

# **Region 7E Public Transit-Human Service Coordination Plan**

**East Central Minnesota (Region 7E)  
Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs & Pine Counties**

**Completed December 2006 by  
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## **Section 1: Introduction and Purpose**

### **A. Role and Purpose of Coordinated Plans**

The Public Transit-Human Service Coordination Plan is a document developed as a result of the August 2005 passage

of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) by the U.S. Congress.

The East Central Regional Development Commission entered into an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to conduct the study of transit needs in Region 7E (Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine counties) within the SAFETEA-LU requirements.

SAFETEA-LU requires the inclusion of, grantees under the New Freedom Initiative, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program 5310) must be part of this locally developed coordinated public transit-human service transportation plan. The inclusion of these grantees in the process helped assure the plan to be independent, objective and representative of public, private and non-profit transportation services, human service providers and the general public.

The purpose of the plan is to create comprehensive guidance to assist community leaders, agencies involved in human service transportation, public transit services, and stakeholders of all the above. The result is a plan developed in cooperation and coordination in communities where coordination is a priority, thus citizens will benefit from improved service, lower costs and easier access to transportation.

## **B. Description of Process**

The process of developing the Public Transit-Human Service Coordination Plan is one of uniformity throughout the state. Each region followed the same general set of guidelines, bringing forward a statewide plan with few gaps in information. The goal of the ECRDC was to follow the guidelines set forward by MnDOT that included:

- An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with limited incomes;
- An inventory of available services that identifies areas of redundant service and gaps in service;
- Strategies to address the identified gaps in service;
- Identification of coordination actions to eliminate or reduce duplication in services and strategies for more efficient utilization of resources; and, prioritization of implementation strategies.

## **C. Public Involvement**

Significant and far-reaching public involvement is key to developing the Public Transit-Human Service Coordination Plan. The ECRDC followed a wide variety of public involvement necessary for bringing forward decisions made by consensus on important transportation issues of Region 7E.

- Appointment of a Technical Advisory Committee

In August 2006 a technical advisory committee was formed, locally referred to as "Transit Study Workgroup". Members of the Transit Study Workgroup include: Michele Bollenbeck, Lakes and Pines Community Action Council; Judy Broman, Pine County Senior Bus; Jacqueline Forner, Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express; George Larson, Isanti County Commissioner; Mike Moilanen, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe; Helen Pieper, Mille-Lacs Public Transit; Connie Strandberg, Kanabec County Public Health; Stan Cooper, Kanabec County Commissioner; Bev Olson, Pine County Public Health; Stephanie Liebel, Communities Investing in Families; Jeannette Kester, PHASE; Pauline Bohachek and Robert Peterson, Industries, Inc.; Kevin VanHooser, Isanti County Family Services; Lisa Lilja, WINDOW Victim Services; Kathy Ellis, Kanabec County Commissioner; Lisa Krahn, Seven County Senior Federation; JoAnn Alexander, Family Pathways; Lowell Sedlacek, Kanabec County Veteran's Services; Robert Bollenbeck, ECRDC; and Penny Simonsen, East Central Senior Resource Center.

- Public Involvement

As part of the public involvement process, the ECRDC solicited input from over 500 respondents that included transportation providers in the form of a transit questionnaire. Those included in the distribution list included private, non-profit, and public transit providers, individuals with disabilities, older adults, human service agencies, employment services and agencies, public health and family services agencies, advocacy groups, American Indian tribal representatives, employers, community-based organizations, and elected officials.

The transit questionnaire asked questions of the respondents, falling into four major areas: 1) type of transportation provided; 2) identification of areas of concern regarding coordination of transit; 3) gaps or duplication of services; and 4) suggestions for improvement and reducing unmet needs.

Of the 485 solicitations, sixty-six responses were ascertained. Information gleaned from the questionnaires were used during the planning workshops held throughout the process and reported within this document in sections 2, 3, and 4. Copies of full responses are available upon request.

- Planning Workshops

Five planning workshops were held during the process and covered the following specific topics and exercises: 1) introduction and overview of SAFETEA-LU, history of transportation coordination in Minnesota and the importance of public transportation services; 2) inventory of transportation services; 3) identification and categorization of unmet needs; identification of gaps and the subsequent challenges in connecting people to services; and 4) development of an action plan to improve and sustain coordination of transportation within Region 7E.

During the course of the planning workshop schedule, participants were able work through each of the agenda items at a pace which allowed for "homework", or the gathering of information from those outside of the workshop. Development of a workshop series created an opportunity to work through the process more fully.

Over 40 individuals participated in the workshop series—representing all targeted groups or organizations. Their input and feedback drove the work and the content of this document.

