

East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Meeting 5, March 21st, 2019
East Central Regional Development Commission Office

Meeting notes:

We had 29 participants at the meeting on Thursday. The list and agency represented is attached.

Progressed through the Power Point presentation (attached) using that as a structure for discussion.

Timeline:

See last page of this report for timeline.

Completed:

- ~ ECRTCC structure organized, defined & approved
- ~ ECRTCC Advisory Board designated & approved by ECRTCC
- ~ Geographic region defined
- ~ Project described continuing efforts from local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan
- ~ By Laws created & approved
- ~ Mission Statement created & approved
- ~ 4 public meetings
intended to involve our community stakeholder's concerns within our strategies as we move forward into implementation

Updates:

- Radio interview with Bob regarding RTCC and to promote the importance of community participation in upcoming regional public meetings,
- Continued involvement with TRY - Volunteer Driver Organization with meetings in Onamia,
- Participated in the quarterly statewide RTCC meeting,
- Held ECRTCC public meetings in Milaca 2/12, Mora 2/13, Sandstone 2/19, North Branch 3/14,
- Participated on behalf of ECRTCC in Community Dialogue hosted by Family Pathways,
- Met Amy Christensen of TriCAP, to discuss involvement and volunteer driver details,
- Met with Miranda Janssen, Field Representative of Congressman Pete Stauber, to discuss transportation issues,
- Updated ECHO (East Central Housing Organization) at meeting on ECRTCC progression,
- Discussed production possibilities of Transportation Mobility Center website with web designer,
- Met with Kathy Reid, representative from Pine Technical & Community College to introduce the idea of CDL training combined with CPR/First Aid training. Relayed driving facility need for bus to utilize for testing.

Question of where Advisory Board's members' interest lay. Board was asked to keep this question in mind as we move forward through this meeting. We are interested in setting up smaller sub committees who together will efficiently bring elements together to implement into the developing project.

East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Stakeholder’s Meeting Questionnaire Results

What transportation modes do you know about that are currently available for those who are transportation disadvantaged?

Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	Volunteer drivers
	MTM, TriCAP, volunteer drivers
Mora	Heartland Express
	The bus
Sandstone	Arrowhead Transit

What are the positive Impacts of what is already in place?

Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	That there is transportation for people.
	We are serving many that have transportation barriers.
Mora	Nothing
	Get to appts on time
Sandstone	Great transportation provided in town of Pine City. Wonderful drivers.

What can we learn from what is currently available?

Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	How to increase coverage areas.

What transportation issues concern you most?

Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	Volunteer drivers
	Lack of volunteer drivers and provider routes – hard to serve areas (rural)
Mora	Unfriendly drivers, sometimes they are rude
	Not enough pick-up times
Sandstone	No transportation or lack of transportation members who live over 3 miles radius of Pine City.
North Branch	<p>Not having providers in the area to meet the needs of our senior population for medical appointment. This includes not only within Chisago City but into the metro area as well. Also, the need for specialty transportation service providers for those with wheelchairs, scooters, and escorted transportation needs</p> <p>Lakes Medi Van and also Heartland while they have been trying, have not been able to meet all the requests we have been asking due to scheduled conflicts. This is understandable due to the increase in needs because of Transit Plus being gone.</p> <p>Communication to the member but also those of us making the appointment when there is a change or cancelation.</p>

What are your primary transportation needs? or Where do you need to go? How often?

Meeting Location	Comments	How often?
Milaca	Milaca and Princeton. Doctors – Milaca country to City of Milaca	Weekly
Mora	Medical appointments. Elmhurst in Braham to Cambridge Medical Center	Weekly
	Grocery store, pharmacy, anywhere in Cambridge. Bridge Park to Walmart to pharmacy, to Cub	2-3 times/week
Sandstone	Church, casino, Walmart	2 times/week
North Branch	Medical appointments including clinic, eye, dental, and mental health	

How do you get there now?

