

**Human Services
Coordinated Transportation Plan
For
Grand Forks, ND
&
East Grand Forks, MN

2006 – 2009**

Prepared by the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Grand Forks, ND & East Grand
Forks, MN, October 2006

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A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE 2006 HUMAN SERVICES COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR THE GRAND FORKS-EAST GRAND FORKS METROPOLITAN AREA

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Transportation requires the development of a Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan for each urbanized area under the direction of a Metropolitan Planning Organization in accordance with 49 U.S.C. 5303; and

WHEREAS, Presidential Executive Order 13330 recognizes the fundamental importance of human service transportation and the continuing need to enhance coordination and directs coordination among recipients of federal funds for human services transportation; and


WHEREAS, in accordance with (71 FR 52610) proposed guidance for the plan mandates the plan be “locally-driven” and developed in coordination with local stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the Plan identifies strategies and goals to improve transportation in the metropolitan area by achieving the intents of 49 U.S.C. 5310, 49 U.S.C. 5316, and 49 U.S.C. 5317

WHEREAS, the Technical Advisory Committee has recommended approval of the Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization approves the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan in FY2006 program period.

11/9/2006
Date



Doug Christensen, Chairman

11/9/2006
Date



Earl T. Haugen, Executive Director

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE 2006 HUMAN SERVICES
COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

This is to certify that the East Grand Forks City Council approved and adopted the 2006 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan at a meeting on Oct. 3rd, 2006

Lynn Stauss
Signature

Lynn Stauss
Name of Authorized Official

Mayor
Title

10-10-06
Date

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE 2006 HUMAN SERVICES
COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

This is to certify that the Grand Forks City Council approved and adopted the 2006 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan at a meeting on October 2, 2006



Signature

Michael R. Brown, Mayor

Name of Authorized Official

Mayor

Title

October 2, 2006

Date

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INTRODUCTION

The 2005 adoption of the transportation legislation by the United States Congress of SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users) ignited the process for all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to look at their transit needs and current services. Of utmost importance was the desire to assess the current transportation environment, to see where the coordination of services is in place, and to assess where there might be opportunities for additional improvements.

The SAFETEA-LU legislation now mandates that all urbanized areas must adopt a “locally developed” coordinated transportation plan in order to receive additional Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants beginning in the Federal fiscal year of 2007. This plan will make the metropolitan area eligible for FTA Section 5310, 5316 and 5317 funding grants.

The intent of the coordination requirement is to ensure that communities coordinate transportation resources and services provided through multiple Federal programs. Ultimately a coordinated plan should minimize duplication of Federal services and encourage the most cost-effective transportation possible.

The Role of the MPO

The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization is a quasi-governmental entity serving as a forum for public officials, citizens, and other interest groups to establish policies and plans to deal with various metropolitan issues. The role of the MPO is to harmonize the activities of federal, state, and local agencies and to provide assistance and encourage public participation in the long-term development of the area.

The MPO led the coordination planning process for the urbanized area which includes the cities of Grand Forks, ND and East Grand Forks, MN. Although coordination with transportation services has taken place in the past, this is the first time all transportation agencies have been solicited for input.

In the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks area, multiple agencies operate multiple transportation services. Complicating coordination even more is their multiple funding sources and a variety of rider eligibility requirements tied to their respective funding programs. Initiating discussion between all transit operators and assessing their current services facilitates additional coordination in the future.

An extensive public participation process was undertaken in order to ensure equitable input by all. As an amendment to the MPO Transit Development Plan (TDP), this plan will provide additional recommendations to serve the specific clienteles of people with disabilities, people with limited income, and senior citizens. This plan will be updated when the Transit Development Plan is updated every five years. After being updated in 2004, both the TDP and this Plan will be updated in 2009. During this time, the plan will guide application priorities for the three previously mentioned FTA funding sources. At that time it will be updated to reflect the new planning environment in the metro area.

Plan Objectives

As part of the Alternative Transportation Modes Plan, the MPO approves specific goals to guide transportation planning in the urbanized area. As this coordinated plan aims at accomplishing all of the stated goals, the plan will particularly aid in reaching the following two goals already stated in the Alternative Transportation Modes Plan.

Goal #2 Provide an Efficient Transportation System

Public Transit

- Provide efficient and cost-effective service.
- Reduce the cost of service delivery through service coordination.
- Assign riders to dial-a-ride and to accessible fixed route service based on users need.
- Comply with federal regulations pertaining to paratransit service.

Goal #3 Provide Mobility and Accessibility to Users of the Transportation System

Public Transit

- Provide travel times that are as competitive with the automobile as possible
- Serve the transit dependent population
- Maintain existing ridership and attract new riders
- Minimize transfers within the fixed-route transit system.
- Provide convenient and dependable service.

Public Participation Process

Customers of public transit were last surveyed in 2004 with an on-bus survey during the development of the Transportation Development Plan (TDP). Customers commented on their satisfaction using each of the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks transit services including Senior Rider, Dial-A-Ride, City Bus, Night Rider and H-Tripper. In 2006, human service providers and transit operators were solicited to coordinate with the MPO to develop this plan. Thirty-one organizations were initially solicited. These organizations either provided a transportation service or represented the target groups of people with disabilities, seniors, or low-income.

After the initial solicitation, those that had responded with an interest in serving on the committee and the requested contact information were then invited to participate in four separate meetings. Twenty-one organizations were involved in coordination meetings over a span of three months.

The first meeting was used to introduce the committee to the objectives and goals of the plan and discuss transportation barriers for the specific demographics. Prior to Meeting II, a transit survey was sent to all previously identified human service providers and transit operators. (See Appendix). These findings were used in the second meeting to familiarize the committee with the current transit services offered in the metro area. In

addition, Meeting II also addressed the gaps between current services and the needs of the customers. Strategies were then identified to address those gaps. Those strategies were then prioritized at Meeting III and committee gave their final analysis and recommendations for the plan at Meeting IV.

An Open House was held for the general public prior to the final committee meeting. The Open House was advertised on all city buses, the two local newspapers, and by the agency representatives on the coordinating committee. A presentation was given when a significant number of individuals were in attendance. A discussion was held and feedback solicited on their opinion of the coordinating committee's prioritized strategies. A survey was also available which allowed attendees to give additional comments. These comments were then presented to the committee prior to the final review of the coordinated pl

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

As background to the plan, an assessment was made of the expected customers, the jobs-housing balance in the area, the services currently available, and what service barriers currently exist.

Target Customer Profile

This plan looks to improve the transportation services for three specific clientele. Before strategies can be considered for implementation, it is vital to assess the current demographics and travel modes of metro area residents. The three specific clientele include people with disabilities, senior citizens, and people with limited incomes. Many times individuals fit into more than one of those categories and sometimes all. Improving transportation services for one group will many times benefit all groups.

People with Disabilities

FTA defines a disability the same as the ADA which includes any person who (a) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (b) has a record of such impairments, or (c) is regarded as having such an impairment. In 2000, 63.1 percent of people with disabilities between the ages of 21 and 64 were employed (see Figure 1).

Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Area		
People with disability in Yr 2000		
Age Group		% of Total Age Group
5-20 yrs	1,296	7.70%
21-64 yrs	5,087	14%
Over 65 years	2,114	36%
Total	8,497	

Figure 1: Disabled Population.

Senior Citizens

FTA considers seniors as those individuals over the age of 55. According to 2000 Census data, 18.3% of the total city of Grand Forks population was between the ages of 45 and 64. Those over the age of 65 constituted 9.8% of the city's population. The city of East Grand Forks had 20.9% of their population between 45 and 64, and 11.7% who were 65 years of age or older.

Low-Income

The definition of those considered low income or with limited incomes are those individuals below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. In Grand Forks, about 14.6% of the population was below the poverty line, and 7.7% of those age 65 or over. In East Grand Forks about 8.2% of families and 12.4% of the population were below the poverty line and 8.6% of those age 65 or over.

