

Dakota County Human Services Research and Transportation Planning: Strategic Action Plan

March 2014
Final Report

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List of Abbreviations

ATS	Access Transportation Service
DHS	Minnesota Department of Human Services
FFS	Fee-For-Service
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HSP	Human Services Provider
MA	Medical Assistance
MnDOT	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MCOTA	Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
NEMT	Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
NIT	Nonprofit Insurance Trust
STS	Special Transportation Service

Executive Summary

■ Introduction

Transportation is essential to a full life: providing access to jobs, school, medical care, recreation, and other basic needs. Those who can afford and are able to use personal vehicles do not experience significant barriers to getting where they need to go. For those who cannot drive a personal vehicle, the story is very different.

Dakota County engaged a team from the University of Minnesota, led by the Center for Transportation Studies, to conduct collaborative stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, emerging practices research, and strategic planning in order to assist County government with identifying strategic opportunities to facilitate improved transit and client transportation services in Dakota County. The work was conducted from October 2013 through February 2014.

This report summarizes the results of the research and engagement activities, and outlines seven recommendations for the County to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of human service transportation.

■ The challenge

In the past two years, Dakota County evaluated existing human service transportation options within the County, and found a lack of coordination and significant service gaps, often describing it as a “spaghetti bowl,” with a variety of funding sources, providers, and rules creating confusion. This study is an effort to start “untangling the spaghetti,” and provide a clear direction for next steps.



Quotes from end users and stakeholders

The following comments from end users and stakeholders illustrate some of the transportation-related challenges that county clients and residents experience.

“...one of the primary reasons [adults with serious disabilities] remain in residential care (at enormous expense) is that outside of a package of residential services, they would lose their ability to get around.”

“For an hour appointment, it might take 3 or more hours each way with transfers and waiting. This is one of the impediments to clients getting consistent medical care.”

“Dakota County residents are attending Technical Colleges or training programs outside of the county strictly due to transportation.”

“I have families willing to participate in Family School (preschool for children, English and Parenting classes for adults) but have no way to get here.

They try to use public transit, but the number of buses and the time they have to get on in the morning is too difficult with a small child.”

“I do have one major concern though and that is that so much of our transit ways are focused on moving people OUT of the area for work. What about those who live in Burnsville but work in Apple Valley? Unless you have a car you’re stuck! ... I think a quality intra-county public transit program would be very helpful to raising quality of living for ALL our residents.”

“Increased transportation options will assist more people in the County to gain skills, obtain employment locally and improve the cities and communities in Dakota County.”

■ External pressures

Demographic changes, in particular the dramatic growth in adults over 65 and individuals with disabilities, limited transportation funding, and the implementation of Minnesota’s Olmstead plan are three external factors that create an imperative for improving human service transportation in Dakota County.

Demographic changes

In Minnesota, the state demographer forecasts the share of the population over age 65 will grow from approximately 15 percent in 2015 to nearly 25 percent in 2030. Individuals with disabilities make up about 20 percent of the state’s population, and that share is also projected to increase. This trend also creates a greater need for transportation services. Figure I.2 shows the dramatic increase in the number of adults over age 65 in Minnesota.

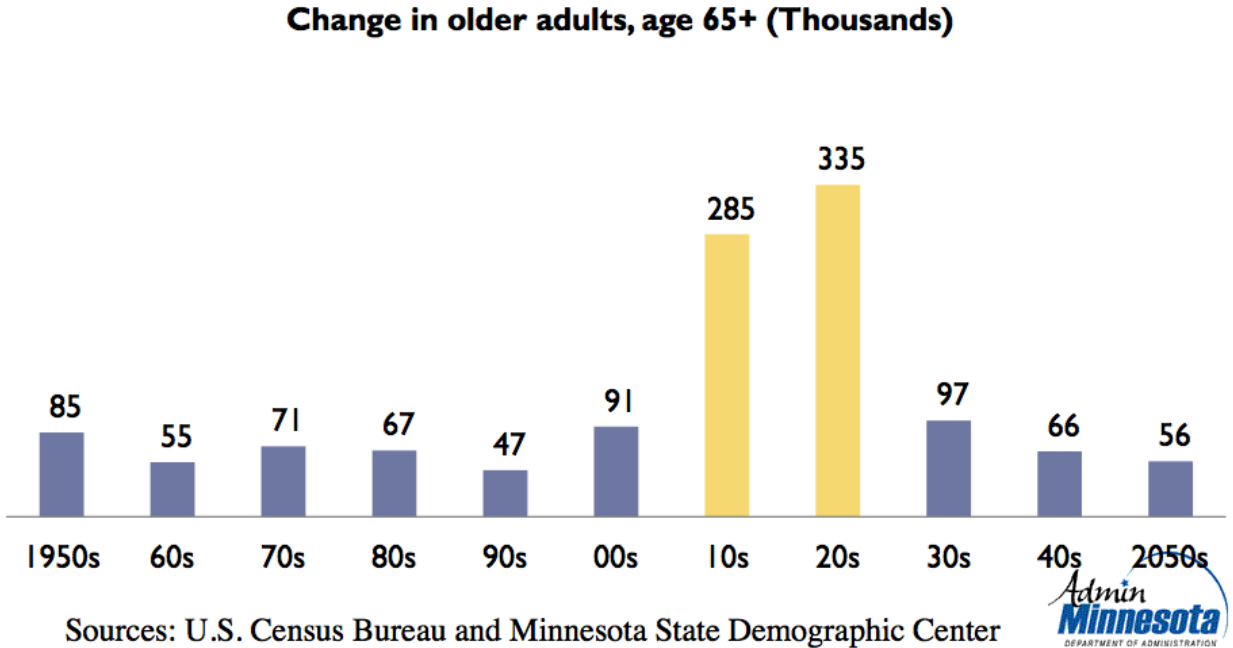


Figure I.2 Change in adult population age 65 and over in Minnesota

Transportation funding constraints

Federal and state funding for transportation is not expected to increase enough to meet demand in the next 5-10 years. Thus, coordination continues to be a core component of federal transportation funding. The latest federal transportation act, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, requires coordination with human services in statewide and metropolitan transportation planning, and coordination of service delivery is also required in Federal Transit Administration grant programs.

While the federal government has been requiring transportation coordination, a 2013 Government Accountability Office report, [Transportation-Disadvantaged Populations: Coordination Efforts are Underway, but Challenges Continue](#), identified ongoing challenges to coordination including insufficient leadership and limited financial resources at the federal level and growing unmet needs at the state and local level, a finding consistent with Dakota County's experiences.

Minnesota's *Olmstead* plan

In 1999, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that “unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The court held that public entities must provide community-based services to persons with disabilities when (1) such services are appropriate; (2) the affected persons do not oppose community-based treatment; and (3) community-based services can be reasonably accommodated, taking into account the resources available to the public entity and the needs of others who are receiving disability services from the entity.”¹

In response to a 2011 federal lawsuit, the state of Minnesota agreed to develop an *Olmstead* plan, which is a way to document the state's “plans to provide services to individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the individual.

The plan, [Putting the Promise of Olmstead into Practice: Minnesota's 2013 Olmstead Plan](#), was released on November 1, 2013. The purpose of the *Olmstead* plan is to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and transportation is critical for access to those opportunities. The Minnesota Council of Transportation Access (MCOTA) will be integrally involved with the implementation of transportation section of the state's *Olmstead* plan and will involve local governments in the process.

¹ United States Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act website, [About Olmstead](#) (accessed Nov. 27, 2013)

■ **Coordination as an overarching strategy**

With the pressures of rapidly increasing in the numbers of older adults and adults with disabilities, ongoing funding constraints, and the requirements of the Olmstead plan, action is needed.

Transportation coordination is a strategy for managing existing resources more effectively, and is particularly necessary because of demographic changes; funding constraints at the federal and state levels; and the state's requirements for more specific compliance with the Olmstead Act. In addition, the County's mix of urban, suburban, and rural geography makes it challenging to offer the same services throughout the County, so coordination of services makes sense.

Coordination also offers many benefits to transportation users and providers, including ease of use and streamlined operations.

■ Findings

Below is a high-level summary of the findings from each aspect of the study.

Stakeholder engagement goals

- One-call/one-click access to information
- Consistent data collection and reporting
- Land use/transportation connection
- Greater awareness
- County-wide coverage

Human service transportation funding

- Varied sources: differing requirements create procedural barriers
- Possible improvements:
- Shared/centralized outreach and training
 - Common understanding of requirements
 - Opportunities for increased sharing of similar duties

Provider survey

- Funding terms restrict service
- Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington counties most common out-of-county destinations
- 45 percent of responding providers interested in vehicle sharing
- Only 58 percent track one-way trips

Emerging practices

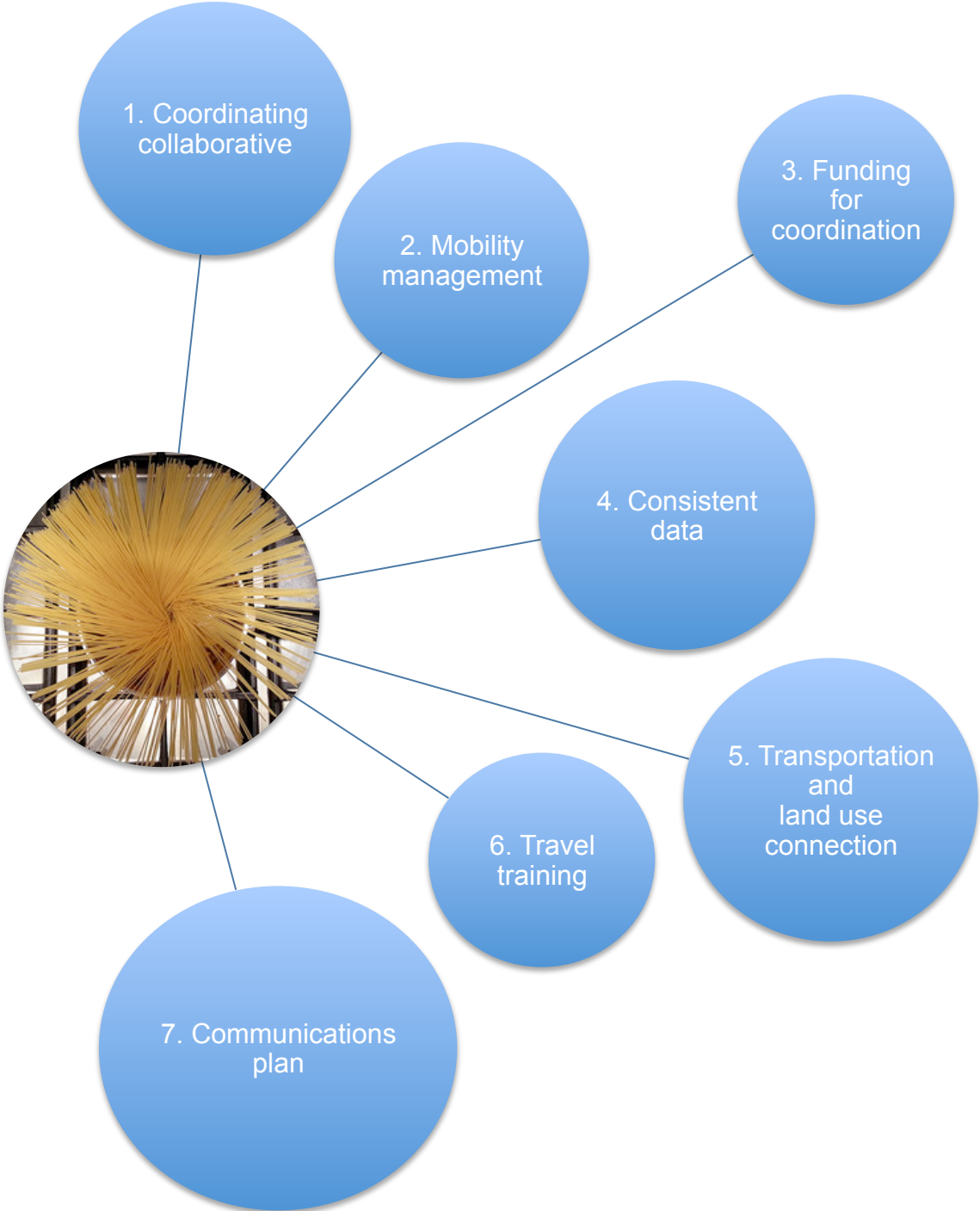
- Local coordinating councils
- Mobility management programs
- Travel training programs
- Shared driver training
- Nonprofit Insurance Trust for vehicle-sharing insurance

External factors

- Demographic changes
- Funding constraints
- Olmstead Plan implementation

■ **Recommendations**

Based on findings from the stakeholder engagement process and other research, the team identified seven action items for the County to move toward “untangled spaghetti.”



These recommendations are based on the priorities that emerged from the stakeholder engagement process and the strategic planning workshop, as well as on best practices from other areas. They are all actions that Dakota County can take immediately, without relying on state, regional, or federal actions (although a state legislative change may be helpful for one of the recommendations.) Yet, they are consistent with and adaptable to state and federal standards, in order to be scalable as human service transportation coordination evolves in the future.

1. Form county coordinating collaborative.
2. Strengthen and continue support for DARTS mobility management project.
3. Identify funding options for coordination activities.
4. Require consistent, transparent, and shared data collection and reporting among providers.
5. Explore ways to encourage/require cities and county to include transportation services and needs in land use decisions.
6. Establish Dakota County Human Service Agency travel training program.
7. Create and implement a communications and marketing plan.

The target populations for human service transportation coordination efforts are older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. Other populations in the county will likely benefit from more choices and services, but are not the primary audience.

1. Form county coordinating collaborative

This is the essential first step to create buy-in, advance momentum, and implement changes.

Start date: Immediately (Spring 2014)

Resources: Dakota County leadership and identified staff support (internal or external), internal or external facilitator

Potential barriers or resistance: Potential challenge to dedicate staff and resources; findings and recommendations from this report to help. The differing levels of professional and cultural experience with transportation between transit provider staff and human service agency staff will require patience and listening.

Other terms used for this concept are council, board, and coalition. The team recommends the term collaborative to emphasize the cooperative nature of this group and to differentiate it from MCOTA and the Metropolitan Council.

This collaborative will:

- Serve as the local group implementing this action plan to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of human service transportation services provided to the transit public.
- Lead coordination activities and advance coordination strategies throughout Dakota County.
- Be invested with the authority and mandate (from county or through joint powers agreement/MOUs/state legislation) to make changes.
- Identify/create incentives for provider participation.
- Foster a willingness to make change among all participants.
- Oversee the DARTS mobility management project.
- Establish minimum standards for service options around the county.
- Conduct outreach to other counties (once greater coordination within the county is established).
- Develop a facilitation and engagement plan to ensure stakeholder participation and buy-in.
- Coordinate with MCOTA, Metropolitan Council, other Metro counties and other relevant agencies to create and advocate for change at the regional and state level.

