

DEVELOPING A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR PUBLIC/SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION IN MONTANA

FHWA/MT-08-006/8188

Final Report

prepared for
THE STATE OF MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

in cooperation with
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

November 2008

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RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Montana Department of Transportation



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**U.S. Department of Transportation
and
Federal Highway Administration**

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ETC Institute**

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16. Abstract This document provides the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and its partners with a plan to enhance Montana traveler information systems so that Montana residents and visitors can better find information about their transportation options. The goal of the One-Stop Shop is to help Montanans and visitors find transportation options other than the private vehicle. An exhaustive survey of transportation options in Montana was conducted and focus groups determined public acceptance of the idea of a One-Stop Shop for traveler information. Findings suggested that Montana currently has no statewide trip planning capability, and planning trips across the coverage areas of different transit agencies is difficult for the user. Recommendations for implementation of a One-Stop Shop include obtaining stakeholder buy-in, involving the state's 211 service, developing a single database of all transportation options in the state, and utilizing Google Transit.			
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Executive Summary

This document provides the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and its partners with a plan to enhance their traveler information systems so that Montana residents and visitors can better find information about their transportation options. The purpose of this document is to provide a roadmap for the implementation of a One-Stop Shop for traveler information services in Montana.

The document was developed through a series of tasks:

- Review Transportation Information Systems of Montana and Other States
- Identify Current Technologies
- Review Existing Montana Transportation Information Services
- Determine Public and User Needs
- Identify Gaps
- Determine Means for Public Access
- Recommend Implementation Approach
- Review Funding Options and Needs
- Review TranPlan 21
- Recommendations and Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is the culmination of the above tasks and is intended to be a living document that MDT will update as needed to guide its Advanced Traveler Information Systems (ATIS) program. All information reviewed for this document was done so with consideration for the needs of Montana travelers and the capabilities of Montana stakeholders to provide the services that may be of use to customers.

To develop this document, the research team of PBS&J, Current Transportation Solutions, Inc. and ETC Institute investigated existing transportation information assets in Montana, best practices and examples in other states and regions, perceived needs (both of travelers and of agencies providing transportation services), funding opportunities and other relevant considerations.

The goal of the One-Stop Shop is to help Montanans and visitors find transportation options other than the private vehicle. The primary audience for the One-Stop Shop is the potential rider, starting with those who are most in need including: seniors; people with disabilities; people with low incomes and other riders including choice riders – students, visitors and commuters. We believe that the best chance of success for a One-Stop Shop is if Montana utilizes the 511 and 211 services, the MDT public transportation and provider websites and Google Transit (<http://www.google.com/transit>) to offer “One-Stop Shop information dissemination.”

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document provides MDT and its partners with a plan to enhance their traveler information systems so that Montana residents and visitors can better find information about their transportation options. The document is the result of a research project, funded by MDT, to research the feasibility of developing a One-Stop Shop for public/specialized transportation information in Montana, as described in the Request for Proposals. The research conducted to complete this report considered the most efficient and effective means to make transportation information accessible to the public. Members of the research committee asked the researchers to consider both technology solutions and traditional methods of disseminating information, such as printed materials and brochures.

The document was developed through a series of tasks outlined in Section 2.0 (Project Work Plan).

The Implementation Plan in Section 7.0 is the culmination of the above tasks and is intended to be a living document that MDT will update as needed to guide its ATIS program. All information reviewed for this document was done so with consideration for the needs of Montana travelers and the capabilities of Montana stakeholders to provide the services that may be of use to customers.

To develop this document, the research team of PBS&J, Current Transportation Solutions, Inc., and ETC Institute investigated existing transportation information assets in Montana, best practices and examples in other states and regions, perceived needs (both of travelers and of agencies providing transportation services), funding opportunities and other relevant considerations.

Everyone we talked with thought that the concept is a viable one, although the concept that came to the top was not “One-Stop” but rather information “no wrong door.” Information should be accessible both through automated services as well as through the ability to talk with a person. Ideally, information should be available through 511, 211, multiple websites and through a person in the region.

During our research, we found little traction among stakeholders for the term “One-Stop Shop.” It caused confusion among Montana’s human service community as this term is associated with workforce centers. Within Montana State government, it also is used to describe the business licensing process and the government vendor resource. The term has become overused in State government, but furthermore, some project participants felt it was a poor description. The term “One-Stop Shop” is used throughout this document, but the researchers request that MDT and its partners develop another term to identify this work to avoid confusion.

Nationwide, both the transportation community and the social service community recognize the need to provide information to their constituents. The transportation community provides information about all forms of transportation, including roads, public transportation and tourist information. The social service community has information and referral services that help find the appropriate organizations that can meet

a caller's needs, including transportation needs. Both communities have services in Montana through, respectively, the 511 and 211 information networks.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a roadmap for the implementation of a One-Stop Shop for traveler information services in Montana. The implementation plan includes:

- A clear-cut, easy-to-understand deployment path for the One-Stop Shop
- An outline of key steps for each recommended element including timing, funding needed and other key decision factors
- A list of the potential obstacles along with our recommendations for how to overcome or circumvent them
- A discussion of recommendations on technology choices, use of existing resources and systems and funding opportunities
- A list of early winners, or pieces of the One-Stop Shop that can be deployed quickly and relatively easily, building momentum and awareness of the service among the public and stakeholders
- An approach that reflects the rural nature of Montana and the environments of the State and local organizations responsible for serving Montana travelers
- A focus on the needs of travelers in Montana, recognizing that they are vital to the project's success

For the state's urban and large rural areas – Billings, Missoula, Great Falls, Butte, Bozeman, Helena, and Kalispell – the One-Stop Shop should answer these questions:

- How do I get from A to B?
- How long will it take?
- When do I need to be at the bus stop or train station?

And for the rest of the state:

- Is it possible to get there?
- Which day of the week is best for this trip?
- Who can take me?

1.2 ONE-STOP SHOP VISION

Goal: To help Montanans and visitors find transportation options other than the private vehicle. The primary audience for the One-Stop Shop is the potential rider, starting with those who are most in need including:

- Seniors
- People with disabilities
- People with low incomes
- Other riders including choice riders
 - Students
 - Visitors
 - Commuters

A centralized repository of transportation services also is beneficial to the transportation providers, coordinators, planners and the MDT Transit Section.

Why Create a One-Stop Shop? MDT and its partners need to make it easier for the consumer to find a ride, leading to citizens having better access to their community resources and foster a more efficient use of transportation resources. The One-Stop Shop may also increase ridership, attract new users, and increase customer satisfaction.

Added Benefits: The One-Stop Shop will help coordinate activities between transportation providers. By defining transportation services electronically, the base level is in place for other applications. By improving the awareness and visibility of Montana transit services to non-users support for operations and funding will be built.

In our country's major metropolitan areas, a One-Stop Shop signifies something different than in Montana. For Montanans, this means that someone looking for a ride should be able to find information through: Montana's three-digit telephone systems (511 and 211); a human service; a local transit agency's website; a statewide website; or the local transportation agency by calling and asking for help.

To accomplish this, a public transportation traveler information system must meet the needs of three primary groups of users:

- The public, various transportation users, their care providers and/or case workers
- Transportation providers including public and intercity transit operators
- State or local planners

The One-Stop Shop can include as many sources of rides as possible. First, it will include regularly scheduled services, whether public or private. Second, it can include specialized transportation options. These could include regularly scheduled services or special trips. Third, it can incorporate carpools and other shared rides in private vehicles. Finally, it can include private services from taxis, charter buses, limousines and similar types of services.

1.3 PERSPECTIVES ON ATIS IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

Traveler information services are not developed in a vacuum while time stands still; the business environment that ATIS operates in is continually changing. Organizations develop requirements for ATIS and implement systems to fulfill those requirements and deliver appropriate information to travelers. During ATIS systems' life cycles, there are advances in technology and information accessibility trends that impact ATIS and its customers. This document is intended to prepare Montana for continued rapid change in this arena.

This document will provide some perspective as to what Montanans and the agencies that serve them will expect relating to ATIS in the future. The White Paper *Traveler Information Systems in 2013: Will It Finally Be "Advanced?"* (Schuman 2006) suggests that in a few years ATIS will be:

- Advanced
- Essentially national and ubiquitous
- Considered services, not systems
- Essential to travelers and mission-critical to transportation operators

What ATIS content will be delivered in 2013? Three types of content will be the cornerstone of ATIS:

- Enhanced static content
- Significantly enhanced dynamic content
- Mass customization of the content, whereby the static and dynamic content is personalized to maximize the ability to inform the traveler and support decision-making

This document will help Montana prepare for these conditions with a backdrop of rapid development in technology and the continued growth of our information society.

Today, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (Pew/Internet 2008) (accessible on the Internet at <http://www.pewinternet.org/>), 34% of Internet users connect to the Web using a laptop, PDA or mobile telephone. Montana needs to be prepared for a growing number of customers with Mobile Internet Devices that they will be using to make decisions about their travels. Today, there is an explosion of personal navigation devices available from manufacturers including Dash, Hewlett-Packard, Pharos, Garmin, Magellan and TomTom. These brands are becoming well known through broadcast advertising and these products are becoming commodities available to consumers at electronics stores such as Best Buy and Circuit City and warehouse clubs like Costco. Nokia recently introduced the N95 mobile phone which includes GPS location and navigation software. With a growing market of this size, consumers will expect to receive up-to-the-minute transportation information.

A few years back, U.S. DOT and ITS America were touting the concept of an Integrated Network of Transportation Information (INTI or “infostructure”) and, ideally, this document will foster such a network in Montana as a platform to provide multimodal traveler information. Metcalfe’s Law states that the value of a telecommunications network is proportional to the square of the number of users of the system (n^2). With more customers, partner agencies and organizations getting and receiving data from Montana ATIS, the more value and benefit that information conveys. In a short time, Montana will go from being relatively “data poor” to “data rich” with advancements in such initiatives as Vehicle Infrastructure Integration (VII) and Clarus (aggregating surface transportation weather information) possibly enabling every vehicle on the transportation network to provide probe and weather data.

While the research team does not expect such concepts as “seamless mobility” and “broadband is air” to be available to Montanans in the short-term, they are expected to come to Montana likely sooner than we expect and MDT and its partners need to consider these developments as they develop ATIS services.

