

SANILAC COUNTY RIDE PROVIDE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT COORDINATION STUDY OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES WITHIN SANILAC COUNTY

The goal of coordinating transportation services within Sanilac County is to maximize the availability of state and Federal dollars while achieving a more efficient use of resources by implementing a coordinated system, which utilizes a central transportation specialist under the direction of the Sanilac County Community Collaborative and Sanilac Transportation. A centralized specialist well versed in all area's of transportation resources and issues within the county will generate greater efficiencies, elimination of duplication of services, cost savings for agencies and clients and allowing for greater options of services to residents of Sanilac County. In the achievement of these goals, the residents of Sanilac County will benefit by more efficiency, less expensive, and greater availability of transportation options. This in turn will enable residents and agencies to focus more on the social issues related to people rather than transportation.

The coordination of services must be viewed as a long-term process rather than a quickly implemented program. This is the basis of the recommendations of the study and the implementation process to follow. Sanilac Transportation, DHS, VA, MI Works, Blue Water Center for Independent Living, Eva's Place, have expressed commitment to the program. It is expected that the additional players will be "sold" on the idea after seeing the results of the implementation.

It is recommended that the implementation be approached slowly, building a base from which residents can be serviced and resources can be expanded by showing a track record of success. Barriers in our county are apparent in the lack of participation of some of the larger purchasers and providers of services in the county.. These agencies will need individual contact and mentoring with the transportation specialist before a final analysis and a true coordination of available resources can be attempted. The second barrier is that agencies do not look at the "holistic" picture of transportation beyond their services. Residents require and are requesting services that do not fall within the parameters of agency programs only.

The study has complete research, data gathering, surveys of agency's and individuals throughout the county in all income levels and educational brackets. The framework for implementing a coordinated system of transportation was utilized ensuring that best practices were being followed. All framework has been completed and the implementation phase is ready to begin. The results of the framework evaluation are that the coordination concept is going to be difficult in Sanilac County. It is recommended that it be addressed as SALES promotion. Personal relationships, proven results, and constant contact will be required though time consuming.

Framework For Action

Sanilac County Connection Ride Provide Program

Building a Fully Coordinated Transportation System in Sanilac County

SECTION 1

1. Have leaders and organizations defined the need for change and articulated a new vision for the delivery of coordinated transportation services?

- Leaders in the Sanilac County Human Service arena have acknowledged that the existing network of transportation services is not sufficiently efficient, cost effective, or flexible enough to meet the mobility needs of people in the county. Through the Providers Survey, which surveyed 35 agencies, organization and public leaders it was learned that 83% of the responders use their own resources financially or otherwise to provide transportation directly or indirectly to their clients, 54% stated that transportation keeps people from participating in their agencies programs and/or activities.
- The Agency survey did not address the impact of transportation of residents not involved in social service programs or for needs other than agency/organization programs.
- Sanilac Transportation and the Sanilac County Community Collaborative regarding the delivery of transportation services approved a vision statement.

“To provide safe, efficient and reliable transportation for all residents of Sanilac County”

- Adopting this vision, the Sanilac County Collaborative Ride Provide Project believes that “Individuals and organizations are the catalysts for organizing and sustaining a coordinated system that provides mobility and access to transportation for all residents.

2. Is a governing framework in place that brings together providers, agencies, and consumers? Are there clear guidelines that all embrace?

- The Sanilac County Community Collaborative in collaboration with Sanilac Transportation has stepped up to a leadership role in establishing a plan to transition Sanilac County to a Coordinated System of Transportation.

- The Sanilac County Community Collaborative and the Sanilac Transportation Board of Directors are both shared decision-making bodies. The Sanilac County Community Collaborative includes public and private transportation providers, non-profit human services agencies, health providers, employment providers and consumers.

3. Does the governing framework cover the entire community and maintain strong relationships with neighboring communities and state agencies?

- The Sanilac County Community Collaborative represents the entire county of Sanilac. It's interest lies in the service provision for all residents of the county. With Sanilac County being bordered by Huron, Tuscola, St. Clair and Lapeer Counties, many multi county agencies are represented on the board. Issues of transportation across county lines due to the limited availability of services in our county have been addressed by all agencies with limited success. Members of the Sanilac County Community Collaborative and the Sanilac Transportation Board of Directors are committed to crossing the county borders to ensure services to our residents.

4. Is there sustained support for coordinated transportation planning among elected officials, agency administrators, and other community leaders.

- The Sanilac County Ride Provide Coordinated Project has solicited sustained support for coordination by communicating the benefits to community stakeholders. Elected officials, agency administrators, and community leaders have been active in their comments and support during the preliminary study phase of this project. Some barriers exist due to turf issues and it is apparent they will continue but with the large support of the general public and agency personal focus on the "Big Picture" will assist in the unanimous commitment of the community.
- It is agreed by agency directors and front line staff that transportation must be integrated into community initiatives related to aging, disability, job training, and health care and services to low-income persons. It is being proposed for any initiative supported by the Community Collaborative specifically address transportation prior to a letter of support being provided. This step will guarantee that all services acknowledge and support transportation coordination.
- With various formula's to increase current transportation funds and workgroup participation and planning, Community leaders are expected and show definite interest though not commitment at this time to support coordination efforts.

