

INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON TRANSIT COORDINATION

February 24, 2009

Hiway Federal Credit Union Administration Building

Meeting Notes

Members Present

Brian Osberg, MN Department of Human Services
Doug Benson, MN Department of Health
Robert Johns, University of Minnesota
Mary Koep, MN Board on Aging

Members Absent

Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council
Kelly Wosika, MN Department of Education
Joan Willshire, MN State Council on Disabilities
Bonnie Elsey, MN Department of Employment & Economic Development
Tim Henkel, Chair, Mn/DOT

Guests

Gayle Kelly, MN Head Start Association
Ronda Allis, Region 9
Brent Pearson, Region 9
Reggie Edwards, Region 9
Michael Weidner, Paratransit Providers Association

Others

Bob Ries, MN Department of Human Services
Hal Freshley, MN Board on Aging
Kelly Schroepfer, MN State Council on Disabilities
Deb Schauffert, MN Department of Human Services
Mike Schadauer, Mn/DOT
Judy Ellison, Mn/DOT
Noel Shughart, Mn/DOT
Diane Contreras, Mn/DOT

Welcome

Mike Schadauer welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported that Tim Henkel was unavailable to attend today's meeting.

Head Start Coordination Initiatives

Gayle Kelly, MN Head Start Association, reported that in January members of the Head Start Association met with staff from the Office of Transit to discuss coordination issues. Under federal regulations head start programs are required to make reasonable attempts to coordinate transportation resources with other human services agencies in their communities in order to control costs and to improve the quality and availability of transportation services.

With the work and knowledge of the ICTC, they hope to be able to accomplish this directive more easily.

Gayle reported that the Head Start Program is a national program that was created in 1965 to provide comprehensive child development services primarily to low-income children (age 3 to 5) and their families. In response to mounting evidence that the earliest years (from birth to age 3) matters a great deal to a child's growth and development, the Early Head Start program began in 1994. There are 35 grantees across Minnesota, 7 in the metro area, who provide around 17,000 head start trips a day with limited funding.

Federal regulations require that program vehicles serving head start students are Multifunction School Activity Buses equipped with appropriate height and weight restraints. Regulations also require that there must be at least one bus monitor on board at all times to help ensure the safety of the very young children in the program. These monitors, as well as the drivers, must be trained in assisting the children, in emergency response, emergency evacuation procedures, and use of special equipment. Due to these regulations and the cost associated with them, head start programs have lost their partnership arrangements with schools, that do not have to follow these regulations.

The Head Start Association, to make their program better and to cut back on costs, is hoping to forge a relationship with the Metropolitan Council and elderly and disability groups for vehicle sharing, They are also looking at working with other groups to obtain lower costs through group bus and training purchases.

DHS: Transit Software/Billing Project

Noel Shughart reported that this project falls within the ICTC's 2009 Workplan, Key Issue Area: Cost Sharing/Purchasing. The Statement of Objective reads, "In order to ensure that adequate resources are available for transportation services for people with disabilities, older adults and individuals with lower income, and to encourage the shared use of vehicles and existing public transportation services, the ICTC recommends that state agencies work together to create funding mechanisms that support shared ownership of funding responsibilities while completing reporting and tracking requirements for various funding streams."

Ronda Allis, Region 9 Development Commission, reported that Phase 1 entailed contacting several routing and billing software vendors to learn about their company and the capabilities of their software. They heard back from five vendors; CTS, Ecolane, Routematch, Mobilitat and Trapeze. Rhonda distributed a packet that speaks to the background of each responding company, their software features, and implementation, and a matrix listing multiple scheduling functions and if it's standard in their software program. Brent Pearson, who made the initial contact with the vendors, noted that some software programs can be customized to a customers needs and many are web-based. Web-based software allows users and transit providers to coordinate rides from any web-based computer.

Once Phase I was completed, it was on to Phase II.....finding out the needs of the customer. A 58 question survey was developed and distributed electronically to transit providers, county human services agencies and managed care providers to learn how they currently schedule rides, mileage rate costs, sources of funding, and their billing system. They learned that many of the smaller transit systems still do everything with paper and pencil.

Their next step is to hold round table discussions around the state to hear where they think the program should go from here. A meeting is scheduled to be held in Duluth, northwestern MN and Anoka County some time in mid-April to mid-May. Ronda will forward a schedule to Noel so that ICTC members can attend a meeting in their area.

Noel noted that the ICTC small group plans to piggy back off this project and work with the Department of Finance to determine a common costing method.

DT & H Coordination Initiative

Noel reported that talks continue with the Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations and others to learn how Day Training and Habilitation (DT & H) providers can overcome barriers to coordinate and ride share. A possible solution identified was for DT & H providers to become Special Transportation Service (STS) certified. Technical assistance would be necessary to help transit providers understand the paperwork requirements and expense involved in becoming STS certified. Metro area 5310 providers with large fleets are being invited to attend a meeting on March 16 to discuss coordination initiatives including insurance, maintenance and fuel.

Noel reported that he met with the Assistant Commission of Veterans Affairs to discuss their coordination issues. Each county transports veterans down to the Veterans hospital in the Twin Cities area and they are interested in seeing if they can get some scheduling software to give them the capability to coordinate with other type agencies to share rides to save money. Noel noted that Veterans Affairs is interested in becoming a member of the ICTC group.

Review/Update ICTC 2009 Work Plan

Noel noted that the ICTC 2009 Workplan identifies five key issue areas; Vehicle/Client Sharing, Cost Sharing/Purchasing, Communication/Coordinated Planning, Reporting and Evaluation, and Research/Demonstration Projects. Work is well underway on the first two issues and the 2009 United We Ride Demonstration Grant that the committee just submitted falls under the Research/Demonstration Projects issue. Correspondence describing the proposed activities under the Demonstration Grant was distributed to meeting attendees.

Brain Osberg, Dept of Human Services, indicated that the ICTC needs to develop methods for measuring the success of coordination efforts. The use of measures is included in the Reporting and Evaluation issue area and some strategies will be presented at the next meeting.

Member Agency Reports on Transportation

Bob Johns, University of MN, reported that web development continues on the ICTC website. Bob suggested that Gina Baas attend a future meeting to update members on the site. Bob also reported that the Center for Transportation Studies is planning a workshop with Hennepin County on April 17, 2009. The draft agenda includes a presentation on Mobility Management from Dave Victor and a report from Noel on the coordination activities of the ICTC.

Hal Freshley, Board on Aging, reported that a listing of service providers in the state can be found on MinnesotaHelp.info. Information can be searched by county, city or zip code.

Doug Benson, MN Department of Health, reported that his agency is following legislation regarding affordable health care insurance.

Noel reported that Senator Dibble and Representative Gardner sent, for review and comment, a draft of potential legislation creating a Minnesota Council on Transportation Access. The legislation would, by statute, restructure the ICTC into a Council with expanded membership and responsibilities. Part of this proposal includes providing an appropriation for administrative expenses. A copy of this proposed bill, with Noel's comments, was distributed to meeting attendees.

Next Meeting Date

March 24, 2009
Hiway Federal Credit Union Administration Building
840 Westminster Street