

Transportation Coordination Toolkit

November 2005

Sections 5310 and 5311 Program Coordination

Topic: Section 5310 and 5311, Program Coordination

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

Goal: To explain the opportunities and mechanisms for coordination between FTA transit programs.

(Note: This brief discusses only Sections 5310 and 5311 since responsibility for implementing these two programs is delegated to the States by FTA. In almost all cases, FTA directly administers Section 5307 projects, and therefore, the States have no direct responsibility for this program. However, coordination can and does occur between 5310, 5311, and 5307 projects. Although there is no specific language in the FTA Section 5307 Circular which governs this program regarding coordination with 5310 or 5311 funded projects, the TEA-21 requirements for coordination apply to 5307.)

Issue: Coordination of FTA-funded Programs

The Sections 5310 and 5311 programs are administered by the U.S. DOT Federal Transit Administration to provide public and specialized transportation in rural and urbanized areas. Section 5311 is allocated for general public service in nonurbanized areas (rural and small urban), while Section 5310 is to be used for

transportation for the elderly and disabled in both urbanized and nonurbanized areas.

Section 5310 allows and encourages coordination to the maximum extent possible including vehicle sharing, ride sharing, operations sharing including joint dispatch/scheduling, maintenance, administration, and information. The FTA Circular 9070.1E also goes on to specifically address the coordination potential between the Section 5310 Program and the Section 5311 Program (public transit in non-urbanized areas). The Circular points out the parallels between the objectives of the two programs and encourages states to “consider both resources and plan for their use in a complementary way.” FTA encourages participation of Section 5310 and Section 5311 recipients in coordination efforts and made the program guideline for both programs as consistent as possible in order to simplify program administration.

With the evolution of the Section 5310 and 5311 programs, FTA’s increased emphasis on coordination and revised guidance has resulted in more interest by the States in aligning and coordinating the two programs. Although Mn/DOT currently has no specific guidelines for coordinating Section 5310 vehicles with 5311 transit systems, there are a few noteworthy examples of where this coordination is occurring, one of which is showcased as a best practice later in this document. In the best practice example where the two programs have been used to complement

one another, the resulting coordination of resources has resulted in significant benefit to their respective communities, thus demonstrating the opportunities and possible benefits that can be realized when the flexibility provided by the Section 5310 and Section 5311 programs is utilized. By embracing the complementary nature of the two programs, options for coordination at the local level can be expanded and the benefits of both programs enhanced.

Issue: Mn/DOT Administration of the Section 5310 and 5311 Programs

Administration of the Section 5310 and Section 5311 Programs varies greatly across the country. Some states administer the two programs together, using one application for both sources of funding. Others have separate applications, but limit the applicants for Section 5310 funds to Section 5311 systems, or at least place the responsibility for distributing the funds on the 5311 systems. There is no right or wrong way of program administration, but rather what works best in the individual state.

In Minnesota the 5310 program is a statewide program with applicants from the nonurbanized and urbanized areas. The 5310 and 5311 programs are administered separately. One of the strengths of Mn/DOT's method of program administration is the decentralization of the day-to-day administration for both programs to the district level. Each Mn/DOT District has a District Project Manager (DPM) who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Section 5310 and 5311 projects in each District. Decentralization enhances the communication, oversight, and guidance

between each individual subrecipient and Mn/DOT.

Policy is established at the main office and shared with the District representatives during frequent meetings, conversations, and correspondence. The program administration and grants administration processes are standardized, but the district representatives are given a certain degree of latitude in the implementation of the programs to reflect the unique nature of the districts and transit agencies they serve.

The discretion afforded the district representatives is apparent in the way that coordination is viewed in each district and the manner in which various components of the Section 5311 and 5310 programs are administered. This not only facilitates the development of 5310/5311 coordination projects, but encourages it by its nature of developing projects which best meet the needs of the individual Districts by the DPMs.

In areas where it is believed that public transit can serve most if not all needs of the district residents, efforts and guidance are placed on strengthening the public transit system and promoting coordination by consolidating transportation services at the public transit system. In other areas, coordination is not perceived as a viable option and therefore, coordination efforts are minimal. In yet other areas, coordination of service delivery and operational functions (i.e., maintenance, training) are encouraged as a means of improving the effectiveness of the public transit system and transportation network as a whole.

While the overall objectives of the Section 5311 program differ from that of the

Section 5310 program, there are parallels, which make it desirable for states to consider all of the resources and to plan for their use in a complementary way.

Issue: Coordinating Section 5310 Vehicles with Section 5311 Transit Systems: Why Coordinate?

There are a number of obvious reasons for a Section 5310 agency to pursue coordination with a Section 5311 transit system (or vice versa), but here are a few:

1. Coordination with a Section 5311 transit system can take advantage of an infrastructure (both staff and equipment) that is already in place, thus saving time and dollars needed for start-up;
2. Coordination can result in expanded service (number of vehicles available, including back-up vehicles, expanded service area, and service hours);
3. Many other services can be enhanced or expanded through coordination, such as training, grants writing, joint purchases, and maintenance;
4. System safety can be improved through coordination because of improved or enhanced training, maintenance, and safety programs, as indicated in #3 above; and
5. System efficiency and effectiveness can be improved by coordinating and/or consolidating scheduling and dispatching activities, either through the use of 800 numbers or computerized scheduling programs.

