

Minutes
**Mississippi River Region Transportation meeting For “Locally Developed Coordinated Public
Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan”**
July 31, 2013, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 Noon
Hazel Brown Leicht Memorial Library, 201 Neshonoc Road, West Salem, WI 54669

Welcome and Introductions

Peter Fletcher welcomed meeting attendees and asked that everyone introduce themselves and name the county/agency they were representing.

Agenda Review

Mr. Fletcher reviewed the agenda and explained how the meeting would be conducted. Mr. Fletcher presented the materials included in the meeting packets.

Coordination Meeting Overview

Mr. Fletcher outlined the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Coordinated Plan requirements. He said the 2005 Federal Transportation bill (SAFETEA LU) required that projects seeking funding under Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317 be derived from a “locally developed, coordinated public transit human services transportation plan” developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human service providers and participation by members of the public. The “locally developed, coordinated public transit human services transportation plan” is required by Map-21 to be updated in 2013. He said the plans are required for counties to receive their 85.21 state funds. Mr. Fletcher said Map-21 repealed the 5316 (Job access and Reverse Commute) Program but these projects are now eligible to be funded in the public transportation programs (5311 and 5307) which do not require coordinated planning. He said Map 21 also repealed the 5317 (New Freedom) program but those projects are now eligible to be funded in the expanded 5310 program that still requires coordinated planning.

Mr. Fletcher reviewed WisDOT’s role in coordinated planning and said that DOT has designated RPC/MPO’s as the lead agency in the planning process. He then outlined the goals of coordinated planning. He said there are four required elements of a coordinated plan: The first element is an assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers. Mr. Fletcher provided a map of public transportation services in the region and chart illustrating transportation services in the region.

The second element was an assessment of transportation needs for transportation-disadvantaged populations. Mr. Fletcher reviewed the transportation needs identified in the 2008 coordinated planning process. He then asked meeting participants for their comments and input on this issue. The following Transportation “Needs and Gaps” were identified:

- Communicating details about riders’ needs (e.g., wheelchair) to volunteer drivers

- Short or no weekend service
- Want access to S.M.R.T. bus
- Attention to population centers other than La Crosse
- Availability of cot and stretcher transportation
- Availability of dialysis and bariatric transportation
- Expansion of La Crosse municipal bus to West Salem, and other communities
- Availability of vehicles capable of transporting wheelchairs
- Educating the public and medical community to schedule appointments to coincide with transit timetables
- Lack of transit between Wisconsin and Minnesota communities
- Unexpressed or hidden demand for transit in rural areas (i.e., people need transit, but aren't speaking up about it)
- Keeping fares affordable
- Scheduling routes to run later into the night and accommodate 3rd-shift workers
- Programs for purchase and/or repair of private automobiles
- Disabled population is largely willing to work, but is often unable to drive and cannot find adequate transportation to a job

Mr. Fletcher asked meeting participants "What has been done well in the last five years"? Public input on strategies, activities or projects to address the gaps included the following comments:

- S.M.R.T. Bus (should look into possibility of expansion)
- More coordination among agencies, to eliminate needless duplication
- Willingness of agencies to cooperate across county lines
- Development of volunteer-driver programs
- More mobility managers
- Changing attitude toward transit: more positive than before; people more likely to see themselves as potential riders than before
- STRAP funding
- Use of attendants
- Agencies welcome all kinds of riders (i.e., programs are not limited only to the disabled, elderly, etc.)
- Medical transportation added to benefits packages
- Medicaid brokerage

Additional public input was requested on "What could be done better?"

- Combine all types of transit – break down silos among general ridership, disabled, elderly, etc. – "it's all transportation"
- Need more accessible transportation, especially as the population ages
- Younger residents are less enthusiastic about car ownership, and want effective transit
- More volunteer drivers needed – connect with R.S.V.P.

- Encourage sharing of vehicles and other resources among local governments
- Secure enough funding for transportation programs
- Improve marketing, outreach, and education about transportation options

Mr. Fletcher provided the group with broad planning goals for inclusion in the plan. He explained the goals were developed by reviewing past Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans as well as sample goals provided by the Department of Transportation. The goals presented were: \

- 1) Increase transportation options for the transportation disadvantaged.
- 2) Develop/expand/continue transportation services.
- 3) Strive to increase transportation funding to create sustainable transportation services.
- 4) Develop and improve access to information and increase awareness of transportation services (marketing/educational outreach).
- 5) Maximize the efficiency of transportation services through technology, innovation and coordination.

Mr. Fletcher asked for any additions or if anyone had any objections to the planning goals outlined. The group reviewed the goals and felt they represented/addressed input gathered at the meeting and through past experiences. The consensus of the group was that the goals be utilized in the plan update and the regional and county work plans.

The next portion of the meeting addressed the third element of the coordinated plan process and involved participants breaking into groups. The groups reviewed past county coordinated planning activities, analyzed needs and gaps, and identified strategies, activities and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needed services. The groups also addressed the fourth element of the planning process and identified priorities based on resources, time and feasibility. The groups met for approximately 60 minutes. Each group completed coordinated plan worksheets that are included in the coordinated plan.

The groups reconvened and reviewed meeting information. After discussion Mr. Fletcher asked for a motion to approve the coordinated plan. Jean Klousia from Vernon County Department of Health and Human Services made a motion to approve the 2013 Locally Developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for the Mississippi River Region with the understanding the final planning document will be reviewed by meeting participants. Keith Carlson, La Crosse MTU seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously. Mr. Fletcher asked if they were any questions, comments or objections to the motion. Hearing none the motion was accepted as presented. Mr. Fletcher thanked everyone for participating in the planning process.