

Arrowhead Region 2016 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan

Prepared by:

Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
221 W. First Street
Duluth, MN 55802

Adopted by:

Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
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Executive Summary

This document is an update of the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan and will assist stakeholders, such as Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils, as they determine ways to coordinate human service transportation and transit services in the Arrowhead Region (Region 3). Beyond fulfilling federal requirements, this planning process encouraged representatives of diverse organizations to join together in articulating specific projects that could advance transportation services in the Arrowhead Region.

Analysis finds that small- to mid-sized cities serve as notable population centers and destinations in the Arrowhead Region, and pockets of transit-dependent populations are centered in Duluth, Ely, Hibbing/Chisholm, and Virginia. Results from surveys administered by ARDC find transit riders in the Arrowhead Region most commonly travel to access their place of employment or school and to access shopping opportunities or run errands; the largest barriers identified for transit providers in Northeast Minnesota is the large size of counties and the rural nature of the Arrowhead Region, whose more rural communities have reported a lack of real transit access.

The plan Steering Committee, made up of representatives from county human service agencies, area agency on aging representatives, centers for independent living representatives, passengers and others, closely guided plan decision-making. As a part of their work, Committee members, evaluated strategies and assessed outcomes of projects identified in the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan, developed project ideas and identified priority strategies as part of the public workshop, and Prioritized project ideas identified at the public workshop for inclusion in the final plan

One result of this Committee work was the completion of a needs assessment for transit coordination in the Arrowhead Region. Key findings from this assessment included the need for a centralized listing of all transit providers in the region with appropriate points of contact, the creation of better resources to help potential transit riders not be intimidated by their transit systems, and the development of a regional coordination body to strengthen communication between transit providers on the regional level.

A second result of this Committee work was the development of strategies and projects to support transit coordination in the Arrowhead Region. Relating to overarching strategies, these projects included the creation of a **transportation provider database**, completion of **regional transit planning**, completion of **transit infrastructure improvements**, development of **transit rider training** materials, exploration of **transit volunteer coordination**, and the development of a **regional transportation coordination council**.

Introduction

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

This document is an update of the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan and will assist stakeholders, such as Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils, as they determine ways to coordinate human service transportation and transit services in the Arrowhead Region (Region 3). The 2016 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan documents technical analysis that evaluates existing transportation services in the Arrowhead Region and assesses needs and gaps of transportation service provision among public transit agencies, social service agencies, and other providers. The plan also records public participation efforts and stakeholders' preferred strategies and projects to improve transportation coordination in the Arrowhead Region.

A Local Human Services Transit Coordination plan is a federal requirement under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). Federal regulations state that projects eligible for funding under the Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310) program must advance strategies identified in a Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan. This planning process fulfills federal requirements by engaging transportation providers, social services agencies, and members of the public in identifying strategies for regional transportation coordination.

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

Existing Conditions

Geography

The Arrowhead Region in northeast Minnesota contains seven counties (Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis), 69 cities, 181 townships, and four Indian Reservations within 22,143 square miles – roughly the size of West Virginia. With Canada on its northern border and Lake Superior's North Shore to its east, the Arrowhead Region has a rugged topography featuring the Sawtooth Mountain Range along the shores of Lake Superior and mixed forests, inland lakes, and wetlands scattered throughout the rest of its area. This diverse topography, the size of the region, and a winter climate modified by Lake Superior have historically posed as barriers to building and maintaining the region's transportation system.

Small- to mid-sized cities – including Aitkin, Cloquet, Duluth, Grand Marais, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, International Falls, Two Harbors, and Virginia – serve as some notable population centers and destinations throughout the Arrowhead Region. Frequent destinations outside of the region include popular recreation areas like lakes, nearby Minnesota cities – like Bemidji, Brainerd, and St. Cloud – and larger cities throughout the Midwest – like Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago, and Bismarck.

Demographics

To better understand the relationship between regional demographics, transportation options, and key destinations, a series of maps was created depicting these elements in the Arrowhead Region. These are included in Appendix A.

Based on the 2010 Census, populations in the Arrowhead Region are predominantly white (92.5%), live in rural areas (74%), and are more likely to be disabled or older when compared to state averages (14.2% of Arrowhead population identifies as disabled versus 10.3% state average, and the average difference between the median age in Arrowhead counties and the state is 9.7 years). These statistics largely align with findings of riders using small urban and rural transit networks throughout Greater Minnesota, as presented in the 2016 Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan.

As demonstrated in the Transit Dependency Index map included in Appendix A, numerous pockets of transit-dependent populations are present in the Arrowhead Region. These populations are centered in Duluth, Ely, Hibbing/Chisholm, and Virginia, with areas in Virginia, Hibbing, and the Central Hillside neighborhood of Duluth demonstrating the highest dependency. One explanation for the location of these clusters may be that most of these communities offer higher education options (i.e. universities, community college, etc.) that attract students who utilize transit as a low-cost transportation option. Other explanations, such as neighborhood socioeconomic status, may also impact a community's transit-dependency.

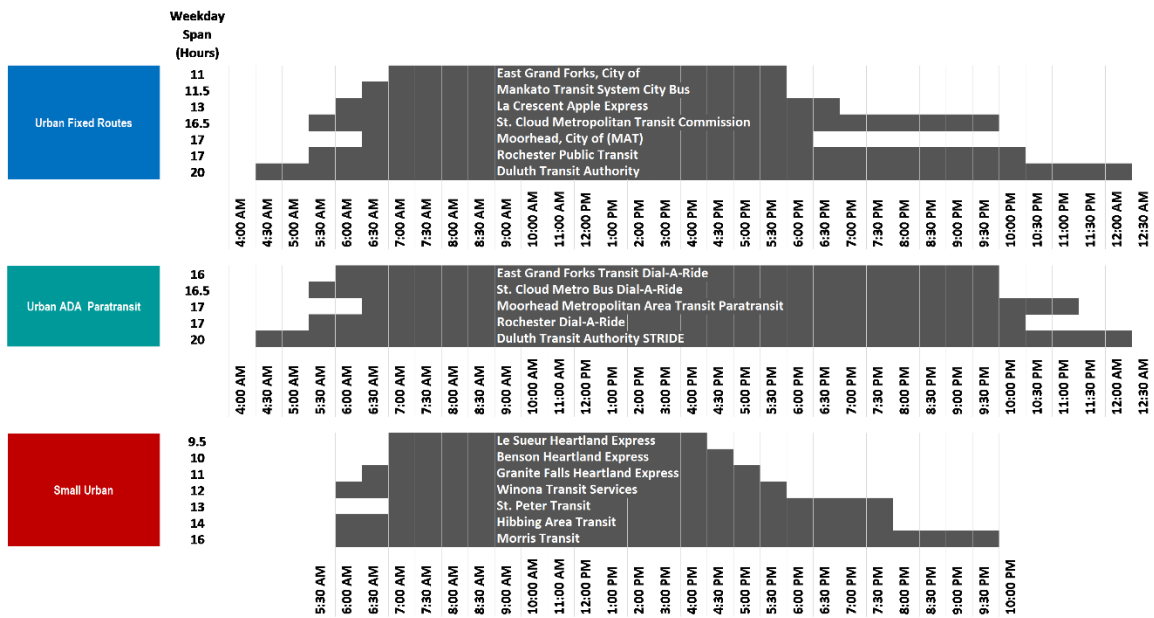
The Arrowhead Region lacks signs of significant change in the future. Demographic changes over time have shown relatively stable population numbers for most counties in the region, though some population decline has been observed in Lake, Koochiching, and Aitkin counties between 2010 and 2015. Predominantly white, the region lacks signs of significant change in racial make-up as well. Barring considerable shifts in specific industries (mining, health care, etc.), significant changes for

