Successful Local Transportation Coordination Case Studies

Coordination Strategy: Establish/enhance volunteer driver programs
VINE Faith in Action Mobility Management

Background

VINE Mobility Management provides transportation assistance to older adults (60 years and older), people with disabilities, and people with transportation challenges to access needed activities and social services. VINE provides transportation using volunteer drivers and assists people in navigating public transportation or other transportation options in Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties. VINE will provide assistance or transportation for any type of trip—medical appointments, social events, hair appointments, shopping, etc.

Volunteers drive their own cars and are reimbursed $0.41 per mile, but they volunteer their time. VINE sends each rider a letter with the total cost of his or her rides and asks for a payment of whatever the rider can give towards that cost. VINE receives approximately 60 percent of the funds for the program this way. It also has had funding from the New Freedom Grant since 2008.

Problem/Opportunity

Because Nicollet and Blue Earth Counties do not have public transportation beyond the City of Mankato, there was a need to help people living in the more rural parts of the counties access medical appointments and shopping. There was also a need to assist people within Mankato and North Mankato who cannot ride public transit.

The authors of the 2006 Human Service Transit Coordination plan identified this gap in service and made it a goal to have a mobility manager in the area.

Solution

The mobility manager is knowledgeable about local transportation options and focuses on establishing and maintaining relationships with local transportation agencies.

The mobility manager coordinates with clients to let them know available options. There is also coordination with volunteer drivers to schedule rides to appointments in Nicollet and Blue Earth Counties and beyond.

Service Area

- Serves Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties
- 1,204 square miles
- 96,740 residents
- Primary clients: Adults age 60 and older, people with disabilities, and people with transportation challenges

Financial

- 2010 budget: $58,000 in mobility management, $83,000 in operations
- Funding from New Freedom grant
- Received 60 percent of budget from rider fares
- Volunteer drivers are reimbursed $0.41 per mile
- Total cost to organization per ride: $0.66 per mile

Operational Characteristics

- Created in 2008
- No agency vehicles; rely on about 2,005 volunteer drivers (various time commitments)
- Staffed by one full-time mobility manager and five part-time staff

Results

- 4,493 rides with volunteers in 2010

Lessons Learned

- Created transit advisory committee

Contact

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Results/Benefits
In 2010, VINE Mobility Management gave 4,493 rides with volunteers.

Challenges/Lessons Learned
One goal has been to create a resource guide for all the services and options for the mobility manager to use. However, it has been a challenge to find a good way to make it searchable and easy to use. Currently, the mobility manager uses a binder with an information sheet for each service as well as a more general list in an electronic spreadsheet.

Another challenge has been to get people to accept help, especially older adults in rural areas. To get the word out, VINE has worked with churches and city staff and given them information about the program so they can refer people who may need transportation help. VINE has also educated staff in clinics on transportation options for patients.

VINE also started a transit advisory committee with many people from different backgrounds and agencies. They have found it to be a helpful resource to talk about problems and possible solutions related to transit in the area.

Future Direction
VINE would like to search out more options for transit into rural areas in the future. They will also work with the City of Mankato to expand the fixed route transportation system.