

Human Service and Public Transportation Coordination Plan

Prepared for, and funded by, the Minnesota
Departments of Transportation and Human Services



Prepared by Region Nine Development Commission



Serving the Counties of Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin,
Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan.

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INTRODUCTION

Coordination of transit services has been discussed and focused on for more than 20 years as means to provide more efficient and effective to citizens, particularly those in rural areas and who use flexible transit modes. Potential benefits from coordination include (from TCRP report 101):

- Lowered trip costs for travelers and human service agencies
- Extended service hours and services to new areas and people
- More trips made by persons needing transportation
- Services become more responsive to schedules, points of origin, etc
- Greater emphasis on safety and customer service
- More door-to-door service
- More flexible payment and service options

Two recent events occurred that have lifted coordination to a local, state, and federal priority. In 2004, President Bush issued an executive order on human service transportation “to enhance access to transportation to improve mobility, employment opportunities, and access to community services for persons who are transportation-disadvantaged” through coordination of transportation services. The executive order contained five provisions:

1. Coordinated Transportation Planning
2. Vehicle Sharing
3. Cost Allocation
4. Reporting and Evaluation
5. Creation of Consolidated Access Transportation Program

In 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, or SAFETEA-LU. This is the most recent reauthorization of the ISTEA and TEA-21 surface transportation bills. Transit, and particularly transit coordination, received increased focus in this bill. Funds were allocated for Section 5310 (Human Service Transportation) and 5311 (Rural Public Transportation). In addition, Section 5316 formalized the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and made funds accessible for non-metro areas. Section 5317 created the New Freedom program which is targeted towards the expansion of services in an effort to expand ADA accessible service.

A key component of this legislation required the creation of a “locally developed human service transportation coordination plan.” More specifically, funds distributed to 5310, 5316, and 5317 programs must be in agreement with these locally developed plans.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation – Office of Transit developed a process for meeting this requirement and developing local coordination plans. Mn/DOT contracted with the regional development organizations and metropolitan planning organizations in the state to carry out the task of facilitating the planning process and developing a final coordination plan.

With guidance from Mn/DOT to ensure conformance with federal directives, this document was created over a period of several months in 2006 and serves as the locally developed human services and public transportation coordination plan.

METHODOLOGY

The coordination planning process required four key components:

- Public Involvement
- Service Inventory
- Needs Assessment
- Strategies and Action Steps

Four steps were taken to ensure public involvement in this process. A Technical Advisory Committee was formed attempting to represent all existing transit needs. The members of the committee are as follows:

Anna Thill
Bob Apitz
Mark Anderson
Sylvia Perron
Shelly Barnett
Cindy Chadwick
Janice Klassen
Tom Loveall
Mike Pinske
Diane Wineger
Kelley Haeder
Linda Fischenich

The committee provided oversight, guidance, and suggestions for the planning process. The group convened four times during this process.

Secondly, information was solicited from the public through use of a questionnaire survey. The survey was mailed to approximately 300 contacts including schools, human service agencies, public transit, and churches. A return rate of nearly 30% produced valuable information for moving forward with the planning process.

Third, two planning workshops were held in Mankato and Le Sueur, respectively. These half-day workshops provided education on coordination, discussion of current conditions, ideas of what could be done better, and strategies for implementing coordination initiatives.

Fourth, a public meeting was held in Mankato on December 18, 2006 to share the final plan with the public. Minutes of that meeting are attached in Appendix D.

The service inventory, needs assessment, and strategies components are discussed in detail throughout the plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Region Nine Development Commission has developed a public transit and human services transportation coordination plan in conjunction with the Minnesota Departments of Transportation and Human Services, local providers, and stakeholders. The plan is a requirement of SAFETEA-LU, the current federal surface transportation bill and will allow the release of certain future federal transit dollars to the state and local agencies and providers.

The plan is comprised of four key components: 1) public involvement through creation of a technical committee, stakeholder workshops, and a provider survey; 2) an inventory of transportation services within the region; 3) a needs assessment and gaps analysis; and 4) strategies to enhance coordination and address gaps in service. The executive summary talks briefly of the needs assessment and strategies.

In July 2006, Region Nine Development Commission identified the transportation needs of its residents by sending out surveys to all of the major transportation providers throughout the nine county region. It was done to determine strategies in confronting transportation discrepancies between the counties facing the general public, working poor, elderly, handicapped, low income and elderly populations. RNDC received 76 surveys back and did a quantitative and qualitative analysis. It was found that three key factors prevented citizens from attaining complete transportation services; lack of funding, limitation on hours of transit services, and limitations of areas where transit services can access between county lines.

There is a definite need for the creation of one-point-of-contact for people to access all transportation services available, whether to public, private, or volunteer transit providers. There also appears to be a great need for an extension in hours and service areas. The public needs to become more educated about the transportation services available so that they are utilized more. Though volunteer and para transit services addresses many community needs, they still have their limitations. For example it is difficult to utilize volunteer services unless one qualifies and can schedule at least 24 hours ahead of time. Para-transit services tend to stay in local area and cannot transport people to large inter-regional areas such as Minneapolis/St. Paul or Rochester.

The results of the survey found that the current transportation system is fragmented. Currently, there is some minor coordination between the various public, private, and volunteer agencies that provide

transportation services. The limited coordination especially affects vulnerable adults, immigrants, the elderly, and the working poor in rural parts of Region Nine without access to para-transit or volunteer services. It is believed that coordination will be vital in providing adequate transit resources for the public and marginalized populations. Region Nine Development Commission believes that by pooling resources, transportation providers can come up with solutions to all these issues as well as making the system better utilized and easier for the average citizen to navigate.

Several strategies for coordination were identified throughout the planning process and were prioritized by plan participants. Those key strategies are:

1. **Implementation of a mobility management program.** *This primarily follows plans and studies Mn/DOT has conducted on mobility management. Mobility management serves as a clearinghouse of information about all aspects of transit options in the service area. The goal of mobility management is to appropriately match rides (based on need) to the most cost-effective provider based on the level of service necessary for that ride.*
2. **Using technology for enhancement of transit activities.** *It is widely accepted that proper implementation of technology can enhance both efficiency and service delivery of transit providers. The plan recommends the procurement and use of modern technologies to bolster the administration and delivery of passenger transportation options.*
3. **Working with funding resources.** *With many different resources funding transportation, there are potential opportunities to be creative with how those funds are expended. This will require careful study and planning, but it is possible that funding streams can be coordinated to be stretched further and maximized.*
4. **Maximizing agency to agency coordination.** *At the core of a large coordination effort are small, micro-level efforts that cumulatively can make the whole all the better. This strategy focuses on interagency agreements and communications. It encourages agencies to look for ways amongst themselves to provide service efficiencies and quality service.*
5. **Adjusting local policy and regulations.** *In some cases, regulations implemented at the local level can be an impediment to transit coordination. This strategy encourages a reevaluation of those regulations to be more flexible for transit coordination.*
6. **Adapting to external factors and limitations.** *At the same time, there are numerous state, and in particular, federal regulations that inhibit*

cross agency coordination of transit services. Local providers, decision-makers, and elected officials should be in contact with federal and state agencies to address the limitations these regulations create and work towards solutions to work around those barriers.

- 7. Others.** *This category looks at things that can be done to maximize efficiency. Three subjects were considered: 1) Using appropriate vehicles for rides; 2) Matching need to resources vs. resources to need; and 3) Developing one system per defined geographic area. These were scored low on the list of recommendations by participants, but are included for consideration.*

To foster implementation of these strategies, the plan recommends the creation of a regional coordination program comprised of board or committee. This committee would represent the nine counties of this region made up of both elected and technical members. It would provide oversight to implementing these strategies and would also be charged with facilitating the development of a mobility management program for the region.

SUMMARY OF COUNTY MEETINGS

Between February and August, Region Nine sponsored a meeting in each of its member counties to allow for an open discussion of transit-specific topics within that county. People representing public transit, volunteer programs, human service agencies, human service transportation providers, veterans, people with disabilities, special-transportation-service providers, and medical facilities in addition to elected officials, transportation users, and other interested parties attended these meetings. These meetings were a forum to share information among transportation stakeholders, learn about county-specific transit options, county-specific transit needs, and discuss options for improving regional transit. This report is a brief summary of these meetings and is intended to identify topics and comments discussed.

While there is always room for improvement in any endeavor, people were generally happy with the transit services being provided in the regional counties. However, there were comments on how the system could be improved. Among those, costs were identified as a factor that needs to be addressed. First, many who use transit are on fixed incomes or do not have the resources to provide their own transportation. It was noted that transportation options should be affordable for these people. Second, providing transportation services can be very costly to organizations. Comments were made about how the most affordable, yet most appropriate transportation options should be used and ways to increase efficiency should be explored.

The second prominent topic hovered around service hours. In most cases, there was a desire for increased service hours. This desire focused on providing transportation late enough in the evening to allow those at medical appointments a ride home, second-shift employees a way to work, and others to take care of their social needs. Stress was placed on providing transportation on the weekends which would allow people to conduct necessary shopping, attend religious services, and attend social activities.

The third topic was about transportation that went beyond county boundaries. In many cases, transportation does go beyond county lines, however, it does have constraints. For example, some public transit systems only provide inter-county transportation on a limited basis, while others do not provide transportation outside of the county. While STS providers or volunteer drivers can provide this longer trip travel, it may not be the most cost-effective or appropriate ride.

Routine medical appointments also surfaced regularly as a priority topic. Trips for dialysis and chemotherapy were a concern for many as they are needed often and leave patients very exhausted. It was hoped

that transportation could be tailored to make these trips more cost-effective while providing a level of service that minimized customer discomfort. It was also hoped that transit providers could take on a larger role for these types of trips so there was less dependence on volunteer drivers.

Two final needs emerged: first, any boost in quality would be a benefit to the entire region; people would have less wait time and people would show more desire to use transit. Second, the need for awareness was addressed. In an ideal situation, users would know of available services, public officials would know the true needs and costs associated with transit, and the public as a whole needs to know that transit is a viable and necessary service.

There were several upsides noted as well. Some systems do cross county lines on a regular basis, and one public transit system operates jointly as a two-county system. In some cases, volunteer driver programs have established excellent relationships with transit providers, which has been able to alleviate some of the gaps in service. For example, a volunteer driver may be used when a medical appointment extends beyond the service hours of the transit provider. Taxis have also been used in off-hours and do provide a valuable transportation resource; however, taxis are not always the appropriate option (ADA needs) and tend to cost more than other transportation options.

Two other topics are worth noting. First, there are private companies that provide long distance travel. One medical system has a van that transports its clients from a local clinic to clinics in the metro area. Another individual started a shuttle service that transports people to the Twin Cities from the New Ulm area. Second, the various providers have worked together to provide referrals to other agencies when that agency would be the most appropriate option, or when it is not possible for the first agency to provide the ride.

In addition to doing some things well, it seemed that things were being implemented that only enhance the level of transportation services provided. Some systems were trying to implement advanced technology, while other used two-way radios and cellular phones. Other systems instituted pre-paid vouchers which helped to streamline the payment process. Communication among systems is taking place and some potential partnerships have been identified. In one county, different terminology was used to reduce the stigma associated with ADA equipment. Some systems have considered using a "companion" rider which would help acclimate people to transit and make it more appealing. More than one system showed a willingness to expand should the various barriers (ie. local policies) be reevaluated. Finally, there was a system that provided a fixed route between two cities. This created a

dependable and visible route that made using and planning for trips easier.

Finally, some suggestions were made to enhance human service transportation. They are as follows:

- Try working with clinics to construct a hospitality room that would provide a comfortable waiting area when there is a lag between a medical appointment ends and when transportation arrives.
- More marketing and information dissemination needs to take place. There should be a central location where people can get information of transportation options that are available to them.
- Examine relationships with churches that would help bring transportation service to Sundays and give people a reliable option to attend church.
- Continually look for new and innovative options to better current service.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Region Nine is a nine county area with roughly 10,000 miles and 200,000 citizens. The needs assessment was done to determine how current transportation affects the livability of the residents of Region Nine. In July of 2006, surveys were sent out to all of the main public, private, and volunteer transportation providers currently operating within Region nine. Region Nine development Commission received back 76 surveys and the results were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed in October of 2006.

The current transportation system is fragmented because many agencies are providing their own transportation services. This fragmentation means that while some residents have adequate transportation provisions, there are limitation for other citizens. According to the results of the survey Region Nine Development Commission distributed, it was unanimously agreed upon that three key factors prohibited marginalized citizens from adequate transportation services. These three key factors are:

1. Federal/state funding deficits
2. Time limitations of transportation services
3. Public/private transit route limitations (Many services do not extend into areas where people say they need to go)

For the majority of public transportation providers in Region Nine, the current bus schedule starts at approximately 8AM and ends at approximately 5:00 PM. Many survey respondents felt that there is a need for extended service coverage and hours of transportation services throughout the region. In different counties, there are many locations that the residents wish were more accessible, whether through public, private, or volunteer services. It is often costly for many people to travel before and after hours to areas that bus routes don't serve.