Options for enabling state legislation:

There are no formal local coordinating councils or collaboratives in Minnesota, so it may be helpful for the state legislature to provide that authority in statute. Since this is a

critical step, we recommend that the County form the collaborative first, then work with MCOTA on determining the legislation needed.

Examples range from a simple clause in the Minnesota Board on Aging's statute that directs the board "to award grants, enter into contracts, and adopt rules the Minnesota Board on Aging deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this section" to legislation in Washington that explicitly creates local coordinating coalitions.²

2. Strengthen and continue support for DARTS mobility management project

Start date: Fall 2014

Resources: Led by the collaborative

Potential barriers or resistance: Potential resistance from other providers; will need to engage them, listening carefully to their concerns.

Definition from the American Public Transit Association:

Mobility management involves creating **partnerships** with transportation providers in a community or region **to enhance travel options**, and then developing the means to effectively **communicate those options to the public** through both traditional and state-of-the-art channels. It requires moving **beyond the usual patterns of doing business**.

The DARTS mobility management project is a two-year (2013-2015) project to develop a one-call, one-click information and referral point, engage transportation providers in a network, and to develop a mobility management operations plan.

The collaborative should:

- Identify/provide sustainable funding.
- Provide oversight and direction.
- Recommend additional mobility management activities.

² Washington State Legislature, Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2072, Chapter 515 (2009): <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2072-S.SL.pdf>

3. Identify funding options for coordination activities

Start date: Fall 2014

Resources: Led by the collaborative

Potential barriers or resistance: None

- Mobility management projects that benefit older adults and individuals with disabilities are eligible for the FTA 5310 program funds, with a 20% or 50% local match requirement. Marin County, California, is an example of a county that has used FTA grants to develop its mobility management program.³
- Redirect a portion of current County transportation funds to coordination activities.
- Opportunities for added revenue.
- Potential for the collaborative to prioritize competing grant applications
- The collaborative could even become the funding provider for human services transportation in the County.

4. Require consistent, transparent, and shared data collection and reporting among providers

Start date: Spring 2015

Resources: Led by the collaborative

Potential barriers or resistance: Process changes can be very challenging to implement; need time and requirements and/or incentives to create agreement and buy-in.

- Adopt uniform reporting standards, following recommendations from current MCOTA project (available in Fall 2014).
- Consider creating a single reporting structure (such as FL and GA).
- Develop a plan for sharing data.
- Recruit all providers in county as participants.
- Lead work with surrounding counties to find efficiencies that can be achieved through multi-county data and process sharing.

³ Marin County Access brochure: <http://marinaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/At-A-Glance-Final-6-27-13.pdf>, and PowerPoint overview: http://www.marintransit.org/pdf/board/Mobility_Management_Presentation_020413.pdf

5. Explore ways to encourage or require cities and the County to include transportation services and needs as factors in land use decisions and to educate businesses and economic development staff

Start date: Spring 2015

Resources: Led by the collaborative, using working group that includes County planning/transportation staff as well as city representatives.

Potential barriers or resistance: Land use decisions are usually challenging.

- Explore methods that cities can use to encourage transit-oriented development, such as rezoning, zoning variances, lower parking requirements, raising height restrictions, density bonuses, lot-size reductions, setback reductions, transit overlay zones, density bonuses, and tax increment financing.
- Explore ways for all the County's facilities to be accessible via transit (perhaps relocation of certain services or a circulator service).
- Educate local realtors and business chambers.

The Metropolitan Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) includes strategies for coordinating transportation investments and land development to support all modes and reduce congestion.⁴

6. Establish Dakota County human service agency travel training program

Start date: Fall/Winter 2015

Resources: Developed by mobility manager, with oversight and direction from the collaborative.

Potential barriers or resistance: Potential challenge to dedicate staff and resources.

- Travel training programs are proven to encourage use of fixed-route transit among those who are able to use it, generating significant savings (see MCOTA cost/benefits report⁵).
- Establish realistic expectations for potential services (e.g., fixed-route transit is not a feasible option in all parts of the County).
- Establish realistic expectations of user abilities with human service agencies; not all clients will be able to use fixed-route transit.

⁴ Metropolitan Council, November 20, 2010, <http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning/2030-Transportation-Policy-Plan.aspx>

⁵ Minnesota Council on Transportation Access, Calculating the Benefits of Transit Coordination: Minnesota Case Studies, 2013, http://www.coordinatemntransit.org/MCOTA/documents/MCOTA_econ_casestudies_2013.pdf

- May be managed by mobility management program and potentially funded by federal 5310 grant.

7. Create and implement a communications and marketing plan

Start date: Fall/Winter 2015 (or earlier)

Resources: Led by the collaborative with staff or consultant assistance, working with the mobility manager.

Potential barriers or resistance: Will require funding.

- The benefits of coordination (both in terms of cost savings and service benefits) need to be documented and regularly communicated to county leaders, stakeholders, and the public.
- A public awareness campaign to raise the awareness of transportation options and services should be created and implemented. This campaign might use direct marketing, local advertising, community organization newsletters, and social media to get the message out.
- Information should also be disseminated through human service agencies, employment specialists, libraries, health care providers, senior housing, and religious organizations.

■ Conclusion

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on the needs, goals, and strategies identified in the stakeholder engagement process. They provide a road map for Dakota County to improve human service transportation, in time to meet the needs of its growing population of older adults, as well as individuals with disabilities and lower incomes. Like universal design for buildings and sidewalks, coordinated transportation will help Dakota County provide better transportation services to all residents, enabling greater access to jobs, medical care, school, and other services.

The confluence of demographic, funding, and legal factors offer a prime opportunity for Dakota County to take the lead in coordinating human services transportation at a local level in Minnesota. The County is to be commended for recognizing the needs and taking action.

Introduction

Transportation is essential to a full life: providing access to jobs, school, medical care, recreation, and other basic needs. Those who can afford and are able to use personal vehicles do not experience significant barriers to getting where they need to go. For those who cannot drive a personal vehicle, the story is very different.

In the past two years, Dakota County evaluated existing human service transportation options within the County, and found a lack of coordination and significant service gaps.

As a result of transportation barriers, serving clients is more difficult and residents experience more challenges with getting to work, medical appointments, and other places they need to go. The lack of coordination and common data reporting also makes it hard to evaluate the use of transportation resources.

A team from the University of Minnesota, led by the Center for Transportation Studies, conducted collaborative stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, emerging practices research, and strategic planning in order to assist County government with identifying strategic opportunities to facilitate improved transit and client transportation services in Dakota County. This report summarizes the results of the research and engagement activities, and outlines seven recommendations for the County to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of human service transportation.

■ Previous Dakota County planning efforts

In 2012, a multi-disciplinary team of managers at Dakota County began meeting to discuss ways to move toward a better coordinated system of transit and Human Service Transportation options. Staff from the Dakota County Office of Planning and Analysis, Administration, Community Services, and Transportation convened stakeholders with the goal of identifying strategic opportunities that would facilitate improved transit and client transportation services in Dakota County through a coordinated system.

As part of this process, County staff invited stakeholders to a meeting in order to share experiences, ideas, and opportunities to improve coordination of transportation throughout the County. Stakeholders represented the following agencies and organizations: the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies, the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, Metro Transit, Transit Link, DARTS, Hastings Family Services, Neighbors, GAPP Services, Lifeworks, and the Metro Area Agency on Aging.

As a result of the meetings, Dakota County developed and issued an RFP to identify strategies and opportunities to improve human service transportation.

■ Coordination as an overarching strategy

Definition of Coordination

The term transportation coordination has multiple meanings. The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) agreed on a working definition of transportation coordination in order to clarify what is meant when the council or members use the term, and to have a common definition that applies to the council's guidelines and recommendations.⁶ The definition is:

- Coordination is a strategy for managing resources. It is applied within community political environments. Fundamentally, coordination is about shared power and accountability among organizations that are working together to achieve common goals.
- Coordination focuses on management, resources, cost-effectiveness, broad perspectives, multiple stakeholders, cooperation, action and accountability.
- Coordination can be used to address problematic transportation situations, such as duplication of effort and opportunities for improving transportation resource efficiency. Coordinating transportation means doing better (obtaining more results, like trips) with existing resources by working together with persons from different agencies and backgrounds.

The National Resource Center for Human Service Transportation Coordination (NRC) uses a slightly less detailed definition:

- Coordination is the efficient and effective use of transportation resources for getting people to important destinations, such as jobs and medical appointments.
- Coordination means working with transit providers, human service agencies, private institutions, businesses, volunteers and political leaders to broaden transportation options⁷

This report adopts both of these definitions to describe the concept of transportation coordination.

Why Coordinate?

Coordination is a strategy for managing existing resources more effectively, and is particularly needed because of demographic changes: the aging of the population, the growing diversity in the County, and differences in generational preferences for vehicle ownership; funding constraints at the federal and state levels; and the state's

⁶ MCOTA 2014 Annual Report, January 2014

⁷ <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=8&z=62>

requirements for more specific compliance with the Olmstead Act. In addition, the County’s mix of urban, suburban, and rural geography makes it challenging to offer the same services throughout the County, so coordination of services makes sense.

Coordination also offers many benefits to transportation users, especially ease of use.

Demographic changes

Aging

In Minnesota, the state demographer forecasts the share of the population over age 65 will grow from approximately 15 percent in 2015 to nearly 25 percent in 2030. Annual growth in the population with disabilities is expected to outpace total population growth, and low-income populations are also experiencing growth.

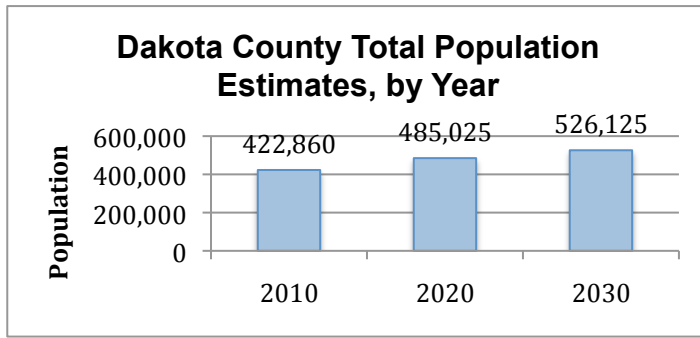


Figure I.1 Estimates for Total Dakota County Population, by Year
 Source: Metropolitan Council 2030 Regional Development Framework - Revised Forecasts as of January 1, 2014

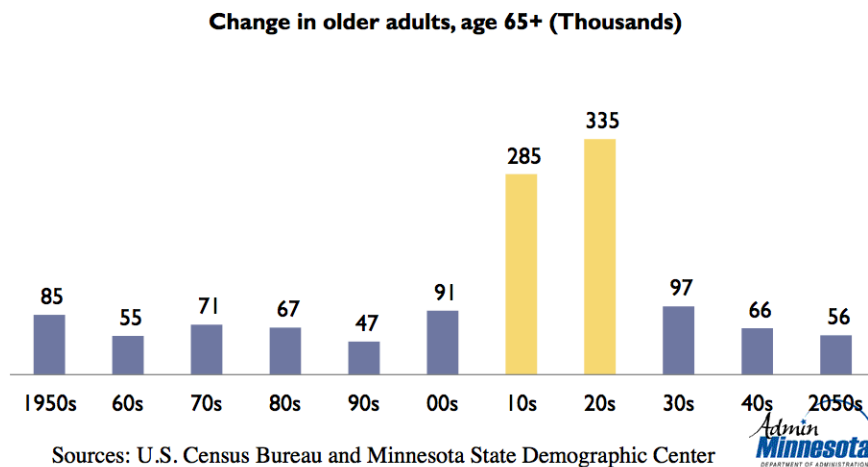


Figure I.2 Change in adult population age 65 and over in Minnesota

Disabilities

According to the Minnesota State Council on Disability, people with disabilities represent a significant and growing part of the population, which generates a greater need for transportation services.

People with disabilities represent approximately 20% of Minnesota’s population. As we age, that number will increase. Individuals with disabilities are living longer, more inclusive and more productive lives than ever before. As our population ages, in particular, as the baby boomers age, people will acquire age related disabilities.⁸

Diversity

In Dakota County, the share of the population that is nonwhite is expected to grow from about 19 percent in 2015 to 25 percent in 2030 (Figure I.3) Diversity is relevant to transportation because, currently, “unemployment and poverty levels in our state are much higher among people of color as a group, relative to white Minnesotans.”⁹ Good transit services enable access to training and employment for all individuals while reducing the need for the often-unaffordable expense of a personal vehicle.

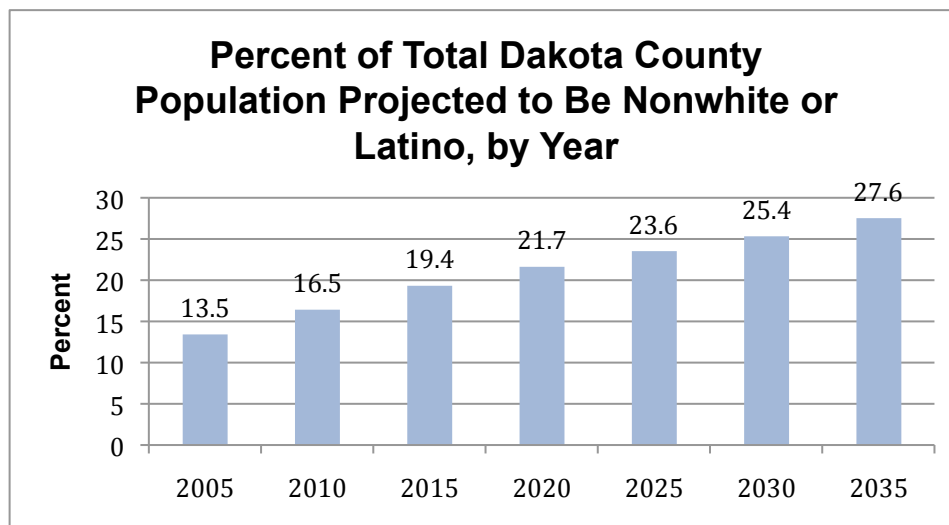


Figure I.3 Percent of Total Dakota County Population Projected to Be Nonwhite or Latino, by Year
 Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center

⁸ <http://www.disability.state.mn.us/about-us/>

⁹ Minnesota State Demographic Center, The Time For Talent: Why the development, recruitment, and retention of talent is key to a prosperous future for Minnesota, March, 2013.
http://www.demography.state.mn.us/documents/Talent_Full_Report_FINAL_March2013r.pdf

Generational preferences

Studies and polls have found that younger generations are less interested in driving and owning personal vehicles than older generations. Transit, bicycling, and car sharing appeal to this generation. Communities that want to be attractive to younger generations need to offer greater transportation choices.

