

Human Service Transportation Coordination State Profile: Iowa

Prepared for the Federal Transit Administration
and the U.S. Department of Labor

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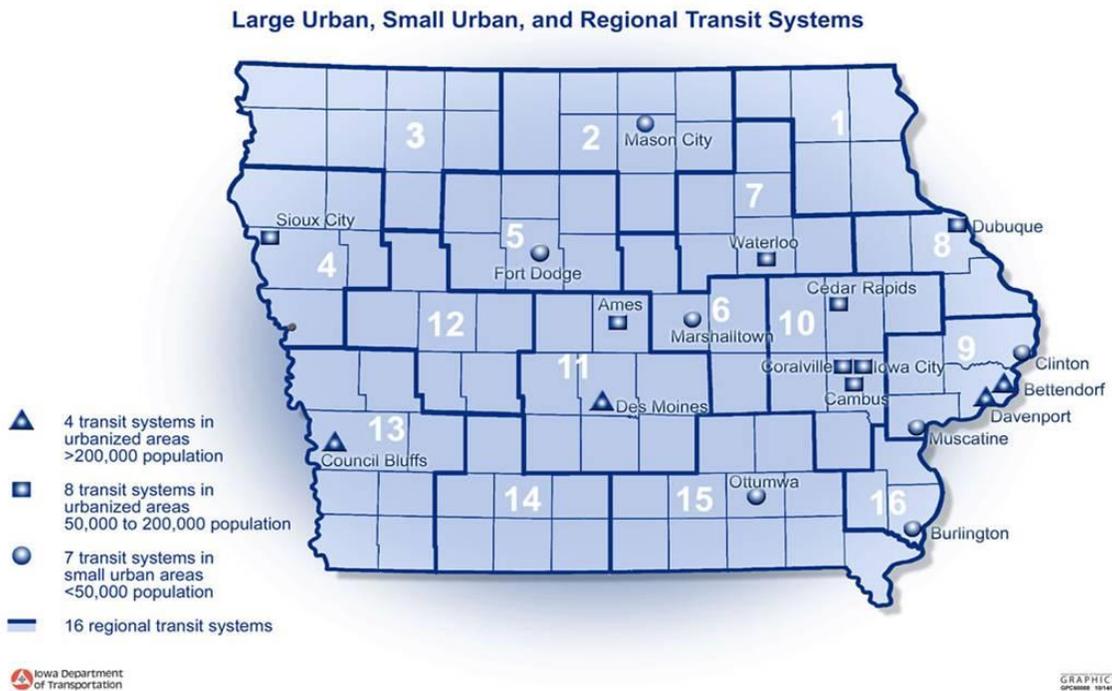
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Author's Note: This is the fifth in a series of profiles of state human service transportation coordination programs. Profiles on Florida, Kentucky, Washington and Wisconsin were previously completed.

Introduction

Iowa is served by 35 public transit systems (Figure 1), 19 of which are urban and 16 are multi-county regional transit systems, providing more than 26 million rides annually.¹ These systems help sustain personal mobility for all individuals, but especially for the transportation disadvantaged—people who are impaired by age or disabilities that prevent them from operating a vehicle, or those with income constraints.

Figure 1. Large Urban, Small Urban, and Regional Transit Systems of Iowa.²



By 2030, the United States will see a significant increase in the number of those considered to be transportation disadvantaged, especially adults over the age of 65. Iowa’s population over age 65 is projected to increase by 52 percent—or an additional 226,973 older adults—during the next 20 years, making up 22.4 percent of Iowa’s total population by 2030.³ Since one in five older adults does not

¹ Kristin Haar, Compliance & Training Officer at Iowa Department of Transportation, Office of Public Transit, and Chair of the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council, telephone conversation, Nov. 1, 2011.

² Iowa DOT, *Large Urban, Small Urban, and Regional Transit Systems of Iowa* (Ames, Ia.: Iowa DOT, 2011).

