

**Public Transit – Human Services
Transportation Plan
Region Six-East
November, 2006**



Prepared by the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
~ Serving the Counties of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville ~

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Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan
Region Six-East
November 2006

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PUBLIC TRANSIT – HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION PLAN REGION SIX-EAST

Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville Counties
November 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Minnesota Department of Transportation, Office of Transit contracted with the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) to prepare a plan that creates a comprehensive strategy to improve the coordination and cooperation of transportation providers in the region and to overcome identified barriers that cause gaps in access to services. The plan is one of the requirements set forth within the federal bill reauthorizing the surface transportation act, called SAFETEA-LU. The plan is necessary before any organization within the region can apply and receive funding from the New Freedom Initiative, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program (Section 5310).

The plan is required to be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, non-profit transportation services, human services providers, and the general public. Agencies and organizations that represent, provide service to, or advocate for individuals who have public or specialized transportation service needs including: elderly and/or persons with disabilities, and/or low income individuals were contacted and requested to participate in the development of the Public Transit – Human Service (PT-HS) Plan. MMDC created an Advisory Committee to help guide the plan process made up of a variety of agencies and organizations discussed above. The process to develop the plan was delineated by Mn/DOT Office of Transit. This uniformity will help bring together plans being conducted throughout the state, while allowing for the unique solutions to the similar and not similar needs and gaps found in the various regions across the state.

Two primary methods were used to gather the information and opinions of stakeholders for this plan. The first method was to conduct a survey designed by the Mn/DOT and the Department of Human Services. This survey was sent to a large number of both current transportation providers and agencies/organizations that have a need for transportation services for their clientele/customers. The other primary method to gain needed information was to hold a workshop of these same businesses, agencies, and organizations. At the workshop, participants were asked to:

- Identify specific gaps in service and access to services (Work Teams).
- Review barriers & obstacles for connecting people to services.
- Prioritize needs.
- Identify a local approach to addressing the identified gap.
- Identify a potential strategy for the gap.

Both the survey and the workshop had a very good cross section of transportation service providers, human service agencies, businesses, organizations, and other stakeholders. Each of the four counties in Region Six-East was also well represented in both activities. In addition to the survey and workshop, MMDC staff drew further insights from the Plan's

Steering Committee, conversations with the public transit programs and other stakeholders, and from other recent transportation studies.

The plan includes an inventory section that describes current transportation service providers within Region Six-East. There are numerous service providers within the region, but less than a decade ago, before any of the four current public transit systems operating in the region were established. The inventory section of the plan also discusses the past and current successes of coordination and cooperation within the region. Many agencies have eliminated or reduced their own transportation services over the past ten years as they found the public transit systems could fulfill much of their needs. The plan shows that while the region has come a long way in meeting the needs of its citizens, there is still much more work to be done in finding solutions to the needs and gaps in service that still exist.

Section Three of the plan is an assessment of transportation needs. Particular attention was given to the needs of the elderly, disabled, and low-income persons. Region Six-East has a growing population. It has a higher than the state average percentage of elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and persons below the poverty line.

There are numerous transportation needs identified in the plan. For the most part, the survey results and the workshop discussion of needs turned out similar findings. Section Three will provide a much more thorough description of the gaps and needs in service, but some of the more prevalent needs found are summarized below.

- There is a need for more service hours. More hours of service are needed during early mornings, after 5 p.m. and on weekends. There are many workers who are employed at times other than the traditional 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. timeframe that have transportation needs getting to and from their jobs. Many persons lack evening and weekend transportation to access various functions and appointments during these times.
- There is a need for improved transportation service to outlying smaller communities within the counties, as well as the non-urbanized rural areas.
- There is a need for transportation service that crosses county lines. This is particularly true for persons needing to get to regional centers for medical appointments, shopping, and other needs.
- There are agencies that have clientele that have specialized transportation needs that make it difficult for the public transit systems to provide for these needs. Some types of clientele do not mix well with other transit riders. In many cases, there is a need for additional use of aids/escorts.
- The region has a large and growing population of Hispanic and Somali persons. Some of these new immigrants need assistance with language skills necessary to comfortably access needed transportation services.
- Additional buses are needed, as are more volunteer drivers. In some cases, transportation providers are having problems finding well-qualified professional drivers.
- There is a demonstrated need to better educate/communicate to riders and potential riders about what is available and how to access what is available for transportation services. Education is needed to lower rider expectations of the service provided; service cannot match the transportation of persons in their own vehicles.

- Additional education is needed for service providers about transportation services available for their clientele/customers.
- There is a shortage of funding available to work on these varied needs.

Section Four of the Plan is the heart of the plan in terms of strategizing solutions to help reduce or eliminate some of the needs/gaps identified in Section Three. These strategies and implementation steps were brought forward in the October 11, 2006 workshop. Some of these strategies and action steps were further refined at a Plan Advisory Committee held subsequent to the workshop. The workshop participants were asked to prioritize the list of transportation needs and concerns they earlier presented. This prioritized list was reduced to several items, to better focus attention on the strategies and action steps to make necessary improvements to these needs.

The first area of focus was the need for additional funding. In addition to increased funding, workshop participants discussed the need to look at appropriate ways to work out new rules that both continue to meet the needs of the clientele they are designed to protect, and also to allow for better ways to coordinate with other transportation providers. Various strategic steps to both improve funding levels and to reduce the barriers caused by federal and state departmental rules are highlighted in Section Four. Encouragement must be given to organizations to take advantage of new funding opportunities, such as JARC and the New Freedom Program. Partnerships also need to be encouraged when seeking out funding to expand transportation services. New methods need to be developed to promote utilization of consumer directed funding. In other words, participants recommended that funding needs to be developed to put the power in the hands of low-income persons to pick and choose the transportation solution that best fits their needs.

The second area of focus from the workshop was awareness. Action steps were discussed to help increase education, awareness, and promotion of public transportation services that are available. A variety of actions were given including better use of church bulletins, local access television, school announcements, shoppers' ads, etc. There is a need for additional transportation provider communication/education of the various service agencies that have clientele with transportation needs. Best practices need to be shared by transportation providers. In addition, ways need to be developed to better communicate with customers who are not yet fluent in the use of the English language.

Finding ways to improve on the number of hours of service is the third area of focus. Additional early morning and evening service hours, as well as additional weekend service are highly needed. Besides increased funding, some action steps identified are:

- Provide education regarding schedules. Be sensitive to public perception regarding over-lapping of two buses at same location for two people.
- Coordinate transportation between counties to meet consumer needs.
- Promote increase in inter-agency coordination of scheduling.
- Look for creative public and private partnerships to expand needed service.
- Maximize use of technology to achieve electronic scheduling where appropriate.

- Link websites between agencies including city websites, agency websites, and bus shelters.
- Support expansion of the volunteer and dial-a-ride programs.

Meeting the needs of transportation to rural areas was identified as the final area on which to focus. One strategy was identified to provide transit providers with flexibility in meeting service to the needs of long distance travel. Special items of consideration include reaching isolated geographic areas and identifying the needs of a varied population base. The use of volunteer drivers is a vital method in providing rural transportation coverage. Besides the need for increased funding, some action steps discussed under this focus area are:

- Look towards allowing/utilizing smaller handicapped accessible vehicles in order to better serve specialized populations in rural areas.
- Expand coordination of church based groups such as Common Cup Ministries in McLeod County.
- Expand resources available to Rideshare Programs.
- Provide resources available to agencies to expand car loan/donated car programs.
- Partner with technical college to borrow auto bay to repair donated automobiles.
- Coordinate delivery related services to reach isolated persons through providers who travel throughout a designated area.

Current public transit providers in the region all provide good service with the limited budgets they operate under. Increased funding would allow them to help meet some of the needs discussed in this study. It is also realized that additional funding alone is not the answer. Coordination and cooperation among current transportation providers must be part of the solution along with increased funding. Important coordination activities have been made through the years, but more efforts are needed. Currently, all four public transit systems in the region are at or near capacity for adding additional service. With being at or near capacity, causing staff to be stretched thin, there is limited time to spend working on action steps highlighted in this plan. If strong progress is to be made on the actions laid out in this plan, a position needs to be created that can focus attention on new activities. It is recommended that funding be sought to establish a regional/district level Transportation Coordination Manager position to concentrate on assisting transportation providers and human service agencies make progress towards new initiatives.

Lastly, there needs to be continued emphasis at the state level for state agencies to discuss steps to both lessen barriers and create new incentives to help foster transportation coordination. Regulations need to be reviewed to see if they can be re-written to allow better coordination opportunities. Insurance providers need to be encouraged to provide policies that will not hinder coordination opportunities.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF PLAN

In August of 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation, Equity Act: A legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), reauthorizing the surface transportation act. As part of this reauthorization, grantees under the New Freedom Initiative, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program (Section 5310) must meet certain requirements in order to receive funding for fiscal 2007 (beginning 10/1/06) and beyond.

One of the SAFETEA-LU requirements is that projects from the federal programs listed above must be part of a "locally developed coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan." (General Guidance, 5/01/96). The plan is required to be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, non-profit transportation services, human services providers, and the general public. Agencies and organizations that represent, provide service to, or advocate for, individuals who have public or specialized transportation service needs including: elderly and/or persons with disabilities, and/or low income individuals were contacted and requested to participate in the development of the PT-HS plan.

The purpose of this plan is to create a comprehensive strategy to assist state and community leaders, agencies, and stakeholders involved in human service transportation, and public transit services. The implementation of strategies identified in the plan is to result in cooperation and coordination of programs. (Public Transit-Human Service Coordination Plan: General Guidance, pg 1, 5/01/96).

Section 1.01: Role of the Plan

- Provides a baseline of coordination that is occurring
- Identifies current gaps in access to services
- Identifies duplication of services
- Identifies obstacles and barriers to coordination and access
- Provides a goal for short and long-range implementation measures to increase human service access to services.

Section 1.02: Description of the Process and Public Involvement

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) was chosen to coordinate the development of the Public Transit - Human Service Coordination plan, as they are an independent and objective entity. Over the past twenty years, MMDC and the Area Agency on Aging have worked together to encourage coordination and to advocate for public transit services in the counties of the MMDC planning and service area.

The survey was designed by DHS and MnDOT to obtain relevant coordination information and was sent to the following categories of potential responders: assisted living/housing with services/nursing homes, health care providers, social service agencies, agencies that serve low income people, school districts, transit providers, units of government. The survey was also available on the MMDC website for agencies choosing to respond via email.

During the months of June through September, the MMDC staff met with the Technical Advisory Committee monthly to review survey results, and prepare for the October workshop. The workshop was held Wednesday, October 11, 2006 in Willmar (Kandiyohi County). There were approximately thirty attendees. Ground rules for discussion were established at the workshop. Noel Shughart, MnDOT Planner, provided an overview of the history of coordination in Minnesota.

Workshop participants were asked to:

- Review barriers & obstacles for connecting people to services.
- Prioritize Needs.
- Identify specific gaps in service and access to services (Work Teams).
- Identify a local approach to addressing the identified gap.
- Identify a potential strategy for the gap.

Section 1.03: Other Public Involvement

Following the development of the draft plan, it was posted on the MMDC website, www.mmrhc.org, for comment. Notices were sent to the media announcing the location of the public meeting and requests for comments.

In addition, other means of notification to the general public included the publication of legal notices in five newspapers throughout Region Six-East and news releases to radio stations across the region. Email was also used to notify agencies of the availability of the draft plan.

A public meeting was held Wednesday, December 6, 2006 at the Meeker County Courthouse, Community Room A, 325 North Sibley Avenue, Litchfield, MN at 7:30 pm. This was for the purpose of presenting the Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan. There was no public representation present. The final document can be reviewed on the MMDC website at www.mmrhc.org.

Section 1.04: Plan Updates

The planning horizon is 2007-2011. Periodic updates to the plan are anticipated. It is recommended that the plan be reviewed for updates using the following benchmarks:

- Federal or state policy change.
- Legislation that impacts access to services.
- Local changes that affect the service.
- Periodic review and update.

SECTION 2: INVENTORY

This section of the plan will provide an inventory of what agencies, organizations, and businesses are currently providing transportation to their clientele or consumers within Region Six-East. A thorough description of the services provided by the four public transit systems is included in this section. Other transportation services that operate within the region will be discussed to a lesser extent as well as agencies and businesses that provide transportation assistance to their own clientele. This section will also identify existing coordination opportunities. Lastly, this section will discuss past and current successes in providing a coordinated transportation system within the Region.

Section 2.01: Region Six-East's Transportation Inventory Profile of Service Providers

The Public Transit Systems

Region Six-East is made up of the Counties of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville. Kandiyohi, Meeker, and Renville Counties have a County-wide Public Transit Program, while McLeod County has a Joint Powers Board agreement with Sibley County for a two-county Public Transit Program. Below is a profile of the four public transit programs.

Kandiyohi Area Transit (KAT)

Kandiyohi Area Transit is a system that operates countywide, and includes operations within the regional center of the City of Willmar. KAT is governed by a Joint Powers Board agreement between the County and the City of Willmar. The system is classified as both a Countywide and a Small Urban Transit Operating Class. Besides operating the public bus system, KAT also operates the county's Volunteer Driver Program under Title III of the Older American's Act.

KAT currently operates six days a week. Monday through Friday they provide rides from 6:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. On Saturday they provide rides from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. KAT's fleet of buses include seven Class 400 buses and two Class 500 buses. The seven medium sized, Class 400 buses, have a total ambulatory seating capacity of 119. Together these buses also have 14 wheelchair positions and all are equipped with lifts/ramps. Together, the two large, Class 500 buses, have a total ambulatory capacity of 58 seats, four wheelchair positions, and both vehicles are lift/ramp equipped. One of the nine buses is a backup vehicle. If needed, drivers assist passengers to and from the vehicles.

KAT Services:

Within the City of Willmar, KAT runs a "Fixed Flexible Route." This is a route that will deviate to pick up at any location within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile (or ten blocks) from any of the scheduled route stops. Throughout Kandiyohi County, KAT offers "Demand Response Ride" otherwise known as Dial-A-Ride. These routes are directed based on ridership demands. This

type of route generally has a base route with more flexibility than that of a fixed flexible route. The Program travels throughout the county making stops at each of the county's communities. To get the lowest cost, riders must provide a 48-hour notice of needing transportation. Same Day Service is available, at times, to pick up passengers for an additional fee above the base fare.

