

Region 7E

2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan

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Adopted by:
East Central Regional Development Commission
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	3
Plan Process	4
Regional Background	7
Needs Assessment	7
Strategy and Project Identification	13
Adoption and Approval of Plan	18
Appendix A- Public Workshop Participants	19
Appendix B- Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations in Region 7E	21
Appendix C- Transportation Provider Inventory	28
Appendix D- Project Idea Summary & Coordination Strategies	30
Appendix E- Project Analysis: Effort versus Impact Assessment	40

Executive Summary

The planning process for the 2011 Region 7E Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan identified coordination strategies that will improve transit provider's ability to reach older adults, those with disabilities and the low-income residents of East Central Minnesota in Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties.

Over the course of several months in 2011, stakeholders across the region gathered as a steering committee to review the work of the 2006 planning process and prepare for the development of this plan. Additionally, the wider public was invited to a day-long workshop to gather a broad range of insights for future transit service development and continuation. The result of the steering committee and regional stakeholder work provided a framework for the work at hand.

As of 2010, all five counties in Region 7E are served with a base level of public transit services. Pine County began public transit services by way of a contract with Arrowhead Transit. Kanabec County added public transit services in 2009 by merging with Mille Lacs Public Transit and forming the new Timber Trails Transit. Both of these new starts/expansions in public transit were a direct result of the 2006 planning process. Pine and Kanabec/Mille Lacs Counties join Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express serving Chisago and Isanti Counties in making some basic form of public transit available to all residents in all five counties.

This year's planning established several key goals. Beyond the top priority goal of maintaining the existing level of transit services, in a vastly rural and economically strapped region (which at the same time is experiencing record population growth in all age sectors) the following outcomes fall into several broad categories: 1) Development of a regional volunteer driver network; 2) Expand the coordination amongst public transit, private providers and 5310 providers; 3) Enhance regional connectors to beyond the region's transit providers service areas; 4) Call center/dispatch coordination; and 5) Development of a transportation management association.

Introduction

The goal of transit coordination is to enhance transportation access by minimizing duplication of services and facilitating the most appropriate and cost-effective transportation possible with available resources. The purpose of human services public transit coordination is to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes by ensuring that communities maximize use of transportation resources funded through public and private sources.

This document is an update of the 2006 East Central Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan and will assist stakeholders as they determine ways to coordinate transit services in Region 7E. The 2011 Region 7E Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan documents technical analysis that evaluates existing transportation services in Region 7E and assesses strengths and weaknesses of transportation service provision among public transit agencies, social service agencies, and other providers. The plan also records public outreach efforts and stakeholders' preferred strategies and projects to improve transportation coordination in Region 7E.

A Local Human Services Transit Coordination plan is a federal requirement under the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Federal regulations state that projects eligible for funding under the Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316), and The New Freedom Initiative (Section 5317) programs must advance strategies identified in a Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan. This planning process fulfills federal requirements by engaging transportation providers, social services agencies, and members of the public in identifying strategies for regional transportation coordination.

Beyond fulfilling federal requirements, this planning process encouraged representatives of diverse organizations to join together in articulating specific projects that could advance coordination strategies in Region 7E. Through public outreach activities, stakeholders brainstormed project ideas and refined these ideas in a collaborative setting. The final project list reflects input of a broad range of regional stakeholders and provides a 5-year blueprint for future coordination efforts in Region 7E.

Plan Process

The goal of the 2011 Region 7E Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan is to identify coordination strategies that will improve transportation services' ability to serve the unique needs of the elderly, persons with disabilities, and persons with low incomes. This planning process combines a needs assessment with public outreach tools to identify strategies for improved human services transit coordination in Region 7E. An overview of the plan's key elements is described here.

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment establishes baseline conditions in Region 7E by analyzing demographic trends and identifying available resources for human services transportation. Key elements of the needs assessment include:

- Identifying and analyzing regional demographic and transportation trends
- Mapping transit-dependent demographic groups, existing transit services, and key regional destinations
- Developing an inventory of public, private, and non-profit transportation provider capabilities and resources

Public Outreach

Public outreach activities informed the strategies and projects identified in this plan. Public outreach occurred during two steering committee meetings held on April 14, 2011, and June 16, 2011 and a public workshop held on May 26, 2011.

The plan steering committee closely guided plan decision-making. Steering committee duties included:

- Evaluating strategies and assessing outcomes of projects identified in the Region 7E 2006 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan.
- Developing project ideas and identifying priority strategies as part of the public workshop
- Prioritizing project ideas identified at the public workshop for inclusion in the final plan

The steering committee was made up of representatives from public transit agencies, county human service agencies, area agency on aging representatives, and others. Members included:

Steering Committee Membership

Name	Organization
Bruce Novak	Cambridge-Isanti Public Schools
Craig Remp	Chisago-Isanti Public Transit
Helen Pieper	Timber Trails Public Transit
Dean Loidolt	Central Minnesota Council on Aging
Joe Gentile	Arrowhead Public Transit
Mary Everett	Family Pathways
Rebecca Perrotti	Central MN Jobs and Training
Shannon Tietz	Tri-County CAP
Tim Schmutzer	PHASE
Steve Hallan	Pine County Commissioner
Steve Kimmel	Fairview Hospital
Lisa Krahn	Seven County Senior Federation
Chuck Hurd	Kanabec County Family Services
Sue Siemers	Mn/DOT
Don Mohawk	Mn/DOT
Robert Voss	ECRDC
Penny Simonsen	ECRDC
Robert Bollenbeck	ECRDC

Strategy Identification and Plan Adoption

In addition to the steering committee, EC RDC hosted a public workshop on May 26, 2011 to incorporate input from all interested stakeholders. A total of 31 people attended, listed in Appendix A. At the workshop, stakeholders identified strengths and weaknesses of transit coordination in the region. Building from these, stakeholders then identified priority strategies for transit coordination and brainstormed project ideas that could address these strategies. Using input gathered at this workshop, the steering committee prioritized the projects and strategies included in the final plan. A draft plan was distributed to stakeholders for public comment between November 15, 2011, prior to a public meeting held December 19, 2011. This plan public hearing is set for December 19, 2011.