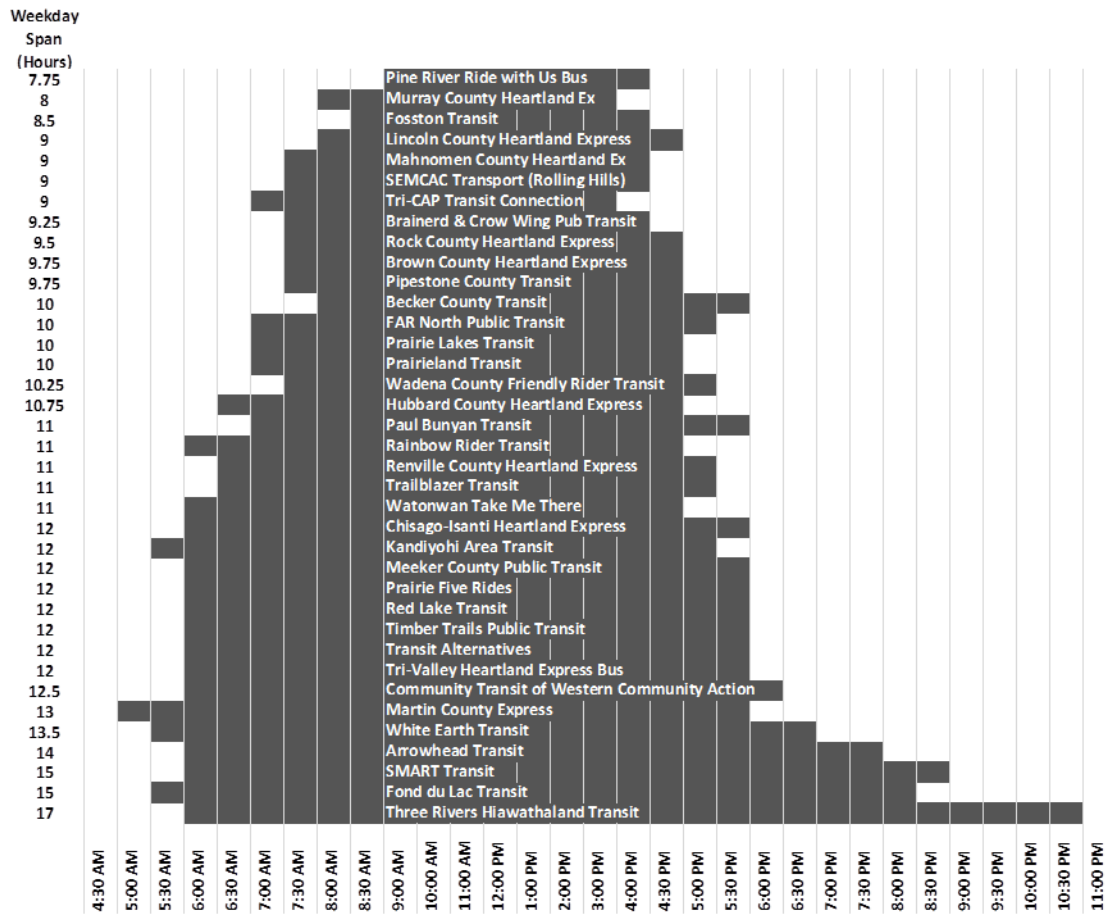
how transportation is handled in the Arrowhead Region does not promise future modifications to current developments requiring transit access.

Transportation Resources

ARDC developed an inventory meant to capture service information for all public, private, school district, human service, and non-profit transportation providers in the region. The inventory provides a source of comparison across agencies and a means to identify service gaps. To complete the inventory, ARDC sent an online questionnaire to 25 of the region’s transportation providers in the Arrowhead Region. 20 completed responses were returned. A summary of the transportation resources is available in Appendix B.

As an overview, public transit providers in the Arrowhead Region include five agencies: Arrowhead Transit, Bois Forte Transit, Duluth Transit Authority (Regular Route and Dial-A-Ride Special Transit Ride [STRIDE]), Fond du Lac Transit, and Hibbing Area Transit. Their areas of service are highlighted on the map in Appendix A, and their spans of service are available below, as presented in the 2016 Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan. Each of these agencies offers both fixed route and dial-a-ride services in their respective areas. Between these agencies, all counties in the Arrowhead Region are offered transit service to some degree.





As identified in the regional transportation provider survey and rider surveys administered by ARDC, transit riders in the Arrowhead Region most commonly travel to access their place of employment or school and to access shopping opportunities or run errands. The results also suggest that riders' primary use of transit varies greatly between a more urban/community transit service (i.e. Duluth Transit Authority or Hibbing Area Transit) versus a more rural transit service (i.e. Arrowhead Transit or Fond du Lac Transit), where a more urban/community transit service is used for a wider array of everyday activities whereas a rural transit service is used for more specific purposes, such as commuting to work. More than half of rural service riders, specifically on Arrowhead Transit, identify themselves as having disabilities, whereas those who ride small urban, community-based, or tribal transportation service do not report these high numbers.

Current coordination between transportation providers is minimal. One reason for lack of coordination is because riders are aware of the transit providers offering service throughout the region and each service has information available to the public, whether available on the internet, in printed materials, or by phone. Social workers and other caretakers whose clients or loved ones are transit dependent are, in turn, aware of these services and can access details about how to use the service or contact the service to learn more information.

The largest barriers identified for transit providers in Northeast Minnesota are the large size of counties and the rural nature of the Arrowhead Region, whose more rural communities have reported a lack of real transit access. Transit providers ranked scheduling conflicts, limited service

hour availability, limited service area, and cost as specific barriers to coordination with other agencies. Feedback on improvements for coordination between transportation providers was limited, but desired connections collected in rider survey results suggest there may be opportunity for riders to make connections with the use of multiple transit providers in one trip. This is a specific area where more coordination between transportation providers may be beneficial.

Public Participation

Steering Committee

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

- Evaluating strategies and assessing outcomes of projects identified in the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan
- Developing project ideas and identifying priority strategies as part of the public workshop
- Prioritizing project ideas identified at the public workshop for inclusion in the final plan

The Steering Committee was made up of representatives from county human service agencies, area agency on aging representatives, centers for independent living representatives, passengers and others.