5. **Is there positive momentum? Is there growing interest in and commitment to coordinate human service transportation trips and maximize resources?**
- The Community Collaborative is encouraging participation in and budget support for coordination initiatives. This is a positive step and was not a priority or a consideration in the past. Continuous visual and verbal presence of the Project Coordinator has had medium success.
 - Agencies currently work together to coordinate services on an informal basis. Recently a handicap accessible van was donated to the Sanilac County Veterans who have offered other agencies the use of the vehicle. Cooperation is high at this time but is not defined in a formal network. Many hours of staff time are devoted to obtaining rides for client's appointments and needs but personal after hour's needs are not being addressed. A shift in assisting the "whole persons needs" is moving through the county and transportation is being addressed. The project has published a transportation-planning tool which is currently being utilized in a couple of programs. Planning to have all agencies implement the tool will be addressed during the implementation of the coordination process.
 - Currently we have had numerous changes in leadership and agency structure, which results in confusion, and miss information for staff member assisting clients. The project continues and outreach to new/transferred employees is being conducted on an ongoing basis as the need becomes apparent to the program coordinator. These changes are to be expected and slow the initial planning process but will result in better communication with staff that will not be use to "the same way we have always done it" idealism.

6. **Is there an inventory of community transportation resources and programs that fund transportation services?**

- All entities in Sanilac County that purchase, sell, or use transportation services have been identified.
- Transportation services provided by different federally funded programs such as Meals on Wheels, Medicaid, Head Start, Vocational Rehab Services, Independent Living Programs, employments services, and other programs have not yet all been identified. Some of these providers were not included in the survey and need to be contacted directly within the "selling" phase.

7. **Is there a process for identifying duplication of services, underused assets, and service gaps?**

- Survey process identified the gaps in services as outlined in the attachments, underused assets have yet to be fully determined. Several agencies are

investigating the cooperative use of vehicles but have not yet received board approval.

8. Are the specific transportation needs of various target populations well documented?

- Agency and Individual survey's have documented the needs and expectation of individuals with disabilities, older adults, youth, job seekers, and persons with low-incomes.
- Non-users of transit have been asked through survey's to identify what characteristics would make transit an attractive choice.
- Major health and human service agencies have been asked through surveys to articulate what would motivate their clients to ride public transit.

9. Has the use of technology in the transportation system been assessed to determine whether investment in transportation technology may improve services and/or reduce cost?

- This item has not specifically be addressed as Sanilac Transportation currently uses a computer scheduling tool which is paid for. It is recommended that an access system be set up during the initial implementation phase prior to reviewing purchases of different systems. The access system will track customers, service providers, routes, gaps, and high and low volume days and times.

10. Are transportation line items included in the annual budgets for all human service programs that provide transportation services?

- Approximately 50% of the agencies providing transportation have a specific line item in their budget. Since budgets for 2007 are already in process we will be unable to propose a coordinated funding plan until 2008. Other programs use flexible funds or employee reimbursement for transportation, which is not a specific line item. Most agencies incorporate their transportation scheduling within a specific persons job description. Concerns have been that they will not save money but spend money by transferring that duty to a coordinated system yet still having to retain a full time employee. Union concerns have arisen.

11. Have transportation users and other stakeholders participated in the community transportation assessment process?

- Stakeholder groups throughout the community have been systematically included in the assessment process through survey's, meetings, and individual contact.

- Customers representing people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income populations were actively included in the assessment process through survey's meetings, and individual contact.

12. Is there a strategic plan with a clear mission and goals? Are the assessment results used to develop a set of realistic actions that improve coordination?

- The action plan calls for the convening of a workgroup, which includes all agencies purchasing, and/or providing transportation to draft a strategic planning document with long-range and comprehensive goals. Priorities will be sustainability and comprehensive service coverage.

13. Is clear data systematically gathered on core performance issues such as cost per delivered trip, rider ship, and on-time performance? Is the data systematically analyzed to determine how costs can be lowered and performance improved?

- The study has documented data on costs/fees, rider ship, and performance.
- Ongoing data gathering and tracking including customer satisfaction survey's need to be utilized during the implementation phase.

14. Is the plan for human services transportation coordination linked to and supported by other plans?

- The study and recommendation link directly to the United We Ride State and National Plan along with DHS planning. Local school districts have shown some interest and support.

15. Is data being collected on the benefits of coordination?

- A complete review of the literature and promising practices has been completed. Recommendation of a coordination system utilizing a Transportation Specialist is recommended.
- The benefits of coordination must be routinely documented and communicated to community leaders and the public during the implementation phase.
- Complete tracking system identifying the number of individuals that receive transportation services, the types of services they receive, and the costs associated with those services are to be tracked during implementation.

