

Transportation Coordination Toolkit

November 2005

Coordination Planning

Topic: Planning for Coordination

Target Audience: State Agencies, Human Service Agency Transportation Providers, Section 5310 Agencies, Section 5307 and 5311 Public Transit Systems

Goal: To present the benefits of, and tools and resources for, coordination planning.

(Note: Parts of the following discussion are taken from the document, Innovative State & Local Planning for Coordinated Transportation by the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility which is available in its entirety at http://www.fta.dot.gov/907_ENG_HTML.htm.)

Issue: Planning: Transit Requirements vs. Human Services Requirements

Funding effective coordinated transportation services requires a planning process that melds service needs, available resources, and agency commitments. Planning for transportation services can also involve satisfying the planning requirements of a myriad of programs funded by different federal and state agencies.

The two main sets of requirements which come into play when planning for transportation coordination are transit

requirements and human service program requirements.

Transit and human service program requirements provide states and localities with the flexibility to design transportation systems to meet unique state and local needs. Each state determines how the coordination planning will be administered and which public agencies will be responsible for program development, implementation, and evaluation. Local responsibilities for leading or participating in plan development will vary from community to community with each selecting participant agencies and service delivery options.

Transit Requirements

The planning and coordination requirements for FTA transit programs in DOT are specified by statute. The 1998 reauthorization of highway and transit legislation, the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (known as TEA-21), creates a context for establishing FTA's procedures at the state and metropolitan level for planning, designing, and delivering transportation services that are coordinated with services provided by non-DOT agencies.

TEA-21 provisions created a much stronger basis for coordinated planning and service delivery between recipients of DOT and HHS funds. DOT-funded recipients must include "the non-DOT agencies with planning functions to the

maximum extent practicable," and non-DOT-funded transportation providers are "to participate and coordinate with DOT recipients to the extent feasible." Such language is the clearest expression to date of Congressional interest in the coordination in the planning and delivery of specialized transportation services.

In general, coordination projects which involve public transit services funded by Sections 5310, 5311 or 5307 will have to take into account any Minnesota Department of Transportation (DOT) planning requirements such as the submission of a multi-year operating or capital plan. Urban transit systems (Section 5307) will also have to satisfy the planning requirements of their metropolitan planning organizations (discussed later in this brief).

Human Service Requirements

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)-funded programs respond to planning requirements based on the individual health or social service missions of those programs. The planning period, scope and structure of the planning process, and plan review/approval process will vary significantly from program to program. This variation in planning processes reflects the differing statutes authorizing these programs and the wide range of health and social needs addressed by the programs. For example, Head Start agencies submit program reports each year which address their program intentions for subsequent years. The state agencies funded under the Older Americans Act choose a planning period of 3 to 5 years for their service planning process. A number of health agencies

participate in a 10-year planning process targeting health outcomes for the general population and for specific target populations.

Applications for funding for eight of the twelve HHS programs that fund transportation services are submitted to federal officials at the regional or headquarters level from the state level. For grants for Native Americans, Head Start, Community Services Block Grants, and Community Health Centers, the local agency or tribe is the recipient and is responsible for detailed program planning. The Administration on Aging uses a more detailed planning process that begins with the local area agencies on aging, feeds into a state plan and ends with submission to the Federal office.

Issue: Who are the "Players" in Coordinated Transportation Planning?

Planning for transportation coordination involves a host of different "players" at the federal, state and local levels:

- ❑ Federal DOT or HHS officials
- ❑ State DOT or HHS officials
- ❑ Local elected officials – county commissioners, city council, mayors, township trustees, etc.
- ❑ Public transit systems
- ❑ Social service agencies
- ❑ Local transportation advocacy and advisory groups
- ❑ Metropolitan planning organizations (MPO's)
- ❑ Regional planning commissions (rural areas)
- ❑ Local businesses/industries
- ❑ Private transportation providers

Issue: The Transportation Planning Role of State Agencies

State agencies exercise their planning, program management, and oversight responsibilities over local agencies who plan for transportation coordination at the local level. Experience has shown that states generally support coordinating transportation services, but that financial assistance to plan and implement coordinated human service transportation may be difficult to obtain. With the recent pressures on transportation services that have been created by welfare reform (including pressures on states to meet Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participation rates), some states are becoming more proactive in providing planning support.

Issue: The Transportation Planning Role of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

For transportation coordination planning projects in urbanized areas and which include an urban transit system or Section 5310 grantees, the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) will most likely become involved in the planning process.

Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) have the federally-mandated responsibility for regional transportation planning including planning for public transit-type services. An MPO is an organizational entity with lead responsibility for developing short-term and long-range transportation plans and transportation improvement plans (TIPs) in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. MPO's may also provide recommendations to the state DOT

regarding the selection of grantees for Section 5310 vehicles. MPOs may also provide technical assistance to small urban areas and rural communities on transportation planning. In some areas, MPOs also lead other types of planning such as human services and housing.

MPOs are appropriate organizations to prepare plans, collect and analyze data, develop strategies, and allocate funds. MPOs participate in the prioritization of projects that span over a variety of highway, transit, mobility and coordination needs in a given region. They can play a significant role in stimulating regional cooperation among agencies and help minimize the fragmentation of services provided in a community or region. MPOs often take a multi-jurisdictional approach to coordination planning and problem solving, engaging a wide range of groups including human service and transit providers. Therefore, MPOs play a lead role in coordinating specialized transportation services in a metropolitan area.

An example of an MPO in Minnesota involved in transportation coordination activities is the Metropolitan Council, the designated MPO for the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Council is responsible for preparing a long-range (20-year) transportation plan for the region every three (3) years. It is also responsible for the selection of projects for federal funding (including transit) and the preparation of a three-year transportation improvement program (TIP). This is done through a planning process involving the Council's Transportation Advisory Board (made up of local elected officials) and its Technical Advisory Committee. The

process to develop the Council's TIP includes broad citizen and interested group input.

Issue: The Planning Role of Local Providers and Agencies

Most coordination planning occurs at the local level. This is where the actual delivery of transportation services takes place and agreements between agencies are formulated. This is also where most of the coordination project's policies and procedures will be developed

Usually, coordination planning begins with the formation of a local committee or task force made up of human service agencies, public transit systems, and local elected officials, and other interested organizations, businesses or citizens. In rural areas, this committee will most likely need to be created. In urban areas, the metropolitan planning organization's committee structure may be utilized.

Issue: What is the Planning Process?

Once a transportation coordination committee/task force has been established, the planning process can begin. To start the coordinated planning process, review the sequence of transportation planning steps outlined in the checklist below. Pay close attention to the following section about working through specific goals and objectives, because establishing these goals and objectives early in the planning process will greatly increase your chances of success. Finally, if you run into problems, ask for help. Technical assistance resources are listed in the Resource Guide for Coordinated

Transportation Planning of the Transportation Coordination Toolkit.

The coordination planning checklist below provides a representative synthesis of coordinated guidance from states and localities around the country. In recognition of these guidelines and the wide variation of needs from community to community, it is recommended that the checklist outlined in the next section be used as an overall framework. Those who are interested in implementing or enhancing coordination in states and communities would be well advised to review the list and the resource guide included in the **Transportation Coordination Toolkit** to fine tune their approaches.

Checklist of Transportation Planning Steps

Following the eleven (11) steps below can help create successfully coordinated transportation services. It is important to remember that coordination takes place at both the state and local level. Use this checklist to make sure that you have covered all the bases. Come back and review it from time to time for a clear perspective on the planning process and its linkage to operations.

Communities are encouraged to include the following steps in coordinating their specialized transportation planning activities:

- 1. Identify stakeholders;
- 2. Organize initial meeting of coordination committee/task force;

- 3. Establish commitments and form partnerships;
- 4. Specify goals, objectives, and constraints;
- 5. Jointly identify client needs;
- 6. Identify transportation resources;
- 7. Design detailed service and financial options;
- 8. Select and recommend a plan of action;
- 9. Confirm agency and community commitments;
- 10. Develop implementation and funding plan for selected alternative; and
- 11. Measure, monitor and evaluate performance.

All of these planning steps are crucial to success in the operational phases of transportation service. The planning process needs to be seen as continuous and iterative: plans are made, tested, refined, and retested in a repetitive cycle until they meet the system's goals and objectives in an efficient manner before operations begin. Nevertheless, operating procedures may need to be evaluated and modified several times before goals and objectives can be met most effectively.

Transportation systems must continuously plan for the efficient and effective delivery of services. Existing systems must decide whether services should remain the same or whether new

or adjusted services will be offered. New systems must determine what services will be provided, how they will be delivered, when services will be offered, and what price will be charged to passengers or their sponsors. Service planning determines the operations, maintenance, administrative, and capital requirements of the transportation system according to the system's adopted goals and objectives. The seven key elements of a transportation service plan are:

- Service modes,
- Service availability,
- Organizational and institutional context,
- Service pricing,
- Personnel and labor requirements,
- Rolling stock, and
- Other capital requirements.