- Public Hearing

A public hearing for the Public Transit-Human Service Coordination plan was held on Monday, December 18, 2006 at 7:15pm at the offices of the ECRDC, 100 Park Street South, Mora, Minnesota 55051.

## **Section 2: Inventory**

### **A. Profile of Service Providers/Description of Services Provided**

#### **Multi-County Transportation Providers within 7E:**

**Allina Transportation.** Cambridge based transportation for Cambridge, Mora, and Pine City. Hours of operation are M-F, 8a-4p. **Levels of Service: Days/hours per week-5, Response Time-6, Assistance-1.**

**Senior Helping Hands.** St. Cloud based private non-profit providing prevention, outreach, addiction services

and mental health help for older adults and their families. One 9 passenger van driven by paid staff. They provide services in all five Region 7E counties. Eight volunteer staff drive personal vehicles. Services provided/needed M-F during daytime hours. Lead time: 1-2 days. Estimate 100's go without the services because of lack of transportation. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-5, Response Time-6, Assistance-1.**

**Family Pathways Senior Services.** Wyoming based private, non-profit has offices in Sandstone, Chisago City and Cambridge that provides senior advocacy, companionship and caregiver relief and support. Provide services in Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec and Pine counties 63 volunteer drivers provide transportation directly related to companion or caregiver services provided by agency from M-F, 8a-4p. 40 mile roundtrip limit. No lead time noted. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-5, Response Time-4/5, Assistance-1.**

**Industries, Incorporated.** Private non-profit with offices in Cambridge and Mora providing employment opportunities and programming for people with disabilities and other challenges. They provide transportation in all five Region 7E counties, in addition to Aitkin, Benton, Stearns, St. Louis and Winona counties. 14 paid drivers transport clients 7 days a weeks from 7a-5p, by 11 vans (118 passengers), one small 8 passenger bus (2 wheelchair capacity), and seven medium (11-20 passenger) buses with 87 ambulatory and 17 wheelchair capacity. Lead time: 12-24 hours. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-3, Response Time-4, Assistance-1.**

**Isanti County Providers:**

**Cambridge Cab.** Private business located in Cambridge, Serving Isanti and Kanabec counties primarily. From Isanti and Kanabec counties, the cab service will transport to Twin Cities airport, medical clinics, shopping, etc. Hours of operation are: Mon-Th 7a-11p; Fri-Sat 7a-2a; and Sun 7a-4p. In addition to cabs, the company has mini-vans that are not wheelchair accessible. Riders must have the ability to transfer from wheelchair to van seat. Rates are \$3.50 meter drop, then \$2 per mile with a \$10 minimum if the pick-up is in Mora. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-1, Response Time-2, Assistance-3.**

**Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express.** Public agency located in Cambridge, providing public transit buses and volunteer driver program in both Chisago and Isanti counties with curb to curb service operating with 12 sedans and 11 medium buses (16-18 per bus) with 2-4 wheelchair capacity—and all with lifts/ramps. Hours of service are 5a-5:30p M-F. Additional hours from 5:30-8p, (**Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express, continued**) and half days on Saturdays and Sundays are deemed to be needed. Staff spend 172 hours a month arranging rides. Rides have a lead time of noon the working day before the ride. Assistance is provided to and from the vehicles upon rider request. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-3, Response Time-4, Assistance-2.**

**Cambridge-Isanti Public School.** Public school with schools in Cambridge and Isanti. They provide transportation to and from school M-F, 6:30a-4:30p using 2 medium buses (15 passenger), and 71 large buses (5,800 total capacity). **Level of Service: 0 (as they offer no transit beyond school age riders to and from school).**

**Eagle Transportation.** Braham based private provider offers transportation statewide Mon-Sat 6a-8p; Sun 6a-8p (though not marketed). Sedans and vans available, rates are \$2 a mile. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-2, Response-4, Assistance-3.**

**Isanti County Family Services.** Public agency providing social services, child support services and financial assistance. Based in Cambridge. Provide transportation to family services clients only (not to the general public) by means of one five passenger sedan and two vans (13 passenger). Transportation provided all hours, but vast majority is M-F, 8a-5p. They purchase volunteer driver services from transit provider. No staff time is spent in coordinating transit, as it is referred to the transit provider, Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express. **Level of Service: See Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express.**

**Trinity Lutheran Adult Day Services.** Located in St. Francis, serving Isanti and Anoka counties, as a private non-profit organization that provides adult day services and homemaking/companion services. They offer handicapped accessible van on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 7:45-9:30am and 3-4:30/5p. Program is closed on Tuesdays and Thursdays due to lack of transportation through Linwood Transportation. Staff transports 18+ a month. Four days a month are dedicated to transportation arrangements. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-5, Response-6, Assistance-1.**