Needs Assessment

Regional Background

- Region 7E (East Central) is located between the metropolitan areas of Duluth, St. Cloud and Minneapolis/St. Paul. The region's eastern edge extends to the state's Minnesota/Wisconsin border.
- Region 7E includes the counties of Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine.
- The region includes 88 townships, 39 cities (3 with 5,000+ population) and 21 school districts. Regional trade centers include North Branch, Cambridge, Princeton, Mora and Pine City. Three state aid cities are Cambridge, North Branch and Isanti.
- The region is defined as mostly rural. In a region with small cities, the geographic barrier primarily is its rural-ness.

Transportation and Demographics

To better understand the relationship between regional demographics, transit options, and key destinations, a series of maps was created depicting these elements in this region. These are included in Appendix B.

- The entire five county region is considered rural by government definitions. The two counties of Chisago and Isanti are urban ring communities, with larger cities, more job/employer/employee centered, more young people and with higher overall growth than the other three counties. These two counties also hold a current distinction of having some of the highest home foreclosure rates in the state. Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine counties are more rural, with older populations—and exhibiting slower, yet steady growth in overall population. Unemployment rates have been historically high in these three counties, as well as poverty rates that are above the state average for the three northern-most counties. Collectively, East Central Minnesota is the second fastest growing region in the state, second only to region 7W. Growth in all age sectors in a region with significant employment, income and housing short-comings creates a unique set of challenges for the development and sustainment of services.
- Region 7E is in the midst of a significant demographic shift related to age. With the region's older adult population expected to double from 25,000 in 2000 to 50,000 by 2020, this population segment are scattered throughout the five county region, and as they age become transit-dependent. Because of the scattered nature (some have migrated to lake communities after retirement while others have aged in place) bringing transit options to them is challenging. The entire region is filled with small cities—where critical mass doesn't exist. Developing a satisfactory system at a reasonable cost is difficult. The region's employers are also scattered, with few employing large numbers of people. Government, schools and hospitals are the largest employers in the region.

- Region 7E shows population growth across all age groups, with no age group shrinking. This is unusual. From 2000 to 2010, 7E population grew by 20.20%. Only Region 7W (25.00% overall growth in the same time period) with the metropolitan area of St. Cloud shares this characteristic with Region 7E—a predominately rural region. This growth far exceeded the statewide growth rate of 7.80%.
- Prior to the “housing bubble”, extensive residential housing was created in the urban ring counties of Chisago and Isanti. The new residents of those counties commuted to the Twin Cities for employment. Commercial/industrial development increased during that time, but not at the same pace as housing development. Since the decline of the housing market, people have moved southward to the Twin Cities for their housing and jobs, or accessing rental properties, leaving the southern portion of Region 7E with high home foreclosure rates and related consequences (lower property tax revenues, and vacated properties).
- Where do people commonly travel to and how do they get there? Older adults utilize the existing transportation systems at a much larger volume than workers/commuters. Older adults ride to medical appointments and shopping. Students use the services to get to and from entry level jobs and classes.
- The region is home to three public transit providers across the five counties. Arrowhead Public Transit contracts with Pine County to provide route and dial a ride services in Pine County. Timber Trails Public Transit provides route and dial a ride services in Kanabec and Mille Lacs County. Both of these providers have begun their services since the 2006 Region 7E Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan—in other words, they are newly developed services based on the work done in 2006. The Chisago – Isanti County Heartland Express serves those two counties by providing route and dial a ride services. They have operated for over 20 years. The three transit providers provide some coordination between them, and offer some connections from within the region and their service area to points beyond. Every area of the region has SOME transit services available to them. There are many very rural areas that have access to transit services one day a week.
- “Big Box Stores” are located in Cambridge and Pine City (with a new store planned in Princeton). Existing transit providers offer access to these on a consistent basis. They also provide good service to other locally owned core businesses such as grocery and hardware stores. Three adult day training organizations—PHASE in Pine County, Industries Incorporated in Isanti and Kanabec County and DAC in Mille Lacs County operate transit services as part of their services for their clients. PHASE currently is working with Arrowhead Public Transit to coordinate additional services. Transit to health care services are offered in all five counties. Northern Mille Lacs and Kanabec counties have the most limited access to transit services.

- The weak-link in transit services within the region are the connectors to regional destinations. This is a significant concern considering the proximity to Duluth, St. Cloud and Minneapolis/St. Paul to the region. There are connectors, albeit limited.
- Almost all job-based commuters travel south to the Minneapolis/St. Paul area for employment. Much smaller numbers travel to Duluth and/or St. Cloud for work. Intra-regional commuter travel exists to a larger degree in Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine counties.