Members included:

Steering Committee Membership	Organization	Representing
Tina Bush	Access North Transit	Private Transit
Amanda Crosby	Access North Transit	Private Transit
Erin Thompson	Access North Center	Independent Living
Jason Worlie	Access North Center	Independent Living
Thomas Burke	Aitkin County H&HS	Social Services
Kristi Kane	Area Agency on Aging	Older citizens
Jack Larson	Arrowhead Transit	Rural Transit
Jennie Rowland	Big Woods Transit (Bois Forte)	Tribal/Rural Transit
Jenny Van Sickle	Community Action Duluth	Minority Populations
Olivia Magee	Cook County H&HS	Social Services
Nancy Brown	Duluth Transit Authority	Urban Transit
Dennis Jensen	Duluth Transit Authority	Urban Transit
Jason Hollinday	Fond du Lac Band	Tribal/Rural Transit
James Kyle	Fond du Lac Transit	Tribal/Rural Transit

Mary Ann Kepler	Hibbing Transit	Small City Transit
Becky Lauer	Itasca County H&HS	Social Services
Kathy LaFrance	Koochiching County H&HS	Social Services
Beth Swanson	Lake County H&HS	Social Services
Ron Chicka	Metropolitan Interstate Council	Metropolitan Planning Organizations
Chris Belden	Metropolitan Interstate Council	Metropolitan Planning Organizations
Lisa Austin	MnDOT District 1	MnDOT
Bryan Anderson	MnDOT District 1	MnDOT
Paula Reed	MN Workforce Center	Workforce/Training
Don Mohawk	MnDOT Transit	MnDOT
Mike Andrews	St. Louis County H&HS	Social Services

2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan Outcomes

Another component of the existing conditions is an analysis of the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan's list of strategies and projects for improving transit coordination. The 2016 Steering Committee reviewed these strategies and projects to assess regional progress on transit coordination since 2011. The group also identified causes for success and barriers to action regarding project implementation. The complete list of 2011 strategies and projects and an assessment of their outcome is presented below.

Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
Coordinate Dispatch: Create centralized call center and share trip dispatch under single entity within an organization. Buy software that incorporates reservation and	Not Started	Improves program access; creates cost-efficiencies; maximizes ridesharing; removes obstacles to providing same day, shared ride service; potential to reduce costs and increase productivity.	Transit providers do not think this idea is conducive to the Arrowhead Region since each provider operates differently; also, dial-a-ride systems would not translate well on a regional level since the Arrowhead Region is so

Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
scheduling capabilities and/or uses vehicle location information.			large.
Coordinate Agency Schedules: Coordinate connections between transit services. Coordinate transit service hours with health services, social services, and employment schedules.	Ongoing	Improves program access, could result in cost-efficiencies by grouping rides from similar origin/destination locations.	Coordination of inter-agency connections are ongoing in the Duluth metropolitan area, especially with Park and Ride facilities and exploring expansion of the Duluth Transit Authority system. Coordination of drop-off and pick-up times at such facilities may be more difficult.
Contract with Common Carrier: One or more sponsors have contracts with a common carrier, such as a public transit agency, and permit co-mingling of clients on the carrier's vehicles.	Ongoing	Increase vehicle productivity; reduces per trip costs.	Particularly with day carriers, this already takes place with certain transit providers in the Arrowhead Region.
Allow joint purchasing: Coordinate purchases such as vehicle maintenance, insurance, driver training and substance abuse testing	Not Started	Reduces costs by "buying in bulk;" increases consistency across organizations	Coordination and communication of needs between agencies are the most significant barrier.
Outsource business	Not	Increased efficiency by allowing	Transit providers lack

Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
functions: Contract with external agencies for business services such as accounting, billing, or dispatching	Started	agency to focus on key mission while outside contractor handles ancillary functions	interest in consolidating business functions.
Contract between agencies: Allow providers with excess capacity to "sell" rides to other organizations, which are reserved for their clients	Not Started	Improves service productivity and cost-effectiveness	Transit providers are unsure how the logistics of contracting between agencies would work.
Share resources: Share use of operational and capital resources (vehicles, facilities, support services)	Not Started	Reduces costs; increases vehicle productivity; improves service quality	The closest action to date is the Duluth Transit Authority's discussion to sell STRIDE vehicles at discounted prices to nursing homes.
Consolidate business functions: Merge various operating functions, such as call center or service delivery, from several agencies under single entity	Not Started	Improves program access; creates cost-efficiencies	Transit providers lack interest in consolidating business functions.
Coordinate volunteer driving: Merge volunteer driver training across programs	Not Started	Merge volunteer driver training across programs	Arrowhead Transit currently holds trainings for their volunteers, but there is no movement to centralize volunteer training on the regional level.
Implement tools that	In	Install tools that improve data	Arrowhead Transit

Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
support data management: Install tools that improve data integrity, fare collection, cost sharing/allocation, billing, reporting and transfers	progress	integrity, fare collection, cost sharing/allocation, billing, reporting and transfers	honors Fond du Lac Transit passes in Cloquet, but more exploration is needed on this topic.

Mobility Strategies			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
Improve Service Convenience: Improve/expand service hours, geographic coverage, driver assistance, same-day service, inter-city services, etc. Purchase additional vehicles. Use software that matches service information with data to maximize service design and enhance productivity.	In progress	Enhances travel and service options; increase services productivity and frees resources for service expansion	Transit providers have noted a lack of funding inhibits expansion; recent MnDOT funding has allowed for the Duluth Transit Authority to implement five new routes in 2017.
Establish/enhance volunteer driver programs: Develop/incorporate volunteer driver program to deliver services	Ongoing	Low cost strategy to increase service, community involvement	Few transit providers offer a volunteer driver program, but Arrowhead Transit's program has noted dramatic increase due to a rise in demand for non-emergency transport in coordination with insurance companies.
Establish/enhance assisted	Not	Increase access to transit	Certain transit providers host accessibility help in

Mobility Strategies			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
transportation programs: Train volunteers to help riders who are unable to use transit services without personal assistance	started	services	their own organizations, but there is not staff to currently support such a program across the region.
Establish/expand taxi subsidy programs: Provide vouchers to partially or completely pay for taxi services	Not Started	Offers flexible service; increases travel options	Taxi subsidies do not currently exist for public transit, but a program called Joy Ride provides bar patrons with taxi vouchers to discourage impaired driving in south St. Louis County and northeast Carlton County. Arrowhead Transit also uses taxis as an option for its rural rides program.
Improve access to transit stops: Make accessibility improvements at bus stops, such as installing accessible pedestrian signals	In progress	Improves accessibility of fixed-route; does not require on-going funding; can reduce reliance on paratransit	The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council compiled a bus shelter inventory for the Duluth Transit Authority, and the DTA will be following this up with a full inventory of all bus stops; MnDOT's Safe Routes to Transit program offers opportunity for enhancements.
Maintain existing vehicle fleet: Replace existing buses appropriate to their age/wear and tear	Not Started	Future levels of service match current levels	The Duluth Transit Authority is satisfied with their current bus replacement program; Arrowhead Transit have noted a constant need

Mobility Strategies			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
			for new vehicles.

