RTCC

Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Region 5 MN



Contents

- **3** Introduction
- **3** Video Links
- 4 Background
- 7 Implementation Process
- **8** Goals
- 11 Outcomes
- 14 Next Steps
- **15** Acknowledgements

Improving mobility for the "transportation disadvantaged" and all people in Region 5

Introduction & Video Links

Transportation services come in many different forms and are administered by a wide range of organizations across the state of Minnesota. With that in mind it can also be challenging to understand both the availability and accessibility of transportation services. Coordination between transportation providers, service agents, and the private sector is a goal to fill transportation gaps, streamline access to transportation and provide individuals more options of where and when to travel.

Thus, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDot) and the MN Department of Human Services, in collaboration with other state agencies through the MN Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) are working with regional governments, such as Region Five Development Commission to create Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs).

Through the RTCC there will be formalized increased coordination between providers and service agencies will result in an efficient system of transportation options, which will provide customers easier access to services that meet their transportation needs with a focus on those who are "transportation disadvantaged" such as older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes, and/or military veterans.

Check out our video links to learn more!



RTCC Overview
Rider Perspective
Transit Providers

Volunteer Drivers

https://youtu.be/aYVFotU30HM

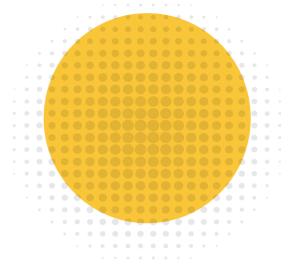
https://youtu.be/1PinK3JZDSE

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https://youtu.be/RR7kJ7zdzOA



Background



MnDOT's 2017 (initial) RTCC Organizational Planning Grant Solicitation

During the fall of 2017 MnDOT launched its initial RTCC Organizational Planning Grant Solicitation. Eligible applicants included municipalities, Counties, legislatively established transit commissions and authorities, regional development Commissions, and potential vendors.

The grant solicitation was opened on November 1st, 2017. A deadline for letters of intent to apply was set for February 15th, 2018, and the final application deadline was March 31st, 2018. Successful applicants were notified of their awards in June 2018 and grant agreements were executed in July 2018, whereupon grant awardees were able to begin executing their workplans.

Identifying Region Need for RTCC

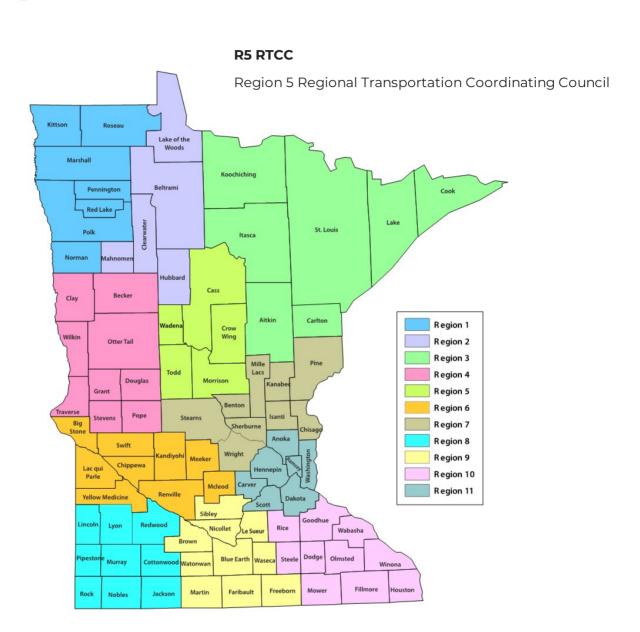
On November 14th, 2017 the Region Five Development Commission held a meeting to review Region Five's approach to stakeholder support and participation, and to identify additional stakeholders, solicit comments and hear recommendations. In addition to this meeting, Region Five also accepted written comments and/or counter proposals to the R5DC – RTCC application.