KAT's Senior Volunteer Program utilizes a volunteer driver using a personal vehicle to transport seniors sixty years of age or older to medical appointments, groceries, errands, etc. Volunteer drivers are paid mileage reimbursement for their services. Currently KAT has thirty-five individuals who volunteer their services to this program. The Volunteer Driver Program operates from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. Riders must register with KAT for the use of this service. Individuals can utilize the program two times a week or up to three times a week for medical appointments with a 48-hour notice. The Senior Volunteer Program is different than other KAT programs in that fares are voluntary with suggested donations. The suggested donation is \$2.50 for a one-way trip, with trips over seven miles paying a suggested rate of 37.5 cents per mile. Medical trips can be made outside of the county with this program.

KAT also provides service through the use of their buses for the New London/Spicer Senior Dining Program. This is a weekday bus route that picks up residents going to each of the two communities' nutrition sites. Lastly, KAT can provide community dwelling elderly and disabled group transportation.

The following is the current bus fare that is charged passengers:

Within the City of Willmar:

Fares are \$1.25 each way, with a 75-cent additional charge per ride for less than a 24-hour notice.

Within Kandiyohi County (outside of Willmar) the cost is as follows:

0 – 10 miles - \$1.25 each way
11 – 20 miles - \$2.50 each way
21 – 30 miles - \$3.75 each way
31 – 40 miles - \$5.00 each way
Add 75 cents for less than 48-hour notice.

Aides for passengers needing assistance travel at the same fare rate as the passenger. Children age 4 and under ride free, and must be accompanied by an adult. Senior Companions registered with the KAT office ride for free. Any agency or business scheduling group rides must pay full fare for all passengers. Passengers may pay with cash (using exact change), tokens, or punch passes sold at several locations.

KAT staff spend approximately four hundred eighty hours per month scheduling rides, and 1,500 hours per month transporting passengers. Approximately 20,000 miles are driven and 10,000 passenger trips are made per month.

Trailblazer Public Transit

Trailblazer Public Transit operates within both McLeod County, which is in Region Six-East, and Sibley County, which is in Region Nine. Trailblazer Transit is operated through a Joint Powers Board Agreement between the two counties, and this Board consists of three McLeod County Commissioners and two Sibley County Commissioners. While affiliated with the two counties, the organization is a self-governing entity.

Trailblazer operates both a Dial-A-Ride bus service and a volunteer driver program. Trailblazer operates its bus fleet five days per week, Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The Volunteer Driver Program may transport people anytime including early mornings, evenings, weekends, and holidays. Currently the system utilizes twelve medium, Class 400 buses. The twelve medium sized buses have a total ambulatory seating capacity of 204. Together these buses also have twenty-four wheelchair positions and all are equipped with lifts/ramps. The program has 19 drivers on their staff and utilizes 25 volunteer drivers.

Both the Dial-A-Ride Program and the Volunteer Driver Program are open for use by the general public. There are no qualifications or requirements to access either of these services, however, transportation is not given for medical emergencies. Children, adults, and seniors alike use the system to get to work, school, day care, recreational activities, stores, banks, clinics, social events, etc. Customers may call one of two dispatch centers to schedule rides, with McLeod County residents usually calling the Hutchinson office. For the volunteer driver service, customers must contact the Gaylord office. Bus rides and volunteer drivers may be scheduled up to one week in advance. Riders may be accommodated on the same day of contact, but a 24-hour notice is requested. For utilizing the Volunteer Driver Program, customers are asked to schedule rides at least one week, or five business days, ahead of time.

For the Dial-a-Ride Program, Trailblazer charges \$1.50 for a one-way trip per individual within city limits. One-way rides less than 25 miles cost \$3.00, with one-way rides of 25 miles or longer paying \$6.00. Bus fares may be paid when boarding the bus with cash, checks, tokens, or the bus fares may be billed.

The charge for a volunteer driver is based on round-trip mileage from the driver's home or starting point. The cost for the Volunteer Driver service is 44.5 cents per mile plus parking expenses and meal reimbursements, which may not exceed \$7.50 per meal for every four hours the driver volunteers. Unlike the bus system, the total numbers of people that ride together on each trip divide fares for volunteer drivers. All volunteer driver services are billed, except for driver meals.

Under the Program's 5311 Services Plan, general public transportation is provided within Sibley and McLeod Counties and up to one mile beyond the county borders. Transportation is also provided to five external service points including the Mankato Rehabilitation Center Incorporated (MRCI) in New Ulm, the Medical Center in New Ulm, the Medical Campus in Waconia, Immanuel-St. Josephs Hospital in Mankato, and the Veterans Administration Hospital in Minneapolis.

“Trailblazer does not provide route, flexible route, subscription, package delivery, or charter service. However, within the scope of demand respond service, Trailblazer provides all customers the opportunity to make standing order requests and the ability to pay for their rides through a billing system.”

Trailblazer employees spend approximately 1,000 hours scheduling rides and 2,600 hours per month transporting passengers. Approximately 36,000 miles are driven and 8,000 passenger trips are made per month.

Augustana Lutheran Homes Inc. Operating Meeker County Public Transit

Meeker County Public transit is a countywide Route Deviation and Dial-A-Ride (Demand Response) system that is owned and operated by Augustana Homes Inc. of Litchfield. The program operates Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The transit system originated in 1995 with a cooperative effort by Augustana Homes, Hicks Bus Lines, Meeker County, the City of Litchfield, and Mn/DOT. The system is still in a growing phase.

Currently Meeker County Transit has five medium sized, “Class 400” buses. Each bus can hold 16 passengers and 2 passengers in wheelchairs or scooters. All the buses have lifts/ramps. The Dial-a-Ride service costs \$1.25 for one-way trips in the communities, and \$2.00 for one-way trips from community to community. Door-to-door service is given to those who need assistance. A 24-hour advance notice is required to assure service, but same day calls for rides will be accommodated when possible. The program provides clients of ProWorks to travel to Litchfield and Hutchinson and back.

Monday through Friday service is provided in the City of Litchfield. The schedule for other communities within the county is as follows:

Monday & Wednesday	Eden Valley / Watkins
Tuesday	Grove City / Cosmos
Thursday	Darwin / Dassel
Friday	open to availability

Transit passes for rides within a city may be purchased on a punch card with 15 one-way rides for \$15, which is a savings of \$3.75.

The transit system spends approximately 400 hours per month scheduling rides. In 2005 the system served almost 40,000 rides throughout the county. They have also had to deny a growing number of rides due to being at full capacity. This is particularly true for additional services requested in Litchfield and Dassel.

Renville County Heartland Express

The Renville County Heartland Express is operated under the county's Human Services Department. Besides the County, fares, and Mn/DOT paying for the operation of the system, they also receive funding from some of the county's municipalities. Heartland Express operates five buses; however, two of the vehicles are backup buses. The buses are medium sized, "Class 400" vehicles that are wheelchair equipped and have lifts/ramps. The program operates a Dial-A-Ride (demand Response) system and also a "Route Deviation" service. They operate Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. In addition to operating the bus system, the operation also operates a Senior Volunteer Driver Program. Currently there are 22 volunteer drivers throughout Renville County that participate in the program.

Renville County Heartland Express has a written 24-hour advance notice policy; however, the system strives to accommodate individual requests by providing rides when someone requests a ride on the same day. It is rare when a same day call needs to be turned down because of not being able to be incorporated into the schedule. One example of same day rides that was given is children who have missed the school bus are assisted.

Beginning on October 1, 2006, Heartland Express has set new bus fares for one-way trips. Customers pay \$1.50 for a ride within a community, \$3.00 to go from one community to another within the County, and \$4.00 for transportation to the Cities of Willmar and Redwood Falls. If needed, door-to-door service is offered. The program will exceed 30,000 rides this year, which is an increase of approximately 7,000 rides from the previous year.

Other Public Transit Systems That Travel Into the Region

There are neighboring public transit programs that travel into Region Six-East. Prairie Five Rides, from Region Six-West, has a bus route to the City of Willmar and to the Twin Cities. The Twin Cities route is open to Kandiyohi County residents for a fee of \$30 one-way or \$60 round trip. They make the following Twin Cities stops: Hopkins Activity Center, Southwest Metro Transit in Eden Prairie, MSP Airport (drop off only), the Mall of America, and to medical facilities.

Tri-Cap Public Transit Program that operates in rural Stearns and Benton counties has a Stearns County route that travels to the Cities of Eden Valley and Watkins in Northern Meeker County every Thursday. The route travels to a number of Stearns County communities, including the City of St. Cloud. The bus arrives at Eden Valley at 8:50 a.m. and at Watkins at 9:05 a.m. It returns to Watkins at 3:10 p.m. and to Eden Valley at 3:25 p.m. In addition to traveling to Meeker County, Tri-CAP Transit transports citizens from the Cities of Sauk Centre, Paynesville, Belgrade, and Elrosa into Willmar the first Monday of the month. The bus arrives in Willmar at 9:40 a.m., and returns to Willmar at 2:25 p.m. to pick up riders.

5310 Elderly and Disabled Program Capital Assistance Programs

Currently Region Six-East has only three organizations that have 5310 Program vehicles.

They are as follows:

- The City of Atwater utilizes their bus for transporting elderly citizens to the community's nutrition program.
- Renville County Community Residence in Bird Island utilizes their 5310 vehicles to transport their residents to medical appointments and a variety of other trip needs. RCCR is a private, non-profit organization serving residential, training, and care needs of persons with developmental disabilities.
- Augustana Homes, Inc. utilizes a 5310 bus within its Public Transit Program.

County Services Departments

County Human Service Departments, Public Health Departments, and Veteran Services all have clientele that need assistance with transportation related to the services they are receiving. While each county department is using the public transit system to a large extent, there is still the need for each department to become involved with making sure their clients get to where they need to be. This level of need varies depending on the department and the county. Renville County Human Services indicated on their transit survey that they spend approximately twenty hours per month arranging rides, and another twenty hours transporting their clients. They put on approximately two hundred miles per month, using five cars for this transportation. Renville County Public Health Services spends approximately ten hours per month helping to arrange transportation for their clients. McLeod County Social Services has two vans, and six staff cars that they use. Their staff spends approximately thirty hours per month for both arranging rides and transporting clientele. Meeker County Public Health staff spends approximately five hours per month arranging rides.

All four Counties have Veteran Services that provide transportation for their clientele to the Veterans Administration Medical Centers in the Twin Cities, St. Cloud, and to other state veterans homes. It varies by county on how the rides are provided. Some offices use volunteers, others utilize staff. In each case, the Veteran Services office utilizes a vehicle for this purpose.

Kandiyohi County has both boy's and girl's Group Homes that serve a much greater area than the county, including all of Region Six-East. The boy's home has a capacity of twelve, and the girl's home houses eleven children. The homes have their own transportation.

Other Agencies, Organizations, and Businesses with Transportation Services

There are a variety of other agencies, organizations, and businesses within Region Six-East that either provide transportation to their clientele, provide transportation for other organizations, or to customers with a particular need. The transportation survey that was undertaken for this study has identified a number of these organizations, while other organizations are known through other sources. The list below should not be thought of as a definitive list of what transportation is provided within the Region, as there are sure to be some that have been missed.

There are a number of school districts within the Region. Several did respond to the survey. For the purposes of this inventory, we are just highlighting that all school districts provide transportation service for the children attending their facilities. In some cases the school district themselves handle the transportation, and in other cases the district's contract this service.

Private For-Profit Businesses In Transportation Services in Region Six-East

- Jefferson Bus Line (Scheduled stops in Willmar, Atwater, Litchfield, Dassel, and Hutchinson)
- R & J Tours of Willmar
- AC Transportation, Inc. – Clinic Cab of Buffalo
- CARE Transportation, Inc. of St. Cloud
- Palmer Bus Service headquartered in Mankato
- Executive Express – MSP Airport Vans
- Scott Bus Service of Bird Island
- Hicks Bus Service of Litchfield
- Dockendorf Bus Service of Watkins
- Hutchinson Taxi Service
- Willmar Taxi – Yellow Cab (Recently gone out of business)
- Peterson Bus Company of New London
- Southwest Tours of Willmar
- Willmar Bus Service
- Handi Van of Rochester
- Bjork Limousine
- Linder Bus Company of Hutchinson
- Clinic Cab of Howard Lake
- Chariot Limousine of Hutchinson
- Prestige Courtesy Car & Limousine Services of Hutchinson
- Jake's Limousine of Lester Prairie

Human Services Agencies with Transportation

NOTE: This list does not include agencies whose staff/volunteers use their own vehicles on occasion to transport clientele) Nor does this list housing, assisted living, nursing homes, or churches, that are highlighted further down in the inventory list.

- Heartland Community Action Agency has two buses they utilize to transport children to Head-Start Monday through Thursday. Neither bus is handicapped accessible. They serve all of Region Six-East
- Kandi Work Developmental Achievement Center contracts with Peterson Bus Company in transporting clientele to their facilities in Atwater and Kandiyohi. They use the service Monday through Friday. Three vans and five buses are used for this transportation need.
- Adult Client Training Service, Inc. in Olivia uses paid drivers, one van, and two buses to transport their clients to their facility Monday through Friday.
- ProWorks, Inc. of Litchfield provides day training and habilitation services. While they use Meeker County Transit, they also use nine vans and one bus in transporting their clientele Monday through Friday.
- West Central Industries has facilities in Willmar and Hutchinson a five vans for transporting their clientele, as well as utilize the public transit systems. They have transportation needs Monday through Saturday for both day times and the evening hours.
- Bethesda Adult Day Care in Willmar has an old bus that is not suitable for everyday use that they use occasionally for special outings.
- ARC Kandiyohi County in Willmar serves as an advocacy, training, and education agency for persons who have cognitive impairments. They utilize one paid staff and four other staff to provide transportation for their clientele Monday through Saturday. This only takes up approximately ten hours per month for transporting and five hours for arranging rides. Some rides are given in the evening hours.
- McLeod Treatment Programs, Inc. has three juvenile Group Homes in Hutchinson and two Group Homes in Glencoe. The capacity of these Group Homes is fifty-five (twenty-five girls and thirty boys). They provide for their own transportation needs.

Elderly Housing, Special Needs Housing, Assisted Living Units, and Nursing Homes

Again, we want to emphasize that the list below is only those facilities that answered the survey or we have learned about from another source. The only facilities mentioned here are those who have agency transportation that is offered to their clientele. The other agencies in this category that answered the survey did not provide any transportation for their clientele. They all utilize their county's public transit program and most indicated on the survey they had unmet transportation needs.

- Franklin Care Center has a van that is used approximately ten hours per month, traveling around one hundred and fifty miles per month. Employees

drive the van and spend another ten hours per month arranging transportation.