Communication, Training and Organization Support			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
Centralize Information: Create centralized listing of regional transportation services	Not Started	More user friendly; increases access to service	Transit providers have noted a desire to see a centralized and updated listing of regional services.
Hire a mobility manager: Dedicate personnel resources to manage local mobility issues and/or staff coordination efforts	Not Started	Creates staff resources to promote and implement coordination efforts	Transit providers have noted a Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC) may help fill this role; Arrowhead Transit has transit advocates to fill this role in its organization.
Provide technical training for coordination staff: Obtain technical training on background skills needed to implement coordination strategies, such as financial tools, team-building, etc.	Not Started	Ensures local coordination staff has skills to implement recommended programs	There is currently no coordination staff.
Offer customer travel training: Encourage targeted populations to use transit services by teaching them how to ride the bus	In progress	May reduce paratransit costs by moving riders to fixed route services; increases consumers' transportation options; means to offer culturally specific training to target groups	Transit providers have noted a desire to see travel training, particularly in the Duluth metropolitan area.

Communication, Training and Organization Support			
Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
Convene regional coordination body: Convene transportation providers and human services agencies to discuss on-going coordination needs within each region	Not Started	Designated body can oversee implementation of identified coordination efforts. Could initiate studies such as identifying and tracking transportation spending within region to promote understanding of dollar trail	There is a desire to see a regional coordination body, and a convened group may inspire greater participation among transit stakeholders.
Educate public of transportation options: Marketing and education to teach consumers about their transportation options	Ongoing	Increased ridership, could target culturally specific groups	Each transit provider is responsible for their own marketing and outreach efforts.
Educate regional professionals of transportation options: Education of human service professionals of the whole spectrum of transportation options available to clients	Not Started	More cost-effective and efficient recommendations to clients	Transit providers believe a centralized database of transit services would best serve this purpose.

Rider Survey

The Arrowhead region relies on a variety of organizations for public transportation and several organizations have administered a MnDOT provided survey to their riders to gain feedback on their transit experiences. The information provided from these surveys will be used in the latest Human Services Local Transit Coordination Plan Update, which will identify strategies for improved coordination of publicly and privately funded transportation resources in this region. Below you will find the summaries from four of the transit organizations: Arrowhead Transit, Duluth Transit Authority, Fond Du Lac Band Transit, and Hibbing Area Transit.

Arrowhead Transit

There was a total of 617 surveys returned to Arrowhead Transit. Of these surveys, 56% were female and 44% male. 77% of survey respondents did not have a driver's license and 66%

identified themselves as someone with a disability. Riders were asked what their primary purpose was for riding the bus and 40% responded with work, 23% with shopping, 13% with errands, 8% with other, and 8% with social (friends, family). Of those that responded with other, a few popular responses were medical, appointments, library, and church. When asked how often riders ride the bus, 51% said 5-7 days per week, 33% said 2-4 days a week, 8% said a few days per month, and 6% said once a week. 85% of riders are either satisfied or very satisfied with the availability or public transit in their community while only 5% are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Riders were asked what single improvement to this service that would make them more likely to ride the bus more frequently and 24% responded with longer service hours (earlier or later), 23% with reliability (on-time), 18% with other, 9% with shorter travel time on the bus, and another 9% said better frequency (less time between busses). Of those that said other, the most common responses were better dispatch communication and later hours. Lastly, when planning about how they make their trip, 29% of riders said convenience was most important, 24% said safety, and 14% said travel time.

Duluth Transit Authority

The survey findings for Duluth Transit Authority reflect the 1,199 survey responses that were recorded. Of these surveys, 52% were female and 48% were male. 50% of riders did not have a driver's license and 81% identified as someone with a disability. Riders were asked what their primary purpose was for riding the bus and 29% responded with work, 18% with school, 15% with shopping, and another 15% with errands. 70% of the surveyed riders ride the bus 5-7 days per week and 22% ride the bus 2-4 days per week. When asked on how satisfied they are with the availability of public transit in their communities, 80% were either satisfied or very satisfied and only 2% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Riders were also asked what single improvement to this service they would make to make them more likely to ride the bus more frequently and 28% said longer service hours (earlier or later), 22% said better frequency (less time between buses), 17% said reliability (on-time), and 10% said other. Of those that said other, top responses included access to Superior, more frequent busses on routes, and clearer bus schedules. Lastly, when planning about how they make their trip, 26% of riders said convenience is most important, 23% said travel time, 21% said something else, and 12% said cost.

Fond du Lac Band Transit

A total of 80 surveys were recorded for Fond du Lac Band Transit. 51% of respondents were female and 49% were male. 65% of riders did not have a driver's license and only 21% identified as someone with a disability. Riders were asked what their primary purpose was for riding the bus and 30% responded with work, 20% with errands, 17% with shopping, 14% with school, and 11% with social (friends, family). 60% of riders ride the bus 5-7 days a week and 21% ride the bus 2-4 days a week. Of the riders that were surveyed, 70% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the availability of public transit in their community while 7% were either very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied. When asked what single improvement to this service would make it more likely that they ride the bus more frequently, 40% of respondents said longer service hours (earlier or later), 19% said reliability (on-time), 12% said other, and 10% said more convenient stops. Of those that said other, some responses included better dispatcher organization, Duluth stops, and more hours on the weekend. Lastly, when planning about how they make their trip, 25% of riders responded with convenience as most important, 22% said flexibility, 17% said cost, and 15% said travel time.

Hibbing Area Transit

A total of 34 surveys were recorded for Hibbing Area Transit and of those respondents, 60% were female and 40% male. 63% of respondents do not have a driver's license and 41% identify as someone with a disability. Riders were asked what their primary purpose was for riding the bus and 34% responded with shopping, 26% with errands, 22% with work, 8% with social (friends, family), and another 8% with other. Of those that said other, most responses were for appointments. 47% of the surveyed riders ride the bus 5-7 days a week and 41% said 2-4 days a week. When asked on how satisfied they are with the availability of public transit in their communities, 88% were either satisfied or very satisfied and 6% were somewhat dissatisfied. Riders were also asked what single improvement to this service they would make to make them more likely to ride the bus more frequently and 43% said longer service hours (earlier or later), 12% said reliability (on-time), 12% said shorter travel time on bus, and 9% said better frequency (less time between buses). Lastly, when planning about how they make their trip, 34% of riders responded with convenience as most important, 21% with travel time, 18% with flexibility, 15% with cost, and 12% with safety.

Focus Group

MnDOT provided focus group question in the form of a survey to be administered by ARDC. The focus group meeting drew seven stakeholders and took place on April 17, 2017, at ARDC. Between the survey being posted online and the participants of the meeting, 10 responses were gathered. Participants were asked to reflect on transit options in their region, which includes Arrowhead Transit, Big Wood Transit, DTA, Fond Du Lac Transit, Lake Superior Coaches, Northern Access, Shuttles, STRIDE, and Taxi/Cabs. Out of the transit options provided, the DTA is the most frequently used organization.