Region Five staff invited transportation stakeholders from throughout the region including representatives from the region's county department of social services, Minnesota Area Agencies on Aging, Workforce Development, transportation providers, human services agencies, transportation and human services advocates, veteran service organizations, Minnesota Continuum of Care Coordinators, Centers for Independent Living and public and private funders of transportation services and others.

Based on the discussions from this meeting and feedback from the broad list of stakeholders, and with no other entity in the region indicating that they were interested in pursuing the RTCC planning grant, it became evident that the Region R5DC would be the organization best suited to be the RTCC Organizational Planning Grant applicant within the region five counties.

Therefore, the R5DC began making plans to apply, by collecting what ended up being eleven (11) letters of support from regional stakeholders, counties and local units of government and drafting a formal letter of intent to apply. Additionally, R5DC Staff prepared a resolution providing authorization to apply – the Resolution was passed by the Region Five Development Commission on January 25th, 2018.

Region 5 RTCC



- ♣ The RTCC region is defined as Cass County, Crow Wing County, Morrison County, Todd County, and Wadena County.
- This is consistent both with the Region Five Development Commissions (R5DC) service area and the MACSSA regions map provided by MnDOT.

Source: http://macssa.org/Documents/MACSSA Regions.pdf

↓ Meetings	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Board Meeting Schedule *set date/times 10am-12pm				* RTCC Board Officially Formed	Meeting at Sourcewell in Staples (11/21/19)		RTCC Board Meeting at Sourcewell in Staples (1/16/20)		RTCC Board Meeting at Sourcewell in Staples (3/19/20) *Moved to April	RTCC Board Meeting held virtually using Zoom (4/22/20)	RTCC Board Meeting at Sourcewell in Staples (5/21/20) *Moved to June	↑
Public Meeting Schedule *set date/times 6pm-8pm							Phase 2 Public Kickoff Meeting at Bethlehem Church in Brainerd					Phase 2 Year End Wrap Up Meeting at TBD
Subcommittee Meeting Schedules							* Sub Committees Formed	All Sub Committees Meet			All Sub Committees Meet	
Tasks and ▼ Deliverables	ylul	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	Мау	June
MNDOT	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Monthly Progress Report and RFF	Application for Phase 3 due – MPR and RFF	Submit final plan- MPR & RFF
RTCC Tasks by Month	•Reach out to to stakeholders to apply to sit on the RTCC Board. •Make initial contact with providers regarding data collection and inventory	Continue data collection and inventory of providers Begin Policy Research Obtain 5- year transit plans from public providers	Finalize the RTCC Board Applicants		• 1st RTCC Board Meeting • Continue to coordinate with regional partners • Begin developing web content • ID gaps in region	•Identified volunteer driver related policy issues to pursue • Update data and inventory •Continue developing web content	y Meeting volunteer Elects Chair all Board volunteer Elects Chair all driver Chair throom to policy issues board of coordinate to pursue Approves with egional regional data and eveloping web web content region region	Meet with all 4 Sub Committees throughout the month Map out goals and structure of all sub committees DRAFT a legislation letter for volunteer driver policies	Lurning the data data collected into a functional region wide provider brochure Educate each entity on existing resources in region	•Explore the routes of each transit provider and analyze existing gaps •Share policies currently researching with other RTCC's in order to work together	•Send in application for RTCC Phase 3 •Board and Sub Committee meetings held •Create Operational Implementat ion Plan for Phase 2	•Submit TMCC DRAFT Report Policy DRAFT Report to MnDOT and DHS •Submit Operationa I Implement ation Plan

R5DC- 12 Month Implementation Grant- TIMELINE

Implementation Process

The first 12 months of the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils RTCC Phase 2 Implementation Grant consisted of implementating the work plan that was created throughout Phase 1. This was achieved through forming the RTCC board and having board meetings, working with stakeholders and holding public meetings which will all be described below.