**Joy Lutheran Church.** Cambridge based private non-profit church has two volunteers (church members) that provide

transportation for disabled members to church activities.  
**Level of Service: Days/hours per week-8, Response-6, Assistance-1.**

**Chisago County Providers:**

**Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express.** Public agency located in Cambridge, providing public transit buses and volunteer driver program in both Chisago and Isanti counties with curb to curb service operating with 12 sedans and 11 medium buses (16-18 per bus) with 2-4 wheelchair capacity—and all with lifts/ramps. Hours of service are 5a-5:30p M-F. Additional hours from 5:30-8p, and half days on Saturdays and Sundays are deemed to be needed. Staff spend 172 hours a month arranging rides. Rides have a lead time of noon the working day before the ride. Assistance is provided to and from the vehicles upon rider request.  
**Level of Service: Level of Service: Days/hours per week-3, Response Time-4, Assistance-2.**

**Parmly Senior Housing and Services.** Located in Chisago City, this private non-profit organization serves Chisago, Isanti, Anoka and Washington counties in an array of services for seniors by multiple housing settings, community services including transportation. Transportation is offered by using two vans (13 capacity/1 wheelchair/1 ramp); one small bus (6 capacity/3 wheelchair/1 ramp); three medium buses (39 capacity/9 wheelchair/3 ramp); and one large bus (21 capacity/2 wheelchair/1 ramp). Types of transportation provided includes specialized transportation, medical transportation and group outings. They assist passengers to and from the vehicles. Hours that transportation is available are: M-F 6a-5p (later by appointment); Saturday 6a-4p; Sunday by appointment. Parmly has 12 paid drivers, and spends 30 hours per month arranging the transportation. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-3, Response-4, Assistance-1.**

**Senior Shuttle.** Non-profit provider based in Chisago City. Rides are available on Mondays and Wednesdays for local shopping or errands in the Chisago Lakes area. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week- 6, Response-5, Assistance-1/2.**

**Mille Lacs County Providers:**

**Milaca Public Schools.** Public entity providing education ts from Kanabec, Isanti, Benton and Mille Lacs counties. They did not identify how many buses/vans/sedans they have to transport students to and from school and school activities. **Level of Service: 0 (they provide no service beyond school age riders to and from school)**

**Mille Lacs County Family Services.** Public agency offering administration of health care programs and all adult and children's social service programs. Eight sedans are available for 2 full time paid drivers and one substitute driver along with 19 volunteer drivers. The MLCFS spends about 2 hours a month scheduling rides. Mille Lacs County funds a grant annually to public transit and provides additional funding for mental health clients. MLCFS also pays for non-medical appointments from state block grants. Transportation is offered through Mille Lacs County Public Transit 8:30a-3p M-F, with a lead time of 2-3 days. Passengers must have an open social service care. They transport 5 persons a month. Expanded hours to 4p or possibly later, and weekend hours, Sunday for church services have been other requests. **Level of Service: See Mille Lacs County Public Transit.**

**Pearl Crisis Center.** Private non-profit agency in Milaca supports victims of domestic/sexual violence estimates 20 people per year cannot access their services due to lack of transportation. Approximately 10 hours a month are used to arrange rides on a 24/7/365 basis. They provide 12 one-way trips each month for clients, using staff vehicles. They also have 12 volunteer counselors that will transport, receiving mileage reimbursement. **Level of Service: Days/hours per month-1, Response-2, Assistance-2.**

**Elim Oasis Adult Day Center.** Public not-for profit located in Princeton provides nutrition (meals), bathing, laundry, medications, medication set up with physician ordered treatments, and transportation that they secure, or do it themselves. They serve clients in Isanti, Mille Lacs and Sherburne counties using a small bus (7 capacity) and one medium bus (12 capacity/2 wheelchair/1 ramp). They utilize Mille Lacs Public Transit when appropriate—they are wonderful. Adult day services are (**Elim Oasis Adult Day Center, continued**)available 8:30a-3p M-F—of which hours they need transportation services. Staff spends 8 hours a month arranging rides for the 8 clients they arrange for. Mille Lacs County Public Transit transports 80, and Interfaith Caregivers provides rides for 40. They have three paid staff that transport, their volunteer drivers are secured through Interfaith Caregivers. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-5, Response-4, Assistance-1.**

**Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.** A tribal government with its mailing address in Onamia have offices in Vineland, East Lake, and Lake Lena provides some transportation to Isle/Vineland route, casino shuttle service, human service rides, and medical rides. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-3, Response-4, Assistance-2.**