³ U.S. Census Bureau, *U.S. Population Projections, Population Pyramids and Demographic Summary Indicators for States* (last accessed Oct. 18, 2011).

drive,⁴ about 45,400 Iowans will need alternative transportation options in the coming decades. A 2009 study found that although older Iowans do not make as many trips to work as those under 65, their other mobility needs are similar to the rest of the population.⁵ Of this group over age 65, 33.6 percent had a disability in 2009, the highest of any age group. In total, 336,139 individuals in Iowa had disabilities, and 160,517 disabled adults reported their disabilities made it difficult to go outside the home alone to shop or visit the doctor.⁶ Iowans with disabilities had a disproportionate poverty rate of 20.3 percent, compared to 8.6 percent in the non-disabled population.⁷

Trips to medical appointments are a key mobility need for people who are transportation disadvantaged. Eleven percent of Medicaid patients in Iowa have missed medical appointments due to unreliable transportation.⁸ The new health care reform law will increase the number of beneficiaries who will be eligible for Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation, or NEMT. An additional 5,161 Iowa residents will become eligible for Medicaid and NEMT when the maximum income level for Medicaid eligibility rises to 133 percent of the federal poverty level in 2014.⁹ Further, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) is advocating that persons who purchase their health insurance through the state exchanges created through the health care reform law be eligible for transportation services similar to NEMT. This could potentially give 187,000 additional Iowans access to adequate transportation options to and from their medical-related appointments.¹⁰

These numbers are worrisome for a public transportation system that is already overburdened and suffering from cutbacks and rising fares. However, Iowa is one of at least 27 states¹¹ that have established proactive measures to ensure transportation delivery programs will provide adequate transportation for those who otherwise could not access it, while saving state money and resources (Figure 2). By facilitating cooperation among different state agencies and stakeholder groups, human service transportation coordination is a technique for better resource management that can provide more total funding through a greater number of funding sources and also reduce costs.¹² This brief explores the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council (ITCC), how it is funded and the results the program has seen since its inception in 1992.

⁴ Linda Bailey, *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options* (Washington, D.C.: Surface Transportation Policy Project, 2004), 4.

⁵ URS, *Iowa Statewide Passenger Transportation Funding Study* (place of publication not ascertainable: URS, 2009), 2. This study was mandated by 2008 Senate File 2420, §27.

⁶ State Data Center of Iowa (SDCI), *Iowans with Disabilities: 2011* (Des Moines, Ia.: SDCI, 2011), 2.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ URS, *Iowa Statewide Passenger Transportation Funding Study*.

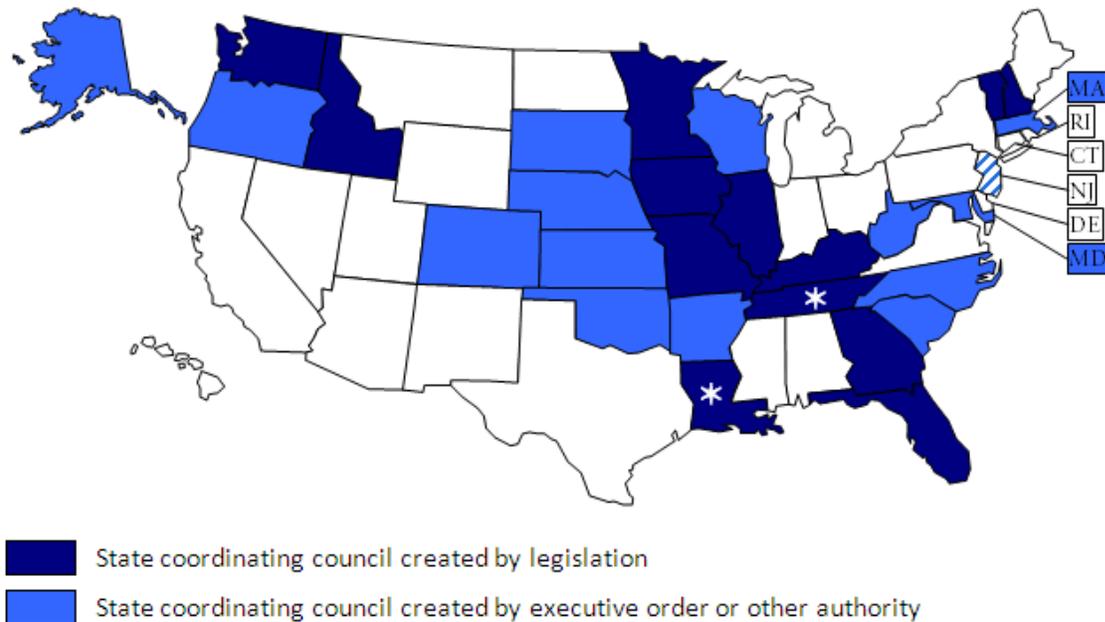
⁹ Democratic Policy Committee (DPC), *The Benefits of Health Reform in Iowa* (Washington, D.C.: DPC, 2010), 3; John Holahan and Linda Blumberg, *How Would States Be Affected By Health Reform? Timely Analysis of Immediate Health Policy Issues* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2010), 9.