R5RTCC Board Formation

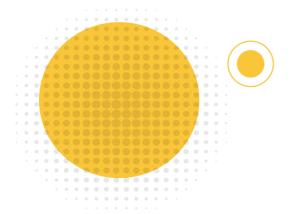
As Phase 2 Implementation began in July 2019, the first task was to create an RTCC Board based on the Operational Guidelines that were developed in Phase 1. Using the membership categories outlined in the Operational Guidelines, applications were sent out to individuals. All RTCC members were approved by the Region Five Development Commission, who ensured that all nominees have the necessary expertise to fulfill the needs of their respective membership category. The R5RTCC or Region Five Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Board now consists of 21 board members and ranges from County Commissioners, to Veteran Service Officers, to Transit Providers. The ability to have board members from different areas of transportation as well as different counties helped bring new ideas to the table and helped with task implementation.

R5RTCC Board Meetings

The R5RTCC Board met four times throughout Phase 2 Implementation, and they met bi-monthly beginning in November 2019. The board was responsible for providing staff with guidance on the workplan as well approving documents and progress brought forward by staff. The timeline on the previous page goes into detail of each meeting and tasks that were accomplished throughout the year.

Subcommittee Formation

Four subcommittees or committees composed of members of the RTCC Board and reporting back to the board were formed during Phase 2 implementation and each was aimed at covering a specific goal or task built into the RTCC. The four areas the subcommittees covered included: Transportation Management Coordination Center/ Regional Transit Network, the Volunteer Driver Program, Medical and Workforce, and a Policy and Funding subcommittee. Each subcommittee was composed of 4-5 members from the R5RTCC Board and met 2 times during Phase 2.



Goals

Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils were required to implement two of the three following emphasis areas:

1) Transportation Management Coordination Center (TMCC) [SELECTED]

2) Volunteer Driver Program Committee [SELECTED]

3) Vehicle Sharing

Based on the priorities of the public participation plan and the feedback received from the 4 public meetings, and survey responses, as well as guidance from the stakeholders during Phase 1, the top two goal options were selected. In addition, RTCC will include, at a minimum, two of their Region's 2017 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan projects as identified by the stakeholders. Below are descriptions of each goal in detail:

Goal #1 - One Call or One Click Dispatching

The Region Five RTCC will seek to develop a one-click service for transportation providing customers with a single point of contact to learn about available transportation resources. This customer-friendly tool can empower travelers by providing information about, assistance with, and access to available services.

The Region Five RTCC will develop this one-click service website in order to coordinate all transit/ transportation activity on a regional basis working with both public and private providers and regional stakeholders. The vision of the Region Five RTCC one-click service website would be for a user to be able to easily access the site, enter in their location, desired destination, and provide eligibility qualifications for various services, in order for the website/app to provide an optimize a travel itinerary for the customer based on program eligibility, distance, cost, and service availability.

Furthermore, the website would provide contact information for each provider identified in the travelers optimized route suggestion along with any pertinent information specific to each provider, such as run times, and/or program parameters.

As the designated implementation agency, for the Region Five RTCC, the Region Five Development Commission would own the rights to the website domain/URL, would be responsible for ensuring the maintenance and functionality of the website.

The purpose of the one-click service website is to empower travelers with an easy to use tool that will not only increase awareness of available transportation options, but also streamline the efficiency of users travel plans throughout the region.

Lastly, this website could also aid in further developing an interconnected regionwide transit/ transportation system by identifying gaps by tracking most frequently searched routes that are not currently provided. It would also identify logical connections between existing programs that could be mutually beneficial by providing efficiencies for not only the providers but also the travelers.

Goals

Goal #2 - Volunteer Driver Program Committee

The Region Five RTCC will seek to develop volunteer driver programs that can help maintain and improve the vital networks. Findings have indicated a need for ongoing support at the local level in attempting to address many of the issues facing Volunteer Driver Programs. RTCC organizations have been identified as someone who can assist this effort by convening the volunteer driver program committee.

