




## Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region Commission

P.O. BOX 365 • HOUGHTON, MICHIGAN 49931  
906-482-7205 • FAX 906-482-9032 • e-mail: info@wuppdr.org

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Office of Passenger Travel, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)  
FROM: Jerald Wuorenmaa, Executive Director, WUPPDR   
DATE: March 21, 2017  
SUBJECT: Regional Transit Mobility, Phase 3

On July 21, 2016, the Western U.P. Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR) hosted and facilitated a face-to-face meeting of transit providers within Planning Region 13/Prosperity Region 1a. The purpose of the meeting was to review KFH Group's final Coordinated Mobility Plan for Region 1, to discuss regional transit needs identified, and to identify potential actions to be taken to address those needs. The meeting, scheduled well in advance based on times of mutual availability, was attended by three of the Region's four public transit agencies and by the region's MDOT Passenger Travel staff.

This memo addresses four items set forward by MDOT regarding transit mobility in the region.

#### ***1. Are there regional needs identified in the plan that your agency should pursue?***

Many of the needs have been pursued in the past but have not been able to be addressed due to limited resources. However, several needs were identified as remaining worth pursuing.

#### ***2. Are the needs in the area of planning, assessment, or service development?***

Needs were in all three areas as follow.

##### *Planning for:*

- Mobility management/shared dispatching (especially in Houghton/Hancock)
- Sponsorship/partnership opportunities with major employers and institutions
- Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) for veterans
- Shift of NEMT to public transit providers through 2-1-1 system

##### *Assessment of:*

- Rider needs and general feedback
- Night and weekend service needs
- Vanpool program feasibility

*Service development through:*

- Reliable capital funding
- Local millage support
- Vanpool funding and technical assistance, if found to be justified
- Utilization of alternate funding sources such as Job Access/Reverse Commute (JARC)
- Direct state grant funding for transit agency marketing, including websites
- Better and more user-friendly state support for CDL training and testing
- Mentorship of human services agencies by public transit agencies

**3. Prepare an initial list of action steps to address the needs.**

Implementation of actions (by the facilitators specified) is dependent upon funding availability.

*In planning:*

- Convene local meetings of transit providers interested in coordinating mobility management. **(WUPPDR)**
- Engage transit providers to collectively continue dialogue with transit insurance pool regarding interstate transport. **(Michigan Public Transit Association [MPTA])**
- Identify and encourage interested individuals to 1) represent transit providers in exploring sponsorship and partnership opportunities with major employers and institutions, and 2) implement the 2011 Coordinated Human Services – Public Transit Plan for Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw Counties, which recommended creation of a transit authority. **(grassroots community groups/transit providers)**
- Convene meeting of transit providers with veterans organizations to explore gaps in NEMT and identify ways to address them. **(WUPPDR)**
- Encourage open dialogue between transit providers and 2-1-1 regarding statewide coordination of NEMT. This initiative is moving forward, but transit providers have not been engaged or sufficiently informed thus far. **(Michigan Association of United Ways)**

*In assessment:*

- Prepare questionnaires to be distributed to transit users for feedback, potentially in conjunction with Houghton Transit data collection for job access/reverse commute. **(WUPPDR/transit providers)**
- Convene local public and stakeholder (e.g. bar owners and major employers) meetings to evaluate need for night and weekend transit service. **(WUPPDR/transit providers)**
- Perform feasibility study of vanpools and ridesharing in region. **(WUPPDR or consultant)**

*In service development:*

- Communicate capital funding opportunities as quickly as possible from the federal to state and local level to give transit agencies opportunity to plan; likewise, transit agencies need "shovel-ready" capital requests for when opportunities arise. **(FHWA/MDOT)**
- Communicate the role of local millage in subsidizing service. **(local governments/transit providers)**
- Share methods of obtaining and utilizing JARC funding. **(transit providers)**
- Establish communication between MDOT and Secretary of State regarding CDL training and licensing process and opportunities for support. **(MDOT)**
- Establish dialogues with individual human services agencies to gauge interest in mentorships. **(transit providers/Copper Country Human Services Coordinating Body/grassroots community groups)**

***4. Present this list of actions to your prosperity region and include your conclusions and next step, if any.***

The draft memo (items 1-3) was distributed to transit providers and then to the Western U.P. (Region 1a) Regional Prosperity Collaborative (RPC) for review and comment. WUPPDR reported on the entire Regional Transit Mobility initiative, including the needs and actions identified above, as the primary focus of our March 15, 2017 RPC meeting. Discussion was had regarding overall availability of, demand for, and unmet service needs for transit. RPC encouraged WUPPDR to proceed on the action items and marshal responsible parties as opportunities arise.

WUPPDR has long held public transit as a high priority, and we acknowledge our role in facilitating collaboration among the parties actions are attributed to above. As initial priority steps within our control, WUPPDR intends to:

- Become involved with efforts of existing veterans groups to address their particular concerns, and facilitate connections with transit providers as appropriate.
- Keep apprised of new developments in provision of nonemergency medical transportation by public transit agencies, and explore increased opportunities for transit providers to provide Medicaid-funded transportation (this was an interest of RPC).
- Reestablish contact with grassroots groups that have recently demonstrated interest in improving public transit service in the Houghton/Hancock area.
- Assist transit providers with questionnaires and public meetings as requested.

Office of Passenger Travel, Michigan Department of Transportation  
March 21, 2017  
Page 4

WUPPDR thanks MDOT for the opportunity to participate in this initiative. This process, through our own efforts and those of KFH Group, has made WUPPDR, providers, and the Regional Prosperity Collaborative better aware of transit issues and potential solutions, and we have a clear path forward to utilize current and potential future resources in the most effective ways possible.