- ***Transportation Provider Inventory Findings***

Throughout April 2011, EC RDC developed an inventory meant to capture service information for all public, private, school district, human service, and non-profit transportation providers in the region. The inventory includes information such as fleet size, vehicle capacity, passenger eligibility requirements, and service cost; this information provides a source of comparison across agencies and a means to identify service gaps. To complete the inventory, EC RDC sent an on-line questionnaire to all of the region’s transportation providers in spring 2011. 18 responses were returned. A full record of responses is included in Appendix C.

Three formal public transit providers cover the five county area. Arrowhead Public Transit serves Pine County, Timber Trails Public Transit serves Mille Lacs and Pine Counties, and Chisago – Isanti Heartland Express serves Chisago and Isanti County. Three private cab operators and a handful of small volunteer driver programs round out the region’s providers.

Currently all coordination is handled on an informal basis, with few memorandums of understanding, etc. in place.

Gaps can be geographic areas or populations that are underserved. Northern Mille Lacs and Northern Kanabec Counties receive the least amount of transit services—due primarily because of the very rural areas within those two counties. Any area that is located in one county but has their “regional center” in a neighboring county will encounter some obstacles to service.

The crossing of county lines remains the central barrier to coordination.

There remains little transit services on evenings and weekends. Connectors between providers are limited.

Fixed routes are the most cost effective, with dial-a-ride services more expensive. Due to the rural nature of the region, all of the transit service costs are costly compared to more populated areas.

The transit providers do a good job in meeting the needs of passengers Monday through Friday from 7 am through 6 pm. A passenger needing a ride beyond those days and times

will struggle to find a way to get from “Point A to Point B”. With limited cab service within the region, even a more expensive ride may not be available.

Pine County has the newest public transit service. It began in 2010, with Pine County contracting with well-respected Arrowhead Public Transit to provide a combination of limited deviated route and dial a ride services to all of Pine County. In 2009 Mille Lacs Public Transit merged with Kanabec County and formed Timber Trails Public Transit providing dial a ride services to all of both counties, with service emphasis placed on the population centers located in the southern portions of both counties. Each of these new services came about because of the 2006 transit planning processes. Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express, in existence for over 20 years serves both counties with the most developed route-system, dial-a-ride and volunteer driver programs.

A direct correlation between more administrative time and thus more available services appears to be a common theme amongst providers. Coordinating that administration time and reducing redundancies is limited across providers.

Some coordination has already taken place by virtue of Arrowhead Public Transit’s contract with Pine County and the Mille Lacs/Kanabec and Chisago/Isanti partnerships. Each of the three providers have solid reputations within the region for working cooperatively and being good partners in providing transit services to a region with very limited resources.

Despite changes, insurance carrier regulations are cited as the top barrier to service delivery and coordination. In addition to insurance, crossing county lines, lack of funding, personalities and scheduling/number of vehicles were identified as barriers.

Outcomes since the 2006 Region 7E Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan

Another component of the needs assessment is an analysis of the 2006 Region 7E Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan. The 2006 Region 7E Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan was the first local human services transit coordination plan to be conducted in this region, and includes a list of strategies and projects for improving transit coordination. The 2011 steering committee reviewed these strategies and projects and assessed regional progress on transit coordination since 2006. The group also identified causes for success and barriers to action regarding project implementation. The complete list of 2006 strategies and projects and an assessment of their outcome is presented below.

Review of 2006 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan. Key components of the 2006 include: 1) the identification of human service issues and needs; 2) strategies and implementation; and 3) service improvements and future steps.

Issues and Needs. Four issues were identified through the 2006 process. The issues included: 1) Lack of coordination amongst providers; 2) Transit need vs. available resources is overwhelming; 3) the need to bring organizations with existing vehicles and staff “to the table”; and 4) blending ridership—organizations that typically serve only “their constituency”, and overlook the areas of overlap with other organizations and the opportunity to share valuable resources.

Strategies to Address Service Gaps. 1) Funding—the cost to riders and the cost of services. Transit providers face challenges in coordination of funding to support new and existing services. Action suggested included the development of 5311 public transit programs in Kanabec and Pine counties, coordinate funding and pool resources, and support the concept of a mobility manager within the region. 2) Increase education and coordination of available transportation. 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. Promoting ways to alert the public of transportation service availability was identified as an action. 3) Expand the hours/days/area of transportation services. 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. Development of expanded services for older adults, those with disabilities and workforce riders was listed as an action.

Service Improvements and Future Steps. Four activities were recommended for development and implementation through the 2006 planning process. They were: 1) Regional Coordination Committee; (SOME ACTION) 2) Develop public transit in Kanabec and Pine counties; (ACTION) 3) Assess the feasibility of developing a transportation mobility manager; (SOME ACTION) and 4) Be part of the regional review team of JARC and New Freedom applications. (SOME ACTION)

Specific discussion points during the steering committee focused on the progress made since the 2006 planning process. For instance, Arrowhead Rural Rides provides transit to and from work as a JARC project—something potentially available in Pine County with the contractual arrangement between Arrowhead Public Transit and Pine County to provide public transit services—also a realized priority from 2006. Arrowhead Rural Rides work in coordination with job counselors, a key to the program’s success. Another example of progress was the expansion of Mille Lacs County Public Transit to Kanabec County. As an initial joint venture, Kanabec County government now carries the responsibility for public transit services for both Mille Lacs and Kanabec County with the goal to strengthen the services offered in Mille Lacs and expanding the services to Kanabec County.

Summary of Existing Conditions and Needs

The final component of this needs assessment is a stakeholder-generated list of strengths and weaknesses of existing transit coordination efforts. At the public workshop, participants identified strengths and weaknesses of existing coordination efforts in Region 7E. Combined with the plan's technical findings, these strengths and weaknesses form the basis for identifying strategies to address transportation coordination in this region.

