

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM NO. 2: OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL COORDINATION STRATEGIES

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
COORDINATION STRATEGIES.....	1
<i>Cooperation</i>	1
<i>Joint Use Arrangements</i>	2
<i>Consolidation</i>	3
OTHER TYPES OF STRATEGIES.....	4
PROCESS FOR SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGY.....	5

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Technical Memorandum #2 is to provide an overview of the types of coordination strategies that many communities are implementing in order to address the unmet needs of transportation-disadvantaged populations and to reduce or eliminate existing transportation service inefficiencies and redundancies. In addition, the memo outlines a process for matching transportation needs with potential coordination strategies.

COORDINATION STRATEGIES

Coordination strategies can typically be grouped into three categories: cooperation, joint use arrangements, and consolidation. Each level of coordination builds on the previous. To be effective and successful, all of the strategies require a broad coalition of stakeholders, trust among participants, strong leadership, and agency commitment. The coordination strategies also require varying levels of planning, preparation, and evaluation. As described in Technical Memorandum #1, there are many real and perceived barriers to coordination; however, the barriers are usually not insurmountable.

Cooperation

Cooperation is the simplest form of coordination and an excellent first step for beginning coordination efforts. Cooperation is simply two or more persons or agencies working together to achieve a common end, namely to improve transportation services. Some cooperation efforts are very informal whereas others will require more formal agreements. It is likely that some agencies in the Sioux Falls area are already cooperating with others. Transportation stakeholders can cooperate in a number of different ways, including the following:

- **Planning:** Cooperative planning efforts involves bringing public and private transportation providers together to discuss their current and future needs. This is the starting point for moving towards other cooperation and joint use efforts.

As a part of this effort, communities can form a Coordination Advisory Group to provide a more formal forum for identifying and resolving local transportation issues, discussing and deciding coordination issues, and developing projects for funding through new and existing funding sources. Subcommittees can be formed to deal with specific issue areas. The committee membership should include human service agency administrators, transportation providers, local elected officials, representatives of the business community, and consumers.

- **Information and Referral:** In this strategy, transportation providers share information with each other about their services and provide referrals to the public and their consumers about other available services. Information, such as description of service, eligibility, fares, and scheduling/reservations, should be updated on a regular basis and/or prior to implementation of any service changes.

- **Development of Capital Specifications:** Transportation providers work together to develop standard specifications for different types of vehicles such as vans, minivans, and small buses among others. The purchase and use of the same vehicles across vehicle types can help facilitate joint training (in vehicle sharing arrangements) and the purchase of spare parts.
- **Joint Policies and Procedures:** As agencies begin to share information and refer customers to each other's services, it can be useful to develop joint policies and procedures on such topics as no-show rules, trip reservation and cancellation, and user eligibility among others. The joint policies and procedures reduce confusion among potential users and make it easier to use existing services.

Joint Use Arrangements

Coordination through joint use arrangements involves sharing available resources among participants. The types of resources that can be shared include vehicles, staff time, staff knowledge, and facilities. Depending on the effort, some agencies will be considered contributors of a resource while others will be users of a resource. Many joint use arrangements build upon informal cooperation efforts which lead to more comprehensive coordination arrangements.

- **One-Stop Call Center:** Creating a one-stop call center formalizes the information and referral component of cooperation. A lead agency is designated to provide a central telephone number for information and referral about transportation services that are available in the community. The call center serves as the repository of information relating to transportation services and requires that transportation providers keep the lead agency current on their services at all times. The call center's services can be supplemented with marketing materials such as brochures and a website.
- **Marketing:** Agencies can coordinate on the development of marketing materials such as brochures, press releases, and newsletters among others. An example of joint marketing is when a group of agencies develop a brochure. One agency may be able to offer a good writer and graphic designer to the effort while other agencies can contribute to printing costs and distribution.
- **Joint Grant Applications:** Joint grant applications are often the result of cooperative planning efforts. Where two or more agencies have found that they can share an expense (e.g., vehicles, operations, planning, etc), they can submit a joint application for funding. Due to many funding programs' emphasis on coordination, many applicants will be more successful at winning grants when it is a joint effort than when they do it on their own. Generally one agency takes the lead on completing the application while all agencies share in the provision of local matching funds (if required).
- **Training:** Cooperation in training can take various forms. One or more agencies can agree to provide training for other agencies staff and drivers' and

participating agencies contribute to the expense of the training. Agencies can also join together to purchase training from a third party. There are many benefits to agencies cooperating on training such as reduced expenses, more efficient use of training materials and personnel, increased frequency of training, improved service quality across all services, and increased communication and collaboration among providers and their employees.