At this time, mainly volunteer agencies provide transportation to medical appointments for disabled, elderly, and low-income residents. Many handicapped, elderly, or low income citizens would also like to utilize public transportation and volunteer agencies to get to job interviews, work in the early morning or late afternoon, the ability to carry out practical activities such as social activities, run important errands, and see family. There is also a need for affordable transportation for the frail and wheelchair bound in rural, remote counties outside of urban areas or counties without volunteer or Para transit services.

There is a definite need for transportation coordination in especially in rural counties with small communities because many elderly,

handicapped, and disabled people in rural areas are dependent on family and friends to help with transportation services.

Inter-agency coordination would make it possible to establish a local point of contact for all transportation services. Inter-agency collaboration would address the medical and social needs of vulnerable adults and/or low-income residents. Some issues encountered by nursing homes were that great amount staff hours are expended scheduling and rescheduling physician appointments, and it is hard to confirm appointments with physicians due to limitations in transit. Coordinating the timing of medical appointments with public and volunteer transit schedules can be difficult for different agencies but is a worthwhile effort.

Presently, when public transportation is unavailable, there are primarily two options. One is to utilize volunteer services. The problem is their limited accessibility for the handicapped and in many cases there are eligibility requirements to qualify for the program.

The second option is to use the town taxi or private services, which can get costly. A taxi may cost \$5.00 for a short trip while STS services can cost in excess of \$25.00 for the same trip if the individual does not have medical insurance to cover expenses. Even though taxis are not expensive for local transportation, long distance trips can get quite costly. Since the majority of taxis are not adequately equipped for the needs of wheelchair bound clients, if necessary, a private service with wheelchair accessible vehicles must then be used.

Region Nine Development Commission did a quantitative analysis of the type of agencies that provide transportation to the elderly, handicapped or low-income people. It was found that out of a total of 74 completed surveys that 40 % were private non-profit agencies, 27 % were public agencies, 16.2 % private for-profit agencies, 6.8 % fit into the other category, while there was a no response rate of 9.6 %. In effect the results show that the majority, or 40 % of transportation services are provided by private, non-profit agencies based on the statistical scores in regards to the amount of surveys that were received back. Many of the private, non-profit respondents to the survey stated that funding was their greatest need.

The responses to the question, "Are there people who cannot access your services due to lack of available resources resulted in 55.4 % replying "No", 29.7 % replying "Yes", 12.2 % replying with "No Response", while 2.7 % said "Possibly." This means that although there are still other needs, many needs are being met.

A list of issues was given to the various agencies to enumerate in order of significance and priority from one to four. The issues listed were whether there was "no transportation services available", "existing transportation providers are too costly", "existing transportation services don't operate the same hours as when people need transportation", or

that "existing transportation services don't go to locations where needed services are located".

The quantitative analysis of the survey reveals that 48.6 % of 74 respondents felt that restructuring the hours of operation should be the top priority of public transportation services. It was found that 44.6% of the respondents felt that limited amount of routes and service of extensive public transportation service to many areas should a close second priority. The third priority for 32.4% of respondents was the cost of transportation providers, and 21.6% of 74 respondents felt lack of service was a priority, this making it fourth on the scale of priorities. The results of the survey were also stated that 77% of the agencies served people who were transportation disadvantaged.

Of the 77% of the agencies that served the needs of the transportation disadvantaged, 68.9% served those with cognitive impairments, 41.9% served those with language needs, 67.6 % served people who had physical disabilities, 56.8% served those with hearing impairments, 44.6% served those with little experience riding public transportation, 60.8% of riders had limited dexterity, while 58.1 of riders had limited endurance. The results of the survey also showed that cumulatively, 88.7% of the riders using transportation services were designated in the low-income socio-economic bracket.

The survey results show that cumulatively, 44.6% of the 74 agencies that responded use their personal vehicles for transportation, while 45.9% operate or lease vehicles to transport people. Cumulatively 70% of the transportation providers in Region Nine are private, non-profit agencies with 35.1% of staff using their personal vehicles, though 55.4% do not. Though cumulatively 45.9% of other agencies lease or operate their own vehicle, 35.1% out of the 74 respondents operate or lease a vehicle, while 54.1 do not.

The survey inquired about what type of enhancements would be necessary to improve the coordination of transportation in the Region Nine service area. The result showed that cumulatively 37.8% of agencies felt that collaboration is a necessary enhancement while 50% of respondents felt that new agency policies would improve collaboration efforts. It was found that 48.6% of respondents felt that inter-agency agreements would be a great enhancement to coordination. It was also found that 43.2% of agencies responded felt that funding would definitely improve coordination.

The analysis of the days of the week found that all were important times for travel with 58.1% of respondents stating that service was needed on Monday, 62.2% on Tuesday, 27.0% on Wednesday, 27.0% on Thursday, 28.4% on Friday, while 23.0% needed transportation services on Saturday.

A public transit provider suggested that perhaps 5310 agencies should start paying public transit for means of transportation instead of

taking on the burden of doing it on their own. This has led to a great fragmentation of transportation services. The public transit provider also suggested that organizations should be open to the proposal of paying directly to public transit services. Another optional enhancement would be to provide education to the public as to increase public awareness of transit services.

Another public transit provider stated that it should be a simpler process to go beyond borders as needed without amending agreements and management plans as to be able to assist people as needed. Many respondents felt additional funding was needed to coordinate transit and human service transportation in their service area with multiple counties.

The goal of the coordination plan is to find a cost-effective and efficient way to provide transportation services to the people who need them the most. The coordination plan attempts to find solutions to transporting and providing A.D.A. accessible vehicles to people who are wheelchair bound. By identifying problem areas and streamlining the system, the coordination plan attempts to reach those people who are in desperate need of affordable transit and outside the geographical jurisdiction of programs that are already in existence.

A coordination plan would fulfill the need for transportation to and from non-urbanized areas and remote, rural communities. This would help people without means of transportation who desperately need to get to medical facilities in regional centers, run errands, social activities, and other personal necessities. Many agencies have clients who have specialized needs that it make it difficult for them to utilize public transit services and coordination would engender cooperation among the various agencies with resources to aid them, such as providing escorts and interpreters.

Region nine has a mounting Somali and Hispanic population who may lack English-language skills and are possibly not completely culturally assimilated. Immigrant populations would benefit from having interpreters and escorts available as a resource to access transportation services. The general public also needs more education about the transportation services available to them. By coordinating the current system, new solutions will develop the existing transportation system into a structure that is easier to navigate and utilize.

The working poor are a population that has many issues that are complex and difficult for the current private, public, and Para-transit transportation system to resolve. Generally, many of people who fall into this classification are single mothers, recent émigrés, young married adults with families to support, elderly people and poor minorities. This population has its own specialized needs, such as financial assistance for transit and/or free or affordable transportation to and from jobs with non-traditional schedules. There is also a need for funding to establish a

regional Transportation Coordination Manager position to facilitate the process between transportation providers and human service agencies if and when a coordination plan is put into place

Adequate funding and cooperation among current private, public, and para-transit entities could overcome the problems facing vulnerable residents and increase their quality of life in Region Nine. Transit providers already have made it their goal to come up with strategies to help both the general public and people in need, but more can be done. Additional coordination and cooperation among all transportation providers will make it possible to pool resources and engender a better response to the complex needs of residents in Region Nine.

Coordination will also help the economy of Region Nine because it engenders further economic opportunities by providing affordable and accessible transit resources for those who seek employment in other towns and counties. It will also make it more conducive for people to shop in places outside towns within the immediate vicinity. Current transportation providers do a good job with the fragmented system that exists, but the quality of transit can only become better by pooling existing resources.

Region nine should also explore Highway 14 development and coordination with local shuttle services to provide regular corridor service to major inter-regional centers. Currently there is no public transit to get to the Minneapolis/St. Paul, or other inter-regional centers. Most people must travel by car pay private charters companies' fees in excess of \$27.00 to get to the airport, or \$17.00 and above if they wish to visit the cities for anything other than medical reasons. Access is also limited for travel to other large regional centers, such as Rochester. Making these long distance trips by car can be expensive and difficult to do. It is difficult for public, private, and volunteer services to provide transportation outside their county lines. At times public transit does not provide enough service to meet demand.

There is a need for coordination among transit entities to get students to schools that do not provide busses (charter schools). It is difficult for some residents in areas like Fairmont and Sleepy Eye to enroll their school children in schools outside the immediate district unless they own a vehicle and have the time, due to the limitations of public transportation. Also there needs to be transportation for school children outside of school days so they have the opportunity to perform extra-curricular activities.

There is a need to upgrade the technology used for transportation services to improve communication on all fronts. Adequate funding is needed to improve technology as to effectively serve and coordinate transportation for the general public as well as people with exceptional needs. Coordination will help in locating the right vehicles for each given situation.

Public awareness needs to raise about the transportation options that are available to them. This can be done in the form of brochures to assist in educating people and possibly increase the utilization of transportation options that are already available. There is a need for affordable ADA approved 24-hour transportation service for the general public as well as marginalized populations that is flexible enough to travel throughout the region and is not limited to medical appointments. Incentives could be given to private organizations so that they will want to be part of the coordination project. Incentives could also be created to attract more volunteers to non-profit organizations so that there is a large pool of applicants to choose from. Many of these goals can be attained if the state, county, and city systems work collectively on creating workable strategies to achieve these ends.

Because the Mankato area, as the regional urban core, functions differently, it was examined separately in this section. What follows is more specific to Mankato, but still applies to the entire region. There is a general need for coordination with all transit providers. The majority of survey respondents also believe that coordination would make existing transportation services more cost effective and better utilized. It was suggested that coordination with other agencies with wheelchair accessible vehicles that are not being utilized would be of great assistance. One of the responding agencies stated that it would be helpful to create a local point of contact within collaborative transit planning for people living in rural areas outside transit routes. Also suggested was that existing policies could be clarified so that transit providers could navigate the current transit system more successfully. Also some respondents suggested that public agencies should collaborate with medical and transportation providers and pool resources to arrange rides for those in need.

Numerous disabled, elderly, and/or low-income residents depend on volunteer services such as VINE (Faith In Action) or Para transit services such as the mobility bus for their transportation needs, but even these excellent services have their limitations. For instance, though the volunteer agency VINE (Faith In Action) does assist in addressing many of the transportation needs of low income, elderly, and handicapped people who are ambulatory, it can not serve people under the age of 60 unless they have adequate insurance or can personally reimburse the agency for accrued mileage. Survey respondents related that wheelchair-bound people especially felt alone and isolated. Many wheelchair bound clients have to pay private services for transportation, which can be costly if they do not have adequate insurance. This is why many wheelchair-bound people feel neglected by the current transportation structure. However, many providers are ADA-compliant can provide service to those in

wheelchairs. It is important that those who use wheelchairs are aware of all their transportation options.

Many volunteers in these agencies use their own vehicles, which typically are not adequately equipped to transport wheelchair bound or severely handicapped people unless they are already ambulatory and VINE does always have the means to provide escorts. Additionally, volunteers do not have the legal qualifications to handle frail elderly and/or handicapped people and can not transfer people from wheelchairs, sit them down or help them up. Volunteer organizations stated that the pool of available volunteers is diminishing and this was becoming a big obstacle for providing adequate transportation.

Though the establishment of Para-transit services attempts to resolve the numerous issues facing vulnerable adults in rural areas, some adult care and senior facility agencies responded that many clients still have spiritual and social needs that are not being addressed. Also, it was noted that it is difficult to obtain affordable transit from rural communities to larger clinics in regional areas, such as Albert Lea Medical Center or to Immanuel St. Joseph Hospital in Mankato. Representatives working in assisted living facilities related that volunteer services such as VINE (Faith In Action) were not always reliable due to the fact that unless given 24-48 hours of notice, which is not always a possibility, people cannot rely on the ability to utilize their services.

ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

SAFTEA-LU required that locally developed coordination plans conduct an assessment of public transit systems in the region. Under guidance from Mn/DOT, three criteria were used in evaluation: span of service availability, response time, and access to a regional trade center. Additionally, Mn/DOT asked planners to compare actual service against desired service and to quantify that gap in terms additional service hours needed.