Issue: Coordinating Section 5310 Vehicles with Section 5311 Transit Systems: Getting Started

If you are considering applying for a Section 5310 vehicle and wish to use it cooperatively with a Section 5311 transit system to enhance or expand your operation, your first contact (after that with the transit system!) should be with your DPM. However, do some initial homework to give your DPM an idea of what you are proposing so that he or she can tell you whether or not you are on the right track. This will also tell your DPM that you are serious.

Together with the Section 5311 system, develop a list of all of the areas that are potential for coordination, for example

- Vehicle sharing, including back-up vehicles,
- Maintenance
- Dispatching/Scheduling
- Training (including training needed for Motor Carrier compliance),
- Purchasing,
- Insurance,
- Grants Writing
- Record keeping and Invoicing,

Begin by prioritizing those areas that would be the simplest to implement (for example, providing a back-up vehicle or sharing schedules to determine trips or services that are potential for linking or coordinating) but could provide some immediate results. For example, what areas could you coordinate right now, before you receive your Section 5310 vehicle?

From this list, develop an outline of the areas for coordination along with a projected timeline, which takes into

account when the Section 5310 application is due. Again, this will show the DPM that you are serious about your proposed effort. Ask the DPM for input and guidance of developing your proposal into a successful Section 5310 application.

If your proposal includes coordinating trips, you will need to begin thinking how you will account for and report the coordinating trips to meet both the Section 5310 and Section 5311 reporting requirements. Your DPM can provide guidance in this area.

Best Practices

Three Rivers Hiawathaland Transit— Cannon Falls, Minnesota

Although the Minnesota DOT administers its Section 5310 and 5311 programs separately, there is an excellent example of coordination between the two programs underway in the state. Three Rivers Community Action, Inc. is the Section 5311 grantee for the Three Rivers Hiawathaland Transit service in Cannon Falls, Elgin, Kellogg, Lake City, Plainview, Red Wing, Wabasha, and surrounding townships. Dial-a-ride and fixed route deviation service is provided 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday thru Saturday under contract with four separate third party operators. Three of the four services are provided solely with Section 5311 funds and vehicles. In Cannon Falls, however, the service is operated by the Cannon Falls Hospital, a Section 5310 agency. Under their contract with Three Rivers, Cannon Falls, provides 24-hour advanced reservation, dial-a-ride service to Cannon Falls and surrounding township residents. Calls come in directly to the Cannon Falls dispatcher, who logs the trip as either 5311 (general public) or 5310. Separate records and

invoices are maintained. Section 5311 trips are reported to and reimbursed by Three Rivers. Section 5310 trips are paid for by Cannon Falls and reported quarterly to MnDOT. This coordinated system takes advantage of a service and infrastructure that was in place for clients of Cannon Falls Hospital as part of an approved Section 5310 application, but allows it to be expanded to the general public. Cannon Falls operates one vehicle; back-up vehicles are available through Red Wing and the MnDOT District 6 office. After much consultation with the MnDOT Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations, Cannon Falls, operating this vehicle primarily for their clients, is not required as a result of this contract to register as a Specialized Transportation Service with the OFCVO.

For more information, please contact Amy Kuchera, Transportation Director Phone 507-732-8558 or email: amykuchera@threeriverscap.org.

Best Practices

Martin Luther Manor – Bloomington, Minnesota

Martin Luther Manor operates three adult day care centers, two in Bloomington and one in Richfield, Minnesota using five Section 5310 vehicles to transport participants to and from the day care centers, doctor's appointments, shopping, etc.

At the same time that the Manor was applying for a Section 5310 vehicle, the Richfield Community Center was contemplating the discontinuation of transportation to and from their congregational meal site because of

financial reasons. Responding to the Manor's Section 5310 public notice, the Community Center approached Martin Luther Manor with a proposal: Pick up and deliver participants to the congregate meal site at the same time they are picking up Manor participants to take them to various activities and the Community Center would reimburse the Manor for its (the Center's) portion of the service. The Community Center would not have to hire a driver nor maintain a vehicle. The Manor could use its existing resources to provide the additional service. Through coordination, one organization was able to meet the needs of another resulting in cost savings for one agency and additional revenue for the other.

Today the service is working well with The Community Center taking requests for the service and providing the schedule to Manor drivers. Martin Luther Manor currently transports approximately eight passengers daily to the congregate meal site.

For more information, please contact Sally Peterson at (952) 948-5182 or sallypeterson@ecumen.org.

Best Practices

10/15 Regional Transit Agency/Ottumwa Transit Authority – Ottumwa, Iowa

The 10/15 Regional Transit Authority, an intergovernmental agency that, as a regional transit system, under Iowa law, is responsible for coordinating all publicly-funded passenger transportation services within the ten counties in Iowa Region 15. (Note: Recently the 10/15 adopted an eleventh county into their service area.)

it will provide and the types of capital projects, if applicable, it will pursue. It is then the responsibility of OPT to review the project and award the type of funds that best meets the project, Section 5310 or Section 5311, or any combination of these two sources. It is the 10/15's role as a "public entity responsible for coordinating human service transportation" and its contract arrangement with Ottumwa Transit that makes it eligible for 5310 "purchase of contracted services" funding."

For further information regarding the 10/15 Regional Transit Authority, contact Pam Ward at (641)683-0608, or via e-mail at pamota1015@lisco.net. You can also visit their website at www.ottumwatransit.com/10-15.htm.

For further information on Iowa DOT's programs and consolidated application process, contact Peter Hallock at (515) 239-1765, peter.hallock@dot.state.ia.us.