- Glesener's, Inc. of Bird Island has a car that is used approximately sixty hours per month transporting their clientele, traveling around six hundred miles. Staff spends an additional thirty hours per month arranging transportation for their clientele.
- RenVilla Nursing Home has an old bus it uses for special occasions.
- St. Mary's Senior Care Living in Winsted has a van and a medium sized bus. The bus has a wheelchair lift/ramp. Employees take clientele on all days as needed, but did not indicate how often they use the vehicles in their survey return.
- Presbyterian Family Foundation is located in Willmar, Atwater, and a few locations outside the Region. It provides residential services to developmentally disabled and the elderly. They have seven vans (three are wheelchair equipped). They can offer rides as needed to their clientele seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. They spend well over one hundred hours per month transporting their residents.
- Orchard Estates of Glencoe has one van that they use only a couple of hours per month transporting their clientele. They mainly utilize the public transit system.
- Olivia Healthcare Center has a bus that they use to transport their clients.
- Buffalo Lake Healthcare Center has a bus, but also utilize the public transit system.

Churches

Some of the Region's churches provide transportation services to bring their members to church on Sunday, and some for other church related activities. We have only received survey responses from a small fraction of the areas churches, thus the list of churches that provide transportation services is the most incomplete list of this study. Of the responses that were received from churches, only two reported having vans and/or buses. It should be noted that the majority of churches in the Region do not provide transportation through vehicles they own. Many do have volunteers organized to provide rides to other members in need. Below are the two churches that returned our transit survey that indicated that their church owns a van or bus:

- Vinje Lutheran Church in Willmar has a bus and a van that it uses on Sunday and also for their Loving Arms Child Care Program.
- Evangelical Free Church of Willmar owns an old 47-passenger bus for youth programs and the occasional out of town event.

Section 2.02: Greater Minnesota Public Transit Systems Key Findings

The Minnesota Department of Transportation's 2001 Greater Minnesota Transportation Plan gave a synopsis of some key facts about all Greater Minnesota Public Transit Programs. These findings show that the transportation provided by public transit programs operated in Region Six-East are in most ways typical of most other programs found around the state. The report made five key findings:

- “There are only seven counties and seven small urban areas without public transportation.”
- Most public transit programs do not operate during evening hours. Only 11 of 67 systems operate after 6:00 p.m.
- Most public transit programs have service Monday through Friday. “Only one-quarter of the systems operate on Saturday while only 11 operate on Sunday.”
- “Because of limited resources, trips are often confined to political boundaries, such as city or county lines.”
- Also, because of limited resources, “many systems are in need of a new transit facility, a radio communication system, and an upgraded computer system.”

The study also concluded “overall Greater Minnesota systems cost less to operate, and carry more passengers per hour than comparable systems in other parts of the United States. This performance occurs while most systems are providing less service per capita than their peers.”

Section 2.03: Past Successes and Current Coordination Occurring With Public Transit Programs

Before opening the discussion of what new steps should be taken to improve coordination of transportation services, it is valuable also to get a sense on how far the Region has already come. Before each of the Region's four counties had county-wide transit programs, approximately ten years ago, the number of transportation providers to individual programs was much greater than today. Along with the greater number of agencies providing their own transportation needs, there was little in the way of coordinating services together or even cooperating. While there is more coordination and cooperation that needs to be developed, much is currently in place. One example of coordination that has taken place is looking at the number of organizations with 5310 Program vehicles. It was not that many years ago that Region Six-East had ten different agencies with 5310 Program funded buses. Today, transit programs provide the transportation service for a number of these agencies, and as a result, there are only three organizations that have 5310 vehicles today. One of these is one of the public transit programs. Before the public transit systems were operating there were many more human service agencies and elderly housing establishments that owned and operated vans and buses for the purpose of transporting their clients.

Kandiyohi Area Transit has a number of organizations for which it provides rides. A number of these organizations were able to give up their transportation, while other agencies have been able to greatly reduce the transportation they provide for their clientele. The City of Willmar had its own public transit program before KAT existed. City transit service is now through KAT. The City of Willmar partners with Kandiyohi County in operating the Program. Other programs that have been absorbed into the KAT operations are Kandiyohi County Volunteer Program, Title III Senior Volunteer Program, and the Whistle Stop Senior Volunteer Program of Spicer and New London. Other agencies that KAT plays a large role in providing rides for clientele are Bethesda Adult Day Care, Rice Hospital Dialysis, and a large number of social service programs (i.e. Medical Assistance, discretionary, After School Kids Club, Open Enrollment, Occupational Skills, Ridgewater College, and Woodland Centers). KAT stays away from contracts, but it does have one with Woodland Centers, who has a need for special transit services. KAT has a letter of understanding with Bethesda. Currently KAT is working with Willmar Taxi Service for JARC – funding for employees who work odd hours. KAT has also recently submitted a Community Service/Service Development grant application for a van to expedite service for medical transit. KAT plans to work with the Area Agency on Aging for this application.

KAT was to begin a new program on January 2, 2007 that proposed to subsidize the Willmar Taxi Service to provide rides for persons to and from work during early morning, evening, and hours when KAT does not provide service. This plan, however, has ended with recent news that the Willmar Taxi Service has ceased operations. The plan would have offset taxi fares during the hours of 4-6 a.m. and 6-10 p.m. However, KAT is exploring a variety of options to help meet these transportation needs. One option being considered is to purchase the taxi vehicle and lease it to a contracted driver. The KAT Board is also considering the purchase of a handicapped-accessible van to use for provision of the service. The cost for this van is approximately \$30,000 to \$40,000. Another option is to expand bus service to cover these hours. However, this option is thought to be cost prohibitive for KAT. Their Operations Board will review the options proposed, and make recommendations to KAT's Joint Powers Board.

The Trailblazer Transit Program has taken over transportation service for a number of organizations. Examples of this are the high school volunteer driver program that was absorbed into their services. Calls for Volunteer drivers now go through their office. The City of Hutchinson rolled their City's Public Transit System into Trailblazer. Glencoe Area Health's transportation service was also absorbed. They were one of the 5310 Programs before this occurred, and they provided rides throughout the county for basically medical appointments. The Program coordinates and provides a large number of rides for the Adult Training and Habilitation Center, who was also a 5310 organization at one time. The County Human Services Department and the County Veteran Services coordinates with Trailblazer and much of their clientele is provided rides through the program. Recently, McLeod County Human Services was awarded a DHS grant for a bus that was given to Trailblazer to increase McLeod County service.

Meeker County Transit has coordinated their program with a number of entities. With an agreement between senior housing, EconoFoods, and the Transit Program, seniors are taken on a grocery run on Tuesdays. The system has coordinated with Meeker County Human Services and Public Health with providing rides for the WIC program, MA, and therapy groups traveling to Woodland Centers. Coordination with these county departments also has established a voucher program for transit to transport county employees and their clients, Head Start children, and persons involved with Jobs & Training Program. The System has a third party contract with Hicks Bus Lines for contract drivers, maintenance, and bus storage. ProWorks has a contract with the Transit Program to provide rides for some of their clients. As a result, ProWorks was able to give up one of their buses. They also have a contract with West Central Industries to bring clientele from Litchfield to West Central Industry's facility in Hutchinson. In addition, the volunteer transportation program has been folded into the operation.

Renville County Heartland Express has also done a good job with coordinating their system. Coordination currently takes place with Heart-To-Heart Adult Day Care, Senior Dining sites, assisted living units, the Renville County Community Residences, Glesener's, Inc., the Christian Community Outreach Center's after school minority program at Bird Island's elementary school, the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Program, and the Work Force Center. The Transit Program contracts with Renville County Human Services to provide rides reimbursed through Medical Assistance payments. An example includes clients served by the Heart-To-Heart Elderly Day Care Program at Renville County Hospital. The RenVilla Nursing Home gave up ownership of a bus because it utilizes the Transit Program. Olivia Healthcare Center and the Buffalo Lake Health Care Center also use the services of the Transit Program, although Buffalo Lake's operation still owns a bus. Lastly, the Transit Program works with the Redwood Falls Elderly Day Service Program to transport clientele every Wednesday through a bus or a volunteer driver.

SECTION 3: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 3 of this plan will provide a transportation need assessment within Region Six-East. This assessment will focus on the needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with limited incomes. Through analysis of the available services highlighted in Section 2 of this plan to the needs that were identified and discussed in this section, there will be a discussion of the gaps in service, as well as identification of any duplication of services. Section 4 of this plan will then discuss strategies and implementation steps to help fill the gaps identified or overcome duplication of services.

This section contains a discussion of economic/demographic trend analysis, documentation of customer needs and expectations, including human service issues and needs. These needs were gathered by several means, including a survey of providers, a workshop, individual discussions with agencies, and past studies. The Section will include service analysis based on “Level of Service” measures that were developed by the State’s Department of Transportation’s Transit Office.

Section 3.01: Demographic Trends Within Region Six-East

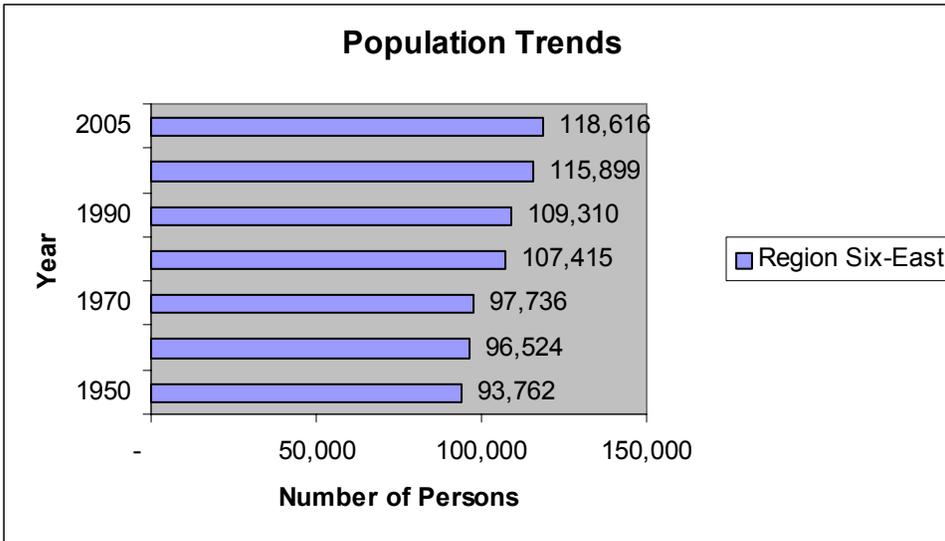
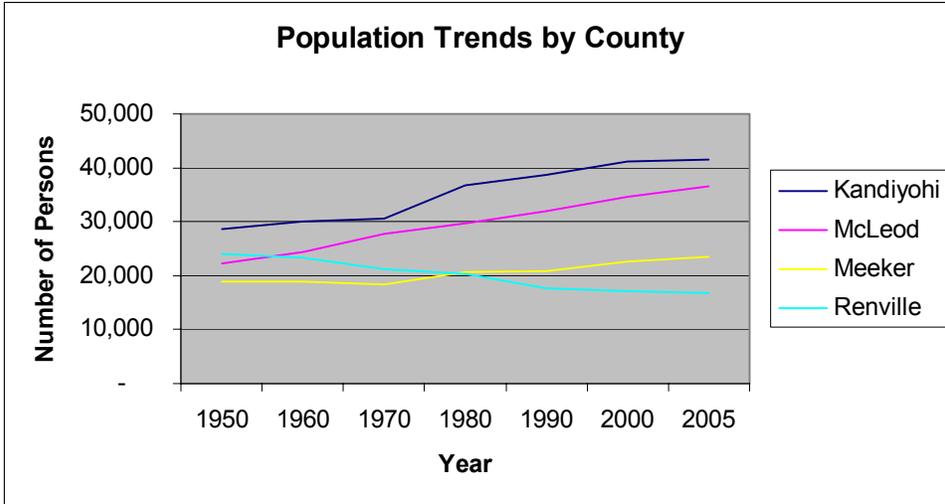
This chapter of the Plan will look at the Region Six-East’s demographics through trend analysis and comparisons to the entire state. The three principal need groups shall be highlighted in this demographic chapter: elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and persons with low incomes. All data in this chapter comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, with the exception of 2005 population estimates from the Minnesota State Demographer’s Office.

Region Six-East’s population trend shows that two counties (Kandiyohi and McLeod) have seen moderately strong population growth through the years. Meeker County has seen growth, but at a slower rate, while Renville County has seen it’s population decline during the past several decades. Overall, Region Six-East has shown moderate growth with predictions for this growth to continue over the next decade. If a change in the past trend is to occur, the likelihood will be an increase in the rate of population growth. The expanding Twin Cities metropolitan area is having an influence on the east side of the Region, while Kandiyohi County, with the Regional Center of Willmar, has the possibility to step up population growth due to the strength of it’s economy and improved transportation connections. Below are the population trends for the Region since 1950.

Population Trends

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>Six-East</u>
1950	28,644	22,198	18,966	23,954	93,762
1960	29,987	24,401	18,887	23,249	96,524
1970	30,548	27,662	18,387	21,139	97,736
1980	36,763	29,657	20,594	20,401	107,415
1990	38,761	32,030	20,846	17,673	109,310
2000	41,203	34,644	22,644	17,154	115,899
2005	41,487	36,642	23,416	16,771	118,616

Source: U.S. Census, and for 2005, State Demographers Population Estimates



Population trends also show growth of the Region’s elderly population. The most rapid growth is currently occurring in persons who are 75 years old and older. The Region currently has a significantly higher percentage of elderly persons who are 65 years old and older when compared to the entire state. In 2000, the percentage of persons in Minnesota that were 65 years old and over was 12.1 percent of the total population. In comparison, the 2000 Census showed the following percentages for the Region’s four counties: Kandiyohi 15.3 percent; McLeod 13.7 percent; Meeker 16.0 percent; and Renville 18.8 percent. The number and percentage of elderly persons will continue to increase over the next decade. Below is the growth in population of elderly persons within the Region between 1990 and 2000:

Population Sixty Years and Older

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>Six-East</u>
1990	7,465	6,043	4,568	4,510	22,586
2000	7,808	6,127	4,659	4,126	22,720

Population Seventy-five Years and Older

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>Six-East</u>
1990	2,741	2,325	1,678	1,758	8,502
2000	3,219	2,571	1,943	1,843	9,576

Population Eighty-five Years and Older

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>Six-East</u>
1990	776	629	447	503	2,355
2000	930	719	638	558	2,845

The statistics shown for persons with disabilities below are for the “civilian, non-institutionalized” population only. Region Six-East has a slightly higher percentage of persons, age 5 and older, that have a disability. Minnesota has 14.6 percent of the population with a disability compared to 15.7 percent of Region Six-East’s age 5 and older population.