Based on the responses major challenges regarding transit include not having enough room on the bike racks on busses, understanding schedules, not having reliable cabs, services hours do not run late enough, not enough shelter stations when weather is poor, and accessibility to all areas specifically in Duluth. Strengths of existing services include the simple fact that they exist, easily accessible to students and commuters, generally very respectful drivers, clean busses, and good weekday service. Weaknesses of existing services include not having Uber or Lyft in the area, poor weekend service, inconvenient transfers, lack of direct connections, and lack of real-time tracking. When asked about any groups of people or people in certain areas that could be better served, rural Minnesota, West Duluth, Superior, and handicapped riders were all mentioned. Suggestions on how to serve the under-served include more STRIDE vehicles and service hours, and better education about rural transit options. Additionally, when asked whether any population is over-served, participants generally said no and that the areas that are more served than others meet the transit needs of the area, for example UMD.

Suggestions for enhancing amenities/facilities include making sure sidewalks are plowed near bus stops, fix deteriorating sidewalks, more bus stop shelters, and making sure stops are near safe/reliable sidewalks. One example of poor bus route service is Central Entrance. Bus stop facilities along Central entrance are terrible due to no sidewalks on the east side of the road and the sidewalks on the west side are often not plowed/no snow removal. Another comment in regards to enhancing amenities is the access to Wi-Fi on busses and electrical outlets to charge phones at the new transit center. Opportunities to expand transportation services include serving to the Twin

Cities, Lincoln Park, Superior, the Iron Range, and the outside areas of Duluth. Additional comments regarding transit use is the need to provide ease to new bus riders to avoid the “intimidation factor,” reaching areas in Canal, and seeing uphill connections (reminiscent of 1900s Duluth incline rail lines) come back to Duluth.

Planning Workshop

The planning workshop on June 12, 2017, incorporated input from interested stakeholders. A total of 10 people attended, listed in Appendix C. At the workshop, stakeholders identified strengths and weaknesses of transit coordination in the region. Building from these, stakeholders then identified priority strategies for transit coordination and brainstormed project ideas that could address these strategies. Using input gathered at this workshop, the Steering Committee prioritized the strategies and projects included in the final plan. A complete list of project ideas considered during the planning process is presented in Appendix D.

Strengths and Weaknesses

At the public workshop, participants identified strengths and weaknesses of existing coordination efforts in the Arrowhead Region. Combined with the plan’s technical findings, these strengths and weaknesses form the basis for identifying strategies to address transportation coordination in this region.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Each transit provider has information for their services and additional contact information readily available online for existing and potential customers.	The Arrowhead Region may be too large of an area to have a centralized system directing customers to their desired transit provider.
Public transit providers in the greater Duluth metropolitan area communicate frequently and utilize park and ride infrastructure as transfer or multimodal trip locations.	Coordinating schedules between transit providers for purposes of inter-service transfers are difficult to maintain, particularly when different types of service (i.e. dial-a-ride, deviated routes, fixed routes) are connected.
Agencies are thinking about ADA improvements at transit stops and shelters, and are actively working to enhance accessibility for users of all abilities.	Meaningful communication about desired system changes and needs does not take place among transit providers and stakeholders regularly.
Interest and participation in volunteer ride programs has shown significant growth in past years where training is made available.	New and upgraded transit vehicles are a constant need, particularly for transit programs in rural areas, but capital is often not available to accommodate these needs.
Transit providers and stakeholders have expressed interest in compiling a centralized information database on regional transit	Stakeholder participation around transit coordination was lacking during the Transit

Strengths	Weaknesses
services.	Coordination planning process.
Transit providers have shown interest and first steps to develop a travel training program focused on educating new riders how to use transit service.	There is currently not a regional body to coordinate interaction between transit providers and stakeholders throughout the Arrowhead Region.

Needs Assessment

The following is a list of needs identified by public transportation providers and stakeholders, grouped by topic.

Service Limitations, Gaps & Unmet Needs

- New and upgraded vehicles for rural public transportation providers that are appropriate for the intended use
- Connections between cities in or near the Duluth metropolitan area, but outside of Duluth (i.e. among Cloquet, Proctor, Hermantown, and Rice Lake)
- Upgraded dispatch software for transportation providers administering dial-a-ride programs

Centralized Information

- Central listing of transit providers and their contact information for human service professionals to reference
- Publicly-available maps of regional fixed transit routes and route information

Spatial Limitations

- A summary of public transportation information, not by county but on a regional level focusing on transit destinations

Temporal Limitations

- Expanded service hours for urban transit routes and expanded service days for rural transit routes

Program Eligibility and Trip Purpose Limitations

- Communication between regional healthcare centers and transit providers to coordinate appointment scheduling of transit-reliant clients, particularly from rural areas, with transit schedules

Service Quality and Miscellaneous Issues

- Coordination of schedules between transit providers using transit hubs (i.e. park and ride lots) to accommodate customer transfers
- Facilitation of meaningful communication about desired system changes and needs among transit providers and stakeholders
- Regional body to facilitate conversations about transit coordination throughout the region

Strategies and Projects

Strategies

The following strategies for regional transit coordination were identified at the planning workshop. For sake of classification, these strategies are broken into three categories: Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources; Mobility; and Communication, Training, and Organization Support.

Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources

- Coordinate among transportation providers and stakeholders to organize and train volunteers to support transportation services on a regional level.

Mobility

- Expand services, including but not limited to additional routes, extended hours of service, and additional vehicles, to enhance mobility throughout the region.
- Enhance infrastructure at and around public transit stops, shelters, and depots to be compliant with standards set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act and be usable by all potential transit users.

Communication, Training, and Organization Support

- Make information about existing transportation providers in the region, and how to use these services, more accessible to the public.
- Develop a Regional Transportation Coordination Council to give organization support to the regional network of transit providers and stakeholders.

Projects

To categorize project ideas, Steering Committee members created an “Effort vs. Impact” chart to compare these project ideas. This created a relative sense of how much effort (low to high) each project idea would take as well as how much impact (minor to major) each project could have in its region. This chart can be found in Appendix E. The following strategies and projects represent those ideas the steering committee prioritized as having the most potential to improve transit coordination in the Arrowhead Region.

Project #1: Transportation Provider Database

Project Overview: Provide a central database of all public transportation providers in the Arrowhead Region and their contact information.

Population Served: Human service professionals, caregivers, public

Communities Served: Communities within Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Koochiching, Lake, Itasca, and St. Louis counties

Responsible Entities: Regional coordination council and public transit

Strategies Addressed: Make information about existing transportation providers in the region, and how to use these services, more accessible to the public.

Project #2: Regional Transit Planning

Project Overview: Engage communities and the public to further identify gaps in service, accessibility needs in the existing transit system, and strategies to improve transit in Northeast Minnesota.

Population Served: Transit riders, seniors/elders, residents with disabilities, low-income residents, public

Communities Served: Communities within Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Koochiching, Lake, Itasca, and St. Louis counties

Responsible Entities: Regional planning agency, public transit, disability advocates

Strategies Addressed: Expand services, including but not limited to additional routes, extended hours of service, and additional vehicles, to enhance mobility throughout the region.

Project #3: Transit Infrastructure Improvements

Project Overview: Address identified system gaps and accessibility needs with new or upgraded infrastructure at and around select transit stops, shelters, depots, and more; pursue improvements using transit-oriented development principles at significant destinations (i.e. Duluth Depot) throughout the region.

