

Human Service Transportation Coordination State Profile: Wisconsin

Prepared for the Federal Transit Administration
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Author's Note: This is the fourth in a series of four profiles of state human service transportation coordination programs. Profiles on Kentucky, Florida and Washington were previously completed.

Introduction

Personal mobility is a crucial need for all individuals, but especially for those who are transportation disadvantaged due to age, disabilities that prevent them from operating a vehicle, or those with income constraints. By 2030, the United States will see a significant increase in the number of transportation disadvantaged, especially those over the age of 65. The number of Wisconsin residents aged 65 or older is expected to nearly double by 2030, to more than 1.3 million.¹ One in five of this group does not drive,² which means an additional 108,046 people in Wisconsin will be seeking sufficient transportation options in the next 20 years.

The new health care reform law will also create additional Medicaid beneficiaries who will be eligible for non-emergency Medicaid transportation or NEMT. In Wisconsin, an additional 291,769 persons will become eligible for NEMT in 2014, when the maximum income level for Medicaid eligibility will go up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level.³ 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.⁴

These numbers threaten to overwhelm a public transportation system that is suffering from cutbacks and rising fares. Wisconsin, however, is one of at least 26 states⁵ that have proactively established innovative transportation delivery programs in order to provide adequate transportation for those who cannot obtain it on their own while also saving state money and resources. This brief explores Wisconsin's Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC), how the program is funded and its results since its inception in 2005.

Program Description

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *State and County Quick Facts: Washington*, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/53000.html> (last visited July 20, 2010); U.S. Census Bureau, *U.S. Population Projections, Population Pyramids and Demographic Summary Indicators for States*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/statepyramid.html> (last visited June 8, 2010).

² Linda Bailey, *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options* (Washington, D.C.: Surface Transportation Policy Project, 2004), 4.

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.

⁴ Dale J. Marsico, *Important Changes to Medicaid Transportation Benefits* (Washington, D.C.: Community Transportation Association of America, 2010) <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=45&z=36> (last visited June 28, 2010).

⁵ Nicholas J. Farber and James B. Reed, *State Human Service Transportation Coordinating Councils: An Overview and State Profiles* (Denver: NCSL, 2010).

In 2005, Wisconsin's then governor Jim Doyle charged five state agencies to form the Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination to study human service transportation coordination in the state and develop a statewide coordination plan. ICTC members represent the state Departments of Transportation, Health Services, Veterans Affairs, Workforce Development and the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance,⁶ each of which includes transportation in its service programs.⁷ The ICTC has a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) that advises the ICTC on statewide transportation needs and coordination opportunities and helps educate the public on the benefits of transportation coordination. SAC members include transportation consumers, advocacy organizations, tribal representatives, service providers and other partners. The goal of the ICTC is to create a "coordinated, accessible, affordable, dependable, and safe statewide system providing the best transportation services to transportation disadvantaged individuals in Wisconsin."⁸

Wisconsin has also encouraged coordination through funding relationships. The state's financial and capital assistance programs for special needs transportation include 1) the Specialized Transportation Assistance Program for Counties, created in 1977 to provide assistance to counties for transportation services for older adults and persons with disabilities;⁹ 2) the transportation employment and mobility program, now known as Wisconsin's Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP), created in 1981 as a system for coordinating employment-related transportation services for low-income workers; 3) a tribal elderly transportation program for tribes to develop and coordinate transportation of older adults in their communities; and 4) an Intercity Bus Assistance Program developed to improve connectivity to and between major metropolitan areas that currently lack convenient or direct intercity bus connections.¹⁰ All of these state-funded programs require a demonstration of local coordination for projects to be eligible for funding.¹¹ A fifth program, the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Capital Assistance Program,¹² combines federal (through 49 USC §5310¹³) and state funds to provide capital assistance for specialized transit vehicles; to obtain federal funding under section 5310, the state must have a coordinated plan.¹⁴

⁶ Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), *Wisconsin Human Service Transportation Coordination Model Final Report* (Madison: Nelson/Nygaard Associates Inc., July 2008),

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/coordination/docs/finalreport-090508.pdf>; Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), *Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC)* (Madison: WisDOT, 2009), <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/coordination/ictc.htm>.

⁷ Reed and Farber, *Transportation Mobility Management*.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Wis. Stat. Ann. §85.21.

¹⁰ Wis. Stat. Ann. §85.24.

¹¹ Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), *Specialized Transportation Assistance Program for Counties (s. 85.21 Wis. Stats) 2010 Application* (Madison: WisDOT, 2009),

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/docs/countyelderly-application.pdf>; Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), *Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program* (Madison: WisDOT, 2009), <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/transit/wetap.htm>.

¹² Wis. Stat. Ann. §85.22.

¹³ Known as the Transportation for Elderly Person and Persons with Disabilities program.

http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_8348.html.

¹⁴ WisDOT, *Wisconsin Human Service Transportation Coordination Model Final Report*.