**Mille Lacs Public Transit, Inc.** A private, non-profit that serves Mille Lacs County from their offices in Milaca.

Services provided include public transit and volunteer driver transportation for medical and other essential trips. Seventeen volunteer drivers provide sedans, along with 4 paid drivers/4 medium buses (47 capacity/4 wheelchair/ramps) transport 500 (volunteer) and 1700 (public transit). Dispatchers spend 194 hours a month in coordinating the rides. Hours of service are from 7a-4p M-F. Extended hours on weekdays and weekend service (Sunday morning) is needed. Lead time is 24 hours. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-4, Response-4, Assistance-2.**

**Onamia Senior Dining.** Catholic Charities senior dining program located on main street in Onamia serves congregate and home delivered meals as a private non-profit organization to persons in Mille Lacs County. They estimate 6 persons per year cannot access their services due to lack of transportation. Fifteen volunteer drivers provide rides M-F for home delivered meals provided from the dining site. Lead time is one day. Hours of operation for the dining site are 10a-1p M-F. About 60 hours a month are spent transporting 6 diners. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-6, Response-4, Assistance-1.**

**Mille Lacs Health System.** Located in Onamia, with clinics in Isle, Hillman and Garrison, the private, non-profit provides health care. 20% of their patients cannot access their services because of a lack of transportation. The nursing home has two paid drivers to operate the medium bus (5310 bus 12 capacity/4 wheelchair/1 ramp) for nursing home residents only for resident outings. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-0, Response-0, Assistance-0. AVAILABLE ONLY TO RESIDENTS OF NURSING HOME.**

**Peterson Bus Princeton, Inc.** A private, for-profit business located in Princeton that provides school bus and van transportation to school aged children, both parochial and public. They serve Isanti, Mille Lacs, Benton and Sherburne counties. They own 15 vans (each with 15 capacity/2 wheelchair/2 ramp), 1 medium bus (1 wheelchair/1 ramp), and 40 large buses (each with 40 capacity/2 wheelchair/2 ramps). Hours are 6:30a - 5p M-F Trips 3p to whatever return time home. Saturdays and Sundays-school district trips. They employ 55 drivers. **Level of Service: 0 (they transport only school age riders to and from school)**

**Rum River Interfaith Caregivers.** Private non-profit located in Princeton that covers western Isanti, northern Sherburne and all of Mille Lacs County. Their office is located in Princeton with a thrift store in Milaca. They provide transportation (medical appointments, other non-medical appointments and shopping), friendly visiting,

respite, home maintenance, ramp building, rural meal delivery, cancer and caregiver support. They currently have 115 volunteer drivers and provide services between the hours of 8:30a-4:30p M-F. They spend 130 hours a month arranging rides. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-5, Response-4, Assistance-1.**

**Kanabec County Providers:**

**Mora ISD 332.** Public school located in Mora. Serving Kanabec County. They transport students to school, special sites, trips using five vans (35 capacity), one small bus (14 capacity), 1 medium bus (17 capacity/1 wheelchair/1 ramp), 24 large buses (1824 capacity/1 wheelchair/1 ramp) during the hours of 7a-4p and occasionally on weekends for trips. 23 paid drivers deliver these services. They estimate 40-50 hours per (**Mora ISD 332, continued**) month are used to arrange this transportation. **Level of Service: 0 (they transport only school age riders to and from school).**

**Kanabec County Public Health. (Three responses)** Public program providing door to door mini-bus transportation, veteran's van and volunteer drivers for medical appointments. Three paid drivers and 12 volunteer drivers provide the services. One medium bus (12 capacity/2 wheelchair/1 ramp) travels throughout Kanabec County M-F 8a-3p. Volunteers drive their own vehicles. Approximately 40 hours a month are dedicated to arranging rides. 800 mini-bus rides per month. 250 volunteer rides per month. Lead time: a moments notice to 2 days. Expansion of hours to 7a-5p M-F is identified as helpful. Weekend hours typically not requested. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-5, Response-3 to 5, Assistance 1/2**

**Grace Lutheran Church.** Located in Mora, the private non-profit church provides rides to Sunday activities from 8a-11a on a very informal basis—friends picking each other up for church. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-8, Response-6, Assistance-1.**

**Ogilvie United Methodist Church.** The private non-profit church is in Ogilvie. They estimate 5 persons per year cannot access due to lack of transportation. They currently have two volunteer drivers that provide rides to church services on Sundays from 9a-noon. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-8, Response-6, Assistance-1.**