1.4 ATIS VALUE CHAIN

It is easiest to understand transportation information as it goes through a value chain from data collection to dissemination to travelers. The Traveler Information Value Chain as shown in Figure 1 was developed by PBS&J and establishes the structure through which ATIS operates. The definitions below have been adapted from *Advanced Traveler Information Systems* (McQueen et al. 2002).

Data Collection - Creation and maintenance of an infrastructure capable of providing the data required by an ATIS and operation and maintenance of the data infrastructure. Montana can expect the amount of available transportation network data to increase exponentially in the coming years.

Data Sharing - The provision of data to or the receipt of additional data from external sources. The ability to share data with partner agencies and the private sector and to receive their data is becoming increasingly important.

Data Fusion - Involves the collation and integration of data from a number of different sources into a unified data stream. The data fusion process resolves inconsistencies, establishes a uniform format, provides for uniform dissemination, allows information on impacts to the transportation network to be presented in a clear manner, etc.

Information Dissemination - The unified data source is converted to information and packaged or combined with other information to provide value propositions that can be marketed (sold) to consumers; provided for free; or provided at no charge to the consumer with advertising or sponsorship underwriting or support for the cost of delivery. The key to a good ATIS is presenting accurate transportation information to customers when and how they need it.

Marketing - The target users for the information must be made aware of some basic information regarding the use of and access to the information including benefits and value of its use and associated

costs, if any. ATIS owners need to inform travelers of the availability of ATIS services and their use. While it may seem unnatural to “market” a public-sector product, ATIS is valuable only if it is used and travelers will use it only if they know about it.

Customer Satisfaction - A measure of how products and services supplied meet or surpass customer expectation, seen as a key performance indicator. A good ATIS assesses customer satisfaction and receives feedback from users to continually improve the service.

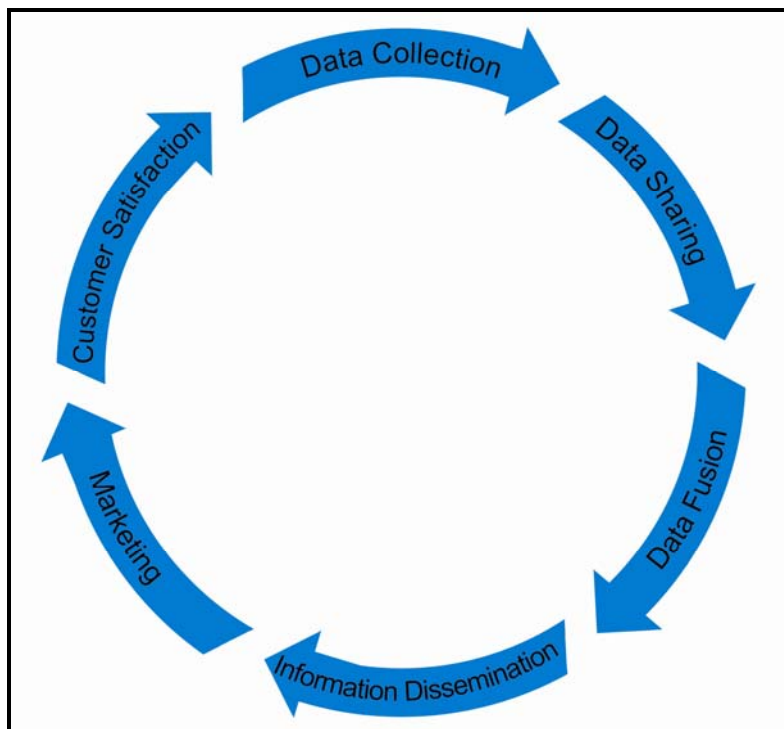


Figure 1. ATIS Value Chain

Montana can use the ATIS value chain to grade itself on its ATIS and One-Stop Shop offerings to see where improvements and investments are needed.

2.0 PROJECT WORK PLAN

2.1 PROJECT TASKS

Below are the tasks that the research team conducted as part of this study with the location in this document of the findings:

- Review Transportation Information Systems of Montana and Other States
- Identify Current Technologies
- Review Existing Montana Transportation Information Services
- Determine Public and User Needs
- Identify Gaps
- Determine Means for Public Access
- Recommend Implementation Approach
- Review Funding Options and Needs
- Review TranPlan 21
- Recommendations and Implementation Plan

A mid-project meeting was originally scheduled as part of this project, however it was not held as agreed upon by MDT, the technical panel and the PBS&J team.

2.2 EXISTING MONTANA AND OTHER STATES' TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND CURRENT TECHNOLOGIES REVIEW

2.2.1 Transportation Information Background

Within the state's urban and large rural areas — Billings, Missoula, Great Falls, Butte, Bozeman, Helena, and Kalispell — a transit traveler information system could answer the questions, “How do I get from A to B?” “How long will it take?” and “When do I need to be at the bus stop or train station?” For the rest of the state, the primary questions are, “Is it possible to get there?” “Which day of the week is best for this trip?” and “Who can take me?” Many of Montana's specialized and public transportation users are accessing medical or social services. For them, they want to know, “What day and time should I schedule my appointment in order to accommodate the available transportation?” and “Can I get to the medical facility where I am covered?” A One-Stop Shop will need to answer these questions and more, within the available resources.

2.2.1.1 Defining Public Transportation

This project is meant to examine traveler information options for specialized and public transportation. Defined in its broadest sense, this includes all passenger transportation options available other than driving alone. This includes urban and rural transit, demand responsive transit, passenger rail, intercity bus, commercial scheduled air service, taxi services, social service transportation, carpooling and vanpooling.

In a more narrow sense, public transportation refers to organizations who receive FTA grants to provide transportation. These are typically public or private non-profit organizations who provide fixed route service, flex route service and demand response service that are open to the general public. These organizations have close connections with either MDT or FTA. Some private for-profit intercity services also receive FTA funds, but because they are typically multi-state operations, MDT has less influence over their operations and their willingness to cooperate with an integrated traveler information system.

2.2.1.2 Public Transportation Services

Montana is primarily a rural state, ranking fourth in geographic size but forty-fourth in population. When compared to those in major metropolitan areas across the country, travelers must cover longer distances to access medical or social services; transportation agencies must also cover long distances with less frequency; State departments, local agencies and non-profit organizations must serve the complete range of client needs for a smaller population over a larger area. Rural users are generally “transportation dependent” – most rural riders of public transportation are seniors, people with disabilities or have low incomes. In some of the cities and tourist destinations, transportation serves a larger cross section of the general public including: college students, commuters, seasonal workers (sometimes from foreign countries), and tourists. Public transportation in Montana comes in many forms including: taking a train, riding a bus, or catching a ride in a smaller cutaway bus or minivan.

Transportation can be particularly challenging in rural America, which accounts for 80% of the nation’s land and 20% of the nation’s population. Many Montana residents are fortunate to be among the 60% of rural residents living in counties with public transit service. This service is vital, as many areas of the state have no taxis, private charter buses, nor intercity bus service. Like most of rural America, rural Montana residents have fewer transportation options than their urban or suburban counterparts.

Many Montana residents face the challenges of long trips to get to jobs, shopping, medical facilities or governmental destinations. Because of advanced age, lack of income or disabilities, some residents encounter significant difficulties in providing their own transportation.

As with other transportation modes, government subsidizes public transportation to make it viable. The FTA partially funds Montana transit providers through its Section 5311 (49 U.S.C. 5311) rural transit grant program and Section 5307 (49 U.S.C. 5307) small urban transit grant program. In addition, Montana communities provide local funds.

Rural transit agencies and transportation providers face many challenges:

- Extensive travel distances
- Limited resources
- Low population densities
- Lack of coordination among multiple providers

While transportation in rural areas is limited, operators provide essential mobility and access to basic living activities, such as health care, social services, shopping and even recreation. Trips can be local, interregional, intercity and interstate to regional centers hours away that require using two or more transportation providers.

Types of transportation:

Urban Transit Systems – Three public transportation providers in Montana receive direct FTA funding through the urban Section 5307 program for cities with more than 50,000 residents – Billings, Missoula and Great Falls.

Rural Transit Systems – The remaining communities are sub-recipients of Section 5311 rural funds, administered by the MDT Transit Section. Butte, Kalispell, Bozeman, Big Sky and Fort Peck provide fixed route services. The remainder provide deviated route or demand response.

Scheduled Air Service – Almost all Montanans are within a one county distance of an airport with scheduled commercial service, as stated in TranPlan 21 (MDT 2002). Air service to seven Montana airports (Glasgow, Glendive, Havre, Lewistown, Miles City, Sidney and Wolf Point) is subsidized by the Federal government’s Essential Air Service program.

Also included in this list is transportation for elderly and persons with disabilities, intercity buses, and passenger rail.

Rural public transportation providers report to the MDT Transit Section, which is responsible for administering Federal and State transit programs. Transit Section staff provide technical and financial assistance to local agencies, governments and companies that provide local and intercity passenger services. Staff members also conduct a variety of training workshops for transit managers and drivers in areas such as passenger assistance, safety, driver education, CPR/First Aid and board training. Urban providers report directly to the FTA’s Section 8 office in Denver.

Additional funding for Montana’s rural transportation from the SAFETEA-LU transportation legislation has allowed for an increase in the number of general public transportation providers, starting in 2006 and 2007. The numbers have increased from 11 in 2001 to 33 in 2007. While some of these represent new services (e.g., Bozeman general public fixed-route service and the link from Big Sky to Bozeman), most of the new providers converted from senior transportation programs previously receiving capital funds through the Section 5310 program.

Montana transit systems are operated by county government, urban transportation districts, city government or non-profit organizations. MDT oversees these local programs, administers Federal transit programs and operates State transportation systems such as the highway system. The FTA and the FHWA provide Federal funding and oversight.

Public transportation services in Montana are limited. These services include in-town fixed routes (e.g., Streamline in Bozeman), door-to-door service (e.g., Angel Line in Livingston) and publicly provided intercity services (e.g., Skyline between Bozeman and Big Sky). Once customers arrive at a hub (e.g., Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Missoula, Helena, and Kalispell), they can receive specialized health care or transfer to a privately provided intercity service (e.g., Greyhound or Amtrak) to reach other cities. Intercity service has been in decline over the past two decades. In 1979 Amtrak ended service across the southern part of the state. Intercity bus services, such as Greyhound, have been cutting routes over the same period, with some cuts occurring in the past few years.