Population Served: Transit riders, seniors/elders, residents with disabilities, low-income residents, public

Communities Served: Communities within Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Koochiching, Lake, Itasca, and St. Louis counties

Responsible Entities: Engineers, public transit, disability advocates

Strategies Addressed: Enhance infrastructure at and around public transit stops, shelters, and depots to be compliant with standards set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act and be usable by all potential transit users.

Project #4: Transit Rider Training

Project Overview: Coordinate the production of transit schedules, maps, and how-to-ride materials by public transportation providers regionwide to fill an education gap for existing and potential transit riders.

Population Served: Potential transit riders, youth, seniors/elders

Communities Served: Particularly communities with localized transit service (Bois Forte, Duluth metropolitan area, Fond du Lac, Hibbing, etc.)

Responsible Entities: Public transit

Strategies Addressed: Make information about existing transportation providers in the region, and how to use these services, more accessible to the public.

Project #5: Transit Volunteer Coordination

Project Overview: Organize transit volunteers to coordinate volunteer efforts and education on a regional level.

Population Served: Residents who require special measures or assistance to use public transportation

Communities Served: Communities within Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Koochiching, Lake, Itasca, and St. Louis counties

Responsible Entities: Public transit, human service agencies, disability advocates

Strategies Addressed: Coordinate among transportation providers and stakeholders to organize and train volunteers to support transportation services on a regional level.

Project #6: Regional Transportation Coordination Council

Project Overview: Convene public transportation providers and stakeholders to form a Regional Transportation Coordination Council and support coordination of transit projects across the Arrowhead Region.

Population Served: Transit providers and stakeholders

Communities Served: Communities within Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Koochiching, Lake, Itasca, and St. Louis counties

Responsible Entities: Regional planning agency

Strategies Addressed: Develop a Regional Transportation Coordination Council to give organization support to the regional network of transit providers and stakeholders.

Project #7: Purchase of Transit Vehicles

Project Overview: Continue to seek funding for the purchase of vehicles for regional providers through the Section 5310 program and other sources.

Population Served: Residents of the region, including those who need special assistance

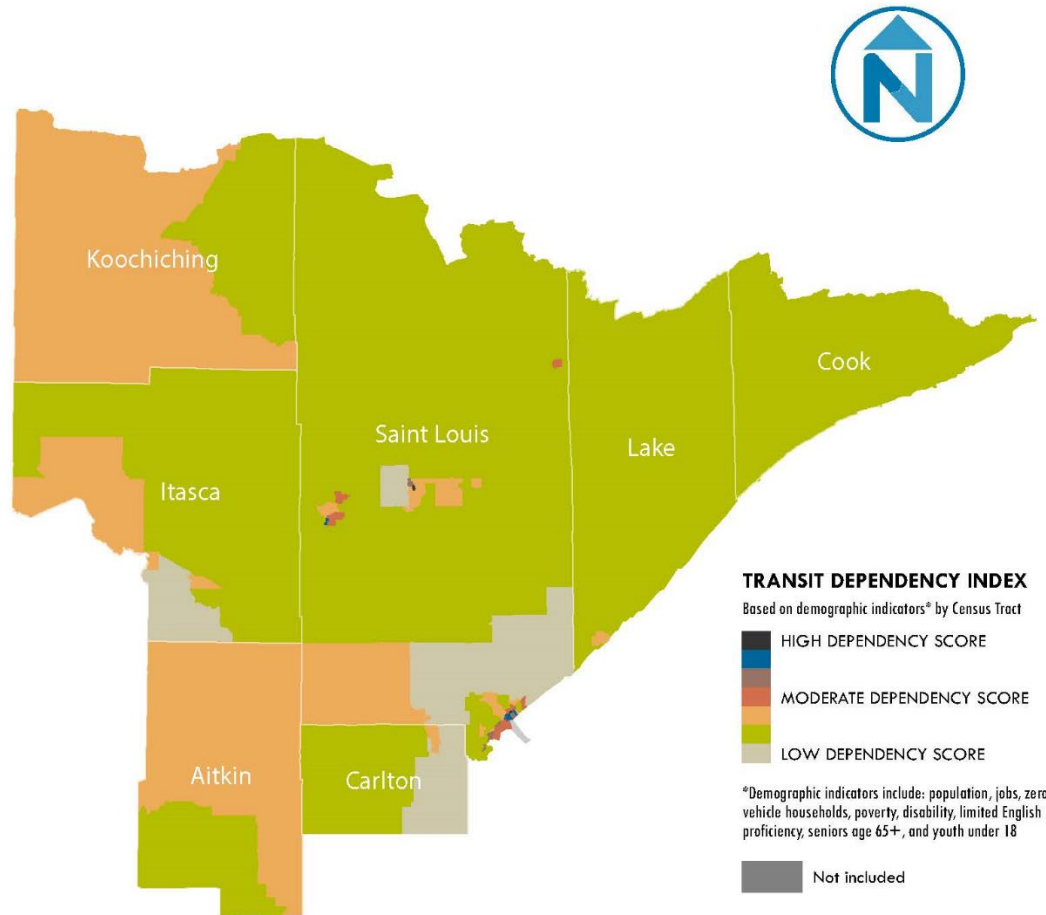
Communities Served: Communities within Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Koochiching, Lake, Itasca, and St. Louis counties

Responsible Entities: Public transit, human service agencies, disability advocates, health care providers, charitable organizations, senior service providers

Strategies Addressed: Expand services, including but not limited to additional routes, extended hours of service, and additional vehicles, to enhance mobility throughout the region.