Both the Grand Forks County Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Program and the Grand Forks school district has seen stable numbers of participants for their low-income programs since 2000. Of a total 7,342 public school students in the district, 2,308 students were eligible for free or reduced price lunches in April 2006. This comprised 32 percent of the student population. In 2005, 31 percent qualified; 30 percent qualified in 2004 and 2000.¹ The WIC program has seen a steady increase in participants with 2,239 individuals enrolled in Grand Forks County during FY 2005; 2,105 in FY 2004; and 1,978 in FY 2003. This program provides grocery vouchers and nutrition education for low-income women.

Job Location

Ensuring the public transportation system reaches the locations of employers is important. Both cities have recognized the transit system does not reach areas with a significant number of employees. Specifically mentioned has been the city developed Grand Forks Industrial Park located west of the Interstate and the American Crystal sugar plant on the eastern fringe of East Grand Forks. Both of these areas have had businesses in operation for at least ten years (see Figure 2).

Industrial Park Employers			
	Expected Employee Total	Industry	Strong interest in Transit to Site
LM Glasfiber	400	Manufacturing of Wind Turbines	YES
Cirrus Design	600	Manufacturing of Airplanes	YES
Amazon.com	450	Customer Service	YES

Figure 2: Industrial Park Employers.

In the City of Grand Forks, land use zoning will continue to influence future development locations both commercial and residential uses. Future zoning is aiding in the consolidation of similar business purposes such as industrial and heavy industrial. Building upon current land uses, industrial areas are being zoned in the northwestern fringes of Grand Forks. Conversely, residential areas are expanding towards the southern fringes of the city. This will present even more difficulties to the public transit system as the coverage area will have to expand, but it will create longer distances between the residential areas and the employment centers.

Figure 3 shows the current employment density in the metro area broken down into traffic analysis zones (TAZ). The heaviest concentrations are shown in the darkest shades and the bus routes are in black.

Figure 4 shows the housing densities in the metro area. This map is also broken down into traffic analysis zones. These maps both depict the concentrated areas where the bus route covers and does not cover.

¹ Source: Child Nutrition Department, GF Public School

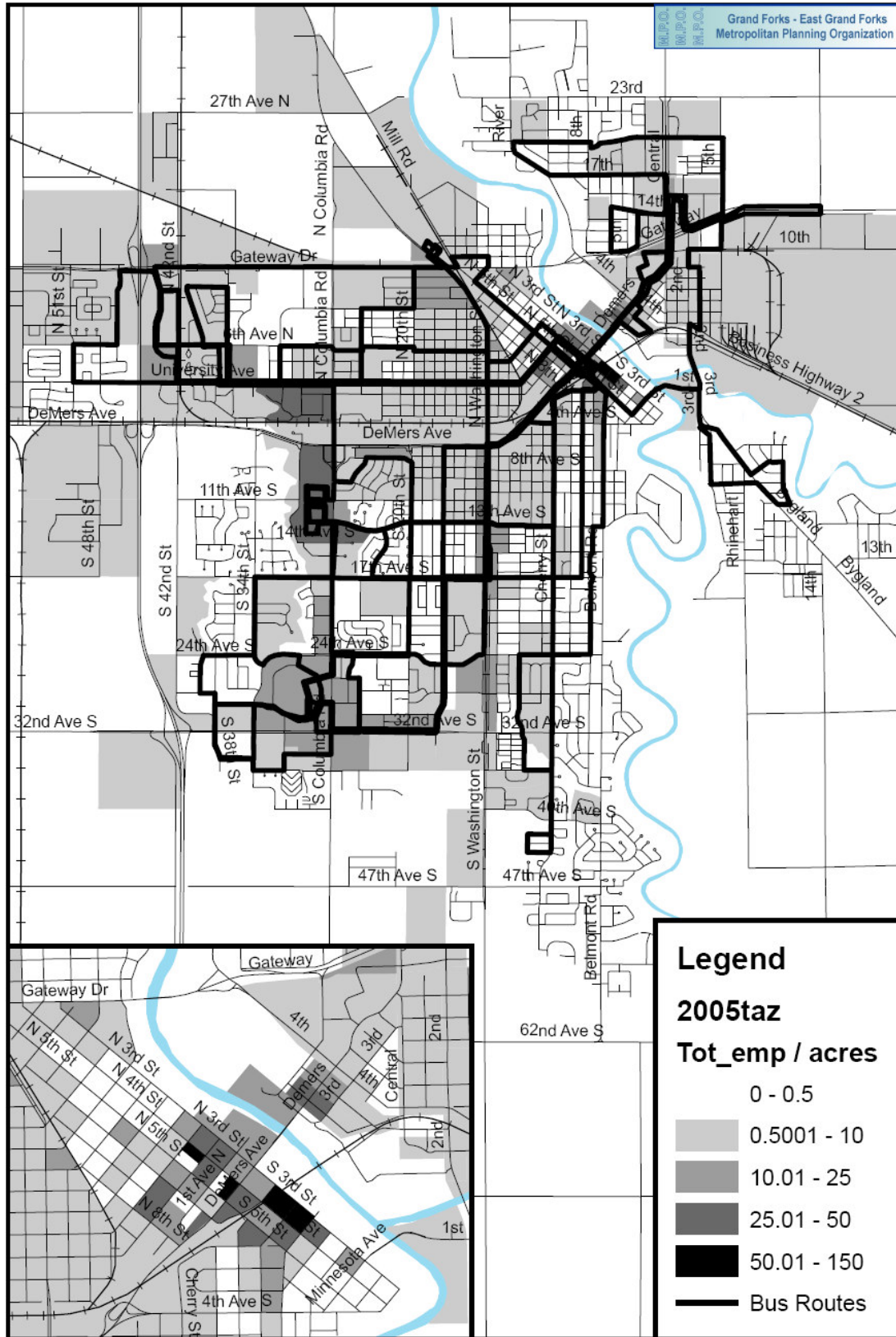


Figure 3: Employment Concentrations in the Metro Area.