Transportation funding constraints

Federal and state funding for transportation is not expected to increase enough to keep up with demand in the next 5-10 years. Coordination continues to be a core component of federal transportation funding. The latest federal transportation act, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, requires coordination with human services in statewide and metropolitan transportation planning, and coordination of service delivery is also required in Federal Transit Administration grant programs.

While the federal government has been requiring transportation coordination, a 2013 Government Accountability Office report, [Transportation-Disadvantaged Populations: Coordination Efforts are Underway, but Challenges Continue](#), identified ongoing challenges to coordination including insufficient leadership and limited financial resources at the federal level and growing unmet needs at the state and local level, a finding consistent with Dakota County's experiences. The report also identified continuing efforts to address those challenges, such as providing state and local entities with improved guidance on transportation coordination, especially instructions on how to share costs across programs.

Minnesota's Olmstead Plan

In 1999, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that "unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The court held that public entities must provide community-based services to persons with disabilities when (1) such services are appropriate; (2) the affected persons do not oppose community-based treatment; and (3) community-based services can be reasonably accommodated, taking into account the resources available to the public entity and the needs of others who are receiving disability services from the entity."¹⁰

In response to a 2011 federal lawsuit, the state of Minnesota agreed to develop an *Olmstead* plan, which is a way to document the state's "plans to provide services to individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the individual. Effective *Olmstead* plans include analysis of current services, concrete commitments to

¹⁰ United States Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act website, [About Olmstead](#) (accessed Nov. 27, 2013)

increase integration (and to prevent unnecessary institutionalization), and specific and reasonable timeframes, among other components.”¹¹

The plan, [Putting the Promise of Olmstead into Practice: Minnesota’s 2013 Olmstead Plan](#), was released on November 1, 2013. The purpose of the Olmstead plan is to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and transportation is critical for access to those opportunities.

MCOTA will be integrally involved with the implementation of transportation section of the state’s Olmstead plan and will involve local governments in the process.

■ Report Organization

The report is organized into seven sections:

- Section 1 summarizes stakeholder engagement activities, including meetings with the advisory committee and stakeholders.
- Section 2 describes the transportation provider inventory and survey results, including issues and barriers and coverage maps.
- Section 3 summarizes transportation funding streams and potentially conflicting requirements, and recommends possible methods for reforming these points of conflict.
- Section 4 describes the end-user experiences received from a voice/e-mail collection mechanism distributed to clients by a few members of the advisory committee and stakeholders.
- Section 5 lists several relevant emerging practices nationwide for transportation coordination, including models for structuring local coordination councils.
- Section 6 is a summary of the Strategic Planning workshop.
- Section 7 contains a set of recommendations for next steps.

¹¹ Minnesota Governor’s press release: [Minnesota’s new Olmstead Plan improves opportunities for people with disabilities](#) Nov. 1, 2013, (accessed Nov. 27, 2013)

Section 1. Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Our team reviewed the previous reports and summaries of stakeholder engagement efforts conducted by Dakota County, to be sure we were building on those efforts. We continued to convene an advisory committee to guide the project, and proposed a series of three meetings to gather input from stakeholders.

■ Advisory committee

We began the stakeholder engagement process with a meeting of individuals from the County, Met Council, MnDOT, and providers who agreed to serve as the advisory committee for the project (see Table 1.1).

The purpose of the meeting was to ask the advisory committee members to provide their input on data sources and potential stakeholders to include in the strategic planning process, as well as to describe the needs and outcomes they would like to see, particularly from the point-of-view of their clients, the end users of transportation services.

We asked the committee to frame the challenges into actionable problem statements, keeping the users central to the problem and solutions. The summarized needs were:

- Consistent/transparent data collection and reporting among providers
- Independence through available and reliable transportation
- Public awareness of existing transportation options and the funding associated with them
- Touch point to ask questions and get information about transportation options and help eliminate barriers (one-stop shop)
- To create a transportation community
- User-friendly, easy technology for transportation information

The committee reviewed and suggested additional stakeholders—such as community development associations, religious organizations, state and county health agencies, retail mall managers, and smaller townships—to include. They also suggested criteria to consider for the locations of the stakeholder input meetings, and asked us to provide background on the current state of transit services and funding for those services in Dakota County at the meetings.

Table 1.1. Advisory committee members

Agency	Contact Name(s)
Metropolitan Council	Arlene McCarthy Gerri Sutton
MnDOT/Minnesota Council on Transportation Access	Noel Shughart
Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA)	Beverley Miller Robin Selvig
Metro Transit	Adam Harrington
DARTS	Greg Konat Kevin Raun Courtney Whited
Dakota County Community Development Agency (CDA)	Anna Judge Mark Ulfers
Dakota County	Jessie Carlson Kurt Chatfield Kelly Harder Mark Krebsbach Jess Luce Joe Morneau Emily Schug Matt Smith Dee Skeens Erin Stwora

■ Stakeholder input meetings

The study team conducted three stakeholder workshops in two locations across Dakota County. Participants included staff from transportation providers and a variety of human service agencies (see Appendix A). A structured and facilitated series of rotating small and large group discussions allowed the groups to identify current gaps and future opportunities for the design of a better coordinated transportation and human services transit system.

The first two stakeholder meetings were held on December 10th at the Dakota County Northern Service Center and on December 11th at the Pleasant Hill Library in Hastings. The goal of these meetings was to identify strategies that can address the gaps and barriers found in Dakota County's transit services. Jessie Carlson from Dakota County provided context for the meetings with a presentation on existing Dakota County human service transportation, including funding, services, and gaps identified in previous meetings. Following this presentation, participants shared their own perspectives and added any needs and barriers not yet mentioned.

Keeping these needs in mind, the participants developed and prioritized strategies to meet these needs. These strategies were categorized into seven themes: Education, Information Management, Financial, Logistical, Destinations/Locations, Resource Management, and Increased Programs/ Routes. Figure 1.1 illustrates how the strategies in each theme were prioritized. The size of the font is proportional to how many strategies in that theme were listed in each quadrant. For example, Education had several strategies listed in the highly desired/highly feasible quadrant, whereas Resource Management only had a few. The complete list of specific strategies categorized by theme can be found in Appendix B.

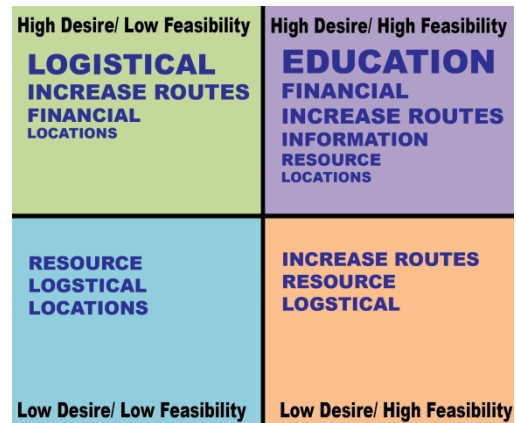


Figure 1.1 Prioritized themes from stakeholder input meetings

The strategies developed at the first two meetings served as the starting point for work at the third stakeholder input meeting. All participants who attended the first two meetings were invited to a follow-up meeting on January 8th at the Dakota County Northern Service Center, where the goal was to create an action map leading to successfully fulfilling the needs of the Dakota County human service transportation.

From this point forward in the project, those needs were categorized into four focus areas:

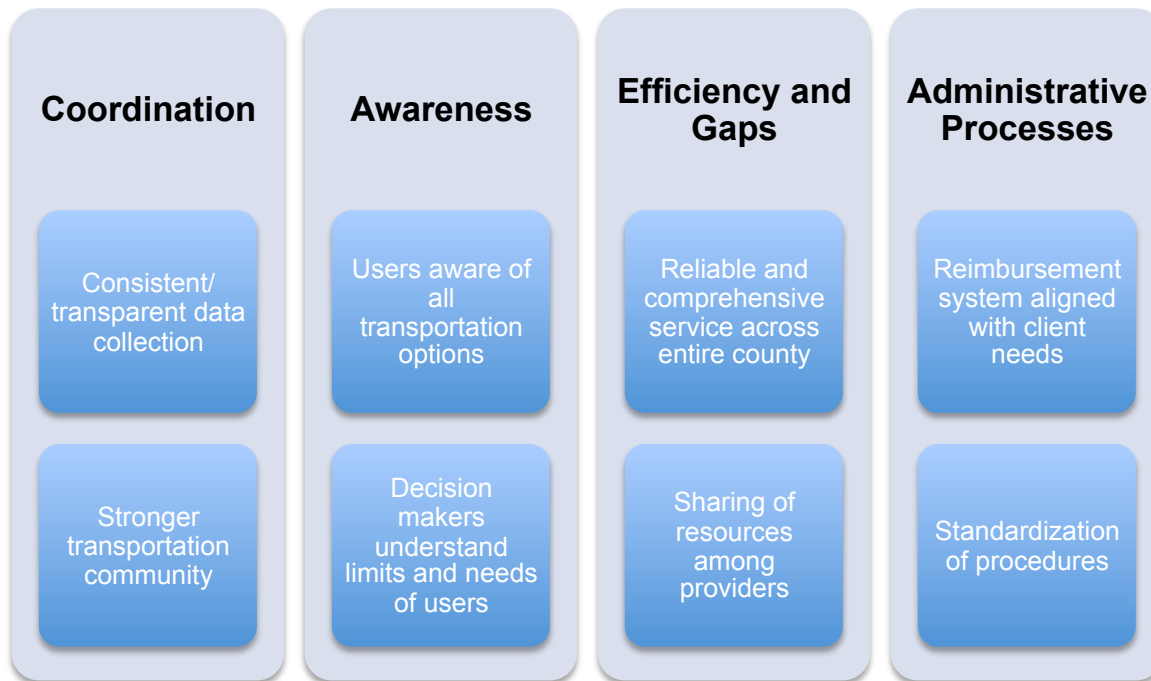


Figure 1.2 Transportation needs identified in stakeholder input meetings, grouped by four focus areas

At this third meeting, participants brainstormed what success looked like in these areas of focus and selected which strategies from the previous meetings would help achieve that vision of success. The input provided at this meeting was further developed in the Strategic Planning Workshop with the Advisory Committee. See Appendix C for action maps.

■ Stakeholder online survey

The team sent over 200 invitations for the stakeholder input meetings, and received responses from fewer than 20 people. Those who expressed interest but were unable to attend the meetings, as well as those who did not reply, were sent a brief online survey. The questions were similar to those in the third stakeholder meeting, and the responses were consistent with the in-person stakeholder input. See Appendix D for the full set of responses.

Section 2. Human Service Transportation Providers Survey

To assess the capacities and needs of human services transportation in Dakota County, a survey was sent to 36 providers. Thirteen responded and an additional six were contacted by phone to gather additional information.

The survey was designed to obtain information on the following aspects of their operations including:

- Geographic service area
- Classifications of passengers
- Trip destinations and purposes

Below is a summary of the results.

■ Service areas and transportation providers

In addition to the fixed-route transit provided by Metro Transit and Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA), the following programs provide transportation services. Metro Mobility and Transit Link are public transit services that meet the needs of some human service programs.

- *Metro Mobility* is a dial-a-ride service for persons certified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Service is provided in Dakota County by DARTS under a contract with the Met Council.
- *Transit Link* is a general public dial-a-ride service for areas where fixed-route services are not available. Service is provided in Dakota County by DARTS under a contract with the Met Council.
- Other and volunteer driver services such as Neighbors, Hastings Family Services, and GAPP Services.

Metro Mobility

Table 2.1 lists the Metro Mobility service hours for different communities in Dakota County. Hours vary by community to align with fixed route service and may change to correspond with changes made to fixed route service.

Table 2.1: Metro Mobility hours of operation by community

Community	Weekday		Saturday		Sunday	
Apple Valley	4:45 AM	11:30 PM	8:00 AM	8:45 PM	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
Bloomington	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR
Burnsville	5:00 AM	11:45 PM	7:15 AM	10:30 PM	7:30 AM	9:30 PM
Eagan	5:15 AM	11:45 PM	7:45 AM	9:15 PM	8:00 AM	9:00 PM
Fort Snelling	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR
Inver Grove Heights	5:15 AM	1:45 AM	6:15 AM	1:45 AM	7:00 AM	12:30 AM
Lakeville	5:00 AM	11:30 PM	8:00 AM	8:30 PM	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE
Lilydale	5:15 AM	11:45 PM	8:00 AM	8:45 PM	8:00 AM	6:15 PM
Mendota	5:15 AM	8:15 PM	8:00 AM	4:00 PM	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
Mendota Heights	5:15 AM	11:45 PM	8:00 AM	8:45 PM	8:00 AM	6:15 PM
MSP Airport	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR	24HR
Rosemount	5:15 AM	7:15 PM	8:00 AM	4:00 PM	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
South St. Paul	5:00 AM	2:00 AM	6:15 AM	1:45 AM	7:15 AM	12:30 AM
Sunfish Lake	5:15 AM	11:00 PM	8:00 AM	4:00 PM	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
West St. Paul	5:15 AM	1:45 AM	5:45 AM	1:45 AM	7:00 AM	12:00 AM

Note: (See <http://metro council.org/Transportation/Services/Metro-Mobility/Service-Hours-By-Community.aspx> for more details).

Metro Mobility in Dakota County covers a wide area of the northern area of the County as can be seen on the map in Figure 2.1. The Metro Mobility service area is larger than the federally mandated area.