Based on market research conducted by Mn/DOT consumers and public officials had expectations of service being provided from 6am to 10pm daily (or 16 hours per day), a service responsiveness of same-day service and up to one-half hour, and access to a level three regional trade center five days per week. A level of service (LOS) score was used to evaluate systems in the region. Rubrics for these assessments factors were developed by Mn/DOT and are shown here:

SPAN OF SERVICE							
Days per Week							
Hours per Day	6 or 7	5	3 or 4	2	1	0.5	<.5
16 +	LOS 1	LOS 2	LOS 4	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
12.0-15.9	LOS 2	LOS 3	LOS 4	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
9.0-11.9	LOS 3	LOS 4	LOS 4	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
4.0-8.9	LOS 5	LOS 5	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 7	LOS 8
less than 4.0	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8	LOS 8	LOS 8

RESPONSE TIME		
Response Time	Comments	LOS Score
Up to 1/2 Hour	Very prompt response	1
1/2 hour to 2 hours	Prompt response	2
more than 2 hours, but same day	Requires planning, but still same day	3
24 hours (next day)	Requires some advanced planning	4
48 hours	Requires more advanced planning	5
48 hours to one week	Requires advanced planning	6
1 week to 2 weeks	Requires considerable advanced planning	7
more than 2 weeks	Requires significant advanced planning	8

ACCESS TO REGIONAL TRADE CENTER

It is assumed that county transit systems with a regional trade center will have five-day access.
St. Peter and Mankato systems operate entirely within a regional trade center.
Watonwan County and City of Le Sueur have occasional access to regional trade centers.

Using these criteria, each system is scored in the chart below. While all systems request a 24-hour booking time, their actual response time is quicker and is also included in this chart. The last two columns estimate the number of additional service hours which would be needed to bring level of service to a LOS 1. It should be noted that Mn/DOT considers a LOS 3 to be a reasonable expectation of consumers. As such, the number of additional service hours needed would drop significantly.

REPORT CARD FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEMS

Provider	Span of Service	Response Time (preferred)	Response Time Typical~	Regional Trade Center	Hours needed for LOS 1	
					Weekly	Yearly
Brown County Heartland Express	8.5	24	6	High Access	81	4212
	LOS 4	LOS 4	LOS 4			
Mankato Heartland Express*	8.5	24	4	High Access	69	3588
	LOS 3	LOS 4	LOS 3			
Faribault County Heartland Express	9	24	6	Little Access	78	4056
	LOS 4	LOS 4	LOS 4			
Trailblazer Transit	9	24	4	High Access	66	3432
	LOS 4	LOS 4	LOS 3			
Martin County Express	12	24	2	High Access	36	1872
	LOS 2	LOS 4	LOS 2			
St. Peter Transit**	13	24	0	High Access	18	936
	LOS 2	LOS 4	LOS 1			
Take Me There (Watonwan County)	8.5	24	2	Some Access	57	2964
	LOS 5	LOS 4	LOS 2			
Le Sueur Heartland Express	9.5	24	2	Some Access	51	2652
	LOS 4	LOS 4	LOS 2			

*Operates for 7.5 hours on Saturday reducing total yearly gap to 3198 hours

**Operates for 7 hours on Saturday reducing total yearly gap to 572 hours

~Systems were asked to score themselves. Hours listed were arbitrarily entered by Region Nine for estimating.

The three systems that do not have high access to a defined level 3 trade center do have access to cities that have many of the components of a regional trade center 3.

This next section will briefly discuss public transit in Region Nine counties. All public transit systems operate at least from 8am to 4:30pm five days a week and have a service response rate of 24 hours or other.

Blue Earth – Mankato Heartland Express operates within the city of Mankato and provides 10 hours of service with a response rate typically less than one day and continuous access to a regional trade center. Greater Blue Earth County does not have public transit, and thus must rely

on other modes of passenger transportation to meet its transportation needs.

Brown – Is served by Heartland Express and is close to meeting the LOS 3 standard in the service span and response time categories. County residents have significant access to New Ulm (a level 3 trade center) and some access to Mankato (a level 2 trade center).

Faribault – Heartland Express operates a county-wide system in Faribault County. The system does not travel outside county boundaries and does not have access to a trade center. However, there is access to Blue Earth which has many of the amenities of regional trade center 3; ie, shopping and medical facilities.

Le Sueur – Le Sueur express serves the City of Le Sueur. The city does have some features of a regional trade center, and occasionally makes trips to regional trade centers Mankato and St. Peter. There is not county-wide public transit and must rely on other modes of passenger transportation to meet its transportation needs.

Martin – Martin County contracts with Martin County Express to operate transit in the entire county. The county seat of Fairmont allows county residents to a regional trade center on all days of all operations.

Nicollet – St. Peter Transit provides service within the city (which is a defined trade center). The rural parts of the county do not have public transit and must rely on other modes of passenger transportation to meet its transportation needs.

Sibley – Trailblazer Transit operates a dual-county system serving all of Sibley County. This structure enables Sibley residents to access the Hutchinson regional center. This system also has a volunteer driver component.

Waseca – No public transit exists in Waseca County. The Minnesota Valley Action Council operates a 5310 program which meets some of the public transit need.


Watonwan – Take Me There Transit operates a county-wide system in Watonwan County. This system frequently transports passengers to the regional centers of Mankato and New Ulm.

Overall, the areas in the service districts of transit systems have access to transit at least 8 hours per day with a response time of less than 24 hours

and access to trade center amenities. While they do fall short of the LOS 1 levels of service, they do provide a significant amount of service through the bulk of daytime hours.

INVENTORY

The following pages provide an inventory of transportation services available in each county. Region Nine also prepared an inventory that provides structured information in a spreadsheet database. This is available in Excel format by clicking this link: [Inventory](#) or visiting http://www.rndc.org/documents/spreadsheetsinventory12_16.xls. It is meant to be a fluid document that can be continuously updated and altered to reflect current transportation options.

 Blue Earth County Transportation Providers			
Public Transit:	City of Mankato Mass Transit Division; Mankato Heartland Express		
Contact Info:	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> 224 Lamm St., Mankato MN 56001 625-RIDE (7433) For more information please call (507)387-8692 </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> http://www.ci.mankato.mn.us/trans/bus/index.php3 Email: pwps@city.mankato.mn.us </td> </tr> </table>	224 Lamm St., Mankato MN 56001 625-RIDE (7433) For more information please call (507)387-8692	http://www.ci.mankato.mn.us/trans/bus/index.php3 Email: pwps@city.mankato.mn.us
224 Lamm St., Mankato MN 56001 625-RIDE (7433) For more information please call (507)387-8692	http://www.ci.mankato.mn.us/trans/bus/index.php3 Email: pwps@city.mankato.mn.us		
Service Area:	City of Mankato		
Days of Service:	<p>Monday – Thursday: 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Friday: 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.</p> <p><u>Stomper X (Night Service) – travels between Minnesota State University and outlying apartment complexes, as well as Walmart, Mankato Heights Plaza, and River Hills Mall</u> Thursday – Saturday: 6:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.</p> <p><u>Late Night Bus – designed to take people from downtown area mall district to Minnesota State University</u> Saturday – Sunday: Midnight – 3:00 a.m.</p> <p>Note: During the summer months the following routes do not operate: 1, 1 short, 6 short, 8, 8 short, Stomper X & the Sober Bus.</p>		
Mobility Bus	<p>The Mobility Bus service is only for customers with disabilities. For more information call 625-RIDE (7433)</p> <p>Days of Service: By Reservation Only, by calling 625-RIDE</p> <p><u>Mobility Bus 1</u> Monday – Friday: 6:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.</p> <p><u>Mobility Bus 2</u> Monday – Friday: 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.</p>		
Fare:	<p>The Mobility Bus Fare is \$2.50 per ride or \$22.50 for a book of 10 tickets.</p> <p>Single Fare.....\$1.25 Nine Tokens.....\$10.00 Token Pouch.....\$20.00 Youth Fare.....\$0.50 with a youth bus pass (available by calling 625-RIDE)</p>		

	<p>30 day Unlimited Pass.....\$35.00 (If you used the bus to go to and from work 21 days a month, the 30 Day Frequent Rider pass would cost only \$0.83 cents per ride. If you ride more often than this, or ride on Saturdays, you will be paying even less per ride.</p>
Bus Route Information:	<p>Website – http://www.ci.mankato.mn.us/trans/bus/routes/search.php For more information, call 625-RIDE</p>
Volunteer Driver Programs:	<p>The Senior Volunteer Transportation Program is a volunteer-based initiative that provides transportation for senior citizens and handicapped persons to doctor appointments, the grocery store, or to meet other various needs. Mileage costs are reimbursed to volunteer drivers.</p> <p>VINE fare is by donation only. VINE runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. VINE serves people 55+ in both Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties</p> <p>Call the Volunteer Interfaith Network Effort (VINE) at (507) 387-1666 for more information.</p> <p>The Mankato Area Living at Home/Block Nurse Program has a volunteer driver component which is responsible for transporting elderly citizens to social events, medical appointments, etc. in the Mankato area. There is no fee for this service, although donations are strongly encouraged.</p> <p>Call the Area Living at Home/Block Nurse Program at (507) 345-2985 for more information.</p>
Veterans:	<p>Contact: Gary Evenson gary.evenson@co.blue-earth.mn.us Blue Earth County Veterans Office; 410 S. 5th St., Mankato, 56001 507-304-4246</p> <p>Website: http://www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/dept/veterans.php#trans</p> <p>The Veterans Service also provides access to medical care at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis through its van transportation program. If you are in need of the transportation service, please call 507-304-4246. The transportation service operates on odd-numbered days of the month (i.e. 1st, 3rd, 5th, etc.)</p>
Other Providers:	<p>Lifeworks – a 5310 Human Services Provider 1804 Commerce Drive North Mankato, MN 56003 507-625-7522</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Special Transportation Services</u></p> <p>Americare Mobility Van (AMV) 703 S. 2nd Street Mankato, MN 56001</p>

507-625-6741

Contact: Mike Pinske – Director

mike@amvan.com

Service: Mon-Fri (24 hrs)

Fare: \$20.00 base + \$3.00 per mi. (within Mankato)

* Fares vary depending on location and one is advised to call to get quote.

Espeland Van Services

44 6th Ave SE

Winnebago, MN 56001

1-800-448-7433

Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon-Sun (24 hrs)

Fare: (MA) \$11.00 base pay + mileage @

– (Private) \$21.00 base pay + mileage @

D.A.C.

MRCI

15 Map Drive

Mankato, MN 56001

507-386-5600

Email: mrci@mrci.info

Nursing Homes

Country Neighbors Home, Inc.

206 3rd Avenue NE, PO Box 365

Mapleton, MN

Traci Birr - Housing Manager

507-524-4990

Elm Homes, CNC

204 2nd St. SW

Waseca, MN

Mavis Klein, Admin. Asst.

507-835-1146

mklein@elmhome.org

Good Samaritan of St. Peter

830 N. Sunrise Drive

St. Peter, MN

Jane Anderson - Housing Manager

507-931-8545

Lake Shore Inn
108 8th St NW
Waseca, MN
Pam Born
507-835-2800



Brown County Transportation Providers

Public Transit:	Brown County Heartland Express	
Contact Info:	1117 Center St., PO Box 788 New Ulm 507-359-6508 Bob Apitz – Coordinator bob.apitz@co.brown.mn.us	Serves General public
Service Area:	Brown County	
Days of Service:	Mon – Fri: 7:15 am – 5 pm Sun: 8 am – 12 pm	
Fare:	Need this info	
Bus Route Information:	5 ADA buses Reserve 24 hrs in advance 507-359-6508	
Volunteer Driver Programs:	Brown County Faith In Action 510 ½ First St. North Ste. A New Ulm Contact: Stacy Daub 507-354-5370 Serves seniors for medical purposes	
Veterans:	Brown County Veterans Hospital 14 S. State St. New Ulm 507-233-6636 Greg Peterson greg.peterson@co.brown.mn.us Serves veterans for medical reason Mon - Fri: 8 am – 5 pm Fare: \$10.00 2 ADA Vans 8 Volunteer drivers Reservations: 24 hrs – 1 week in advance	
Other Providers:	<u>Special Transportation Services</u>	
	Americare Mobility Van (AMV) 703 S. 2 nd Street Mankato, MN 56001 507-625-6741 Contact: Mike Pinske – Director mike@amvan.com Service: Mon-Fri (24 hrs)	

Fare: \$20.00 base + \$3.00 per mi. (within Mankato)

* Fares vary depending on location and one is advised to call to get quote.