Current information is critical to the concept of trip planning. As schedules change, new brochures must be produced and webpages must be updated. Customers needing to plan a trip during the evening or weekends may have limited access to the information that they need to plan the trip.

2.2.1.3 Coordination

Montana communities are currently doing significant work on coordination as required by the SAFETEA-LU legislation and the MDT. MDT has required a consolidation concept, meaning that all State-managed FTA funds for a community flow through one agency. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2007 in Montana, a sub-recipient of FTA Sections 5310, 5311, 5315 and 5316 funds must certify that projects selected are derived from a locally developed, coordinated public-transit human-services transportation plan. The plan must be developed using a process that includes representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation and human-service providers with participation by the public and representatives to address the needs of persons with disabilities, low-income people and minorities as well as users of the service.

It is typical for communities of all sizes to have, besides the public transportation provider, five to ten other organizations that provide transportation and a similar number of organizations that show significant needs for transportation. The public transportation provider works with these organizations to identify ways to work together and increase efficient transportation and to consolidate services.

2.2.1.4 Montanans and Technology

Even the most urban parts of Montana are different from the environment in which many Americans live. Montana has limited mobile phone service and less access; the community can be slow to adapt to new technology because new technology is slow to come to Montana, especially the most rural portions of the state. Many users of public transportation are less likely than the average Montanan to use automated systems because they are older, have a lower income and some have disabilities. However, the state will continue to grow the use of technology. Today, a transit user without a cognitive disability below the age

of 45 likely has access, skills and ability to use webpages or automated telephone systems. The portion of technology users will continue to grow in the future.

2.2.1.5 Federal Environment

Through the United We Ride (UWR) program, the U.S. DOT is working with the Federal Departments of Labor, Education and Health and Human Services to improve the delivery of human services transportation, which is currently spread across 62 Federal programs and innumerable State, local and private initiatives. UWR has provided technical assistance and funding to State and local governments to help reduce the duplication, administrative complexity and inefficiency of existing human services transportation programs.

A related effort, Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA), is an ITS initiative of the U.S. DOT that seeks to build on the progress of UWR to create a fully coordinated human service transportation system in partnership with health and human services agencies and transit providers. Information regarding MSAA can be found on the USDOT's website, at <http://www.its.dot.gov/msaa/index.htm> (USDOT 2007). This system will use geographic information systems, automatic vehicle location and/or other technologies to improve mobility and accessibility for the elderly, mobility-impaired and other "transportation disadvantaged" Americans.

Both UWR and MSAA envision the eventual development of a kind of "One-Stop Shop" for arranging human services-related transportation, where the transportation-disadvantaged could, for example, schedule all of their daily travel via a single telephone call.

The Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) offered their vision for a One-Stop Shop, (CCAM 2008) accessible on the Internet at (<http://www.unitedweride.gov/>).

"The vision is.... Whether it's a trip to work, the doctor, shopping or a place of worship ... it should be as easy as picking up the phone and making one call. Human service transportation addresses the mobility needs of all individuals with disabilities, people with low incomes, seniors and youth. Coordinated transportation ensures access to healthcare, education, recreation, employment and other life sustaining activities. Where barriers once stood, new technologies are making the vision of making One Call for a ride a growing possibility..."

Advances in ITS enable coordination among agencies and between customer and provider and dispatcher and driver. It also enhances transportation service quality, efficiency and accessibility.

MSAA has chosen pilot projects to demonstrate its services. All pilot projects are east of the Mississippi, where travel distances are shorter than in Montana. Kent, OH and Paducah, KY are rural communities of 25,000 – 30,000 residents which may have some applicability to Montana:

- Kent, OH – planning and design of a human service transportation network that involves a call center to support trip planning/management and real-time traveler information using ITS (such as

interactive voice response [IVR] and web-based applications). This project also incorporates emergency evacuation as a service scenario.

- Paducah, KY – expansion of an existing call center to cover a larger geographic area and provide around-the-clock access to traveler support. The strengthened call center will add customer-oriented features, such as automated telephone and Internet-based trip reservations and management.

2.2.1.6 Using Technology in Public Transportation

The One-Stop Shop concept is one of many uses of technology that can help Montana transit providers operate more effectively, provide better customer service and coordinate their activities. Technology can address rural transit problems, to improve service and coordination using technology tools and streamlined processes.

Various technologies include applications for the following areas:

- For daily operations, applications differ based on the type of service
 - Fixed Route – traditional bus service with fixed routes and stops
 - Demand Response – door-to-door reserve in advance
 - Deviated Route – fixed stops and times with ability to go off route to serve people with disabilities
 - Coordinated Services – reserve a trip on another agency’s vehicle
- Software also is helpful in planning for future services
 - For coordination, an application can assist with tracking a community’s transportation inventory and needs
 - Ridership and demand analysis
 - In reporting
 - Tools to support quarterly reports and annual application
- Billing of social service agencies or riders
 - Fare collection
 - Social service billing
- Traveler information for people who want to use the service
 - Available options
 - Costs
 - How to get more information
 - How to get from Point A to Point B
 - Reserve a ride

- Real-time information – when is the bus from Livingston arriving
- When can I expect the dial-a-ride to pick me up

For more automated systems, a transit provider can include on-vehicle equipment. These come at a higher cost and the team recommends not working with these items until basic functions are in place. Hardware includes equipment for:

- Automated Vehicle Location or Geographic Positioning System
- In-vehicle Mobile Data Computer
- Passenger Counters
- Automated Stop Enunciators
- Automated Fare Collection

The Montana Statewide ITS Architecture and the National Architecture provide a menu of services that meet regional needs. There are more than 85 of these transportation services available to select from however, only six of them are applicable to public transportation services in Montana. A brief summary is provided below.

Archived Data (AD) 1: ITS Data Mart. This market package archives data from operational systems and provides historical reports.

Advanced Public Transportation Systems (APTS) 2: Transit Fixed-Route Operations. Assists with operator assignment and system monitoring for fixed-route and flexible-route transit services.

APTS 3: Demand Response Transit Operations. A vehicle routing and schedule system with automatic operator assignment and monitoring for demand responsive transit services.

APTS 4: Transit Passenger and Fare Management. This market package manages passenger loading and fare payments on-board transit vehicles using electronic means. It allows transit users to use a traveler card or other electronic payment device.

Advanced Traveler Information Systems (ATIS) 2: Interactive Traveler Information. This service provides tailored information in response to a traveler request. Both real-time interactive request/response systems and information systems that “push” a tailored stream of information to the traveler based on a submitted profile are supported.

ATIS 5: Information Service Provider (ISP) Based Route Guidance. This system offers the user trip planning services. The trip plan may be confirmed by the traveler and advanced payment and reservations for transit trip segments are accepted and processed.

2.2.2 Existing Transportation Information Resources in Montana

2.2.2.1 Montana 511

Montana's statewide 511 system was launched in January of 2003 and now covers over 8,000 miles of Montana's highways. Montana's 511 system was developed and is operated by Meridian Environmental Technologies. The system is available via landline and wireless phone within the state by dialing 511 and by calling the toll-free number 800.226.7623 outside the state. Voice recognition is available, but has to be selected specifically during the call. The top levels of information available to the caller are:

- **Highway Conditions** – Information is available either by route or as a regional summary.
- **Glacier National Park Tourist Information** – Information on park road weather conditions are available via recorded message. The message is updated as needed. During the summer months, the message is updated daily and generally less often during the winter months.
- **Other States** – Montana's 511 system includes road information for two other states, North Dakota and South Dakota, as well as offering call transfers to Idaho and Wyoming.

Data is entered into the system via Montana's Road Conditions Reporting System to which all division offices have access. Operators at the division offices enter incident, weather and road condition data into the Road Conditions Reporting System which in turn sends the data to an FTP site. The 511 system then pulls the information from the FTP site and disseminates it via the telephone.

2.2.2.2 Montana's 511 Web Page

Traveler information is also available at MDT's 511 website (<http://www.MDT511.com>). The website is co-located with Montana's official State website and there is information available on the website that is not on the telephone system. Several categories of information are listed under the major category "traveler information." The categories relevant to this project are listed and described in this section.

Alerts / Restrictions / Road Reports – This tab takes the user to an informational page that includes an interactive map of the state, shown in Figure 2.

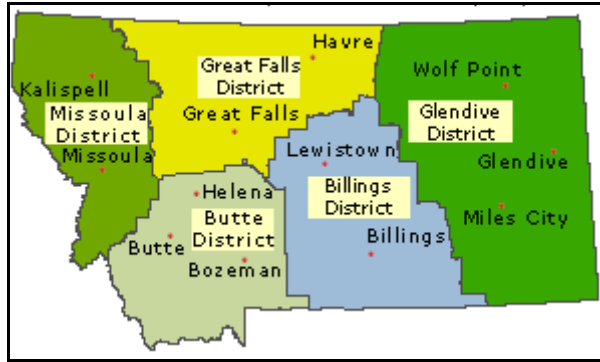


Figure 2. Montana 511 Map

The map allows a user to click on any of five districts, which opens a new window showing a static traffic map of that district. The map includes a timestamp with the time of the last update as shown in Figure 3.

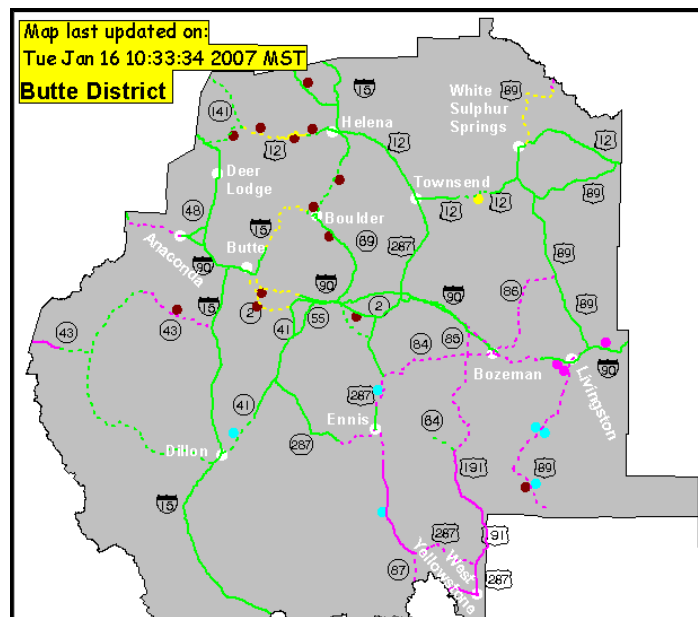


Figure 3. Butte District Map

Under the “**Travel Alerts**” heading, users can access information in two categories: Incidents / Closures / Emergency Travel and Hazardous Weather Outlook. Both links take the user to a text page of information. Information is updated via district offices as needed.

