

**Interagency Committee on Transit Coordination  
Report to the Governor  
11/1/07**

***Background***

Transportation is a lifeline for persons to access work, school, medical care, and other daily needs. Health and human service organizations have established a variety of transportation systems and the State makes a substantial investment in public transit. However, the delivery of these services is often fragmented or duplicative. In some cases, the transportation services are non-existent. As a result, some people are not able to access the critical services that support their quality of life.

In recognition of the fundamental importance of transportation and the continuing need to reduce barriers between federally-funded human service programs and Minnesota's public transportation systems, the Governor issued a directive for agencies to work together to ensure that transit services are effective and accessible. Representatives from the Departments of Transportation (Mn/DOT), Health, Human Services (DHS), Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Education, Metropolitan Council, Center for Transportation Studies - University of Minnesota, Board on Aging, and the State Council on Disability are members of the Interagency Committee on Transit Coordination (ICTC) The Governor has charged this Committee with:

1. surveying existing transportation alternatives, best practices and coordination strategies that have worked in Minnesota and other states, and
2. developing a series of recommendations for improving the levels of transportation coordination.

***Committee Membership***

Margaret Kelly, Assistant Commissioner	Dept of Health
Doug Benson, Supervisor, Office of Rural Health	Dept of Health
Brian Osberg, Assistant Commissioner of Health Care Services	Dept of Human
Bonnie Elsey, Senior Administrative Officer	Dept of Employment & Economic Development
Bob W. Fischer, Education Finance Specialist	Dept of Education
Tim Henkel, Director, Planning, Modal & Data Management Div	Dept of
Gerri Sutton, Assistant Director, Contracted Transit Service	Metropolitan Council
Robert Johns, Director, Center for Transportation Studies	University of MN

Mary Koep, Chair  
Joan Willshire, Executive Director

MN Board on Aging  
MN State Council on  
Disability

### ***Committee Activities***

The Committee has met seven times over the course of the past year. The following is a brief overview of the activities undertaken by the Committee:

- ⊞ Reviewed results from Local Human Service and Public Transportation Coordination Plans. The Plans included an inventory of available transportation options/providers, a list of unmet needs and strategies to help meet the unmet needs, and identified barriers for coordination. The most frequently reported barriers identified in these plans were:
  - a. Agencies can't share vehicles because of insurance issues;
  - b. Need more money if evening and weekend service is provided;
  - c. Reporting requirements;
  - d. Limited knowledge of services provided by local agencies;
  - e. Lack of communication between agencies;
  - f. Having no other agency to coordinate with; and
  - g. Unwillingness to coordinate.
  
- ⊞ Discussed coordination obstacles identified in Local Transit Human Service Coordination Plans. With the assistance of the Department of Commerce, developed recommendations to begin to address the "Agencies can't share vehicles because of insurance issues" barrier.
  
- ⊞ Reviewed web-based, electronic consumer assistance available from the Department of Human Services and the Department of Transportation.
  - o ***MinnesotaHelp.Info*** –this site is an online directory of services designed to help people in Minnesota identify resources such as human services, information and referral, financial assistance, and other forms of aid and assistance within Minnesota. It is especially rich in resource information for seniors and their caregivers; people with disabilities and their caregivers; parents and families; and low income people. The website is [www.MinnesotaHelp.info](http://www.MinnesotaHelp.info).
  
  - o ***Arrive MN*** – Arrive MN will be a commuter website that provides travel information in Minnesota. Persons accessing the site can learn how to get to a destination by any mode of transportation; such as planes, trains,

cars, buses, carpool, vans, bicycles and boats. The website is [www.ArriveMN.com](http://www.ArriveMN.com).