This trend continues with elderly persons with disabilities. Each of the four counties within the Region have a significantly higher percentage of persons 65 years and older with a disability than that shown for the entire state.

Persons With a Disability 5 Years and Older

	Number	Percentage
Kandiyohi	6,437	16.7
McLeod	4,533	14.1
Meeker	3,465	16.4
Renville	2,613	15.6
Six-East	17,048	15.7
Minnesota	679,236	14.6

The number of persons with a disability within the 16 to 64 year-old age bracket within the Region is 9,956 persons in 2000. The breakdown of these persons by county is as follows: Kandiyohi with 3,979; McLeod with 2,627; Meeker with 1,986; and Renville with 1,364. The number of persons in the Region that are 65 and older with a disability in 2000 was 6,160 persons. The breakdown of these persons by county is as follows: Kandiyohi with 1,990; McLeod with 1,746; Meeker with 1,294; and Renville with 1,130. Other 2000 Census data on disability status is shown in the following tables:

For 2000, Percentage of Persons Five Years and Older With:

	<u>Any Disability</u>	<u>Sensory</u>	<u>Physical</u>	<u>Mental</u>	<u>Self Care</u>
Kandiyohi	17.0%	3.4%	6.9%	4.7%	2.6%
McLeod	14.1%	3.0%	5.7%	3.2%	1.8%
Meeker	16.7%	3.3%	7.9%	4.1%	2.6%
Renville	16.5%	3.4%	7.3%	3.3%	1.7%

For 2000, Percentage of Persons 18 to 64 Years Old With an Employment Disability:

<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>
10.5%	8.6%	9.8%	9.3%

For 2000, Civilian Non-institutionalized Population Aged 21 to 64 that are Disabled and Employed:

<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>Minnesota</u>
68.3%	71.0%	61.3%	68.2%	65.0%

While the Counties within Region Six-East have both a much lower per capita income and median household income than the state as a whole, the gap has closed somewhat between the 1990 and 2000 Census. Please see the tables below for a detailed look at this data:

Per Capita Income

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>State</u>
1989	\$ 11,574	\$ 12,689	\$ 10,843	\$ 10,795	\$ 14,387
1999	\$ 19,677	\$ 20,137	\$ 18,628	\$ 17,770	\$ 23,198
Increase	70.0%	58.7%	71.8%	64.6%	61.2%

Median Household Income

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>State</u>
1989	\$ 25,368	\$ 29,549	\$ 24,516	\$ 23,278	\$ 30,909
1999	\$ 39,772	\$ 45,953	\$ 40,908	\$ 37,652	\$ 47,111
Increase	56.8%	55.5%	66.9%	61.7%	52.4%

As can be seen from the tables above, McLeod County is much closer to the state's figures for both per capita income and median household income than the Region's other three counties. McLeod County has a larger percentage of the county's workforce working at higher paying manufacturing jobs. The higher percentage of elderly households within Kandiyohi, Meeker, and Renville Counties also is a factor with McLeod County having higher income figures.

Between 1989 and 1999, the Census has shown that the number and percentage of persons below the poverty level has been reduced on the regional level. The percentage of persons below the poverty level has also improved on the state level as well. Region Six-East has gone from having a slightly higher percentage of persons in poverty in 1989 to having a percentage that was slightly less than the state's percentage in 1999. The tables below show further information on poverty level status and income.

Persons below Poverty Level

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>Six-East</u>	<u>State</u>
1989	5,164	2,375	2,199	2,233	11,971	-
1999	3,696	1,653	1,571	1,471	8,391	-
1989	13.7%	7.5%	10.8%	12.9%	11.2%	10.2%
1999	9.2%	4.8%	7.1%	8.8%	7.4%	7.9%

Hispanic Persons below Poverty Level 2000

<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Six-East</u>
1031	131	45	302	27,727	1,509
32.4%	12.1%	12.7%	34.4%	20.1%	27.4%

Region Six-East has 4 percent of the State's Hispanic Population.

Region Six-East has 5.4 percent of the State's Hispanic Population that are in poverty.

Persons 65 and Older (Non-Institutionalized) Below Poverty Level 2000

<u>Kandiyohi</u>	<u>McLeod</u>	<u>Meeker</u>	<u>Renville</u>	<u>Six-East</u>	<u>State</u>
845	584	490	449	2,368	
7.9%	8.1%	13.8%	8.1%	9.2%	8.2%

The 2000 Census showed that 13,195 households within Region Six-East had income from social security. This is 29.5 percent of the total households. The table below shows how that breaks out for each of the Region's four counties.

Social Security Income In 1999 For Households

	Minnesota	Kandiyohi	McLeod	Meeker	Renville
Total:	1,896,209	15,973	13,478	8,563	6,759
With Social Security income	453,443	4,654	3,622	2,586	2,333
No Social Security income	1,442,766	11,319	9,856	5,977	4,426

The 2000 Census showed that 1,385 Households within Region Six-East had public assistance. This is 3.1 percent of the total households. The table below shows how that breaks out for each of the Region's four counties.

Public Assistance Income In 1999 For Households

	Minnesota	Kandiyohi	McLeod	Meeker	Renville
Total:	1,896,209	15,973	13,478	8,563	6,759
With public assistance income	65,144	647	320	242	176
No public assistance income	1,831,065	15,326	13,158	8,321	6,583

The table below shows that in 1999, the Region had 3,187 families (10.2%) that had incomes below \$20,000. This compares to 9.6 percent of state-wide families with incomes below \$20,000. A total of 949 families (3%) in Region Six-East made less than \$10,000 in 1999. This is only slightly better than the state's percentage of 3.1 percent

Family Income In 1999

	Minnesota	Kandiyohi	McLeod	Meeker	Renville
Total:	1,262,953	11,047	9,457	6,168	4,605
Less than \$10,000	39,374	388	165	218	178
\$10,000 to \$14,999	35,957	434	233	179	159
\$15,000 to \$19,999	46,279	443	283	273	234
\$20,000 to \$24,999	56,847	707	530	357	269
\$25,000 to \$29,999	63,240	789	464	471	325
\$30,000 to \$34,999	68,868	780	548	432	369
\$35,000 to \$39,999	69,984	649	603	493	362
\$40,000 to \$44,999	73,217	764	596	414	401
\$45,000 to \$49,999	72,690	833	600	419	337
\$50,000 to \$59,999	146,372	1,377	1,443	806	700
\$60,000 to \$74,999	188,363	1,585	1,731	921	580
\$75,000 to \$99,999	193,868	1,323	1,428	685	424
\$100,000 to \$124,999	92,157	478	453	267	132
\$125,000 to \$149,999	43,927	148	153	121	57
\$150,000 to \$199,999	35,640	185	114	62	36
\$200,000 or more	36,170	164	113	50	42

The table below shows that in 1999, the Region had 5,965 (44.2%) non-family households that had incomes below \$20,000. This compares to 35.3 percent of state-wide families with incomes below \$20,000. A total of 2,540 (18.8%) non-family households in Region Six-East made less than \$10,000 in 1999. In comparison, the state had 14.8 percent of non-family households with incomes under \$10,000.

Non-Family Household Income In 1999

	Minnesota	Kandiyohi	McLeod	Meeker	Renville
Total:	633,256	4,926	4,021	2,395	2,154
Less than \$10,000	93,792	982	630	570	358
\$10,000 to \$14,999	69,182	713	504	306	277
\$15,000 to \$19,999	59,732	608	472	280	265
\$20,000 to \$24,999	59,223	533	450	237	269
\$25,000 to \$29,999	54,694	501	437	214	254
\$30,000 to \$34,999	51,778	360	313	171	164
\$35,000 to \$39,999	41,913	281	292	118	137
\$40,000 to \$44,999	36,314	203	177	104	94
\$45,000 to \$49,999	27,043	127	181	50	85
\$50,000 to \$59,999	44,410	190	190	105	87
\$60,000 to \$74,999	39,204	159	217	121	82
\$75,000 to \$99,999	29,505	130	100	53	48
\$100,000 to \$124,999	12,019	50	35	20	14
\$125,000 to \$149,999	4,755	17	6	15	10
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4,316	33	6	13	2
\$200,000 or more	5,376	39	11	18	8

The 2000 Census also had a question on means of transportation to work for those workers 16 years old and over. The table below shows that 448 persons indicated that they took public transportation to work, of which 285 are from Kandiyohi County.

Means of Transportation To Work For Workers 16 Years and Over

	Minnesota	Kandiyohi	McLeod	Meeker	Renville
Total:	2,541,611	20,815	18,233	10,969	8,176
Car, truck, or van:	2,236,358	18,701	16,311	9,700	6,903
Drove alone	1,971,668	16,340	14,290	8,494	6,001
Carpooled	264,690	2,361	2,021	1,206	902
Public transportation:	81,276	285	88	26	49
Bus or trolley bus	78,691	267	74	26	47
Streetcar or trolley car	317	0	0	0	0
Subway or elevated	202	0	0	0	0
Railroad	164	0	2	0	0
Ferryboat	110	0	0	0	2
Taxicab	1,792	18	12	0	0
Motorcycle	1,347	0	18	0	4
Bicycle	10,096	37	47	42	24
Walked	84,148	637	635	433	428
Other means	11,732	95	60	79	31
Worked at home	116,654	1,060	1,074	689	737

Section 3.02: Region Six-East Transit Stakeholder Questionnaire

Summary Report

In September of 2006, The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission conducted a survey for the purpose of gathering information for this plan. There were a total of 62 returned surveys, from a total of 220 that were sent out, for a return rate of 28.2 percent. The survey was sent to current transportation providers, non-profit human service agencies, churches, and other agencies, organizations, and businesses that have clientele that are elderly, low income, or have disabilities. The mixture of return surveys will give a good picture of transportation needs within the Region. The survey was returned by all four county transit operations, as a key component in determining current transit conditions. The survey had responses from 22 public agencies, 26 private non-profit agencies, 10 private for profit businesses, and 4 religious organizations that marked other on question 9 about type of agency.

The organizations that returned the survey are located throughout the Region. Many of the organizations serve a larger area than the county they are based in. Thirty-four of the reporting agencies serve Kandiyohi County, 17 serve McLeod County, 28 serve Meeker County, and 26 serve Renville County. Twenty-three of the agencies serve a county or counties outside of the Region besides serving within the Region.

Transportation Needs Analysis On Questions That Are Not Open-Ended

Question 13 asked if it is possible people could not access their services due to a lack of available transportation. Twenty-eight (45%) answered yes to this question. For those agencies that answered yes, some indicated an estimated number of persons that cannot access their services due to unavailable transportation. These numbers covered a wide range from 1 to 1,040 persons.

Fifty-nine (95%) of the survey respondents said yes to **Question 14**, which asked if their agency serves people who are transportation disadvantaged. This means a person has personal limitations that may limit their ability or cause difficulty in getting to places they need or want to go.

Question 15 asked what types of transportation-disadvantaged persons they transport. The question means they have at least one client that meets these various personal limitations. The survey results show that many respondents answered all or most of the personal limitation choices given. Each of the limitations listed had a significant number of respondents indicating they have clientele meeting that description. The most frequent answer was persons with low incomes at 49 (79 %), followed by physical limitations at 48 (77.4%) checked responses. The least category of personal limitations that was checked was clientele with language limitations. Thirty-six (58.1%) checked language, which is still a large percentage of organizations that have clientele with this limitation when it comes to transportation needs. The complete results for Question 15 are as follows:

	<u>Number Checked</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Cognitive	43	69.4
Dexterity	39	62.9
Endurance	44	71.0
Experience	45	72.6
Hearing	42	67.7
Low income	49	79.0
Language	36	58.1
Physical	48	77.4
Vision	46	74.2

Question 16 and 17 asked about vehicles. Twenty-four respondents (38.7%) indicated that their agency/organization/business staff uses their own vehicles to transport clientele. Twenty-seven respondents (43.5%) of the organizations responding to the survey operate their own or leased vehicle(s) to transport passengers. **Question 18** asked organizations to describe the vehicles that they use to provide transportation. Six organizations use sedans or station wagons, 8 have vans or minivans, 2 have small buses, 6 have medium buses, and 5 have large buses. In most cases those who answered had more than one vehicle type that they utilize. Most all the buses, outside the large school buses, are equipped with wheelchair capacity and lifts/ramps.

Question 22 is one of the key questions on the survey to help determine transportation needs in the Region. The question asks if transportation is a barrier or obstacle in accessing services for your clients/consumers and to rank in priority the answers given. The following shows how many respondents checked the following barriers as applying to their agency’s situation:

	<u>Checked</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
No transportation services available	14	22.6%
Existing transportation providers too costly	18	29.0%
Existing transportation services don’t operate the same hours as when people need transportation	33	53.2%
Existing transportation services don’t go to locations where needed services are located	25	40.3%
Other obstacles or barriers	7	11.3%

It is important to also note that 21 (33.9%) of the respondents did not answer Question 22. It can only be assumed that these respondents do not believe their clients/consumers have any transportation obstacles in going to or returning from their facilities, or riding with them on their transportation service.

Some respondents checked only those that they believe apply to their organization without ranking them in order. For those respondents who did rank the importance of these barriers and obstacles there are some minor changes in emphasis as shown above. Hours of transportation availability still are the highest need but to a lesser degree when considering an agency’s top two priorities. Nineteen respondents had hours of operation as one of their two top priorities. Both too costly and not going to the location where needed tied with 17 respondents scoring them in their top two priorities. No transportation services available had 10 respondents indicate they are a first or second priority. Four respondents indicated that an “other” obstacle is either first or second on their priority list.

Survey respondents, for whom current transportation service does not meet their needs, were given the opportunity to identify needed locations. The survey answers to this question had a number of answers but two key trends emerged. First, a number of respondents mentioned the need to go out of the county for appointments. The Twin Cities was mentioned most, but St. Cloud and Willmar were also mentioned, as was a more generic statement of needed transportation outside the county. The second major area of location need problems was the service provided to the rural areas, and smaller communities of the counties. These comments were made for each of the four counties. All comments made can be read under the comment section of this report.