Strengths identified during the public workshop on May 26, 2011 included:

- Political Support, supportive attitude, limited funds; Local political support and communication on transit has improved; strong political support
- Serve all ages, HDCP accessible, M-F & Sundays, pre-k and older
- Work with local health and human services, waiver, MA, hospital buys tickets, Industries and PHASE, veterans
- Seeks funds for other projects (CSSD-Bus Buddy), innovative
- Existing transit providers in all five counties
- Increasing population
- History of collaboration; Strong relationships! Transit, government and partners; Strong support for public transit
- Coordination between systems has improved since 2006 Plan
- All 5 Counties in 7E have public transit
- Zero rides denied in public transit
- Veterans medical visits to VA medical centers are being met in Isanti/Chisago/Kanabec/Mille Lacs
- Joint venture with Heartland Express for North Branch bus
- County and City participation in Rushline Bus from North Branch to Forest Lake transfer to Twin Cities buses
- Volunteer Drivers through Veteran's Services

Weaknesses included:

- Lack of education on what is available; People don't know about service until they need it, need to continue collaborative conversations
- Getting over negative images/fears of public transit; Perception barriers: 1) education—dependability; 2) marketing—coolness; Travel training and marketing of transit system, overcoming fears; Travel eligibility through education to increase ridership
- Lack of coordination of all services that are available

- Limited service hours, not conducive to working public; Limited evening or weekend service
- Outside (more rural) areas difficult large geography, can only be in one place at a time
- Very limited non-medical volunteer driver systems
- Supervised transportation (i.e. pre-school children, vulnerable adults)
- Underutilization of available assets
- Lack of public knowledge what buses do for who
- Lack of agency representatives knowledge of services and specifics of programs
- Inefficient billing between agencies; Billing takes staff time...staff don't have it.
- Rural population density (rural expanse); Long distance to trade centers especially elderly and disabled (physical barriers); Unserved/underserved areas (e.g. Northern Mille Lacs and Northern Kanabec Counties); Rural areas are hit hard by recent economic downturn.
- Difficult to access for employment because of the ruralness of the region

In summary, the region has a history of having strong support from its elected officials and regional stakeholders for public transit. Despite its limitations of rural expanse, low incomes and limited funding, the three existing public transit providers offer a solid basic transit service to the five counties in Region 7E. Relationships between the three providers are collegial and offer a foundation for opportunities for further coordination and cooperation in the future.

Strategy and Project Identification

The priority strategies and projects identified in this plan were initially identified by stakeholders at the public workshop and further refined by the steering committee. At the public workshop, stakeholders reviewed strategies for transit coordination, identified which strategies should be prioritized for this region, and brainstormed project ideas for implementation of these strategies. Taking the entire list of ideas generated, public workshop participants voted on high-priority strategies and projects to be highlighted in the final plan. Later, steering committee members considered this input while prioritizing strategies and projects for inclusion in the list presented below. A complete list of project ideas considered during the planning process is presented in Appendix D.

To categorize project ideas, steering committee members created an “Effort vs. Impact” chart to compare these project ideas. This created a relative sense of how much effort (low to high) each project idea would take as well as how much impact (minor to major) each project could have in its region. This chart can be found in Appendix E. The

strategies and projects listed below represent those ideas the steering committee prioritized as having the most potential to improve transit coordination in Region 7E.

Easy to do/Major Improvement

1. Overview of Project:

Regional Volunteer Driver Network will establish volunteer driver programs where none exist and enhance current volunteer programs while building a regional communication framework amongst emerging and existing programs.

Clients served by Project:

Persons served by this project will include those needing transportation for medical based needs, older adults and persons living in “very rural” underserved zones within the five county region.

Communities Served:

The project will be piloted in northern Mille Lacs and Kanabec Counties, and extend to all five counties where the focus will expand to include the development of a regional communication network incubated in the pilot stage.

Type of Agency Responsible:

A public/private partnership between public transit and regional senior services organization.

Strategy Addressed:

This project will meet two strategies: 1) COORDINATE/CONSOLIDATE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND RESOURCES STRATEGY-Coordinate volunteer driver training, merging volunteer driver training across programs with more volunteer drivers serving more clients within/amongst more programs; and 2) MOBILITY STRATEGY-Establish/enhance volunteer driver programs to deliver a low cost service to more clients while involving the larger community.

Easy to do/Minor Improvement

1. Overview of Project:

Working with all current 5310 providers (and providing technical assistance to future new 5310 providers) establish coordination to include at minimum scheduling, maintenance and vehicle sharing.

Clients served by Project:

Clients will be reflective of 5310 program targets (older adults and those with disabilities).

Communities Served:

This will be a region-wide project.

Type of Agency Responsible:

Non-profit, local, county or regional government and public transit agencies.

Strategy Addressed:

The strategy addressed by this project is a COORDINATE AND CONSOLIDATE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND RESOURCE STRATEGY-Coordinate agency schedules, by coordinating connections between 5310 transit services. Coordination of transit service hours with health services, social services, and employment schedules. The project will improve program access, resulting in cost-efficiencies by grouping rides from similar origin/destination locations.

2. Overview of Project:

Regional Travel Opportunities will connect local transit providers to intra-state providers such as Jefferson Lines bus or NLX rail services.

Clients Served by Project:

Clients will come from all age and income categories.

Communities Served by Project:

This is a region-wide project.