Espeland Van Services

44 6th Ave SE

Winnebago, MN 56001

1-800-448-7433

Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon – Sun (24 hrs)

Fare: (MA) \$11.00 – (Private) \$21.00 **1-800-448-7433**

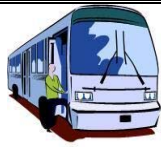
Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon-Sun (24 hrs)

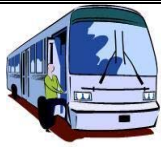
Fare: (MA) \$11.00 base pay + mileage @

– (Private) \$21.00 base pay + mileage @



Faribault County Transportation Providers

Public Transit:	Faribault County Prairie Express	
Contact Info:	415 N. Main, PO Box 130 Blue Earth 507-526-7433 Bonita Hagedorn bonita.hagedorn@co.faribault.mn.us	Serves General public
Service Area:	Need this info	
Days of Service:	M-F: 8 am – 5 pm	
Fare:	Fare: \$2.00	
Bus Route Information:	Reservation: 24 hrs – 1 week 3 busses	
Volunteer Driver Programs:	Interfaith Caregivers-Faith In Action (Faribault) 515 S. Moore St c/o United Hospital District, PO Box 160 Blue Earth 507-526-4684 Jean Bierly (Project Director) invocare@bevcomm.net M-F: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm	
Veterans:	Faribault County Veterans Office 412 N. Nicollet Blue Earth 507-526-6268 Bryan Schultz bryan.schultz@co.faribault.mn.us M-F: 8 am – 12 pm Sat: 1 – 5 pm Fare: \$2.97 - \$5.00	
Other Providers:	<u>Special Transportation Services</u>	
	Americare Mobility Van (AMV) 703 S. 2 nd Street Mankato, MN 56001 507-625-6741 Contact: Mike Pinske – Director mike@amvan.com Service: Mon-Fri (24 hrs) Fare: \$20.00 base + \$3.00 per mi. (within Mankato) * Fares vary depending on location and one is advised to call to get quote.	



Le Sueur County Transportation Providers

Public Transit:	Le Sueur Heartland Express	
Contact Info:	601 South 5 th Street PO Box 176 Le Sueur, MN 56058 507-665-6211 cswanson@cityoflesueur.com	Serves General public
Service Area:	City of Le Sueur	
Days of Service:	M – F: 5:30 am – 4:30 pm	
Fare:	\$1.10-2.25 each way for general public. \$0.75-1.10 each way for seniors	
Bus Route Information:	Call 507-665-6211 2 busses	
Ambulance:	Gold Cross Ambulance 1308 Marsh Street Mankato 507-345-7540 Jill Norman j.norman@mayo.net Runs - 24 hrs/7 days per week	
Volunteer Driver Programs:	Aging Services for Communities Serves seniors 60+ 206 1 st Street North, Suite 3 Montgomery, MN 56069 507-364-5663 agingservices@frontiernet.net Service: Mon-Fri – 8 am – 4:30 pm Fare: Sliding Fee Scale	
Veterans:	Need this info	
Other Providers:	<u>Special Transportation Services</u>	
	Americare Mobility Van (AMV) 703 S. 2 nd Street Mankato, MN 56001 507-625-6741 Contact: Mike Pinske – Director mike@amvan.com Service: Mon-Fri (24 hrs) Fare: \$20.00 base + \$3.00 per mi. (within Mankato) * Fares vary depending on location and one is advised to call to get quote.	

Espeland Van Services

44 6th Ave SE

Winnebago, MN 56001

1-800-448-7433

Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon – Sun (24 hrs)

Fare: (MA) \$11.00 – (Private) \$21.00 **1-800-448-7433**

Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon-Sun (24 hrs)

Fare: (MA) \$11.00 base pay + mileage @

– (Private) \$21.00 base pay + mileage @



Martin County Transportation Providers

Public Transit:	Martin County Express	
Contact Info:	Courthouse Room 100 201 Lake Ave Fairmont 507-235-3126 scott.higgins@co.martin.mn.us	Serves General public
Service Area:	Martin County	
Days of Service:	Mon- Fri 4:15 am – 6:45 pm Sat 6 am – 6 pm Outside Fairmont city limits: Mon-Fri 6 am – 6:30 pm	
Fare:	\$2.25 (Fairmont) \$2.75 (Rural)	
Bus Route Information:	Website- www.co.martin.mn.us 5 busses	
Ambulance:	Gold Cross Ambulance – Mayo Health System 418 North State Street Fairmont 507-238-2123 or 888-509-6296 Fare varies by service need and length of transportation Runs - 24 hrs/7 days per week	
Volunteer Driver Programs:	Fairlakes Taxi Service – Dial A Ride Serves seniors in the Fairmont area 227 S State St Fairmont 507-235-5559 agingservices@frontiernet.net Service: Mon-Fri –5:30 am – 7 pm, Sat 5:30 – 5 pm Fare: Vary with trip	
Veterans:	Martin County Veterans Office 115 W 1st St, Ste 306 Fairmont 507-238-3220 Douglas Landsteiner doug.landsteiner@co.martin.mn.us M – F = 8:30 am – 4:30 pm	
Other Providers:	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Special Transportation Services</u></p> Americare Mobility Van (AMV) 703 S. 2 nd Street Mankato, MN 56001	

507-625-6741

Contact: Mike Pinske – Director

mike@amvan.com

Service: Mon-Fri (24 hrs)

Fare: \$20.00 base + \$3.00 per mi. (within Mankato)

* Fares vary depending on location and one is advised to call to get quote.

Espeland Van Services

Available to those in need of non-emergency wheelchair/ambulatory or stretcher transportation in Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, LeSueur, **Martin**, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan counties.

44 6th Ave SE

Winnebago, MN 56001

1-800-448-7433

Contact: Ben Espeland

despelan@bevcomm.net

Service: Mon – Sun (24 hrs)

Fare: (MA) \$11.00 base pay + mileage @

– (Private) \$21.00 base pay + mileage @

Watonwan County Take Me There

1304 7th Avenue S

St James

Serves Watonwan County plus **Fairmont**, Lake Crystal, Mankato, New Ulm, Sleepy Eye, **Trimont**, and **Truman**

507-375-7385

Mon – Fri 6 am – 5 pm

Fare: In county: \$2.25 each way, Within city limits of St James or Madelia: \$1.25 each way, \$.20/mile outside limits of Watonwan County

American Cancer Society

Available to cancer patients or survivors in Southern Minnesota

882 7th Street NW

Rochester

507-287-2044

Kathy.scheid@cancer.org

Service: Mon-Fri 8 am – 4:30 pm

Fare: None

Human Services of Fairubault & Martin Counties

Transportation funding to MA eligible persons in Martin County

115 West 1st Street

Fairmont

507-238-4757

Service: Mon-Fri 8 am – 5 pm After hours and weekend emergency/crisis assistance through sheriff's office.

Fare: Varies with program



Nicollet County Transportation Providers

Americare Mobility Van (AMV)

703 S. 2nd Street
Mankato, MN 56001

507-625-6741

Mike Pinske – Director
mike@amvan.com

Serves general public and people with disabilities for medical reasons

24/7 365 days a year

Fare: \$26.00 base rate

Reservations: 24-48 hrs

Elm Homes, CNC

204 2nd St. SW
Waseca

507-835-1146

Mavis Klein, Adm. Asst.
mklein@elmhome.org

M-F: 5:30 am – 7:30pm

Nursing home

Fare part of budget for clients living in nursing home

Espeland Van Services

44 6th Ave SE
Winnebago, MN 56001

1-800-448-7433

Contact: Ben Espeland
info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon – Sun (24 hrs)

Good Samaritan of St. Peter

830 N. Sunrise Dr
St. Peter, MN

507-931-8545

Jane Anderson - Housing Manager

Serves seniors and people with disabilities for medical and social service purposes

M – F 1 pm – 7 pm

1 bus

Reserve 24 – 48 hrs in advance: (MA) \$11.00 – (Private) \$21.00

Kato Cab

722 1/2 Riverfront Drive
Mankato

507-388-7433

Paul Hendrycks

Runs 24 hrs a day/ 7 days per week

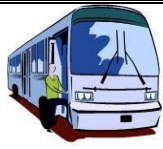
Fare: \$4.25 – \$19.50 (between Mankato & St. Peter); \$1.50 per loaded mile
Mankato Lutheran Homes, Inc. / ECUMEN 718 Mound Ave. Mankato 507-385-4360 Jim Gatchell - Dir. Environmental Svcs jimgatchell@ecumen.org
MBW Company 1220 South Broadway New Ulm 507-354-3808 Sue Wojeick, PD M – S: 6:30 am – 8 pm
MRCI 15 Map Dr., PO Box 328 Mankato 507-386-5670 Lanny Cox - Trans. Coord lcox@mrci.info M – F: 5 am – 5 pm Fare by donation
Nicollet County Public Health 501 S. MN Ave. St. Peter 507-934-0459 Nita Ansen nansen@co.nicollet.mn.us 24 /7
Nicollet County Transportation 501 S. Minnesota Ave. St. Peter 507-964-2676 Sylvie Perron sperron@co.nicollet.mn.us M – F: 8 am – 5pm
Nicollet County Veterans Office 501 S. Minnesota Ave. St. Peter 507-934-0409 Henry Sadler hsadler@co.nicollet.mn.us M – F: 8 am – 5pm Fare: \$10.00
VINE Faith In Action 1618 3rd Avenue Mankato

507-387-1666

Pam Determan – Director

pamdeterman@vinevolunteers.com

M – F: 8 am - 4:30 pm



Sibley County Transportation Providers



Public Transit:	Trailblazer Transit - Sibley County	
Contact Info:	PO Box 88 Gaylord 1-888-743-3828 Gary Ludwig gludwig@trailblazertransit.com	Serves General public
Service Area:	Need this info	
Days of Service:	M – F: 6:30 am – 5:30 pm	
Ambulance:	Gold Cross Ambulance 1308 Marsh Street Mankato 507-345-7540 Jill Norman j.norman@mayo.net Runs - 24 hrs/7 days per week	
Fare:	\$1.50, \$3.00, \$6.00	
Bus Route Information:	Operate 3 busses in Sibley County and 5 in McLeod County	
Volunteer Driver Programs:	Sibley County Faith In Action 105 N.W. 4th Ave, P.O. Box 193 Arlington 507-964-2676 Tami Stadherr - Program Director scfia@frontiernet.net M – F: 8 am – 6 pm	
Veterans:	Need this info	
Other Providers:	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Special Transportation Services</u></p> <p>Americare Mobility Van (AMV) 703 S. 2nd Street Mankato, MN 56001 507-625-6741 Contact: Mike Pinske – Director mike@amvan.com Service: Mon-Fri (24 hrs) Fare: \$20.00 base + \$3.00 per mi. (within Mankato) * Fares vary depending on location and one is advised to call to get quote.</p> <p>Espeland Van Services 44 6th Ave SE</p>	

Winnebago, MN 56001

1-800-448-7433

Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon – Sun (24 hrs)

Fare: (MA) \$11.00 – (Private) \$21.00 **1-800-448-7433**

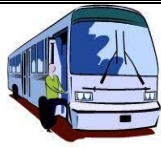
Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon-Sun (24 hrs)

Fare: (MA) \$11.00 base pay + mileage @

– (Private) \$21.00 base pay + mileage @



Waseca County Transportation Providers

5310 – Human Service Transportation Provider	Minnesota Valley Action Council – Waseca Transportation Project 105 3 rd Ave NE Waseca 507-835-4551 or 800-892-8644 schadderon@mvac.mankato.mn.us	Serves all Waseca County residents who do not have access to reliable transportation.
Service Area:	Waseca County	
Days of Service:	M – F: 8 am – 3:30 pm (office) Bus runs additional hours as needed Sunday bus service is provided through funding by a group of seven churches renting service time.	
Fare:	Donations accepted or Medical Assistance billed	
Bus Route Information:	507-835-4551 or 800-892-8644	
Volunteers:	MVAC – Waseca Transportation Project has a van and volunteer drivers which can be utilized on a 24-hour basis.	
Veterans:	Waseca County Veterans Service Office Veterans, widows, orphans of veterans and active military and their dependents 307 N State St Waseca 507-835-0680 Service: Mon-Fri 8 am – 4:30 pm Fare: Free will offering or travel pay	
Other Providers:	<p> Jobs Plus, INC – Operates several busses. 200 16th Avenue Southeast Waseca, MN 56093 507-833-5044 </p> <p> Taxi Connection 511 S State St Waseca, MN 56093 507-833-5588 </p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Special Transportation Services</u></p> <p> Americare Mobility Van (AMV) 703 S. 2nd Street Mankato, MN 56001 507-625-6741 Contact: Mike Pinske – Director mike@amvan.com </p>	

Service: Mon-Fri (24 hrs)

Fare: \$20.00 base + \$3.00 per mi. (within Mankato)

* Fares vary depending on location and one is advised to call to get quote.