These efforts will be coordinated by maintaining and improving the vital networks as well as coordinating a multi-county volunteer driver training program to both identify and recruit additional volunteer drivers to meet rising ridership demands. R5-RTCC will organize and provide direction on statewide Volunteer Driver Program Guidelines to create a seamless network of volunteer drivers with consistent service expectations and standards.

Creating a seamless network of volunteer drivers will make recruiting and retaining drivers a more feasible task. With the R5 – RTCC geographic area being so spread out covering Cass, Crow Wing, Todd, Wadena, and Morrison County it will be crucial to have a volunteer driver program in order to ensure the residents of the area are receiving the best transit options possible.

Goal #3 - Begin Developing the Ground Work for a Regional Transit Network

The Region Five RTCC will explore the possibility of developing a regional transit network through public, private, non – profit, and volunteer driver programs to form a s seamless transportation network. This network will allow riders to get from home, to node, to destination in a seamless manner.

To begin this groundwork, the R5 RTCC would direct implementation agency staff to understand what assets and/or resources are available from each entity and from there educate each entity on what exists. Having this understanding will open the door for transit providers being able to work together.

The vision for this network is to allow people the option to travel around the region seamlessly. With this network the Region Five RTCC will also seek ways to work with private sector employers to purchase bus passes for employees and clientele. A bus pass for employees and clientele benefits both the transit side as well as the private sector side as it results in increased ridership, employees having reliable transportation to work, and clientele being able to access private sector employers which fits into the LHSTCP on page 16 where it describes developing a private partnership with large employers.

Having a regional transit network also fits into the local coordination strategies which were derived from the region's 2017 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan. More specifically it is stated that the ability to cross county and city lines is a barrier to overcome as well as sharing a common goal for access in the region which can be found on page 14 of the Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan developed by Region Five Development Commission.



Goals

Goal #4 - Simplify, Streamline, and Coordinate Policies and Procedures

With the understanding that one of the roles of the RTCC's is to locally identify transportation issues, and make recommendations to state partners, in order to affect policy level changes. This project would act as the basis for that bottom up information sharing to take place.

For example, the 2017 <u>Region Five Local Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan (LHSTCP)</u> identifies several limitations, gaps and unmet needs (pg. 14.). Many of these items pertain to policy-based limitations that would require policy changes at the state or even the federal level.

Through this project the R5 RTCC would direct implementation agency staff to conduct research and regionwide data gathering, regarding areas of transportation in need of potential policy change; with the goal of bringing about simplification, streamlining, and coordination of policies.

Furthermore, based on implementation agency stafffindings, the R5 RTCC would develop a report outlining the areas of transportation in need of potential policy change, and provide draft recommendations for consideration by state agency partners such as MnDOT and DHS.

In addition, implement agency staff would also seek to coordinate with other RTCC's throughout the state in order to identify if there are some areas of transportation in need of potential policy change that are consistent on a statewide basis and which are on a local or regional basis. Coordination with other RTCC's will also help form a consistent coherent message, (understanding that regional transportation needs will vary from region to region) to be communicated to State Agencies such as MnDOT and DHS.

Lastly, it would be the intent of R5 RTCC to direct implementation agency staff to update the report annually and provide the draft report to appropriate state agencies for consideration annually.





This section outlines and describes the outcomes from the Region Five RTCC Implementation Organizational Planning Grant, otherwise known as Phase II. Each goal is broken down by the tasks that were developed for that specific goal. Please find the outcomes of each task in detail below.

Transportation Management Coordination Center

Task 1 – Inventory all existing transportation programs in the region:

Work on this task included reaching out to stakeholders from Phase 1 initially and from there move onto the "new" providers to the RTCC via email and/ or calling to collect data such as population served, type of service offered, and current infrastructure. The data collected was then transported into an excel file and from their the data will be turned into a functional brochure/ user friendly rider guide which will be available on Region Five's website as well as any providers within the region that would like to have the document on their own website.