- **Joint Purchasing:** Any effort among agencies to pool expenses will take advantage of economies of scale for items such as office supplies, fuel, driver training, drug and alcohol testing services, vehicle maintenance, insurance, and employee benefit programs. In addition, staff efficiency is increased when less time is spent collecting quotes and bids.
- **Vehicle Sharing:** In vehicle sharing arrangements, an agency that needs to provide more trips is able to use idle vehicles. Vehicle sharing is a more complex form of coordination but it offers greater benefits by holding down capital and operating costs while providing more passenger trips. Vehicle sharing arrangements can be set up to occur regularly or on an as-needed basis for emergencies, back-up, and special events. It requires agreements between the parties on cost-sharing and billing, vehicle storage and maintenance, insurance, and operator policies among others.
- **Trip-Sharing:** Like vehicle sharing, trip sharing requires detailed planning and coordination. With trip sharing, an agency that needs more trips is matched with an agency that has empty seats, thus maximizing capacity and reducing trip costs. It requires agencies to share information on when seats are available. In a formal approach, a lead agency collects the information from the participants and matches needs with empty seats.

Consolidation

Consolidation is the most comprehensive form of coordination. It involves the joining or merging of two or more agencies' resources to benefit all participants. A lead agency must be designated or created to lead the coordination effort. Due to the complexity of consolidation, a longer timeframe is needed to plan and implement the system. There are many possible organizational frameworks to implement a consolidated system; however, single provider systems and brokerages are the two primary types. Many communities have hybrids of these systems.

- **Single Provider:** In a single provider system, one entity undertakes all activities necessary to provide transportation. This entity administers, manages, and operates the services. The management entity can be a new or existing organization.
- **Brokerage:** In a brokerage system, a single entity oversees all of the coordination activities and serves as a broker that contracts with other entities (e.g., public transit, human service agencies, private, for-profit companies, etc.) to operate the vehicles. The broker may also contract out other selected

management and administrative functions. In most cases, the broker takes all trip requests and determines which contractor is best suited to provide the trip.

Consolidated systems are now commonly called “mobility manager” systems. Mobility manager systems focus on meeting individual needs through a wide range of transportation services. Mobility managers provide the services described above and may also handle:

- Eligibility determination
- Trip reservations
- Scheduling of trips and vehicles
- Dispatching
- Customer trip planning
- Information and referral
- Provision or procurement of vehicles, training, supplies, insurance, maintenance, and fuel among others
- Drug and alcohol testing
- Operation of vehicles
- Write grants
- Advocate for policy changes
- Plan and implement technology improvements
- Measure performance

OTHER TYPES OF STRATEGIES

Coordination efforts represent excellent strategies for addressing the unmet needs of the coordinated plan’s target populations. However, it is unlikely that coordination efforts will address all of the unmet needs identified through the planning process. Many communities are using a combination of coordination and new service initiatives to address unmet needs. Communities are utilizing funding programs such as FTA’s Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom to support coordination and initiate new or expanded services and programs. In addition, some communities are attempting to create innovative partnerships, with organizations such as private foundations and community-based health organizations, to further such initiatives.

Technical Memorandum #1 outlined the eligible activities for FTA's JARC and New Freedom programs. This list is an excellent resource for the possible service initiatives. Some common strategies include:

