

Planning Process for a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council

MEETING #1



MEETING SUMMARY

Date: November 26, 2019

Time: 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Location: Intergovernmental Center, 10 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato, MN

Attendees

- Joe Kapper, SRF Consulting
- Charles Androsky, Mankato Area Planning Organization
- Vicki Apel, SMILES Center for Independent Living
- Lanette Ayers, Blue Earth County
- Landon Bode, Mankato Transit System
- DeAnn Boney, Blue Earth County
- Ron Decker, True Transit (VINE Faith in Action)
- Melinda Estey, Minnesota Department of Transportation Office of Transit and Active Transportation
- Jaime Hayes, South Central Community Based Initiative
- Kyle Hoffman, Region Nine Development Commission
- Pat LaCourse, Brown County Heartland Express
- Kari Loe, MRCI Worksource
- Kelly McDonough, Minnesota River Agency on Aging (MNRAA)
- Mike Pinske, AmeriCare Mobility Van
- Craig Rempp, Mankato Transit System

Welcome and Introductions

Joe provided an overview of the agenda, led introductions among meeting attendees, and asked each attendee to identify an issue faced by their agency or organization. Attendees identified the following issues:

- Lack of consistency in administration of non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) leads to difficulties in coordination of services.
- High “deadhead” ratios – vehicles dispatched long distances for relatively short rides.
- Transit users and potential users expect more of agencies than is possible to provide with available resources.
- Justification of increased service hours is difficult with low ridership.
- Rural transportation and coordination of services.
- Equity issues in rural areas as access to services become more challenging

- Transportation between Waseca and New Richland.
- Span of service – transit/transportation service hours not late or early enough
- Interagency communication and training

Background

Joe provided an overview of forming a Regional Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC) and explained the purpose and benefits of doing so. Joe noted that a grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Office of Transit and Active Transportation is the source of funds for this undertaking and that south-central Minnesota area counties will be the focus area for the work.

Joe stated that the goal is to get all stakeholders involved as early as possible and address all modes of transportation, noting that potential outcomes of the process include resolutions by county governments or the formation of a transportation authority. Joe highlighted that this plan will identify specific action items as opposed to high-level strategy and that implementation will occur in the next phase.

Project Management Team

Joe identified the members of the project management team (PMT) and stated that the purpose of the organization is to determine the mission of the RTCC. Joe said that the PMT will also assist in public engagement efforts; creation of an organizational structure, financial plan, and implementation plan; and development of a purpose and need statement. Joe said that the consultant team will be responsible for meeting minutes and engagement summaries as well as a summary of the RTCC workplan.

Proposed Schedule

Joe outlined the proposed schedule for the RTCC planning process:

- PMT Meeting 2 (early 2020): Review outreach summary, peer analysis report, purpose and need statement, and proposed RTCC geography.
- PMT Meeting 3: Review proposed workplan, bylaws, peer research, and items for follow-up.
- PMT Meeting 4: Review draft plan and any outstanding items.
- PMT Meeting 5: Presentation of operation and implementation plan.

Joe noted that there will also be meetings with the Mankato/North Mankato Planning Organization (MAPO) board at various points throughout the project and that, when possible, these meetings will be coordinated with the completion of deliverables.

Project Tasks

Joe described the key project tasks, components of each, and the process needed for completing these tasks. Joe led a discussion about who is currently well-served by the transportation system and who is underserved or unserved. Attendees identified the following issues:

- Lack of service on weekday evenings and weekends.
- Difficulties with workforce and postsecondary transportation.
- Limited capacity/transportation options for wheelchair users.
- Lack of rural transportation options – some counties still have no service
- Lack of transportation options is associated with homelessness because it creates barriers to accessing education and job opportunities.
- Limited awareness of transit options.
- Low ridership has led to service reductions.
- People without transportation options use emergency medical transportation for non-emergency medical appointments.
- Non-local management of services sometimes creates issues due to lack of familiarity with local geography.
- Funding has not increased to match rising costs.
- Bus driver shortage.

Participants also identified strengths within the existing system – those who are well served – and noted some of the following groups:

- People that are traveling to/from Mankato during business hours have options
- City of St. Peter has a high level of service

Attendees noted that investment in non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) has produced a significant return by providing access to preventative care. Attendees also expressed an interest in finding efficiencies to improve service without increasing costs.

Joe next asked attendees what they wish their organizations or agencies had capacity to achieve. Attendees noted the following desired staff additions and organizational capacity improvements:

- Marketing manager.
- Mobility manager.
- Additional case management capacity for staff serving people with disabilities.
- Coordination with other agencies and organizations to increase capacity in specialized areas and improve services.
- Centralized resource providing information about available specialized services.
- Travel companions/trip training.
- Coordination between medical assistance programs and transit.
- Improved pedestrian access to bus stops and sidewalk maintenance.
- Increased flexibility in scheduling rides.

Stakeholder Involvement

Joe identified stakeholders that staff will meet with in interviews and small group meetings, including funding partners, program managers, county officials, advocates, employers, healthcare providers, and transit agencies. Joe led a discussion to learn about other stakeholders to involve in this process. Attendees identified the following groups:

- Taylor Corporation.
- Mayo Clinic.
- Senior services providers.
- Youth organizations.
- Diverse cultural groups.
- People with disabilities.
- People who served by stakeholder organizations.
- DaVita.
- Staffing agencies.
- Large employers such as Walmart.
- Senior apartment developments.

To conclude the meeting, attendees identifies noted local elected officials, county commissioners, and DaVita as potential funding partners for this undertaking.