

## Committed to Transit Coordination

*The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access seeks to improve transportation accessibility for all*

Far too often, transit in the U.S. is a classic case of too many chefs in the kitchen. At the federal level alone, there are at least 62 transit programs administered by eight departments and even more agencies. As those program—and the associated funding—filters down to the state and local levels, an even more complex web of transportation is created. This multitude of funding programs and requirements across dozens of departments and agencies makes transportation coordination and communication a daunting task.

### Creating the Council

The good news for transit supporters in Minnesota is that in 2010, the Minnesota State Legislature took an important step towards unraveling these complexities when it created the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access. The Council succeeds the state's Interagency Committee on Transit Coordination (ICTC), which was established by Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty in 2005. The Council is made up of representatives from 13 state agencies and organizations. Its mission is working together to remove obstacles preventing the successful coordination of transportation programs and resources.

The Council's job is an important for the prosperity of the state and its residents. While some people believe accessible transportation is only about improving individual lives, research has show that it improves all facets of a state's economy, culture and communities. Reliable transportation is a prerequisite for a healthy economy and is often the first step toward independence and opportunity for people with low incomes, older adults and people with disabilities.

### Pursuing Transit Coordination

To work towards its goal of transit coordination and accessibility, the Council is tasked with 20 duties grouped into five Key Issue Areas:

- 1. Vehicle and Client Sharing** – Transit programs should share vehicles and customers in order to reduce idle time and duplicative transportation services.
- 2. Cost Sharing and Purchasing** – Agencies are encouraged to pursue shared ownership and funding responsibilities of transit programs.
- 3. Communication and Coordinated Planning** – Agencies are encouraged to participate in community transportation planning processes to promote the development and delivery of coordinated services.
- 4. Reporting and Evaluation** – Agencies are encouraged to agree on common measurements and definitions for tracking and reporting transit service costs.
- 5. Research and Demonstration Projects** – Agencies should conduct demonstration projects to investigate the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of new transit approaches.

## **Driving Transit Improvements**

The Council is currently driving process in each of the five Key Issue Areas through the creation of high-value toolsets, coordination with the Minnesota State Legislature and aggressive advocacy. One recent accomplishment includes creating a model contract for use by local agencies contracting with external organizations to provide transportation services. In addition to sample contract language, it features a glossary of transportation terms for participating agencies to refine into a uniform set of terminology and a cost allocation methodology to more consistently describe transportation costs. The Council is also working to produce local planning guidance documents, document successful local coordination practices and clarify insurance requirements for client and vehicle sharing.

Through its ongoing efforts, the Council aims to increase transit capacity to serve unmet needs, improve quality of service, improve understanding and access to services by the public, and achieve more cost-effective service delivery. By creating a more efficient, effective and accessible transit system, the Council helps improve lives and drive economic growth in Minnesota.