Type of Agency Responsible:

Public transit providers, 5310 providers, private providers

Strategy Addressed:

MOBILITY STRATEGY-Improve service convenience by improving/expanding service hours, geographic coverage, same day service and inter/intra city services which enhances travel and service options; increase services productivity and frees resources for service expansion.

Difficult to do/Major Improvement

1. Overview of Project:

Create a Regional Transportation Manager/Organization that will broker services, be the navigator, initiator and catalyst for transit services coordination and education/outreach.

Clients served by Project:

Clients will include seniors, those with disabilities and low-income residents.

Communities Served:

The project will serve the five county region.

Type of Agency Responsible:

Public transit providers, private providers in partnership with a regional non-profit or government entity.

Strategy Addressed:

This project will meet several strategies. These are: COORDINATE AND CONSOLIDATE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND RESOURCES- 1) Allow joint purchasing that will coordinate purchases, maintenance, insurance, driver training and substance abuse testing thus reducing costs and increasing consistency across organizations; 2) Contract between agencies and common transportation service providers allowing providers to maximize capacities and co-mingling clients increasing vehicle and service productivity and reducing per trip costs; 3) Share resources such as operational and capital resources to reduce costs, increase vehicle productivity, and improve service quality; and 4) Consolidate functions by merging various operating functions such as call center or service delivery from several agencies under single entity resulting in improving program access, creating cost-efficiencies and maximizing ridesharing.

COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT- 1) Centralize information creating centralized listing of regional transportation services increasing access to services; and 2) Education public of transportation options by developing marketing and education materials/events to teach consumers about their transportation options to increase ridership targeting culturally specific groups.

2. Overview of Project:

Call Center Coordination Technology project will provide phone/web-based software and training to coordinate dispatch functions amongst providers.

Clients Served by Project:

Public transit providers, private providers

Communities Served by Project:

Five counties within region.

Type of Agency Responsible:

Region-wide agency, public transit agencies.

Strategy Addressed:

COORDINATION AND CONSOLIDATE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND RESOURCES- 1) Coordinate dispatch creating centralized call center and share trip dispatch under single entity within an organization. Buy software that incorporates reservation and scheduling capabilities and/or uses vehicle location information improves program access, creates cost efficiencies, maximizes ride sharing, removes obstacles to providing same day, shared ride service; 2) Implement tools that support data management. Installing tools that improve data integrity, fare collection, cost sharing/allocation, billing, reporting and transfers improving service operations, design and management. Both of these strategies should reduce costs and increase productivity.

3. Overview of Project:

Transportation System Preservation will commit resources to maintain current transportation options and future transportation needs, including veteran's transit services.

Clients Served by Project:

Existing and future clients across all age and economic categories.

Communities Served by Project:

Currently all five counties within the region are provided some public transit services and limited private providers. Isanti County has expressed interest in serving as a pilot project for veteran's transit provider re-development.

Type of Agency Responsible:

Public transit providers, 5310 providers, private providers.

Strategy Addressed:

MOBILITY STRATEGY- Maintain existing vehicle fleet by replacing existing buses appropriate to their age/wear and tear and matching future levels of service to current levels.

COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

STRATEGY-Understand transportation funding sources by identifying and tracking where transportation dollars originate and how they are spent within the region. By understanding the dollar trail and highlights funding resources across agencies.

4. Overview of Project:

Create a Transportation Management Association to improve communication, increase resources and bring transit providers, riders, employers and funders together to cross political boundaries and increase services to underserved populations.

Clients Served by Project:

All clients; targeted older adults, low-income individuals, those with disabilities.

Communities Served by Project:

Regionwide focused project.

Type of Agency Responsible:

Regional agency in partnership with transit stakeholders.

Strategy Addressed:

COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT-Educate regional professionals of transportation options will provide cost-effective and efficiencies within the current transit provider network, and create a framework for future planning.

Adoption and Approval of Plan

The public comment period was held from November 15 through December 19, 2011 culminating in a public meeting on December 19, 2011 at 7:30pm at the ECRDC offices located at 100 Park Street South, Mora, MN 55051.

During the public comment period, copies of the plan were available through the ECRDC website, available at all branches of the East Central Regional Library system, and the ECRDC.

Appendix A- Public Workshop Participants

May 26, 2011 Workshop Participants

Name	Organization
Lisa Wilson	City of Isanti
Helen Pieper	Timber Trails Public Transit
Jim Rostberg	Isanti County Veteran Services
Jarrelle Rydlund	Bethel College - student
Don Mohawk	Mn/DOT
Sue Siemers	Mn/DOT
Shannon Tietz	Tri-CAP
Nancy Dahlin	Chisago County Health & Human Svcs
Bob Voss	ECRDC
Brandon Belgum	South Dakota State University – student
Bridgitte Konrad	City of North Branch
Shaun Williams	City of North Branch
Craig Rempp	Chisago – Isanti Public Transit
Fay Cleaveland	Mn/DOT
Kathy Burski	Kanabec County Public Health
Valerie Palmer	Family Pathways
Dean Loidolt	Central MN Council on Aging
Rebecca Perrotti	Central MN Jobs and Training
Marcia Westover	City of Cambridge
Stan Gustafson	City of Cambridge
Beth Thorp	City of Mora
Joe Gentile	Arrowhead Public Transit
Lisa Krahn	Seven County Senior Federation

Bob Bollenbeck	ECRDC
Susan Lehner	Chisago – Isanti Public Transit
Karrie Kolb	Isanti County Family Service
Sue Larson	City of Isanti
Barb Platten	MNet
Chuck Lucia	City of Stacy
Trish Rydlund	ECRDC
Penny Simonsen	ECRDC

Appendix B- Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations in Region 7E

Insert Map 1

All maps are available for review at the ECRDC offices.