Espeland Van Services

44 6th Ave SE

Winnebago, MN 56001

1-800-448-7433

Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon – Sun (24 hrs)

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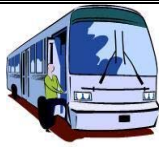
Contact: Ben Espeland

info@yourvan.com

Service: Mon-Sun (24 hrs)

Fare: (MA) \$11.00 base pay + mileage @

– (Private) \$21.00 base pay + mileage @



Watonwan County Transportation Providers

Public Transit:	Take Me There (TMT)
Contact Info:	1304 7th Ave. S. St. James 507-375-7385 Marge Smith marjorie.smith@co.watonwan.mn.us
Service Area:	Watonwan County plus destinations to regional centers
Days of Service:	M – F: 7:30 am – 4 pm
Fare:	Fare: \$1.25 – 2.25
Bus Route Information:	Operates 4 busses daily.
Other Providers:	<p>Espeland Van Services 44 6th Ave SE Winnebago, MN 56001 1-800-448-7433 Contact: Ben Espeland info@yourvan.com Service: Mon – Sun (24 hrs) Fare: (MA) \$11.00 – (Private) \$21.00</p> <p>Habilitative Services, Inc. 945 - 947 Prospect Ave. Windon 507-831-5033 Brenda Meyer - Regional Administrator M – F: 7 am – 10 pm Sat: 8 am – 10 pm Reserve 24 hrs – 1 week</p> <p>Kato Cab 722 1/2 Riverfront Drive Mankato 507-388-7433 Paul Hendrycks Runs 24 hrs a day/ 7 days per week Fare: \$4.25 – \$19.50 (between Mankato & St. Peter); \$1.50 per loaded mile</p> <p>MBW Company 1220 South Broadway New Ulm 507-354-3808 Sue Wojeick, PD</p>

	M – S: 6:30 am – 8 pm
	Progressive Living 105 Creative Ct Mankato 507-388-7560 / (cell) 507-381-4211 Robert Sweeney - owner/director ProgressiveLiving@charter.net M – S: 2 pm – 10 pm
	Senior Citizens Transportation Program 505 First Ave. S. Butterfield 507-956-5815 Glen Linscheid gvtl@rconnect.com 24 hrs/ 7 days a week Fare is by donation only
	St. James Health Services 1207 6th Ave. South, P.O. Box 460 507-375-8654 Lori Sodeman, LSW sodeman.lori@stjmc.org Mon – Sun: 5am - 9pm
	Americare Mobility Van (AMV) 703 S. 2nd Street Mankato, MN 56001 507-625-6741 Mike Pinske – Director mike@amvan.com Serves general public and people with disabilities for medical reasons 24/7 365 days a year Fare: \$26.00 base rate Reservations: 24-48 hrs
	VINE Faith In Action 1618 3rd Avenue Mankato 507-387-1666 Pam Determan – Director pamdeterman@vinevolunteers.com M – F: 8 am - 4:30 pm
	Watonwan County Veterans Office PO Box 518 St. James 507-375-1254 Deb Grote vs o@co.watonwan.mn.us M – F: 8 am – 5pm

	<p>Wellspring Faith In Action 108 8th Street South St. James 507-375-1276 Jolene Fredrickson wellspringfia@co.watonwan.mn.us 24 hrs/7 days a week Fare is by donation only</p>
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GAPS AND DUPLICATION

As one of the major goals of coordination is to reduce duplication in service and fill service gaps, this section briefly discusses gaps and duplication by county. Six general criteria were used for determining where gaps exist. They are access to service between 6am and 10pm, accessing service between 6am and 10pm on providers other than STS, taxi, and volunteer, service from 8am to 5pm for seniors, 8am to 5pm for those with disabilities, 8am to 5pm for human service clients, 6am to 10 pm for low income workers.

In general, the service provided by the network of systems does a relatively good job of meeting these criteria. In fact, service from 6am to 10pm provided by public transit, et cetera was the only category with a significant gap. In almost all cases, volunteer, sts, etc. provide 24 hour service. While considerable, the focus of this analysis is on traditional and affordable methods of transportation. The following pieces highlight gaps in service only.

Blue Earth County

Mankato has access to public transit from 7:30am to 5pm. However, most of the county must rely on other forms of transportation during those hours. Additionally both the city of Mankato and Blue Earth County have a gap of service in hours not considered part of the traditional business day. MRCI provides bus service from 5am to 5pm so this is an opportunity for coordination

Brown County

Heartland Express operates county-wide service from 7:30am to 5:30pm leaving a gap of traditional service of 1.5 hours in the morning and 4.5 in the evening.

Faribault

Prairie Express provides service countywide from 8am to 5pm leaving a gap of service from 6-8am and 5-10pm. Additionally, there is a need for intercounty travel.

Le Sueur

The City of Le Sueur has service from 7am to 4:30pm. The county proper does not have service from 6am to 10pm. Aging Services for Communities provides significant service for seniors, however, there is a need/gap for more service to human service clients and those with low incomes.

Martin County

Martin County's main gap in service for general transportation after 6pm daily.

Nicollet County

St. Peter transit operates within the city from 7am to 8pm leaving just a 3 hour daily gap of service. The county as a whole lacks general service daily from 6am to 10pm. However, most daily transportation needs are provided by other providers and thus could be a focus for coordination.

Sibley County

Trailblazer Transit provides general service from 6:30am to 5:30pm. This leaves an evening gap of 4.5 hours and a morning gap of just 30 minutes.

Waseca County

MVAC-Waseca, through a 5310 bus, provides significant daily service to the residents of Waseca County from 8am to 3:30pm. A gap of service of 8.5 hours per day exists in the county.

Watsonwan County

Take Me There Transit provides daily service from 7:30 to 4pm leaving a gap of 7.5 daily.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP RESULTS

Two stakeholder workshops were held in August 2006 in Mankato and Le Sueur to gather input and advice on developing this plan. The workshop was designed to provide a background on transit coordination, highlight examples of successful coordination efforts, conduct the United We Ride Self-Assessment Tool for Communities, prioritize and categorize passenger transportation needs, brainstorm solutions, develop action steps and identify most important strategies. Each workshop was attended by approximately 25 people representing a variety of transportation interests; however, between the two workshops, only one transportation user was in attendance. This section provides brief results from the workshops. Detailed notes can be viewed in Appendix C.

The United We Ride Tool contained five key elements of coordination efforts:

1. Making Things Happen by Working Together
2. Taking Stock of Community Needs and Moving Forward
3. Putting Customers First
4. Adapting Funding for Greater Mobility
5. Moving People Efficiently

These five were scored by all participants as needing to begin, needing significant action, needing some action, and being done well. This was accomplished through a series of questions for each section, in which participants then identified where they believed coordination efforts in the region stood. The tabulation of results showed general consensus that all five sections were past the "needs to begin" stage. However, no sections scored in the "done well" section either. While individual votes were across the board, votes clustered around "needs some action" for sections 1, 2, and 3, and around "needs significant action" for sections 4, and 5.

The workshop process ultimately led to coordination strategies being identified. In all, 21 strategies were identified. Due to some overlap and redundancy, staff broke those strategies into six broader categories of strategies. Participants were also asked to identify preferred strategies as well as strategies preferred given a financially constrained scenario. With weight given to fiscally constrained preferences, strategies highlighted in the next section are listed in the order they were prioritized.

The input and results from these two workshops serve as the baseline for the strategic sections of this plan. Staff has researched coordination methods, ideas, and success stories that fall in line with what the two

workgroups have recommended. The following sections contain detailed strategies obtained from the workshops, as well as information from external sources meant to supplement identified strategies.

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED STRATEGIES

This list is a concise outline of strategic categories identified at the stakeholder workshops. They are listed from high to low priority as preferred by stakeholders. However, all strategies listed are parts that can and should be implemented.

Mobility Management & Tech. Enhancement

- Mobility Manager/Coordinator
- Clearinghouse of information
- Incorporating Technology
 - Billing
 - Fleet management
 - Dispatch
 - Brokerage

Funding Options, Obstacles, Opportunities

- Tying funding to decision-makers
- Coordinating funding using efficiency best practices
- Dedicated and earmarked funding
- Pursuing new moneys (ie Transportation Amendment Funds)
- Pooling of external funds

Agency to Agency Coordination

- Centralized Management of all systems by county
- Developing protocol for coordination
- Coordination of all inter-county (regional) rides
- Communication among individual agencies

Policy and Local Regulations and Standards

- Utilize local expertise and education
- Create an oversight board of elected officials
- Continue on-going assessment of local practices
- Ensuring quality driver training
- Excellent customer service
- Large-scale marketing and awareness campaign

Adapting to Federal and State Regulations/External Factors

- Waivers of funding requirements and regulations
- Identify all funding streams
- Coordinate funding options when possible
- Communicate with elected officials and state and federal policy makers

Others

- Using appropriate vehicles for rides
- Matching need to resources vs. resources to need
- Developing one system per defined geographic area

DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL COORDINATION PROGRAM

Among the various strategies identified throughout this planning process, the creation of a bona fide coordination framework emerged as a necessary foundation for implementing subsequent coordination strategies and initiatives. This plan recommends the creation of a coordination structure serving all systems and residents in the Region Nine area. There are two key elements to developing this structure:

Creation of a Board or Committee on Transportation Coordination

Various stakeholders in this process have stated that, without at least minimal oversight, it is difficult for independent agencies to justify the effort needed to practice coordination. The notion of a coordination board received strong support from nearly all stakeholders. Therefore, a coordination board or committee should be formed to address all coordination efforts in the nine-county area of Region Nine. The board's sole purpose is to increase coordination.

The key elements of implementing this coordination board are as follows:

1. This board will be created in conjunction with the steering committee identified in this plan, the Mn/DOT Office of Transit, and with input from all transportation agencies in the region.
2. As a formal board, by-laws must be created. The process for writing of these by-laws will be assigned to the board at their first official meeting. These by-laws will need to include a meeting structure, definition of membership, and identification of a chairperson and other leadership positions as necessary.
3. In an effort to maintain visibility, effectiveness, and influence, it is necessary for a majority of the board's membership to be elected officials while having significant representation from providers and stakeholders. This committee may be comprised of 14 to 16 members. Each of the nine counties covered in this plan should have at least one elected official serve on this board. Furthermore, Mn/DOT and DHS should also have representation on this board. Three to five technical experts—representing the various agencies involved with transportation—will also serve on the board. These suggestions are meant to guide the formation of the board; the final composition of the board shall be determined through the by-law development process.
4. Depending on the scope and level of involvement this board chooses to impart in transit, it will likely be necessary for a person or agency to staff this committee. It will be the responsibility of the board to determine if and how it is staffed. The board will also be responsible for obtaining funding necessary to pay staff. Region Nine, under its annual work agreement with Mn/DOT, may be able to use set-aside hours in that agreement to serve as a staff resource.

5. This board will serve as the designated coordination committee for the entire region intended to implement the coordination initiatives and strategies identified by the state and federal departments of transportation, the federal and state departments of human services, and those in this plan. The board will provide a minimal amount of oversight with the coordination efforts in the region, and to the best of its ability, work towards implementing the strategies identified in this plan.
6. The board will be the non-staff entity responsible for oversight of mobility management functions.
7. The board will define—over time—minimum standards required in this region for successful coordination. This includes the following areas:
 - a. Driver Training
 - b. Insurance
 - c. Vehicle Maintenance
 - d. Communication
 - e. Information sharing
8. The minimum standards should be tailored to specific components of transit. Volunteer programs should not be required to meet the same standards as public transit, for example. Furthermore, setting standards are not meant to supercede or further regulate existing regulations. Instead uniform standards are meant to create conditions in which accepted components of coordination can be implemented.
9. The board will define yearly goals and objectives for increasing coordination. Examining best practices and consulting technical members and agencies will provide the board with ideas that are feasible, attainable, and do not overburden existing systems.
10. The board will develop a reporting process to update DHS and Mn/DOT of its coordination process and the level of coordination in the region. At the request of Mn/DOT or DHS, the board will be able to share participation levels in coordination initiatives.
11. Each agency or provider will remain autonomous of the board and can determine its own level of participation in the coordination program. Direct incentives for participation should come from state and federal agencies only.

Mobility Management

Mobility Management, as defined in Mn/DOT's Framework for the Coordination Action Plan in Greater Minnesota, "is a person or organization with in-depth knowledge of all the passenger transportation options within the designated service area...[and] arranges transportation from a menu of services available in the service area, capturing the best fit between the service need and service provider." This plan identifies

mobility management as an important strategy in coordination and will be discussed further in the next section of the plan. However, to the extent funding is available, there has been strong support for implementing mobility management as soon as feasible.

Responsible Parties

The board, mobility managers, Mn/DOT, DHS, service providers, service purchasers, stakeholders, and Region Nine will all be asked to participate in this program.