**Lewis Lake Covenant Church.** Private non-profit religious organization located near Ogilvie has one volunteer driver that provides transportation to church services on Sundays. They note the need for transportation on Wednesdays. They estimate 5 people per year cannot access services due to

lack of transportation. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-8, Response-6, Assistance-1.**

**Pine County Providers:**

**Pine City Schools.** Public schools located in Pine City. They provide regular and special education bus service to and from school 7a-4:30p M-F. They spend 4 hours per month arranging rides. No vehicle information was given. **Level of Service: 0 (they transport only school age riders to and from school)**

**WINDOW.** A private, non-profit agency providing crime victim advocacy, community education, supervised visitation and safe exchanges in Kanabec and Pine counties. They estimate 40 persons per year cannot access their services due to lack of transportation. WINDOW has 1 van (7 capacity) that is available 24/7/365 for victims of crime, and visitation center participants. On a monthly basis, the agency transports eight people. Other transportation includes gas vouchers, very limited cab fees, and staff transport only if abuser is secured. They have paid drivers (no number given), and spend 3 hours a month on transportation arrangement. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-1, Response-2, Assistance-2.**

**Westerman Bus Company.** Pine City based private company that provides school bus service to Pine City Schools in addition to offering transportation to older adults on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10a-1p within the city limits of Pine City. Fares are by anonymous contribution, forwarded to the City of Pine City, which contracts with Westerman Bus Company to provide the senior transit. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-7, Response-5, Assistance-3.**

**Pine County Health and Human Services.** Public health and social services programs located in Sandstone and Pine City. They have 6 full time and 8 part time volunteer drivers that provide medical transportation from 8a-4:30p M-F, with rides for evenings/weekends arranged during the work week. Lead time: 3 days. They spend 75 hours a month arranging 400 rides. **Level of Service: Days/hours per week-5, Response-6, Assistance-1 to 3.**

**B. Identification of Coordination Opportunities**

Using the Framework for Action as a guide, coordination opportunities are grouped into five areas:

- Making things happen by working together.  
The process of working through the transit study workshop as a series of workshops rather than a one-day event allowed participants to become better acquainted with each other, fully examine the results of the questionnaire and

move toward working together for a common goal, rather than continuing down the path...that each set of challenges belongs only to the provider.

The workshops provided an opportunity for collaboration amongst stakeholders beyond the timeline of the transit study.

- Taking stock of community needs and moving forward. Community needs varied throughout the region. Some communities had a significant interest in transportation from the church communities; others had commuter or employee transportation concerns; while yet others struggled with before and after school activities; and finally the need for older adults and those with disabilities to access timely, affordable transportation.

Pine and Kanabec counties currently do not have public transit systems. Through this process, they both have indicated interest to explore the option and take action to have public transit available. Working in collaboration with existing public transit systems in the region was identified as a desirable option.

Developing strategies to bring "to the table" agencies, organizations and businesses that have vehicles and/or staff that currently provide transportation services, but provide transportation to a limited number of riders by reducing real or perceived obstacles for sharing their resources.

- Putting customers first. Implementation of new and expansion of existing volunteer driver programs to provide extended hours of service, focusing on collaboration amongst existing providers to reduce staff costs and provide more units of service at the same cost.

- Adapting funding for greater mobility. Region-wide, continue the work of comparing the cost of providing transportation independently rather than working collectively. Determine areas where the community will benefit most from collaboration, areas where new services are needed and shift resources to those areas.

- Moving people efficiently. Building on the efficiencies that have been developed in Chisago, Isanti and Mille Lacs counties, encourage a "hub" system to cross county lines, use all available vehicles to their fullest capacity, and create a coordination model across the region.

### **C. Directory of Service Providers**

A directory of transportation service providers is available as a separate attachment to this document. The ECRDC publishes approximately 5,000 directories to be included with an existing senior service resource guide, and as a stand-alone resource guide for region-wide distribution and access. The Directory of Services will also be located on the ECRDC website.

### Section 3: Needs Assessment

#### A. Economic and Demographic Trends

The 7E region, comprised of Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine counties touches the outer most reaches of three metropolitan areas within Minnesota, Duluth to the north, St. Cloud to the west and Minneapolis/St. Paul to the south. While in close proximity to urban areas, the region remains largely rural, consisting of small cities.

The total population of Region 7E in 2000 was 136,244. Projections for 2010 and 2020 are 161,950 and 185,320 respectively. Upon closer look, the population by county shows that Chisago and Isanti counties are much more densely populated than Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine counties reflecting their close proximity to Minneapolis/St. Paul. Tables 1 and 2 portray some of the details.