Appendix B- Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations in Region 7E

Insert map series- map 2

Appendix B- Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations in Region 7E

Insert map series- map 3

Appendix B- Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations in Region 7E

Insert map series- map 4

Appendix B- Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations in Region 7E

Insert map series- map 5

Appendix B- Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations in Region 7E

Insert map series- map 6

Insert map series-map 7

Appendix B- Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations in Region 7E

Appendix C- Transportation Provider Directory

The following directory includes contact information for all regional transportation providers who responded to an inventory questionnaire sent in spring 2011. This is not a complete list of providers in the region.

Chisago County	
Name:	Example PICK ONE: Public Transit Fixed Route, Public
Address:	Transit Dial a Ride, Public Transit Deviated Route, Private
Phone:	Transportation,
Web:	Non-profit Transportation, School Transportation OR
Service Type:	Volunteer Driver
Name:	Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express
Address:	245 2 nd Avenue SE, Cambridge, MN 55008
Phone:	763-689-8131
Web:	www.co.chisago.mn.us
Service Type:	Public Transit Deviated Route
Name:	Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express
Address:	245 2 nd Avenue SE, Cambridge, MN 55008
Phone:	763-689-8131
Web:	www.co.chisago.mn.us
Service Type:	Volunteer Driver
Name:	Parmly Specialized Transportation Services-Senior Shuttle
Address:	28210 Old Towne Road, Chisago City, MN 55013
Phone:	651-257-0575
Web:	NA
Service Type:	Public Transit Dial a Ride
Isanti County	
Name:	Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express
Address:	245 2 nd Avenue SE, Cambridge, MN 55008
Phone:	763-689-8131
Web:	www.co.isanti.mn.us
Service Type:	Public Transit Deviated Route
Name:	Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express
Address:	245 2 nd Avenue SE, Cambridge, MN 55008
Phone:	763-689-8131
Web:	www.co.isanti.mn.us
Service Type:	Public Transit Dial a Ride

Name:	Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express
Address:	245 2 nd Avenue SE, Cambridge, MN 55008
Phone:	763-689-8131
Web:	www.co.isanti.mn.us
Service Type:	Volunteer Driver
Kanabec County	
Name:	Timber Trails Public Transit
Address:	905 East Forest Avenue, Suite 127
Phone:	1-888-217-5222
Web:	www.timbertrailstransit.com
Service Type:	Public Transit Dial a Ride
Name:	Timber Trails Public Transit
Address:	905 East Forest Avenue, Suite 127
Phone:	1-888-217-5222
Web:	www.timbertrailstransit.com
Service Type:	Volunteer Driver
Mille Lacs County	
Name:	Timber Trails Public Transit
Address:	905 East Forest Avenue, Suite 127
Phone:	1-888-217-5222
Web:	www.timbertrailstransit.com
Service Type:	Public Transit Dial a Ride
Name:	Timber Trails Public Transit
Address:	905 East Forest Avenue, Suite 127
Phone:	1-888-217-5222
Web:	www.timbertrailstransit.com
Service Type:	Volunteer Driver
Name:	Elim Home
Address:	730 2 nd Street SE, Milaca, MN 56353
Phone:	320-983-2185
Web:	NA
Service Type:	Non-profit Transportation
Pine County	
Name:	Arrowhead Transit
Address:	702 3 rd Avenue South, Virginia MN 55792
Phone:	866-682-2154
Web:	www.arrowheadtransit.com
Service Type:	Public Transit Dial a Ride

Appendix D- Project Idea Summary

Two additional questions were asked of the steering committee following the public workshop. The following is a compilation of the responses generated from the steering committee. They are not in priority order, but the responses did influence the larger discussion and ultimate prioritization of the projects.

“What was unexpected about the workshop results?” Responses included: 1) the level of good-overall discussion from the wide variety of participants in attendance; 2) the desire for the development of an informal services network; 3) the significant amount of involvement from veteran’s services; 4) no “votes” for existing service preservation; 5) potential champions emerged for volunteer program coordination; 6) high level of interest in call center coordination.

The second question posed to the group was, **“Are there projects we should add?”** Responses included: 1) preservation of existing systems; 2) pay more for more service—increased revenue goes to increased services; 3) coordination amongst the three formal (public) providers; 4) 5310, school fleets, nursing home fleets, church vans; 5) medical trips; 6) creating one brand or increased identity amongst providers; 7) three-prong approach—call center, ride broker and mobility manager; 8) financial accessibility through flexible rates, transfers, passes and boarding; 9) ruralness creates a challenge for commuter services; 10) look at the Transportation Resource Center initiatives; 11) transit stakeholder meetings at regular intervals.