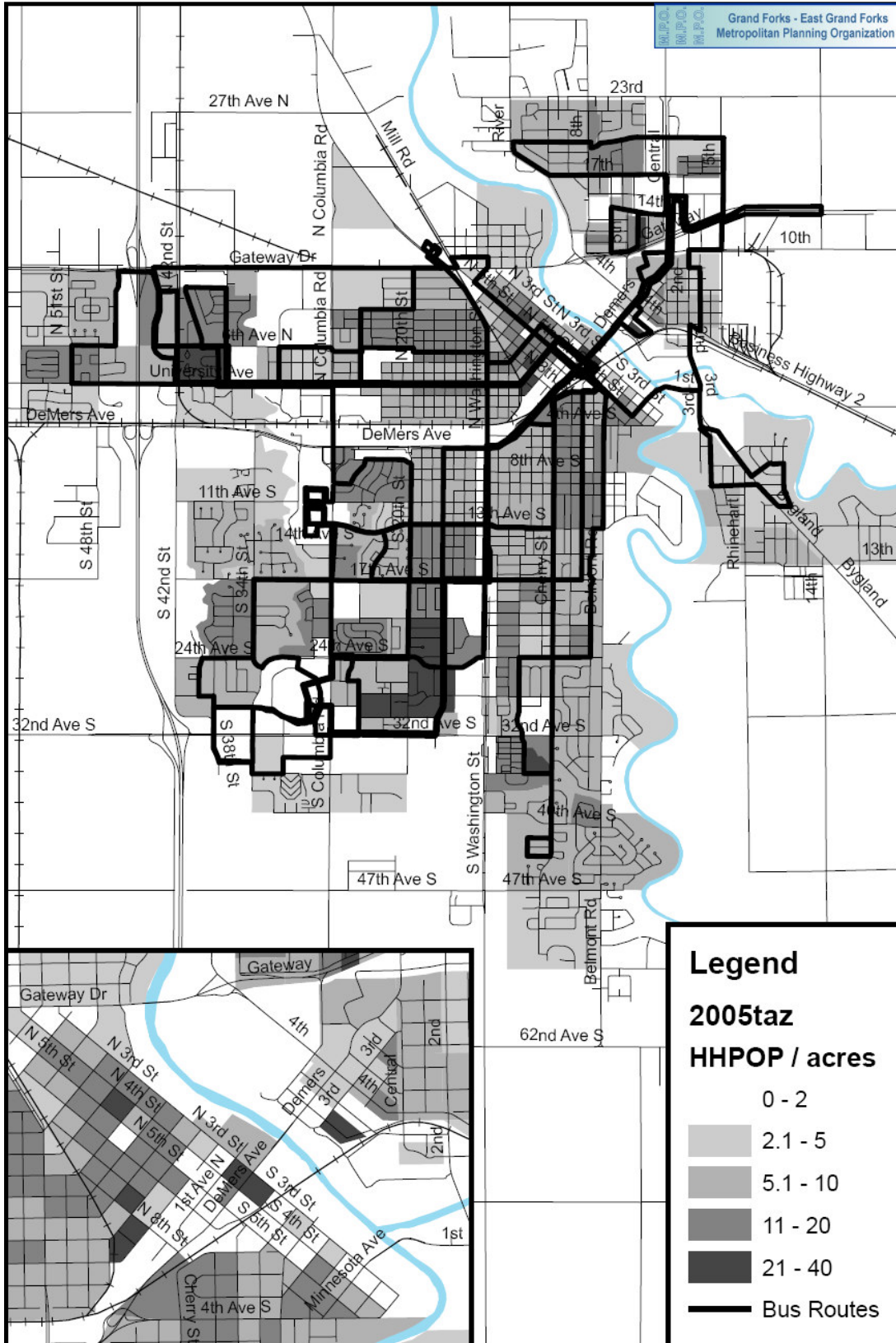


Figure 4: Household Density in the Metro Area.

Locations of Support Services

It is important to provide access not only to employment and residential centers but also to support services serving the three target clientele. The list below (Figure 5) includes social services agencies in the community in relation to the fixed route service offered in the communities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. As not all clients will utilize all services, utmost consideration should go towards making those locations as transit accessible as possible.

Support Agency	On Bus Route?
American Red Cross	YES
Community Violence Intervention Center	YES
Development Homes	NO
Douglas Place	YES
EGF Food Shelf	YES
EGF Housing Authority	YES
EGF Senior Center	YES
GF County Social Services	YES
GF Housing Authority	NO
GF Senior Citizen Center	YES
Job Service ND	NO
Listen, Inc.	YES
Listen, Inc. (North location)	NO
Lutheran Social Services	YES
MN Workforce Development	YES

Support Agency	On Bus Route?
NDAD	YES
NE Human Services	YES
Northland Rescue Mission	YES
OPTIONS	YES
Polk County DAC	NO
Prairie Harvest HS Foundation	NO
R.R.V. Community Action	YES
Salvation Army	YES
St. Vincent dePaul	NO
Success Unlimited	NO
The Arc, Upper Valley	NO
UND	YES
United Way	YES
Village Family Services	YES
WIC	NO
Total not on Routes:	30%

Figure 5: List of Support Services.

As the map in Figure 6 shows, many of the services are clustered near government buildings in the downtown areas of both cities, while many others are near suburban residential and commercial areas, but rarely near industrial employment centers.

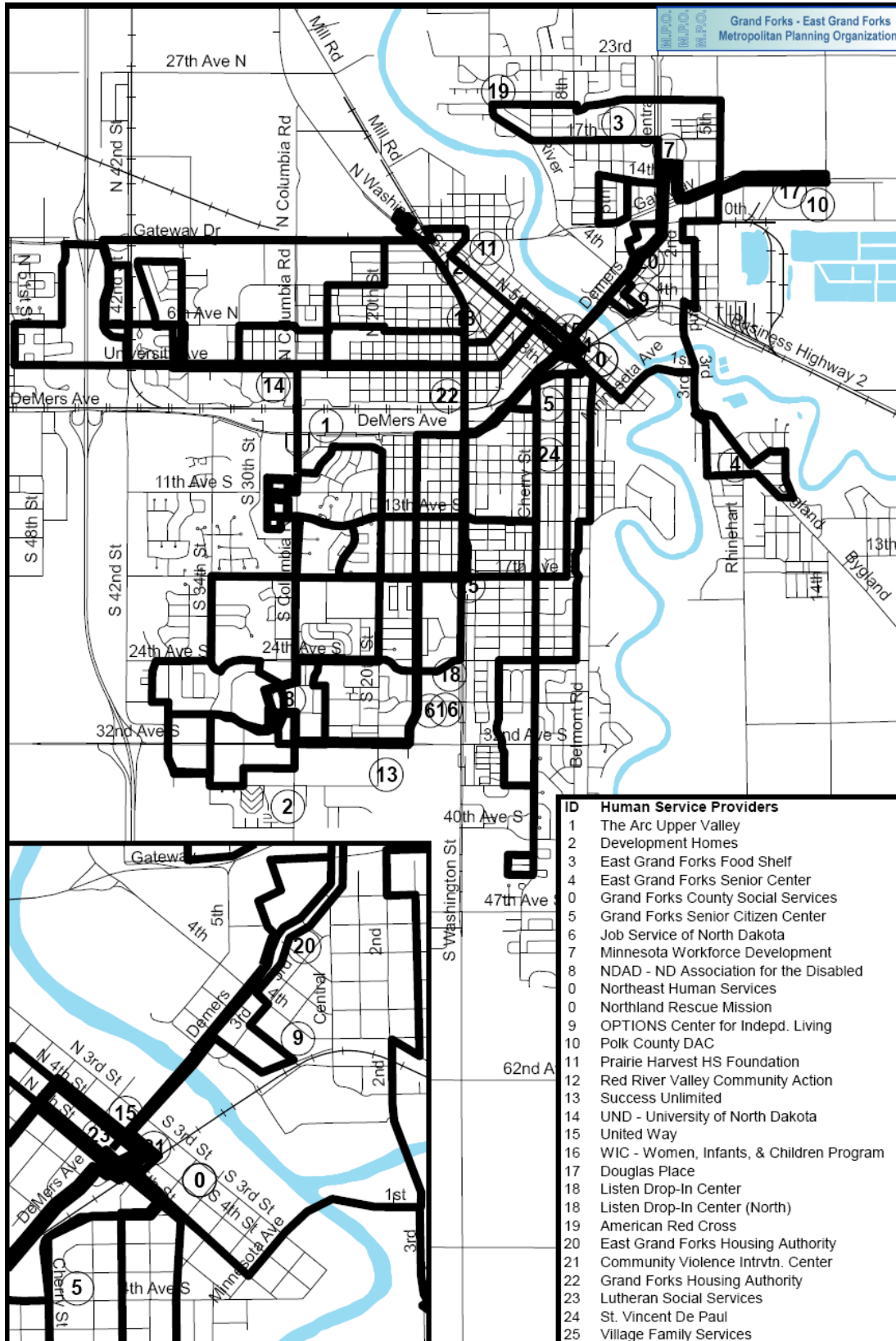


Figure 6: Map of Bus Routes and Support Services in the Area.

Currently Available Transportation Alternatives

Although most working people commute by car, a greater proportion of the working poor commute by bus or other alternative modes (see Figure 7).

