

Region 4 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan Addendum



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Addendum to be adopted by:
West Central Minnesota Economic
Development District Board
September, 2012

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Introduction

In 2011, the Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan for Region 4 was developed and published. During the time that the document was under development, a number of initiatives related to transportation issues for veterans were coming to the fore. Due to the timing specific to the Local Human Service Coordination Plan for Region 4, these issues were not specifically included in the plan at that time.

Following plan adoption, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) requested that the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination plans be amended to describe how the plan addresses veterans' transportation issues. The amended plans were also to include a detailed three-to-five-year work plan, outlining how projects identified in the plan would be prioritized, and what specific steps would be taken to implement them.

As such, this Addendum to the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan for Region 4 was developed.

Planning Process

Early in the planning process for this Addendum, outreach efforts were conducted with County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) in west central Minnesota. It was intended that a CVSO would be appointed to the Steering Committee to help provide input regarding the transportation needs of veterans. However, a candidate could not be identified prior to the meeting of the Steering Committee. This unfortunately limited the amount of input the Steering Committee was able to receive regarding veterans transportation issues.

The focus of the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan was on four distinct groups of people: individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, the elderly and minority populations. In the course of developing the plan, it was determined that many of the goals and objectives – and ultimately many of the projects identified – were the same as the goals and objectives for all users of the transit systems in the region, or the general public.

In May 2012, the Steering Committee met to review the status of local coordination activities, identify potential projects for funding in 2013, and discuss how these potential projects – as well as those already identified in the plan – could benefit veterans in the region. As previously discussed, since most of the projects identified would serve both the needs of the general public as well as the four groups listed above, the Steering Committee concluded that the projects listed in the plan would also be of benefit to veterans in the region as well.

Many of the same types of trips that are common for both the general public, as well as the four disadvantaged groups that the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan focused on, are similar to those trips that are needed by veterans. Foremost amongst these are trips for employment, medical appointments, and shopping.

As transit coordination efforts in the region continue, it will be the goal of the Steering Committee to continue outreach efforts to gain a better understanding of the transportation issues facing the veterans and military community in the region. The Steering Committee has expressed an interest in continuing to meet on a regular basis. As their work continues, renewed efforts will be made to add a voice for veterans to the Steering Committee membership.

Work Plan

The Steering Committee identified four projects for advancement from the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan for Region 4. The projects listed below are those for which the Steering Committee felt reasonable progress could be made within the next three years.

Category	Mobility Strategies
Project	Expanded Evening & Weekend Service
Description	Establish or expand routes to serve people working evenings, nights and weekends. Also establish or expand routes to serve people accessing educational opportunities.
How this project will be accessible to veterans	Expanded evening and weekend service could provide additional transportation options for returning veterans that are reintegrating back into the workforce. By having transportation available beyond the traditional "8-to-5" hours, this could increase employment opportunities for veterans in need of transportation to employment. In addition, with the advent of urgent-care clinics, some veterans may have medical appointments on evenings or weekends.
Next steps	Daryn Toso, Transit Alternatives and Harold Jennissen, Rainbow Rider, will explore opportunities for expanded service. Initial focus will be on expanding weekend service in the service areas for both Transit Alternatives and Rainbow Rider.

Category	Mobility Strategies
Project	Trade Center Connector Routes
Description	Establish transit routes that would provide service between regional centers, for trips originating within the region and destinations either within or outside the region.
How this project will be accessible to veterans	Regular service between cities in the region would serve veterans well by offering a standard schedule for employment trips. It would also assist by making it easier for veterans to access medical appointments – especially if trade center connector routes serviced a city with a Veterans Administration clinic or hospital.
Next steps	Harold Jennissen, Rainbow Rider, will begin exploring how Rainbow Rider could expand on existing routes to implement this strategy in their service area.

Category	Mobility Strategies
Project	Regional Volunteer Coordination
Description	Coordinate volunteer drivers amongst transit, human service and other agencies region-wide. Develop region-wide standards for training, contracts and service.
How this project will be accessible to veterans	Enhancing volunteer driver services will improve reliability and accessibility for all riders – including veterans. Volunteer driver trips currently account for a large number of trips with destinations outside the service areas of the transit systems in the region. Major destinations include medical facilities in Fargo, St. Cloud, Rochester and the Twin Cities.
Next steps	Beverly Herfindahl, Mn/DOT, is going to research the status of Mn/DOT’s volunteer driver handbook; John Dinsmore, Otter Tail County Human Services, will begin research on development of regional volunteer driver standards; Harold Jennissen, Rainbow Rider, will coordinate with Beverly and John from the public transit side.

Category	Communication, Training and Organizational Support
Project	Regional Transportation Services Coordination Meetings
Description	Host regularly scheduled inter-agency regional meetings that include networking, training and informational speakers.
How this project will be accessible to veterans	Outreach efforts will be made to veterans service organizations (including County Veteran Service Officers) to invite their participation in the meetings.
Next steps	Wayne Hurley, West Central Initiative, will organize and host the meetings at WCI's office. The goal will be to hold two steering committee meetings per year – one of which would include a larger audience, similar to the workshop that was held during the development of the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan for Region 4.