- Presentations are to be scheduled throughout the implementation phase at community meetings, agencies, and organizations to gather support for the project and sustainability.

DOCUMENTATION OF NEED

A summary of data

- **Sanilac County is a rural farming county located in the Thumb Area of Michigan. Bordered on the East by Lake Huron. The county encompassed approximately 964 square miles and does not include any urban area's. Resources are limited and most residents travel outside the county borders to obtain services and goods. Sanilac County has an estimated population for 2005 of 44,752 the rate of change since 200 is .5%. The median household income for 2003 was \$37,042 with 11.7% of the residents below poverty level.**

The Sanilac County Collaborative Ride Provide Project administered surveys to agency personal, providers, and residents via written, face to face and telephone surveys assessing the gaps and needs of the current transportation options in the county.

- **The Sanilac County Human Service Needs Assessment of 2004 lists transportation as the top 14th problem facing the county.**
- **82.8% of the agencies use their own resources, financial or otherwise, to provide transportation directly or indirectly to clients.**
- **95.8% limit their transportation to Sanilac County only**
- **57.7% do not own or lease vehicles for transportation.**
- **DHS clients do not have transportation available, as part of their services if a lift equipped vehicle is required.**
- **53.6% of the agencies state that lack of transportation keeps people from participating in their agency's programs at least somewhat.**
- **9.1% of the population served by a social service agency utilizes some type of mobility device.**
- **57.1% of individual respondents report the use of at least a cane or walker**
- **28.6% report the use of a wheelchair and 4.8% the use of a scooter.**
- **72.7% of the population served by a social service agency has some difficulty reading and understanding printed maps and/or schedules.**
- **36.4% of the agencies provide transportation for clients to their programs.**
- **27.3% do not.**
- **81.8% of the providers survey reported that 81.8% of their clients have transportation needs which are unmet for activities not related to their agency.**
- **The following have been identified as types of trips that clients of social service agencies need transportation for that is currently not available through their agency.**
 - 72.7% Educational
 - 90.9% Programs at another agency
 - 54.5% Medical appointments
 - 54.5% Employment
 - 72.7% Shopping/Personal Business
 - 63.6% Recreation

- 63.6% Social Activities
- 63.6% Community Activities
- 36.4% Other

- 72.7% of the agencies reported that they have funds to assist with some transportation issues but 88.9% state they have strict eligibility requirements.
- 100% of the agencies refer clients to public transportation (Sanilac Transportation)
- 60% of the agency personnel recognize a need for a central referral source for transportation needs.
- When asked to check any problems in the current transportation availability the following was identified:
 - 45.5% Cost of Service
 - 72.7% Lack of Options
 - 81.8% Lack of Out of County Transportation
 - 81.8% Times transportation is available
 - 54.5% Length of trips
 - 63.6% hard to coordinate appointments with available transportation
 - 36.4 Inconvenient to use.
- 88.9% of individual respondents state they usually drive to where they need to go with 8.9% saying no.
- 85.5% stated that they would prefer not to drive in rain or snow
- 84.3% of the county residents survey stated they have never used public transportation
- 48.6% of the individual respondents would like rides to the Grocery Store
- 25% to work
- 47.2% to medical appointments
- Most traveling is required in the mornings (76.2%) with only 32% requiring evening travel.
- 80% of those obtaining transportation currently utilize Sanilac Transportation

An evaluation of the results stated above show that there is definitely a need not reflected in the view of agency personnel. Work with the community, as a whole is important so as to address all needs. Based upon the above summary analysis the following recommendations are being made.

1. Contract with a Transportation Specialist for 30 hour per week. SALES EXPERIENCE NECESSARY!
2. Transportation Specialist to review current study and recommendations utilizing consultant if necessary
3. Transportation Specialist to organize and promote informational Welcome meeting/lunch...

- 4. Transportation Specialist to individual meet and introduce the program, themselves, and begin developing basic “sales” relationships with those working in the transportation arena.**
- 5. SELL the concept to agencies, front line staff, and residents SELL**
- 6. Set up Access data base to track needed data on an ongoing basis**
- 7. Promote, promote, and promote – One Call Does It All!**
- 8. Implement the One Call Does It All Campaign within 2 weeks of hire.**
- 9. After five months of implementation, reevaluate the project**
- 10. Transportation Specialist reviews cost savings/benefit analysis with assistance of consultant if necessary.**
- 11. Additional Tasks: Contact agencies/employers to set up car pooling
 Promote after school transportation for
 children’s activities with the schools
 Explore private vehicle pool and reimbursement
 concept. Liability issues, union issues, etc.**
- 12. Consultant available on request at reduced rate.**
- 13. Consultant to complete the final publishable study and analysis free of charge.**