¹⁰ DPC, *The Benefits of Health Reform in Iowa*.

¹¹ Nicholas J. Farber and James B. Reed, *State Human Service Transportation Coordinating Councils: An Overview and State Profiles* (Denver, Colo.: NCSL, 2010). The New Jersey Council on Access and Mobility expired in 2010, and Louisiana and Tennessee established councils during their 2011 legislative sessions (by House Concurrent Resolution 131 and Senate Bill 523, respectively), bringing the total number of state coordinating councils to 27.

¹² Jon E. Burkhardt, David Koffman and Gail Murray, *TCRP Report No. 91 Economic Benefits of Coordinating Human Service Transportation and Transit Services* (Washington, D.C.: Transportation Research Board, 2003), 2.

Figure 2: State Coordinating Councils.



The New Jersey Council on Access and Mobility, created by Executive Order 87 in 2007, expired Jan. 1, 2010.
 The councils in Louisiana and Tennessee were established by bills enacted during 2011 legislative sessions.

Note that although Iowa statute mandates statewide coordination activities, the establishment of the state coordinating council itself was through administrative code. (See page 6.)

Program Description

The state of Iowa is a pioneer in transportation coordination; the nation’s first coordination statute was enacted by the General Assembly in 1976.¹³ In response to the legislation, the governor formed an Ad Hoc Interagency Advisory Committee in 1985 to develop administrative rules for coordination. The committee eventually evolved into the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council (ITCC), which was officially established by administrative code in 1992.¹⁴ The purpose of the ITCC, as stated in the code, is to “assist with implementation of the compliance reviews required by statute” and to review information about transportation operations in order to advise the state department of transportation (Iowa DOT) about providers’ compliance.¹⁵ The ITCC was also meant to serve as a forum for the discussion of general transportation coordination issues in Iowa.¹⁶ Its mission statement is “to discuss and review transportation coordination issues and to address institutional and/or regulatory barriers to

¹³ Iowa DOT, [Iowa Transportation Coordination Council \(ITCC\): Background and Overview](#), last accessed Oct. 25, 2011.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Iowa Code §761-910.3(324A).

¹⁶ Iowa DOT, Office of Public Transit, [Status of Coordination Planning in Iowa: Working Together to Improve Passenger Transportation Services](#) (place of publication not ascertainable: Iowa DOT, n.d.).

coordination so as to maximize access to publicly-funded passenger transportation and make effective use of public investment.”¹⁷

In 1992 and 1996, the ITCC sponsored statewide workshops on transportation needs and transportation coordination, and published a brochure with transit information for health care providers. In the ITCC’s early years, members also arranged presentations on public transit at state public health conferences, elder rights conferences, a governor’s conference on aging and an older driver’s conference.¹⁸

In 2004, the governor sent three participants to the first United We Ride (UWR) conference,¹⁹ and the ITCC followed up with the national initiative by creating a UWR Action Plan in 2005. The plan’s goal was to “to create a coordinated transportation system that efficiently and effectively transports Iowa citizens by: ensuring those needing essential transportation services have access to them to the greatest extent possible; opening ‘closed transportation systems’ for users wherever possible; extending transportation service to areas that do not have services; and improving the quantity and quality of services.”²⁰

The ITCC took a leadership role in implementing the UWR plan by outlining and following four specific action steps. The first was to survey health and human service agencies and transportation providers to gain an understanding of their perceptions of transportation needs and barriers, as well as their interest in coordination. Second, the ITCC sponsored a series of 15 Mobility Action Planning (MAP) workshops around the state in mid-2006 to introduce coordination to, and facilitate the planning process with, personnel from local transit, health and human service agencies. The ITCC shared survey results specific to each region in order to spark creative, local solutions. Some transit systems and planning agencies formed local transit advisory groups—each known as a Transportation Action Group (TAG)—to gain financial and political support for transit, so as to help fill service gaps and meet growing transportation needs. In November 2006, 140 participants from across the state attended a Statewide MAP Conference to share ideas from different regions and combine efforts where possible.²¹