For those survey respondents that indicated “other” obstacles or barriers to needed services there were no clear trends. A couple comments, again, discussed the need for better service to the smaller communities and rural areas within the counties. It was also mentioned that when service is given to these rural communities it is often not at times when it would do their clients any good. A respondent in Renville County was concerned about no guarantee that a person will be picked up in a timely manner. There was a comment that the “transit

service available is not always appropriate to the special needs population.” Another response was that some elderly find it difficult to “manage the bus.” Another comment under this section was that there are not enough buses to cover the needs in the City of Litchfield. Lastly, there was a comment made that transportation services are needed in the evening hours and in the early morning to bring commuters to work that do not work the classic 8:00 to 5:00 job.

Question 24 asked about days and hours of operation. There were 38 respondents who answered this question. Of these 38 respondents, eleven did not show days or hours, but indicated that service was either as needed or available 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The few that indicated all days and all hours were principally the private medical transportation providers. One respondent answered “as available” to this question.

Of the 26 respondents who filled in the day and hour data, there were 12 that operated Monday through Saturday, another 14 who operate Monday through Friday. Three respondents operate something less than Monday through Friday. Several wrote down they operate on Sunday, even though this was not asked. Those who said they operate on Sundays were mostly churches.

Most respondents answered that the hours they serve are mornings and afternoons. Only eight respondents indicated that they provide transportation service after 6:00 p.m. Three of these eight respondents provided this evening service less than five days a week. One respondent did not give the hours of service, but just said that hours vary.

Question 25 asked the survey respondents to check all that apply for “special needs of your passengers.” The largest response was passengers with physical disabilities with 43 (69.4%) of the respondents checking it as a need. Thirty-eight (61.3%) of the respondents indicated that elders/frail people are among their passengers. For the four respondents who checked “other,” three gave answers that were more aimed at what the special needs rider may use or bring onto a vehicle. This included two comments about wheelchairs and scooters, and one comment about how to handle personal items such as groceries, baggage, and car seats. The other comment added to “other” mentioned emergency transportation. The complete breakdown for this question is as follows:

What are the special needs of your passengers? Check all that apply:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number checked</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Infants	17	27.4
Children	25	40.3
Physical Disability	43	69.4
Elders/Frail people	38	61.3
Mental Impairments	36	58.1
Interpreters	12	19.4
Escorts/Personal Care		
Attendants	28	45.2
Other	4	6.5

Question 26 asked if the agency uses paid or volunteer drivers, where mileage reimbursement is involved, and also asked for the number of drivers used. Only 19 (30.1%) of the survey respondents answered that they have paid drivers. The range of paid drivers on staff was from 3 drivers to 125 drivers. The median response for those who answered this question was around 8 to 10 paid drivers. Thirteen (21.0%) survey respondents answered that they use volunteer drivers. The number of volunteer drivers ranged from 2 to 35 drivers, with the median response approximately 4 to 9 volunteers.

Question 26 also asked the question “where do you get your volunteer drivers?” The most frequent response to this question is via members/internally and/or through using staff. The next most common answer was using volunteers from their community. Other single comments were a driver pool, via interview, through people they know and network with, and through word of mouth.

Question 27 asked how many hours per month do employees spend arranging rides for their clients/consumers/passengers. The answers varied a great deal, obviously corresponding to a great extent on the number of clients that an agency/business transports.

Question 28 through Question 36 sought to learn more details on those agencies and businesses that provide transportation services. The majority of survey respondents did not answer these questions, as many do not provide their own transportation services to their clientele. There are both large and small transportation providers that answered the survey, thus the answers given varied greatly.

The number of hours, per month, that employees spend transporting passengers ranged from 2 hours to 2,600 hours. Besides the business that showed the 2,600 hours per month, there was only one other business with as many as 1,500 hours per week. There is a large drop off to 400 hours for the third highest response to this question, with the majority of the respondents answering 60 or fewer hours. Businesses and agencies that provide transportation services as their principal business had the highest numbers of hours transporting passengers. The number of hours employees spend transporting persons, the number of individual clients transported, and the number of miles put on vehicles followed the same pattern as described above. The range goes from very little to a very large amount for each of these questions. Slightly over one-half of the survey respondents serve less than 100 individual clients, had fewer than 100 passenger trips, and spent less than 100 hours transporting passengers per month. Twenty survey respondents indicated that they do assist passengers to and from their vehicles.

The Questionnaire’s Open-Ended Questions

Throughout most of the questions that asked about issues and needs on the questionnaire, there were some key themes that were repeated throughout the answers given. Answers are available to read in the detailed survey results, but the highlights will be discussed here.

There were many similar comments made by a number of the survey respondents. The most frequent comment made was that there is a lack of funding for transportation, and that this funding problem is directly linked to most of the other needs and concerns that were mentioned. Returned comments can be separated into the following broad categories: availability needs, affordability, vehicle/infrastructure needs, driver/staff needs, special needs, and policy problems. Each of these broad areas of needs and concerns will be discussed in greater detail below.

Availability Needs/Issues

When discussing availability, much of what was written can be separated into either hours of operation problems or lack of service tied to location. A number of survey respondents discussed the need for weekend and after-hour/evening service. Churches primarily could use transportation service on Sundays. There are low-income persons that work other hours than the traditional 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. jobs that would be helped if transportation were made available during these non-traditional times. Evening classes, social events, and meetings were mentioned.

The need to transport persons to and from areas with no coverage or poor coverage was also highlighted by a number of survey respondents throughout their open-ended comments. Service to rural areas of the county and to the smaller communities within the county were both mentioned a number of times. The need to transport clients over the county line, particularly for medical appointments to the Twin Cities, Willmar, and St. Cloud was mentioned by several of the respondents. Crossing the county lines to get to the agency's facility was also mentioned as a need.

There are other comments that best fit under availability needs that were highlighted in the open-ended question results. The long waits between being dropped off and picked up, again, was a concern by several respondents. The lack of flexibility was mentioned numerous times. Scheduling problems were mentioned, including the issue raised about the availability of transportation when needs arise at short notice. One respondent wanted to be given a bus schedule, thus in certain instances better marketing needs to take place. One respondent indicated a need for transportation to go store to store, i.e. Cashwise Foods to Cub Foods.

Special Needs/Issues

Some specialized needs of individual clients were also mentioned in the open-ended survey answers. Some respondents did not get into detail, but just mentioned that they have clients with specialized needs that make their transportation needs difficult. One respondent indicated a need for special needs individuals who cannot independently ride the bus. Others similarly discussed the need of escorts needed for some of their clientele. Another special need that was highlighted by several respondents was the needed improvement for staff to be able to communicate to minority individuals who lack English language skills.

Driver and Other Personnel Needs/Issues

Finding volunteers to provide transportation was mentioned throughout the survey by a number of respondents. A couple mentioned that high gas prices have a negative impact on volunteers. Driver qualifications were mentioned by one of the respondents.

For professional staff, one key area that was mentioned was the need for more bilingual and culturally competent staff. Consumer service skills are lacking, mentioned one of the respondents. Another respondent wrote, “some clients have complained the county service is very unfriendly and the coordinators intimidating enough that they don’t want to call in for assistance.”

Vehicle/Infrastructure Needs/Issues

The most frequent concern of the respondents that indicated a need/concern within this area was the need for wheelchair lifts for persons in wheelchairs as well as those who use scooters. There was a comment that there is a need for smaller vehicles, such as vans, that can reach out more easily to the rural areas and also give more specialized service. One respondent thought that the transit buses need better shocks for the back roads that are traveled. Another respondent mentioned the need for air conditioning. Another reported problem was with volunteer drivers that use pickups or sports cars. These can cause problems for some clients to get in and out of the vehicle. Two non-vehicle issues were mentioned in the survey return. One organization mentioned that a number of businesses do not have accessible businesses, i.e. electronic doors or wide doors to accommodate their clients that utilize scooters. Another organization mentioned that there should be change or token machines at various locations.

Policy Problems and Other Needs/Issues

There were a number of comments made that either dealt with how the current transportation system operates, the current policies that are in effect, and other general statements of needs and concerns that do not readily fit into any category. Below are the comments that have been received from the questionnaire. Many of these items were identified as barriers to achieving transportation coordination. One of the most frequent responses under this category was that insurance requirements can prohibit transit carriers from seeking ways to for coordination of rides. Another problem identified was with rules that dictate to whom a transportation provider may provide rides for specific clients. Interagency billing and payment problems were also mentioned by a couple of respondents about coordination issues.

Turf protection was also discussed by a couple of respondents. Another agency stated there is a lack of incentive for coordination to occur. One respondent indicated that a flexible pot of money like AAA Title III-B would be good without the corresponding administration requirements. Cutting red tape was mentioned. Another respondent mentioned the approval process for MA recipients was a problem with coordination efforts. Another respondent felt

that future transit surveys need to be also written in Spanish and Somali to better capture the opinions from these two communities.

Lastly, there were a couple comments that cautioned about working towards better coordination of services. One respondent wrote that coordination has lead to higher costs, less efficiencies, and greater fraud. Another respondent thought that coordination efforts lead to lower quality of service.

Tabulation Of Non-Open Ended Questions

9. Is your Agency Public, Private For Profit, Private Non-Profit, or Other?

Public:	22 (35.5%)
Private non-profit:	26 (41.9%)
Private for-profit:	10 (16.1%)
Other:	4 (6.5%)

10. List each county your agency serves:

Kandiyohi:	34
McLeod	17
Meeker	28
Renville	26
Other Counties	23

13. Is it possible people cannot access your services due to lack of available transportation?

Yes: 28 (45.2%) No: 32 (51.6%) No Answer: 2

If yes, please estimate the number of people per year: 3,134 persons

14. Does your agency serve people who are transportation disadvantaged? (Persons classified as “transportation disadvantaged” have personal limitations that may limit one’s ability or cause difficulty in getting to places they need or want to go.)

Yes: 59 (95%)

15. Personal Limitations (please check all that apply:)

	<u>Checked</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Cognitive	43	69.4
Dexterity	39	62.9
Endurance	44	71.0
Experience	45	72.6
Hearing	42	67.7
Low Income	49	79.0
Language	36	58.1
Physical	48	77.4
Vision	46	74.2

Vehicles

16. Does your agency/org/business staff use their own vehicles to transport people?

Yes: 24 (38.7%) No: 38 (61.3%)

17. Does your agency operate its own or leased vehicles to transport passengers?

Yes: 27 (43.5%) No: 35 (56.5%)

18. Please describe the vehicles used to provide transportation.

Sedans/Station Wagons	6 Have
Vans/Minivans	8 Have
Small Bus < 10 passengers	2 Have
Medium Bus 11-20 passengers	6 Have
Large Bus > 20 passengers	5 Have

22. Is transportation a barrier or obstacle in accessing services for your clients/consumers?

	<u>Checked</u>	<u>Percent</u>
No transportation services available	14	22.6
Existing transportation providers are too Costly	18	29.0
Existing transportation services don't operate the same hours as when people need transportation.	33	53.2
Existing transportation services don't go to locations where needed services are located	25	40.3
Other	7	11.3

Priority

No transportation services available

one priority: 9; # two priority: 1; # three priority: 3; # four priority: 2

Existing transportation providers are too Costly

one priority: 7; # two priority: 10; # three priority: 0; # four priority: 1

Existing transportation services don't operate the same hours as when people need transportation

one priority: 15; # two priority: 4; # three priority: 6; # four priority: 4

Existing transportation services don't go to locations where needed services are located

one priority: 7; # two priority: 10; # three priority: 5; # four priority: 4

Other # one priority: 7; # two priority: 2; # three priority: 2; # four priority: 0

Transportation Services

25. What are the special needs of your passengers? Check all that apply:

	<u>Checked</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Infants (car seat)	17	27.4
Children	25	40.3
Physical Disability	43	69.4
Elders/ Frail people	38	61.3
Mental Impairments	36	58.1
Interpreters	12	19.4
Escorts/Personal Care Attendants	28	45.2
Other	4	6.5

NOTE: For Questions Below, the first number given is the answer and the second number is the number of respondents who gave that number. Example: 1=3 means that the survey answer 1 was given by 3 survey respondents.

26. Does your agency have paid or volunteer drivers?

Paid Drivers Yes: 19 (30.1%)

Number of paid drivers: 1=3, 2=1, 4=1, 5=1, 8=2, 10=1, 13=1, 15=1, 17=1, 19=1, 35=1, 125=1 No Answers: 47

Volunteer Drivers (mileage reimbursement) Yes: 13 (21.0%)

Number of volunteer drivers: 2=1, 3=2, 4=2, 9=1, 25=2, 35=1
No Answers: 53

27. Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend arranging rides for your clients / consumers / passengers? No Answers: 28

1=4, 2=3, 3=3, 4=2, 5=2, 6=2, 10=6, 15=1, 18=1, 20=3, 22=1, 30=2, 60=1, 100=1, 175=1, 200=1, 315=1, 480=1, 1000=1, 1920=1

- 28. Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend transporting passengers?** No Answers: 45
2=1, 4=1, 6=1, 10=3, 20=1, 50=2, 60=2, 80=1, 100=1, 300=1, 400=1, 1500=1, 1920=1
- 29. Do you assist passengers to and from your vehicle(s)?**
Yes: 20 (32.3%) Somewhat: 3 (4.8%) No or No Answer: 39
- 32. How many passenger trips do you provide per month?** No Answers: 43
5=1, 6=1, 10=1, 12=1, 20=1, 21=1, 25=1, 40=1, 60=2, 100=1, 320=1, 1760=1, 3840=1, 4000=1, 8000=1, 10,000=1, 30,000=1
- 33. How many individual clients do you transport per month?** No Answers: 44
All numbers were given as answers one time
4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 15; 16; 20; 21; 44; 96; 120; 200; 750; 3000; 7500
- 34. Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend transporting passengers?** No Answers: 50
4=1, 5=1, 20=1, 25=1, 45=1, 60=2, 90=1, 1500=1, 2600=1, 4000=1, 15,000=1,
- 35. About how many vehicle miles per month do you operate transporting passengers?** No Answers: 50
All numbers were given as answers one time
10; 50; 55; 150; 250; 600; 2800; 3200; 20,000; 36,000; 50,000; 250,000

Section 3.03: Transportation Needs Identified At Plan's Workshop

On October 11, 2006, The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission held a Transportation Planning Workshop in the City of Willmar. The Commission followed a workshop design that was developed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Invitations were given to all agencies and businesses that received the above mentioned transportation questionnaire as well as an expanded listing of County Commissioners, and others who were invited to participate. The meeting was open to the general public, with legal workshop notifications that were placed in area newspapers. A total of 30 persons attended the meeting. The workshop had a very good mixture of persons from throughout the region, as well as a good mixture of different agencies, organizations, and businesses that serve persons with disabilities, the elderly, the low income, as well as other groups of persons.