Meeting Location	Comments
Milaca	Don't or find friend with car
	Most individuals use transportation providers, family, friends, neighbors, or volunteer drivers
Mora	Take the bus/volunteer driver
	Barter for a rider from friends/acquaintances
Sandstone	Some don't. Rely on people to shop for them.

Dream of Possibility

What transportation remedies would help you most?

Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	Have drivers on time or calling people if late.
	More service coverage areas.
Mora	Friendlier drivers, more understanding
	Bus system is pretty good right now.
Sandstone	Having transportation available to members all over Pine County.
North Branch	More STS providers who will go to metro and a variety of counties.

What is your *vision* for an ideal approach to rural transportation for disadvantaged?

Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	Provide a seamless approach for transportation. Blur the county lines to ensure the consumer's needs are being met. Have more vehicles that can transport the disadvantaged by providing more routes to those in rural areas.
Mora	More understanding, treat everyone the same
Sandstone	Have more companion volunteers. Bus that drives outside of city limits
	More transportation services like an Uber or Lyft to get to the cities for people with disabilities using waivers because of their disabilities.
	A little bus service for those who need disability accommodations so that nobody gets left out.
	Some kind of typed transcript for the visually impaired.
	Sign up at local library for group trips to cultural events in city.

Design the Plan

Reflect on the *vision* and identify what you feel would be your top 3 goals.

Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate amongst transportation providers. 2. Increase coverage areas 3. More providers to provide service
Sandstone	Transportation provided to everyone in need in Pine County

Deliver the Consensus

As a group, what is our <i>Priority Goal</i>?	
Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	Get people where they are going and home
	Provide seamless transportation with more coverage area.

Any other questions that could help us to receive more clarity?	
Meeting Location	Comment
Milaca	Volunteer driver event

How did you hear about this Public Meeting and any other comments you may have?	
Meeting Location	Comment
Sandstone	My supervisor went to a transportation meeting and told us care coordinators to each fill out a survey and email back.

Public Meeting outcomes coincide with what we've been working on, what our implementation plans are.

Our Goals:

Volunteer Driver Program – Rural Mobility, Affordable, Fills Gaps

Uncomplicated – *Transportation Management Coordination*

Conductivity – Connectivity Hubs, building out to collaborate with counties, region, outside region and into Met Council area. Connected & Automated Vehicles (CAV).

Reaching Out – Utilize RTCCs throughout the state to collaborate with MnDOT for Transportation Service Plan that will fulfill transportation needs in outstate MN with available connections to larger cities.

At this point the Implementation Phase Grant Requirements become part of the conversation:

Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils will be required to implement **two of the three** following emphasis areas when preparing their Implementation Grant Application and Work Plan for Calendar Year 2019.

In addition, RTCC will include, at a minimum, two of their Region's 2017 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan projects as identified by the stakeholders.

#1 Transportation Management Coordination Center (TMCC)

#2 Volunteer Driver Program Committee

#3 Vehicle Sharing

#1 Transportation Management Coordination Center (TMCC)

Website will be developed by MCOTA's design team. It will be promoted in order to provide a one stop, one click opportunity for coordinated transportation information. Possibly an APP.

Information will be gathered for the site and updated by utilizing coordination from all transportation providers.

We will stress the importance of including adjacent statewide RTCCs and will utilize the quarterly meetings for initial introduction.

The mobility manager would also focus on reducing duplication of services, thereby improving service delivery throughout the region.

Computer software and training to organize data. Data would include public/private systems, times/routes.

Knowledgeable management and implementation of data, continual update and transmission of information.

Data would be taken and retained from inquirers in order to implement a less redundant system.

Links and site content kept current utilizing RDC staff member.

Site will be easily navigated, simple, with layers of information to get deeper into content.

Noel stated that they received a grant from the Veterans Community Transportation Initiative – like the Linkage Line system. They built an online tool listing available transportation options, referrals linked, built a secure email, voice systems. They learned that the TRANSIT PROVIDER must know all the transportation options in the area – this is a BIG DEAL – their system didn't work well – we must learn from this – we need an expert – we need someone with the time and responsibility to know all of the transit providers!