Third, since 2006, the Iowa DOT Office of Systems Planning has worked closely with the ITCC to develop coordination plans. The Iowa DOT Office of Systems Planning and Office of Public Transit established coordination planning as a key requirement under the annual transportation planning contracts maintained by the Iowa DOT with Iowa’s nine metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and 18 regional planning affiliations (RPAs). Each MPO and RPA is required to work with local health, human service and transportation providers to prepare a Passenger Transportation Development Plan (PTDP), now called a Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). The TAG serves as a steering committee for the PTP process, which helps regional authorities identify needs and service gaps, and assess available funds. The ITCC designed its MAP workshops with the PTP process in mind.²²

¹⁷ Iowa DOT, [ITCC: Background and Overview](#).

¹⁸ Iowa DOT, Office of Public Transit, [Implementing Service Coordination in Iowa](#) (place of publication not ascertainable: Iowa DOT, 2007).

¹⁹ Iowa DOT, [Status of Coordination Planning in Iowa](#).

²⁰ Iowa DOT, [ITCC: Background and Overview](#).

²¹ Iowa DOT, [Status of Coordination Planning in Iowa](#).

²² Ibid.

The fourth initiative was for the ITCC to identify funding resources available to support passenger transportation services. The PTPs are shared with the ITCC so it can monitor local participation, provide encouragement, identify problems to investigate that involve state- or federal-level policies and give state agencies the opportunity to provide feedback.²³ The ITCC still functions in this way; members use their statewide influence to encourage colleagues in human service organizations and state agencies to attend their local TAG meetings and influence the PTP process.²⁴ Over the past several years, the ITCC has been rejuvenated—much of the council’s focus has been to improve general operations and expand its structure. The outcomes of these efforts by the ITCC are outlined in the Results section of this report.

Authority

Iowa has unique authority for its statewide coordination activities. While most state coordinating councils have been created through legislation, executive orders or governor initiatives, Iowa’s council was established in administrative code. The rules outlined in Iowa Administrative Code §324A are meant to implement the general transportation coordination mandate that was enacted by the General Assembly in 1976.²⁵ The original legislation requires all agencies providing or purchasing publicly-funded passenger transportation services through urban or regional transit systems to coordinate such services for the transportation disadvantaged,²⁶ including senior citizens, Head Start programs and people with disabilities. Additionally, state agencies must submit funding and service planning information to the Iowa DOT.²⁷ Each public transit system is thus responsible for coordination of all publicly-funded passenger transportation, making all transit systems eligible for funding under the Federal Transit Administration’s 5310 program.²⁸

As defined in administrative code, the original members of the ITCC included the Iowa DOT, the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs, with the ability to grant membership to state agencies, federal agencies and statewide private agencies that fund local transportation services;²⁹ in 2001 and 2011, membership was expanded.³⁰ Over the life of the council, membership has also included representatives from:

- Iowa Department of Education;
- Iowa Department of Public Health;
- Iowa Department of Human Rights;

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Kristin Haar, telephone conversation.

²⁵ Iowa Code §324A.

²⁶ Defined in Iowa Code §324A.1.

²⁷ Iowa Code §324A.4(1).

²⁸ Iowa DOT, Office of Public Transit, *Iowa State Management Plan for Administration of Funding and Grants under Programs from the Federal Transit Administration* (Ames, Ia.: Iowa DOT, Office of Public Transit), 9.

²⁹ Iowa Administrative Code §910.3(2)a.

³⁰ Iowa DOT, [ITCC: Background and Overview](#).

- Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Iowa Governor’s Developmental Disabilities Council;
- Iowa Department on Aging;
- Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA);
- Cities;
- School boards;
- Transit systems;
- Nonprofit and community organizations;
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs); and
- Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs).

The administrative code requires the director of transportation or the director's representative to serve as chairperson of the council.³¹ Currently, the ITCC is chaired by the Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit, and a UWR Ambassador is the vice-chair.³² The ITCC is directed to meet at least once per month and more frequently if necessary,³³ and the DOT Office of Public Transportation is to provide staff support to the council.³⁴

Duties outlined for the council are to:

- Review and make recommendations to the member agencies concerning guidelines and criteria for the review process operated by the council;
- Provide the department with written recommendations for findings of compliance or noncompliance with the transportation coordination mandate of Iowa Code chapter 324A for individual providers based upon review of each provider's request for certification;
- Upon request of a member agency, review all transportation components of funding applications or plans submitted by a recipient of the member agency; and
- Advise and make recommendations to the department's office of public transportation concerning public transportation policy.³⁵

³¹ Iowa Administrative Code §910.3(2)b.