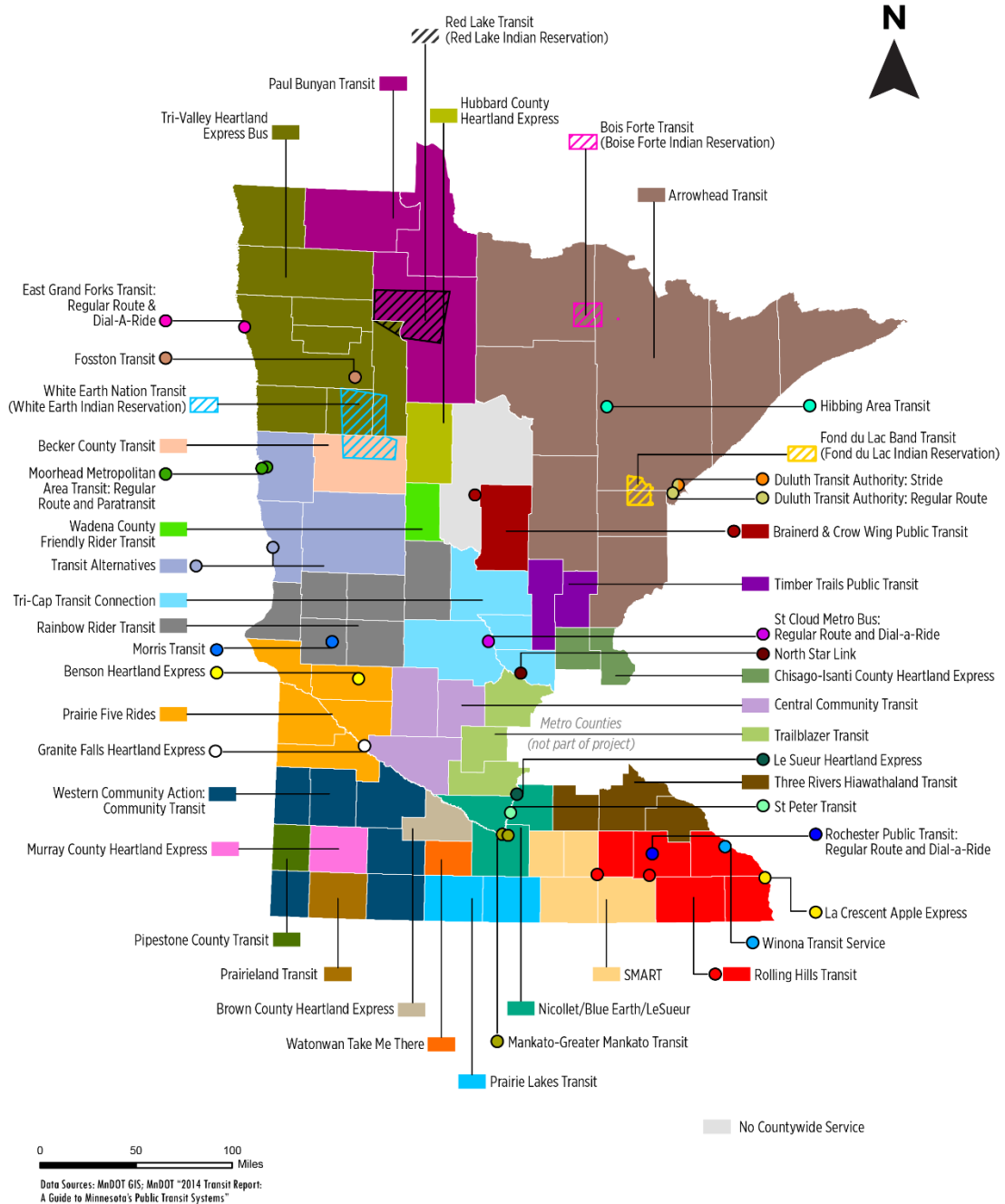
Appendix A – Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations

Transit Dependency Index - RDC 3

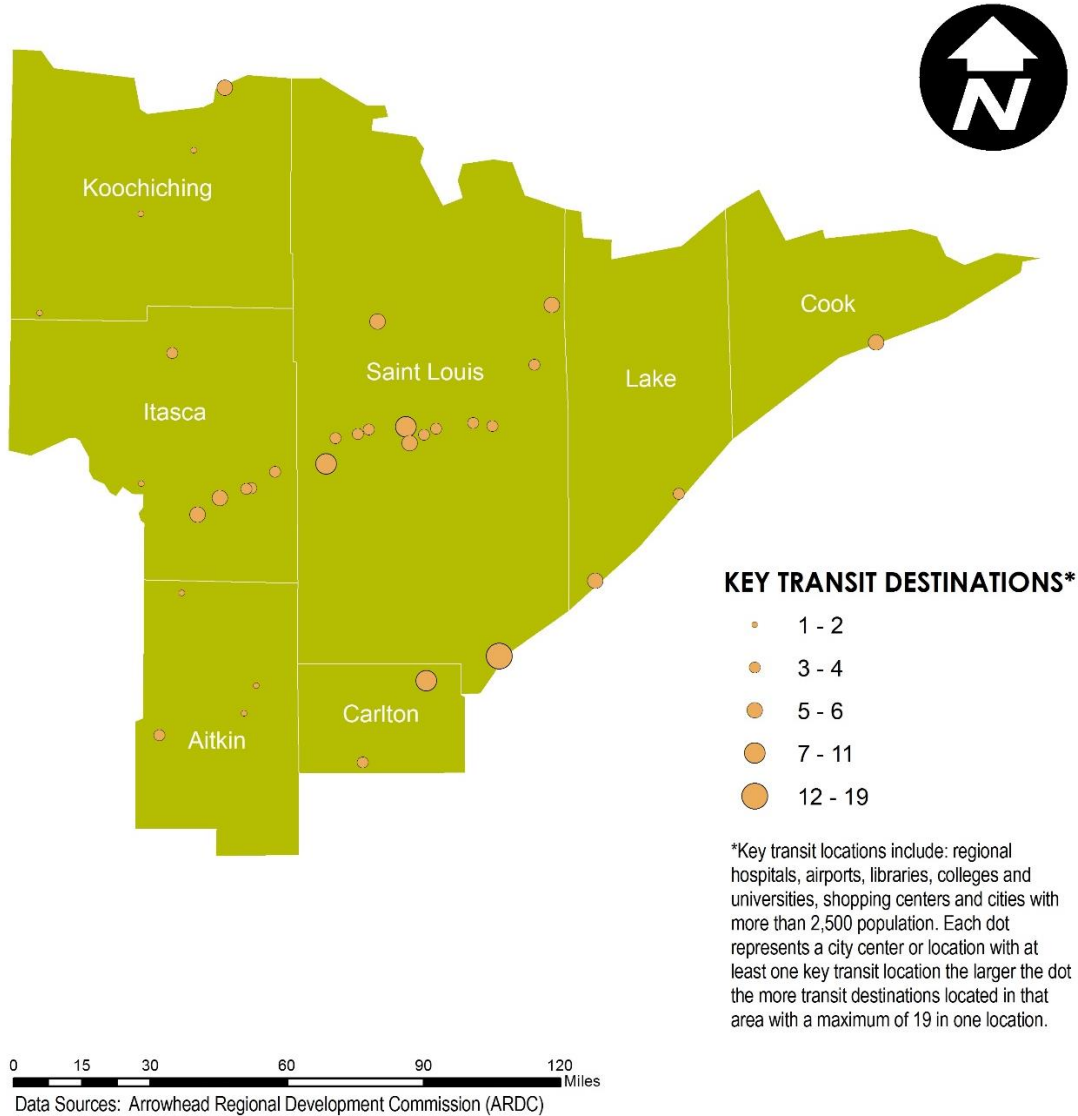


0 60 100 Miles
Data Sources: MnDOT GIS; ACS 5-yr estimates 2013; LEHD On the Map (All Jobs) 2013.

Transit Services



Key Transit Destinations – RDC 3



Appendix B – Transportation Resources

The following includes contact information of all regional transportation providers for whom information was received. This is not a complete list of providers in the region.