Road Condition Reports take the user to maps with 63 RWIS stations and 25 traffic camera locations (Figure 4), as well as statewide and detailed road conditions reports and interactive maps. Conditions reports are updated every 15–20 minutes.



Figure 4. Image From MDT Traffic Camera

Construction Delay / Detours and Information – This section provides the user with text information on active construction projects in the state.

Restrictions - Restrictions include information on current load and speed limit restrictions, as well as tire equipment and towing restrictions.

Aviation – This link takes the user to a page dedicated to Montana’s 120 public use airports and other aviation information.

Bicyclists and Pedestrians – A statewide map of walking and bicycling paths is available, as is general information on trip planning and bike safety. There are several links on the page to weather and road condition information.

Cameras / RWIS – This link is another path to the RWIS and traffic cameras map described earlier in the document. A statewide interactive map of camera locations and RWIS stations allows the user to click on the icons to receive more information on current conditions. The site offers information on 63 RWIS stations and 25 cameras.

Public Transportation – The public transportation page of the MDT website offers a wealth of information regarding public transport, information that is not available on the 511 phone system. Links to a general guide to public transportation and information about grants and funding for public transportation projects are offered. The page contains a comprehensive list of general public transit providers in the thirteen cities that have this service. The public transportation page also provides the user with contact information to obtain information on public transportation for the elderly. Private transportation companies for bus, train and air travel are listed as well.

The Call-A-Ride Services - These services do not have accompanying websites, but are provided via a link to PDF file. The link can be accessed at: http://mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/docs/citybus_list.pdf with and has complete contact information for the companies.

Weather – Montana’s 511 website has a great deal of information regarding atmospheric weather and road weather conditions. 36 links are provided in four categories: Zone Forecasts, Warning Reports, Climatic Reports and Other Reports. These links take the user to information on everything weather-related, from city weather forecasts to tornado warnings to climatic reports by city.

2.2.2.3 Kiosks

Traveler information for the Yellowstone region is also available via kiosks. MDT has installed a network of traveler information kiosks under the Greater Yellowstone Regional Intelligent Transportation System (GYRITS) program.

2.2.2.4 211 in Montana

211 services are provided by information and retrieval (I&R) call centers that are accredited by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), available online at (www.airs.org) and that meet the standards set by the Montana 211 Call Center Association (www.montana211.org). Currently building on existing infrastructure is:

- Voices of Hope in Great Falls
- The Help Center in Bozeman
- First Call for Help in Missoula
- First Call for Help in Kalispell

The four call centers and one regional data collection site work year round on updating a database of health and human services. Each agency is responsible for data collection in their community. The team works closely together to maintain consistency in service term indexing, agency inclusion and writing style. Contact numbers for data collection are as follows:

- Voices of Hope, Great Falls – North Central and North East Montana
406.268.1330
- The Help Center, Bozeman – South Central and South East Montana
406.586.3333
- District XI Human Resource Council, Missoula – South West Montana
406.728.3710
- United Way of NW Montana – North West Montana
406.752.7266

The three digit dialing code 211 is used for access to community information and referral services, just as 511 is used for traveler information. In Montana, it is currently available in only four counties – Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli and Cascade – and is only available via landline telephone. In all other counties the information is only available online. While 211 is not a traveler information service, social service providers do provide transportation information to get their constituents to and from doctors appointments, shopping trips, etc.; consequently, they must also provide transportation information. In fact, for some of the targeted users of the One-Stop Shop, 211 is arguably more useful and important than 511 might be.

To support 211 capabilities, the information and referral services are working with Internet Connect Services of Missoula to implement Flex Portal, a single database application for the entire state.

While services that are offered through 211 vary from community to community, 211 provides callers with information about and referrals to human services for everyday needs and in times of crisis. For example, 211 can offer access to the following types of services:

- Basic Human Needs Resources, such as food banks, clothing closets, shelters, rent and utility assistance
- Physical and Mental Health Resources such as health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health care, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), medical information lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol abuse intervention and rehabilitation
- Employment Supports including financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance and educational programs
- Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities which include adult day care, congregate meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, home health care, transportation and homemaker services
- Support for Children, Youth and Families: child care, after school programs, Head Start, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring and protective services
- Volunteer Opportunities and Donations

A report entitled “211, 5-1-1 and Human Services Transportation” prepared by the Volpe Center answers the question of what 211 call center do: (U.S. DOT 2004)

- Provide information and referral services to inquirers for their designated geographic area with well-trained staff who are knowledgeable about local resources
- Create and maintain a database of statewide community resources and referrals
- Provide appropriate services to crisis callers which include stabilization, safety assessment and connection to further resources (domestic violence shelter, sexual assault survivor advocate, etc.)
- Provide information regarding callers, service needs and resource gaps

- Provide support to community and emergency service providers in the event of a disaster

The Taxonomy of Human Services is the I&R industry’s classification system for indexing resources in I&R databases. It was developed by INFO LINE of Los Angeles, the predecessor to 211 Los Angeles County out of a need to classify and define health and human services. It has been endorsed by AIRS and the United Way of America as the standard indexing system for the industry. More information on Taxonomy and to subscribe to the service can be found online at <http://www.211taxonomy.org>.

Related transportation information categories of interest to Montana travelers are under “B” for basic subsistence and “T” for transportation (BT Transportation):

BT-4500	Local Transportation
BT-4500.4500	Local Automobile Transportation
BT-4500.4500-050	Automobile Rentals
BT-4500.4500-150	Car Sharing Programs
BT-4500.4500-450	Limousine Services
BT-4500.4500-600	Park and Pool Facilities
BT-4500.4500-700	Ride Sharing Programs
BT-4500.4500-750	Shuttle Services
BT-4500.4500-850	Taxi Services
BT-4500.4500-900	Truck Rentals
BT-4500.4600	Local Bicycle Transportation
BT-4500.4700	Local Bus Services
BT-4500.4700-050	Airport Bus Services
BT-4500.4700-500	Local Bus Transit Services
BT-4500.4700-650	Park and Ride Facilities
BT-4500.4700-800	Senior Center Bus Services
BT-4500.4900	Local Rail Services
BT-4500.4950	Local Water Transportation
BT-4500.4950-200	Ferry Services
BT-4500.4950-250	Ferry Terminals
BT-4500.6500	Paratransit Programs
BT-4500.6500-120	Child Transportation Programs
BT-4500.6500-170	Disability Related Transportation
BT-4500.6500-180	Drinking/Drug Impaired Driver Transportation
BT-4500.6500-250	Emergency Transportation for Commuters
BT-4500.6500-280	General Paratransit/Community Ride Programs
BT-4500.6500-350	Indigent Transportation
BT-4500.6500-500	Medical Transportation
BT-4500.6500-800	Senior Ride Programs
BT-4500.6500-830	Transportation for Endangered People
BT-4800	Long Distance Transportation
BT-4800.0500	Air Transportation
BT-4800.0500-020	Air Charter Services

BT-4800.0500-040	Air Freight Services
BT-4800.0500-060	Airlines
BT-4800.0500-080	Airports
BT-4800.0500-250	General Aviation Services
BT-4800.0500-300	Helicopter Transportation
BT-4800.4500	Long Distance Automobile Transportation
BT-4800.4500-850	Travelers Switchboards
BT-4800.4550	Long Distance Bus Services
BT-4800.4550-080	Bus Charter Services
BT-4800.4550-100	Bus Freight Services
BT-4800.4550-120	Bus Terminals
BT-4800.4550-450	Long Distance Bus Passenger Services
BT-4800.7000	Rail Transportation
BT-4800.7000-700	Rail Freight Services
BT-4800.7000-750	Rail Passenger Services
BT-4800.7000-850	Train Stations
BT-4800.8500	Truck Transportation
BT-4800.8500-850	Truck Freight Services
BT-4800.9500	Water Transportation
BT-4800.9500-650	Port Services
BT-4800.9500-800	Shipping Lines
BT-8300	Transportation Expense Assistance
BT-8300.0500	Air Fare
BT-8300.0850	Automobile Insurance Payment Assistance
BT-8300.0870	Automobile Loans
BT-8300.0870-030	Automobile Purchase Loans
BT-8300.0870-060	Automobile Repair Loans
BT-8300.0900	Automobile Payment Assistance
BT-8300.1000	Bus Fare
BT-8300.2500	Gas Money
BT-8300.3000	Mileage Reimbursements
BT-8300.7000	Return to Point of Origin
BT-8300.8500	Taxi Fare
BT-8400	Transportation Organizations
BT-8400.1800	Departments of Transportation/Special Districts
BT-8400.6300	Private Transit Companies
BT-8400.6400	Public Transit Authorities
BT-8400.8500	Transit Customer Service Centers
BT-8400.8550	Transportation Information Clearinghouses/511 Services
BT-8400.8600	Transportation Management Associations
BT-8500	Transportation Passes
BT-8500.1000	Local Transit Passes
BT-8500.1000-180	Discount Transit Passes
BT-8500.1000-200	Free Transit Passes

BT-8500.1000-220	Full Fare Transit Passes
BT-8500.6500	Paratransit Vouchers
BT-8500.8400	Toll Road/Bridge Passes
BT-8500.8500	Transportation Smart Cards
BT-8600	Transportation System Orientation Programs
BT-8700	Travel Directions/Trip Planning

Additional information is available at <http://www.montana211.org>.

2.2.2.5 Montana Paratransit and On-Demand Services

Paratransit and on-demand transit services tend to serve a rural population with very little access to public transit. While a significant portion of these agencies' customers are elderly or handicapped, the services are open to the general public and agencies strive to get their information out to their potential customer base. All agencies discussed in this section provide general information to the public via brochures or similar printed materials.