Project #	#Votes	Title of Project	Description of Project	June 16, 2011 Comments
1	5	Regional Transportation Manager	Navigator, initiator, catalyst Clients Served: Not identified Communities Served: Not identified Strategy Addressed: Champion: ID who is doing what Responsible for Implementation: Not Identified Timing: Long Term	Combine projects 1, 3 and 13. Add a brokering aspect to the project design. Create an environment that fosters a system development-vs-personnel development

2	15	Regional Volunteer Driver Network Regional Communication	<p>Understand extent and gaps within volunteer driver service.</p> <p>Clients Served: special needs, various</p> <p>Communities Served: medical, elderly residents in “very rural” zones.</p> <p>Strategy Addressed: Establish/Enhance volunteer driver program</p> <p>Champion: Seven County Senior Fed w/ assistance from Timber Trails</p> <p>Responsible for Implementation: Timber Trails</p> <p>Timing: Short Term</p>	
3	13	Regional Mobility Manager/Management	<p>Education/Awareness and Referrals of systems available</p> <p>Clients Served: All ages and abilities</p> <p>Communities Served: All</p> <p>Strategy Addressed: Establish /enhance volunteer driver programs</p> <p>Champion: Barb, assist from Shannon</p> <p>Responsible: Bob</p>	

			Bollenbeck, ECRDC Timing: Medium	
4	10	Call Center Coordination Technology	Phone/Web based software to coordinate dispatch. Pilot up to 4? counties, Google Earth Tracking, Ride Share map. Clients Served: All residents Communities Served: 4? counties	
5	0	Transportation System Preservation	Commit resources to maintain current transportation options and future transportation needs Clients served: All Ages Communities Served: All of 7E Strategy Addressed by Project: Maintain existing vehicle fleet Project Champion: None identified Responsible for Project Implementation: Not identified Timing: Not identified	This project was voted by the steering committee to be Priority #1, regardless of what was reported from the public workshop. It was unanimously agreed that participants at the workshop had assumed that current levels of transit services were “a given”, and conversation had moved quickly to other items because of the strong local government support for public transit in all five east

				central counties.
6	0	Enhanced flexible routes serving rural areas	<p>Description: No further description</p> <p>Clients Served: Public</p> <p>Communities Served: Not identified</p> <p>Strategy Addressed: Mobility Strategies</p> <p>Project Champion: Not identified</p> <p>Responsible for Project Implementation: Not identified</p> <p>Timing: Not identified</p>	<p>Explore taking an “all stakeholders” approach by involving physicians, grocery stores, etc. into the route building. Work from the other end, by having a “Braham Day at the Pine City Clinic” and build ridership around the schedule. Virginia, MN is working on developing that type of service/route.</p>
7	2	5310 Scheduling	<p>Coordinate schedules among 5310 providers. Public transit agencies to facilitate vehicle sharing.</p> <p>Clients Served: Any</p> <p>Communities Served: Public Transit service area</p> <p>Strategy Addressed by Project: Coordinate agency schedules</p> <p>Project Champion: Not identified</p> <p>Responsible for Project Implementation: Not identified</p>	<p>This is larger than just scheduling. It needs to include coordination amongst providers on all levels.</p>

			Timing: Not identified	
8	2	Create a Transportation Management Association (TMA)	<p>To improve communication and bring transit providers, riders and employers (ees) together.</p> <p>Clients Served: Not Identified</p> <p>Communities Served: Not identified</p> <p>Strategy Addressed by Project: Mobility</p> <p>Project Champion: Not Identified</p> <p>Responsible for Project Implementation: Not identified</p> <p>Timing: Not identified</p>	Create an environment that fosters system development – vs- personnel development
9	3	Utilize Private Providers	<p>Coordinate with private providers to provide transportation across political boundaries or underserved areas. Would need to be a subsidized program.</p> <p>Clients Served: All public transit riders, specifically low-income population.</p> <p>Communities Served: Unmet needs in service area(s)</p> <p>Strategy Addressed by Project: Establish/expand taxi subsidy programs</p>	Combine with project 8

			<p>Project Champions: Not Identified</p> <p>Responsible for Project Implementation: Not identified</p> <p>Timing: Not identified</p>	
10	4	Regional Travel Opportunities (RTO)	<p>Local providers would connect with Jefferson Bus Line (Duluth to Twin Cities) or NLX at designated stops to allow passengers to travel regionally.</p> <p>Clients Served: All Ages</p> <p>Communities Served: Would be locally defined</p> <p>Strategy Addressed by Project: Improve Service Convenience</p> <p>Project Champion: Not identified</p> <p>Responsible for Project Implementation: Not identified</p> <p>Timing: Not Identified</p>	
11	4	Coordination of Veteran's Rides	<p>Expand service in Isanti County by utilizing other counties transportation.</p> <p>Coordinate, mobility, doctors support.</p> <p>Clients Served:</p>	<p>Coordination work should include connections with local medical providers, clinics and hospitals and the larger community.</p>

			<p>Veterans</p> <p>Communities Served: Isanti County</p> <p>Strategy Addressed by Project: Coordinate/Share resources</p> <p>Project Champion: Jim Rosberg</p> <p>Responsible for Project Implementation: Not identified.</p> <p>Timing: Not identified</p> <p>Other comments: electronic map to track vehicles, portable tracking device, agencies schedules/vehicles coordinate</p>	<p>Veteran's administration grants needs to be connected to the project.</p>
12	6	Share maintenance costs	<p>Have one mechanic travel between shops (=FTE) or share maintenance shop among systems.</p> <p>Clients Served: All public transit riders</p> <p>Communities Served: Across agencies</p> <p>Strategy Addressed by Project: Share Resources</p> <p>Project Champion: Not identified</p> <p>Responsible for Project implementation: Not</p>	<p>This was deemed a significant project, but one that would be a long-term goal.</p>