	Below Poverty	% of all below poverty	100-150% of Poverty Level	below 150%	Total All Workers	% of all workers
Drove Alone	2,615	72.04%	2,640	75.00%	35,038	83.90%
Carpool	390	10.74%	445	12.64%	3,515	8.42%
Bicycle/Walked	320	8.82%	195	5.54%	1,732	4.15%
Worked at Home	165	4.55%	160	4.55%	1,133	2.71%
Bus	90	2.48%	60	1.70%	289	0.69%
Taxi/Motorcyce	50	1.38%	20	0.57%	56	0.13%
Total	3,630	100.00%	3,520	100.00%	41,763	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Transportation Planning Package

Figure 7: Travel Modes of All Workers

A survey was administered in June of 2006 to gather information regarding the transit services provided by agencies in the community. Some of the agencies only operate human service transportation. Many are human service agencies offering very limited demand-responsive transportation service.

Even though there are a variety of transit services in the area, many serve their own clients or have specific eligibility requirements (see Figure 8). The general public is able to use the public transit system and the private-transit services offered by the two community taxi companies. Senior citizens and people with disabilities qualify for other services including the communities’ Dial-A-Ride and Senior Rider service. In addition, four operators provide service to the same clientele in the rural areas.

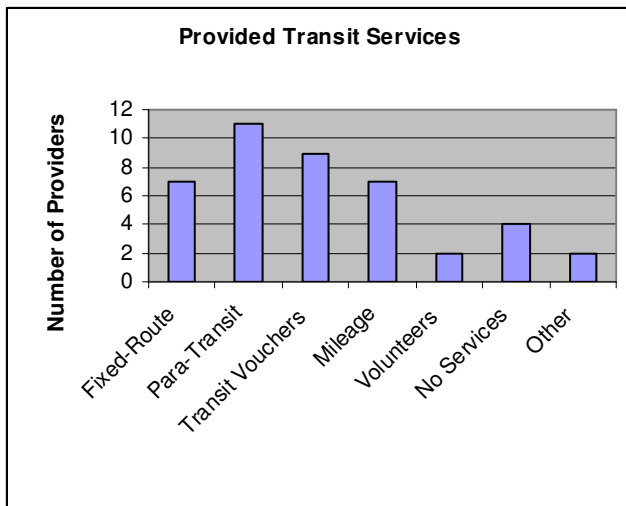


Figure 8: Metro Area Transit Services

23 agencies returned their surveys out of a total solicitation of 31 (see Figure 9). Of these, fourteen categorized themselves as non-profits. Others considered themselves as

governmental agencies or for-profit businesses. Seven agencies had transportation budgets of over \$100,000.

Of the agencies, six desired financial assistance with shuttle service and six others desired assistance for demand-responsive transportation. Noteworthy is the fact the two taxi companies are the only operators providing rides to the general public on a 24/7 basis. Many agencies offer transit services to supplement the demand not met by the public transit system during the usual office hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Through the process to develop this plan, a directory of transportation services in the community was identified as being beneficial. This directory will serve three purposes:

- Familiarize those offering transit services with what other organizations offer.
- Facilitate agencies to better inform and train their clients on the possible transportation services available to the client.
- Serve as a reference for general public to find transportation services and understand how to use them.

This directory will be distributed to all human service agencies, made available on the web and at key locations around the community including both city halls, the Grand Forks Public Information Center and Metro Transit Center.

North Dakota Association for Disabled (NDAD)	Developmental Center-Grafton
University of North Dakota	Parkwood Place
Development Homes	Walsh County Transportation
Grand Forks County Social Services	REM North Star, Inc
Grand Forks Senior Citizen Center	Fargo Senior Commission
Foster Grandparent	Grand Forks Taxi
Minnesota Workforce Development Center	Polk Co. DAC: Developmental Achievement Center
Northeast Human Service Center-Aging	Red River Valley Community Action Agency
Job Service North Dakota	Pembina County Transportation
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council	Larimore Good Samaritan Center
ARC, Upper Valley	Park River Good Samaritan Center
Cities Area Transit	Altru Health Systems - Rehab
Good Samaritan Grove - EGF	Dietrich Bus Service
Nodak Taxi Cab	

Figure 9: Agencies Offering Transit Services.

Customer Transit Barriers

During the 2004 update to the Transit Development Plan and through coordination of human service agencies, a number of barriers to transportation were identified for the target clientele of the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan. The ultimate goal is to operate the fixed route system to the effectiveness it is the most desirable transportation mode for all metro residents. This plan aims to improve transportation for the target clientele of seniors, people with disabilities and low-income individuals. This plan also recognizes the substantial benefits public transit can provide to these specific clientele.

Information Gap

The most common barrier identified for individuals not riding public transit is their lack of information. Many times residents will not know where the system runs, when it runs, how to use it, how much it costs. In addition, they might not realize the cost savings or usefulness public transit can be for their trips to work.

Accessibility to Routes

ADA requires complementary paratransit service for residents within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a bus route. Both cities provide the service within the entire city limits. However, origin and destination data for those rides reveal many rides are a brief distance from the bus route. Clear barriers to these routes include the cold weather and ice and snow buildup on sidewalks in the winter. In addition, current walking distances to bus stops and bus routes are not always achievable by all segments of the population including the elderly and people with disabilities.

Coverage Area

As the cities continue to grow out from a central core, increasing coverage area continues to become a challenge. Different areas may serve different demographics of riders. Support services and employment centers are two types of locations which would specifically serve the three target clienteles. In addition, specific areas in Grand Forks, such as portions of 42nd Avenue, areas west of the Interstate, and southern residential neighborhoods, are not fully covered by the bus system.

Cost

Many individuals are willing to pay a fare for transportation, but very few would like to pay the full cost. Even though public transit charges a fare well below the cost of services, the fare still remains a burden when the transit system does not meet their needs and they must find alternative transportation. The degree of the burden the fare has on an average metro resident may not be the same as for the target clienteles.

Hours of Service

The current bus system operates between 6am and 10pm Monday through Friday in the City of Grand Forks. In East Grand Forks, routes run 6am-6pm Monday through Friday. Saturday service runs between 10am and 6pm in both cities. The paratransit/senior rider services run during the same hours as the fixed routes, with the exception of paratransit services are extended to East Grand Forks in the evening.

Public transit in the MPO area does not provide service between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Many businesses begin and end work shifts between those times. Lack of affordable transportation during these hours impedes workers ability to take the “third shift.” In addition, increasing the available workforce for employers is a goal of economic development officials. Providing public transit during these hours will allow greater employment opportunities for people with limited incomes and support business operations throughout the community.

Census data from 2000 reported the time individuals left their home to go to work (see Figure 10). In the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks area, 3,589 workers left between the time of 4:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m. This number accounts for 10.24 percent of the total

MPO area workforce. Grand Forks has a slightly higher percentage of late-night workers compared to the two other MPOs in North Dakota.

	Bismarck, ND MSA		Fargo-- Moorhead, ND--MN MSA (part)		Grand Forks, ND--MN MSA (part)	
		%		%		%
Total:	50,009		69,743		35,038	
Did not work at home:	47,714	95.41%	67,378	96.61%	33,905	96.77%
12:00 a.m. to 4:59 a.m.	1,011	2.02%	1,426	2.04%	653	1.86%
4:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.	3,998	7.99%	6,011	8.62%	3,589	10.24%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Summary File 3

Figure 10: Time Leaving for Work

Frequency of Routes

When a departure time can not be met due to unforeseen circumstances, riders are left with very little affordable options than waiting for the next time the bus comes. Having this risk will deter many would-be riders from relying on that mode. Increasing the number of times a bus reaches that location, decreases the risk the cost of the wait and inconvenience will outweigh the benefit of the bus.

Indirectness of Routes

Convenience is greatly undermined when routes do not follow a similar path as a resident would use to reach their destination. Many times the benefits of riding the bus are outweighed by the cost of additional time spent riding the bus. This greatly decreases if not eliminates the benefit of riding the bus. Decreasing the number of transfers it takes to reach a destination cuts down on the indirectness. Similarly, operating all routes on 30-minute headways rather than 60-minute headways will allow more frequent service to destinations. (See Figure 11.)