Agencies Providing Transportation Services

Aitkin County Health & Human Services

204 1st St NW

Aitkin, MN 56431

[Aitkin County Health and Human Services Website](#)

Contact: Jessica Goble

Financial Assistance Supervisor

218-927-7200

jessica.goble@co.aitkin.mn.us

AEOA/Arrowhead Transit

702 South 3rd Avenue

Virginia, MN 56792

[Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency Website](#)

Contact: Jack Larson

Transit Director

218-735-6807

jack.larson@aeoa.org

Big Woods Transit

5344 Lake Shore Drive

Nett Lake, MN 55772

[Big Woods Transit Website](#)

Contact: Jennie Rowland

Transit Coordinator

218-757-3261

mrowland@boisforte-nsn.gov

Bigfork Valley

PO Box 258

258 Pine Tree Drive

Bigfork, MN 56628

[Bigfork Valley Website](#)

Contact: Barbara Rahier

Transportation Coordinator

218-743-3052
brahier@bigforkvalley.org

Care Partners of Cook County

PO Box 282
515 5th Ave West - Office 106
Grand Marais, MN 55604
[Care Partners of Cook County Website](#)

Contact: Martha Olson
Senior Rides Coordinator
218-387-3788
seniorrides@boreal.org

Community Partners – Living at Home Program

PO Box 327
505 1st Avenue
Two Harbors, MN 55616
[Community Partners Website](#)

Contact: Taylor Holm
Executive Director
218-834-8024
Commpart@frontiernet.net

Duluth Transit Authority

2402 W. Michigan Street
Duluth, MN 55806
[Duluth Transit Authority Website](#)

Contact: Dennis Jensen
General Manager
218-623-4306
djensen@duluthtransit.com

Home Instead Senior Care

315 East Central Entrance, Suite 3
Duluth, MN 55811
[Home Instead Senior Care Website](#)

Contact: Mary Andrews
Business Owner
218-727-8810
mary.andrews@homeinstead.com

ISD 361/International Falls School District

1515 11th Street

International Falls, MN 56649

[International Falls School District Website](#)

Contact: Kevin Grover

Superintendent

218-283-2571

kgrover@isd361.k12.mn.us

ISD 2142/St. Louis County School District

619 14TH Street

Virginia, MN 55792

[St. Louis County School District Website](#)

Contact: Kay Cornelius

Transportation Director

218-735-6744

kcornelius@isd2142.k12.mn.us

Itasca County Health and Human Services

1209 SE 2nd Avenue

Grand Rapids, MN 55744

[Itasca County Health and Human Services Website](#)

Contact: Becky Lauer

Family & Child Services Division Manager

218-327-6192

becky.lauer@co.itasca.mn.us

Koochiching Aging Options

1000 Fifth Street, Suite 201

International Falls, MN 56649

[Koochiching Aging Options Website](#)

Contact: Douglas Skrief

Executive Director

218-283-7084

douglas.skrief@co.koochiching.mn.us

Lake County Health and Human Services

616 3rd Avenue

Two Harbors, MN 55616

[Lake County Website](#)

Contact: Beth Swanson
Supervisor - Adult & Disabilities
218-834-8416
Beth.Swanson@co.lake.mn.us

Project Clean Start/Hope House of Itasca County
2086 Ridgeway Drive
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
[Hope House of Itasca County Website](#)

Contact: Terri Blaha
Program Manager
218-301-1858
terriblaha@gmail.com

Rural Transportation Services
PO Box 208
23 Commerce Road
Babbitt, MN 55706
[Rural Transportation Services Website](#)

Contact: Barb Dimich
HR Coordinator/Transportation
218-305-4844
bdimich@rurallivingmn.com

Agencies Providing Transportation Funding

Access North Center for Independent Living
1309 East 40th Street
Hibbing, MN 55746
[Access North Center for Independent Living Website](#)

Contact: Tina Bush
IL Specialist
218-262-6675
tbush@accessnorth.net

Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging
221 West 1st Street
Duluth, MN 55802
[Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging Website](#)

Contact: Kristi Kane
Director

218-529-7524
kkane@ardc.org

Cloquet Housing Authority

950 14th Street
Cloquet, MN 55720
[Cloquet Housing Authority Website](#)

Contact: Debra Shaff
Executive Director
218-879-3353 ext:11
debra@cloquetcarlton.org

Community Action Duluth

2424 W 5th Street, Suite 102
Duluth, MN 55806
[Community Action Duluth Website](#)

Contact: Jenny Van Sickle
Transportation Programs Manager
218-726-1665
jenny@communityactionduluth.org

Good Samaritan Outreach

PO Box 156
C/O Holy Family Church
20 S. 1st Street
McGregor, MN 55760

Contact: Bill Pavlik
Founder & Chair - Good Samaritan Outreach
612-708-2453
bilmar@usfamily.net

Recover Health

2900 E Beltline, Suite 1
Hibbing, MN 55746
[Recover Health Website](#)

Contact: Jessica Erickson
Branch Manager
218-231-8811
jerickson@recoverhealth.org

Range Respite

1309 20th St S
Virginia, MN 55792
[Range Respite Website](#)

Contact: Nancy Dougherty
Executive Director
218-749-5051
nancyd@rangerespite.org

SOAR Career Solutions
205 W 2nd Street, Suite 101
Duluth, MN 55802
[SOAR Career Solutions Website](#)

Contact: Jason Beckman
Program Director
218-722-3126
jbeckman@soarcareers.org

St. Louis County – Adult Services Division
320 West 2nd Street
Duluth, MN 55802
[St. Louis County Website](#)

Contact: Gena Bossert
Adult Services Division Director
218 726-2085
bossertg@stlouiscountymn.gov

Appendix C – Public Workshop Participants

Ten (10) Workshop Participants

Name	Organization
Bryan Anderson	MnDOT District One
Chris Belden	Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
Tina Bush	Access North Center for Independent Living
Amber Dallman	MnDOT Office of Transit
Bonnie Ebnet	Arrowhead Transit
Nicole George	MnDOT Office of Transit
Russell Habermann	Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
Jason Hollinday	Fond du Lac Band
Andy Hubley	Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
Sophia Parr	Duluth Transit Authority

Appendix D – Project Idea Summary

The following list includes all project ideas generated during this planning process, including those from the public workshop and the final steering committee meeting.

- Development of a set of transit analysis questions for communities to answer as they conduct local comprehensive planning processes
- Creation of a list of public transportation providers in the region, for use by transit riders, human services staff, caregivers, and the public
- Coordination of a volunteer network to support public transportation needs, such as helping public transit riders with mobility issues, serve as volunteer drivers, etc.
- Development of rider training materials and trip planning tools for current and potential transit riders
- Development of a Regional Transportation Coordination Council made up of transit providers and stakeholders to implement this transit coordination plan and work on projects to enhance transit in Northeast Minnesota
- Completion of regional transit planning to identify gaps in service and strategies to expand transit routes, service hours, vehicles, and other levels of service measures where they are most needed and make most sense
- Assessment of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at all transit stops, shelters, depots, etc. in the Arrowhead Region, and development of an ADA transition plan to address identified needs
- Install or improve infrastructure at and around transit stops, shelters, depots, etc. throughout Northeast Minnesota, as identified in proposed planning processes and assessments
- Consider application of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) at and around key transit destinations in the Region

Appendix E – Project Analysis: Effort vs. Impact Assessment

<p>Difficult to do/Minor impact projects</p> <p>Regional Transit Planning Regional Transportation Coordination Council</p>	<p>Difficult to do/Major impact projects</p> <p>Transit Infrastructure Improvements Transit Volunteer Coordination</p>
<p>Easy to do/Minor impact projects</p> <p>Transit Rider Training</p>	<p>Easy to do/Major impact projects</p> <p>Transportation Provider Database Transit Rider Training Additional vehicle purchases</p>