			<p>identified</p> <p>Timing: Not identified</p> <p>Other comments: allow joint purchasing, share resources-maintenance providers, use private providers (cabs) to cross county boundaries and unserved areas.</p> <p>5310: public transit uses buses when 5310 isn't; software could help, interagency coordination; scheduling and timing re-routing. Dispatch: issue of billing; coordinate volunteer training</p>	
13	9	Marketing/Education	<p>Mass coverage w/flyers to grocery store, church bulletin, city celebration info booth, libraries, township supervisors, clinics/hospitals, senior dining, youth recreation associations, colleges</p> <p>Clients Served: All ages/abilities to go anywhere</p> <p>Communities Served: Kanabec, Pine, Mille Lacs, Chisago, Isanti</p> <p>Strategy Addressed by Project: General Flyer on Public Transit available with specific contact info on I/C=Heartland;</p>	

			<p>K/ML=TTPT; P=Arrowhead</p> <p>Project Champions: Public and Private Providers, Timber Trails, Initiative Foundation, social workers</p> <p>Responsible for Project Implementation: Same as Champions</p> <p>Timing: Short Term 1- 3 months</p>	
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Appendix E- Project Analysis: Effort vs. Impact Assessment

<p>Difficult to do/Minor impact projects</p> <p>Project 1</p>	<p>Difficult to do/Major impact projects</p> <p>Projects 1,3 and 13 Combined</p> <p>Project 4</p> <p>Project 6</p> <p>Projects 8 and 9 Combined</p> <p>Projects 5 and 12 Combined</p>
<p>Easy to do/Minor impact projects</p> <p>Project 7</p> <p>Project 10</p>	<p>Easy to do/Major impact projects</p> <p>Project 11</p>

Coordination Strategies

	Key Elements	Benefits
Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources		
Allow joint purchasing	Coordinate purchases such as vehicle maintenance, insurance, driver training and substance abuse testing	Reduces costs by “buying in bulk;” increases consistency across organizations
Contract between agencies	Allow providers with excess capacity to "sell" rides to other organizations, which are reserved for their clients	Improves service productivity and cost-effectiveness
Contract with common transportation service providers	One or more sponsors have contracts with a common transportation vendor, such as a public transit system, and permit co-mingling of clients	Increases vehicle productivity; reduces per trip costs
Share resources	Share use of operational and capital resources (vehicles, facilities, support services)	Reduces costs; increases vehicle productivity; improves service quality
Coordinate dispatch	Create centralized call center and share trip dispatch under single entity within an organization. Buy software that incorporates reservation and scheduling capabilities and/or uses vehicle location information	Improves program access; creates cost-efficiencies; maximizes ridesharing; removes obstacles to providing same day, shared ride service; potential to reduce costs and increase productivity
Consolidate functions	Merge various operating functions, such as call center or service delivery, from several agencies under single entity	Improves program access; creates cost-efficiencies; maximizes ridesharing
Coordinate volunteer driver training	Merge volunteer driver training across programs	Volunteer drivers are qualified to drive clients of more than one program

	Key Elements	Benefits
Implement tools that support data management	Install tools that improve data integrity, fare collection, cost sharing/allocation, billing, reporting and transfers	Improves service operations, design and management; may create cost savings
Coordinate agency schedules	Coordinate connections between transit services. Coordinate transit service hours with health services, social services, and employment schedules	Improves program access, could result in cost-efficiencies by grouping rides from similar origin/destination locations

	Key Elements	Benefits
Mobility Strategies		
Improve service convenience	Improve/expand service hours, geographic coverage, driver assistance, same-day service, inter-city services, etc. Purchase additional vehicles. Use software that matches service information with data to maximize service design and enhance productivity	Enhances travel and service options; increase services productivity and frees resources for service expansion
Establish/enhance volunteer driver programs	Develop/incorporate volunteer driver program to deliver services	Low cost strategy to increase service, community involvement
Establish/enhance assisted transportation programs	Train volunteers to help riders who are unable to use transit services without personal assistance	Increase access to transit services
Establish/expand taxi subsidy programs	Provide vouchers to partially or completely pay for taxi services	Offers flexible service; increases travel options
Improve accessibility at transit stops	Make accessibility improvements for persons with disabilities at bus stops	Improves accessibility of fixed-route; does not require on-going funding; can reduce reliance on paratransit

Maintain existing vehicle fleet	Replace existing buses appropriate to their age/wear and tear	Future levels of service match current levels
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	Key Elements	Benefits
Communication, Training and Organizational Support		
Centralize information	Create centralized listing of regional transportation services	More user friendly ; increases access to service
Hire mobility manager	Dedicate personnel resources to manage local mobility issues and/or staff coordination efforts	Creates staff resources to promote and implement coordination efforts
Provide technical training for coordination staff	Obtain technical training on background skills needed to implement coordination strategies, such as financial tools, team-building, etc.	Ensures local coordination staff has skills to implement recommended programs
Offer customer travel training	Encourage targeted populations to use transit services by teaching them how to ride the bus	May reduce paratransit costs by moving riders to fixed route services; increases consumers' transportation options; means to offer culturally specific training to target groups
Convene regional coordination body	Convene transportation providers and human services agencies to discuss on-going coordination needs within each region	Designated body can oversee implementation of identified coordination efforts
Understand transportation funding sources	Identify and track where transportation dollars originate and how they are spent within each region	Regional understanding of dollar trail, illuminates funding resources across agencies
Educate public of transportation options	Marketing and education to teach consumers about their transportation options	Increased ridership, could target culturally specific groups
Educate regional professionals of transportation options	Education of human service professionals of the whole spectrum of transportation options available to clients	More cost-effective and efficient recommendations to clients
Additional Strategies		