	Bismarck, ND MSA		Fargo-- Moorhead, ND--MN MSA (part)		Grand Forks, ND-- MN MSA (part)	
Universe: Workers 16 years and over who did not work at home						
Total:	47,714		67,378		33,905	
Less than 30 minutes:	42,778	89.66%	61,239	90.89%	30,122	88.84%
Public transportation	129	0.27%	139	0.21%	241	0.71%
Other means	42,649	89.38%	61,100	90.68%	29,881	88.13%
30 to 44 minutes:	2,438	5.11%	3,161	4.69%	2,450	7.23%
Public transportation	31	0.06%	62	0.09%	47	0.14%
Other means	2,407	5.04%	3,099	4.60%	2,403	7.09%
45 to 59 minutes:	934	1.96%	1,082	1.61%	592	1.75%
Public transportation	41	0.09%	29	0.04%	19	0.06%
Other means	893	1.87%	1,053	1.56%	573	1.69%
60 or more minutes:	1,564	3.28%	1,896	2.81%	741	2.19%
Public transportation	21	0.04%	26	0.04%	19	0.06%
Other means	1,543	3.23%	1,870	2.78%	722	2.13%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Summary File 3

Figure 11: Travel Time to Work by Transportation Means

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This section deals with transportation coordination, various project concepts, and the prioritization process.

Coordination

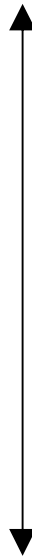
Coordination is often more costly, more difficult, and more time-consuming to achieve coordination than initially thought. It does not necessarily save money and almost all coordination requires constant work to ensure it agencies work together (see Figure 12).

Coordination can result in a greater access to funds with an increased number of funding programs, access to more staff and facilities, and greater opportunities to hire more specialized staff. Similarly, coordination will create greater economies of scale with more centralized planning and management of resources and a reduction in duplication of services. Overall, it will aid in filling the service gaps single budgets cannot rectify and will be a unified information source of transportation information for clients (see Figure 13).

Coordination can come in different forms:

Less coordination/

Separate Transportation Programs



Highest level of coordination

Blended Transportation Programs

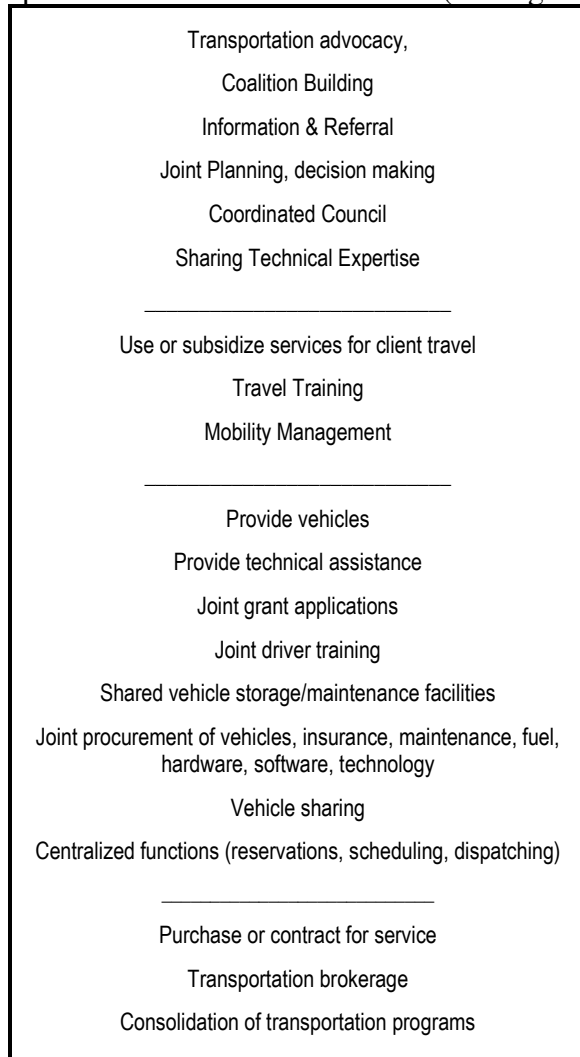


Figure 12: The Coordination Continuum.

Source: TCRP, Report 91: Economic Benefits of Coordinating Human Services

Transit Administrative functions
Contract management
Customer registration
Record keeping and accounting
Quality assurance and customer relations
Eligibility determination
Voucher sales
Trip reservations
Assignment of trips to providers or vehicle scheduling
Dispatching
Provision or procurement of vehicles, maintenance, fuel, insurance
Drug and alcohol testing
Information and referral services
Operation of vehicles

Figure 13: Transportation & Transit Services, 2003

The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks MPO can be the governing framework to initiate coordination among human service transportation providers. The MPO covers the jurisdictions of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks and maintains relationships with both state departments of transportation. The agency can also provide the staff time to support a coordination agency which will continually address the need for greater coordination between transportation providers in both communities.

Identifying the benefits coordination will have in the MPO area will be difficult until full costs of transportation services are identified by multiple agencies and in terms that are comparable. Reporting these costs will identify current duplication of such things as administrative costs but create incentives for agencies to participate in the difficult stages of developing coordination.

The MPO also is required to employ public participation techniques to regularly engage the general public and obtain their feedback. Implementation strategies can be properly developed in order to properly provide travel training, consumer education and marketing programs. The public must be regularly consulted before federal transportation funds are used in the MPO area.

In the metro area, coordination can start with information dissemination and marketing of transportation services available to specific clients. The next step will be to identify projects to overcome clients' barriers in use of the transportation services.

A formal pooling of resources would allow the collective agencies to negotiate a contract to purchase discounted taxi vouchers from the two taxi companies or purchase multi-

vehicle insurance policies for a group of agencies. Agencies would still maintain ownership of vehicles but negotiate contracts for other services such as maintenance or fuel purchases. In addition, a formalized pool would be eligible to apply for FTA funding to cover services such as a shuttle, expanded services, or for paying operating costs. This formal coordination could come in the form of a joint-powers agreement between multiple agencies.

In our area, not all clients of human service agencies have a disability to qualify for a Dial-A-Ride card or are of age to qualify for the Senior Rider service. Furthermore, these rides are not available on a 24/7 basis. A possible scenario for human service agencies would be to negotiate paratransit service at reduced rates from the taxi companies for specific groups of clients. Currently the two cities have negotiated a full fare of \$6.85 for each DAR and Senior Ride in the metro area. The city subsidizes the ride by paying \$4.35 of that fare and customers pay the remaining fare of \$2.50. This is one way coordination can be used to extend services while sharing the costs.

Two services formerly operated by one agency may now be another avenue for coordination. In the past, the Greater Grand Forks Senior Citizen Center operated both the current Senior Rider service within Grand Forks city limits and the rural Grand Forks service which is now being operated by Fargo Senior Services. As those two services are now separate, there is not presently any coordination between the two systems. The metro transit system could work with the rural service to inform their customers of what the metro system has to offer while the seniors are in the community. More specifically, more seniors may use the senior transportation if the metro transit system allows access to shopping, medical, and services not on the rural transportation itinerary. Coordination of schedules and vehicles may need to be considered to offer additional services to this clientele.

Project Concepts

From meetings with local stakeholders and other sources, several project concepts were assessed.

Volunteer Programs

Volunteer programs are cost-effective ways to add demand-responsive service. The volunteers are reimbursed at the end of the month after they log their miles/hours. In this form, administration costs can be very low as the transaction is between the rider and the volunteer driver. Those able to provide volunteer rides can be a friend, neighbor, or relative who does not reside in the same household. In addition a volunteer referral list can be created with drivers being recruited through collaboration of human service agencies. Community service clubs would be the first solicited for volunteers.

The program would benefit from effective recruiting/retention strategies along with a volunteer manual and training. Umbrella liability/accident protection for volunteers can be purchased through companies such as CIMA or MCIT.