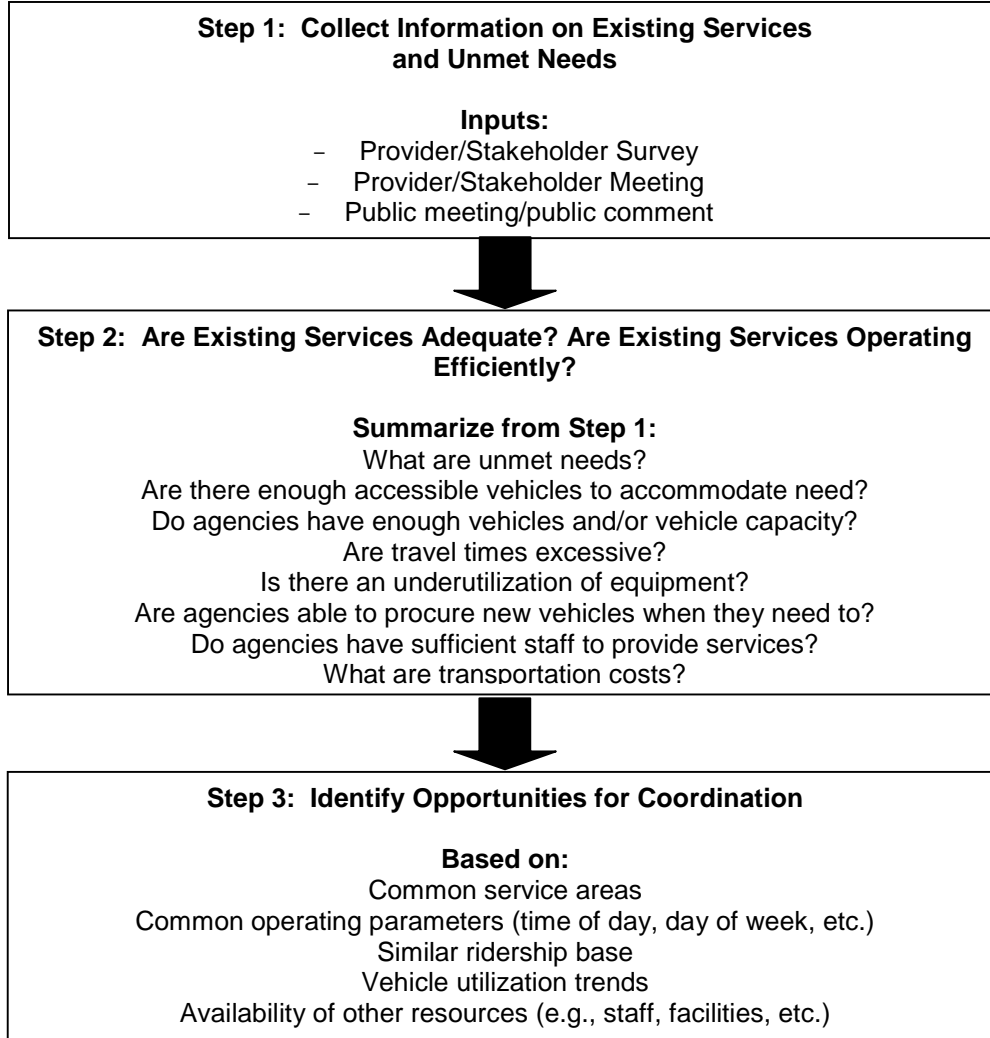
- Expanded hours and/or increased transit frequency
- New transit routes
- Employer shuttles
- ADA complementary paratransit service area expansion or expansion of hours
- Travel training programs
- Programs to expand program eligibility
- Emergency ride home programs
- Purchase vehicles to address capacity issues
- Vouchers, transit passes, user subsidies
- Subsidized taxi programs
- Accessible taxi programs
- Volunteer driver programs
- Volunteer escort programs
- Automobile ownership programs
- Purchase technology such as GIS, scheduling/dispatching programs, automatic vehicle locators
- Planning studies
- Marketing
- Mobility management programs
- Transit accessibility improvements (e.g., sidewalks, curb cuts, etc.)

PROCESS FOR SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGY

The process for selecting coordination strategies is depicted on the next page. Basically it is a three-step process:

1. Collect Information On Existing Services And Unmet Needs
2. Assess Whether Existing Services Are Adequate and Operating Efficiently
3. Identify Opportunities For Coordination

Process for Identifying Coordination Strategies



Subsequent steps will involve evaluating the potential strategies and developing implementation plans. More information will be needed from stakeholders about their priorities for addressing unmet needs and issues and their support for various strategies. Examples of criteria for evaluating coordination strategies include:

- **Degree of project contention:** Is this a project that is divisive and could be both time consuming and complicated to pursue? Depending on the importance of the project, it may be pursued alone or postponed in favor of easier pursuits.
- **Core versus peripheral issue:** Is the project addressing a keystone issue or one that is relatively minor and has limited overall value? Depending on the range of impact, the project could dictate whether it is an action worth taking sooner or later. Generally projects with far-reaching results can have great pay-offs in advancing coordination or, if not successfully pursued, they can discourage future action.

- **Time:** Is the project addressing an immediate and pressing issue or one that is more long term. Issues with immediate and significant impact may be more desirable than those that are long term in nature. For example, addressing the impact of rising fuel prices could be immediate while addressing federal vehicle safety standards may have a longer time horizon with less tangible benefits.
- **Scope of Impact:** Does the project affect a small inconsequential aspect of human service transportation or is it more significant? The more significant the issue, the more challenging and the greater the potential rewards.
- **Scope of effort:** Does the project tax the technical and time skills of the people involved? Would it require outside help in the form of a consultant or other outside expert? Far-reaching projects requiring significant effort may be challenging to pull off, though a successful outcome could be enormously useful.