- ⌘ Received a presentation on Western Community Transit system's volunteer driver program and public transit bus services. Western Community Transit serves 3,500 square miles in the counties of Lincoln, Lyon, Cottonwood, Jackson and Redwood. The system relies on a variety of resources: volunteer drivers, rider companions, and lift accessible buses. Flexibility in scheduling is very important and expectations vary among passengers and transit staff. Tools used for successful coordination are dispatch software and multiple dispatch centers who share the same resources. A dispatch center can schedule 450 to 500 requests per day. The coordination between agencies that occurs keeps costs down and provides better service for customers.
- ⌘ Recommended development of a Minnesota coordination website for stakeholders and providers. The Center for Transportation Studies will assist in this effort. Objectives of the site are:
  - o Serve as an information resource for community transit and human service practitioners by providing access to key information and innovations on community transit-related topics.
  - o Provide a mechanism for the ICTC to share information about its activities and initiatives.
  - o Coordinate interagency communication efforts on community transit-related topics.
- ⌘ Reviewed and discussed a potential best practice example for assisting State agencies to improve transportation coordination in areas such as: program and policy, contracting and subcontracting, and budget and finance. Washington State's Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) produced a set of guidelines that suggest policies and procedures that state agencies/organizations can take to improve coordination.
- ⌘ Submitted correspondence to FTA's United We Ride program coordinator regarding a state and local level transportation issue that may prevent the sharing of vehicles between transportation agencies. (See Attached Letter)
- ⌘ Began to gather information on State coordination statutes that have been enacted throughout the nation as a result of the United We Ride transportation coordination initiative. By reviewing other State's statutes there is the possibility that best practice examples may be found that are appropriate for Minnesota to consider.

- ⌘ Prepared, with the assistance of the Department of Commerce, a reissuance of the Volunteer Driver Insurance and Liability Information brochure to help volunteer drivers understand how insurance regulations apply to them.

### ***Future Activities***

The Committee intends to meet periodically in its capacity as the forum to work on coordination issues. Possible activities could include:

- ⌘ Research and consider legislation to encourage, and provide/realign resources (e.g. information, vehicles, funding) for coordination.
- ⌘ Propose State Agency policy and procedure guidelines for coordination. The Committee felt that it is important to maintain a concern for accountability.
- ⌘ Encourage and support local coordination demonstration projects that display creative approaches to providing transportation options for Minnesotans.
- ⌘ Finalize coordination website development as an information resource for community transit and human service practitioners.
- ⌘ Host a forum to gather information on transportation issues that impact coordination, share possible solutions and identify new and innovative strategies.
- ⌘ Print revised Volunteer Driver Insurance Brochure, co-sponsored by Minnesota Department of Transportation, Minnesota Board on Aging and the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

October 8, 2007

Ms. Bryna Helfer  
FTA United We Ride  
Office of Program Management

Dear Ms. Helfer:

I am submitting this letter on behalf of Minnesota's Interagency Committee on Transit Coordination (ICTC) regarding the issue of insurance coverage as a barrier to vehicle sharing. By gaining the ability to share vehicles at the local level the more effective use of the existing resources and expansion of service options can occur. While Federal cost principles do not restrict grantees from serving only their own program participants, state regulated insurance underwriters are determining that coordination is not an insurable activity. In recent discussions between the ICTC and the Minnesota Department of Commerce, the state agency responsible for insurance regulation in Minnesota, it was confirmed that insurance underwriters have the ability to regulate the extent to which vehicle sharing occurs or the extent to which an agency's clients can be transported on another agency's vehicles. In Minnesota this has resulted in situations where agencies that want to coordinate resources are denied that ability based on insurance coverage.

In our investigations of the insurance issues regarding vehicle sharing, we have learned that the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) is the organization that oversees insurance from a national perspective. We are also aware that the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility is working on the vehicle sharing issue. We encourage this activity and recommend that the Council, through the FTA United We Ride Office, contact the NAIC to work on possible solutions to the insurance obstacle to coordination. We are willing to support this effort with the assistance of our State's Department of Commerce representative to the NAIC.

Thank you for consideration of this issue. If you need further information, please don't hesitate to contact Donna Allan, Mn/DOT Office of Transit Director at 651-366-4161, or Noel Shughart, United We Ride State Contact at 651-366-4181.

Sincerely,

Tim Henkel  
ICTC Chair  
Division Director

Mn/DOT, Planning Modal and Data Management Division

cc:

Doug Birnie, FTA

Interagency Committee on Transportation Coordination (ICTC) Members

Roland Mross, CTAA