IMPLEMENTATION

The process for implementing the components in this plan is based on five principles:

1. Mn/Dot has recognized that coordination is a relatively long-term process (10 years)
2. This plan covers a five-year planning horizon for coordination implementation
3. Stakeholders expressed that coordination should be systematically phased in over time
4. This plan should be updated annually
5. Flexibility for board to further define implementation steps

Strategy for Implementation

- Coordination Board/Mobility Managers will be responsible for oversight and implementation of coordination activities
- Implementation will be broken into to yearly goals and objectives, with each year incorporating more coordination
- Strategies will involve both regional (interregional) and local coordination efforts

Year One (2007)

The first year of the coordination program involves the development of the framework that will guide the future of the program. This involves the following steps:

- Formation of Coordination Board
- Development of Mobility Manager Districts and Mobility Managers
- Evaluation and purchasing of necessary technology
- Formal agreements finalized between various agencies and mobility managers
 - Identify scope of participation for each entity
 - Identify expectations of all parties
- Framework developed for inter-agency communication and coordination
- Collection of data which will be used as benchmark for evaluation in latter years

Years Two – Five

In an effort to allow the board flexibility in implementing the strategies outlined in this plan, the board is expected to set its own work plan and agenda for each of the subsequent years. However, the coordination program will be expected to address the list below in their implementation strategies. The list reflects potential prioritized implementation steps that

the coordination board should adopt as yearly goals when developing annual goals for years two through five.

- Achievement of a measurable reduction in service duplication
- Achievement of a measurable reduction of gaps in service
- Increased service hours (this may increase each year)
- Increase of various services provided to geographic regions
- Increased interagency communication
- Developing a singular platform for cross-provider information dissemination
- Use of mapping technology and AVL's
- Pooling of federal and state funds where possible
- Reviewing best practices and implementing new strategies
- Requirement that all intercounty rides be processed through mobility manager
- Development of minimum standards for all providers in the region
 - Driver training
 - Marketing
 - Customer service
 - Maintenance
 - Budgeting
 - Full-cost allocation reports
 - Billing
 - Scheduling
 - Dispatch
- Pooling, where possible, of multiple insurance policies into fewer master policies that cover multiple providers
- Sharing of drivers
- Sharing of back-up vehicles
- Sharing of all vehicles
- Development of a regional or sub-regional maintenance facility
- Development of flex-routes that are part of regional scope

Other Implementation Steps

In addition to the above tasks which will be implemented by the board and mobility manager, the following implementation steps should be taken at the local level:

- Development of county-level coordination efforts
 - Public transit entities should be the lead agency
 - Human service agency should be the lead in counties without a public transit system
 - The board can serve as a facilitator in these instances
- 5-year goal of all transit activities within each county operating and interacting seamlessly together

- Develop purchasing standards which will match appropriate vehicle types with the identified need
- Using the identified needs to most appropriately utilize resources
- Development of a coordination rubric which will determine level of coordination among providers. A baseline for this is provided in the following sections

DEFINING REGIONAL MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

Recent studies and efforts by Mn/DOT have focused on mobility management. Mobility management, as defined by the “Framework for the Coordination Action Plan in Greater Minnesota,” is comprehensive, well-orchestrated “family of services” that meets the mobility needs by taking advantage of the strengths of various service providers that already exist in the community. This plan fully supports the mobility manager framework developed by Mn/DOT.

This plan recommends the prompt creation of a mobility management program in the Region Nine service area. Based on the notion of mobility management, the planning process identified major components essential to the creation of a mobility management program. This section is meant to compliment the planning work already completed by Mn/DOT, but with an emphasis on local inclinations.

Possible Scenarios for Geographic Area Served

Four types of geographic boundaries for districts were discussed:

1. County Mobility Managers
2. Sub-regional Mobility Managers (probably 2, 3, or 4 counties per mobility manager)
3. Regional (9 counties) or District (13 counties)—may include scheduling
4. Regional information and referral with local brokerage, scheduling, billing, etc.

Throughout the workshops, it was emphasized that the scope of coordination and mobility management should extend beyond the county level. On the other hand, stakeholders felt a regional mobility manager might be too large to successfully be implemented in five years, it may strip local systems of their autonomy, and would create an additional layer of oversight that many felt would be burdensome. Preference from workshops and meetings then, was for having sub-regional mobility management composed of two to four counties each with a regional focus on developing a information and referral service.

Preferred Geographic Area of Mobility Management

The following points highlight preferred methods for creating mobility management districts.

- County boundaries will be used to determine Mobility Management boundaries

- Boundaries of districts will be considered fluid to eliminate the notion that boundaries are a barrier. This will allow some areas to be indirectly served by more than one mobility manager
- A minimum of two counties per mobility management district
- Preference for three mobility managers serving three counties each
- City of Mankato, as the primary intercounty destination, may be considered part of all mobility management districts
- All mobility management entities will be required to interact and communicate with each other seamlessly:
 - Standardized administrative procedures
 - Standardized reporting techniques
 - Simple forum for communication
 - Use of technology
 - Interactive web-based interfaces
- Policy board and Mn/DOT OT will determine mobility management districts
- One mobility management district will be responsible for managing an information database for the entire region.

Oversight of Mobility Management

- The board/committee composed primarily of elected officials with technical experts will oversee functions of the mobility management program. There are two options:
 - Regional or district board to oversee all mobility management activities in the defined area, or
 - Individual subcommittees for each mobility management program.
- Having one regional board oversee all functions is the preferred method as it will lead to more congruency and seamlessness.
- Board will be responsible for the following activities:
 - General oversight of mobility management activities
 - Defining specific tasks of the management program
 - Directing funds, receiving funds, applying for funds
 - Advocacy for coordination
 - Assessment of best practices

Responsibilities of Mobility Manager

The mobility manager will be defined as an entity responsible for mobility management functions. This entity can be a stand-alone organization, part of a transit-related organization, or an individual person. The mobility manager will be responsible for the following activities:

- Maintaining and updating exhaustive database of providers and service inventory with the following elements:
 - Geographic service areas

- Hours of various providers
- Various funding streams of providers
- Various funding and reimbursement structures of agencies
- Eligibility requirements
- Allowable destinations—especially destinations outside service area
- Driver qualifications
- Insurance obstacles
- Others as relevant
- Providing information services (hotline).
- Brokering unmet trip requests
- Enhancing relationships with destination entities (ie. clinics, nutrition sites, shopping)
- Monitoring federal and state policy
- Establishing minimum standards for the coordinated network in conjunction with the board, ie:
 - Insurance
 - Driver Training
 - Vehicle Maintenance
- Securing funding for administration of the MM program
- Continuing to further coordination partnerships
- Implementing, where possible, other strategies documented in this plan

Participation in the Mobility Management Program

- Participation is voluntary, not mandatory
- Coordination Board will develop definitions to determine level of coordination among participants (suggestions will be included in this plan)
- Coordination should aim to reduce duplication, reduce gaps, enhance existing service delivery, and provide expanded services. Participation will require efforts resulting in tangible success in these areas
- Requirements of coordination will be phased in over a period of years. Participants are not expected to meet all requirements of coordination in a short period of time. However, participating transit agencies will be persuaded to meet annual coordination goals
- Programs receiving new funding should be encouraged to have accelerated coordinated efforts as part their start-up plans.

Mobility Management Funding

- Funding should come Mn/DOT defined sources and Mn/DOT should serve as the primary fiscal agent

- Local funding resources should only be used to supplement the program
- Funding for all programs serving the defined geographic area should be evaluated by the mobility management program for commonalities—this may lend itself to the pooling of certain pots of money to reduce fragmentation

Barriers to Coordination

- The Mobility Manager will be in a position to continue identifying local, regulatory, institutional and other barriers to coordination
- Barriers, obstacles, and successes must be documented by the mobility manager
- The Mobility Manager will directly, and indirectly through the board, communicate with the ICTC and other agencies and elected officials to find solutions to identified barriers

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENT

Technology was identified as an important tool in furthering coordination efforts and ranks high in the list of strategies. However, the use of technology can represent a significant cost a significant amount of training time to individual systems. Thus, the use of technology may not be fully executable under fiscally constrained conditions. However, technology should be incorporated into all systems to the level feasible and affordable for the system. Additionally, the use of technology will be a necessary component of a successful mobility management program. Some smaller providers can bundle technology, or use the web to utilize the mobility manager's interface.

Integrating technology falls into three broad categories: communication, reducing complexity, and enhancement functions.

Enhancing Communication

A successful communication model requires equipment enabling improved communication between agencies and drivers. This includes both voice communication as well data transmission. These needs can be met through:

- Use of cell phones
- Use of two-way radios or C/B system
- Integration of mobile data terminals
- Installation of automatic vehicle locators

Furthermore, a platform, venue, or framework for interagency communication is necessary.

- Creation of listservs will result in communication that reaches into many transit circles
- Use of an alert system. This can be in the form an email alert or through the creation of an alert software
- Use of web-based communication. This will require compatible interfaces that allow systems to communicate with each other and the mobility manager through the web. It will also require a standard of information dissemination
- Mapping software will be necessary for visualization of transit options. Couple with vehicle location devices and shared with all systems, this will provide a quick and simple method for pairing rides
- Sharing of information with mobility manager. Although information may or may not be used, sharing significant amounts of information with a mobility manager will allow the manager to further identify barriers and prospects in coordination

Software for Complex Tasks

The use of software can dramatically reduce the burden placed on transit staff and can lead to opportunities for enhancing service through coordination. This plan recommends, when possible, the purchasing of software to manage daily transit functions. Software would be used to:

- Schedule trips
- Coordinate rides
- Broker rides
- Handle billing functions
- Automatic communication with other systems
- Dispatch trips
- More effectively create daily itineraries
- Software can/will reduce administrative burdens

Other Technology Aspects

- Mobility manager will be able to interact electronically with all systems
- Mapping technologies will allow spatial visualization and decision-making
- Technology will automatically store and process client information
- Fares could be paid electronically through electronic systems or swipe cards
 - This could also lend itself to prepayment transferable to all providers for payment
- Generation of automatic reports:
 - Number and type of trips
 - Billing
- Creating better arrangements with destination agencies. I.e Clinics
- Total cost and cost-benefit analysis will determine level of technological integration and success
- A subcommittee should be formed at the discretion of the board and in partnership with Mn/DOT to study the procurement of technological assets

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

While mobility management and technology enhancement were given strong support and are emphasized in this plan, other strategies must also be implemented. Strategies developed at the stakeholder workshop also included acclimating to funding options, direct agency to agency coordination, adjusting local policies and regulations, adapting to external conditions, and others. This section explains these strategies.

Funding Options, Obstacles, and Opportunities

The substrategies and actions named in this category focus on utilizing financial resources to their fullest extent. These strategies do not necessarily contain implementation guides as it is the responsibility of the entities involved for determining how to implement them within their respective program.

STRATEGY ONE: Tying funding to users who can then make decisions on their own transportation options. More specifically, passengers who receive funding for their transportation needs or who have their transportation bills paid by federal, state, and local agencies should have influence on where that money is spent. This will put pressure on users to make efficient use of transit dollars and make them more active in the transit preparation process. Further, when dollars per person are viewed as a finite sum, users are more likely to find the cheapest form of transportation that meets their needs.

STRATEGY TWO: Coordinating funding using efficiency best practices. With the many federal, state, local, and charitable resources funding passenger transportation, regulations and stipulations attached to each resource make it difficult to work with those funds. By examining the funds in detail and looking at best practices, it may be possible to find ways to use multiple pots of money per ride.

STRATEGY THREE: Pursuing new monies. While money allocated through programs is usually fixed, there are opportunities to access other funds. When those opportunities arise, it is important that they be pursued. In particular, the November 2006 passage of the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax amendment will make additional money available for transit. In this case, however, it is sustaining money that should be pursued; temporary funds can be spent quickly and inaccurately alter expectations of the transportation network.

STRATEGY FOUR: Pooling of external funds. Even though there are many regulations attached to funding resources, similarities exist which make it

possible for at least minimal pooling of funds to take place. Commonalities of resources should be examined in conjunction with the type of transportation expected from those funds. It is likely that transportation can be provided from a pool of funds without violating the stipulations within each individual fund. In the long run, this can make administration easier and result in more trips generated.

Agency to Agency Coordination

The coordination board and mobility manager are expected to enhance coordination on a macro level within the region. However, individual agencies can and should participate in coordination activities both inclusively, and where necessary, exclusively of the board and mobility manager. This category discusses micro level strategies to be undertaken among individual entities.

STRATEGY ONE: Moving towards a centralized management/protocol of all transportation providers by county. Each county has several options for transportation ranging from public transit and taxi service, to human service transportation, special transportation service providers, and volunteer driver programs. All services within each county should be part of a framework that allows county residents to work seamlessly with all systems. This is similar to mobility management on a county-by-level basis.

STRATEGY TWO: Coordination of all inter-county trips. Any trip that crosses a county line should be part of a coordinated effort and must be communicated with all pertinent entities in the adjacent county.

STRATEGY THREE: Communication among individual organizations. Any communication between any two or more agencies that results in better service delivery or efficiencies in providing transportation should be examined. Individual systems working out agreements with medical facilities, or a non-profit program under agreement with a nutrition center to provides are both examples of coordination that has taken place through communication.