Another component of Wisconsin's model is its 48 mobility managers, who develop and implement mobility management programs. These programs focus on delivering coordinated transportation services to persons with special transportation needs through a range of options and providers, and seek to improve special needs transportation through collaboration with public and private transportation providers and other community stakeholders at the local, regional or county level.¹⁵ Mobility management allows the state to avoid a uniform program across the state since its population density varies greatly. For instance, rural areas average 32 persons per square mile, while the city of Milwaukee has 6,214 persons per square mile.

The state began building its system of mobility managers in 2007. The effort was funded by federal New Freedom grants—which support transportation services for persons with disabilities—as well as other state and federal resources. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) also provides mobility management training and technical assistance.¹⁶ Currently, mobility management is provided in 69 of the state's 72 counties.¹⁷

In 2007 the ICTC hired a consultant to develop a model of human service transportation coordination for Wisconsin, including implementation strategies. In 2008 the *Wisconsin Human Service Transportation Coordination Model*¹⁸ final report was released, which proposed four strategies to advance state and local coordination:¹⁹

1. Strengthen ICTC as the lead entity for statewide coordination efforts, by making it a more permanent body with clear authority and stable support;
2. Encourage county and/or regional coordination councils;
3. Require county and/or regional coordination councils for federal and state funding; and,
4. Encourage regionalization through incentives and rewards.

At the conclusion of the consultant's work to develop the Human Service Transportation (HST) Coordination Model, the ICTC summarized coordination activities from 2005 to 2008 in a report to the governor. The ICTC offered two recommendations:

¹⁵ Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), *Application: New Freedom (49 U.S.C. Section 5317) Calendar year 2010 projects* (Madison: WisDOT, August 2009),

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/docs/newfreedom.doc>.

¹⁶ Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), *Mobility Management in Wisconsin* (Madison: WisDOT, 2009), <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/transit/newfreedom-mobility-wi.htm>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hereinafter referred to as the *Coordination Model* report.

¹⁹ Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), *Coordination Model* (Madison: WisDOT, 2009); Reed and Farber, *Transportation Mobility Management*; WisDOT, *Wisconsin Human Service Transportation Coordination Model Final Report*.

1. Provide a more formalized basis for the ICTC through an executive order; and,
2. Develop one or more pilot projects to test the feasibility of regional coordinated human services, NEMT and public transportation networks.

Due to the heavy administrative demands placed on the state by the newly enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in 2009, as well as some changes in key state staff positions, the ICTC report was never formally presented to the governor.

Authority

The ICTC was authorized by a governor's directive. In October 2005, Governor Doyle directed five state agencies to study coordination in Wisconsin and develop a statewide coordination plan, which created the ICTC.

Funding

The *Coordination Model* report recommended the ICTC be made a permanent, independent council in order to secure stable funding and administrative support, which it currently lacks.²⁰ Funding for ICTC activities has come from several sources such as the federal United We Ride grant program, WisDOT, ICTC conference registration fees and the Department of Workforce Development Division of Vocation Rehabilitation. The ICTC does not directly fund any local coordination activities at this time. The ICTC is staffed by the HST coordination program manager at WisDOT and was previously co-staffed by the then-called Department of Health and Family Services.²¹

The *Coordination Model* report also cited funding-related barriers and challenges to coordination. One barrier is a fragmented transportation delivery system. Funding for human service transportation in Wisconsin—including local coordination activities—comes from many sources. These funding streams have different reporting requirements, operations, guidance and restrictions on how funds may be used. This frequently results in multiple services that operate independently within a single county or region.²²

To illustrate, WisDOT currently administers twelve programs that provide operating and capital assistance for public transportation. In 2010, \$130 million was available for this purpose, of which 10 percent was used to support specialized transit services accessible to older adults and

²⁰ WisDOT, *Wisconsin Human Service Transportation Coordination Model Final Report*; WisDOT, *Coordination Model*.

²¹ John Alley, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, telephone conversation with author, October 22, 2009; Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC), *“Opening Doors to Human Services Transportation Coordination”*: 2007 Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC) Conference (Madison: ICTC, 2007), <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/coordination/docs/ictc-2007agenda.pdf>.

²² WisDOT, *Wisconsin Human Service Transportation Coordination Model Final Report*.

persons with disabilities.²³ State programs include the Specialized Transportation Assistance Program for Counties, Elderly and Disabled Transportation Capital Assistance Program, Tribal Elderly Transit Assistance and Intercity Bus Assistance. Federal programs include the New Freedom grant program, which is one of the resources that provides funds for the development of statewide mobility management programs. The state's WETAP program also supports specialized transit and is funded by the federal Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program, WisDOT's Transportation Employment and Mobility (TEAM) program, the state Department of Workforce Development's Employment Transit Assistance (ETA) program and local matches. State agencies that fund human service transportation programs include the Departments of Health Services, Veterans Affairs and Workforce Development. The state's largest resource for human service transportation is combined state and federal Medicaid, providing \$60 million annually.²⁴

Results

In 2008 Wisconsin initiated a second statewide coordination planning initiative, which focused on multi-county and regional planning. Figure 1 depicts the multi-county and regional planning coordination councils that developed from the initiative. Four of the regional coordination teams are assisted and led by Regional Planning Commissions, which contribute consultation and planning expertise to local coordination councils.