Task 2 – Develop web content/ narratives/ descriptions for future website:

Most of the work done for task two was preparation for Phase 3, which will begin July 1st, 2020. As R5RTCC continues to plan for a future RTCC website, staff has begun turning the raw data gathered from task 1 into text that would be ready to put directly onto any website format. Along with that much of the text and narratives of the site will be pulled from the board meetings, public meetings, and stakeholder engagement that took place throughout Phase 2.

Task 3 – Coordinate with regional partners to share/ collect information and to be a part of a regional network to assist the site:

The first step in coordinating with regional partners was the creation of the RTCC Board by going through the nomination process. The nomination process had been developed in Phase 1 and was included in the RTCC Operational Guidelines. In an extended effort to share and collect information with stakeholders, the RTCC Board approved the creation of subcommittees. The subcommittees were formed around the existing goals in Phase 2 as well as the addition of a workforce/ medical subcommittee to bring in new stakeholders. The subcommittees are currently made up of RTCC Board members only at this point and once a structure and goals are developed, we will be looking to recruit stakeholders within the region to sit on the subcommittees. Lastly coordination with partners has also been done through data collection as that was the first interaction between many providers and the R5RTCC.

Task 4 – Develop DRAFT report summarizing outcomes of tasks 1,2,3:

At the time of writing this Operational Implementation Plan the DRAFT report has not been finalized as we are continuing to work on tasks. The DRAFT report will be developed over the next couple months and will focus on showing data collected and what information was obtained throughout Phase 2. This report will summarize all events that took place in Phase 2 regarding the TMCC.

Volunteer Driver Program Committee

Task 1 – Develop a regional volunteer driver labor pool data base to identify potential committee members:

Staff reached out to Volunteer Programs within the region and asked the coordinators if they had drivers that may be interested in sitting on a volunteer driver program committee. In doing so a list of volunteer's names were developed for the committee to reach out to once they had a structure for the committee. It is a goal to have 1-2 drivers join the committee moving into Phase 3.

Task 2 – Seek committee members to join the Volunteer Driver Program Committee:

At January's RTCC Board meeting the subject of the Volunteer Driver Program Committee was listed on the agenda and with that was the call for committee members. After discussing with the group what the committee would be responsible, we ended up filling the committee with 5 members from the R5RTCC Board. The group has been meeting bimonthly and the main goals of the group include creating a standardized application regionwide as well as a standardized background check as well as an emphasis on training.

Task 3 – Coordinate a multi county volunteer driver training program:

Through the initial Volunteer Driver Program committee meetings we have looked into multiple training aspects that could be implemented into Phase 3. These include creating a regionwide training program for volunteer drivers, as well as looking into each programs procedures to see if there is any way to be more efficient. Staff also looked into possible training options to implement and depending on what the R5RTCC board decides, the board may end up developing their own training materials for the region, this is currently being looked into.

Task 4 – Facilitate the Volunteer Driver Program Committee Meetings

Leading up to January's RTCC Board meeting staff had been in contact with the volunteer driver coordinators in the region to see what interest could be gathered and to see who would want to be on the committee. For now, the committee is filled with RTCC Board members, but we will be looking to add to the group once our structure and goals are defined. In Phase 2 the Volunteer Driver Program Committee met 2 times and staff facilitated each meeting.



Developing the Groundwork for a Regional Transit Network

Task 1 – Determine each provider's cost with data collection on wages, geography, population served, and infrastructure:

In order to gather the data each county providers cost was looked at by gathering information on wages, geography, population served and their current infrastructure by obtaining their 5-year transit plans. This was used to look further into each county's capabilities, although Cass County is the lone county within the region that does not have a public transit service.

Task 2 – Map out sources and what assets/resources are available while educating each entity on the existing resources:

The R5RTCC Board created a "County Roundtable" exercise that allows each County within the region to present to the board on what their specific program brings to the region and going forward we will be including programs that are not currently represented on the RTCC Board. Along with that we also had at least 5 Board members at each public meeting held throughout Phase 2 and they gave a program overview on what assets and resources they bring to the region. Both of these allowed people to learn what exists and allowed people to become more familiar with services they may have not known about.