- Blackfeet Transit – serving the Blackfeet Reservation in the northern portion of the state
- Dawson County Urban Transportation
- Fort Peck Transit – serving the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and the town of Poplar
- Valley County Transit
- Bitterroot Bus – providing paratransit and on-demand transit service to Ravalli County
- Powder River County Transit

2.2.2.6 Private Intercity Services

Respectively, AMTRAK and Greyhound bus serve 12 and 39 cities and towns in Montana and are key elements of the transportation network. They each provide information over the telephone and on their websites <http://www.amtrak.com> and <http://www.greyhound.com>.

2.2.2.7 Transit Providers in Montana

- Achievements, Inc.
- ASUM Office of Transportation
- A.W.A.R.E., Inc.
- Big Dry Transit
- Billings Metropolitan Transit
- BitterRoot Bus
- Blackfeet Transit Program
- Butte-Silver Bow Transit System
- Community Medical Center

- Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
- COR Enterprises
- Dawson County Urban Transportation District
- Eagle Transit
- Eastern Montana Industries
- Fergus County Council on Aging
- Fort Peck Transportation System
- Galavan
- Garfield County Council on Aging
- Great Falls Transit District
- Helena Area Transit Service (HATS)
- Hospitality House
- Liberty County Council on Aging
- MET Transit
- Missoula in Motion
- Missoula Ravalli TMA
- Mountain Line
- Opportunity Resources, Inc.
- Powder River County Transportation System
- Powder River Trailways
- Quality Life Concepts, Inc.
- Ravalli County Council on Aging
- Ravalli Services Corporation
- Residential Support Services
- Rimrock Trailways
- Rocky Mountain Development Council
- Seeley Swan Stage
- Sidney Health Center Extended Care
- Streamline Bus
- Summit Independent Living
- Valley County Council on Aging
- Valley County Transit
- West Yellowstone Foundation

2.2.2.8 Montana State Government Website

The Montana State government website (<http://mt.gov>) provides a means to chat (typing via Internet) with an online help representative who can answer questions regarding public services in Montana. Users are asked to fill in their name, email address and question. After pressing a “Chat” button, the user is taken to a chat window and asked to wait to be connected with a live support representative. After a short time, if one is unavailable or if the time is outside of the support centers’ hours of operation, the user is presented with a web page where he or she can send a question to a support representative to receive a reply via email.

This method of communication most benefits the hearing impaired. Additionally, the text size on screen can be changed by the user for easier viewing. Upon finding an appropriate website that will answer the user’s question, the support representative can “push” it to the user. This opens a new browser window on the users’ computer screen with that website. Users are also offered the opportunity to have a transcript of the chat session emailed to them.

2.2.2.9 Institutional Issues

Institutional issues are often at the heart of developing new programs within a State department of transportation and traveler information is no exception. Just within MDT, there are at least four different entities with some responsibility for ITS data collection or dissemination:

- Maintenance Division – This division is responsible for the operations and maintenance of all ITS field devices.
- Traveler Information Section – Housed within the Maintenance Division, this section oversees the Road Conditions Reporting System, 511 and the traveler information website.
- Information Services Division – This division provides support for all ITS devices, maintains the centralized ITS database, archives the ITS data and provides system integration.
- Districts – Districts coordinate construction information with the maintenance divisions for traveler information.

2.2.2.10 Data Collection

This section describes existing transportation information resources in Montana and is based on research undertaken as part of this effort. This section uses that framework to describe what exists in Montana and then discusses some of the overarching institutional issues related to transportation information. Table 1 illustrates the various types of data that exist and how they can be disseminated to travelers.

Key data elements come from MDT’s Maintenance Division, which is responsible for the operations and maintenance of all of the state’s ITS devices. These include – for purposes of data collection – traffic cameras and road weather information sensors.

Table 1. Montana Data Dissemination

Type of Information Dissemination	When Information is Needed / Used		
	Trip Planning Information	Immediate pre-trip Information	En-route Information
Paper	Road maps; transit schedules	Road maps; transit schedules	
Telephone	Information from transit agency or social service provider call center about schedules, etc.	Road conditions from 511; information from call center	Road conditions from 511; information from call center
Internet / Kiosks	Transit schedules; driving directions; planned construction	Current road conditions	
Roadside			Road conditions from Dynamic Message Signs
In-Vehicle			Weather (from radio or navigation device); road conditions (from navigation device)

In addition, much of the data that is relevant for the One-Stop Shop will come from transit agencies and social service agencies. This data will primarily be schedules for fixed route transit and information on how to take demand-responsive transit.

2.2.2.11 Information Dissemination

Currently, no single information source provides all details for the various transportation options within the state. Each public transportation service independently distributes schedules, through printed brochures and agency websites. Not all of the 33 public transit services have websites. Using these resources as well as the knowledge of the bus drivers and office workers, the local transportation providers are successfully getting people to where they need to go, to locations within their counties and to regional hubs.

Some transit systems connect with each other, but for these, it is difficult or impossible for a person trying to connect between services to plan an itinerary online. When transit providers have their schedules online, potential riders can search for trips across systems. For a person who has proficient computer skills and a decent understanding of bus schedules, it could take at least 30 minutes to put together an itinerary using the web. A person who is unfamiliar with the Internet would likely take longer and may not be able to identify the trip at all. Currently, most people call the various providers directly when planning an unfamiliar trip. When calling the providers, the individual hopes that the providers know enough about the possible transfers and the other providers' services to suggest possible routings to complete the trip.

The current situation makes it difficult for an individual to plan a trip with different providers across the state. In addition, it is difficult for a single transportation operator to have detailed information about all

the various transportation options within the region. Bus managers must educate dispatchers of changes and share new information with current and potential riders. With the current system, a change with one transportation provider may have an impact on clients of other transportation providers. The current system makes it harder to maintain up-to-date information and to share any changes to schedules, routes, etc., with the public or other providers. Individual transit providers are responsible for maintaining their websites, ensuring that all information about the transit system is current. As schedules change, public transportation agencies must produce new brochures and update webpages. Further, individuals at the transit systems are typically available to answer questions during “normal” office hours (8 AM to 5 PM). Therefore, if someone wanted to plan a trip during the evening or weekends, they may have limited access to the information that they need to plan the trip.

2.2.3 Parallels Elsewhere

2.2.3.1 511

A discussion of traveler information systems in other states must include 511, the nation’s three-digit dialing code designated by the FCC in 2000 for the use of traveler information systems. There are currently 41 statewide and regional 511 deployments in the United States and two in Canada, as shown in Figure 5. 511 is expected to be accessible to 100% of the U.S. population by 2010. The map illustrated in Figure 5 was created by the 511 Deployment Coalition and can be found on their website at www.deploy511.org.

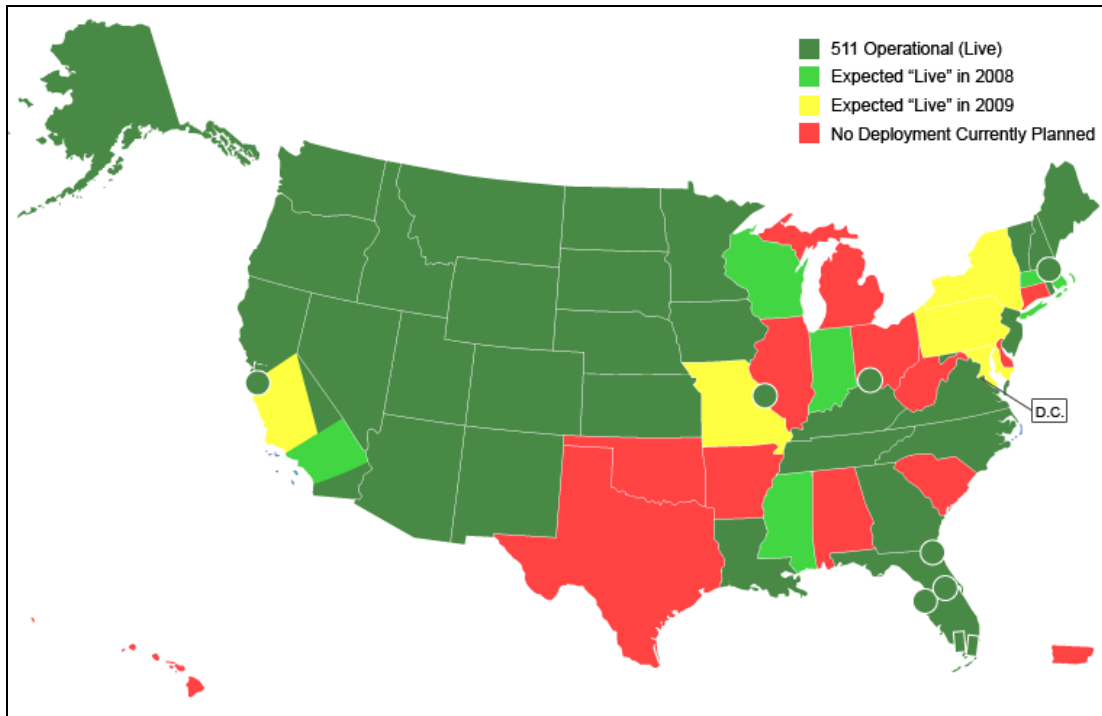


Figure 5. 511 Deployment Status

The 511 Implementation Guidelines recommend deployment as an IVR system and encourage an accompanying co-branded website (like <http://www.MDT511.com>). 511 is becoming the “brand” for transportation information nationwide and is an effective method of disseminating traveler information – road conditions, incidents, travel times, transit and weather, etc. – to anyone with a telephone and/or access to a computer.

The type, quantity and quality of information differs from deployment to deployment, but implementation and operational guidelines (available on the 511 Coalition’s website at <http://www.deploy511.org/docs/511%20Guidelines%20Version%203.0.pdf>) are available to help deployers and potential deployers provide a 511 service that meets certain expectations derived from operational experience. While many 511 systems are focused on highway information – road conditions, incident reports, travel times, etc. – the service can include all existing and available multi-modal traveler information.

Montana and all its neighboring states have deployed statewide 511 systems. In Canada, both Nova Scotia and the Yukon region have deployed the service.

2.2.3.2 Washington Traveler Information Systems

The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) provides a wealth of information via its website at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov> as well as the statewide 511 system, available to callers outside the state by calling 800.695.ROAD. In addition to road conditions and incidents, transit schedules, fares, ridesharing information and trip planning are all available.

