

Successful Local Transportation Coordination Case Studies

Coordination Strategy: Share resources

Dakota Area Resource and Transportation Services Vehicle Sharing/Maintenance



photo courtesy of DARTS

Background

The Dakota Area Resource Transportation Services (DARTS) Vehicle Coordination Program lends a bus to area churches to provide rides to church for older and non-driving adults. DARTS currently has an agreement with the City of Farmington, and the Rambling River Senior Center also uses the bus on Fridays for special outings.

DARTS also has a maintenance program for its sizeable fleet of vehicles because of the expense of providing maintenance for paratransit vehicles. Simultaneously, DARTS realized that area non-profit organizations with paratransit vehicles may also benefit from access to specialized maintenance and has extended its services to area organizations.

Problem/Opportunity

The vehicle-sharing program came about after DARTS recognized that their community partners might not be able to own or rent a paratransit vehicle at an affordable price.

The vehicle maintenance program started after

Service Area

- Serves Dakota County
- 23,486 square miles (excluding Duluth)
- 587 square miles
- 400,000 residents
- Transit: Primary clients are older adults and people with disabilities
- Vehicle sharing: Buses used by area churches, City of Farmington, and the Rambling River Senior Center
- Vehicle maintenance: Used by area non-profit organizations

Operational Characteristics

- Transportation programs incorporated in 1977

Results

- 100 vehicle maintenance program customers

Lessons Learned

- Coordinated and collaborated with community partners; provided useful services in a cost-effective way

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DARTS identified the high maintenance costs associated with paratransit vehicles. These vehicles cost a lot to maintain because of the parts and mechanisms inherent to their design, as well as their heavy use and their high number of miles.

Solution

The shared use of the buses through the vehicle-sharing program benefited both DARTS and the community partners. The vehicle maintenance service provides cost-effective maintenance to both DARTS and other area non-profits.

Council Members

Office of the Governor

Minnesota State Council
on Disability

Minnesota Public Transit
Association

Minnesota Department
of Transportation

Minnesota Department
of Human Services

Minnesota Department
of Health

Metropolitan Council

Minnesota Department
of Education

Minnesota Department
of Veterans Affairs

Minnesota Board on
Aging

Minnesota Department
of Employment and
Economic Development

Minnesota Department
of Commerce

Minnesota Management
and Budget

Results/Benefits

The vehicle maintenance program currently has 100 customers.

Challenges/Lessons Learned

With the vehicle-sharing program, there was a challenge to find a community partner who needed the buses at a time when DARTS did not. There was a lot of coordination and collaboration with the community partners to bring about the shared program.

The vehicle maintenance program needed to build a strong customer base to sustain the program and offer enough business that all mechanical specialties were covered.

Future Direction

Both programs are running strong and in the future, DARTS would like to keep them operating efficiently.