One call, one click – Gather Info, Start Simple.

Utilize the Scott & Carver County model.

Call Center – DHS – MCOTA, Statewide System

Build the capacity in various pieces, RTCC's are to be the organizing structure builder (see Sr. Linkage Line structure) all over the state. Staff centers all over the state and lots of money to build this structure.

RTCCs are to bring the state and individual area issues to light.

#2 Volunteer Driver Program Committee

(Used for short distances and for filling gaps in public transportation)

- Pursue legislation to update the Charitable Reimbursement Rate in order to entice and retain volunteers,
- Pursue legislation on the reimbursement limits for Volunteer Drivers triggering the need for an IRS form 1099,
- Consider No-Load miles in the conversation,
- Coordinate (an) Insurance Pool(s) covering Volunteer Drivers instead of raising personal insurance rates if the paid driver vs. volunteer driver cannot be differentiated.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION NEEDED.

Who is Paying Volunteer Drivers? (some ideas):

- Included in Membership Dues: 7 County Sr. Federation, choice when joining organization, added questionnaire. - Seniors only.
- Grant received by Lakes & Pines to fund rides for those who are disadvantaged. Disadvantaged only. Bob Benes made it clear that 60% of his population are seniors, there are many overlaps in the disadvantaged population. *Could Lakes & Pines cover the insurance for a Volunteer Program Service?* MCIT (Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust)
- Veterans: Part of Veteran Services – paid through Veteran Service Organization. Veterans only.
- It was brought up that getting wheelchairs in and out of vehicles is a dirty and difficult job for drivers. It's rough on the back seat and most volunteer drivers don't like to do it. Messes up their car.

Medicaid pays for transportation to medical appointments. Mille Lacs and Kanabec county have some funding for social service trips. All counties need to have a small amount of funds to cover non-medical trips for those disadvantaged.

Issue of lack of drivers.

Kanabec County's Timber Trails pays volunteer drivers but the insurance issue placed on volunteer drivers drives the drivers away. *Loaded miles are covered only, so drivers will not go up far to get anyone and not be paid for non-loaded miles.*

One item was brought to our attention that would be of significant value regarding the Volunteer Driver insurance issue...

In 2008, a document put together by MnDOT, the MN Department of Commerce and the MN Board on Aging intended for volunteer drivers was updated for the last time. Through our Statewide RTCC connections, this document called, "Be Prepared, The Best Way to Stay Safe" needs a facelift/update. With the advent of Uber & Lyft, there needs to be clarification that volunteer drivers do not fall under Rideshare Driver Coverage (commercial level of coverage, often mandatory for Uber or Lyft drivers). Volunteer drivers need protection that will allow them to serve as a volunteer and be protected – possibly fall under the Good Samaritan Law.

Once updated, the document could be provided to insurance companies with assurance that volunteer drivers are adhering to an approved set of standards set by MnDOT and the Department of Commerce. It was suggested that the updated document be distributed to all licensed automobile insurance companies and agents authorized to do business in Minnesota. **THIS SHOULD BE A TASK OF ALL RTCCS TO BRING FORTH TO MCOTA as it is a STATEWIDE ISSUE.**

#3 Vehicle Sharing

Vehicle sharing generally refers to:

- (a) one or more organizations operating the same vehicle at different times (time sharing) or
- (b) a human service provider using their vehicle to provide transportation for the clients of another organization (ride sharing).

Increased vehicle sharing is an objective among the government agencies and private organizations that fund transportation.

...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.

...It is also an objective among transportation providers seeking to more efficiently use their resources, further their respective missions or increase funding opportunities outside of the current boundaries that are impacted by transportation movements between regions.

Tim Schmutzer stated that other states share vehicles rather than using personal vehicles. Volunteers could check out PHASE's available vehicles 24/7 from 6 different sites in East Central MN areas. These could be used to fulfill ride requests. These are ADA accessible vehicles and smaller vehicles.