Serving the rural parts of the state as well as the elderly and disabled are several organizations which in turn get their information from WSDOT. While each organization has different methods, resources and options for getting information out to its potential customers, the most common method of these community based organizations is word of mouth. These organizations are listed on WSDOT’s comprehensive directory of transit options in the state, available on their website at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Transit/>.

2.2.3.3 Idaho

Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) deployed its statewide 511 system in November of 2005. Available to out-of-state callers at 888.432.7623, the telephone system offers callers information in the following categories: highway reports; weather; regional summary; tourism; and road information in other states.

The accompanying co-branded website can be accessed at <http://511.idaho.gov>. Public transportation information on the website includes a comprehensive list of transit options in all districts.

The list, available for each of the state's six districts at <http://itd.idaho.gov/PublicTransportation/how2get.html> includes:

- Local Transit System
- Carpool
- Vanpool
- Intercity
- Social Service
- Bicycling
- Charter
- Public Transportation
- Train
- Taxi

According to ITD's transit division, information regarding transit options in rural parts of the state is disseminated in a few different ways. Medium-sized rural transit providers do use the media (generally radio) to advertise their services. ITD transit staff conducts meetings in the State's six districts several times a year. The main reason for the meetings are that applicants of 5310 funds – usually senior citizen centers and disability workshop staff – must meet with ITD to apply for these funds. However, these meetings are also held with the goal of informing the local public of available transit options.

2.2.3.4 Wyoming

Wyoming offers road and weather information on its statewide 511 system available to out-of-state callers at 888.996.7623, and the State DOT website at <http://www.wyoroad.info>. The IVR system offer callers information on road reports, seasonal closures and information on surrounding states. The website allows users to check road conditions on statewide and district maps, as well as by highway number. No public transit information is available via the IVR system or the website.

2.2.3.5 North Dakota

North Dakota deployed a statewide 511 service in February, 2003. The service is available by toll free call to 866.MY.ND.511 and online at <http://www.dot.nd.gov>. The IVR menu offers callers the options of route specific road condition information, regional summaries and seasonal load restrictions.

Traveler information throughout the state can be found on the North Dakota Department of Transportation website. The "Road, Map and Travel" tab takes the user to general travel information, including road conditions and construction, as well as winter weather information.

2.2.3.6 South Dakota

South Dakota deployed 511 in November of 2002 which includes call transfers to the 511 systems of Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota and Minnesota. Road condition information is offered for South Dakota highways. The IVR system can be reached at 866.MY.SD.511 and online at <http://www.sddot.com/511.asp>.

2.2.4 Rural ITS Technologies

ITS technologies have significant applications in rural settings throughout the nation to ensure the safety and security of travelers. Unfortunately, rural areas are leading in fatalities on our nation’s roadways due to distance and remoteness from emergency services, high speed collisions, etc. Rural ITS practitioners are focusing on these areas of concern: ensuring safety; developing partnerships; providing better traveler information; and addressing communications and resource issues. Rural agencies are continually making investments in ITS technologies to improve the safety and movement of people and goods.

The PBS&J team conducted three focus groups with stakeholders, described below in Table 2:

Table 2. Focus Group Details

Location	Date	Composition
Wolf Point	April 19, 2007	9 Participants
Helena	May 17, 2007	6 Participants
Missoula	May 18, 2007	7 Participants

The Focus Group Moderator’s Guide is included as part of this section for reference.

In order to ensure that PBS&J received sufficient feedback on key issues, the team supplemented the focus groups with interviews of key people representing areas that were not adequately represented in focus groups. We talked with a representative of transportation systems used primarily by tourists (Gary Danczyk, Glacier National Park), a representative of one of the largest systems in Montana (Steve Earle, Missoula Mountain Line) and a representative of college students who use public transportation (Nancy Wilson, Associated Students of University of Montana). We also talked with Chris Nauman of the Downtown Bozeman Partnership, who works with tourists and does not work in the transportation field.

A wide range of issues were discussed during the focus groups and interviews. The topics that were discussed were organized into five major areas of discussion:

- Awareness and Familiarity with Existing Travel Informational Services
- The Needs for Travel Information Services
- Potential Roles for Various Organizations in the Development of a One-Stop Shop for Traveler Information

- Types of Information that Should Be Provided Through a One-Stop Shop and the Best Ways to Provide the Information
- Willingness of Agencies to Partner with MDT in the Implementation of a One-Stop Shop for Traveler Information

At the end of each focus group, all participants were also given an opportunity to make closing comments on any topic. One of the topics discussed a number of times was the name “One-Stop Shop” and the desire for another term to describe this work. In the early part of this decade, U.S. DOT and ITS America were touting the concept of an Integrated Network of Transportation Information (INTI or “infostructure”) and, ideally, this document will foster such a network in Montana as a platform to provide multimodal traveler information. For this version of the document, we will continue to refer to the “One-Stop Shop” pending further direction from MDT.

Although a wide variety of information was collected from the people who participated in the focus groups, some of the major findings are briefly summarized below.

- There was definitely interest in developing the concept of a “One-Stop Shop” for traveler information in Montana. Almost all of the focus group participants thought there was value in having a centralized place for travelers and service providers to get travel information in Montana. While consensus regarding the way a One-Stop Shop should be designed and operated was not reached during these meetings, almost all of the focus group participants thought there was a need to make travel information more accessible.
- Most focus group participants thought the “One-Stop Shop” should be regionally focused. Although most of the focus groups participants thought MDT should be involved in the development and funding of the One-Stop Shop concept, they thought the concept should be implemented and managed at a regional level. Most of the participants thought there were too many differences across the state to develop a single system for the entire state. Most focus group participants thought that local transit agencies, Transportation Advisory Councils (TACs) and/or local governments would be the appropriate agencies to oversee and manage “One-Stop Shops” at the regional level. Some focus group participants suggested that the Montana Transportation Partnership could provide overall leadership for the development and implementation of the concept at the State level. Participants in two of the three focus groups thought it would make sense to develop a “pilot” concept for a One-Stop Shop that is initially tested and implemented at the regional level.
- If the “One-Stop Shop” concept is going to serve seniors, low-income persons and persons with disabilities, it will need to be more than just a website. While a majority of the focus group participants thought a website would be a good way to provide information to residents and travelers in Montana, most of the participants did not think that a website would meet the needs of the state’s low-income and senior populations because these populations often do not have access to the Internet. For this reason, many of the focus participants thought it was very important to design the system in a way that would allow people to easily contact a “live” person to help them.

3.0 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 WHAT SHOULD THE ONE-STOP SHOP LOOK LIKE?

The following factors point to the need for changing the way transportation information and services are provided in Montana:

- Currently there is no statewide trip planning capability; the burden of obtaining information, planning the trip and making necessary reservations or arrangements between the service providers rests on the shoulders of the customer.
- The dispatcher for an individual service provider has limited information about other service providers in the region.
- Most Montana transit systems do not have websites. Each transit website in the region describes their service in a different way. This complicates a customer's attempt to understand service in multiple regions. Furthermore, some of the transportation services are eligibility oriented and other services such as door-to-door paratransit systems need 24-hour advance reservations.
- Often, coordination between transit services is limited to informal communication via telephone between service providers.
- If information were more easily available, people may be encouraged to try public transportation services.

Many Montanans or visitors who need a ride will get information from someone they know and trust: the transportation provider themselves; someone at a social program they use; a taxi service; a family member; a friend; or a neighbor. Some riders will feel more comfortable getting information from the Internet or other technology. The transportation providers and social service agencies must keep information up to date and comprehensive and share with a wider audience if they use the Internet. A database of services also facilitates production of other non-computer sources of information. Information can be available to the rider or to the rider's agent through the following media:

- Telephone call/face-to-face (the person answering the phone can review information in a database)
- Paper brochures
- Internet: Web or automated emails
- The Montana 511 traveler information phone number
- 211 human service phone number, which is in limited use in Montana
- Signs at bus stops

The organization of this document contains a collection of potential elements or building blocks when deployed in pieces or in a whole will lead MDT to the deployment of a One-Stop Shop for traveler information. The first section of building blocks present what we consider to be the critical, necessary

elements that must be deployed in order to create a valuable product. These involve bringing stakeholders into the planning process and the creation of a core database from which all information will flow. The rest – those that deal with the dissemination of all the information – can be considered optional building blocks. Those recommendations are presented as an “a la carte” menu of items to choose from. None of those recommendations are redundant and none are dependent on one another. Within those building blocks, different sub options are presented as well.

This project seeks not only to address the needs of travelers, but to benefit providers of transportation services. Our common goal – shared by MDT and providers of rural or on-demand transit and transportation cooperatives – is to get the customer to their destination in the easiest and quickest way possible. While large transportation providers generally have the resources to keep information updated and flowing smoothly to their customers, small transportation agencies and cooperatives may not have the means necessary to keep information for their customers updated as regularly.

Montana’s One-Stop Shop is not intended to be presented as the one and only place for customers to get transportation information. It is meant to provide enough redundancy in the ability of the consumer to find the information needed so that all relevant information can be found from this one source. Unlike other traveler information dissemination systems, Montana’s One-Stop Shop will have a specific focus on rural and/or disadvantaged populations. However, this focus will not be to the omission of the metropolitan populations who utilize urban transit. It will be less about providing road information for single drivers and more about making sure that those with limited transportation choices get all the information that they need.

The One-Stop Shop addresses the shortcomings of the current situation. The system intends to meet the needs of the users: the transportation provider, the social service agency and the public. For transportation providers, it will help in understanding its own transportation options and viewing other transportation options. The system also will serve caseworkers, health care providers and clients to make travel arrangements, using agency transportation providers or public intercity services. Finally, the system will provide the public with information resources for planning a trip within one county, across several counties or even interstate.