The program would foster independence by enabling people to manage their own transportation. Volunteer programs will increase the level of service to customers while not taking from the services provided by Senior Rider and Dial-A-Ride services. In addition, no capital costs need be incurred by the city to offer the program.

Currently, Dial-A-Ride and Senior Rider are only offered within city limits. A volunteer program could be implemented within the same limits at a much lower cost to both consumer and city. Suppose a volunteer driver provides twenty one-way rides at an average of 3 miles per ride. The 2006 standard IRS mileage reimbursement is 44.5 cents. This reimbursement factors in fuel, maintenance and depreciation costs. For twenty rides, the driver would be reimbursed \$27.00. With an average price of one gallon of gas as \$2.85 and a fuel efficiency of 20 miles per gallon, it would cost the driver 14.2 cents per mile in fuel. The remaining 30.3 cents would cover the remaining costs to the driver. Conversely, twenty one-way trips reimbursed at the current Dial-A-Ride/Senior Rider rate of \$6.85 totals \$137.00.

The current D-A-R/Sr. Rider fare is prohibitive for many customers. Even though the city covers \$4.35 of the entire \$6.85 cost of a one-way trip through D-A-R/Sr. Rider, the rider pays a flat fare of \$2.50.

Travel Training

A travel training program was a concept proposed when discussing marketing to specific demographics. This training would focus on educating individual users on the transportation services available and how to properly utilize them. Community members who have never used the public bus system may be intimidated by the process. Escorting a group of individuals on a bus trip, may allow many to get over the fear of the bus system and answer simple questions.

Where can I get on the bus?

How can I stop the bus?

How do I pay?

How do I transfer buses?

How can I bring my bike on the bus?

What if the bus is late?

OPTIONS Interstate Resource Center for Independent Living, an agency assisting people with disabilities, currently operates a travel training service for its clients. City route maps are the only materials used for the training. Staff work with clients primarily on an individual basis to help them understand how to use the bus to get to work, school, etc. They start at the agency's office in East Grand Forks or at the Metro Transit Center in downtown Grand Forks and ride the bus with the clients to and from their destination. The training is offered once a year for high school students with disabilities who will be working, living, or furthering their education in the metro area. Demand warrants training sessions approximately four times per year.

ITS

Transit is identified in the MPO Information Transportation System (ITS) Architecture. A goal of the ITS is to "enhance transit operations to improve service and increase transit use." Along with the systems in place, ITS should be used to the utmost extent to achieve this goal. In the recommendations for the MPO ITS Architecture, transit vehicle tracking was listed as a planned strategy to be implemented in the short term. This system would monitor current transit vehicle location using an Automated Vehicle Location System. The data will then be used to determine real-time schedule adherence and update the

transit system’s schedule in real-time. A two-way wireless communication link will be used to transmit the data. This information will in turn be interfaced to depict locations of vehicles on the metro maps.

The City of Grand Forks is currently pursuing a public access GIS website. Once the GPS vehicle location system is in place, this data will then be made available for the general public on the GIS website.

This vehicle tracking should be used to also assist travelers in making mode choices, travel time estimates, and route decisions prior to trip departure. Providing information on the public transit options along with construction delays, weather conditions, and bike/pedestrian paths will allow travelers to make decisions on the most economical, convenient travel mode. The modes could end up being auto, public transit, bicycling or walking. Using ITS technology to connect the information and make it accessible to the public will require strategic planning and coordination.

Commuters

Currently there is no program to provide public transportation for the general public outside of city limits. Suggestions have been made to coordinate carpooling and commuter vans from the nearby communities of Grand Forks Air Force Base, Grafton, Thompson/Mayville/Hillsboro and Crookston to the metropolitan area. Crookston is the most populous of neighboring communities followed by the GFAFB. Year 2000 Census numbers indicate commute time for 3,783 workers or 11.1 percent of total workers require over 30 minutes (see Figure 14). Commute times for metropolitan workers are considered relatively brief with approximately 80 percent with trips less than 19 minutes.

QT-P23. Journey to Work: 2000 Geographic Area: Grand Forks, ND--MN MSA (part)		
TRAVEL TIME TO WORK		
Workers who did not work at home	33,905	100.00%
Less than 10 minutes	11,439	33.70%
10 to 14 minutes	10,276	30.30%
15 to 19 minutes	5,517	16.30%
20 to 24 minutes	2,159	6.40%
25 to 29 minutes	731	2.20%
30 to 34 minutes	1,878	5.50%
35 to 44 minutes	572	1.70%
45 to 59 minutes	592	1.70%
60 to 89 minutes	379	1.10%
90 or more minutes	362	1.10%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	14.5	(X)

Figure 14: Travel Time to Work

Additional research needs to be conducted to assess whether there is a need for the service, if it will be utilized and if it will be financially feasible.

	Bismarck, ND MSA		Fargo-- Moorhead, ND--MN MSA (part)		Grand Forks, ND--MN MSA (part)	
Total:	50,009		69,743		35,038	
Worked outside MSA/PMSA of residence:	983	1.97%	1,515	2.17%	782	2.23%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SF3, P28, Level 25						

Figure 15: Long-Distance Commuters

Business representatives have also voiced concern over the pool of workers in the metropolitan area. Offering commuter service from nearby communities would increase the available workforce in the community (see Figure 15). Tax incentives also promote private businesses to offer transit credits and reimbursements for employees using a public transit service such as a commuter line. Fargo Senior Services is the sole operator of rural services in greater Grand Forks County and Tri-Valley Opportunity Council operates rural service in Polk County. Both services are not tailored to accommodate working schedules, but coordination should be implemented to utilize these existing services if a commuter service is offered. If capacity permits, customers riding the existing services and general customers using the commuter service should be eligible to use the alternative service when the need arises.

The increase in fuel costs will make a commuter service all the more appealing in future years. National average for gasoline has increased from \$1.44 per gallon in January 2001 to \$2.90 per gallon in April 2006. ² Past considerations of commuter services weighed the costs of time and convenience with the savings in fuel expenses. The opportunity for savings in fuel expenses has greatly and will continue to increase. The inconvenience of not having an automobile for personal trips throughout the work day and set departure and return times are two negatives frequently cited as disincentives for commuter transit. Discounted metro bus passes may be able to increase a commuter’s mobility during the day and a guaranteed ride home program would be a way to overcome the circumstances where a ride is needed before or after a commuter van leaves. Both of these programs would be additional costs to a commuter program but address common barriers to joining a commuter pool.

Employer Provided Transportation

Increasing coverage area of the transit system will increase costs bus not necessarily provide the job access benefits needed for the target clientele. Every effort should be made to provide public transit to the locations of the communities’ largest employers. (See Figures 16 and 17.) However, consideration should go to looking at how the major employers in the community could offer transit passes as a benefit to their employees.

² Daily Fuel Gauge Report. AAA. www.aaa.com

This would not only aim to increase ridership on the public transit system, but may also appeal to jobseekers unable to afford the commute to the worksite.

Largest Employers	Industry
1 University of North Dakota	Colleges & Universities
2 Altru Health System	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals
3 Grand Forks Public School District	Elementary & Secondary Schools
4 City of Grand Forks	Executive & Legislative Offices Combined
5 Valley Memorial Home	Nursing Care Facilities
6 Ralph Engelstad Arena, Inc.	Promoters with Facilities
7 Nondisclosable	
8 Nondisclosable	
9 Department of Defense	National Security
10 Valley Markets, Inc.	Supermarkets & Other Grocery Stores
11 Nondisclosable	
12 Development Homes, Inc.	Residential Facilities for Developmentally Disabled
13 Altru Support Services LLC	Facilities Support Services
14 Grand Forks County	Executive & Legislative Offices Combined
15 Nondisclosable	

Source: Job Service North Dakota, 2006.