**Table 1. 2000 County Population Comparisons**

County	Total Population	Density per square mile	Percent Change 1990-2000	Percent Change 1930-2000
Chisago	41,101	98.4	34.66	211.63
Isanti	31,287	71.3	20.70	158.98
Kanabec	14,996	28.6	17.14	75.23
Mille Lacs	22,330	38.9	19.60	58.64
Pine	26,530	18.8	24.76	30.92
Region 7E	136,244	38.4	24.79	99.87
Minnesota	4,919,479	61.8	12.44	91.87

**Table 2. 2000 City Population Comparisons**

County	Total	Population density per square mile	Housing density per square mile	Percent Change 1990-2000
Chisago	5,520	894.1	384.5	8.4
Mora	3,193	781.2	359.9	9.9
North Branch	8,023	224.9	81.3	329.7
Pine City	3,043	1076.3	451.0	16.5
Princeton (Mille Lacs County Only)	3,926	1216.2	516.1	5.6

Region 7E	136,244	38.4	---	99.87
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During the 1990's 59 rural counties in the state gained population (a trend that continues), while 21 counties, predominately in the west and south lost population. The Region 7E counties sit squarely within the corridor of counties that runs from Olmsted County in the southeast, northward through the Twin Cities suburban counties up to Lake of the Woods County.

Between 2000 and 2025, Region 7E counties are amongst the 45 counties statewide that can expect an increase in its population. Table 3 reflects the trend that amongst those 45 counties, Region 7E, along with Region 7W is unique—as the only regions to experience growth in all age groups, not just older adult populations. This growth both in workforce population and older adult population will continue to put demands on transit planning and transportation services within the region, and beyond its borders for employment and services such as health care.

**Table 3. By Region Population Comparison by Age**

Region	2000 0-54	2025 0-54 Projection	Percent Change	2000 55+	2025 55+ Projection	Percent Change
1	74,930	54,600	-27.13	28,400	31,800	+11.97
2	55,840	50,560	-9.46	18,130	27,860	+53.67
3	230,620	177,930	-22.85	87,380	121,570	+38.93
4	150,760	124,990	-17.09	57,970	81,020	+39.76
5	103,380	124,990	+6.77	41,710	59,100	+41.69
6E	87,120	80,780	-7.28	29,050	42,450	+46.13
6W	32,940	23,980	-27.20	16,040	17,590	+9.66
<b>7E</b>	<b>98,620</b>	<b>104,960</b>	<b>+6.43</b>	<b>29,310</b>	<b>51,860</b>	<b>+76.94</b>
<b>7W</b>	<b>261,740</b>	<b>287,540</b>	<b>+9.86</b>	<b>54,020</b>	<b>114,540</b>	<b>+112.03</b>
8	77,950	69,590	-10.72	32,250	42,920	+33.09
9	166,620	144,630	-13.45	32,250	42,920	+33.09
10	342,340	296,280	-13.45	103,420	165,100	+59.64
<b>11</b>	<b>2,121,550</b>	<b>2,028,980</b>	<b>-4.36</b>	<b>450,850</b>	<b>910,180</b>	<b>+101.88</b>
<b>MN</b>	<b>3,803,770</b>	<b>3,540,250</b>	<b>-6.93</b>	<b>1,002,250</b>	<b>1,742,590</b>	<b>+73.87</b>

**Table 4. 2000 Over 60 Population with Projections**

County	2000 Census	2005 Population	2015 Population
Chisago	5,412	6,600	10,220
Isanti	4,594	5,140	6,990
Kanabec	3,079	3,200	4,270
Mille Lacs	4,645	5,080	6,720
Pine	5,359	5,960	8,240

Vehicle access continues to be an issue for older Minnesotans, especially for women in their 70s and 80s. In

1990 the percent of women who did not have a vehicle in the household was 24 percent for those 75 to 79, 38 percent for those 80 to 84 and 58 percent for those 85 to 89. By 2000 the comparable rates were 15, 27, and 42 percent. While the percentages decreased, the population increased.

The fact remains, many older people—especially the oldest women, lack vehicle access. In every age group men are more likely to have vehicles than are women. The lack of vehicles for older adult women, coupled with the ruralness of the region creates limited options for transportation. Lack of vehicles and public transit options, plus distance between the rider and services makes access to services challenging.

Within Region 7E those individuals (over 25 years of age) not completing high school account for 16% of the population compares to the state's figures of 12%. Those with a bachelor's degree or beyond within Region 7E totals 13% of the population, far below the state's figures of over 27%. Individuals falling between those two categories equal. The impact of both statistics is realized in the jobs available within the region, and the per capita income. Tables 5, 6, and 7 highlight the per capita income, median household income and poverty levels within Region 7E.

