

# INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON TRANSIT COORDINATION

January 19, 2006  
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.  
Aeronautics Training Room  
222 East Plato Boulevard

## Meeting Notes

### Meeting Attendees

Randy Halvorson, Committee Chair, Department of Transportation  
David Christianson, Metropolitan Council  
Brian Osberg, Department of Human Services  
John Kowalczyk, Department of Human Services  
Robert Johns, University of Minnesota  
Gina Baas, Center for Transportation Studies  
Toni Baker, Board on Aging  
Hal Freshley, Board on Aging  
Tom Lencowski, Department of Education  
Bob Fischer, Department of Education  
Joan Willshire, State Council on Disabilities  
Nadia Facey, State Council on Disabilities  
Mark Hoisser, DARTS  
Larry Blackstad, Hennepin County  
Robb Luckow, Hennepin County  
Donna Allan, Director, Office of Transit  
Judy Ellison, Office of Transit  
Noel Shughart, Office of Transit  
Diane Contreras, Office of Transit

The meeting opened with a welcome and introductions. Randy reported that in keeping with the agency information exchange mission of the committee, today the group would hear presentations on two state level projects: DARTS coordination efforts and the Hennepin County/Center for Transportation Studies Community Transit Project.

### Hennepin County/Center for Transportation Studies Community Transit Project

Larry Blackstad noted that Hennepin County, with funding through the Greater Twin Cities United Way and in cooperation with DARTS, started its Community Transit effort in 2000 to identify better ways to provide transit needs and quality services at a lower cost to their clients.

Gina Baas, from the Center for Transportation Studies, provided a presentation overview of the program. The overview covered the definition of Community Transit, the University's involvement with Community Transit, Hennepin County's interest, findings from previous work, and current Hennepin County project activities. Community Transit was defined as a means to provide transportation, other than mainline buses or personally-owned vehicles, for people who cannot drive or do not have access to a vehicle. The study notes that Hennepin County is Minnesota's most populous county and growing, and that its social service programs spend an increasing amount of their budgets on transportation.

Stakeholder groups involved in the development of the program include transportation and human service funders, transportation providers, and community transportation users. These stakeholders identified four strategies: the need for better use of resources to be able to meet more of the need for services; the need for transportation providers and human service agencies to maintain their own missions and connections with clients-keeping control at the "ground level" to the greatest extent possible; the need for a collective voice in planning, lobbying and other policy-related activities; and the desire for a system to be easy to use (including reducing gaps in coverage), and for users to have choices among providers where possible.

To learn more about the Community Transit Project or other projects being developed through the Center for Transportation Studies, persons can access information on the Center for Transportation Studies web site, [www.cts.umn.edu/ct](http://www.cts.umn.edu/ct).

Randy noted that this project is an excellent example of taking advantage of studies that are currently underway and asked Bob Johns to revisit this program with the group following the completion of the study.

### **DARTS Coordination Efforts**

Mark Hoisser, President of the Dakota Area Resources and Transportation for Seniors (DARTS), gave a presentation on the coordination efforts of DARTS. He noted that DARTS is a volunteer-based organization that provides professionally coordinated home-help and transportation services for Dakota County seniors and their families; and can help them find additional services throughout the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

In Mark's presentation he reviewed DARTS Specialized Transit Solutions for Collaborating for Rides and Collaborating to Share Expertise services/programs that DARTS participates in with other agencies.

### **Collaborating for Rides** seven programs:

5310 – funding for a bus purchase and expansion and coordination of service in an exurban community;  
ProAct – vehicle sharing with non-profit for new fixed route service for seniors in Hastings;  
MAAA – adult day services expansion for rides for memory-loss clients; SASS/Medica – Strategic Alliance for Senior Services collaborative members joint application with American Red Cross for Medica non-emergency services clients;  
Churches – buses leased to churches for worship service rides on weekends;  
City of Lakeville - expanded service for seniors and transit dependent general public riders; and  
JARC – service to “at risk” job seekers.

### **Collaborating to Share Expertise** seven programs:

State-wide Driver Training – DARTS certified staff provides driver training to metro agencies and out-state providers through Rural Transit Assistance Program;  
5-County Technology Project – upgrade of paratransit computer-assisted scheduling and dispatching software and requisite hardware in five metro suburban counties;  
AVL/MDC Implementation – project test of mobile data computers in paratransit agency with joint funding from Mn/DOT, Dakota County and beta work with MDC provider Mentor Engineering;  
Web Hosting Software – DARTS internet web hosting of Trapeze scheduling and dispatching software and training support for agencies;

DARTS VMS – vehicle maintenance for all non-profit providers in metro area, building on agency core competency;  
Carver County ADA – weekend and evening telephone support for request taking, scheduling and dispatching Carver County ADA rides and providing added bus service as needed; and  
United Way EZ-Trip – providing and supporting DARTS-developed EZ Trip paratransit software to all UW agencies for support and service standardization.

Mark noted that DARTS has been in business for over 30 years, has 40 vehicles and a \$5,000,000 budget. Mark credits the success of DARTS to Dakota County who does not use the low cost-low bid idea for providing customer service. Their mission statement is ..... “to support the full participation of seniors and all generations in community.”

Donna reported that DARTS was recently one of five in the whole country to receive an award for coordination by the U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary.

### **Vision/Mission Prioritization**

Randy noted that in the first two meetings, committee members developed Mission Objectives and Strategies to improve the levels of transportation coordination. He noted that the committee needs to decide which items they want to start focusing on. Noel reported that Donna, Office of Transit staff and he reviewed the list and developed bullets for each item to generate some thought process. Randy suggested that committee members review and prioritize the list as they see fit. He also encouraged them to add any suggestions on how each strategy can be accomplished. Noel suggested that item No. 6 “identifying a process for state agencies to ensure consistency in coordinated program and service delivery” be prioritized as No. 1.

Randy also suggested that this list of 10 items should be broken out into two tiers to help develop a timeline of completion. He noted that Mn/DOT would hire a consultant to help the committee develop a plan and to assist staff.

### **Coordination Forum**

Donna reported that the Minnesota Department of Transportation Office of Transit is sponsoring a Transit Coordination Best Practices Forum. Forum sessions will be based on topic areas that were identified as part of the “stakeholder assessment” component of a recent coordination study conducted by Mn/DOT, in cooperation with the Metropolitan Council.

The forum is being held on February 21, 2006, at the Continuing Education and Conference Center on the St. Paul Campus of the University of Minnesota. The cost is \$25 and reservations must be made by February 14.

### **Next Meeting Date**

Randy noted that if no one has any objection, the February committee meeting will be canceled. The next meeting will be March 16, 2006, from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Office of Aeronautics training room.

Dave Christianson suggested that in lieu of the February meeting, committee members attend one of the open houses that are being held throughout the state to present the findings and recommendations of the MN Transit Coordination Action Plan and to obtain comments and ideas. The metro area open house will be held on February 13, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at DARTS.

### **Adjourn**

Randy thanked everyone for coming and sharing their ideas and comments with the group.