³² Iowa DOT, [Iowa Transportation Coordination Council \(ITCC\): Committee Members](#) (last accessed Oct. 25, 2011).

³³ Iowa Administrative Code §910.3(2)d.

³⁴ Iowa Administrative Code §910.3(2)c.

³⁵ Iowa Administrative Code §910.3(3).

Currently, the ITCC meets bimonthly instead of monthly. The ITCC also no longer enforces compliance requirements for individual providers (outlined in the second bullet point above—a duty of the ITCC under Iowa Administrative Code §910.3(3)). Instead of focusing on individual providers, the ITCC has evolved to have a broader scope and to focus on statewide issues.³⁶

Funding

Staffing for the ITCC is provided by the Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit. No additional funds are currently needed to manage the ITCC; members are not paid or reimbursed for travel to meetings. If the ITCC were to implement a special project requiring extra resources, funds would be accessed through the Iowa DOT or a partner agency.³⁷ In 2005 the Iowa DOT applied for the first year of UWR grant funding and was awarded \$35,000. This money was used to sponsor the regional MAP workshops and to share the results with local providers.³⁸

The Iowa DOT Office of Systems Planning oversees development of the PTPs to assist with identification of available or new funding. When creating a PTP, the local organizations work with the TAG to develop an inventory of existing services of transportation providers and their operations; determine the needs and unmet needs of various population groups; determine how to address service gaps, either through better coordination of existing services or through development of new services; and assess available funds. An annual requirement, the plans include all elements of the coordinated plan mandated by the current multi-year federal surface transportation law—the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), signed into law in 2005—for the FTA’s Special Needs, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom grant programs. The plans, however, are also intended to be used for all transit funding streams to provide the needs-based project justifications for all transit programs. The Iowa DOT supports the increased planning effort with increases in intermodal planning funding to the local agencies.³⁹

In general, special transit in Iowa is funded by a combination of local, state and federal funds. In 2008, public transit revenue from all sources totaled approximately \$100 million,⁴⁰ with local revenue sources representing more than half of the funding for transit operations in the state (Figure 3).⁴¹ The ITCC works to track where federal funds come into the state, how they are being used and if there is opportunity to access a greater share for passenger transportation purposes. Surveys were sent to state agencies deemed to be likely recipients or administrators of specific funds; the results were then shared with MPOs and RPAs to be included in the PTPs, and thus assist with securing funds by prioritizing projects based on available grants.⁴²

³⁶ Kristin Haar, telephone conversation.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Iowa DOT, [Status of Coordination Planning in Iowa](#).

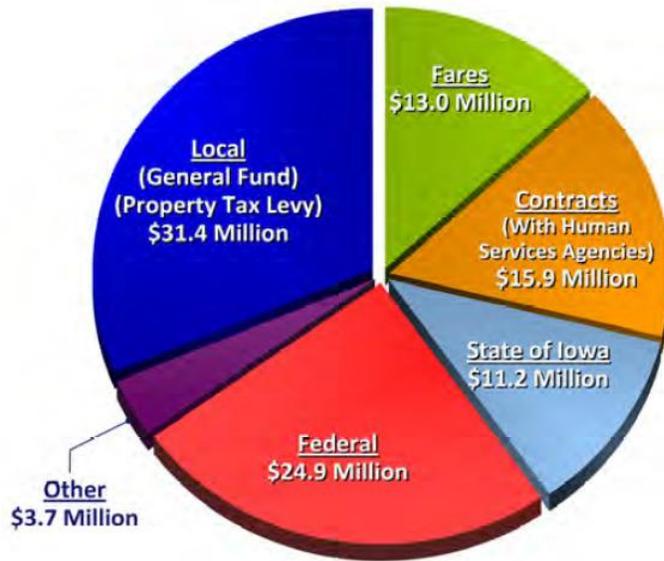
³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ URS, [Iowa Statewide Passenger Transportation Funding Study](#).

⁴¹ For more information, see *ibid.*

⁴² Iowa DOT, [Status of Coordination Planning in Iowa](#).

Figure 3. Iowa's Passenger Transportation 2008 Annual Operations Funding by Source.⁴³



The state also provides funding for public transit, and projects matched with human service agencies are a funding priority in awarding competitive projects throughout the state.⁴⁴ Most state funding for public transit is provided by the Iowa DOT State Transit Assistance (STA) program. STA funds are derived from one-twentieth of the first four cents of the use tax on the sale of motor vehicles and accessory equipment, which yields an estimated \$10 million annually. Funds are allocated to the 35 recognized Iowa public transit systems based on a formula that includes ridership, revenue miles, operating expenses and locally determined income.⁴⁵

Up to \$300,000 of the total STA funds are set aside to fund special projects. These can include grants to individual systems to support transit services that are developed in conjunction with human service agencies, or statewide projects to improve public transit.⁴⁶ Coordination Special Projects are considered an “immediate opportunity” program by the Iowa DOT, meaning that these funds can be applied for at any time. Projects, usually small in scope, are intended to assist with startup of new services that have been identified as needs by health, employment or human service agencies participating in the PTP process. Grants for operating expenses may be awarded for a duration of up to two years, with maximum STA participation of 80 percent of net project cost in the first year and 50 percent of net project cost in the second year. Grants for capital expenses may have up to an 80 percent STA share.⁴⁷

⁴³ URS, [Iowa Statewide Passenger Transportation Funding Study](#).

⁴⁴ Johnson County Council of Governments (JCCOG), [Long Range Multi-Modal Transportation Plan 2007-2035 \(Section G: Transit Plan\)](#), (Iowa City, Ia.: JCCOG, 2007), 12.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Region XII Council of Governments, [Region XII Passenger Transportation Development Plan 2009-2012](#), (Carroll, Ia.: Region XII, 2008), 94.

⁴⁷ Iowa Regional Planning Agencies 13 and 18, [Passenger Transportation Development Plan of RPA 13 & 18, 2010-2013](#) (Atlantic, Ia.: RPA 13 and RPA 18, 2009), 21.

In 2006, the General Assembly established a new Public Transit Infrastructure Grant program to fund some of the vertical infrastructure needs of Iowa's transit systems.⁴⁸ Applications are accepted as part of the annual Consolidated Transit Funding Program. Projects can involve new construction, reconstruction, relocation or remodeling, but must include a vertical component. They are evaluated based on the anticipated benefits to transit, as well as the ability to have projects completed quickly.⁴⁹

Results

The ITCC has developed a new action plan and been making changes to its structure, including expanding membership and forming subcommittees to focus on specific issues. The ITCC is now able to expand coordination activities beyond traditional stakeholders by opening membership to statewide, non-governmental organizations with an interest in transit; the first meeting with an expanded membership was held in March 2011. Member roundtables at ITCC meetings allow all members to share how their respective agencies are affected by transportation in their communities. The ITCC is in the planning stages of surveying volunteer agencies throughout Iowa in order to begin coordination with transit agencies; the ITCC plans to have this long-term goal completed by Jan. 2015.⁵⁰ Once available volunteer transportation providers are determined, transit agencies will have the option to refer individuals to a provider when rides can't be accommodated.⁵¹

Another key goal has been to promote mobility management around the state. Mobility managers enhance the customer service aspect of coordination by serving as policy coordinators, operations service brokers, and customer travel navigators.⁵² ITCC leadership encouraged the formation of the Iowa Mobility Managers Network (IMMN), which links those working on mobility management across the state. The network's mission is "to enhance Iowans' quality of life through a variety of mobility options by supporting mobility management practices."⁵³ The IMMN has made key recommendations that have been adopted by the council.

One was to create a statewide mobility manager position, charged with developing a sustainable statewide mobility management system. The position was implemented by the DOT and created to address a common problem—that mobility managers are drawn away from their mobility management work by other tasks of the agency housing the position. The position aims to avoid the issue, with the Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC), the Iowa DOT and the ITCC jointly supervising the work.

⁴⁸ 2006 House File 2782, FY 2007 Infrastructure Appropriations Act; Iowa Administrative Code §924. Vertical infrastructure, as defined in Iowa Administrative Code §8.57(6)b, "includes only land acquisition and construction; major renovation and major repair of buildings; all appurtenant structures; utilities; site development; recreational trails; and debt service payments on academic revenue bonds issued in accordance with chapter 262A for capital projects at board of regents institutions. 'Vertical infrastructure' does not include routine, recurring maintenance or operational expenses or leasing of a building, appurtenant structure, or utility without a lease-purchase agreement."