The workshop had breakout sessions and open discussions of participants on their thoughts on the areas transportation needs and current gaps and challenges in service. The attendees also were stepped through a discussion on working on solutions to overcome these gaps, which will be discussed in Section 4 of this plan.

Needs and Gaps Identified At Workshop

The transportation needs identified at the workshop, for the most part, were the same needs that were identified on the survey. The need for additional funding was raised a number of times by many different individuals. Workshop participants generally agreed that the public transit programs in Region Six-East are doing a very good job with the resources they have. The transit programs are at capacity, and to expand service will take more resources, either by receiving more funding, or through additional coordination. Workshop participants did not believe that there would be any significant cost savings as a result of additional coordination. The widely held view of most of the workshop participants is that, while working on finding better coordination and cooperation possibilities is an important step to work on, additional funding is necessary to truly make a significant dent in the needs that were identified.

To better get a handle on the various needs that were identified at the workshop, the needs shall be grouped into several broad categories. Below are the needs identified at the workshop in these various categories.

Needs Based On a Location Issue:

- There needs to be more transportation service given to the smaller communities in the counties, as well as to the rural, non-municipal, areas.
- Better transportation service outside of the county is needed. This includes travel to a destination in a neighboring county; to out of county regional centers such as St. Cloud, Willmar, and Hutchinson.
- There is a desire for better transportation service to the Twin Cities.
- Transit has a hard time being able to bring persons from store to store, or appointment to appointment.

Needs Based on Times Available Issues:

- Related to the location issue of needing better rural county coverage, including the smaller municipalities, is that usually when service is offered to these rural areas, it is offered less than five days a week. Appointments must be scheduled accordingly. The transit service to these more rural areas are also for a shorter time period necessary to use the service for going to and from a person's job.
- There is a lack of transportation service during early morning, evening hours, and during the weekends. More hours in the day are necessary for those potential consumers who work other hours than the traditional 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. work hours. Many activities, meetings, etc, take place in the evening. Persons have needs for shopping, appointments, and getting to jobs during the weekends. Persons need transportation to church on Sunday mornings.
- Some organizations would like to utilize the transit programs for their group activities.

Needs of Persons That Have Specialized Transportation Needs

- There are some very frail elderly that are beyond the means of the public transit programs to accommodate. This is also true of some special needs clientele that have too high of a level of special care conditions for public transit to handle.
- There is a need for additional or expanded use of aids/escorts for clientele that with this assistance could be transported by public transit.
- There are some mixtures of clientele that would not mix together very well that could hinder some coordination opportunities.
- There is a considerable Hispanic and Somali population living in the Region that are in need of interpreters or staff that can speak to them in their native language. Instructions need to be written in Hispanic and Somali also. Staff should be encouraged to learn about cultural differences.

Needs Related to Personnel and Equipment

- It is difficult to find enough qualified volunteer drivers to fulfill the need of the volunteer driver programs. There is also a shortage of persons who will volunteer as escorts.
- It is difficult to attract and keep qualified part-time paid drivers for the transit buses.
- Additional buses are needed to expand service, and additional operational funds are needed as well. The availability and financing of technology improvements, such as scheduling software, should be considered.

Other Identified Needs

- There is a need to better educate/communicate to riders and potential riders on how public transit works and what opportunities for transportation is available to them.
- Education also needs to focus on rider expectations on what public transit can and cannot provide. Riders, for example, need to realize that they may need to wait after their medical appointment to return home until another passenger's medical appointment has been completed.
- Even though public transit is affordable for many, there are some very low-income individuals who have affordability problems. Those low-income who need to purchase rides from private for-profit transportation providers have even a greater affordability problem.

Section 3.04: Region Six-East 5311 Public Transit System Report Cards

Using Level Of Service (LOS) criteria Shown Below

For Non-Fixed Route Transportation Provided:

Below is an exercise the Office of Transit wants included within all the transportation PT-HS Plans being prepared state-wide. This will allow for some comparisons to be made on a consistent basis. The Level of Service shown will be both what the public transit system showed in their plans to Mn/DOT, and also what service they try to provide above this level.

Days Per Week							
Hours Per Day	6 - 7	5	3 - 4	2	1	0.5	< 0.5
16+	LOS 1	LOS 2	LOS 4	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
12.0 - 15.9	LOS 2	LOS 3	LOS 4	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
9.0 - 11.9	LOS 3	LOS 4	LOS 4	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
4.0 - 8.9	LOS 5	LOS 5	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 7	LOS 8
< 4.0	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8	LOS 8	LOS 8

- **Kandiyohi Area Transit: LOS 3** (Monday through Friday 11.5 hours, Saturday 8.5 hours) To achieve LOS 2, KAT would need to run an extra 30 minutes a day on weekdays and an additional 3.5 hours on Saturday.
- **Trailblazer Transit (McLeod County): LOS 1** if volunteer driver program is included, bus service alone would be LOS 4 (Monday through Friday 11 hours) For the bus service to go to a LOS 3, Trailblazer would need to increase weekday service by 1 hour per day.
- **Meeker County Transit From Augustana Homes Inc.: LOS 4** For the City of Litchfield, **LOS 6** for areas outside of the City of Litchfield. Within the City of Litchfield, LOS 3 could be achieved by adding an additional hour of service each weekday. To achieve a higher LOS in rural parts of the county, the system would need to expand to accommodate more days and hours of service to communities other than Litchfield. Some communities would need to get service one more day a week, while others would require two more days per week.
- **Renville Heartland Express: LOS 4** (Monday through Friday, 11 hours per day.) To increase service to a LOS 3, Heartland Express would need to increase service by one hour each weekday.

LOS	Response Time	Comments
1	Up to 1/2 hour	Very prompt response; similar to exclusive ride taxi service.
2	More than 1/2 hour, & up to 2 hours	Prompt response; considered immediate response for DRT service.
3	More than 2 hours, but still same day service	Requires planning, but one can still travel the day the trip is requested.

4	24 hours in advance; next day service	Requires some advance planning.
5	48 hours in advance	Requires more advanced planning than next-day service.
6	More than 48 hours in advance, and up to 1 week	Requires advance planning.
7	More than 48 hours in advance, and up to 2 weeks	Requires considerable advance planning.
8	More than 2 weeks, or not able to accommodate trip	Requires significant advance planning.

- **Kandiyohi Area Transit: LOS 3,** KAT prefers and encourages a 24-hour notice for travel inside Willmar and a 48-hour advance notice for transportation outside of Willmar. The Program will allow same day calls, but the cost of the one-way ride increases by 75 cents. Thus rides are available at the LOS 3 level, but the cost is more for this service.
- **Trailblazer Transit: LOS 4,** Riders may be accommodated on the same day of contact, but at least a 24-hour notice is requested. More cases than not the system actually operates on a LOS 3 level.
- **Meeker County Transit: LOS 4,** A 24-hour advance notice is required to assure service, but same day calls for rides will be accommodated when possible. In most instances the LOS 3 level is achieved.
- **Renville Heartland Express: LOS 4,** A 24-hour advance notice is required to assure a ride, but the system is willing to accept rides on shorter notices if they can be fit into the schedule. Thus in most cases the LOS 3 level is achieved.

LOS	Assistance
1	Door Through Door
2	Door To Door
3	Curb To Curb
4	Transit Stop

When assistance is needed:

- **Kandiyohi Area Transit: LOS 3**
- **Trailblazer Transit: LOS 2**
- **Meeker County Transit: LOS 2**
- **Renville Heartland Express: LOS 2**

Section 3.05: Need Demonstrated Through Mn/DOT Greater Minnesota Studies/Plans

The Minnesota Department of Transportation's Office of Transit has conducted a couple of recent reports that show transportation needs of persons throughout Greater Minnesota. From these materials it is apparent that the needs seen in Region Six-East are similar to the needs found around the state.

The Transit Needs Assessment within Mn/DOT's 2001 Greater Minnesota Public Transportation Plan gave three methods that need to work together in order to eliminate the

gaps in service found in the state's Greater Minnesota transit systems by 2010. The first step is to make efficiency improvements to current services. "However, since current systems are relatively efficient, this action will satisfy only a small portion of the need" for additional trips (1.9 percent of the need). The second means to eliminate the gap in needed service levels is to "continue to coordinate and cooperate with special transportation services, such as those funded with Section 5310 funds." The plan indicates through these efforts, 16.8 percent of the transportation gap can be fulfilled. It is important to note that Region Six-East currently has only three Section 5310 Providers, and one of these is a current Public Transit Program system. Service expansion is looked upon to meet an additional 23.9 percent of the need by 2010. The hope of the plan is to meet 80 percent of the need in all 80 counties of Greater Minnesota by 2010. The plan also calls for maintaining the current productivity level (passengers per capita) for Greater Minnesota transit systems to meet the identified service gap. The plan also noted that, while the Greater Minnesota transit operators have demonstrated strong performance, they have not been able to meet all the mobility needs they have. "Expanded services to meet these needs cannot even be considered with the current level of federal, state, and local funding."

The Plan discussed a questionnaire conducted during the Fall of 2000, in which of the sixty-seven of the transit systems operating in Greater Minnesota were surveyed. There were 47 surveys returned. One of the questions asked systems to list improvements that could be made to satisfy unmet need. Of the thirty responses from non-urban transit systems, ten indicated more weekend service, six more evening service, and five said expand service hours. One question asked about the best coordination opportunities with other providers. In response, there were nine answers from 5310 buses/social services and nine responses from inter-community carriers (such as Greyhound). School districts and volunteer driver programs tied for third with 4 answers each. One half of the non-urban transit systems that answered the survey indicated that they thought there are opportunities for inter-jurisdictional services to areas outside their service area through better coordination/cooperation with neighboring county systems.

In May of 2000, Mn/DOT released a study entitled Greater Minnesota Transit Market Research Study. The report was conducted by SRF Consulting Group, Inc. and N.K. Friedrichs Consulting, Inc., and consisted of random and on-board surveys of residents and transit passengers.

From random sample surveys, the study indicated that six percent of respondents used some form of local bus service in the past twelve months. Awareness and use of local bus service for the general public is greatest among lower income households. The survey return showed, overall, "the largest share of respondents prefer the bus service area to cover several counties (53%). This share is significantly greater among respondents who live in smaller cities or rural areas (60%). Respondents who live in larger cities with a population over 5,000 have a greater need for buses to operate seven days a week."

"When asked to judge the trade-offs of service characteristics, respondents indicated that days of bus service was rated higher than size of area or service hours. Travel time was valued more than size of service area or service hours. The hours that service operates was

more important than wait time or size of service area, and less important than days that service operates and travel time. The size of the service area was valued less than service hours, travel time, or days that service operates.” The majority of respondents want the bus service to run longer hours and to run five to seven days per week. Respondents prefer that buses run from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m.

The random survey also asked about marketing techniques and system information. “Respondents indicated that bus route maps and telephone numbers to call for local transit-related information are the most desired types of information. Frequent users who say they ride the bus once a week or more often are also interested in a printed bus schedule and a list of bus fares. Respondents are most interested in obtaining information about local bus service in their community from their local newspaper, senior citizens centers, and at bus stops and bus waiting areas.”

The on-board survey that was conducted for the study separated results from small urban transit service areas and county transit service areas that included multi-county areas. There were some basic differences in the typical rider of these two service area types. Small Urban transit service areas were defined as small urban areas with less than 5,000 population, small urban areas with 5,000 to 10,000 population, and small urban areas with more than 10,000 population, but less than 50,000 population. “Transit users in small urban areas are predominantly female (ranging from 75% to 85%), and low income (ranging from 80% to 94% with incomes less than \$35,000) with some physical limitations (ranging from 50% to 60% had difficulty walking). The main purpose for use by small urban transit riders is work (ranging from 17% to 36%) and shopping (ranging from 32% to 44%), convenience (ranging from 16% to 30%), and car not available (ranging from 15% to 20%). Most small urban users (ranging from 77% to 83%) use transit regularly, at least two to three times per week.”

“Transit users in county service areas are predominantly elderly (ranging from 52% to 61% older than 65 years old), female (ranging from 72% to 78 %), and low income (ranging from 80% to 87% with incomes less than \$35,000) with some physical limitations (ranging from 37% to 45% had difficulty walking). The main purpose for use by county transit riders is shopping (ranging from 22% to 33%) and medical (ranging from 23% to 30%). The primary reasons for using transit are don’t or can’t drive (ranging from 38% to 46%), convenience (ranging from 22% to 24%), and car not available (ranging from 15% to 18%). Most county users (ranging from 56% to 64%) use transit regularly, at least 2-3 times per week.”

SECTION 4: STRATEGIES/IMPLEMENTATION

Section 4.01: Introduction

The following strategies derived by workshop attendees from October 11, 2006 are ranked in order of priority. The attendees worked in small groups and then met together as the full group to rank in order the recommendations. The cost of each strategy is dependent upon utilization of existing resources or seeking service improvements.

Section 4.02: Funding and Rule Change Encouragement

Strategy: *Targeted application for funds.*

Rationale: Transit providers are facing deficits in funding operational costs of programs and thereby compromising future services.

Actions: *Increase Availability of Operating Funds.*

- State and Federal funds are allocated based on criteria that include how funds are spent, need for service, volume of service provided, demand for service.
- Grant regulations-Providers feel that grant requirements are too cumbersome and require too much staff time to administer (Federal funds are needed, but available funds appear to be on the decline, i.e. Title III, and rules to apply have increased, and require a greater amount of staff time to administer).
- Maintain local transportation funding levels to make the money go farther, money for transit stays for transit, use that to make the services available; work with what you have. (Support the Transportation Amendment)
- Establish partnerships that can enter into joint venture grant applications
- Inform organizations about new funding opportunities, such as JARC and the New Freedom Program, and encourage organizations to apply for these programs to help fill gaps/needs in service.
- Work to better inform federal and state legislators about transit needs to encourage better financial support

Strategy: *Promote utilization of consumer directed funding for families.*

Rationale: Low income persons are unable to utilize funds available to them for services they require, such as getting to work, or attending children's' school conferences, or keeping appointments at Social Services.

Actions: *Relax rules for consumer utilization of Minnesota Department of Human Services funding, Promote utilization of flexible funds for riders*

- Put decision making for use of funds at the level of the consumer
- Work with legislators to change rules to meet needs of local agencies and citizens.