The WisDOT transit team continues to provide technical consultation to the counties and has been instrumental in the increase in federal grant applications (see figure 2). The state also provides coordination plan toolkits that support conducting coordination meetings and developing coordinated plans. Many counties have updated or developed new coordination plans in the last few years because of these efforts.

Recently, the ICTC was one of six entities awarded a \$300,000 United We Ride grant. The grant will fund two primary goals: 1) to conduct a study to determine if four county pilot projects and one multi-county pilot project to coordinate NEMT and public transportation are viable; and 2) to implement those pilot projects (if viable) with facilitation by a mobility manager and fund local and regional coordination councils.

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²³ Bobbie Beson-Crone, Human Services Transportation Coordination Programs Manager, WisDOT, e-mail to author, Nov. 10, 2010.

²⁴ Ibid.

Figure 1: Wisconsin Regional Coordination Committees

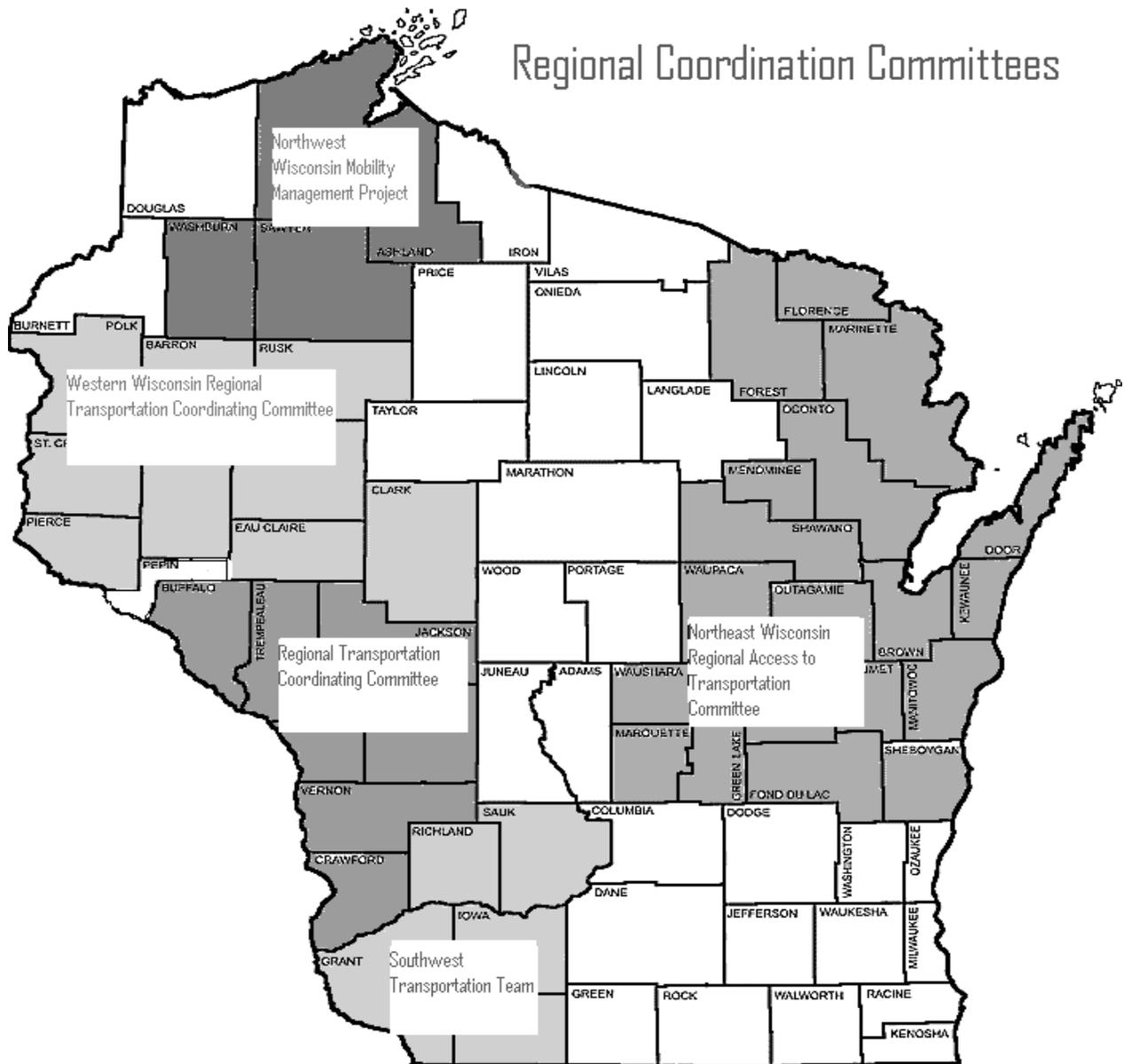


Figure 2:

Increase in Specialized Transit Participation, 2005-08