The program will integrate multiple sources of transportation information and data. Ideally from a functional perspective, the program will provide these capabilities:

- Assist customers to:
 - Find a ride or plan travel using any available transportation service
 - Plan long-distance travel using
 - Public transit and intercity services
 - Commercial passenger carriers
 - ‘Flex’ services (periodic or infrequent)

- Consider alternative travel options (e.g., ridesharing, carpool, etc.)
- Book a trip or make reservations
- Pay for a ride – using electronic payment card
- Help operators to (manage daily activities)
 - Post special trips and travel options
- Help transportation agencies to
 - Coordinate scheduled services among operators

The system will include as many transportation options (or modes) as available within each county. First, it will include regularly scheduled services, whether public or private. These include local fixed routes (e.g., Mountain Line), door-to-door services (e.g., Dial-a-Ride), publicly operated intercity services (e.g., Bitterroot Bus) and links to commercial passenger carriers (i.e. Greyhound and Amtrak). At a later stage, the system could include specialized transportation or travel options. These could include either regularly scheduled services or periodic, special trips. Also, the system could incorporate carpools, shared rides or subsidized transportation via public, human service or tribal vehicles or other options. Finally, the system could include private services from taxis, limousines, shuttles and links to commercial carriers (i.e. Greyhound and Amtrak.)

Ideally, the One-Stop Shop will serve riders and operators statewide, considering the realities of Montana’s environment. Riders will be able to talk over the phone or in person to a “mobility manager” (one per region) to find a ride. If riders have access to the Internet, assistance tools will be available online. Oftentimes, the individual seeking trip planning information will not be the same person who will take the ride. The seeker could be a caretaker, an adult family member, a receptionist, a health care provider or a friend. Whether users are individuals or rural agencies, many will have limited or no access to specialized computer skills or high-speed communications. The system will need to accommodate this reality.

One-Stop Shop stakeholders include both the organizations whose primary responsibility is transporting people and the organizations whose primary responsibility is providing care and support to people.

3.2 GAP ANALYSIS

Currently, Montanans have many ways to acquire their desired travel information which may (or may not) satisfy their need to make good decisions about their journey. Ideally, a “One-Stop Shop” would make all the traveler information available in one place or, at least, harmonize the existing information for consistency across delivery platforms. The gaps across these delivery mechanisms are numerous and non-productive to enumerate here.

This report could declare that MDT and its partners need to spend millions of dollars to address gaps in data collection and information delivery to develop a new One-Stop Shop database with many over-

engineered features and a brand identity for that information to be delivered to Montanans, but that would be impractical and wishful thinking at best.

Montana needs to, at a reasonable cost, build upon the delivery mechanisms available today to implement a One-Stop Shop approach and mentality, not a new system, to provide transportation information available from MDT and transit and social service providers. In the Implementation Plan in Section 7.0, we propose an actionable series of tasks for MDT and its partners to undertake to deliver the “promise” of a One-Stop Shop to Montana citizens, visitors and through travelers.

3.3 STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN

Before any development can be completed, significant time and effort must be put into bringing relevant stakeholders into the planning process. Enthusiastic participation of the stakeholders is critical to the ultimate success of the project and an effort to make them a part of the process early on is an effective way to ensure that MDT receives the cooperation needed to deploy and operate an effective service. The elements chosen to comprise the project will be created not only as a resource to the traveling population, but to the stakeholders as well. The more that stakeholders understand this, the more likely they will be to agree to update the resource when needed. In regards to the stakeholders who will be invited to participate, it is important to note that the One-Stop Shop project is unique among transportation projects. This is because the stakeholders include not only organizations whose responsibility is transporting people, but also organizations whose primary responsibility is providing health and human services.

The single source of information that will be the heart of the One-Stop Shop should be presented as a win-win situation for the stakeholders as well as the customers they serve. Stakeholder buy-in will ensure ultimately that the initial information database will be as complete and useful as possible and the process of keeping that database updated is more likely to be appreciated. If it was simply a matter of publishing contact information once in a directory and website, it would still be important to let each stakeholder know what development is taking place. But the buy-in of the stakeholders is critical regarding the ongoing update of the database. The goal is a statewide network of transportation information, but we suggest starting with a region to apply lessons learned in its development across the state.

Calls must be placed, emails sent and meetings arranged with all relevant transportation and health and human services agencies, companies, associations and councils. The purpose and background of the project should be discussed and it should be made known that input from those stakeholders on the direction of the project is welcome.

Before this report provides the details of implementing the One Stop Shop, it is worthwhile to describe just what we think it should look like, both to the travelers and to the relevant agencies.

3.4 HOW TO GET THERE

The purpose of this document is to present to MDT with an Implementation Plan (see Section 7.0) that will guide the agency on how to create a One-Stop Shop for public and specialized transportation in Montana. Potential barriers to completion are noted and suggestions regarding how those roadblocks might be handled. To build on existing resources and realize economies of scale wherever possible, this plan describes how the existing ATIS infrastructure in the state will be utilized to the greatest extent possible.

Montana is a rural state with unique transportation needs, one of the largest states in the Union containing one of the smallest populations and subject to extreme weather conditions. Those who are elderly, disadvantaged and/or isolated in rural parts of the state have distinct needs in regards to travel information. This project is specifically focused on the needs of those populations. However, Montana has several urban areas with various public transportation choices and the needs of those customers will be addressed as well.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that the best chance of success for a One-Stop Shop is if Montana utilizes the 511 and 211 services, the MDT public transportation and provider websites and Google Transit (<http://www.google.com/transit>) to offer “One-Stop Shop information dissemination.”

4.1 OBTAIN STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN

Before any development can be completed, significant time and effort must be put into bringing relevant stakeholders into the planning process. Enthusiastic participation of the stakeholders is critical to the ultimate success of the project and an effort to make them a part of the process early on is an effective way to ensure that MDT receives the cooperation needed to deploy and operate an effective service. The elements chosen to comprise the project will be created not only as a resource to the traveling population, but to the stakeholders as well. The more that stakeholders understand this, the more likely they will be to agree to update the resource when needed.

The potential statewide stakeholders to be contacted are listed below in Table 3. Part of this task will be to identify all other stakeholders that should be added to the list. The list may be updated dynamically, as input from stakeholders may allow MDT to expand the list as the process of engaging stakeholders proceeds.

Table 3. Initial List of Statewide Montana Transportation Stakeholders

Name	Telephone Number	Website
1. 211 Call Center / Great Falls	406.268.1330	
2. 211 Call Center / Bozeman	406.586.3333	
3. 211 Call Center / Missoula	406.549.5555	
4. 211 Call Center / Kalispell	406.752.7266	
5. AMTRAK	800.872.7245	http://www.amtrak.com
6. Bitterroot Bus	406.363.7484	
7. Blackfeet Transit	406.338.5604	
8. Butte-Silver Bow Transit (The Bus)	406.497.6515	http://www.co.silverbow.mt.us/transit
9. Central Montana Shuttle	406.538.7486	
10. Dawson County Urban Transportation	406.377.5024	
11. Eagle Transit	406.758.5728	http://www.co.flathead.mt.us/Eagle
12. Fort Peck Transportation System	406.768.3909	
13. GALAVAN	406.587.2434	
14. Great Falls Transit	406.727.0382	http://www.gftransit.com
15. Greyhound	800.231.2222	
16. Helena Area Transportation System (HATS)	406.447.1580	http://www.ci.helena.mt.us/works/hats
17. Met Transit	406.657.8218	http://www.mettransit.com

Table 3, concluded

Name	Telephone Number	Website
18. Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) (Incl. MT Transportation Partnership)	406.443.4332	http://www.mtcdd.org
19. Mt.gov staff	406.444.2511	http://mt.gov
20. Montana DOT	406.444.6200	http://www.mdt.mt.gov
21. Montana DOT Planning Division	800.714.7296	http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/public_trans.shtml
22. Montana Transit Association	406.327.8707	http://www.mttransit.com
23. Mountain Line Transit	406.543.8386	http://www.mountainline.com
24. Powder River Buslines	800.525.0840	http://powderriverbuslines.com
25. Powder River County Transit	406.436.2646	
26. Reach, Inc.	406.587.1271	http://www.reachinc.org
27. Rimrock Stages	800.255.7655	
28. Rocky Mountain Development Council	406.447.1680	http://www.rmhc.net
29. Streamline Bus	406.587.2434	http://www.streamlinebus.com
30. Valley County Transit	406.228.8747	
31. Western Transportation Institute (at Montana State University)	406.994.6114	http://www.coe.montana.edu/wti

4.1.1 Involve 211

The national partnership between AIRS and the United Way of America is the driver of a nationwide 211 service. Within the state, community services and health and human services resources are provided via 211 in Missoula, and by dialing a 7-digit number in four of Montana’s major cities.

211 call centers in each area are:

- Voices of Hope in Great Falls
- The Help Center in Bozeman
- First Call for Help in Missoula
- First Call for Help in Kalispell

Montana’s 211 service is available online at <http://www.montana211.org>. The website offers public access to its comprehensive, statewide database of health and human service providers, searchable by a number of search criteria.

In addition, current 211 deployment can be brought into the process of creating a One-Stop Shop by educating 211 call center staff and creating an operational atmosphere where 211 operators are familiar with the One-Stop Shop project.

4.2 DATABASE DEVELOPMENT

At the beginning of the project, each record must be created manually. It can be a labor-intensive job, but it is necessary in order to get all the information needed into a central, accessible database.

Fields that must be created in the database will be but are not limited to:

- Name of Agency
- Contact Information
 - Agency or Company Contact Person
 - Address
 - Telephone Number
 - Fax Number
 - Email Address
 - Website
- Services Offered
- Hours of Operation
- Number of Vehicles
- Types of Vehicles
- Licenses
- Coverage Area
- Last Record Update
- Expected Date of Next Update

This data for the proposed region can be started in a widely available format like Excel and will populate the MDT public transportation website (http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/public_trans.shtml). For a statewide information storehouse, Excel may still suffice or there can be a transition to a more robust database product.

A significant part of the database can be created or matched against the information kept by the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities (MCDD). The parameters for data that the 211 service providers use should also be considered. In order to create a valid baseline of data, each agency and company must be contacted to confirm all known contact information and operational details. This contact can be coupled with the initial call to gauge and generate stakeholder interest.

There can be a two-pronged approach to keeping the database updated. Providers could have access to the database online in a Wiki-like format and update their own information. However, giving access and educating providers does not mean that the information will get and stay updated dependably. Differences in interest and commitment, not to mention financial resources that vary from year to year, can have an impact on the timely updating of this information. If a telephone system manned by live operators is chosen as one of the building blocks, then one of the responsibilities of the employee hired will be to

contact on a regular basis all transportation providers represented in the database, to ask for updates to existing information as well as recording new information to the database.