Strategy: *Promote, where practical, the easing or elimination of transportation funding rules that inhibit coordination and cooperation.*

Actions:

- Inform state and federal departments that provide funding for transportation about barriers their rules create in trying to better serve the public.
- Encourage state and federal departments to make changes in their internal rules that would allow better coordination opportunities.
- When rule changes are made, help inform organizations that provide transportation services about these changes, and how such changes may open the way for them to look at coordination opportunities.

Section 4.03: Awareness

Strategy: *Increase education, awareness and promotion of public transportation.*

Rationale: The group consensus was that education and awareness of available transit services should be an ongoing practice of transit providers, as the rider community continually changes, and the service is continually changing.

Actions:

- Promote inexpensive ways to alert the public (all ages, all populations) of transportation service availability. Utilize the following:
 - Church bulletins
 - Local access television
 - School announcements
 - Shoppers' ads
- Coordinate with service providers to educate and familiarize potential new riders of service availability.
- Identify needs of first time fearful riders. Provide volunteer or escort program for first-time riders. Provide orientation for first-time riders.
- Encourage coordination between school districts and public transit for students to attend after school events or other activities.
- Encourage bilingual escorts/drivers where needed.
- Share best practices across transit providers by encouraging regular communications.

Section 4.04: Flexible Schedules

Strategy: *Meet the needs of transportation before 7am and after 5pm Monday through Friday and additionally during Weekends. Currently there is limited transportation available at these times and days.*

Rationale: The needs of the rider public are changing. An increasing number of older adults are living independently and seeking ways to navigate their communities by using public transportation or volunteer driver programs. Another group of

persons requiring service on off peak hours are persons who work second shift work or overnight hours, such as for factory employment.

Flexibility in hours of operation in scheduling was reflected as a need in the open-ended questions received in the survey.

Actions:

- Provide transportation for medical appointments, shopping, second, and/or third shift workers.
- Keep marketing materials easy to understand-brochures.
- Provide education regarding schedules. Be sensitive to public perception regarding over-lapping of two buses at same location for two people.
- Coordinate transportation between counties to meet consumer needs.
- Provide additional staff, additional vehicles (more money).
- Promote increase in inter-agency coordination of scheduling
- Look for creative public and private partnerships to expand needed service. (See KAT example described on page 17.)
- Maximize use of technology to achieve electronic scheduling where appropriate
- Link websites between agencies, such as city websites, agency websites, and bus shelters.
- Provide bus schedules with list of scheduled stops
 - Expansion available
 - Most transit providers report that they currently are meeting capacity and would face concerns regarding safety issues
- Encourage agency networking. A semi annual schedule was suggested at the workshop; and the method and frequency of networking between agencies is limited only by technology. The purpose of the communications was to coordinate bus scheduling (routes, schedules, needs, etc).
- Support expansion of the volunteer and dial-a-ride programs

Section 4.05: Rural Transportation

Strategy: *Equip transit providers with flexibility in service provision in order to the needs of long distance, isolated, varied age population base.*

Rationale: Rural transit providers rely on volunteers for many aspects of service provision, from escorts on public transit to providing car rides with their own cars under the Title III funded volunteer program.

Actions:

- Providers require smaller handicapped accessible vehicles in order to better serve specialized populations
 - One option for purchase is an electric lift that converts a regular van into wheelchair accessible available from a company from North Dakota for non public transit provider

- Expand coordination of church based groups such as Common Cup in McLeod County
- Expand resources available to Rideshare Programs
- Provide resources available to agencies to expand car loan/donated car programs.
- Partner with technical college to borrow auto bay to repair donated automobiles.
- Increase availability of transportation for all populations living in rural/deep
 - For shopping or errand needs (store- to-store)
 - For increased transportation pick-up service (door-to-door)
- Arrowhead Transit Example
 - Coordinate delivery related services to reach isolated persons through providers who travel throughout a designated area. For example, provide delivery of prescriptions, groceries, etc through an agency whose primary purpose may be to travel rural roadways. A CAP agency is currently funded in the Arrowhead region to provide this coordinated service. Participant's agreed that this model is replicable.

Section 4.06: Summary of Strategies and Implementation:

The themes identified above: funding, education, flexibility, and needs surrounding rural transportation were derived from discussion at the workshop. As expected, these same themes were reflected in the survey results. The underlying approach to problem solving the identified solutions was offered from the consumer perspective. Transportation providers report that consumer expectations, needs, and standards are changing. The definition of transportation can mean different things to different people. One provider stated, “We need to be consistent in our definition before setting the standards by which we are funding transportation programs.”

As was discussed in Section Two, Kandiyohi Area Transit will be beginning a new program in January that will subsidize persons using Willmar Taxi service during the hours of 4-6 a.m. and 6-10 p.m. for assisting persons with getting to and from work. Details of the program are in the process of being developed. This concept has merit, and KAT should be given due recognition of looking to address needs by implementing such an innovative project.

Rural areas pose special challenges to transit providers such as long distances between stops and multiple stops. There is a balance that needs to be achieved before providers reach a point of diminishing returns. For example, disabled medically frail persons, older adults, and persons riding public transit for medical appointments report that multiple stops and long periods of time riding the bus is not the preferred mode of transit. Therefore, the volunteer programs and higher cost medical transport services are utilized for this specialized service.

The first priority, funding for operations and flexible funding for consumers, can be addressed by the strategies offered above. Flexibility in the use of funds by consumers who use public transit was identified as a need. The term ‘consumer directed funding for families’ was identified as a strategy that could allow families to use public transit to attend school conferences, get to work, shop for groceries, etc. As it is now, transit funding for low-income families is not flexible. Additionally, providers reported that additional funding for operations would be welcome. However, increased regulations regarding grant rules has required additional staff management time, which takes away from operations in small companies.

The second priority regarding strategies for increasing consumer awareness and community education can be addressed by a combination of combining existing resources and channeling new funding into operational costs. Service providers concur that community awareness is an ongoing need. However, it should be noted that since this has not been a priority, costs to education and awareness might increase. The needs of cultures other than the dominant culture will need to be addressed in this strategy. Workshop attendees agree that education, awareness, and community promotion of transportation programs on a continual basis is the key to addressing the changing levels of community understanding. As consumers’ needs change, so does the need to promote the transportation service available to disabled, elderly, and low-income persons.

Third, flexible scheduling was identified as a need due to changing consumer needs. This strategy was interesting in that the approaches to addressing the needs ranged from very low-tech bulletins, to very high-tech electronic scheduling. These examples are indicative of the level of customer responsiveness that transit providers would like to provide. As the population changes, both demographically and culturally, there is a need to be responsive to consumer needs. Many of the strategies identified address expansion or resurrection of existing programs, and will have minimal costs associated. However, as the demand for technology increases, so does the cost associated with the end product.

Finally, the fourth strategy, transportation to rural areas presents unique challenges when compared with city transportation. This is due to long travel distances. It should be noted that the perspective of the workshop attendees was to maximize the travel time and provide the best service possible. Coordinated transit appeals to providers in order make the best use of manpower and vehicle resources. The Arrowhead model presented wherein people, grocery, and prescription delivery was coordinated appeals to a model of sensible management style.

All of the public transit providers reported that they currently do not have excess capacity, and thus, the concept of coordination can pose concerns from at least this perspective. Small fleets have limited capability to address coordinating additional service needs beyond their own. The discussion also addressed the yet undefined concept of mobility manager, and recommended that as this concept evolves, to be successful, it should be consumer driven. A mobility manager, or possibly an optional name of regional transportation coordination manager, would be a helpful position to have if funding were made available. This position could work with all the various transportation providers and human service organizations within the region to work at making progress to the strategies highlighted above. The public transit programs, while key

players, cannot be expected to meet all the needs of the public, even if more resources are given to them. Each of the public transit systems operating within Region Six-East are all doing a good job with the resources given to them. All identified organizations and businesses identified in this plan must play a part if gaps in service need are to be significantly reduced. This possible transportation coordination position, if created, could keep coordination and cooperation on the forefront of the key players minds and work toward finding affordable solutions to the gaps and needs identified in this report.

In addition, significant progress on better coordination will also need fundamental rule changes by various state and federal agencies. There are numerous regulations in place that produce barriers to coordination and cooperation. While regulations are necessary to make sure various clientele are given the level of service necessary, there are cases where changes can be made without sacrificing this level of service. Identifying and changing these regulations will better allow coordination to occur. With input from the front line service agencies throughout the state, it would be helpful if a statewide committee of key transportation funding agencies be formed to see what compromises could be made. This committee could also look at what possible incentives could be offered to better encourage transportation coordination, as well as look for solutions for insurance barriers that stand in the way of some possible coordination arrangements.

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Appendix A:
Transportation Stakeholder
Questionnaire

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TRANSPORTATION STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONNAIRE

The first page of the questionnaire asks general information regarding your agency/organization. The last two pages are specific to transportation and access to services. If additional space is needed, please use additional pages.

Agency/Organization/Business Information

1 Agency / Organization / Business Name:

2 Street Address:

3 Mailing Address:

4 City, State, Zip Code:

5 Contact Person (Name & Title):

6 Contact Telephone #:

7 FAX Number:

8 E-Mail Address:

9 Is your agency:

Public

Private non-profit

Private for-profit

Other:

10 List each county your agency serves:

11 If agency operates multiple sites, please give locations:

12 What types of services does your agency/org/bus provide?

13 Is it possible people cannot access your services due to lack of available transportation?

YES

NO

If yes, please estimate number of people per year _____

14 Does your agency serve people who are transportation disadvantaged? (Persons classified as "transportation disadvantaged" have personal limitations that may limit one's ability or cause difficulty in getting to places they need or want to go.)

YES

NO

15 Please check all that apply:

Personal Limitations		Description
Cognitive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has a cognitive impairment including, for example, Alzheimer's, developmental disabilities, or other cognitive impairments
Dexterity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has limited use of the hands, making it difficult to handle fares or operate switches, knobs, etc.
Endurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is frail or requires personal assistance including persons with weather sensitivities (heat or cold); may not be able to wait for long periods or travel long distances
Experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is not familiar with public transportation and/or the system
Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is hearing impaired including deaf and hard of hearing
Low income	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is low income
Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	Limited or no English proficiency; may include inability to read
Physical	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has physical disabilities especially related to ambulation
Vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is vision impaired including blind and low vision

Vehicles

16 Does your agency/org/business staff use their own vehicles to transport people?

YES NO

17 Does your agency operate its own or leased vehicles to transport passengers?

YES NO

If answer is NO skip to question 19

18 Please describe the vehicles used to provide transportation. Example 4 vans, three are 4/1 (4 passengers/1 wheelchair) and one is 6/0. See example below.

Vehicle Type	Total Number of Vehicles	Total Ambulatory Capacity	Total Wheelchair/Scooter Capacity	Number of Vehicles Lift/Ramp Equipped
Example (Vans)	4	18	3	3
Sedans/Station Wagons				
Vans/Minivans				
Small Bus < 10 pass.				
Medium Bus 11-20 pass				
Large Bus > 20 pass				

Coordination. (A process through which representatives of different agencies and client groups work together to achieve any one or all of the following goals: more cost-effective service delivery; increased capacity to serve unmet needs; improved quality of service; and, services which are more easily understood and accessed by riders.) Coordination can occur on many levels, examples include: informal information sharing; formal (written) coordination arrangements; the management of transportation services by one agency; or the consolidation of transportation services under one provider agency.

19 What issues, if any, have you encountered in coordinating or attempting to coordinate transportation (e.g., billing and payment, insurance, driver qualifications, etc.)?

20 In your opinion, what do you see as the greatest obstacle(s) to transit and human service transportation coordination in your service area?

21 In your opinion, what enhancements are most needed to improve the coordination of transportation in your service area? (e.g. agency collaboration, agency policies, funding, inter-agency agreements)

22 Is transportation a barrier or obstacle in accessing services for your clients/consumers?

Please check all that apply and rank in priority, with 1 being highest priority.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	Priority
No transportation services available	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Existing transportation providers are too costly	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Existing transportation services don't operate the same hours as when people need transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Existing transportation services don't go to locations where needed services are located	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Please identify locations: _____		
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Describe other: _____		

Transportation Services

23 What type(s) of transportation services does your agency offer or purchase? (List)

24 What hours and days of the week does your agency:

	Provide or Purchase Transportation Services	Specify Hours	Need Transportation Services?
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

25 What are the special needs of your passengers? Check all that apply:

Infants (car seat)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Children	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elders/ Frail people	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental Impairments	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Interpreters	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Escorts/Personal Care Attendants	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other (please identify)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

26 Does your agency have paid or volunteer drivers?

Paid Drivers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of paid drivers	_____
Volunteer Drivers (mileage reimbursement)*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of volunteer drivers	_____

Where do you get your Volunteer Drivers? _____

27 Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend arranging rides for your clients / consumers / passengers?

If you answered "NO" to question 16 under "Vehicles," skip to question 37 now

28 Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend transporting passengers?

29 Do you assist passengers to and from your vehicle(s)?

YES NO

Sometimes (please specify) _____

30 How far in advance must a passenger schedule their trip? _____

31 What are the eligibility requirements for using your agency's transportation services and what is the process to be "qualified"?

32 How many passenger trips do you provide per month? _____

Passenger Trip – One person making a one-way trip from origin to destination. One round trip equals two passenger trips.

33 How many individual clients do you transport per month? _____

34 Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend transporting passengers?

35 About how many vehicle miles per month do you operate transporting passengers?

36 What is your agency's transportation service strength?

Unmet Needs

37 Thinking of the clients or individuals your agency/organization represents, what transportation needs are not being met adequately? (Please be specific and include any special needs ,requirements, destinations or social activities.)

38 Thinking of the clients or individuals your agency/organization provides transportation services to, what transportation needs are you aware that are not met adequately? Please be specific and include any special needs, requirements, destinations or social activities.)

39 What are the barriers / obstacles to meeting those needs? Why are these transportation services not being met?

40 Do you have any other information to share?

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Appendix B:
**Survey Responses to Open-Ended
Survey Questions**

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Survey Responses To Open Ended Survey Questions (No Agency Listed)

NOTE: The following represents the open-ended questions and corresponding responses received from the Transportation Stakeholder Questionnaire received from the survey that was sent to agencies in Region Six-East, August 2006.