When sharing with other organizations insurance will get in the way. Non-profit insurance trust that allows vehicle

sharing! MCIT will not allow sharing of vehicles – we must change policy!

Maximize Resources!

Issues with reimbursable miles using own vehicle and transporting to another program – B's HomeCare.

(Helen Pieper) County service – MCIT – is a Big Brother approach for volunteer drivers insurance pool. So is League of MN Cities or there is a Foster Program. The Board on Aging is lobbying on this as well (Ben Byker).

2017 Public Transit Human Service Plan Implementation Projects

Transit Centers (CHUBS)

Connectivity from counties, regions, to cities,
Safe,
Congregate larger groups, may cause increase in service hours,
Utilizing Public Libraries

Continue to work with the regional library system, coordinating with all service providers to utilize all libraries in our East Central region. Re-routing buses so that libraries are daily transit stops.

Seize the opportunity to develop these hubs throughout other regions, connecting all buses with MnDOT's service plan making allowance for Public Transit to cross county lines (in order to make the closest connections).

A place for autonomous cars, volunteer drivers, cabs, park & ride, private service providers – to meet up with public service providers in order to reach further and reach efficiently. This can allow for hours to be stretched, to utilize our current system to the fullest extent.

RTCC's quarterly meeting #3 – develop this idea with Sue's support.

Outdoor, free standing clearly viewable buildings (CHUBS, Connectivity Hubs) – on library's site – open when library is open and for short hours when library is not open. Specific hours. (Open 6am – 10pm?). Automatic locking mechanisms. Cameras, WiFi, Car Charging Station, warmth, coolness (solar heat, air, fans, light),

security monitoring through county Sheriff's Department and/or City Police.

CHUBS are for the future plans. Idea is very interesting but before our time...

Address lack of prospects choosing to drive buses

What are the obstacles? - work towards resolution -

Pay,
Extra work than just driving,
Hours,
The need for vehicle (bus) for driver's test taking – hired by one service provider and then moves on after qualifying for position.

Develop incentive for job searchers (for Veterans) to take driver tests, get qualified. There are positions with flexible hours & benefits!

Lack of CDL drivers in general because backgrounds must be squeaky clean; no blood pressure issues, no sleep apnea...

Can we adjust this policy? Add a co-pilot?!!

Travel Training

Introduction to Mobility Services

Public Buses at County Fairs, Expos, bring to Senior Centers, to meeting places where those who we are trying to reach frequent. Make Bus Riding Fun!

Monique Mendyk explained the CarFit program that will take place on June 26th in Onamia from 10am – 1pm.

Tom and Tim both stated that Public Transportation takes many years for people to use, it's multigenerational – people don't tend to ride the bus.

More conversation clarified the two – 2017 transportation plan goals will be:

#1. Travel Training

#2. State & Federal Legislation - Changing Policies

Big Picture - Look at this as long term – create the continuation of the RTCCs. Drive Momentum. Show the PMT & MCOTA the variables at the end, show progress. Gain Momentum, need attainable goals.

1. Volunteer Driver goals and

2. Resources of Providers – consistent information, referrals to correct facility (resource).

Noel clarified that Chuck Morris is working to run an Innovative Technologies workshop to be attended by RTCCs & Public Transit Systems through a federal grant. The desire is to use this special project grant to implement technology through the RTCCs. We are the ones who can adapt federal funding for technology. The working advisory committee for technology is to be expanded to RTCCs.

Continual Watching ...

Monitor the progress of connected and automated vehicles – East Central MN would like to encourage setting and example using our CHUBS as testing facilities,

County based transportation – van service that will travel in rural areas of individual counties to facilitate connectivity, NLX from Cities to Duluth - stops in Cambridge, Hinckley and Sandstone (maintenance facility).

Pursue Uber/Lyft for rural, specific, and gap filling for those who can afford it.

Next meeting Thursday, April 25, 2019

Timeline:

