

**Interagency Committee on Transit Coordination
Report to the Governor
11/1/08**

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 State and 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, and the Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Center For Transportation Studies, Board on Aging, and State Council on Disabilities 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 level of transportation coordination.

Committee Membership

Doug Benson, Supervisor, Office of Rural Health
Brian Osberg, Assistant Commissioner of Health Care
Bonnie Elsey, Senior Administrative Officer
Kelly Wosika, Program Finance
(Chair) Tim Henkel, Director, Planning and Modal Programming Div
Gerri Sutton, Assistant Director, Contracted Transit Service
Robert Johns, Director, Center for Transportation Studies
Mary Koep, Chair
Joan Willshire, Executive Director

Department of Health
Department of Human Services
Department of Employment & Economic Development
Department of Education
Department of Transportation
Metropolitan Council
University of MN
MN Board on Aging
MN State Council on Disabilities

Introduction

The ICTC has met regularly for the past four years. Each year more support from the member agencies is seen and collectively the agencies are willing to tackle increasingly difficult challenges to coordination. Member agencies continue to work collaboratively to ensure that policy and funding strategies are coordinated. Some additional benefits created by this group are:

- More effective interagency communication
- More comprehensive identification of transportation stakeholders
- Increased awareness and knowledge of transportation impacts to member agency programs

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Committee met seven times over the course of the past year. The following is a brief overview of the accomplishments and activities in progress by the Committee, categorized by the core elements from the “United We Ride” Framework For Action:

Core Element - Making Things Happen by Leadership and Partnership

The ICTC continues to work on a plan to move coordination forward in Minnesota.

Accomplishments

- Developed a work plan to ensure progress toward the goals of the Governor’s Office. The plan can be found in Appendix A.
- Reviewed the State of Washington’s Coordinating Special Needs Transportation language used in preparing its coordination legislation.
- Received a presentation on Mn/DOT’s effort to update the Greater Minnesota Transit Plan. The plan will define the future vision for public transportation across Greater Minnesota and lay the foundation to achieve that vision. The plan will identify steps needed to preserve the long-standing investment in current public transit services, look for opportunities to enhance mobility options for the general public, and focus on the target market groups of the elderly, low income, disabled and commuters.

A Plan Advisory Committee, including members of ICTC, provides guidance at key project milestones. Stakeholder involvement will be the key to the success of this project. Stakeholders in transportation, such as transit operators and transit related organizations, were invited to a series of seven outreach workshops held around the State in September as part of public process for the plan. Comments from telephone and on-line surveys will also be used. The first draft of the plan should be completed in December.

- Received a presentation by Mn/DOT Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations, defining the difference between motor carriers of passengers and small vehicle passenger service. Both are for-hire transportation of passengers, but motor carriers of passengers are allowed to transport 8 or more passengers, including the driver, and small vehicle passenger service can transport no more than 7 passengers, including the driver. Special Transportation Service (STS) is a

transportation provider who receives state or federal funding to assist in providing transportation that is designed primarily or exclusively to serve the elderly or disabled.

- Reviewed the Operating Standards for Special Transportation Service (STS), Statute 174.30. Operating standards adopted under this section only apply to providers of STS who receive grants or other financial assistance from either the state or the federal government, or both, to provide or assist in providing that service. This standard does not apply to common carriers operating on fixed routes, volunteers using their own vehicles, school buses or emergency ambulances. Facilities or programs that are non-exempt are those that provide transportation to nonresidents on a regular basis and the facility receives reimbursement, other than per diem payments, under rules promulgated by the Commissioner of Human Services.

