Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Meeting #2
Headwaters Regional Development Commission
403 4th St. NW #310 Bemidji, MN 56601
Sept 11th, 2019 10:00am

Welcome & Introductions
Attendance: Wendy Jourdin, Tom Gottfried, Gail Leverson, Terri Darco, Jo Aery, Jamie Halverson, LuAnn Durant, Bryan McCoy, Emily Tribby, Missy Malone

Officer Elections
Require Chair, Co-Chair, & Secretary: Gail Leverson volunteered to be chair. Still need a co-chair and secretary

Volunteer Driver Program
Vision: Increase availability of drivers & sharing of volunteer pool
Volunteer pool is very small in our region, Clearwater and Lake of the Woods Counties only have two drivers, both of which have set schedules and mostly unable to take on any new rides. There seems to be similar causes to the shortage, tax reimbursement issues, differences in requirements between counties deterring volunteers, basic information on options not readily available. Discussed a few options to go forward with, such as setting up a Volunteer Driver Training that would give general instruction on driving regulations and how to deal with the taxable reimbursements, but also could have social service groups attend and present on their needs and requirements. Other options could be working with legislation to fix the taxable reimbursement issue and work with counties to get standardized document requirements.

Vehicle Sharing Network
Vision: Multiple agencies partnering together on transportation resources
There are dozens of public and privately funded transportation vehicles in our region, many of which sit unused for a majority of the time. Need to check into the possibility of sharing vehicles between organizations to transport clientele. Need to identify Partners/5310 providers throughout our region, check into possible insurance issues, figure out what type of reimbursements would be available, and take inventory of vehicles available. Also need to look into the option for churches in an area to stagger start times, so a bus could possibly be used to drop off at multiple churches.

Employer Transportation Program
Vision: Employer sponsored shared transportation service
Large businesses in the region have non-typical hours, causing transportation issues. Need to reach out to employers, see if there’s an option to use a company vehicle, set up a rideshare program or partner with area transportation agencies if businesses are in a centralized location. Having a plan for transportation can be beneficial for both employers and potential employees that otherwise couldn’t get to an interview/shift. Other options could be a college rideshare for students.

Court Transportation
Vision: Provide reliable & low-cost transport to court and other legal programs
Our area has a unique issue of individuals missing court due to having no means to get to their scheduled date, causing further legal issues. There’s no set time for court, it can be an all morning/early afternoon event. People are unable to schedule a ride due to not knowing when they’ll be out. Another issue is getting to court mandated classes or treatment programs. Many unable to drive due to their sentence, and the confidentiality of certain classes makes it difficult to ride share. Look into possibility of a voucher type system.

Centralized Ride Resource
Vision: Provide a resource to organizations & public on available transportation
Discussed gathering multi-county inventory on the Volunteer programs to form one centralized information pool. Need to have multiple options for those needing a ride, e.g. type of ride, which payment agency could be used, number of stops. Issues come from drivers only allowed a direct route, to an appointment and back home. Clearwater has a partial list started. Need an organization to volunteer and help with a trial run.

Other Items
Transportation to Food Locations
Many in the area do not have an easy access to food distribution sites, including food pantries and hot meal locations. Public transit doesn’t have reliable hours, the distance is too great, or limitations once on public transit. Need to look into food distribution mapping and talk with communities who have options for those in need.

Wrap-Up
Next meeting is November 14th at 10am in the HRDC Conference room.