Task 3 – Explore the routes of each transit provider and what gaps need to be addressed:

The routes were explored for each provider that had a fixed route, but for those that did not have an exact route such as volunteer programs or dial a ride we looked at more of boundaries of where their program would stop. Looking into Phase 3 the goal is to incorporate all of this information into a GIS layered map so that the R5RTCC can do a more in depth gaps analysis.

Develop a regional transit network for seamless transit region wide:

The development of the regional transit network is ongoing and will be a task going forward into Phase 3. To date all tasks that have been completed in this specific goal as well as the TMCC goal has helped us begin the steps in developing a regional transit network in the region. This remains the main objective for this goal and the R5RTCC anticipates to have the groundwork for a regional transit network laid out by the end of Phase 3.

Explore Ways to Simplify, Streamline, and Coordinate Policies and Procedures Plus Identify Ways that Transportation Systems Could be Fiscally Sustained

Task 1 – Conduct research and regionwide data gathering, specifically for policy related inefficiencies:

Research regarding policy inefficiencies started with reaching out to the providers as well as having it as an item on the RTCC Board agenda. From their it was determined that a lot of the policy issues were surrounding the Volunteer Drivers and were focused primarily on insurance issues and tax issues. Phase 2 policy issues mainly surrounded the volunteer drivers and the reason for that was that it was clear how important volunteer driver programs are to the Region Five area.



Task 2 – Share the list of policies in need of potential change with other RTCC's throughout the state by seeking feedback:

Sharing policies between RTCC's has been ongoing by all of the RTCC's throughout Phase 2 by email and now with the use of Flock which is a site for messaging between all the RTCC coordinators. Other issues are discussed on the site as well and most of the polices we are looking at in Region Five, other regions are also looking at those polices which will help in changing these polices going forward. Working with all the RTCC's throughout the state has been on going and all the RTCC coordinators meet quarterly to discuss topics such as policy issues.

Task 3 – Develop a series of draft recommendations to address the list of policies in need of potential changes:

A letter to the legislators has been drafted by all of the RTCC's collectively and all of the RTCC's plan to send them in the near future. The letter is focusing on the volunteer driver policy issues discussed. Region Five had talked about hiring a graduate intern to help with policy issues but that has been pushed back to Phase 3 as an option.

Task 4 – Present the DRAFT report to appropriate state agencies:

A final DRAFT report will be sent to MnDOT and DHS before the end of the grant period (June 30th 2020) to outline what policies effected the region the most and possible solution to these issues. The R5RTCC will also be seeking feedback from the agencies so we can move ahead in looking into potential change for the policies that were collected during Phase 2.

Next Steps

Phase Three: Implementation Grant

Following the completion of the 2017 Organizational Planning Grant period, MnDOT launched a solicitation for RTCC implementation grants. These grant support Regional Transportation Coordinating Council(s) that have completed Phase 1: Organizational Planning Grant task activities and Phase 2: Planning Implementation in the Greater Minnesota regions outside the seven county Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The deadline for RTCC implementation grants applications was May 15, 2020. At the time of publication of this document, Region Five Development Commission has submitted a Phase Three Implementation Grant application and is awaiting notification. (June 2020)



Acknowledgements

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This project is funded by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The Regional Transportation Coordinating Council for Region 5 is faciliated by Region Five Development Commission (R5DC).

Participants

We are grateful to our public participation attendees. Your feedback is invaluable to this project.

RTCC Board Members

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Amy Christensen – Director of Transportation Services, Tri-CAP Inc. Transportation Dept.

Andy Stone - Transit Coordinator, Brainerd and Crow Wing Public Transit

Barb Becker - Todd County Commissioner

Bill Stearns - Wadena County Commissioner

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Scan the QR code using your smartphone camera to learn more about RTCC for Region 5 in Central Minnesota







"This is not just about going out to get your sustenance or going to medical appointments. It's about people connecting with people, and getting them where they need to go."

Cheryal Hills



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