Successful Local Transportation Coordination Case Studies

Coordination Strategy: Share resources
Far North Transit Senior Medical Travel Program

Background
Far North Transit operates its Senior Medical Travel program with approximately 25 volunteers who drive their own vehicles. The volunteers drive older adults and individuals with disabilities to medical appointments across Minnesota. Riders pay what they can, up to the full reimbursement of $0.51 per mile, for the ride. Riders are referred through social service agencies, which determine eligibility for the program.

Problem/Opportunity
Roseau County is very rural, and many people have a two-hour drive to anywhere with a population greater than 10,000 people. Many older adults and individuals with disabilities in the community do not have family that can drive them to appointments in major towns or cities, which are often a considerable distance away. Furthermore, many clients need to drive substantial distances for regularly scheduled appointments, such as dialysis or chemotherapy, and they are not able to make those trips on their own. In 1990, the Committee on Aging assessed the need in Roseau County and determined this type of service was needed.

Solution
Because Roseau County is rural and sparsely populated, a program with volunteer drivers was the only option considered. Many of the people utilizing the service would not be able to drive themselves to their medical appointments, some of which are life-sustaining, because of the distance, their general health, or other reasons. The program requires coordinating referrals from social service agencies and scheduling drivers.

Results/Benefits
The Senior Medical Travel program provided 1,373 rides in 2010 to locations such as Grand Forks, Fargo, Bemidji, Thief River Falls, Deer River, Minneapolis, and St. Paul.
Challenges/Lessons Learned
Far North Transit’s Senior Medical Travel program has experienced ongoing funding challenges. Currently, the program’s funding comes from many sources—public funds, grants, rider fees, and funds from the local hospital.

Future Direction
The program is considering expanding into other counties that have demonstrated transportation needs, contingent upon future funding.