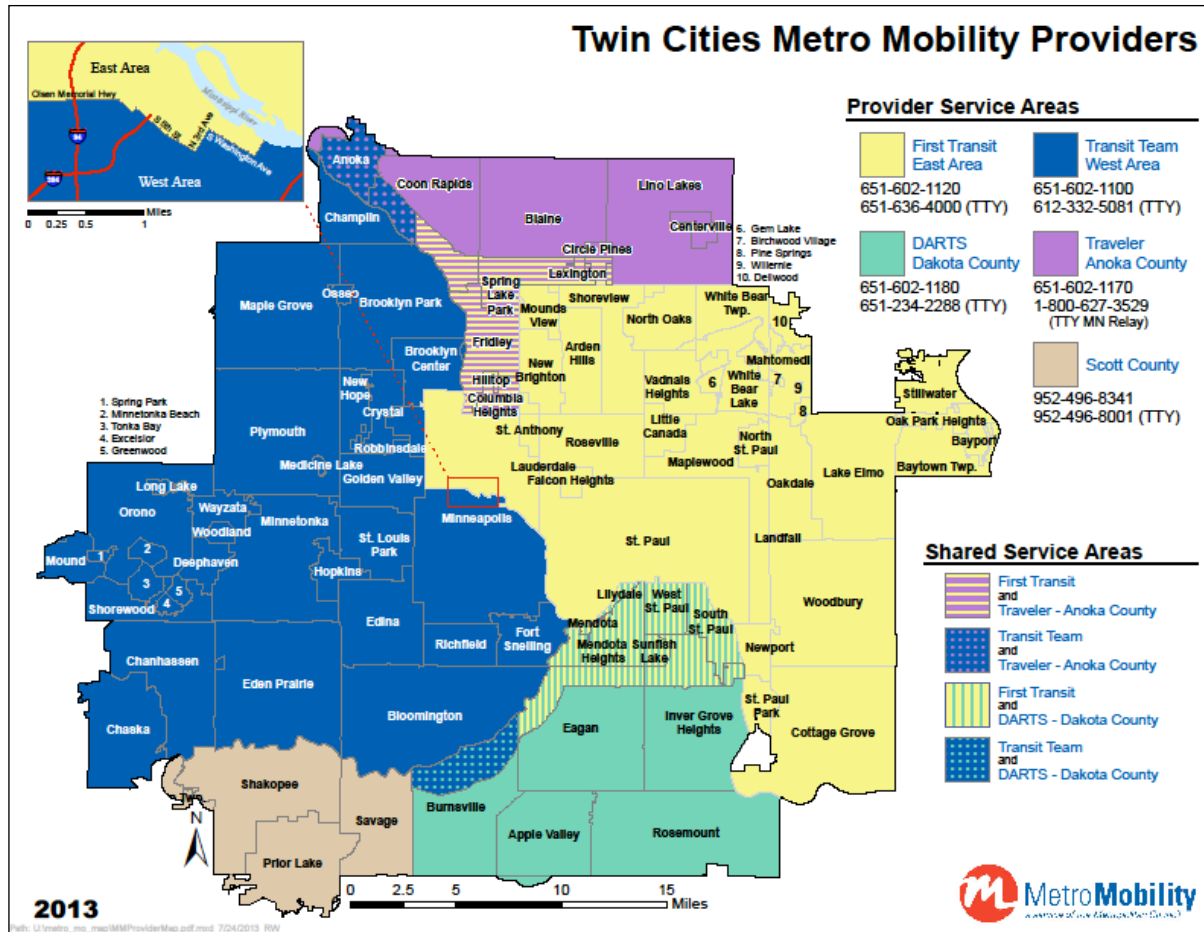


Figure 2.1. Twin Cities Metro Mobility providers

Source: Metropolitan Council ([http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Services/Metro-Mobility/Metro-Mobility-Provider-Map-\(pdf\).aspx](http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Services/Metro-Mobility/Metro-Mobility-Provider-Map-(pdf).aspx)).

The map also shows areas of service overlapping between different providers in the northern and western parts of the county. Qualified clients in these areas can contact either contractor covering that area to place the ride and will choose based on their destination to eliminate transfers when possible.

DARTS will provide limited trips to destinations outside of Dakota County. They will transport clients directly to their destination if it is within two miles past the boundary of their service area. Otherwise they will take the client to a transportation hub for transfer to another service (e.g., if a client is going from West St. Paul to Savage and the destination is within two miles of the Burnsville Transit Station, the client will be taken directly to their destination. Otherwise they will be transferred to another provider at a major transit hub).

One reason for clients in the northern part of the county to contact First Transit in Ramsey County or Transit Team in Hennepin County is that these two agencies will service either county and are not limited to the two-mile overlap zone. Thus, a client in

West Saint Paul can go to locations in Hennepin, Ramsey and parts of Washington counties without having to transfer to another provider. This is not the case for other locations in Dakota County when clients need to go to locations in other adjoining counties.

Transit Link

Transit Link is a dial-a-ride service for the general public who are coming from or going to locations that are not in areas serviced by fixed-route transit. The service is not a substitute for Metro Mobility but it is an option for people that live or are going to destinations that are more than a 1/2 mile from a fixed-route transit line (1/4 mile in winter), in which case Transit Link will take or pick up a rider at a major transit hub. Transit Link service hours are limited; currently between 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays, and no service in weekends or holidays. Reservations need to be made at least one workday in advance.¹²

¹² For details see <http://www.darts1.org/transportation/ride-services/transit-link> and <http://metro council.org/Transportation/Services/Transit-Link/Forms,-maps,-publications/TransitLinkRiderGuide.aspx>

Service areas

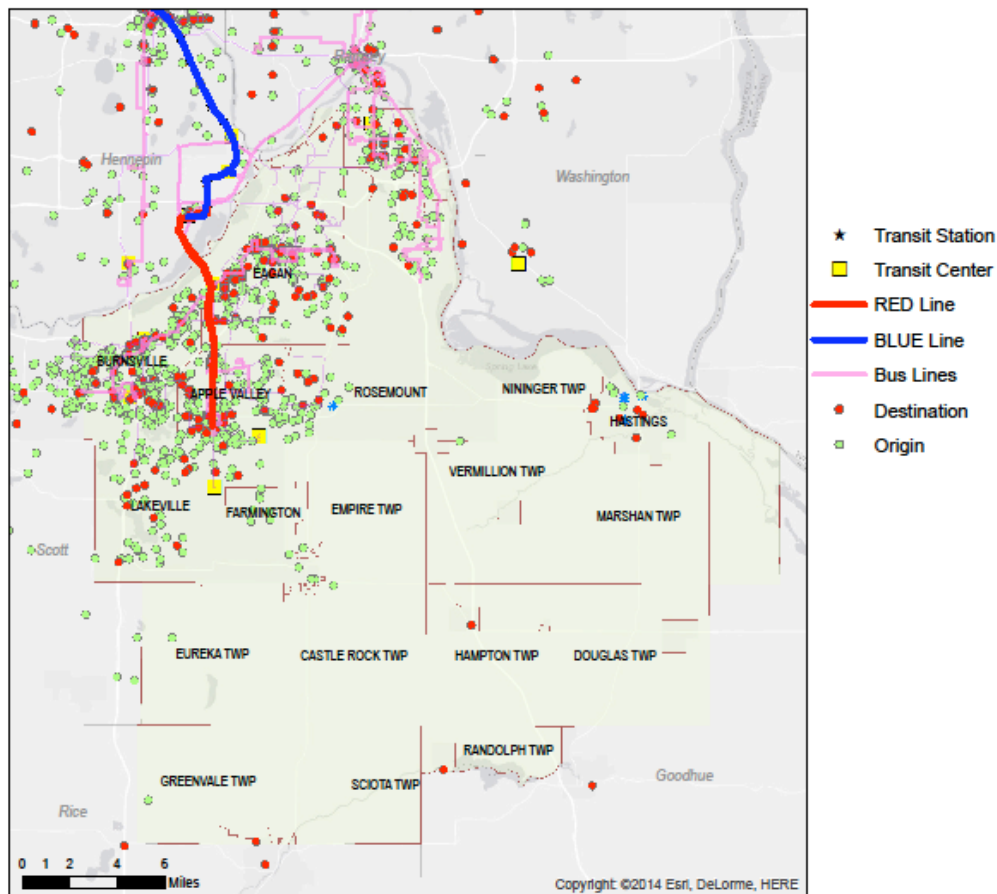


Figure 2.2. Trip origins and destinations from the Travel Behavior Inventory 2010

Dakota County STS providers cover all of the county, but as seen in Figure 2.2, the majority of the trip origins and destinations are in the northern and northwest portions of the county, concentrated from West Saint Paul to Lakeville (including Eagan, Burnsville, and Apple Valley – communities along Hwy. 35E), and from South Saint Paul to Inver Grove Heights (extending along Robert St. and Hwy. 52). These are the areas with the highest concentration of residential, commercial and service providers. These are covered by regular fixed-route transit from the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) routes 415 to 492, Metro Transit routes 67, 68, 71 and 467, and the METRO Red Line.¹³

¹³ For details see <http://www.metrotransit.org/bus> and <http://www.metrotransit.org/map/> for detailed route information.

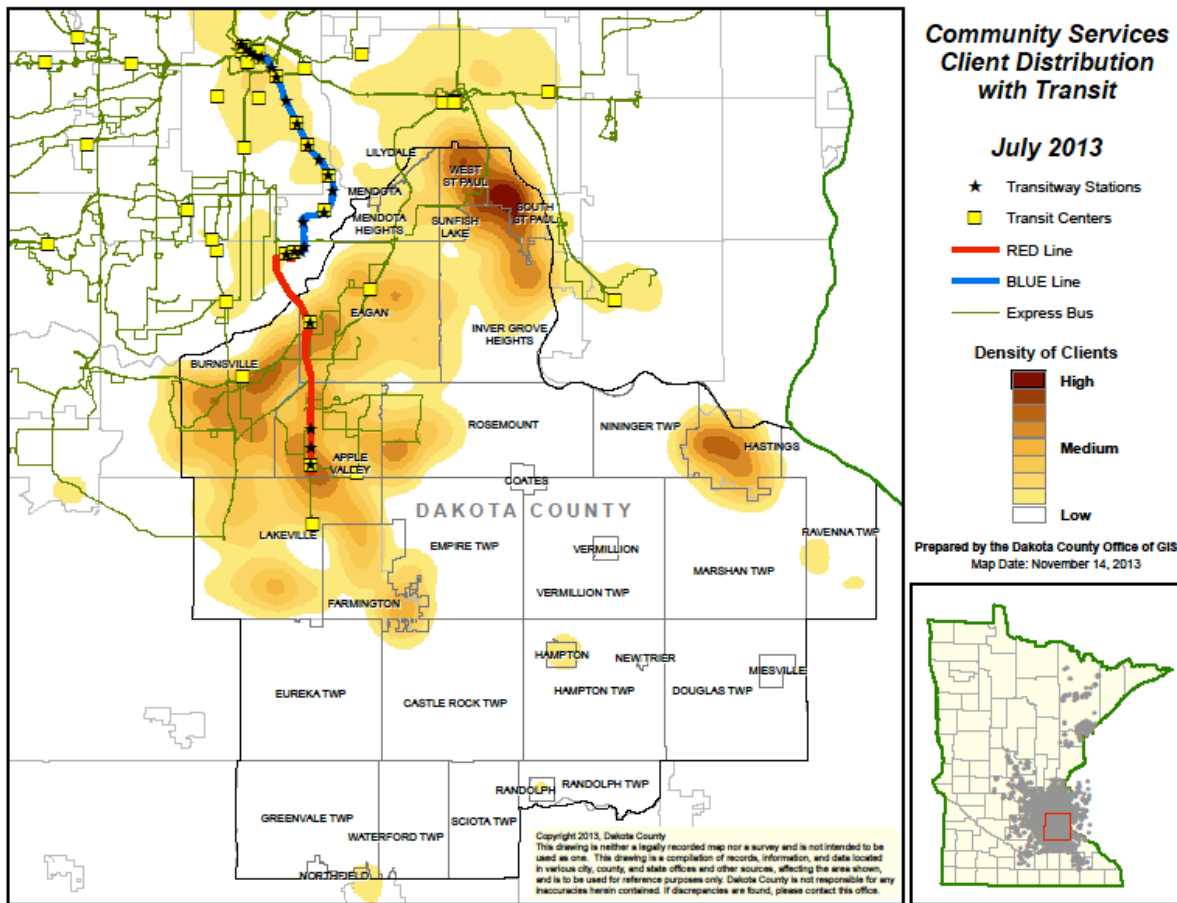


Figure 2.3. Community Services client distribution with transit

Figure 2.3 shows the areas identified by Dakota County Human Services Department with concentrations of service clients. Comparing this map with the maps in Figure 2.1 and 2.2 as well as Figure 2.4, it shows that these areas have some coverage from fixed-route bus service. Yet as provider survey responses and stakeholder input meeting participants have noted, limited hours and lack of weekend service is a significant problem for many of their clients who depend on public transportation (Appendix A, question 77). When analyzing the maps and transit agencies information, Dakota County only has a few transit lines that operate on weekends or extended hours (routes 67, 68, 71, 440, 444, 445, and the METRO Red line). This is primarily in response to demand. Fixed-route service requires a minimum level of ridership demand to be sustained.

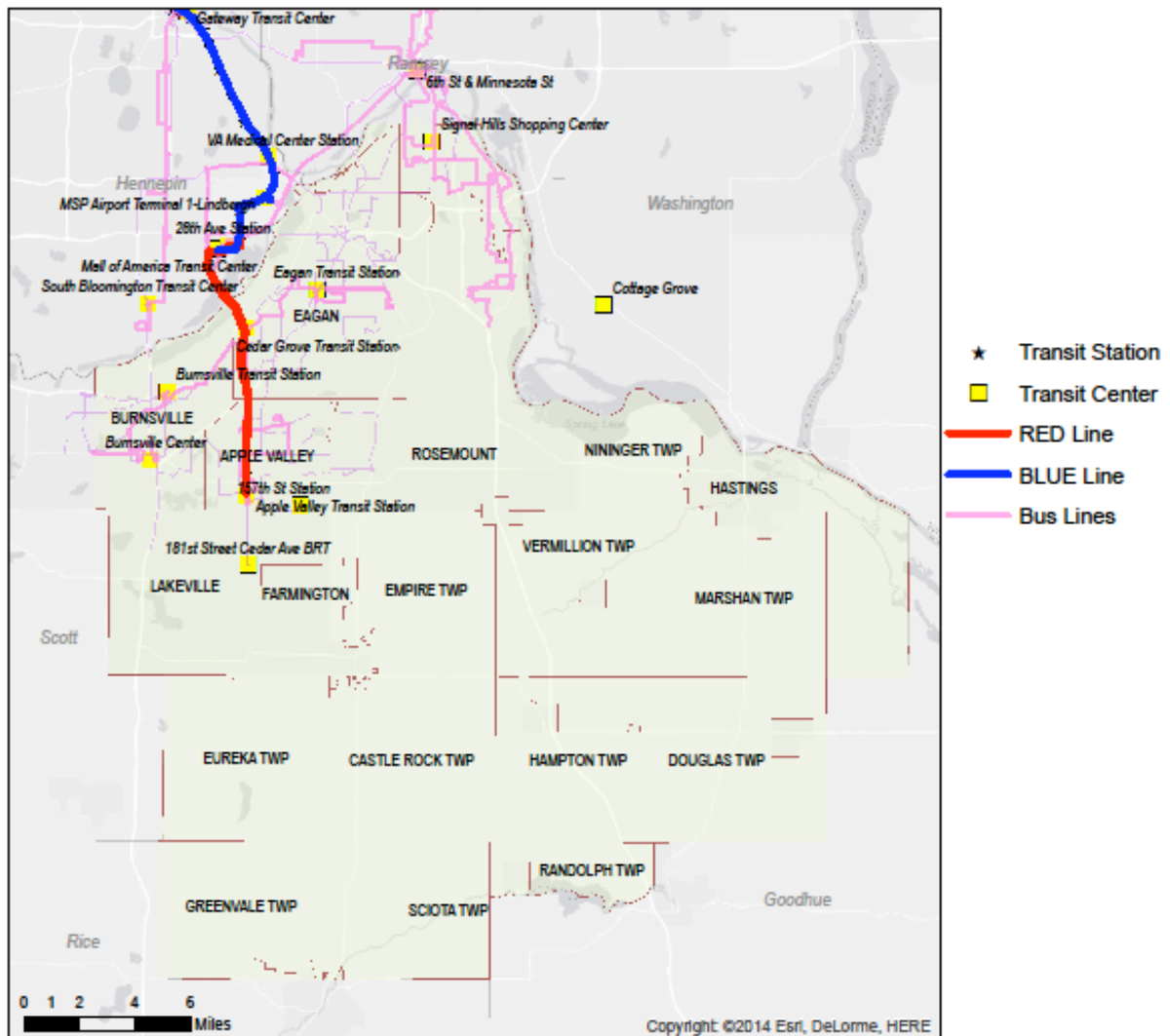


Figure 2.4. Transit centers and routes

Note: Maps generated with data from ESRI, Metro Council, MnDOT and Dakota County GIS department.

