

INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON TRANSIT COORDINATION

July 22, 2008

Hiway Federal Credit Union Administration Building

MEETING NOTES

Members Present

Robert Johns, University of Minnesota
Mary Koep, MN Board on Aging
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council
Joan Willshire, MN State Council on Disabilities
Kelly Wosika, MN Department of Education

Members Absent

Bonnie Elsey, MN DEED
Brian Osberg, MN Department of Human Services
Doug Benson, MN Department of Health

Others

Bob Ries, MN Department of Human Services
Hal Freshley, MN Board on Aging
Judy Ellison, Mn/DOT Office of Transit
Noel Shughart, Mn/DOT Office of Transit
Diane Contreras, Mn/DOT Office of Transit

Welcome, Introductions

Bob Johns welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that they introduce themselves and the organization they represent.

Greater Minnesota Transit Plan

Noel Shughart reported that Mn/DOT is undertaking a planning 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.

Mn/DOT along with an Advisory Committee that includes members of ICTC will be assembled to provide 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, will be invited to a series of two hour outreach workshops being held around the State in September where their comments will be used to develop this plan. Comments from telephone and on-line surveys will also be used. The first draft of the plan should be completed in December.

Cost Sharing: State Strategies

Hal Freshley spoke on the funding obstacles and barriers identified by local elected officials and stakeholders in the 2005 Minnesota Transportation Coordination Study. Barriers identified were insurance, billing and rider eligibility, insufficient funding and driver training/qualifications.

Insurance.....insurance companies make it difficult for providers to share vehicles. They may not insure this activity, charge a high premium making coordination not cost effective, or make the operating terms unreasonable for one or both of the providers.

Billing and Rider Eligibility.....transit providers have to keep records of passengers and their destination to ensure that they are eligible for the source of funding they are billing for their service. Systems must calculate the cost per passenger, miles and trip. Mn/DOT, Met Council and DHS are working together to test out new software technology to help with the billing process.

Insufficient Funding.....due to complex budgeting issues, transit systems may not have sufficient funding to provide service for their clients. In this event, they must look for new or untapped funding sources. Not all systems use the same methodology to figure out facility, maintenance, gas and operating costs.

Driver Training/Qualifications.....costs associated with training drivers may not be eligible from transportation funding sources.

Vehicle/Client Sharing: Insurance Forum, Special Transportation Service (STS) Obstacles

Noel noted that ICTC members identified vehicle/client sharing a road block to coordination. At the August 2007 meeting Tom Baker and Lee Spelbrink, from the MN Department of Commerce, met with the group and identified several strategies to resolve this issue. One of the techniques for communicating the strategies is to hold a summit that would serve as an insurance forum. If transit providers are interested in a summit for stakeholders to talk about insurance issues, a forum will be scheduled.

Noel distributed a copy of the Operating Standards for Special Transportation Service, 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 bus or an emergency ambulance. 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.

Noel noted that under administrative rules the Commissioner of Transportation shall adopt standards for the operation of vehicles used to provide STS which are reasonably necessary to protect the health and safety of individuals using that service. These rules also state that the Commissioner shall consult with the Council on Disabilities before

making a decision on a variance from the standards. Noel recommended that the ICTC, through the MN State Council on Disabilities, send a letter of request to the Commissioner of Transportation to investigate the interpretation of the non-exemption language under Statute 174.30 with the Office of Motor Carrier. This recommendation was seconded by Gerri Sutton and all approved.

Coordinated Planning: Proposal Discussion

Noel distributed a copy of the draft ICTC Coordinated Planning Guidance and the matrix of the different state's guidelines that the small working group prepared in February for the committee's review and use for developing Minnesota's coordination guidelines. Noel asked members to review the options under each section on the second page of the Coordinated Planning Guidance document for discussion at the next meeting. If members have any additional thoughts or comments on these options, they should forward them to Noel by the end of August. A copy of this document is attached.

Member Agency Reportson Transportation

Bob Johns, University of Minnesota, reported the Center for Transportation Studies is continuing to work on the ICTC Website. Bob noted that next month a link to the test site will be available for the members to review.

Hal Freshley, MN Board on Aging, reported that a local hospital in southwest Minnesota was given a grant to support transporting local patients to their medical appointments.

Joan Willshire, MN State Council on Disabilities, reported that she attended a conference in New Orleans where she spoke on transportation in Minnesota in relationship to persons with disabilities

Mary Koep, MN Board on Aging, noted that the Board has heard a lot about persons not volunteering to drive for meals on wheels due to the high price of gas and will make a statement on this issue.

Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council, reported that she attended eight public meeting to discuss the proposed Metro Transit fare hike, \$0.25 on fixed routes and \$0.50 for metro mobility. A final decision will be made in August.

Bob Ries, MN Department of Human Services, reported on the disappearing medical transportation service providers. He noted that transportation providers do not have to take a ride if they're going to lose money on it and DHS lacks authority to require service be provided

Kelly Wosika, MN Department of Education, reported that school transportation has also been affected by high gas prices. Their resources are also limited by new legislation that toughened up driver qualifications on type three vehicles, and driver background checks.

Next Meeting Date

September 23, 2008
Hiway Federal Credit Union Administration Building
1 to 3 p.m.