**Table 5. 2000 Per Capita Income**

County	PCI	Rank in PCI	Percent PCI of MN Total	Percent Change in PCI 1995-2000
Chisago	\$28,260	10	88.5	40.5
Isanti	\$24,870	37	77.9	27.5
Kanabec	\$19,619	85	61.4	19.7
Mille Lacs	\$21,199	75	66.4	27.5
Pine	\$18,852	86	59.0	17.5
Region 7E	\$23,549		73.7	29.5
Minnesota	\$31,935		100	31.4

**Table 6. 2000 Median Household Income**

Chisago	\$52,012
Isanti	\$50,127
Kanabec	\$38,520
Mille Lacs	\$36,977
Pine	\$37,379
Minnesota	\$47,111

**Table 7. 2000 Persons Living Below Poverty Level**

County	Number of Persons	Percent of all Persons	Rank of Percentage
Chisago	2,052	4.9	79
Isanti	1,753	5.6	77
Kanabec	1,402	9.3	40
Mille Lacs	2,084	9.3	41
Pine	2,831	10.7	21
Minnesota	388,639	7.9	---

The ten largest employer sectors in Region 7E include: 1) local government-6,475; 2) health services-4,963; 3) amusement and recreation services-3,407; 4) eating and drinking places-3,292; 5) social services-2,259; 6) food stores-1,713; 7) auto dealers and service stations-1,409; 8) rubber and miscellaneous plastics-1,200; 9) industrial machinery and equipment-1,076; and 10) miscellaneous retail-1,056.

Trends in employment have changed over the past ten years within the region. Increases have been shown in agriculture/forestry/fishing, construction and services with decreases in manufacturing, and public administration.

Due to the close proximity to the Minneapolis/St. Paul, St. Cloud and Duluth metropolitan areas, many of the region's population travel outside of the region for employment. Commuting statistics contained in Table 8 support this practice.

**Table 8. 2000 Commuting Statistics**

County	Average Travel Time	Percent Working Outside County	Percent in Carpools
Chisago	31.9	65.8	12.6
Isanti	32.6	60.4	13.1
Kanabec	31.3	46.3	14.3
Mille Lacs	27.1	40.2	14.6
Pine	30.2	39.6	14
Region 7E	30.6	53.7	13.7
Minnesota	21.9	33.7	10.4

**Table 9. Labor Force Participation Rates**

County	2000	Change from 1990	Percent M/F 16+	Percent Male 16+	Percent Female 16+
Chisago	21,840	45.1	72.6	77.2	67.9
Isanti	17,120	33.9	72.7	78.6	67.0
Kanabec	7,657	23.7	67.0	71.1	62.9
Mille Lacs	11,272	32.7	65.8	71.1	60.8
Pine	12,766	43.0	61.9	64.5	59.0
Region 7E	70,655	37.0	68.7	73.2	64.2
Minnesota	2,691,708	16.3	71.2	76.6	66.0

## **B. Documented Customer Needs and Expectations**

Customer needs and expectations followed common themes across much of the region. In Chisago, Isanti and Mille Lacs Counties where public transit operates the needs and expectations were more defined, with the delivery of "more and better" services as the desired level of service, whereas those surveyed in Kanabec and Pine (where public transit does not operate) the expectations were lower and more basic.

Lack of transportation when crossing county lines. In each of the counties there are base transportation services which each county supports. When county support is involved, county leaders are reluctant to have their vehicles and staff cross county lines. In a region where so many basic transportation needs (i.e. health care, employment, social services) are located beyond a single county border—and may be beyond the regional border this practice becomes an obstacle to access vital services.

Low interest from older adults to ride a bus. The identified preference of older adults was to be able to access volunteer driver programs that have a perception of more flexibility with schedules, ride times, and level of assistance to the rider. In counties that have public transit, this was not reported as often.

Providers must move beyond existing limitations. The expectation that issues with vehicle ownership/use, insurance, training and payment need to be resolved and more transit made available because providers are sharing resources of vehicles and staff.

Make public transit available in all five counties. For Kanabec and Pine counties, development of public transit programs, and for Chisago, Isanti, and Mille Lacs counties, significant expansion of existing services.

Consolidate/coordinate operations of existing transportation. Enhancements in consolidated schedules, routes, and rider access to more fully utilize existing vehicle and staff.

Addressing the issue of cost. Ridership cost was identified as a barrier across the region.

The difficulty in reaching rural areas. While all of Region 7E is considered rural, there remains a struggle for existing transportation providers to reach beyond the city limits of the small cities which dot the region.