One area that lacks fixed-route transit service is the city of Hastings which in Figure 2.3 is shown as having a concentration of service clients. While Hastings is outside the Metro Mobility service area, it is covered by Transit Link. Some clients such as veterans are serviced by Disabled American Veterans (DAV) transportation services. Yet Transit Link service, as noted previously, has limited hours and days of operations.

Frequent destinations

In the survey, respondents noted that most of the trips out of Dakota County are to Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties, but trips to other counties also take place

as shown on Table 2.2. Examining the 2010 Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) data for Dakota County, most out-of-county trips are to Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties, but destinations to other adjoining counties are also identified in the TBI data as seen in Figure 2.2. These destinations are also identified in the Survey of Human Service Transportation Providers and follow-up phone calls as seen in Figure 2.5.

Tables 2.2 and 2.3 indicate how transportation providers rank the different destinations and types of trips they provide – see Appendix A, questions 12 and 15.

Table 2.2 Out-of-county trips

Destination	To	From
Hennepin	11	8
Ramsey	9	7
Washington	7	6
Goodhue	6	3
Scott	6	5
Rice	3	3
Other	6	4

Table 2.3 Frequent destination types

Destination	Rank
medical	1
organization's facilities	2
employment	3
residential	3
government services	3
shopping	4
community centers	4
entertainment	4
school or college	5
other (parks)	5

Figure 2.5 shows some of locations including medical, social services, retail, senior and other forms of housing. Ideally there is a connection between the availability of transit, service, retail and housing locations with transit lines (Figure 2.4). Yet as mentioned above there are some locations that are not well served due to a lack of adequate density and ridership demand to sustain fixed-route service.

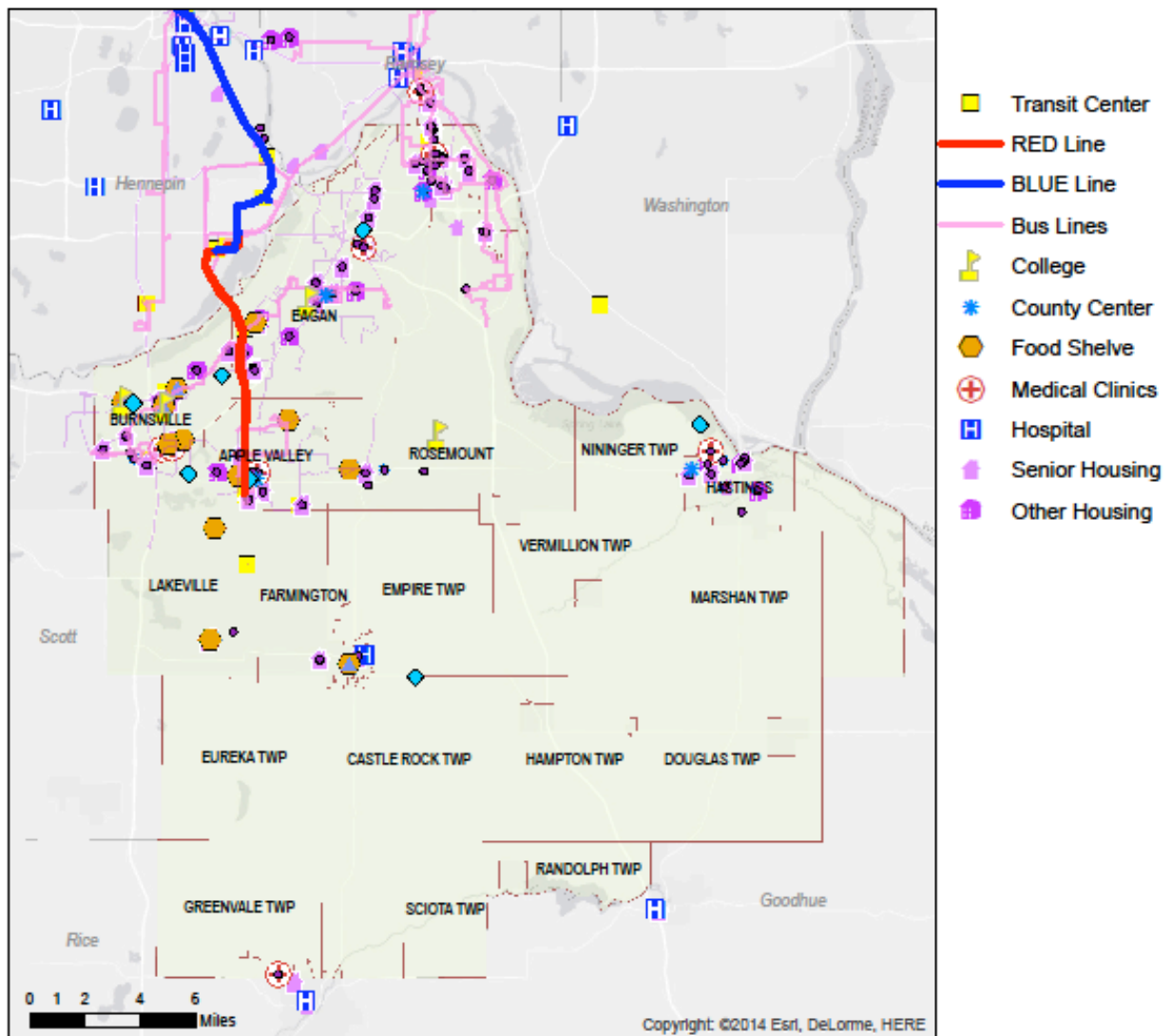


Figure 2.5. Human service provider locations

Note: Maps generated with data from ESRI, Metro Council, MnDOT and Dakota County GIS department.

■ Access to employment by transit

This study does not explicitly focus on tying transportation to employment, but, instead, includes employment as one of the desired types of destinations. The University of Minnesota has conducted several studies related to measuring access to jobs (and other destinations) by mode. The Access to Destinations Study (<http://ao.umn.edu/destinations/>) is a set of research projects that both developed methodologies for measuring accessibility by each mode (automobile, transit, biking, and walking) and created measures for them in the Twin Cities.

As a follow-up to the study, the University recently launched the Accessibility Observatory (ao.umn.edu), which will conduct research both beyond the Twin Cities and in more detail within the Twin Cities. The Observatory will soon release a ranking of the top metro areas in the U.S. by access to jobs by transit. Figure 2.6 is an unpublished map created by the Accessibility Observatory of the number of jobs accessible within 30 minutes by regular route transit. The map is for the entire Twin Cities metro area, but focuses on Dakota County.

A related study sponsored by the Met Council looked at how to achieve transit-oriented jobs and housing balance. The project, led by Yingling Fan, an Assistant Professor at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, “aimed to create a set of policy solutions that will effectively promote affordable housing development and entry-level living-wage job creation near transit corridors in the Twin Cities metropolitan region. To that end, the researchers conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with private-sector decision makers including business owners, corporation executives, real-estate developers, and investors. Results from the focus groups and interviews were used to design incentive, regulatory, and private-public partnership programs to effectively influence development and business location choices and ultimately promote a transit-oriented balance between jobs and housing in the Twin Cities region.”¹⁴

¹⁴ See <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Research/ProjectDetail.html?id=2012067>. Additional research conducted by Fan and other faculty is part of the Transitway Impacts Research Program: <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Research/featured/transitways/>.

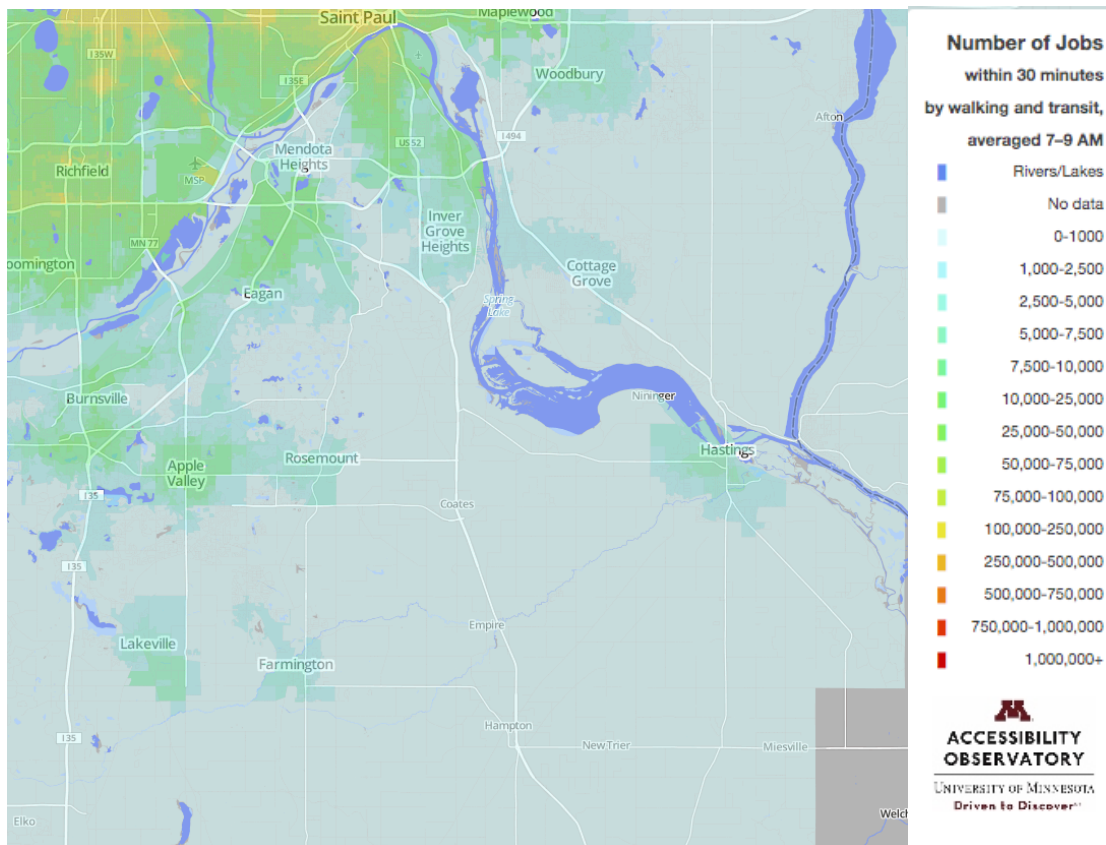


Figure 2.6. Map of number of jobs accessible within 30 minutes by regular route transit (2014). Source: University of Minnesota Accessibility Observatory

Section 3. Funding Streams and Requirements

The funding of transportation services in Dakota County can best be understood of as having two main streams: (1) the public transit funding stream; and (2) the human services funding stream.

Each of these main streams then contains multiple sub-streams.

Generally speaking, the picture of the public transit stream is relatively clear, given the limited number of transportation providers and funding sub-streams involved, as well as the ready availability of data. On the other hand, the human services stream is comparatively more convoluted, as it involves a multitude of funding sub-streams, funding allocators and transportation providers, for most of which reliable data is difficult to access.

While these two streams are distinct, there is some overlap between the two, principally where rides under human services programs are provided by public transit systems.

■ Public transit funding stream

Overview

Public transit in Dakota County is funded as part of the larger seven-county metropolitan public transit system. The public transit funding stream contains relatively few, but relatively large funding sub-streams. The principal sources of funding for the metropolitan transit system include:

1. Federal funding, principally through Section 5307 grants
2. State motor vehicle sales tax (MVST)
3. State appropriations from the state's general fund, as well as state bonding for capital purposes
4. Funding from the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB); these are funds generated by a one-quarter cent sales tax and \$20 motor vehicle excise tax in counties that have joined the CTIB; (Dakota County has joined the CTIB)
5. Passenger fares

Generally, these funding sub-streams are channeled through the Metropolitan Council (the "Met Council") and the Met Council has discretion in how it allocates funds from some of these sources, but not all.

Services and providers

There are generally four types of public transit service programs that operate in Dakota County.

1. Regular route
 - a. Metro Transit. Metro Transit is an operating division of the Met Council that provides regular route bus services in select areas of Dakota County.
 - b. Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA). MVTA is a public transit is a public transit joint powers organization of five cities providing regular route bus service for the Dakota County cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan and Rosemount.
2. Metro Mobility. This is a dial-a-ride service for persons certified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Service is provided in Dakota County by DARTS under a contract with the Met Council.
3. Transit Link. This is a general public dial-a-ride service for areas where fixed bus route services are not available. Service is provided in Dakota County by DARTS under contract with the Met Council.
4. Metro Vanpool. This is a rideshare program subsidized by the Metropolitan Council in areas without regular route transit or for commuters not served by regular route service. Vans are leased from a third-party vendor, under contract with the Council, by a group of riders.

Table 3.1 summarizes the sources of operating revenue for each of these programs, using the most recent available data. Note, these figures include revenue covering all of the Met Council's and MVTA's respective service areas, not just Dakota County. Notably, only the Metro Vanpool program receives operating revenue from local sources (other than fares).

Table 3.1. 2013 Budgeted operating revenue for public transit stream
(Amounts in 1,000's)

Source	Metro Mobility		Transit Link		Contracted Services		Metro Transit Bus		MVTA	
	Amount	Pct.	Amount	Pct.	Amount	Pct.	Amount	Pct.	Amount	Pct.
MVST	\$5,091	9%	\$4,887	82%	\$13,922	73%	\$148,962	60%	\$12,674	69%
State	\$47,399	80%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Federal	-	-	\$609	10%	\$1,075	6%	\$15,849	6%	-	-
Local	-	-	-	-	\$1,949	10%	-	-	-	-
Fares	\$4,952	8%	\$199	3%	\$2,036	11%	\$77,142	31%	\$4,928	27%
Other	\$1,543	3%	\$275	5%	\$100	1%	\$5,146	2%	\$764	4%
Total	\$58,985	100%	\$5,970	100%	\$19,082	100%	\$247,099	100%	18,366	100%

As reflected in Table 3.1, the relative importance of passenger fares as a funding source varies among the transit programs. As a result, the degree to which particular services are subsidized by public dollars also varies. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the subsidy per passenger for transit programs within Dakota County.