Local Policy, Regulations, and Standards

Significant obstacles and barriers to effective transportation and transportation coordination have been identified through various studies, task forces, and other mechanisms for more than two decades. Some barriers are external and not controllable by local decision makers. However, some factors are controllable by local leaders and need to be addressed.

STRATEGY ONE: Utilize local expertise and education. There are many human sources of expertise available at the local level which can provide extensively valuable information to decision makers, both politically and administratively. When that knowledge is fully consulted in the decision-making process, maximum yields will be obtained. Therefore, a strong reliance on local expertise should be integrated into transit decisions.

STRATEGY TWO: Continue an ongoing assessment of local practices, including oversight, administration, and execution of transit activities. All involved parties should continually evaluate what is working, what is not working, and what could be done better, including the political management.

STRATEGY THREE: Ensuring quality driver training and excellent customer service. In many ways this is currently being met, but should continually be a focus.

STRATEGY FOUR: Conduct a large-scale marketing and awareness campaign. The various providers in the region should collectively perform and/or support efforts to make transit options more visible and recruit likely riders. This will likely take place in addition to the individual marketing efforts already underway, and be carried out by the coordination board or the mobility managers.

Adapting to Federal and State Regulations and other External Factors

In order to overcome the external factors that can unduly limit the ability of providers to maximize their service, it is critical that strides be made to adjust to those regulations. The three strategies below are ways to make external stipulations more congruent with local conditions.

STRATEGY ONE: Pursue waivers of funding requirements and regulations.

STRATEGY TWO: Identify and coordinate all funding streams when possible – similar to aforementioned strategies.

STRATEGY THREE: Local officials, leaders, and administrators should continuously be in communication with policy makers and elected officials to highlight the problems encountered with said regulations and present potential alternatives and solutions.

Others

Three other strategies are identified here as noteworthy items.

1. Using appropriate vehicles for rides. This refers to the cost effectiveness of the type of vehicle being used. In some cases, using a car for transportation is a better option than using a bus.
2. Asking how resources can be tailored to meet identified needs instead of matching inelastic resources to needs.
3. Developing one comprehensive system per defined geographic area, essentially having with entity with ownership of all transportation options in that geographic area.

STANDARDIZATION

Standardization is a supplemental and complementary strategy that can make transit in general, and the other strategies in this plan, more effective. This plan recommends implementation of standardization principles to the degree possible for the systems in Region Nine. The following highlights elements of standardization.

One of the hurdles to developing a fully coordinated system is that many systems have adopted their own levels of standards for operation of their transportation systems. This works quite well for each system, but does create some difficulty in trying to join system functions through coordination. For example, elements of coordination would allow the sharing of drivers in the event this was needed. However, with each system having its own driver standards, and liability and other factors tied in, it is quite difficult to ensure that drivers from other systems would meet the training standards and insurance eligibility of the destination agency.

To foster the development of a coordinated network of systems, standardization of certain elements would need to take place. This plan recommends the development of a standardization protocol for systems which will bring unity and consistency to the network of providers.

Through guidance from the coordination board through the coordination program, a series of standards should be developed for the entire network. These standards would be voluntary; however, the goal is such that systems compliant with the regional standards would also be compliant with the standards of other systems. These standards should only be developed in significant consultation with providers.

Some suggestions for standardization are identified below. Certainly, standards will need to be applied differently based on various circumstances and should be addressed by all affected parties prior to implementation.

- Fare Collection
- Fare Cards
- Driver Training
- Volunteer Training
- Cost Allocation
- Billing
- Booking
- Maintenance Standards
- Marketing and Awareness Campaigns

- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Technology
- Communication

When such standards are in place, the following may also be pursued:

- Regional Maintenance Facility
- Sharing of Vehicles or Back-up Vehicles
- Development of intermodal facilities
- Insurance Pooling
- Creation of Transfer Hubs
- Comprehensive Strategic Direction

PARTICIPATION LEVELS

In order to provide Mn/DOT and other funding sources with information on the level of coordination, the board should define a standard for coordination as a benchmark on which to determine the level of coordination being undertaken by each agency. The standards will change yearly as more and more coordination steps are phased in. However, the board should recognize all coordination efforts and not overlook efforts that have been ongoing. This plan recommends five participation tiers:

- No Coordination
- Minimal Coordination – some cross agency communication takes place for improving transportation
- Average Coordination – in addition to communication, agreements or memorandums of understanding are in place to ensure some form of coordination
- High Coordination – agencies have measurable results (defined by the board) of coordination success
- Full engagement – agencies are part of a system in which all rides and ride requests are processed through an established coordination framework

The board should establish, based on yearly goals, the specific criteria for qualifying for each tier.

New 5310, 5316, and 5317 recipients should, in their start-up/management plans, define their operations to be in coordination at Average Coordination or higher.

APPENDIX A – STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

TRANSPORTATION STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONNAIRE

The first page of the questionnaire asks general information regarding your agency/organization. The last two pages are specific to transportation and access to services. If additional space is needed, please use additional pages.

Agency/Organization/Business Information

1 Agency / Organization / Business Name:

2 Street Address:

3 Mailing Address:

4 City, State, Zip Code:

5 Contact Person (Name & Title):

6 Contact Telephone #:

7 FAX Number:

8 E-Mail Address:

9 Is your agency:

Public

Private non-profit

Private for-profit

Other:

10 List each county your agency serves:

11 If agency operates multiple sites, please give locations:

12 What types of services does your agency/org/bus provide?

13 YES

NO

Are there people who cannot access your services due to lack of available transportation?

If yes, please estimate number of people per year

14 Does your agency serve people who are transportation disadvantaged? (Persons classified as "transportation disadvantaged" have personal limitations that may limit one's ability or cause difficulty in getting to places they need or want to go.)

YES

NO

15 Please check all that apply:

Personal Limitations

Description

Cognitive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has a cognitive impairment including, for example, Alzheimer's, developmental disabilities, or other cognitive impairments
Dexterity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has limited use of the hands, making it difficult to handle fares or operate switches, knobs, etc.
Endurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is frail or requires personal assistance including persons with weather sensitivities (heat or cold); may not be able to wait for long periods or travel long distances
Experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is not familiar with public transportation and/or the system
Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is hearing impaired including deaf and hard of hearing
Low income	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is low income
Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	Limited or no English proficiency; may include inability to read
Physical	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has physical disabilities especially related to ambulation
Vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is vision impaired including blind and low vision

Vehicles

16 Does your agency/org/business staff use their own vehicles to transport people NO YES

17 Does your agency operate its own or leased vehicles to transport passengers? YES NO

If answer is NO skip to question 19

18 Please describe the vehicles used to provide transportation. Example 4 vans, three are 4/1 (4 passengers/1 wheelchair) and one is 6/0. See example below.

Vehicle Type	Total Number of Vehicles	Total Ambulatory Capacity	Total Wheelchair/Scooter Capacity	Number of Vehicles Lift/Ramp Equipped	Number of Back-up Vehicles
Example (Vans)	4	18	3	3	0
Sedans/Station Wagons					
Vans/Minivans					
Small Bus < 10 pass.					
Medium Bus 11-20 pass					
Large Bus > 20 pass					

Coordination. (A process through which representatives of different agencies and client groups work together to achieve any one or all of the following goals: more cost-effective service delivery; increased capacity to serve unmet needs; improved quality of service; and, services which are more easily understood and accessed by riders.) Coordination can occur on many levels, examples include: informal information sharing; formal (written) coordination arrangements; the management of transportation services by one agency; or the consolidation of transportation services under one provider agency.

19 What issues, if any, have you encountered in coordinating or attempting to coordinate transportation (e.g., billing and payment, insurance, driver qualifications, etc.)?

20 In your opinion, what do you see as the greatest obstacle(s) to transit and human service transportation coordination in your service area?

21 In your opinion, what enhancements are most needed to improve the coordination of transportation in your service area? (e.g. agency collaboration, agency policies, funding, inter-agency agreements)

22 Is lack of transportation a barrier or obstacle in accessing services for your clients/consumers?

Please check all that apply and rank in priority, with 1 being highest priority.

Priority

- No transportation services available
- Existing transportation providers are too costly
-

Existing transportation services don't operate the same hours as when people need transportation

Existing transportation services don't go to locations where needed services are located

Please identify locations:

Other

Describe other:

Transportation Services

23 What type(s) of transportation services does your agency offer or purchase? (List)

24 What hours and days of the week does your agency provide or purchase transportation services:

	Specify Hours	Need Transportation Services?
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>	

25 What are the special needs of your passengers? Check all that apply:

- Infants (car seat)
- Physical Disability
- Mental Impairments
- Interpreters
- Escorts/Personal Care Attendants
- Other (please identify)

26 Does your agency have paid or volunteer drivers?

Paid Drivers

Number of paid drivers

Volunteer Drivers (mileage reimbursement)*

Number of volunteer drivers

Where do you get your Volunteer Drivers?

27 Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend arranging rides for your clients / consumers / passengers?

If you answered “NO” to question 16 under “Vehicles”, skip to question 36 now.

28 Do you assist passengers to and from your vehicle(s)?

YES

NO

Sometimes (please specify)

29 How far in advance must a passenger schedule their trip?

30 What are the eligibility requirements for using your agency’s transportation services and what is the process to be “qualified”?

31 How many passenger trips do you provide per month?

Passenger Trip – One person making a one-way trip from origin to destination. One round trip equals two passenger trips.

32 How many individual clients do you transport per month?

33 Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend transporting passengers?

34 About how many vehicle miles per month do you operate transporting passengers?

35 What is your agency’s transportation service strength?

Unmet Needs

36 Thinking of the clients or individuals your agency/organization represents, what transportation needs are not being met adequately? (Please be specific and include any special needs ,requirements, destinations or social activities.)

37 Thinking of the clients or individuals your agency/organization provides transportation services to, what transportation needs are you aware that are not met adequately? Please be specific and include any special needs, requirements, destinations or social activities.)

38
What are the barriers / obstacles to meeting those needs? Why are these transportation services not being met?

39 Do you have any other information to share?

APPENDIX B – TRANSIT FORUM SUMMARY

The Region Nine Development Commission hosted a transit coordination forum on April 13 at South Central College in North Mankato. Over 40 people from the nine-county region came to learn, listen, and raise issues regarding transit and transit coordination. Following is a summary of the forum.

Former U.S. Congressman and current Humphrey Institute co-chair Tim Penny gave opening remarks. Penny stressed that rural transit is very different from urban transit and that is important to work on transit as it pertains to rural areas. Penny also noted that creativity will stretch rural transit capabilities to new heights.

Tom Gottfried, representing the Minnesota Department of Transit Office, spoke on the current state of rural transit and the progress made over the last fifteen years. Gottfried commented that he believes the existing capital (busses, etc.) is capable of meeting current needs and demands if coordinated properly. He went on to say that MNDot will be unveiling a new transit coordination in 2007. While MNDot will provide guidance and some financial assistance, it will be a locally driven project requiring local cooperation and planning. One comment was raised suggesting MNDot allow more flexibility in funding capital purchases so local providers can make the most economical decisions based on local demands. Gottfried gave a second presentation in the afternoon discussing the new “Mobility Manager” concept MNDot plans to unveil in 2007. The goal of this project is to create a new method for coordinating rides. As MNDot is still currently drafting the plan, more information will be available in May.

Rolf Hage from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), gave a presentation on the human service sector and its role in transit. As Minnesota’s population becomes increasingly older, those citizens have more need for healthcare and social services. A critical component of delivering quality service is making sure all residents have access to medical and other facilities. Therefore, the DHS places an emphasis on making sure adequate transportation channels are available so everyone can access their needed agencies. DHS works with transit providers and offers financial assistance to make sure the public can get to essential services.

Marcia Highum, Blue Earth County Employment Services, talked about the need for transit services for those in the working sector. Highum pointed to the People to Jobs transportation program which brings people to and from work while also meeting some of the other needs of workers. For

example, the program allows parents to bring their children along, who are then dropped off at day care. Although seat belts had to be reconfigured, she says the program is “just working out fabulously.”

Pam Determan runs VINE Faith-in-Action, a non-profit agency which provides transportation services. Through the Town, Rural, Urban Express (TRUE Transit) program, VINE has developed a large volunteer driver network providing long distance and other types of transportation to users. VINE has also purchased a bus which will allow it to cater to several people at once, and work with the employment sector. Determan’s presentation talked about volunteer driver training, driver requirements, and safety issues.

Kathleen Wilken from Blue Plus discussed the transit needs of her clients. It is important for those who need to get to appointments have adequate transportation to do so. In many cases she is arranging transportation for those clients. Wilken noted that, at times, transportation services are so limited that she’s called a taxi to take a person on a several mile trip, which costs several dollars. Coordination would allow a friendlier, cost-effective way to transport medical patients.