Coordination is applicable to all of these key elements. Sharing information, facilities, and resources across this broad spectrum of activities can lead to coordination benefits, including access to more funding sources, higher quality and more cost-effective transportation services, and transportation services that are more visible to consumers.

(Note: a complete description of each of the steps is included in the aforementioned CCAM report.)

References/Resources:

Many individuals and organizations have been involved in the area of coordinated transportation planning for some time, and are available to help. A list of coordination resources is provided in the ***Resource Guide for Coordinated***

Transportation Planning of the **Transportation Coordination Toolkit** which is available at:
http://www.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_101.pdf

The National Transit Resource Center includes a wide range of materials on transportation coordination strategies and experiences. The Resource Center may be contacted at 1 (800) 527-8279 or on the web at: www.ctaa.org/ntrc.

The Office of Family Assistance/HHS has published and disseminated joint guidance on the use of TANF, Welfare-to-Work (Department of Labor) and Job Access (FTA) funds to provide transportation services that is available on the following website:
www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/welfare/pa002.htm.

Also, you may find answers to your questions on the web page for the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. If you don't find the question directly, there are discussion groups on that web page to which you may post your particular question. The address for the Council's web page is www.unitedweride.gov.

Best Practices

Rainbow Rider, Lowry, MN

Coordinated Planning and Administration

Rainbow Rider is a consortium of Douglas, Pope, Stevens, and Traverse Counties, formed under a Joint Powers Board in 1995. Since its inception, the Rainbow Rider Transit Board has coordinated the planning, oversight, administration and operations of transit

service in the four counties. In 2000, the transit board took over direct operations of the system. This coordination effort among the four counties helps contain administrative costs and assures that the service provided is the right mix and most cost effective for the area served. Wheelchair lift equipped buses along with a volunteer driver program are used to provide route deviation, dial-a-ride, and subscription service Monday - Friday on a first come, first served basis. The service is provided as one, seamless system, although service is tailored to the individual counties and local communities. In addition to its stated service area, Rainbow Rider also coordinates with other counties outside its service area to provide service primarily through its volunteer driver program. It also contracts with the majority of the schools in its service area to provide special need transportation as well as all of the Head Start transportation in the four county area.

Each county appoints two county commissioners to serve on the joint powers board, which meets monthly to conduct business. The board approves any new service that is needed, but relies on the Rainbow Rider management staff to make the call if more or less service is needed in an area.

Each county also has a Transit Advisory Committee or TAC, appointed by the respective counties, which meets quarterly to provide input regarding the service to the Transit Board. Human service representatives, senior coordinators, commissioners, representatives from cities, nursing homes, churches, and riders are represented on the TAC.

Rainbow Rider is financed from State and Federal transit funding, as well as contracts, donations, and fares. From 1995 to 2001 the counties contributed from their general funds to the local share according to population and hours used. Since that time Rainbow Rider has been able to fund itself without the county appropriations, however, each county [department] purchases service through the system as needed for its own clients with fares.

Rainbow Rider is currently developing a strategic plan and working with MnDOT on a long range plan for the system.

For additional information contact Rainbow Rider, 401 Florence Avenue, P.O. Box 136, Lowry, MN 56349, 800-450-7770, or via email at rainbowr@runestone.net.

Best Practices

Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency (SCALE) – Scott County, Minnesota

Planning & Leadership

The Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency (SCALE) was formed in the spring of 2003 to encourage greater efficiencies and leadership in public service through enhanced communication, collaboration of services and sharing of resources. Members include the mayors and administrators from cities within Scott County, School Superintendents, Township Officers, representatives of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC), as well as the County administrator and County board

As a further testament to SCALE's applicability as a model, in its December 2004 report, Best Practices Review, Cooperative Efforts in Public Service Delivery, the Minnesota State Auditor's Office recommended, "...the creation of organizations similar to Scott County's SCALE in every county in Minnesota."

The report went on to say "this recommendation requires non legislative action or expenditure of dollars. All it requires is a desire by local officials to create a formalized process to foster coordination in the community." The State Auditor's full report can be accessed at [this website](#).

Best Practices

Washington State

The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) is a partnership of members from the legislature, state agencies, transportation providers, and consumer advocates. ACCT's mission is to direct and promote activities that efficiently use all available state and community resources for special needs transportation across the state of Washington.

ACCT's vision is to remove transportation as a barrier to participation in community activities; its mission is to facilitate a statewide approach to coordinated transportation to fulfill this vision. ACCT activities focus on increasing service to special needs populations by removing barriers to transportation coordination between agencies. Coordinated transportation can increase service availability and quality without increasing costs for the state. One of ACCT's first goals was to