

# **INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON TRANSIT COORDINATION**

September 23, 2008

Hiway Federal Credit Union Administration Building

## **MEETING NOTES**

### **Members Present**

Tim Henkel, Chair, Mn/DOT  
Kelly Woska, MN Department of Education  
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council  
Doug Benson, MN Department of Health  
Mary Koep, MN Board on Aging  
Joan Willshire, MN State Council on Disabilities

### **Members Absent**

Brian Osberg, MN Department of Human Services  
Bob Johns, University of Minnesota  
Bonnie Elsey, MN DEED

### **Guests**

Jody Jacoby, Metropolitan Council  
John Harper, Metropolitan Council  
Gina Baas, Center for Transportation Studies  
Arlene Mathison, Center for Transportation Studies

### **Others**

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

### **Welcome, Introductions**

Tim Henkel welcomed everyone one to the meeting and introduced Mike Schadauer the new Director for the Office of Transit. Mike stated that he is glad to be here today and commented on how he is learning about coordination from so many parties. He reported that this morning he attended the Older Adult Services Community Consortium in St. Cloud, and many of the 2008 Greater MN Public Transportation Plan Update Workshops held around the state.

## **Dial-A-Ride Transit Service Redesign**

Jody Jacoby, Project Administrator for the Metropolitan Council, reported that under their current dial-a-ride transit service program 14 systems, 6 operated by cities, 4 counties and 4 non-profits in the Metro Area, received funding from the Council in the amount of \$3.4 million last year. The Council conducted an audit of this service and found that not all dial-a-ride service is available to the general public, there are minor to serious problems with internal controls and a lot of duplication of services. In an effort to make the program better, the Council is proposing a new concept where the Council and counties form partnerships to develop and implement dial-a-ride service. Current Council funding would be redirected from dial-a-ride programs (non-ADA) to county-based programs, and all service contracts would contain standard operating policies. Through proposed operating parameters they could eliminate duplicative transit service, provide equitable coverage, streamline communication and administrative efforts, improve visibility and usability, assure eligibility for federal funding and adjust dial-a-ride services as fixed route services change. This change would also improve coordination at the local level between non-profits, county DHS programs and fixed route service.

To get this proposed plan implemented they will continue working with the metro area counties, present proposals to stake holders, finalize recommendations based on input and approval. They hope to have this plan implemented before they enter into new contracts with the dial-a-ride providers in 2010.

## **Coordination Website**

Gina Baas and Arlene Mathison, from the Center for Transportation Studies, reported that they have been working since March to develop the Coordination Website. Arlene provided screen shots of the information contained under the Home/About/Contact sections and requested committee member input. If members have changes they would like made, please send them to Noel. Gina noted that this is a living website and that changes and updates can be made continually. The scheduled date for going live is September 29. The URL address of the web site is [www.CoordinateMNTransit.org](http://www.CoordinateMNTransit.org).

## **STS Rules Interpretation**

Joan Willshire, MN State Council on Disabilities, referred to the area in Minnesota Rules, Chapter 8840, that states the Commissioner of Transportation shall consult with the MN Council on Disabilities before granting or denying a variance to organizations that provide Special Transportation Service (STS) to persons that are elderly, handicapped, or disabled and who are unable to use regular means of transportation.

Noel noted that as the regulations stand now, providers do not want to provide transportation to non-residents and get reimbursed because they do not want to deal with the STS rules and regulations they would be subject to. If some of these regulations were eliminated or the agencies declared exempt, it would have a tremendous impact on the ability for agencies to coordinate and make coordinating

more cost effective. Noel has been talking with staff from the Office of Motor Carrier to discuss this issue.

Gerri Sutton commented that with the recent minibus fire in New Brighton, changing these statutes may put safety at risk. If drivers do not have the safety training for evacuating passengers from a burning bus or carry the proper tool to cut the seat belt strap for their disabled passengers, it defeats the purpose of providing safe transportation service. She would like to meet with Noel and Margo to discuss a resolution to this issue.

Tim noted that in the meantime, Noel will continue talking with the Office of Motor Carrier and bring back his findings to the committee for further discussion.

### **Cost Sharing: Statewide Transportation Billing Study**

Hal Freshley, Board on Aging, reported that transportation is the biggest challenge in MN for elder persons and persons with disabilities. More people need transportation to get where they need to get to in their communities and MN is not doing a good job to provide this transportation more effectively. With a \$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 for transit in Minnesota. They will collect information through three multi-regional discussions which will be held in Duluth, Mankato and the Metro area or St. Cloud. They will also review current software applications in order to make recommendations for software that have the capability to meet funders requirements. This will be a one year project.

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

Bob Ries, MN Department of Human Service, reported that there is a need to get more information to the counties outside the metro area regarding transportation under the Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP). These organizations need to better understand what they can and can not do to negotiate access service with other providers.

Kelly Woska, MN Department of Education, noted that their agency is concerned about providing transportation to homeless students and the cost of doing so.

Hal Freshley, MN Board on Aging, reported that transportation in rural MN has been identified as a need. They are working on plans to seek funding to help these areas with this issue. Hal also reported that the state got a grant from the federal government to help promote the use of difference transportation options for older people.

Joan Willshire, MN State Council on Disabilities, reported that the Council is holding three mini transportation dialogues in rural Minnesota. The dates and location are; October 27 in Crookston, October 28 in Thief River Falls and October 29 in Marshall.

Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council, reported that the proposed fare hike has been approved and will take effect October 1.

Doug Benson, MN Department of Health, reported that they received a planning grant to hold a series of meeting to hear what the health challenges people are experiencing around the state. These meeting will be held in the first quarter of next year.

Tim Henkel, Mn/DOT, asked members if they were aware the State Representative Alice Hausman has been holding meetings over the last several months concerning the policy-making structure for transportation in Minnesota. She is investigating the merit of creating one transit agency who would be responsible for transit around Minnesota. Mike Schadauer noted that he has some information on this and will e-mail the information to the members.

**Next Meeting Date**

October 28, 2008

1 to 3 p.m.

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