Annette Bair, Physical Development Director at Southwest Regional Development Commission (Region 8), gave a presentation on the work her region has done with transit coordination. She discussed a forum held in Hadley where DHS, managed care, and coordination issues were addressed. The region then hosted county-wide meetings in each regional county. This helped open dialog, created awareness of what is available, fostered new perspectives, and opened the door to possible changes. Those meetings emphasized the need to involve healthcare organizations, identify additional transit services, and make all involved more aware of transit needs and options. Bair closed by using a phone book to show the difficulty in looking up a ride in the directory. She said it was almost impossible and an issue that needs to be addressed.

Brent O’Neil, Transportation Planner from Region Development Commission, told the group that Region Nine is the process of conducting meetings similar to the ones done in Region 8. The object of these meetings is to identify needs, obstacles, and other key components of rural transit. Four key points were raised at the first county meeting. First, high costs were identified as a difficulty both from a provider and user perspective. Second, a need for increased service hours was addressed. Third, was the necessity of volunteer driver programs and the need to fund them adequately. Finally, awareness was identified as a key issue. In an ideal transit system, users would know of available services, public officials

would know the true needs and costs associated with transit, and the public as a whole needs to know that transit is a viable and necessary service.

Jeanette Aguirre of Western Community Action presented her agency's transportation efforts. Through DHS funding through Regions 8 and 9, obstacles to coordinating rides will be identified, a uniform standard of procedures will be fostered, improved technology will be used, and more effort will go towards creating more awareness of transportation services. WCA has developed an email alert system designed to let other providers, users, and agencies know about rides that have been dispatched towards this area. Therefore, if a second ride is needed and corresponds to the first, the rides can be coordinated together resulting in a more economic ride.

Shelly Barnett of Aging Services for Seniors, talked about the new program developed in Le Sueur County in 2004, which replaced the previous system placing the burden on users to arrange a ride. This program has given seniors more independence, reduced worry about transportation and safety, and lessened the number of seniors driving long distances and in stressful situations. Since its inception in October 2004, the number of riders has more than tripled from 112 per month to a peak of 393 one year later. There have been several benefits including reduced costs from using less expensive vehicles, one central phone number for users to call, and transportation availability for people of all ages.

APPENDIX C – TECHNICAL WORKSHOP RESULTS

At the workshops held in August of 2006, participants discussed five components of transit coordination. What respondents felt was being done well, what needed improvements and possible solutions for each topic were identified. The following are notes from those workshops and formed a solid baseline for creation of strategies and action steps.

Making Things Happen by Working Together

What are we doing well?

- *Communicating/showing up for meetings*
- *Including representation from different agencies/organizations*
- *Learning about each other*
- *Very good cost-efficiency for services offered*
- *Each organization/agency doing well individually*
- *Call system – mobility referrals*
- *Rides available to all (Sibley Co) to wherever they want to go*
- *Increase in donations by educating consumers on cost of trip*
- *Lines of communication are open*
- *Volunteer networks good*
- *Contacting and referring agencies*
- *Joint county-system*
- *Combining public transit and volunteers*
- *Coordinating return trips*
- *Talking with family*
- *Utilizing non-traditional modes for low-income riders*

What can be improved?

- *Work better together as a whole*
- *Focus on shared decision-making bodies*
- *Increase communication*
- *The current funding system makes collaborating difficult*
- *No one wants to “open their pockets” for anyone else*
- *STS not affordable*
- *Determining funding streams*
 - *Who gets \$*
 - *How much*
 - *50% state/50% federal*
 - *flat rate*
 - *reimbursement vs. pay as you go*

- *Clinics not involved—they are a key stakeholder*
- *Corridor travel*
- *Talking with other counties/cities*
- *Utilizing existing system and enhancing awareness of resources*
- *Hurdles- transit administrators having trouble finding time to spend on coordination efforts*

Brainstorm Solutions

- *Make funding streams more specific to different areas*
- *Tie funding to decision makers and ensure that no funding occurs without participation*
- *More involvement by doctors/medical facilities in funding and scheduling*
- *Form local committee to focus on coordination*
- *All agencies should be more open and identify funding streams*
- *Escorts for using buses – especially for first-time users (recruit RSVP)*
- *Coordinate better for out-of-service-area rides*
- *Work with clinics to coordinate rides*
- *Develop routes to key locales/cities*
- *Determine funding streams*
- *Create a “coordination committee”*
 - *Needs decision-makers*
 - *Needs to be granted some authority*
- *Develop a coordination framework*
- *Need to educate decision-makers and clinics*
- *Need ongoing pot of money*
- *Educate customer base (need to understand rural public transportation)*
- *Develop plan and take it to those who aren't at the table*
- *Get “freight train” going*
- *Get more needed information*
- *Education about medical times/appointments*
- *Talk to clinics (negotiate both ends—transit and medical)*
- *Distribute flyers*
- *Utilizing expertise*
- *Share information across systems*
- *Focus on data collection, management, and sharing*

Taking Stock of Community Needs and Moving Forward

What are we doing well?

- *Survey by Region Nine and forming a comprehensive service provider list*
- *There is a lot of local interaction already happening*
- *Inventory started*
- *Beginning to identify full cost of transport*
- *Good discussion and communication taking place*
- *Target needs are being met*
- *Identifying new projects and transit potential*
- *Some coordination efforts already taking place*

What can be improved?

- *Sometimes studies don't go beyond people in the programs and they may be put into a different category*
- *There should be more coordination*
- *Additional hours of service and increased availability for special events*
- *More local-level information gathering and research should take place*
- *Technology—a coordination “must”*
- *Duplication can be reduced*
- *Moving forward – just do it*
- *Bringing all destination entities to the table*
- *Utilize churches*
- *Provide vouchers*
- *Helping small slivers of need*
- *Funding information*
- *Awareness that different population groups have different needs*
- *Develop list to document needs and gaps*

Brainstorm Solutions

- *Coordinate between agencies to fill gaps in service (including extended hours, special events, etc.)*
- *Conduct assessment processes at a more local level*
- *Technology to track/identify costs for human services—waivers*
- *Give vouchers to customers*
- *Promote partnerships among all stakeholders*
- *Expand inventory*
- *Destination areas should have drop-off locations*
- *Inventory must be very thorough*
- *Schedules should continue to evolve*

- *Fully utilizing volunteer networks*
- *Reference of vehicles*
- *Technology can be used more*
- *Care managers of DHS working well?—NO*
- *Recruiting large employers*
- *Establish corridor system*

Putting Customers First

What are we doing well?

- *Many programs are in place*
- *Marketing and promotions are good*
- *Programs are in place to move people from point A to point B*
- *Volunteer drivers offer flexibility and door-to-door service*
- *Accommodating customer needs to best ability with resources available*
- *People that most need service get high priority*
- *Available information*
- *"TRUE Transit"*
- *55 Alive instruction*

What can be improved?

- *Increasing client feedback for some agencies*
- *Ensuring friendly drivers, possibly through policy – "One bad experience spoils it"*
- *Promotion of private services*
- *Middle-of-road folks fall between cracks*
- *Full circle of service (ie can use service to get to work, but not to day care)*
- *Current system does not handle last minute and same day trips well*
- *Educate customers*
- *Outreach to culturally diverse groups*
- *Improve number of information*
- *Access to information*
- *Reduce complexity*
- *Increase customer service*
- *Using a coordinator whose connected to customers and knows the system*
- *Work with senior Linkage Line*
- *One-call...Medicare Part D model*

Brainstorm Solutions

- *Ensure driver qualifications and mandate customer service classes*
- *Maintain customer-friendly service*
- *Include formal complaint procedures (possibly through resolutions)*
- *Conduct random surveys of customers to determine satisfaction*
- *Smaller vehicles for smaller rural communities*
- *More resources for accommodating consumer needs*
- *Have a mobility director/manager serve as a clearinghouse of info*

- *Make all relevant information available online*
- *Educate caregivers, customers, and diverse groups*
- *Develop buy-in from employers*
- *Encourage on-site day care facilities*
- *Developing an escort program*
- *Bring in additional funding sources*
- *Use technology*
- *Direct billing to payer*
- *Seek charitable and endowment funding*
- *Oversight committee for transit*

Adapting Funding for Greater Mobility

What are we doing well?

- *5310 program provides a lot of help*
- *Public transit is visible and accountable*
- *MN is still investing dollars*
- *Best practices of existing systems*

What can be improved?

- *Sharing of vehicles between organizations*
- *Financial data tracking, especially across programs*
- *Why is more money not going to outstate organizations/agencies?*
- *There is no way to recover increased fuel costs*
- *DHS – identify per diem rates for more accountable spending*
- *DHS – pass on full payments to transit provider*
- *Combining resources—pulling in dollars from feds*
- *Grants available, but how to coordinate?*
- *More money to rural Minnesota*
- *Dedicating funding*
- *Customer-friendly payment system*
- *Bridging gap between low and high cost transit*
- *Conduct some brokerage*
- *Examine public/partnerships*
- *Coordinate billing systems*
- *Reduce bureaucracy*

Brainstorm Solutions

- *Try to get more money allocated for outstate MN*
- *Increase availability of shared vehicles*
- *Find strategies to recover costs incurred with higher fuel prices*
- *Public transit engage in more contractual rides*
- *Money should be tied to person, not program*
- *Create dedicated funding*
- *Fight for rural transit dollars*
- *Ask for waivers and more flexibility*
- *Medical and non-medical waivers*
- *One-stop shop for money*
- *Eliminate some matching requirements*

Moving People Efficiently

What are we doing well?

- *Efficient use of buses in St. Peter*
- *There are good volunteer networks in the area*
- *There are many cross-agency referrals*
- *There is lots of flexibility for special needs*
- *Volunteer drivers, putting multiple riders in vehicles*
- *Dispatch from busses (Martin Co.)*
- *So MN to Twin Cities*
- *JJ Shuttle -- \$65 cost to program*

What can be improved?

- *Focus on regional network of transit and volunteers*
- *Identify any gaps in service*
- *Make it easier for providers to cross county lines*
- *GIS on buses*
- *Communication and technology*
- *How do we make transportation more efficient?*
- *Accountability*
- *Responsive to needs*

Brainstorm Solutions

- *Identify and address gaps in service*
- *Produce strategies that will enable providers to cross county lines when need be*
- *Coordinate funding streams*
- *Determine which vehicle works the best*
- *Tap into local experts what will work the best*
- *Communication between "fractured" systems to bring about cohesion*
- *Use vehicles sitting during the day (from non-transit programs)*
- *Waivers and exceptions*
- *"bigger is not always better"*
- *Public transit covering all areas of the region*

APPENDIX D – PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Transit Coordination Plan - Public Meeting
Region Nine Development Commission
365 Nichols Office Building, Mankato, MN
Monday, December 18, 2006 – 4:30 p.m.

Attendees: Gary Ludwig, Cindy Posivio, Dylan Thomas, LuAnn Dostuo, Marge Smith, John Baerg, Elaine Spain, Janicek Klassen, Bob Apitz, Bonita Hagedon, Brent O'Neil, Elizabeth Carey

Introductions

Brent O'Neil introduces draft of transit coordination plan for Region nine. He describes format of plan, how plan is on website, and key outline of the plan and how the plan was developed. He describes how Plan is applicable to requirements for 5310, 5316, and 5317.

O'Neil describes strategies of plan is to further coordination. He does brief synopsis of Executive Summary. Executive summary states overarching theme of plan is a regional coordination strategy which involves creation of a coordination program. It will be focused on coordination in the Region Nine area and requires the creation of a board.

The key strategy of the plan is mobility management. MNDOT has done research on topic and considers it a worthwhile pursuit. The plan discusses financial feasibility and barriers of mobility management. Plan narrows down preferred geographic area which is Tri-County area and gives suggestions to Mn/DOT for implementation.

O'Neil discusses how plan recommends technology to enhance transit system and the use of software to coordinate rides. Software should be compatible across systems, allowing systems to communicate with each other.

Implementation of coordination of agencies among selves is discusses. Creating a framework to lump all county-level systems while maintaining autonomy is key. Communication among coordinating agencies is important and encouraged.

O'Neil discussed the strategies within plan referring to local policies. The plan lays out recommendations for adjusting those strategies.

The next strategy was examining federal, state, and other external factors that make coordination difficult. With this knowledge, the plan recommends constant local communication with federal and state decision-makers to eliminate those barriers.

Two final pieces were presented: a recommendation list on standardization, and a level-of-coordination rubric.

The meeting was then opened for comments:

- Concern was expressed over the implementation of the plan; would it be fully implemented.
- The board would need to be strong or “have teeth” to be effective. It was suggested possible reexamining the structure of the board to contain more state-level members with enforcement capabilities.
- Mechanisms need to be in place for measuring results
- Desire for a potential board to replace existing oversight, not add to it.