

ONE CALL-ONE CLICK Profiles

DANE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

BACKGROUND

Dane County and its second largest city, Madison, provide an example of a large urban area where the County has taken the lead in providing one-call services. Both the City and County have a long history of working together on coordination activities – and this also is an example of a one-call service as part of an overall strategy to coordinate transportation resources.

Dane County has a population of more than 475,000 and covers 1,238 square miles. There are more than 60 cities, towns and villages. Madison is the state capital, county seat, and second largest city, with a population of 232,000. Madison is the central city in an urbanized area that had a population of nearly 330,000 in 2000 and covers about 84 square miles.

CONDITIONS PRECEDING ONE-CALL SERVICES

Both Dane County and the City of Madison have pursued transportation coordination and developed a range of services to support improved mobility for residents and efficient use of resources.

Madison's Metro Transit is a city utility. It provides fixed-route transit service within the City of Madison, Town of Madison, City of Middleton, City of Fitchburg, and University of Wisconsin Madison Campus. Commuter service only is provided to the Village of Shorewood Hills. Metro Transit works cooperatively with Dane County, for example, by alerting ADA Paratransit riders to the availability of Senior Group Access Services.

The Dane County Department of Human Services administers routed group ride and demand-responsive services for the elderly and persons with disabilities, contracting with private providers for this service.

- The Senior Group Access Service (GAS) provides regularly scheduled weekday routed group trips for seniors and persons with disabilities. Service is provided within five senior coalition areas. This service is neighborhood-based and connects residential areas to nearby nutrition sites, shopping areas, farmers' markets, pharmacies, and libraries. Within each coalition area, shopping trips are provided mid-morning and mid-afternoon, with meal-site trips in mid-day.
- Rural transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities is provided in eight geographic areas of the county. This service is modeled after the GAS service in Madison and is tailored to the needs of each area.

The Retired Senior Volunteer Driver Escort Program (RSVP) provides individual rides primarily to medical appointments. It operates throughout Dane County.

Specialized Transportation Service (STS) provides group rides for adults with developmental or mental

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disabilities traveling to vocational sites or work sites.

Rideline provides limited demand-responsive services to the elderly and persons with disabilities for work, volunteer activities, education or training, and medical trips. This service operates throughout the County, and wherever possible, trips are coordinated with the STS service so trips can be provided on existing routes.

Dane County Department of Human Services (DCDHS) provides limited assistance to transportation services. Most programs are very limited and need DCDHS approval. They include mileage reimbursements and assistance with paying fares. They may look at public transit options, utilizing the primary specialized services that operate within the county, or getting support through non-profit groups (American Cancer Society, Catholic Charities) or other charitable programs.

Previously there were several private medical providers, but most are no longer in business because the rates were so low. There is a real problem providing non-emergency medical transportation trips within Dane County. In some cases, the County authorizes paratransit services because specialized medical providers are not available.

A Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan prepared in 2008 assessed resources and needs and identified strategies for coordination. In the plan, it was noted that there was a substantial amount of coordination in place:

- Metro Transit and Dane County share state funding to support paratransit, Senior Group Access Service, and the RSVP Driver Escort program.
- Dane County Area Agency on Aging has rescheduled its program start and end times so they fall outside the peak periods experienced on Metro Transit.
- Dane County has integrated nearly all of its transportation for seniors and persons with physical disabilities, coordinating group rides within some programs. Coordination is occurring across programs at both the funding and ride levels.

The plan identified a wide range of coordination needs – specific steps that agencies could take to improve coordination of resources.

The strategies resulting from the plan are listed below. You may also wish to view the plan at the WIDOT website. The specific details of each strategy (such as recommended tasks for the mobility manager) provide a broader understanding of how well each strategy was developed in this planning process.

Communication, Training and Organizational Support

- Develop improved, more-centralized information on available public transit and specialized transpor-

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tation services.

- Hire mobility manager.
- Provide technical training for coordination/mobility management staff.
- Continue to improve and expand current travel training programs.

Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources

- Facilitate contracting with agency operators such as Care Wisconsin.
- Coordinate eligibility-determination functions.

Mobility Strategies

- Improve public transit and specialized services identified in the needs assessment.
- Consider “alternative” transit services such as flexible or deviated-route services in communities, areas, or on days and times when fixed-route bus service is not feasible.
- Continue efforts to improve accessibility at transit stops.

Technology Strategies

- Evaluate, develop, and purchase tools to support data management.
- Evaluate and purchase tools that support live dispatch.
- Evaluate and purchase tools that support improved productivity.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Dane County serves as the lead agency. Dane County, the City of Madison transit utility, and a large managed care organization had already developed working relationships to coordinate services and agreements to put people on the appropriate system regardless of who pays. The agencies work out the cost allocations internally, with costs adjusted to reflect the actual use and payment responsibility.

The human service transportation needs cover all of Dane County, and the County is involved with providing specialized transportation services to meet these needs. The roles and responsibilities of each agency in this arena were previously defined: the agencies work effectively together, and Dane County was the logical organization to take the lead in hiring the mobility manager and establishing a one-call service.

The ease with which these decisions were made reflects the amount of work that has gone into developing not only working relationships, but also agreements between key agencies.

ONE-CALL SERVICES

Dane County hired a Transportation Coordinator and has established a one-call service. Its one-call service

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has:

- Coordinated information for the Dane County Department of Human Services transportation programs, four municipal shared-ride taxi programs, and other transportation options. This has simplified access for consumers.
- Consolidated eligibility for programs other than Madison Metro's ADA Paratransit services. A generic application form is now used, and one staff member determines eligibility and the level of subsidy.
- Obtained a New Freedom grant through WIDOT to support mobility management and provide travel training. People with conditional eligibility can obtain training to use fixed-route services.
- Manage a transit transfer center to support riders with disabilities. Youth Corp participants are supervising people who need to transfer, assisting as needed to help them get to the right bus.
- Participate in a "time bank" barter network that allows some people with cognitive disabilities who know the system well to bank time for training new riders.

The Transportation Coordinator has reached out to medical facilities and businesses to show them how working together benefits their bottom line as well as the community as a whole. They meet with middle managers and discuss good public policy and how they can help each other. The way in which they work together depends on the business. They have reached agreements with local Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) to authorize rides at the point of service. This agreement provides for the HMO to assume audit responsibility for the trips.

TECHNOLOGY

The Dane County one-call service uses spreadsheets for tracking calls and trips. Efficiencies would be gained by using a software program, and Dane County is working with WIDOT to procure software to support data management, live dispatch, and service efficiencies. At this point, more than 500,000 trips are provided annually, so there is potential for considerable efficiency.

LOOKING FORWARD

Dane County has a well-defined path forward, with specific goals identified in its Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan. Its staff are making good progress on implementing the strategies that have been identified. With the procurement of a software program they will have significant work with installing the system, testing it, and developing the protocols that enable it to operate smoothly. With the installation of this technology, Dane County will be able to identify more opportunities for coordination and for addressing customer needs.

For more information about Dane County's one-call service, contact Norah Cashin,
Cashin@countyofdane.com.

The Community Transportation Association of America is a national non-profit, membership organization working to ensure that our nation's residents have reliable, accessible, affordable, convenient and safe transportation services. The Association is involved in several projects to provide information and technical assistance to communities, transportation providers, human services agencies and other groups to increase mobility through effective public and community transportation.

1341 G Street, NW, 10th Floor | Washington, DC 20005 | 202.628.1480 or 800.891.0590 | www.ctaa.org



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