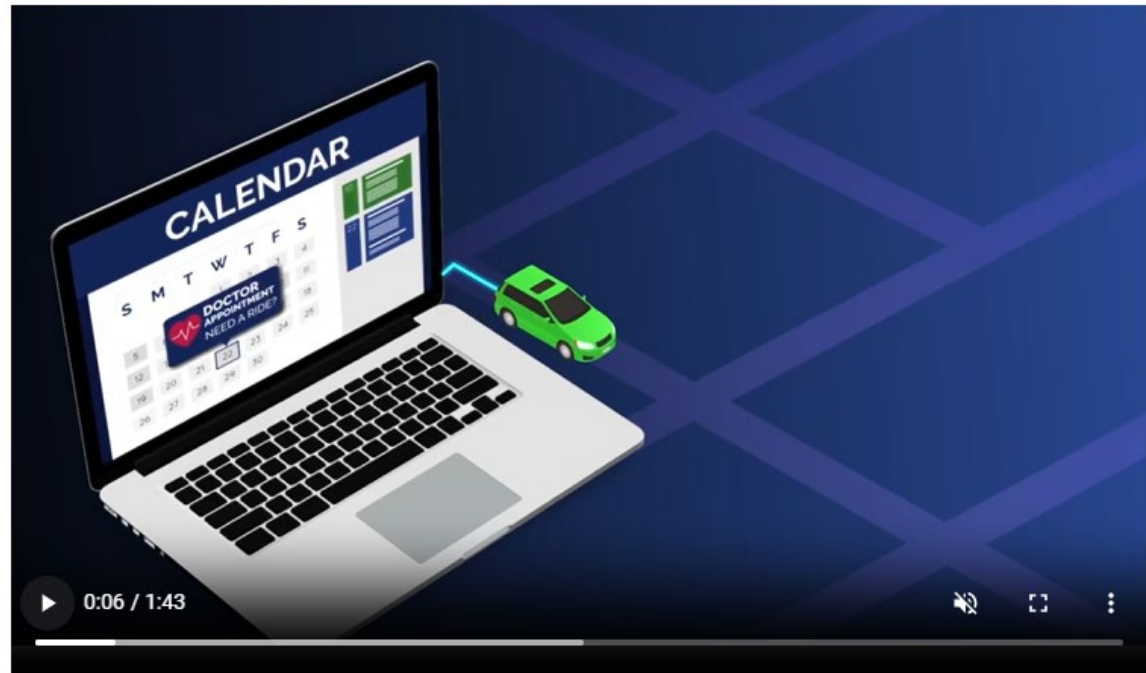
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# Video Outreach

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- Explainer for Partners/Stakeholders
- Explainer for Travelers
- Registration Process Walkthrough



Source: HIRTA

# Participant Recruitment Timeline

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1. Website launch – COMPLETE
2. Marketing material distribution – expected to begin soon
  - Flyers
  - Videos
  - Social campaign
3. Local community outreach
4. Journal articles – ongoing through April and May
5. Public meetings and conferences – ongoing
6. Training sessions for travelers – following first round of participant registration