Table 3.2. 2012 Ridership and subsidies for transit programs in Dakota County

	Metro Mobility	Transit Link	Metro Transit	MVTA
One-way trips	149,799	34,746	2,595,518	2,575,363
Avg. cost per trip	\$26.82	\$24.04	\$4.63	\$6.98
Avg. one-way fare	\$3.79	\$2.03	\$1.15	\$1.91
Avg. subsidy per one-way trip	\$23.03	\$22.02	\$3.48	\$5.07

Sources: Met Council, MVTA

Funding and transportation coordination

The structure of the public transit funding stream, and the laws tied to it, influence coordination in Dakota County in a number of ways, and there are a number of provisions in state law that direct the Met Council to pursue improving public transportation coordination.¹⁵

For purposes of this study though, the public transit funding stream has two important effects on overall transportation coordination. First, the number of entities (e.g., Met Council, MVTA, CTIB, Transportation Advisory Board) involved in the governance of transit funding in the metro area makes the coordination of decision-making about transit operations and policies complicated, time-consuming and inefficient. This issue of metro-wide transit governance was the subject of an in-depth 2011 report by the Minnesota Legislative Auditor.¹⁶ The Legislative Auditor made a series of recommendations to address this, including restructuring the Met Council and clarifying the Met Council's authority over MVST funds.

The second notable way in which the public transit funding stream influences coordination is the geographic limits on the scopes of services. Specifically:

The Met Council, by law, is not required to provide regular bus service outside the boundaries of the transit taxing district (a/k/a transit capital levy communities).¹⁷ Figure 3.1 shows the current boundaries of the transit taxing district with respect to Dakota County, as well as those areas within Dakota County that have come to an agreement with the Met Council to levy in their community for transit capital when demand warranted providing fixed route services. Currently there is no regular route bus service outside of the transit taxing district, including in communities such as Farmington and Hastings.¹⁸

¹⁵ See e.g., Minn. Stat. 473.371, subd. 2(d), Minn. Stat. 473.375, subd. 14, Minn. Stat. 473.386, subds. 3(e) and 4.

¹⁶ Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota, "Evaluation Report Governance of Transit in the Twin Cities Region," January 2011, available at www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/transit.pdf.

¹⁷ Minn. Stat. 473.446, subd. 2.

¹⁸ Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota, "Evaluation Report Governance of Transit in the Twin Cities Region," January 2011, available at www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/transit.pdf, 67.

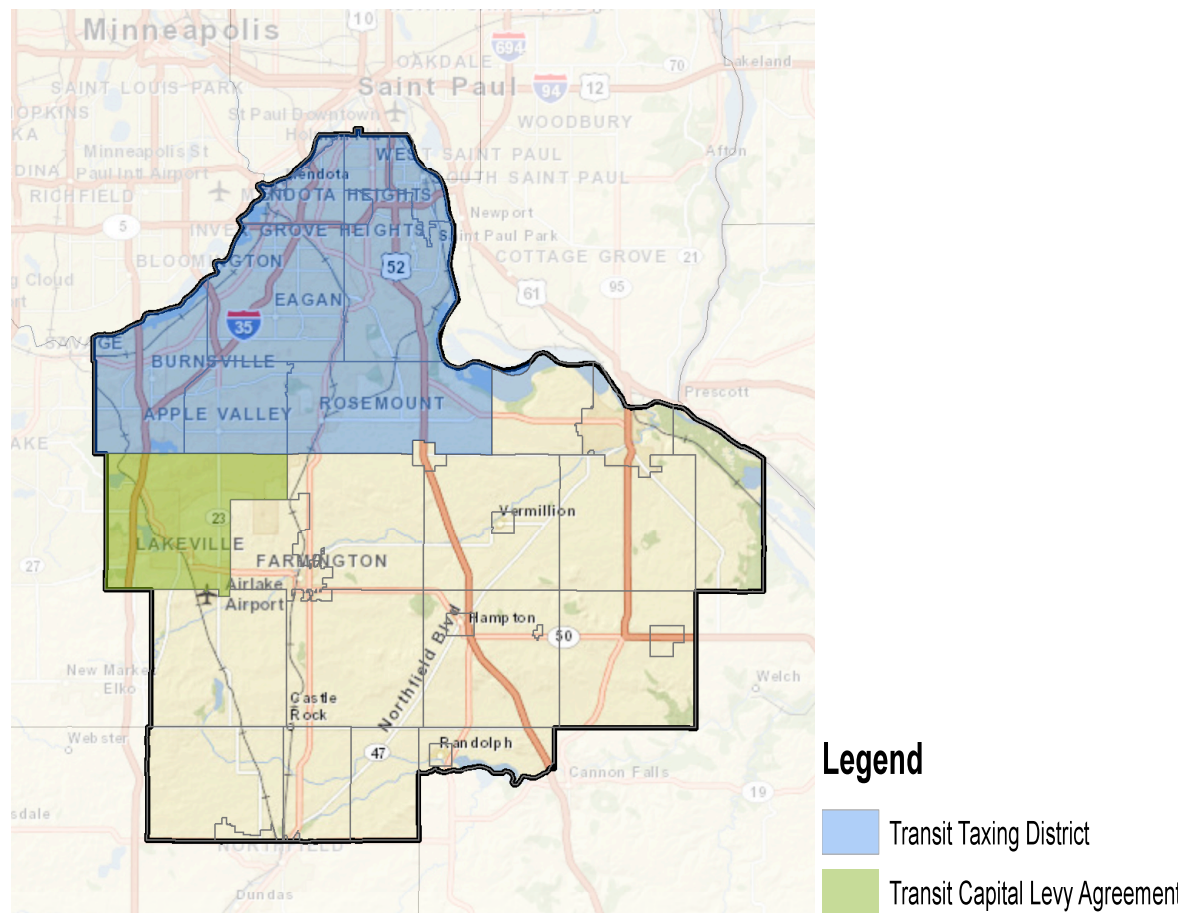


Figure 3.1. Map of Transit Taxing District in Dakota County (2013) Source: Met Council

Under federal law, Metro Mobility’s regular on-demand service must be provided to origins/destinations within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of a regular bus route.¹⁹ This is known as the “ADA Service Area.”

Outside of the ADA Service Area, but within the transit taxing district as it existed in 2006, Metro Mobility’s service is provided on a standby basis. Outside the transit taxing district, the Met Council is not statutorily required and does not provide Metro Mobility service.²⁰

Transit Link service is not limited by transit taxing district boundaries and provides service in all of Dakota County where fixed route isn't available. Transit Link functions to

¹⁹ Metro Transit, “METRO MOBILITY STANDBY SCHEDULING: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS”: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Services/Metro-Mobility/Standby-Scheduling-Frequently-Asked.aspx>

²⁰ Minn. Stat. 473.386, subd. 3(i).

connect passengers outside the transit taxing district to regular fixed route transit services.

Possible opportunities for greater clarity

When compared to the Human Services Funding discussion that follows this section, we find the public funding stream to be relatively straightforward, with little opportunity for reform or restructuring that would directly improve coordination. However, we do note that an opportunity for increasing transparency would be to reform the transit taxing district. In its current form, the district creates an easily misunderstood boundary that can create confusion regarding the geographic scope of transit services²¹ since the funds raised by the district are limited to fund only capital projects, not operations,²² and residents outside the taxing district in Dakota County contribute to the other sources of transit funding, such as the MVST and the taxes under the CTIB.

As Dakota County looks to fill transit gaps particularly in communities further from the core metro areas, such as Farmington and Hastings, this boundary line may continue to hinder understanding among non-transportation parties that will need to be involved in the conversation. While the Legislative Auditor recommended extending the boundaries of the transit taxing district to match the Met Council's boundaries, we recognize that other approaches to reform may also exist.

■ Human services funding stream

Human service transportation in Dakota County is funded by a multitude of sources. In the main these sources are government assistance programs under which transportation is provided to persons who cannot afford their own transportation or have a physical or mental limitation that prevents them from transporting themselves or from using public transit. In many cases, transportation is not the primary objective of these assistance programs, rather it is a necessary but secondary objective to some other primary purpose (e.g., obtaining medical services).

Overview

Five categories of funding sources for Human Service Transportation were identified in this study.

1. Federal grants
2. Medicaid waiver programs
3. Medicaid funded non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT)
4. Dakota County funds

²¹ Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota, "Evaluation Report Governance of Transit in the Twin Cities Region," January 2011, available at www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/transit.pdf, 74.

²² Minn. Stat. 473.446, subd. 1.

5. Miscellaneous programs (e.g., MFIP, veteran's affairs, private grants)

Each of these categories can be broken down further, as each category captures a number of programs. For example: Minnesota has five Medicaid waiver programs, all of which cover transportation services; NEMT includes Medical Assistance transportation services covered by the state's Department of Human Services (DHS) and by private insurers; and Dakota county funds go to a number of social service and public health programs that include transportation. Further, the funding within each of these categories is allocated to transportation providers through a number of different channels, as summarized in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Categories of human service transportation funding

Category	Sub-Categories	Allocator of Funds to Providers
Federal grants	Section 5310 Program ²³ Section 5307 Program ²⁴ (former JARC program)	MnDOT
Medicaid waiver programs	5 separate Medicaid waiver programs ²⁵	MN Dept. Human Services (as of 1/1/14) Formerly handled by the counties
Medicaid funded NEMT	State operated fee-for-service NEMT Private insurer operated NEMT	Private medical insurers MTM (private contractor)
Dakota county funds	A number of social services and public health programs (e.g., volunteer driver programs)	Dakota County
Misc. programs	Examples include: MFIP; transportation assistance programs for veterans, refugees, and those with chemical dependencies	MTM (private contractor) Dakota County MN Dept. of Veterans Affairs

²³ 49 U.S.C. Section 5310 (2012);

²⁴ 49 U.S.C. Section 5307 (2012);

²⁵ Danyell Punelli, *Medicaid Home-and Community Based Waiver Programs*, Research Department, Minnesota House of Representatives (2013), available at <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/waiver.pdf>.

Services and providers

Thirty-five providers of Human Service Transportation were identified as operating in the County. This number includes the County itself and the public transit providers discussed above, since a number of rides paid for, at least in part, by the human services funding stream are delivered through public transit providers. The other providers are a mix of non-profit and for-profit providers, ranging in size from those with over 60 employees involved in transportation to those having five employees.

Identifying aggregate dollar amounts associated with each of these categories has proven difficult. Likewise, estimating the relative number of rides or trips delivered within Dakota County under each of the five funding categories has been limited by data availability. Forty percent of the providers responding to the provider survey do not track the number of rides they deliver. But from what data is available, there appears to be a wide range in terms of the number of rides delivered under the various programs. For example, under the MFIP program about 1,500 rides were delivered in Dakota County in 2012; whereas nearly 90,000 were delivered under the DHS's fee-for-service NEMT program.

The type of transportation services provided also varies widely, including:

- County employees providing rides directly to social services clients;
- Transit passes provided to program clients; and
- Door-to-door services provided for those with physical and mental disabilities.

Reflecting that many of the providers involved in Human Service Transportation handle vulnerable individuals, about half of the respondents in the providers survey reporting being certified by MnDOT to provide special transportation services. In other words, generally speaking, many riders receiving Human Service Transportation require a comparatively high level of individualized service (relative to regular fixed-route public transit). This high level of service per client presents challenges for creating efficiencies of scale.

Funding and transportation coordination

Funding and legal/regulatory obstacles to improved coordination

With respect to Human Service Transportation, two of the most important forms of coordination are: (i) *multi-loading*, or the co-mingling on the same trip clients whose rides are being paid for by different programs; and (ii) *vehicle sharing*, which consists of time-sharing (independent providers using the same vehicle for different periods of time) and ride-sharing (one provider transporting another organization's clients).

In general, no statutory provisions with respect to funding were found that directly prevent multi-loading or vehicle sharing within Dakota County. The one exception to this

was with respect to transportation services provided by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs at the Hastings Veterans Home, whose services and transportation resources are generally limited for the benefit of qualifying veterans.²⁶

There are motor carrier, insurance and program compliance regulations attendant to governmental programs that pay for Human Service Transportation, and these regulations can discourage multi-loading and vehicle sharing with respect to certain types of providers, particularly small providers. However, in many cases these obstacles appear more perceived than real and are likely best addressed through better information flow among providers and administrators about the specifics of these obstacles.²⁷

Funding and structural obstacles to improved coordination

While there are generally not express funding barriers *in law* to improved coordination, the nature of the funding stream for Human Service Transportation does create *in-fact* structural barriers to improved coordination. This happens in three main ways:

1. The divisions in how funding is allocated to providers creates operational barriers and disincentives to increased coordination and efficiency. For example, rides through Medical Assistance NEMT are arranged by either MTM (a private contractor) or private insurers, depending on the type of Medical Assistance the client is receiving at the time. This results in a large number of rides within the County being arranged and scheduled through completely separate processes, even though the rides are for the same purposes (medical appointments under Medical Assistance) and even though over time the same client may switch back and forth among the separate processes (clients often change between different types of Medical Assistance coverage).
2. The number and complexity of the funding streams creates information gaps among providers, clients and administrators. These gaps principally relate to the type of transportation services available, who provides the services, and for which services a given client is eligible under certain circumstances. Among other things, this makes it difficult to identify opportunities for increased coordination.
3. Some funding sub-streams are individually so small, comparatively speaking, that there is insufficient scale of rides to motivate improved coordination with respect to those programs. For example, the number of rides delivered under the MFIP contract in Dakota County is relatively small, such that not all providers operating in the County are contracted to provide rides under that program, reducing the opportunities for *multi-loading* with respect to that program.

²⁶ Minn. Rule 9050.0050, subps. 2 & 3.

²⁷ Frank Douma and Thomas Garry, *Vehicle Sharing Among Human Service Providers in Minnesota: Steps to Address Barriers*, Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (2013), available at http://www.coordinatemntransit.org/MCOTA/documents/MCOTA_VehicleSharing_Report_2013.pdf.

In effect, the confluence of (a) a large number of funding sub-streams, (b) multiple actors involved in allocating funds to providers, and (c) a large number of providers, function to create a relatively balkanized system under which human service rides are delivered. That the system operates in this fashion is largely not a product of intentional legislative design, but a function of a number of different programmatic, funding and stakeholder forces.

