Successful Local Transportation Coordination Case Studies

Coordination Strategy: Coordinate agency schedules
Kandiyohi Area Transit KAT Carriage

Background
The KAT Carriage program offers a paratransit bus and driver to area nursing homes and adult day care centers to provide rides to medical appointments, scheduled treatments, shopping trips, and other outings for residents. The program currently uses one vehicle, purchased under the 5310 program. KAT Carriage is a joint powers venture between the City of Willmar and Kandiyohi County.

Problem/Opportunity
Kandiyohi Area Transit, operator of KAT Carriage, took inventory of the types of transportation and vehicles used in the county. Many organizations had buses but did not use them enough to justify the cost of owning and maintaining them. Furthermore, these organizations were using the same types of vehicles but were not coordinating with each other to make ownership and operation more cost effective. As these vehicles aged, maintenance costs often exceeded the resources of each organization.

Kandiyohi Area Transportation considered providing transportation with city buses. However, an analysis of Kandiyohi County’s demographics showed an increasing number of individuals with disabilities. The county needed a bus that could provide transportation for more than two people in wheelchairs at a time, so Kandiyohi Area Transit applied to get funding for a paratransit vehicle.

Service Area
- Serves the City of Willmar and Kandiyohi County
- 796 square miles
- 42,293 residents
- Primary clients are local nursing homes and adult day care centers

Financial
- Budget: Approximately $10,000 per year
- Funding mostly from county transit, local share dollars
- Older Americans Act transportation funding for 2011: Kandiyohi Area Transit received $31,000 from MNRAAA
- Fee for community use: $45 per hour (no matter how many riders)

Operational Characteristics
- Created in October 2008
- One vehicle, purchased under 5310 program
- Staffed by six part-time employees (administration and drivers)

Results
- 1,424 rides in 2010

Lessons Learned
- Motivated community partners to rethink how they provide transportation to residents

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Solution

Kandiyohi Area Transportation applied for and received a paratransit bus through the 5310 program. KAT Carriage can use the accessible bus all day to serve the needs of multiple organizations, allowing for better use of the vehicle. Kandiyohi County worked with agencies in the area to get them on board so that they would use the program rather than continue to provide the services themselves.

Organizations must request the vehicle ahead of time and pay $45 per hour to use the vehicle.

Coordination of the program is an ongoing task, as agencies need to request services and the schedules of multiple agencies need to be accommodated.

Results/Benefits

The KAT Carriage program is used by organizations throughout the City of Willmar and Kandiyohi County. Many agencies no longer have their own vehicles and rely solely on KAT Carriage. In 2010, KAT Carriage provided 1,424 rides.

Challenges/Lessons Learned

One challenge the program encountered was how to get agencies to use and rely on KAT Carriage rather than continuing to use their own vehicles. At first, it was difficult to convince area organizations to use the service because of the inconvenience of reserving the bus ahead of time.

Also, since the cost is upfront, as opposed to ownership and operating costs that are absorbed into an organization’s budget, it was hard to convince area organizations that the KAT Carriage was a cost-effective alternative. Thus, the lesson learned was to make sure the service is on time, efficient, and reliable so that organizations continue to use it.

Currently KAT Carriage uses just one vehicle. While this can be a challenge at times, users have been flexible. Kandiyohi Area Transit has also used public transit buses to supplement service if needed.

Kandiyohi Area Transit has found it beneficial to have public transit and KAT Carriage housed in the same building. Staff has been able to assess on a case-by-case basis if a user may be able to efficiently use public transit rather than KAT Carriage to get to a destination.

Future Direction

Moving forward, KAT Carriage plans to continue to provide transportation services at the current level. When financially feasible, KAT Carriage would like to provide more hours of operation.

While there are no current plans to purchase an additional paratransit bus, research on the need for second bus may begin in the next few years.