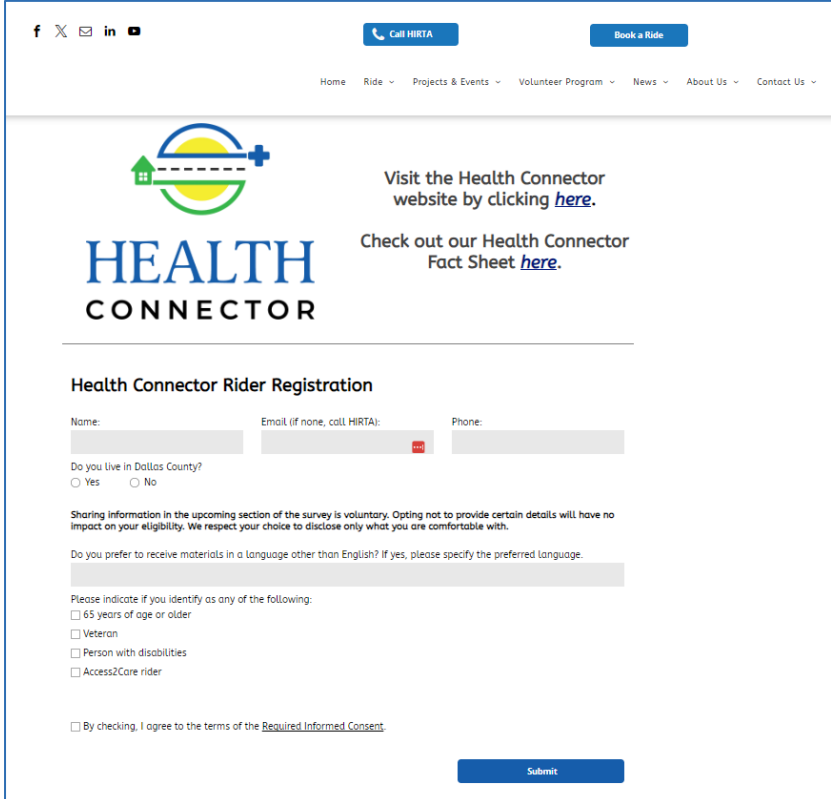
# Participant Recruitment Plan

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- Primary goals:
  - Reach potential travelers in our target audience
  - Provide beneficial information
  - Make content accessible for all users
    - In multiple languages
    - In multiple formats
  
- How to achieve:
  - Flyers and journal articles – digital and hard copy; text-based
  - Videos – audio/visual
  - Social campaign - digital
  - Facility outreach – pre-existing relationships
  - Public meetings and conferences – in-person and/or virtual

# Registration Process

1. Register online at [www.ridehirta.com/its4us](http://www.ridehirta.com/its4us)
2. Provide basic contact details
3. Option to select preferred language
4. Self-identify demographics (65+ years old, person with a disability, etc.)
5. Review and accept terms of required informed consent
6. Press Submit!
7. Website will display a confirmation message and thank-you note