Possible opportunities for improving coordination

Two of the larger funding sub-streams for Human Service Transportation are in the midst of substantial regulatory changes. First, the state law governing NEMT transportation is being re-written in the 2014 legislative session. It is expected that the legislative changes will have a significant impact on the coordination of NEMT rides. Second, control over transportation contracts for Medicaid waiver programs, which had been with the counties, was taken over by DHS effective January 1, 2014. It is unclear what impact this change will have on coordination efforts with respect to waiver transportation and what drove DHS to take over the contracting responsibilities.

One opportunity for improved coordination would be for increased driver training and certification programs that are centrally provided or shared among providers. Dakota County could work with state agencies to increase education and outreach within the provider community to provide the necessary certification and training that would allow increased vehicle sharing. The education and outreach efforts should focus on the “how to” of vehicle sharing, and include guidance documents and training that cover:

- The types of sharing models.
- STS training and certification, and explanation of how vehicle safety regulations apply to HSPs in the context of vehicle sharing.
- The technical aspect of setting-up a vehicle sharing arrangement, including insurance, risk management, documentation and compensation structures.

These materials should be developed in consultation with providers that have successfully established sharing arrangements and should be made available on the Internet.

Related to improving the information flow about Human Service Transportation, the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access is in the process of developing a statewide primer for how Human Service Transportation is funded.

■ Section 4. End-User Experiences

The team developed a simple way for end-users to share feedback their current experiences with transportation options in Dakota County, and what might make it easier for them to travel to medical appointments, shopping, work, and entertainment or recreation. The information was collected through one central phone line and e-mail address using Google voice, a free service that provides basic automatic transcription.

It was not a formal structured or representative survey, but a way to hear about a number of end-user experiences. It did not require the use of a computer.

The basic questions were:

Tell us how you get to the places you need to go, and what might make that easier for you.

1. *PAST: Explain how transportation factored into major decisions such as where to live or work.*
2. *PRESENT: Share how your current available transportation options support or limit your ability to travel.*
3. *FUTURE: Propose new ideas to help improve coordination & access to transportation. What would make it easier to get around?*

Members of the project's advisory committee had concerns about end users not having the full picture of transit services and the money that is already spent in the County, as well as concerns about the potential for simply inviting negative comments about the transit system without getting specifics about what might make it better. Metro Transit was conducting a large service improvement survey at the same time, and the other large transit providers did not want to distribute the flyer to their clients.

The team made adjustments to respond to the advisory committee's concerns, including adding a summary of current transit expenditures to the back of the flyer. The flyer was sent to the stakeholders who attended the input meetings and to the broader list of invited stakeholders as well. Dakota County Community Services staff distributed the survey to their contacts. The team received responses from 19 individuals. See Appendix F for the flyer and the transcription of the responses.

Some themes that emerged from end-user stories:

- A strong need to overcome geographical barriers (city and county lines) in order to streamline services for vulnerable adults
- A need for a transit connection to Dakota County Technical College, especially for students with disabilities. Students in Dakota County attend technical colleges elsewhere because of transit access.
- Many adults with serious disabilities remain in residential care (at enormous expense) in order to keep their ability to get around.
- Employment problems caused by miscommunication and unreliability with Transit Link, especially in rural areas

- A need for better intra-county transit services
- One idea suggested was a circulator system (i.e., shuttle or city buses) that makes frequent trips between each Dakota County service center during designated times for clients and employees.

Section 5. Emerging Coordination Practices

Below are several emerging coordination practices that may be useful for Dakota County. These come from a literature review of reports published by the Transportation Research Board's Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) and other publications, including those produced by MCOTA.

■ Coordination

1. Local coordinating councils

According to the National Conference on State Legislatures,²⁸ most states have state coordinating councils similar to the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA). The state councils bring together the key players to examine and recommend changes to state policies and practices that inhibit coordination at the local level.

Many states also have regional and local councils. Colorado is an example with similarities to Minnesota's transit environment. The Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility developed a handbook for creating local coordinating councils,²⁹ and is a good start for establishing an ongoing venue for communicating, sharing information, and problem-solving at a local or regional level.

In addition to Colorado, Snohomish County³⁰ in Washington, Marin County in California,³¹ and Florida's Local Coordinating Boards³² are all models for the County to consider.

²⁸ *Regional Human Service Transportation Coordinating Councils: Synthesis, Case Studies and Directory*, National Conference of State Legislatures, January 2012, <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/transport/regional-coordinating-councils-report.aspx>.

²⁹ Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility, *Handbook for Creating Local Transportation Coordinating Councils in Colorado*, 2008

³⁰ Snohomish County Transportation Coalition: <http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/554/Transportation>

³¹ Marin County Access brochure: <http://marinaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/At-A-Glance-Final-6-27-13.pdf>, and PowerPoint overview: http://www.marintransit.org/pdf/board/Mobility_Management_Presentation_020413.pdf

³² See Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/>

2. Mobility management programs

Mobility management is a specific type of coordination. Here is the definition from the American Public Transit Association:

Mobility management involves creating **partnerships** with transportation providers in a community or region **to enhance travel options**, and then developing the means to effectively **communicate those options to the public** through both traditional and state-of-the-art channels. It requires moving **beyond the usual patterns of doing business**.

There are many mobility management programs in place throughout the country. Dakota County has started a mobility management project that was awarded to DARTS a few months ago. A couple additional practices that the County and DARTS may want to consider include:

Share data openly with partners

Menominee Regional Public Transit (MRPT) in Wisconsin partners closely with other transit services. MRPT staff is dedicated to sharing data so that all coordinating partners have access to their data to see how many trips are being provided at any time. This openness has created an environment of trust, and has led to more departments and counties wanting MRPT to provide services.³³

Develop transportation plans for human service agencies

The mobility manager for JAUNT, a rural transit system based in Charlottesville, Virginia, has an out-of-the-ordinary job description: developing transportation plans for human service agencies that operate their own service. This meets the mobility manager's goal of helping agencies to use transportation resources more effectively. "The mobility manager identifies deficiencies in a human service agency operation and works with the agencies to come up with an appropriate solution. JAUNT reasons that if they cannot combine operations, at least they can improve the agencies' services and gain a level of trust for future efforts."³⁴

³³ *Developing, Enhancing, and Sustaining Tribal Transit Services: A Guidebook*, Transportation Research Board, 2012, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_154.pdf, p. 170

³⁴ Hosen, Kenneth, I, and Powell, S., Bennett. *Innovative rural transit services*. Transportation Research Board, 2011, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_syn_94.pdf, p. 12

■ Awareness

4. Travel training programs

Travel training is less of an “emerging” practice than a proven one. However, it is worthwhile to mention a few success stories.

In 2011, MCOTA published a set of Minnesota case studies illustrating successful coordination strategies throughout the state.³⁵ Three travel training programs were highlighted: Metro Transit, St. Cloud Metro, and Tri-Valley Transit. The travel trainers for St. Cloud and Tri-Valley in particular needed to break down the cultural barriers to using public transportation, with significant success.

Another travel training program was featured in MCOTA’s Economic Benefits study in 2013.³⁶ MNET’s “On the Move!” Travel Training shifts riders from paratransit to Metro Transit’s fixed route system in the counties of Anoka, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Sherburne, and Washington. The cost savings for the first year was nearly \$12,000, with savings of \$67,680 conservatively estimated for subsequent years. Other benefits cited include greater independence, mobility, and engagement for persons who traditionally only rode paratransit.

5. Other outreach and education efforts:

A TRB report on innovative rural transit services provide the following examples of interesting outreach efforts.

Meeting on a bus (TRAX)

Ark-Tex TRAX in northeastern Texas, like many rural transit systems, has had difficulty in generating interest in a public meeting. Experience indicates that people will not attend a meeting unless drastic cuts or major changes are being made to the service or if the service is really poor. “Meeting on a Bus” brings the meeting to riders who would otherwise not provide input to the transit agency. TRAX designates a location for the meeting and sets up the bus with posters, maps, and informational materials. TRAX uses the local media (newspapers and radio), getting interviews and raising awareness. Management has stated that it helps to have coffee, water, and pastries. Initial meetings through the “Meeting

³⁵ Minnesota Council on Transportation Access, *Successful Local Transportation Coordination Case Studies*, 2011,

http://www.coordinatemntransit.org/MCOTA/documents/LocalCoordCaseStudies_MCOTA_Jun2011.pdf

³⁶ Minnesota Council on Transportation Access, *Calculating Benefits of Transit Coordination: Minnesota Case Studies*, 2013,

http://www.coordinatemntransit.org/MCOTA/documents/mcota_econ_casestudies_2013.pdf

on a Bus” program have expanded public meeting participants 10-fold over previous meetings.³⁷

Shared driver training (MODOC)

The Modoc Transportation Agency (MTA)/Sage Stage Bus in rural northern California has taken its driver training program public. The rural transit agency trains not just its own drivers, but those at several local social service transportation providers, and also provides periodic driver safety courses to the general public at three local senior centers. The latter practice has been extremely valuable in marketing the agency’s transit services, which has in turn increased ridership. The practice also has built “goodwill” and positive recognition in the transit agency’s rural area.³⁸

■ Efficiencies and gaps

These two creative ways to raise revenues cited in TRB reports seem relevant to Dakota County.

6. Differential fares based on service levels

The Independent Transportation Network® (ITN) affiliate in Portland, Maine, *ITNPortland*, charges fares that vary for different levels of service.³⁹ For example, same-day rides cost twice as much as those arranged at least one day in advance (\$3.00 per mile compared to \$1.50 per mile). More stops while the driver waits cost more as well. Riders are offered discounts for sharing rides. ITN provides rides to seniors and those with visual impairments. The fare differentials make the services attractive to well-off seniors, while offering less convenient but still accessible options for those who wish to spend less on transportation services. This example is for a single provider; to implement it across several providers, a mobility management program would be helpful.

7. Non-traditional funding opportunities

Public-private partnerships

Fredericksburg (Virginia) Regional Transit has developed an innovative program to generate local funds for its small transit system. The transit system actively and aggressively seeks Partners—local private and public organizations that benefit from the community transportation program—to provide financial support

³⁷ Hosen, Kenneth, I, and Powell, S., Bennett. *Innovative rural transit services*. Transportation Research Board, 2011, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_syn_94.pdf, p. 14

³⁸ Hosen, Kenneth, I, and Powell, S., Bennett. *Innovative rural transit services*. Transportation Research Board, 2011, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_syn_94.pdf, p. 14

³⁹ See <https://www.itnportland.org/>

for the transit system. Partners include the local college, hospital, a local “big box” developer, as well as the City of Fredericksburg and adjoining county. The Partners program is formalized, with different “levels” of annual giving and specified benefits for each “level” of financial support, including acknowledgment on all of the transit system’s marketing and informational materials and a detailed annual report tailored to each Partner. This successful program generated close to two-thirds of budgeted revenues for FY 2000 as well as strong community support for the small system.⁴⁰

■ Administrative processes

8. Nonprofit Insurance Trust (NIT) for vehicle-sharing insurance

Vehicle sharing among human service providers generally refers to one or more organizations operating the same vehicle at different times (time sharing) or an HSP using its vehicle to provide transportation for the clients of another organization (ride sharing). The aim of vehicle sharing is to maximize the use of available vehicles and drivers in order to save on transportation-related costs and expand services.

In 2013, MCOTA published a report on the practices and barriers related to sharing vehicles for Human Service Transportation, and made recommendations for overcoming those barriers. Insurance was one of the perceived barriers the investigators found.⁴¹ In 2009 Minnesota’s legislature permitted the Nonprofit Insurance Trust (NIT) to create a property and liability insurance pool for Minnesota non-profits, and it appears to be working for those providers who are using it for sharing vehicles with other organizations.⁴²

The report makes other recommendations to facilitate vehicle sharing, which is an effective strategy to maximize limited resources and improve transportation access.

⁴⁰ *Guidebook for change and innovation at rural and small urban transit systems*. Transportation Research Board, 2001, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_70a.pdf, p. I-30

⁴¹ Frank Douma and Thomas Garry, *Vehicle Sharing Among Human Service Providers in Minnesota: Steps to Address Barriers*, Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (2013), available at http://www.coordinatemntransit.org/MCOTA/documents/MCOTA_VehicleSharing_Report_2013.pdf

⁴² Minn. Stat. 471.98 (2012). Nonprofit Insurance Trust, <http://www.nitmn.org/> (last accessed August 28, 2013).

Section 6. Strategic Planning Workshop Summary

The Advisory Committee came together one more time on February 5, 2014 for an all-day strategic planning workshop at the Dakota County Northern Service Center in West Saint Paul. The purpose of the workshop was to establish goals for improving the transportation services in Dakota County, and to identify and prioritize the strategies and actions necessary to meet those goals. Throughout the meeting, the study team shared the input generated from the stakeholder input meetings so the Committee could consider their perspective when completing the exercises.

To start the meeting, participants were asked to imagine what successfully improved transportation services would like in 3-5 years. They envisioned a system where coverage is county-wide, services are better coordinated, resources are shared, land-use is factored into decisions and access to information about transportation services is centralized. The participants then discussed what roles, processes, tools, and spaces would need to change in order to achieve this success. The table below summarizes the discussion.

Table 6.1. Roles, Processes, Tools, and Spaces (RPTS) Framework

How do roles, processes, and tools need to change to achieve success?	
<p><u>Roles</u></p> <p>Cities to guide in development Employees, social workers need to know where clients are located and develop there (transit/land-use) Collaborative of providers & buy-in from providers County-scheduled quarterly provider meetings</p>	<p><u>Processes</u></p> <p>Willingness to shift service paradigms (specifically with providers) May need significant legislative changes Re-defining the need/purpose (ex: school lunches)</p>
<p><u>Tools</u></p> <p>Enterprise-wide plan for improvement (Start with collaboration not potential setbacks) Develop universal data collection tool Use contracts to improve services (prioritize transport accessibility) Consistent user process (ex: shared user-cards)</p>	<p><u>Spaces</u></p>

This Roles, Processes, Tools, and Spaces (RPTS) framework was used throughout the meeting to structure the discussions. This framework helped participants focus on the aspects of the problem that could be design or changed. Participants were also asked

to concentrate on the four areas of focus described earlier: Coordination, Awareness, Efficiency and Gaps, and Administrative Processes. For each category, participants identified 2-3 goals, selected strategies to meet those goals and identified necessary actions to carry out those strategies. The groups then prioritized which actions would create the most momentum for change. The results of this work can be found in Appendix G. All of the input generated from these exercises strongly guided our final recommendations.

Coordinated human service transportation goals

These are the summarized goals from the meetings.

1. **One-call/one-click access to information:** Customers and providers have a one-call, one-click touch point to ask questions and get information about transportation options and to help eliminate barriers.
2. **Consistent data:** Data collection and reporting among providers is consistent, transparent, and shared.
3. **Land use connection:** Transportation services and needs are factored into city and county development and land use decisions.
4. **Awareness:** Customers and providers are aware of available transportation options and how to access them. County leaders are aware of need for and usage of services.