Figure 16: Grand Forks Largest Employers

	Employer	Industry	# Employed
1	American Crystal Sugar	Sugar Manufacturing	420
2	EGF Public Schools	Elem. & Secondary Schools	340
3	City of EGF	Exec. & Legis. Offices	190
4	Vigen Construction	Construction	125
5	Hugo's	Grocer	115
6	Cabela's	Sporting Goods Retailer	100

Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, 2006.

Figure 17: East Grand Forks Largest Employers

Mobility Manager/Transportation Broker

Mobility management is short-range planning and management activities for improving coordination among transportation providers, but excludes operating public transportation services. Mobility management can be in the form of one local or regional manager. This manager could perform the duties of supporting a local human services coordinating council. The manager may also go beyond supporting a council to work specifically on facilitating coordination among operators in the community.

Along with being involved in seeking and implementing coordination, mobility management could maintain and operate transit brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers. Eligible functions include scheduling, dispatching and monitoring of vehicles. Transportation brokerage as a one-stop transportation point for customers will likely require acquisition and operation of intelligent transit technologies. This would link GIS, vehicle scheduling, dispatching, monitoring, cost tracking and billing, and single smart customer payment systems. Working to acquire and operate new technologies for transportation brokerage can also be a duty of a mobility manager.

SAFETEA-LU has now made mobility management a capital expense for the three funding sources. This will only require a 20 percent local match as opposed to the 50 percent local match required for operating expenses. This makes mobility management an appealing program for consideration.

Priorities

The following strategies listed are those prioritized by the committee of transit stakeholders involved in a series of meetings during this plan's development. These strategies are the committee's priorities until the plan is due for revision in 2009.

1. Continue the Coordination Committee

An ongoing committee established with the creation of this plan was given as the top priority. There is no specific transit committee in place to provide recommendations to either city or the MPO. The technical assistance would be provided by MPO staff. The committee would be called on to evaluate and monitor current transit programs. In addition, the group will be convened to prioritize applications for the three additional federal funding sources.

2. Implement a Marketing Plan

The metro public transit system does not presently have a line-item in their budget for marketing. The 2004 update of the Transit Development Plan recommended the system allocate 3 percent of the total expense budget on marketing expenses. The current and projected expense budget is approximately \$1.8 million. Three percent would total approximately \$50,000 per year for marketing. The group decided addressing the information gap and implementing the 3 percent goal is imperative. Adopting both a short term and long term marketing plan was identified as the first step in achieving this goal.

In 2003, a team of University of North Dakota marketing students developed a marketing plan for the transit system with the primary focus as UND students. A new marketing plan should be completed addressing all demographics and especially those of the underrepresented communities. After the marketing plan is deemed sufficient, the recommendations and strategies will then be implemented. The marketing techniques should be approved by and coordinated with the human services transit committee. Bridging the information gap for the target demographics and in turn increasing their respective ridership is paramount.

The marketing plan should address marketing to specific businesses and show public transit as a job access alternative. In addition, marketing could be used to promote programs such as the Smart Commute Initiative and employer provided public transit incentives. The Smart Commute Initiative offers financial incentives to buyers of homes within a quarter-mile of bus routes. Employers may also be persuaded to offer bus passes and vouchers for employees who use public transit to get to work.

3. Enhance Existing Services

Expressed by many human service agencies and clients is the need to keep the existing fares affordable and comparable with other forms of transportation.

In January 2006, Senior Rider service was combined with the Dial-A-Ride service to improve efficiency and maintain service. Senior Rider's fares were increased from \$1.00

per ride to \$2.50, same as DAR. Senior Rider is a service beyond those required by ADA. Financial forecasts for the service prior to combining with DAR, included Senior Rider expenses being twice that of revenues. Expenses approximately \$140,000 in FY2007-2009 and revenues decreasing from \$97,771 in FY2007 to \$52,406 in FY2009. Combining services has decreased that deficit, but the service needs to be continually subsidized by City Bus operating funding.

Increasing the frequency of the fixed bus routes has been considered in past plans. An option evaluated was making each route in Grand Forks have 30-minute headways. This would require operating an additional bus on each of three of the existing routes. However, this would result in significant costs for both cities. Potential costs would be approximately \$240,000 for Grand Forks and \$120,000 for East Grand Forks. Increasing route frequency would make some of these routes currently operating on 1-hour headways more appealing to riders.

4. Expansion of Services

The stakeholder committee was hesitant to recommend expansion of public transit services but recognized the gaps in the existing routes. Of particular concern were the hours of service, coverage area, and commuter service.

For job access, the hours of service should be sufficient for normal business hours. However, many low-income individuals are employed in service and entry-level occupations operating during late-night hours and weekend hours. Many seniors and people with disabilities also express interest in Sunday service. Attending religious services, shopping or social engagements are all trip purposes desired on Sundays. Additional service for Sunday would cost approximately \$13,000 for four hours of service. Operating eight hours of service would cost double the amount approximately \$26,000.

Coverage area is a concern for all segments of the population. Job access advocates identify lack of public transit to the Grand Forks Industrial Park, East Grand Forks American Crystal and the rapidly expanding southern end of Grand Forks residential area. Over 2,000 jobs are located in the industrial areas not accessed. These are areas with higher-paying jobs and businesses expanding payrolls.

Without making changes to existing fixed routes, expanding coverage would require additional cost. An additional route to the Grand Forks Industrial Park would cost approximately \$100,000, with capital costs topping \$250,000 to purchase a new vehicle.

Interest was also expressed in providing a commuter vanpool service for workers residing in neighboring communities. A study has not formally answered the question if there is adequate demand and interest to provide such a service. This service would increase the much needed labor pool desired by existing businesses and those looking to locate in the community. Possible communities to provide service would include Crookston, MN and the North Dakota communities of Grafton, Larimore, Thompson and Mayville.

5. Uniform Reporting

The lack of uniform reporting from transit operators makes proper assessments and strategy decision making difficult. Many human service agencies were not able to detail the full cost in providing a transportation survey. Ensuring all agencies maintain a line-

item in their budget for transportation will be one measure towards recognizing those costs.

Surveys by the MPO on a regular basis would aim to acquire information especially on the various costs incurred by operating a transit service by the respective agency. Cost reporting may include labor, fuel, maintenance, administrative and other operating costs. In order to calculate proper efficiency rates, proper ridership data and incurred miles and trip data should also be detailed in the surveys.

Gathering information on available and unused capacity would help to identify possible avenues for coordinating rides and also show efficiency. Coordination would benefit those seeking to decrease unused capacity and those willing to expand their capacity.

This pool of agencies offering transit services would also be an optimal resource to assess customer satisfaction with their respective services. Feedback on accessibility, mobility, cost and general satisfaction should all be collected continually. Ultimately coordination will allow agencies to utilize available resources the most efficiently and effectively and unify transportation services.

FUNDING RESOURCES

Almost all human service transportation improvements require additional funds. Agencies providing a transportation service receive funds from a variety of sources. Some agencies fund their services completely with donated funds. Others use a mix of federal, state or local funding to operate their services. FTA offers specific grant programs to fund transportation for a variety of purposes. New provisions in some grant programs specifically JARC allow local match to be covered by other federal funds. For instance, if 80 percent of a capital improvement project which allowed people with disabilities to access work was financed with an FTA grant, the other 20 percent could come from a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). This allows even greater coordination of federal resources but also facilitates a decrease in duplication of services if those two grants were going to finance two separate capital projects.