20. What is the greatest obstacle to transit and human service transportation coordination in your service area?

- Being a rural church
- Hours of operation
- Cost, time, availability
- Resistance to using transit, lack of Sunday transit
- Limited transportation to Twin Cities, limited transportation on weekends, evenings, and in certain counties
- Limited hours of transportation; no bus on weekend
- Distance
- Transportation for special needs individuals who cannot independently ride bus; need more help getting in and out of home.
- Could use more drivers/probably need more funding/support
- Flexibility and affordability
- Scheduling rides with the KAT system, availability hours
- Access
- Time restraints
- Rural routes
- Coordination
- Limited scheduling in rural areas, cost for larger families, non-English speaking riders-needs translators, transportation to medical appointments outside the county
- No night-time service
- Crossing county lines
- We have had no problems
- Price of gas
- Poverty, low numbers, or utilization of public transit, independence by car
- Scheduling and funding
- Price and availability
- 5310 client transport
- Persons not knowing about the service and/or not having energy to coordinate
- Education for people of other cultures how to use the system
- Heartland has been an asset to our facility.
- Maintenance on back roads, cost of gas, and upkeep of buses.
- Cost; wait time for more affordable transportation (KAT or Senior drivers).
- Limited services, limited days of service
- No weekend service
- Limited access
- Limited availability and long wait time
- Human services clients trying to take advantage and whether their MA covers transportation or just to see a doctor

- Taxi cost
- Funding for evening and weekend services (Trailblazer does well)
- Long waits for return trips
- Number of people unaware of availability of the bus service. Some clients have complained the county service is very unfriendly and the coordinators intimidating enough that they don't want to call and ask for assistance.
- Since our clients depend on public transportation to get to and from work, the limited schedules can deter a person from working evenings and weekend jobs. Also most of the public services do not cross county lines, so that can limit someone coming to our main locations in Willmar and Hutchinson.
- There is some turf protection and for rules, which dictate, who can provide rides to whom. The biggest obstacle is the lack of funding for most of the programs.
- I feel it is handled very well and meet our expectations.
- The specialized needs of the human service customers and the lack of funding to properly operate the services we currently have. We believe that we are at the end of the line relative to the concept of doing more with less.
- Finding someone available at the time of need

21. What enhancements are most needed to improve conditions of transportation in service area?

- Flexibility
- Longer run time
- Sunday transit/more "interpretation" of transit system
- Coordination with nursing facilities
- Funding
- Expanded hours/days
- Funding
- Funding, coordinating transportation services between agencies is very time consuming and labor intensive
- Better collaboration in local area
- Funding and collaboration
- Funding for increased service hours
- Unknown
- Significantly improved funding and the ability to cross county borders
- Collaboration with other groups
- Funding-more time to allow greater flexibility to schedule
- Funding
- Lengthy waits for clients between drop off and pick up times
- Collaboration-better springs on busses
- Adult Client Training Services, Inc. (ACTS) bus should coordinate and provide service to people in southern part of county that need Elderly day service
- Changing some border (county) issues
- Perhaps a simpler way of obtaining services
- Need Somali and Spanish speaking drivers who also speak English.
- Continued funding to be able to continue proving this service
- Need addition funding from state for operating buses and special needs students

- Funding
- Accessibility
- More buses available, transit to Metro or out of area services
- Funding more service needed in Meeker area
- Area coordinator,
- Funding? Unsure. I attend Joint powers Board meetings of McLeod/Sibley Trailblazer Transit.
- I'm not familiar enough with the challenges the service itself encounters. From an agency standpoint and/or client view, funding seems to be an issue and again consumer service skills are sorely lacking.
- Funding to expand services to nights and weekends. Having agreements to cross county lines
- Inter-agency agreements; agency collaborating and putting the needs of the public first.
- Being able to be more flexible in providing rides to different groups of people who would get help but again the lack of funding is by far the biggest barrier to providing accessibility for people to be transported.
- Funding, gas prices are making it harder for volunteers.

22(A). Identify locations:

- Church
- West end of county-bus service
- Twin Cities
- No out-of-county pick-ups
- Out of town appointments
- No, we were mandated to provide the transportations
- Heartland bus in Renville County
- Smaller communities and rural areas in Meeker County
- St. Cloud, Metro area, Willmar
- Meeker and Sibley County-Rural areas
- Fairfax, Franklin, Morton, Buffalo Lake, Sacred Heart
- Kandiyohi County
- Rural Meeker-McLeod, cities
- Other communities, cities
- Atwater
- Out of county, Metro physician/medical appointments
- Coordinating time, location and availability
- Out of county

22(B). Describe Other:

- Transport service available is not always appropriate to the specific needs population.
- They cannot guarantee picking up consumers in a timely manner.
- Transportation from store to store would be helpful (i.e. Target to Cashwise or Cub).

- These persons must use volunteer drivers, which is more costly to them than the bus fare.
- Does not apply to us
- Elderly difficult to manage bus
- Not enough buses to cover Litchfield area
- The bus may not go to a town at a time or day that the client can schedule an appointment for services.
- Night hours-minority populations are in need of night hours or early morning hours of service, 6am-9am.

23. What types of transportation services does your agency purchase?

- Just volunteer drivers
- Staff volunteers offer rides when needed
- Rides to those who do not drive for major events, limited with wheelchairs/scooter
- Purchase volunteer driver and transit bus rides for Medicaid eligible and elderly
- Emergency only; for non-emergency: none; referral only
- Agency vehicles, staff vehicle, heartland express (county Transit)
- Meeker County public transit is what is available, they do not operate just for us.
- School buses
- Field trips for tenants
- Car ride to grocery store on Fridays
- Contract a county transit for rides to and from Adult Day Services program for participants
- Bus contract for services to and from school
- Heartland Express bus service/volunteer drivers (can drive anytime)
- Only Headstart, we do "vouchers" for families in emergency situations (limited)
- All types; staff drive their own cars if a location does not have a van
- Transportation to and from residence to our facility for day programming
- To and from work via bus, van, or car
- Public Transit
- Purchase vouchers/tickets for the clients we serve to use public transportation
- KAT bus Willmar
- Volunteer drivers
- Prime West Provides transportation for its members as required by the department of social services
- Van rides to VA appointments
- Transportation with staff vehicles
- Public Transit; STS Volunteer driver
- Transportation to medical appointments
- Wheelchair or mobility impaired, low income groups, elderly

- We transport students to and from school and sporting events, school activities.
- Medical trips, outings
- Rides to and from VA medical centers
- Door to Door, to all public in Meeker County
- Provide limited client transportation; some rides purchased from Trailblazer Transit
- Trailblazer transit, Clinic Cab (medical van)
- Once clients reach our site, we transport some clients to our crew sites. Clients use public service throughout the week and weekend as available.
- Busing
- Veterans Transportation, Volunteer Driver Program, Public Transit Bus Service
- General Public transportation with a bus system. General public transportation with a volunteer driver program. These two programs are different services.
- Rides for shopping, doctor visits, errands, to events, etc. Delivery of groceries, prescriptions, meals, etc.

25. What are the special needs of your passengers? Other (Identify)

- Emergency transportation
- Other-how to manage personal items, groceries, baggage, car seats
- Other-Wheelchair accessible
- Wheelchair and scooter users

26. Where do you get your volunteer drivers?

- Church members, Rose Center in Paynesville
- Staff
- Internally
- Congregation
- Council on Aging
- County
- Myself and spouse, no reimbursement
- Our town
- Elders serve elders through our program
- Our county agencies provide common carrier transportation for our members.
- Driver pool
- Church members
- Via interview
- KAT bus
- People we know-network with
- Kandiyohi County Family services or minority community
- Community
- Word of Mouth
- From the community

31. What are the eligibility requirements for using your agency's transportation services and what is the process to be "qualified"?

- Personal decision, not organized
- Resident of facility
- Need our services is the only requirement
- Need/desire
- Social workers transport consumers
- In-house clients only
- Go to school within my district
- Must be tenant
- Acceptance into our program
- Must be consumer receiving services from DT&H [Day Training and Habilitation]
- ProWorks typically provides transport services only to persons admitted to our program.
- Must be resident of facility
- No requirements, just a need, we take people shopping, too
- This information would be obtained from our county partners
- To sign a liability waiver and able to get into and out of vehicle safely
- General public/Senior
- 30-mile radius; need for medical appointment; family unable to take
- Approved billing source
- Depends on funding source
- Not general public transportation, client related
- It all depends on their job.
- Only children qualify and school staff youth related activities
- No qualifications are necessary

36. What is your agency's transportation service strength?

- Available to rural residents and to church Sundays
- Fair
- Coordination with Heartland
- Minimal
- Staff driving own car
- Drivers and aides know the clients
- We're on time
- Consistency
- Provide personal attention at medical appointments to assure medical follow up is completed
- Low income and disabled non-medical trips
- Minimal; rely on Trailblazer transit for majority
- We try to be flexible and met the needs of the clients and their crew sites in particular.
- Coordination

37. Thinking of the clients you represent, what needs are you aware that are not met adequately? (Specify any special needs, requirements, destinations, or social activities.)

- Evening monthly meetings, late evening social events
- People with electric scooter/in need of wheel-chair lifts
- Bus needed in west end of the county, more frequent trips to Willmar, flexible fund for those unable to afford bus
- Transportation on Holidays
- None after hours of 5pm, no weekend hours for clinic visits, church
- Tenants can get rides to somewhere but can't get back or have to wait for hours to get back
- Would be nice having company transportation
- People in the outer limits of the county, transportation for people who need assist to get in and out of their home, who are not able to use transportation independently
- Support to maintain individual transportation (personal vehicles) flexibility and affordability or public transportation
- Unknown-access for special needs
- A/C [air-conditioned] vehicles
- Senior citizens, developmentally disabled, families without vehicles of their own
- After hours transportation, non-English speaking riders, families with children-car seats
- Timely delivery and pick up for healthcare appointments
- Some clients are rural and the transportation is not available; i.e. doctor appointments, to and from rehab or adult day care, or it is too expensive
- No wheelchair lift
- Rides to church services
- Wheelchair bound
- Destinations, times available
- It is very difficult to meet the needs
- The few isolated incidences I have seen are that families live in rural areas 10-20 miles from town and would like service at their door.
- Clients and staff need to plan ahead of time; clients call and say they don't have rides. They sit here a long time waiting for rides
- Low cost options with short notice, weekends
- Hours of operation; we often would use service on Saturday, Sunday, holidays, and later evenings.
- Available transportation on nights and weekends
- Transportation to Metro or out of area appointments (medical) also this agency receives many requests for gas vouchers and car repair
- Only transportation they have is a taxi or the bus or volunteer drivers, which are getting more difficult. Sometimes they may need an appointment on short notice, which makes finding transportation much harder. We would like to go places as a group for a social activity but the transportation makes that virtually impossible.
- No public service or private funding.

- Evenings, weekends (Sundays for church), and regular Routes
- Many say they cannot afford gas for their vehicles. Many say they cannot afford the bus or volunteer drivers. Others are unable to come out to the bus without assistance due to fragility or physical disability
- Clients can have jobs at all times of the day and night. If the public service is mostly days with advance notice needed, there is little flexibility.
- Minority populations would like to have transportation available to get them to church, social services, medical, health appointments, shopping (food and retail) etc.
- Doctors appointments for all people in need of transportation

38. Thinking of the clients that you provided transportation services to, what transportation needs are you aware that are not being met adequately?

- Attempted to share van from Washburn Court in Paynesville, but liability concerns stood in way
- Transportation to Twin Cities for weekly appointments
- We need larger vehicles at reasonable costs that will go outside of McLeod/Sibley boundaries, i.e. Old Log Theatre, Eden Prairie mall
- Lack of transportation funding to Head Start prevents some families from enrolling
- Wednesday evenings, Sunday a.m.
- We do not provide transportation services, we purchase service for our clients
- Wheelchair accessible rides are not as available; also many clients need assist on and off the transportation and that is not always available
- Pickups, sports cars don't work sometime
- Wheelchair bound
- Border towns of Kandiyohi
- Escort service to the reception desk
- Electric doors at local businesses and/or wider doors for scooters
- ProWorks clients have more routes they would like us to transport but we can't.
- Example of solution: vouchers to available transportation
- Not sure: funding limits services available
- We do not provide transportation
- We usually purchase services through our busing companies to transport youth to activities in the Twin Cities

39. What are the barriers/ obstacles to meeting those needs? Why are these transportation services not being met?

- Hours of operation
- No wheelchair lifts
- Funding for expansion
- Cost, lack of funding
- Limitations to Heartland Express and County Volunteer drivers

- Funding
- Cost to purchase a larger vehicle; Trailblazer does not go outside of two-county area, cost to lease or rent a vehicle too high
- Funds, not enough vehicles/drivers
- Funding
- Cost
- We have limited volunteers and also need vehicles
- Cost and availability
- No vehicles with lifts
- Last minute or same day transport times
- Money and policy issues
- Most often the families that I work with are simply too exhausted to pick up the phone to make arrangements. The healthcare needs are priority over going somewhere
- Traveling outside the 30-mile radius
- Lack of funding.
- Older buildings-another bus to help ProWorks
- Local service cost: Avg. curb-to-curb \$7.16 trip, Avg. special transportation \$16.95
- Funding limitations and efficiency goals for rides
- Our very rural County has no services in most cases, such as a person in Canby coming back and forth to work in Willmar each day for work- not possible. It probably isn't feasible to have a full service in some rural areas because demand might be very limited, so besides demand, funding is surely a factor.
- Need to be inclusive of all community members when surveying needs. Possibly have focus groups in other languages to get the voice of other groups in our community.
- Funding

40. Any other information to share?

- We would support Sunday bus service
- A flexible pot of money like AAA's III-B without the administration Burden/red tape to help elderly and those unable to pay for rides would be great
- Adult Day Services would like to see additional smaller vehicles such as vans reach out to rural areas and also to give more specialized service.
- Our Senior Club is disbanding this September due to lack of interest, one member moved to Willmar and one to Clara City.
- Our public transit system does an excellent job with the resources they have available, but more resources are needed in rural MN.
- We have had interest to ride and no drivers or drivers and no riders, riders seem to be selective on how we get their transportation.
- Somali women don't take babies and children on the bus. WIC clients call and ask for bus. Many are asking for change or tokens. Could there be

change or token machines (in) various places? We could use a bus schedule.

- This was a difficult assessment to complete because we have never considered providing transportation for our early childhood programs.
- Meeker County transit is still in the "growing stage"
- We're a senior housing HUD subsidized, very low-income apartment building - independent apartments. About 30% receive some type of homecare and only about 8 own their own cars. Most rely on family, taxi or in a few cases the KAT bus. Getting on and off the bus would be difficult if not impossible for some; when your monthly income is maybe \$600 a taxi very often does not fit in the budget
- Prepare surveys to clients in English, Spanish, and Somali