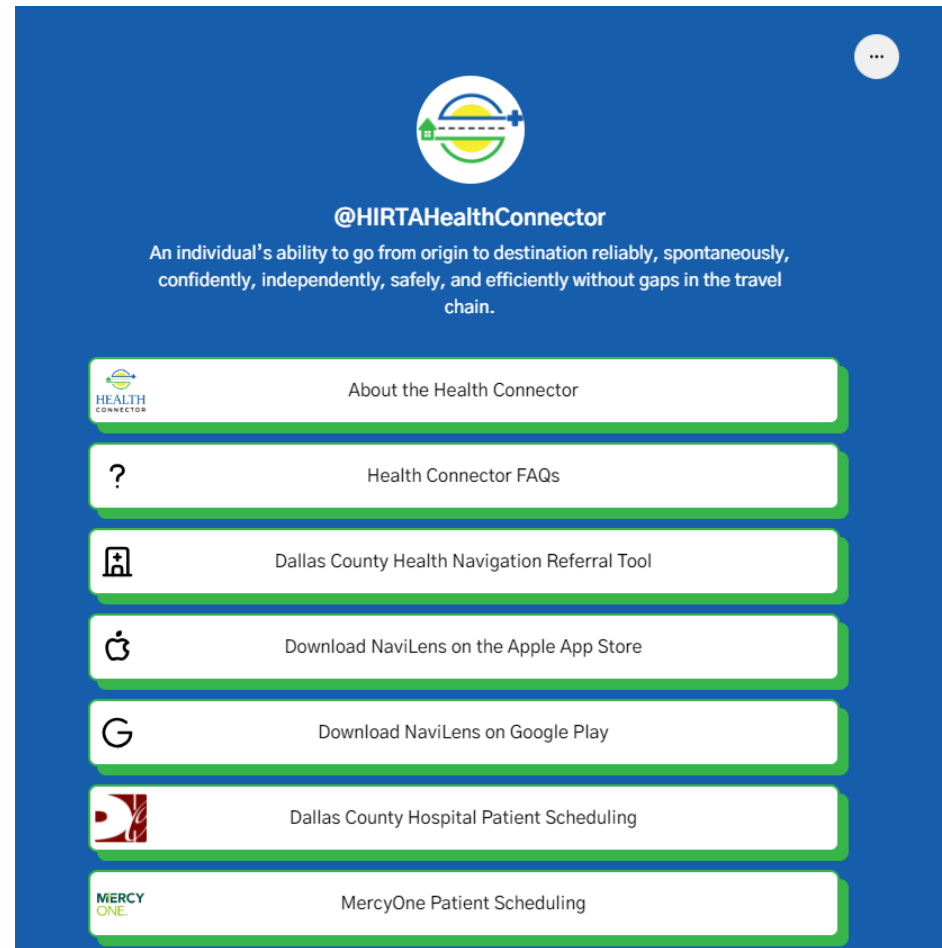


The screenshot shows the 'Health Connector Rider Registration' form on the HIRTA website. The page header includes social media icons, a 'Call HIRTA' button, and a 'Book a Ride' button. The navigation menu contains 'Home', 'Ride', 'Projects & Events', 'Volunteer Program', 'News', 'About Us', and 'Contact Us'. The main content area features the Health Connector logo and text encouraging users to visit the Health Connector website and check out the Fact Sheet. The registration form includes fields for Name, Email (if none, call HIRTA), and Phone. It also has radio buttons for 'Do you live in Dallas County?' (Yes/No) and a section for language preference. A list of demographic options includes '65 years of age or older', 'Veteran', 'Person with disabilities', and 'Access2Care rider'. A checkbox for 'Required Informed Consent' is present, and a 'Submit' button is at the bottom right.

Source: HIRTA

# Linktree

- One-site touchpoint
- Directs users to registration, application downloads, appointment scheduling sites, and wayfinding information



Source: HIRTA



Source: Chris Zeilinger

## Chris Zeilinger

Deployment Lead

Community Transportation  
Association of America

# Purpose of Training

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## Why Train Our Participants?

- Health Connector travelers – and other Health Connector participants – are likely to be unfamiliar with transit
- The use of technology can present its own challenges
- There are features novel to Health Connector, including:
  - Real-time trip status information and flexibility
  - Language accessibility
  - Off-vehicle wayfinding
  - Trip information for third parties such as family members, caregivers, healthcare professionals



# Approach to Training

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- Modeled on HIRTA's existing training for new system users, with Health Connector features incorporated into the training.
- Hands-on training, delivered one-on-one or in small groups (maximum group size is determined by the seating capacity of a HIRTA bus)
- As part of Phase 2, a trial cohort of 10 – 12 people, representative of Health Connector user groups, will be trained in conjunction with User Acceptance Testing.
- After that, an initial Phase 3 cohort of Health Connector travelers and other participants, identified through our participant recruitment and selection processes, will be trained, and should be ready to use Health Connector services upon official launch of the service

# Training Materials

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Training follows this sequence:

1. **Overview of Health Connector** (in-person presentation + video)
2. **How to schedule/manage Health Connector rides** (in-person hands-on teaching and practice with website and with the app on users' smartphones), including training on non-English language access, and practice with helping resolve technological questions users may commonly have
3. **Overview of HIRTA and Health Connector policies**, including fare payment policies as applicable (in-person presentation)
4. **How to ride the vehicle** (on-vehicle training, simulating real-life experience, including boarding, riding safely, arriving at destination, using applicable accessibility features on the vehicle, and how to use wayfinding features)

# Next Steps

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When revenue service is launched, the following will be in place:

- Initial cadre of participants, including Health Connector travelers representing the full range of user groups, plus family members, caregivers, Dallas County Health Navigators and other medical facility personnel will have been recruited and trained.
- On that day, the initial set of Health Connector trips will be taken.
- Stakeholder engagement will continue, with goal of progressively increasing number of Health Connector participants during the Phase 3 period and increasing the number of healthcare facilities or other medical destinations being served by Health Connector.

# Stay Connected

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**For more information, please contact:**

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Program website:

<https://its.dot.gov/its4us/>

ITS4US Deployment Program  
Video

<https://youtu.be/pztl1IRyXAc>