More effective marketing of existing transportation providers. The number of riders accessing transportation

programs would increase if promotions and publicity would be targeted to places riders frequent (i.e. businesses). In many instances potential riders were not fully aware of the extent of services currently available.

Need is far greater than programs available. In some instances, a sense of resignation was reported. Funding programs to a level deemed necessary appears to be an obstacle that cannot be overcome. Developing strategies to establish early successes may change this.

Weekend, evening, extended hours, emergency hours. Moving beyond Monday through Friday 8a-4p was expressed in a variety of ways. Offering volunteer driver programs that go beyond medical visits, and allowing for more social uses of the services was reported repeatedly.

Medical trips such as rides home from the hospital or extensive trips such as rides to chemotherapy or dialysis are examples.

Very limited transportation for grocery shopping, banking, pharmacy needs, work or social activities beyond weekday hours.

Rides to and from before or after school activities were identified as needs for working parents. Many school districts, while maintaining a fleet of vehicles, do not offer these services to/from their before or after school activities.

**C. Service Analysis based on Level of Service Measures**  
Service analysis is included within **Section 2-Inventory**.

**D. Human Service Issues and Needs**

Lack of coordination amongst providers. A tremendous amount of staff time needed to coordinate transportation services was reported amongst most of the providers.

Transit Need vs. Available Resources is overwhelming. A common theme was "money...the lack of money", the need for additional vehicles, more volunteer drivers, and more money to support them. There is a desire to get beyond the funding and move toward more collaboration.

Bring organizations with vehicles and staff "to the table".

Most of the long-term care providers and school districts within the region did not respond to the questionnaire nor did they identify themselves as an organization that has 1) vehicles capable of providing transportation and 2) staff able to drive those vehicles.

Blending ridership. Organizations typically serve only "their constituency", and overlook the areas of overlap with other organizations, and consequently lose the opportunity of the sharing valuable resources.

#### **Section 4: Strategies and Implementation**

##### **A. Strategies to Address Service Gaps**

**Strategy #1:** Funding—the cost to riders and the cost of services.

Rationale: Transit providers face challenges in coordination of funding to support new and existing services.

Action: Encourage the development of 5311 public transit programs in Kanabec and Pine Counties.

Action: Coordinate funding and pool resources.

Action: Support the concept of a mobility manager within the region.

**Strategy #2:** Increase education and coordination of available transportation.

Rationale: Education and awareness building of available transit services are vital to the success of transit systems as the rider community continually changes and thus services change.

Action: Promote ways to alert the public of transportation service availability.

**Strategy #3:** Expand the hours/days/area of transportation services.

Rationale: The needs of riders are changing. Older adults live independently and seek ways to navigate their communities by using public transportation or volunteer driver programs. Work force needs demand services at off-peak hours with significant flexibility.

Action: Develop expanded services for older adults, those with disabilities and workforce riders.

##### **B. Service Improvements and Future Steps**

The following activities would be anticipated and undertaken in the implementation phase of the Transit-Human Services Coordination Study.

**1. Regional Coordination Committee** to be kept active in order to review and/or develop JARC or new Freedom initiatives. This committee would be comprised of public transit and 5310 providers, human services programs, low-income programs (such as welfare to work), and others such as local elected officials. The role of the RDC would likely be that of coordinator to ensure issues are discussed and more transit services are delivered in the region.

**2. Develop Public Transit** services in areas of the region without them. Currently three of the five counties have public transit services. One of the themes determined by the transit coordination study was the need for public transit in Kanabec and Pine Counties (currently without public transit).

**3. Assess the feasibility of developing a transportation mobility manager** position to encourage ongoing coordination activities. The mobility manager would also focus on reducing duplication of services, thereby improving service delivery throughout the region.

**4. Review JARC and New Freedom applications** from a regional viewpoint and provide assessment of proposals as recommendation to ECRDC and/or Mn/DOT. This would ensure regional review and acceptance of proposals for new transit services and opportunities.

**C. Strategies to Reduce and Eliminate Service Duplication**

1. Provide incentives and reduce obstacles for coordination of 5310 program vehicles and other vehicles owned by churches, schools, long-term care facilities (and others) to expand the availability of vehicles.
2. Offer on-going training on topics such as insurance and legal issues as it pertains to sharing of vehicles and/or drivers. Thus reducing apprehension and encouraging dialogue to begin, and to foster cooperative agreements.
3. Assist in the development of creating cooperative agreements amongst service providers presently operating independently.
4. Using existing service providers to act as liaisons for new service development, to encourage further

collaboration amongst providers/vehicles and showcase best practices.