Section 7. Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the priorities that emerged from the stakeholder engagement process and the strategic planning workshop, as well as on best practices from other areas. They are all actions that Dakota County can take immediately, without relying on state, regional, or federal actions (although a state legislative change would be helpful for one of the recommendations.) Yet, they are consistent with and adaptable to state and federal standards, in order to be scalable as human service transportation coordination evolves in the future.

The target populations for human service transportation coordination efforts are older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. Other populations in the County will likely benefit from more choices and services, but are not the primary audience.

Table 7.1 summarizes the recommendations by the focus areas identified by stakeholders in this project.

Table 7.1. Recommendations by focus areas

	Recommendations						
Focus Areas	1. Form county coordinating collaborative	2. Continue mobility management project	3. Identify funding options	4. Require consistent data reporting	5. Include transportation in land use decisions	6. Establish travel training program	7. Create communications /marketing plan
COORDINATION							
AWARENESS							
EFFICIENCIES AND GAPS							
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES							

■ 1. Form county coordinating collaborative

This is the essential first step to create buy-in, advance momentum, and implement changes.

Start date: Immediately (Spring 2014)

Resources: Dakota County leadership and identified staff support (internal or external), internal or external facilitator.

Potential barriers or resistance: Potential challenge to dedicate staff and resources; findings and recommendations from this report to help. The differing levels of professional and cultural experience with transportation between transit provider staff and human service agency staff will require patience and listening.

Other terms used for this concept are council, board, and coalition. The team recommends the term collaborative to emphasize the cooperative nature of this group and to differentiate it from MCOTA and the Metropolitan Council.

The stakeholder engagement activities undertaken by Dakota County in this project and previously are a good start, but much more work needs to be done in this area. A collaborative provides a good mechanism for continuing and enhancing stakeholder engagement.

This collaborative will:

- Serve as the local group implementing the action plan to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of human service transportation services provided to the transit public
- Lead coordination activities and advance coordination strategies throughout Dakota County
- Be invested with the authority and mandate (from county or through joint powers agreement/MOUs/state legislation) to make changes
- Identify/create incentives for provider participation
- Foster a willingness to make change among all participants
- Oversee the DARTS mobility management project
- Establish minimum standards for service options around the County
 - Use of a variety of strategies, including volunteer driver programs and car sharing programs
 - One goal expressed in the stakeholder engagement process is to have all cities in Dakota County served by Metro Mobility
- Conduct outreach to other counties (once greater coordination within the County is established)
 - Washington, Scott, and Ramsey to start
 - Potential to expand to multi-county collaborative

- Develop a facilitation and engagement plan to ensure stakeholder participation and buy-in
- Use [United We Ride's Framework for Action: Building the Fully Coordinating Transportation System](#) and the [Colorado Local Coordinating Council Handbook](#) as references for the process.
- Develop a formal, written agreement that includes roles and responsibilities, a process for decision-making, a regular meeting schedule, a strategic plan with a clear mission and goals, a communications plan, and ongoing assessment mechanisms.
- Develop recommendations for issues affecting the coordination of services and funding options
- Communicate these recommendations to appropriate organizations (MCOTA, County Administration, Met Council, etc.)
- Potential for the Collaborative to prioritize competing grant applications
- The Collaborative could even become the funding provider for human services transportation in the County, in order to combine funding streams. (See Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged⁴³).
- Coordinate with MCOTA, Metropolitan Council, other Metro counties and other relevant agencies to create and advocate for change at the regional and state level:
 - Cross-county trips without transfer
 - Metro-wide enforcement of transit access in comprehensive (land use) plans, etc.

Structure:

- Dakota County in lead with dedicated staff (.25-.50 FTE, either county staff or staff designated by the County)
- Include internal or external facilitator
- Representation from relevant Dakota County Offices (Office of Planning and Analysis, Administration, Community Services, Transportation, and Community Development Agency)
- Start with current advisory committee members, and add participants from stakeholder input meetings (Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, Metro Transit, Transit Link, DARTS, Hastings Family

⁴³ Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, Annual Report, 2013, <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/docs/APR/2013/APR2013Final.pdf>

Services, Neighbors, GAPP Services, Lifeworks, the Metro Area Agency on Aging, and MTM/MNET)

- Include customers representing people with disabilities, older adults, veterans, and low-income populations on collaborative (or as an advisory committee)
- Cities (e.g., transportation, community service, and senior programming departments)
- Workforce Board
- Community college representative
- Advocates for human service client groups
- A veteran
- Local medical community representative
- Other organizations that fund human service transportation (e.g., United Way)
- Health plan transportation coordinators (Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Health Partners, Medica, etc.)
- Create subcommittees/working groups to address each of the other recommendations on this list
- In addition to Colorado, Snohomish County⁴⁴ in Washington, Marin County in California⁴⁵, and Florida's Local Coordinating Boards⁴⁶ are all models for the County to consider.

Options for enabling state legislation:

There are no formal local coordinating councils or collaboratives in Minnesota, so it may be helpful for the state legislature to provide that authority in statute. Since this is a critical step, we recommend that the County form the collaborative first, then work with MCOTA on determining the legislation needed.

Examples range from a simple clause in the Minnesota Board on Aging's statute that directs the board "to award grants, enter into contracts, and adopt rules the Minnesota Board on Aging deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this section" to legislation in Washington that explicitly creates local coordinating coalitions.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Snohomish County Transportation Coalition: <http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/554/Transportation>

⁴⁵ Marin County Access brochure: <http://marinaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/At-A-Glance-Final-6-27-13.pdf>, and PowerPoint overview: http://www.marintransit.org/pdf/board/Mobility_Management_Presentation_020413.pdf

⁴⁶ See Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/>

⁴⁷ Washington State Legislature, Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2072, Chapter 515 (2009): <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2072-S.SL.pdf>

2. Strengthen and continue support for DARTS mobility management project

Start date: Fall 2014

Resources: Led by the collaborative

Potential barriers or resistance: Potential resistance from other providers; will need to engage them, listening carefully to their concerns.

Definition from the American Public Transit Association:

Mobility management involves creating **partnerships** with transportation providers in a community or region **to enhance travel options**, and then developing the means to effectively **communicate those options to the public** through both traditional and state-of-the-art channels. It requires moving **beyond the usual patterns of doing business**.

The DARTS mobility management project is a two-year (2013-2015) project to develop a one-call, one-click information and referral point, engage transportation providers in a network, and to develop a mobility management operations plan.

The collaborative should:

- Identify/provide sustainable funding.
- Provide oversight and direction.
- Recommend potential additional mobility management activities:
 - Shared driver training program for human services agencies, small providers, and volunteers (DARTS offers)
 - Travel training program
 - Vehicle-sharing program
 - Coordination of volunteer driver programs
 - Consulting on transportation plans for human service agencies
 - Other shared asset and service ideas to consider:
 - Joint purchasing and/or leasing of equipment and facilities
 - Shared maintenance facilities (DARTS offers)
 - A single or coordinated fare mechanism
 - Coordinated reservation, dispatching, scheduling, and payment systems
 - A single entity to provide human service transportation to all participating human service agencies

3. Identify funding options for coordination activities

Start date: Fall 2014

Resources: Led by County Coordination Collaborative

Potential barriers or resistance: none

- Mobility management projects that benefit older adults and individuals with disabilities are eligible for the FTA 5310 program funds, with a 20% or 50% local match requirement. Marin County, California, is an example of a county that has used FTA grants to develop its mobility management program.⁴⁸
- Redirect a portion of current County transportation funds to coordination activities.
- Opportunities for added revenue. See p. 52 of this report.
- Potential for the Collaborative to prioritize competing grant applications
- The Collaborative could even become the funding provider for human services transportation in the County, in order to combine funding streams. (See Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged⁴⁹).

⁴⁸ Marin County Access brochure: <http://marinaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/At-A-Glance-Final-6-27-13.pdf>, and PowerPoint overview: http://www.marintransit.org/pdf/board/Mobility_Management_Presentation_020413.pdf

⁴⁹ Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, Annual Report, 2013, <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/docs/APR/2013/APR2013Final.pdf>

4. Require consistent, transparent, and shared data collection and reporting among providers

Start date: Spring 2015

Resources: Led by the collaborative

Potential barriers or resistance: Process changes can be very challenging to implement; need time and requirements and/or incentives to create agreement and buy-in.

- Adopt uniform reporting standards, following recommendations from current MCOTA project (available in Fall 2014).
- Minnesota’s Olmstead Plan is requiring baseline data collection for funding and services of transit expenditures administered through MnDOT, Met Council, and DHS.⁵⁰
- Data elements to include:
 - Ridership
 - Types of services
 - On-time performance
 - Cost per trip/ride
 - Trip purpose
 - Origin-destination
 - Total duration of trip/trip legs
 - Number of trips and mileage
 - Customer satisfaction
 - Turnaway data
 - Stories (qualitative data from providers and consumers)
 - Rides that are not being used (underutilization).
 - Where is it that people want to get to but can’t?
 - Number and types of vehicles
- Consider creating a single reporting structure (such as FL and GA).
- Develop a plan for sharing data.
 - Data privacy can be explicitly addressed in contracts and agreements
 - Examples range from a simple clause in the Minnesota Board on Aging’s statute that directs the board “to award grants, enter into contracts, and adopt rules the Minnesota Board on Aging deems

⁵⁰ Putting the Promise of Olmstead into Practice: Minnesota’s 2013 Olmstead Plan, November 2013, pp. 47-48, http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/olmstead/documents/pub/dhs16_180147.pdf

necessary to carry out the purposes of this section” to legislation in Washington that explicitly creates local coordinating coalitions.⁵¹

- Recruit all providers in county as participants. Tie funding to participation with this effort.
 - According to the Iowa Coordination Law Iowa Code 324A, requires all providers of transportation must provide information to the State to ensure coordination is occurring.
 - The Iowa Department of Human Services, in its administrative rules, requires all contractors who provide transportation for their clients to provide transportation information on a common form.⁵²
- Ensure that participating human service agencies identify transportation costs as a separate budget item.
- Lead work with surrounding counties to find efficiencies that can be achieved through multi-county data and process sharing.

⁵¹ Washington State Legislature, Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2072, Chapter 515 (2009):
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2072-S.SL.pdf>

⁵² Iowa DHS Administrative Rules:
http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/policyanalysis/PolicyManualPages/Manual_Documents/Rules/441-150.pdf

5. Explore ways to encourage or require cities and the County to include transportation services and needs as factors in land use decisions and to educate businesses and economic development staff

Start date: Spring 2015

Resources: Led by the collaborative, using working group that includes County planning/transportation staff as well as city representatives.

Potential barriers or resistance: Land use decisions are usually challenging.

- Explore methods that cities can use to encourage transit-oriented development, such as rezoning, zoning variances, lower parking requirements, raising height restrictions, density bonuses, lot-size reductions, setback reductions, transit overlay zones, density bonuses, and tax increment financing.
- Explore ways for all the County's facilities to be accessible via transit (perhaps relocation of certain services or a circulator service).
- Educate local realtors and business chambers.

Resources

The Metropolitan Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) includes strategies for coordinating transportation investments and land development to support all modes and reduce congestion.⁵³

A study sponsored by the Met Council and led by Yingling Fan, an Assistant Professor at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, made the recommendations to policymakers to encourage a balance of living-wage jobs and mixed-income housing near transit.⁵⁴

They include:

- Fostering communication and collaboration between the public sector and groups in the private sector that already have shown an interest in transit-accessible locations. These groups include multifamily residential developers, redevelopment specialists, large corporations, startups and other small, innovative employers, and employers of low-wage workers.
- Promoting vibrant, walkable neighborhoods through flexible design and regulatory reform such as form-based codes in station areas (regulating only

⁵³ Metropolitan Council, November 20, 2010, <http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning/2030-Transportation-Policy-Plan.aspx>

⁵⁴ Yingling Fan and Andrew Guthrie. 2013. *Achieving System-Level, Transit-Oriented Jobs-Housing Balance: Perspectives of Twin Cities Developers and Business Leaders*, CTS 13-24, <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Publications/ResearchReports/pdfdownload.pl?id=2336>.

appearance and externalities rather than uses), high-enough densities, and maximum parking requirements.

- Promoting diverse affordable-housing options by helping affordable-housing specialists pursue cost-effective designs that reduce parking ratios and increase density by raising height restrictions.
- Promoting diverse transit options--including high- frequency bus routes and high-quality rail--and accelerating system development.

6. Establish Dakota County human service agency travel training program

Start date: Fall/Winter 2015

Resources: Developed by mobility manager, with oversight and direction from the collaborative

Potential barriers or resistance: Potential challenge to dedicate staff and resources.

- Travel training programs are proven to encourage use of fixed-route transit among those who are able to use it, generating significant savings (see MCOTA cost/benefits report⁵⁵).
- Establish realistic expectations for potential services (e.g., fixed-route transit is not a feasible option in all parts of the County).
- Establish realistic expectations of user abilities with human service agencies; not all clients will be able to use fixed-route transit.
- May be managed by mobility management program and potentially funded by federal 5310 grant.
- Develop and/or share instructional videos.

⁵⁵ Minnesota Council on Transportation Access, Calculating the Benefits of Transit Coordination: Minnesota Case Studies, 2013, http://www.coordinatemntransit.org/MCOTA/documents/MCOTA_econ_casestudies_2013.pdf

7. Create and implement a communications and marketing plan

Start date: Fall/Winter 2015 (or earlier)

Resources: Led by the collaborative with staff or consultant assistance, working with the mobility manager.

Potential barriers or resistance: Will require funding.

- The benefits of coordination (both in terms of cost savings and service benefits) need to be documented and regularly communicated to county leaders, stakeholders, and the public.
- A public awareness campaign to raise the awareness of transportation options and services should be created and implemented. This campaign might use direct marketing, local advertising, community organization newsletters, and social media to get the message out.
- Information should also be disseminated through human service agencies, employment specialists, libraries, health care providers, senior housing, and religious organizations.
- Develop and/or share instructional videos

Section 8. Conclusion

A wealth of state and federal guidance and resources exist to assist in advancing the County's efforts. As demonstrated by the variety of approaches taken by states and localities throughout the U.S., there is no one right way to coordinate transportation services. It is important to be able to customize coordination for each community, while taking advantage of the resources and experiences of other areas.

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on the needs, goals, and strategies identified in the stakeholder engagement process. They provide a road map for Dakota County to improve human service transportation, in time to meet the needs of its growing population of older adults, as well as individuals with disabilities and lower incomes. Like universal design for buildings and sidewalks, coordinated transportation will help Dakota County provide better transportation services to all residents, enabling greater access to jobs, medical care, school, and other services.

The confluence of demographic, funding, and legal factors offer a prime opportunity for Dakota County to take the lead in coordinating human services transportation at a local level in Minnesota. The County is to be commended for recognizing the needs and taking action.

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