

## INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON TRANSIT COORDINATION

January 30, 2007

2 to 4 p.m.

Office of Aeronautics Training Room

### **Members Present**

*Meeting Leader* – Lynda Boudreau, MN Department of Health

Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council

Toni Baker, MN Board on Aging

Joan Willshire, MN State Council on Disabilities

Bob W. Fischer, MN Department of Education

Donna Allan, Acting Director, Program Management Division

### **Members Absent**

Brian Osberg, MN Department of Human Services

Robert Johns, University of Minnesota

Bonnie Elsey, MN DEED

### **Guests**

Bryon Laher, United Way

Brent O'Neil, Region 9 Development Commission

### **Others Present**

Terri Ricci, MN State Council on Disabilities

Richard Caligiuri, MN DEED

John Kowalczyk, MN Department of Human Services

Noel Shughart, Mn/DOT

Judith Ellison, Mn/DOT

Diane Contreras, Mn/DOT

### **Welcome, Introductions**

Lynda Boudreau welcomed the group and asked that they introduce themselves and the organization they represent.

### **Local Coordination Plan Development**

Noel reported that Mn/DOT, Office of Transit, in cooperation with DHS Office of Aging Services, contracted with the Regional Development Commissions (RDC) to develop Local Transit Human Service Coordination Plans. FTA requires these plans for their JARC, New Freedom and 5310 capital programs. The plans include an inventory of available transportation

options/providers, provide a list of unmet needs and identify strategies to help meet the unmet needs.

Brent O'Neill (Region 9 Development Commission) distributed a copy of Region 9's Human Service and Public Transportation Coordination Plan. Counties served by the RDC are Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca and Watonwan.

The plan addresses four key components:

1. Public involvement
2. Service inventory
3. Needs assessment
4. Strategies and action steps

To identify the needs of its residents, surveys were sent to all major transportation providers throughout the nine-county region. The survey 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. The plan also concludes that there is a great need for extension in hours and service areas, and the public needs to become more educated about transportation services available so they are utilized more.

Strategies for coordination identified through the planning process are:

1. Implementation of a mobility management program.
2. Using technology for enhancement of transit activities.
3. Working with funding resources.
4. Maximizing agency to agency coordination.
5. Adjusting local policy and regulations.
6. Adapting to external factors and limitations.
7. Others (this category looks at things that can be done to maximize efficiency).

To foster implementation of these strategies, the plan recommends the creation of a regional coordination program comprised of board or

committee. This group would represent the Region and be made up of both elected and technical members. It would also provide oversight to implement these strategies and would also be charged with facilitating the development of a mobility management program for the region.

Brent mentioned that insurance can be somewhat of a barrier and that volunteer drivers find this issue confusing.

### **Summary of Local Coordination Plans**

Noel reported on the coordination strategies that were identified in the RDC plans (see handout). Strategies were listed under three categories (Adapting Funding for Greater Mobility and Moving People Efficiently; and Making Things Happen by Working Together) by Region.

It was noted that many regions identified similar strategies such as: searching for additional funding opportunities; increasing education and awareness of public transportation; creating a mobility management program; funding smaller, accessible vehicles for public transit; creating transit provider groups.

Noel noted that all the plans will be posted on the Office of Transit's website.

### **Insurance as a Barrier to Coordination**

Byron Laher, United Way, noted that insurance is still an issue with the 200 agencies in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area that provide rides to elderly and disabled persons. A third of participating agencies like what they are doing, a third would like to drop transportation service, and the other third would like to get out of the transportation business. It costs the 200 agencies around \$10M a year for maintenance, insurance, fuel and basic operating costs for their 925 vehicles.

To help agencies with this cost, the United Way plans to ask the legislature to exempt some transportation providers who provide transportation to elderly persons from the state gas tax; to exempt non-profit/charities from being considered a livery for-hire service (insurance rate classification relief); and, to allow charitable organizations to participate in the State Purchasing Plan.

Byron also spoke about the difficulties that a current transportation provider can face when they decide to go out of business, but then decide to

start up again. He noted that it would be wise for them not to get rid of their vehicle, but to rent them out to other providers. This would save on the cost of repurchasing vehicles. Transportation providers can also save money by partnering with another agency who would share in the cost of vehicles, maintenance of vehicles and drivers. However, he noted that insurance companies tell agencies that they should not do this. Bryon challenged the group to come up with a resolution to this issue. He would be very grateful for any ideas, suggestion they have to offer.

Noel noted that at a coordination workshop held in February 2006, insurance was a big issue. The Office of Transit submitted a list of insurance questions to the Department of Commerce and to date has not received a reply. It was suggested that Noel simplify the questions as they seem more like legal questions. Noel recommended that the ICTC submit the revised questions to the Department of Commerce. The members in attendance concurred with the recommendation.

### **Member Agency Reports on Transportation**

Donna reported that the Department will soon announce the new Assistant Director for the Program Management Division.

Lynda reported that she will no longer be the MN Department of Health representative for this committee. The new representative will be Margaret Kelly.

### **Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be February 27, 2007, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Hiway Federal Credit Union Administration Building on 840 Westminister Street, St. Paul.

**Meeting Adjourned**