Other federal funding sources to consider for match include:

- Medicaid
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- JOBS (transportation allowance for TANF recipients)
- Older Americans Act
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (Title V)
- Welfare to Work
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Workforce Investment Act
- Community Development Block Grants
- Community Service Block Grants

Grand Forks County Social Services administers the TANF funds and Medicaid Program. Medicaid is one federal program which provides nonemergency transportation services. In April 2006, TANF roles included 671 recipients, 228 of which were adults. Total payments equaled \$91,686. Medicaid rolls in December 2005 included 4,674 recipients, 438 of which were seniors, 725 disabled, 1,148 other adults. In addition, TANF provides JOBS Transportation Allowance Payments. In April 2006, 197 individuals received a collective \$20,544 to aid in transportation to work. Both the Medicaid and TANF funds are federal sources which would be eligible matches to the FTA grants. Private donations can also be used for matching funds (See Figure 18).

Urban Area (FTA Section 5307)

This is a formula grant program providing capital and operating assistance and transportation related planning in urbanized areas. As the MPO area is an urbanized area with an urban population of over 50,000, the governors of North Dakota and Minnesota are the recipient of the funds and which in turn are distributed to the urbanized area.

Match requirements are set at 80/20 for capital expenses and 50/50 for operating expenses.

Eligible: Planning, engineering design and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies; capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement of buses, overhaul of buses, rebuilding of buses, crime prevention and security equipment and construction of maintenance and passenger facilities; and capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software.

Elderly & Disabled (FTA Section 5310)

FTA intent of this program is to support vehicle acquisition for non-profit organizations to meet the transportation needs of elderly and people with disabilities. It is a capital only program with a match of 80/20. Each state receives funds based on the population of that state. Minnesota distributes funds to agencies throughout the state, whereas North Dakota only distributes these funds in the rural areas.

In Minnesota, East Grand Forks non-profit agencies the Good Samaritan Village and the Polk County DAC have both received 5310 grants to purchase vehicles. Most funds are used to purchase vehicles, but acquisition of transportation services under contract, lease or other arrangements are also eligible.

Eligible: Capital projects.

Rural Areas (FTA Section 5311)

A formula grant program for transportation services in the rural areas (population under 50,000). Specific FTA goals of the program include enhancing access for rural residents to services, assisting in maintenance, development, and improvement of transportation, encourage efficient use of Federal funds, support intercity bus transportation and use private transportation providers to the maximum extent feasible. Specifically cited by FTA is use of coordination to best use federal funds. Match is set at 80/20 for capital projects and 50/50 for operating expenses.

Eligible: Capital, operating and administrative expenses.

New Freedom (FTA Section 5316)

New Freedom is a new formula program approved with SAFETEA-LU. Since Grand Forks is considered a small urban area, the states of Minnesota and North Dakota are the designated recipient of the funds and the MPO applies to each state. The MPO will then enter with other small urban areas in the two states into a competitive selection process.

Projects eligible for New Freedom funding can either be new public transportation services or beyond those required by ADA. It does have to target people with disabilities and remove barriers to transit and assist persons with disabilities with transportation. For instance, if ADA requires complementary service with a range of ¾ mile on each side of fixed route, service beyond that distance would be eligible for New Freedom funding. New service can be additional routes primarily for the disabled or renovations to existing

transportation facilities. The renovations can not be part of an already planned renovation or alteration.

Eligible: New Service (routes or service); environmental modifications (signage, curb cuts) beyond required in ADA; technologies to enhance customer access;
 Beyond ADA: expanded hours for paratransit, beyond ¾ mile, same day service, door through door, flex route for commuter bus; administration of vouchers, administration of volunteer programs, travel training, and mobility management.

Job Access & Reverse Commute (JARC) (FTA Section 5317)

This grant program has been historically a discretionary program but recently was changed to a formula grant program. The purpose of this program is to improve transportation services designed to serve those below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. Emphasis is put on projects that use mass transportation. States receive money for large urban areas (population over 200,000), small urban areas (population between 50,000-200,000), and rural areas. The match is set at 50/50 for operating expenses and 80/20 for capital expenses. The local match can be met with other federal funds.

Eligible: Late-night and weekend service, guaranteed ride home services, shuttle service, expanding fixed-route transit routes, demand-responsive van service, ridesharing and carpooling activities, bicycling, local car loan programs, and promotion through marketing efforts of use of transit by workers with non-traditional work schedules, use of transit vouchers, development of employer-provided transportation such as shuttles, and ridesharing.

Transit Operators GF-EGF Metro Area		Transportation Funding Source	Local	State	Federal	All Private
University of North Dakota Shuttle Service	State Fleet Vehicles			✓		
Good Samaritan Village	FTA 5310			✓	✓	
Parkwood Place	Private Revenues					✓
REM	Private Revenues					✓
Walsh County Transportation	FTA 5311	✓			✓	
Grand Forks County Social Services	TANF, Medicaid	✓	✓	✓		
Development Homes	County, City, Internal Office			✓		
Foster Grandparent	Grant: Corp. for Nat'l Commtty Service			✓	✓	
OPTIONS				✓	✓	
Polk DAC	FTA 5310				✓	
Fargo Senior Commission	FTA 5311				✓	
NDAD	CDBG				✓	
United Way		✓			✓	
CAT, DAR	FTA 5307	✓	✓	✓		

Figure 18: Funding Sources for Agencies

OUTCOMES

Whether the desired outcomes of this plan have been achieved should be considered every year and especially when this plan is updated. An ongoing coordination committee will aid in continually evaluating current programs and future goals. The following desired outcomes are not ranked according to importance or timeline to achieve. Instead they are measures to determine success that will many times be dependent upon each other.

Coordination of Agencies

Increasing the degree of coordination between agencies with transportation services will take many years to achieve. It will be important to evaluate what point the agencies are currently at and detail what it will require to get to the next point on the coordination continuum. It will ultimately be the decision of agencies as to what level of coordination they are willing to achieve, but being cognizant of the benefits of coordination will help to achieve.

Reduce Duplication of Services

As previously identified, numerous aspects of transportation operations are being duplicated by numerous providers. Whether it is duplication of administrative expenses such as eligibility determination, scheduling, or multiple agencies separately procuring vehicles, duplication is occurring. Decreasing duplication will come with the ongoing work of coordination.

Increased Ridership by Target Groups

The public transit system keeps track of rider categorizations according to fares paid. Whether these clienteles are being given more rides can easily be evaluated by comparing totals from quarter to quarter or year to year. However, this will not give us an indication of all rides and all demographics. Consistent reporting by multiple agencies will aid in collecting all ridership data in the metro area. In addition, numbers collected by the U.S. Census Bureau every decade will also help evaluate whether more people in these target demographics are using public transit.

Customer Satisfaction

Collecting data to make conclusions on this measure will be very challenging, but should not be disregarded. Administering annual surveys to riders and recording all rider complaints and grievances, are just two ways to collect this feedback. An annual survey would be very beneficial in asking about overall satisfaction but also satisfaction with specific aspects such as comfort, travel time, safety, accessibility, and fares. Increasing these scores annually should be a goal of all transit operators.

Available Capacity

As coordination improves, available capacity should not be compromised. Availability should always exceed demand. If coordination decreases the number of providers, vehicles and operations should be able to handle the number of rides previously offered.

An individual's transportation options should not be limited by decreased available capacity as a result of coordination.

Efficient Service

Decreasing duplication of services will allow costs to decrease improving the efficiency of an operation. Consistent reporting on cost per ride ratios will help assess whether agencies are using their resources in the most efficient way possible.

Affordable Transportation

This plan is aimed to decrease the barriers to transportation for the target customers. Keeping fares affordable comes before marketing and before expanded service on the Coordination Committee's priorities. Simple consultation with representatives of target customers and the customers themselves will be the primary source to assess this outcome.

Accessible Transportation

Projects resulting of this plan should inherently work towards this outcome. Some projects will improve the physical environment to the pickup location. Some projects will improve vehicle accessibility. Other projects will increase the accessibility of support agencies and workplaces by public transportation. Ultimately, all projects will aim to decrease the barriers preventing people to use public transportation.

APPENDICES

2006 Transportation Services Directory

Stakeholder Letters

Transit Survey

Coordination Committee Meeting Minutes