Current and Future Activities

- Issue planning guidance to direct local organizations/agencies that are in the business of providing transportation service to participate in coordination planning. Agencies that provide Elderly and Disabled Individuals Transportation Program (FTA Section 5310), Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Program (FTA Section 5316) and New Freedom Program (FTA Section 5317) service are required to participate in coordination planning, however, many agencies/companies that provide Human Service transportation are not required to coordinate.
- Convene a meeting with human service transportation providers to talk about insurance issues. The meeting will serve as a forum for sharing the insurance strategies identified by the MN Department of Commerce and foster further discussion by stakeholders how to implement the new strategies.
- ICTC member agencies participate in a Mn/DOT work group to help transportation stakeholders more easily understand Federal Motor Carrier and Special Transportation Services rules and regulations.
- Investigate research opportunities that examine coordination strategies and analyze their effectiveness.

Core Element - Taking Stock of State Needs and Moving Forward

The ICTC investigated other state's transportation-related programs, services, and policies to coordinate service delivery.

Accomplishments

- Reviewed Kentucky's Human Service Transportation Delivery (HSTD) Coordination Model. The results from the HSTD Coordination Model indicate it saves money, eliminates fraud and abuse, provides safer transportation and quality service, and resources are better used.
- Received a presentation on the Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Program. This Commission is an independent state agency and is administratively housed within the Florida DOT. Their mission is to ensure the availability of efficient, cost-

effective and quality transportation services for transportation of disadvantaged persons. This program has received recognition and achievement awards from the Federal Transit Administration, United States Department of Transportation and Community Transportation Association of America. It exceeds the national standard of 100,000 miles between roadcalls and is considered a safe and reliable system.

- Reviewed how the states of Minnesota, Florida, Kentucky, and Ohio compare in 10 areas with Medicaid Service. The areas compared included: number of coordinating agencies, rate determination, governing group, special funding, service delivery method, geographic area of coverage, coordinating agency, variability of reimbursement rates, and number of trips provided.

Current and Future Activities

- Utilize the regional “United We Ride” Ambassador as a resource for obtaining information on federal coordination initiatives and national coordination best practices.

Core Element - Putting Customers First

The ICTC continues to inform the transportation stakeholders about available programs and services. All ICTC member agencies continue to disseminate information through their respective networks and through the ICTC meetings.

Accomplishments

- A new web site was created through a partnership between Mn/DOT, Met Council, and the Center for Transportation Studies to facilitate coordinated planning and implementation among human service transportation providers and stakeholders. Visitors to the web site can obtain up-to-date information on Federal programs and related information in a user-friendly, menu-driven format. Tools and strategies for enhancing human service transportation are also available on the site. For example, the United We Ride Framework for Action and related materials can be accessed at www.CoordinateMNTransit.org
- Reviewed four examples of vehicle sharing by transit providers in southeastern Minnesota. The providers entered into agreements to transport clients to and from their home to each agency, to medical appointments and social activities. Vehicle sharing also allows agencies to transport clients from different parts of a service area at a cost savings.

Core Element - Adapting Funding for Greater Mobility

The ICTC is working to eliminate the duplication and inefficiencies caused by the “siloining” of transportation funds through various state and federal programs.

Current and Future Activities

- Investigate potential funding mechanisms that support the sharing of costs while completing reporting and tracking requirements for various funding streams.

Core Element - Technology Moves Coordination to the Next Level

One of the areas of interest to the ICTC is the continued development and deployment of technology to improve the coordination of scheduling, routing and billing of transportation services,

Accomplishments

- Received an update on a Statewide Transportation Billing Study being funded by a Community Service/Service Development grant. With transportation being the biggest challenge in MN for elderly persons and persons with disabilities to get where they need to go in their communities, the study is looking at how to improve the billing system. Using an \$182,000 grant (\$91,000 state funds plus \$91,000 in local match) to support the study, information will be collected from existing transportation providers and transportation funders to identify all funding sources of transit in Minnesota. Information will be collected through three multi-regional discussions which will be held in Duluth, Mankato and the Metro area or St. Cloud. Current software applications will also be reviewed in order to make recommendations for software that has the capability to meet agency requirements. This will be a year long project.

Current and Future Activities

- Investigate cost effective purchasing strategies for the statewide deployment of advanced technologies.