⁴⁹ Iowa DOT, [Public Transit Infrastructure Grant Fund](#) (last accessed Oct. 28, 2011).

⁵⁰ Iowa Transportation Coordination Council (ITCC), [Meeting Minutes](#), March 9, 2011.

⁵¹ Kristin Haar, telephone conversation.

⁵² United We Ride (UWR), [Mobility Management](#) (Washington, D.C.: UWR, 2007).

⁵³ Margi Ness, ["Iowa Transportation Coordinating Council Moves Forward,"](#) *Margi Ness' Ambassador Blog*: Feb. 2011.

IARC will house the mobility manager and Iowa's Region 6 applied for funds to support the position.⁵⁴ The ITCC's goal is to increase the number of mobility managers in Iowa, with eight positions filled by July 2013.⁵⁵ So far, the statewide mobility manager has helped implement two other regional mobility managers in Regions 2 and 8, and the positions qualify as capital expenses under most FTA grant programs.⁵⁶ The ITCC plans to give more guidance to the statewide mobility manager to strengthen this process.⁵⁷

The ITCC has also focused on facilitating better-coordinated NEMT services. Another IMMN recommendation was to create a committee to address Medicaid brokerages and NEMT issues. The members meet bi-monthly and include a representative from Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME), Transportation Management Systems (TMS), the Iowa Public Transportation Association (IPTA) and IMMN. In fall 2010, IME hired TMS to be the first broker for Medicaid NEMT in Iowa. TMS now arranges transportation for Iowa's 650,000 Medicaid members with full benefits.⁵⁸ Medicaid beneficiaries can call one number to arrange transportation, whereas before, they would go through a social worker or local human service agency. In addition, transit agencies that provide NEMT services had to bill IME for each individual provided with a ride; TMS now sends the total number of rides and a consolidated bill to IME on behalf of the transit agencies. The IMMN will work with IPTA on resolving any issues the transit agencies may have with the broker.⁵⁹ The ITCC is also considering implementation of a statewide NEMT voucher program, which would provide human service agencies that already coordinate NEMT with vouchers for transit systems around the state. With this program, individual clients will be able to get to medical services through any transit system in Iowa, instead of paying multiple fares for different systems.⁶⁰ The coordination of volunteer services, increased number of mobility managers and expanded capacity of NEMT will be extremely advantageous as the numbers of adults over 65 and NEMT-eligible Medicaid beneficiaries increase in Iowa.

In addition, the ITCC has met its goal to host a state Institute for Transportation Coordination. In May 2011, Iowa became the fourth state to host the Institute, jointly organized by the ITCC and the Iowa DOT. Five teams participated in the intensive three-day forum to build more effective partnerships and enhance capacity for cost-effective and customer-focused transportation services.⁶¹

The PTP process developed by the ITCC has also been used as a springboard for other planning activities that may result in improved services to transportation disadvantaged populations. In 2009, a study requested by the General Assembly was carried out for the Iowa DOT to determine passenger transportation needs in Iowa and define service expansion alternatives, specifically for older adults. The PTPs created by RPAs and MPOs were used in the study to identify needs.⁶² While the study will be

⁵⁴ Margi Ness, "[Iowa Transportation Coordinating Council is Innovation](#)," *Margi Ness' Ambassador Blog*: March 2011.

⁵⁵ Iowa DOT, [Contact Information: Office Staff](#) (last accessed Oct. 28, 2011).

⁵⁶ UWR, [Mobility Management](#).

⁵⁷ Kristin Haar, telephone conversation.

⁵⁸ ITCC, [Meeting Minutes](#), Sept. 8, 2010.

⁵⁹ ITCC, [Meeting Minutes](#), March 9, 2011.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Margi Ness, [Iowa Transportation Coordinating Council is Innovation](#).

⁶² URS, [Iowa Statewide Passenger Transportation Funding Study](#), 1.

useful as the state moves forward in their transportation coordination planning, the alternatives have not yet been implemented by the state because of the economic downturn.⁶³

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⁶³ Kristin Haar, telephone conversation.