4.3 CREATE A DIRECTORY

Addressing the particular needs of this population, the primary means of dissemination of this information can be a simple but comprehensive printed directory delivered to stakeholders at regular intervals to be decided. Purposely low-tech, this method of disseminating information was chosen to address the needs of the identified population. The directory will contain contact information and operational details for all known transportation providers in the region/state. Updates to the directory will be generated from the database which could benefit from the fact that all participants in the directory will be able to update their own information. An easy to read font in a large point size should be used for the benefit of elderly and sight-impaired customers. Printed copies of the directory will be made available to MDT and its partners.

4.4 GOOGLE TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT

Using Google Transit can make trip planning in the pilot region (and eventually the entire state) available to One-Stop Shop customers and others. Google has developed a schema to accommodate and share transit agency scheduling and origin/destination information. We believe that this is powerful tool to achieve the objectives of the One-Stop Shop. Imagine every transportation service provider in the state having their regular schedule available on Google Transit for all to explore their transportation options. To truly serve the customer's needs, this may be expanded to adjoining providers in neighboring states.

Hopefully, customers who use Google Maps will have the option in the future to get public transit "directions" on their Montana trip request. Currently, public transportation information is available on Google Transit for parts of California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Washington State. New Jersey has information available statewide for their NJ Transit rail service only.

4.5 ADD A MENU ITEM ON 511

Montana's 511 service, launched in January of 2003, provides construction, weather and road conditions on Montana's highways as well as the Glacier National Park road report. 511 should be an integral part of the One-Stop Shop effort and offer some assistance to users seeking these services. The addition of 511 as a building block to Montana's One-Stop Shop is a fairly easy and low cost element. A new menu item that references public transportation information availability could be added to the top level menu. The public transportation providers could also utilize a floodgate message on Montana 511 to provide details about their offering including contact information and telephone number for more information. The decision must be made by MDT of whether to undertake more development to implement a call transfer to the provider, but the convenience to the caller is greater if they can reach the One-Stop Shop information seamlessly from 511 rather than having to write down the number and make a second call.

4.6 LIVE OPERATORS

MDT or partner agency personnel with time available could staff a telephone service during business hours, and even 24/7 if necessary. The operators would be trained on how to access the available transportation information, to best get information quickly and efficiently out to callers. The operator could be housed at MDT or at the offices of a partner agency – there is no need to create a freestanding call center. A conversation with MDT and partner agencies should determine where best to house the employees.

Hiring a live operator would provide an economy of scale in that in addition to manning the telephone lines, the operator could assume as part of their duties the regular update of database records.

5.0 FUNDING RESEARCH

Transportation systems are usually funded through traditional revenue sources, such as fares, donations, advertising, contract services and governmental and charitable grants. This Appendix gives an introduction to the most common sources of funding and revenue for transportation services. It is not intended to be a list of every possible source. Information in this Appendix has been adapted from the Montana Coordinated Transportation Handbook.

Governmental grants make up the most substantial income source for transit agencies. The following are some of the most commonly used funding sources. Many of these programs place a strong emphasis on coordination. Eligibility requirements vary from program to program.

However, human service agencies purchasing transportation from such a system will likely use one or more of these sources of funding for this purpose.

5.1 FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

U.S. DOT's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the primary regulatory body for public transit in the country. The FTA offers a number of programs to assist transportation providers with capital, planning, training, technical assistance and operating expenses. All vehicles purchased with FTA funds must be ADA compatible lift or ramp equipped. Exceptions will only be made if the organization applying for funds already has ADA compatible vehicles in their fleet. The MDT Transit Section administers many of the following programs authorized by the U.S. Congress in March 2007 under the FTA Fiscal Year 2007 Apportionments and Allocations and Program Information Notice (U.S. Congress 2007).

5.1.1 Rural Public Transportation (Section 5311)

FTA Section 5311 provides funds for operating and capital expenses for transportation systems in rural and small urban areas. SAFETEA-LU increased the Federal share for expenses:

- Operating – Federal share not to exceed 54% of the net operating deficit
- Capital – Federal share not to exceed 86%
- Maintenance – Federal share not to exceed 80%
- Administrative – Federal share not to exceed 80%

The remaining expenses are covered by local matching funds or Federal funds not from the U.S. DOT.

Eligible recipients of this funding are local public bodies, private nonprofit organizations, Native American Reservations and operators of public transportation services. Only one Section 5311 provider may exist in any single service area. Coordination with other transportation providers –public, private, or social service – in the area is required to the extent possible.

5.1.2 RTAP (Rural Transit Assistance Program)

The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), a component of the Section 5311 grant program, provides funding for rural transit providers to attend training programs, professional development programs and educational conferences. Rural transit providers receiving Federal funds are eligible for the program, as are small urban public transit providers, so long as the program to be attended is primarily designed to benefit rural public transit.

RTAP can reimburse 100% of the cost of registration fees, meals, travel and accommodations upon proof of successful completion of the program attended. MDT must approve applications for RTAP assistance before attendance at the conference. Applications are available through MDT.

5.1.3 Planning and Research (Section 5303/5313)

These funds are the principal sources of Federal financial assistance to help urban and non-urban areas plan, develop and improve comprehensive public mass transportation systems. Eligible activities under these grants include the planning, engineering, designing and evaluating of urban and non-urban mass transportation projects; development of regional transportation plans; and completion of other technical studies.

The MDT Transportation Planning Division's Urban Planning Section administers the Section 5303 Grant Program. The Section 5313 portion of this grant is used by the Transit Section to conduct rural planning and technical studies and to meet the non-urban statewide planning needs. Section 5313 funding provided to transit agencies in rural and small urban areas finances planning and technical support.

5.1.4 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (49 U.S.C. 5316)

As described in the *Federal Register*, the JARC program "provides formula funding to States and Designated Recipients to support the development and maintenance of job access projects designed to transport welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment, and for reverse commute projects designed to transport residents of urbanized areas and other than urbanized to suburban employment opportunities. FTA invites comment regarding technical assistance or training that would be helpful to grantees in implementing the JARC program.

Funds are available to support the capital and operating costs of transportation services that address the needs of welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals that are not met by other transportation services. Federal JARC funds may be used for 80% of capital expenses and 50% of operating expenses. Funds provided under other Federal programs (other than those of the Department of Transportation) may be used for local/state match for funds provided under section 5316, and revenue from service contracts may be used as local match. Funding is available for transportation services provided by public, non-profit, or private-for-profit operators. Assistance may be provided for a variety of transportation services and strategies directed at assisting welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals address unmet

transportation needs. Examples of projects and activities that might be funded under the program include, but are not limited to:

- Transportation projects to finance planning, capital, and operating costs of providing access to jobs
- Promoting public transportation by low-income workers, including the use of public transportation by workers with nontraditional work schedules
- Promoting the use of transit vouchers for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals
- Promoting the use of employer-provided transportation, including the transit pass benefit program under section 132 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986
- Subsidizing the costs associated with adding reverse commute bus, train, carpool, van routes, or service from urbanized areas and other than urbanized areas to suburban workplaces
- Subsidizing the purchase or lease by a nonprofit organization or public agency of a van or bus dedicated to shuttling employees from their residences to workplaces
- Facilitating the provision of public transportation services to suburban employment opportunities

A recipient of JARC funds must certify that projects selected were derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan; and, the plan was developed through a process that included representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation and human service providers; participation by the public; and included those representing the needs of welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals. Projects in the locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan must be integrated into and consistent with the metropolitan and state planning processes. Finally, recipients must certify that allocations of the grant to sub-recipients are distributed on a fair and equitable basis. The planning requirement applies not only to JARC, but beginning in FY 2007 to the section 5310 and section 5317 (New Freedom) programs.

5.1.5 New Freedom Program (49 U.S.C. 5317)

As described in the *Federal Register*, “The New Freedom program provides formula funding for new public transportation services and public transportation alternatives beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 that assist individuals with disabilities with transportation, including transportation to and from jobs and employment support services. Funding is available for transportation services provided by public, non-profit, or private-for-profit operators. Assistance may be provided for a variety of transportation services and strategies directed at assisting persons with disabilities address unmet transportation needs. The conference report stated that examples of projects and activities that might be funded under the program include, but are not limited to:

- Purchasing vehicles and supporting accessible taxi, ride-sharing, and vanpooling programs
- Providing paratransit services beyond minimum requirements ($\frac{3}{4}$ mile to either side of a fixed route), including for routes that run seasonally

- Making accessibility improvements to existing transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations
- Supporting voucher programs for transportation services offered by human service providers
- Supporting volunteer driver and aide programs
- Acquisition of transportation services by a contract, lease, or other arrangement
- Supporting mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation

5.2 TRANS ADE

The MDT Transportation Assistance for the Disabled and Elderly (TransADE) program (MCA 7-14-112) provides operating assistance for transportation services that serve persons with disabilities and seniors. TransADE funds are collected through a 25-cent fee on vehicle registrations. It is estimated that approximately \$315,000 per year will be available for the program. This money is to be equally distributed among MDT's five transportation financial districts.

Eligible recipients include counties, incorporated cities and towns, transportation districts and nonprofit organizations providing transportation services for persons 60 years of age or older and for persons with disabilities. Priority is given to specialized transit providers. TransADE funds can only be used for operating expenses. The maximum grant is for 50% of operating expenses, with the balance being supplied by local match sources (which may include Federal funds). (Note that MDT TransADE program funds may not be used as local match funds for FTA programs; TransADE may be used to expand service and coordination.) To receive continuous funding, applications must be renewed yearly. Preference will be given to those applicants currently receiving TransADE funding, provided that they are successfully achieving the program's requirements.

5.3 LOCAL AND/OR TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

MCA 7-14-232 authorizes local governments to levy a property tax to fund an urban transportation district in Montana. Urban transportation districts are created to provide local public transportation, as provided in MCA 7-14-201 (et seq.).

MCA 7-14-111 authorizes county and city governments and urban transportation districts to levy a property tax to fund transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities. Under this section, the taxing body is authorized to:

- Contract with public or private transportation providers to provide rides for senior citizens and persons with disabilities
- Use funding to augment a local public transportation system's ability to provide service to senior citizens and persons with disabilities

- Create and operate an independent public transportation system for senior citizens and persons with disabilities

MCA 7-14-111 encourages regional coordination through the formation of regional Transportation Advisory Committees. Procedures for levying a property tax are outlined in MCA 15-10-420.

5.4 OTHER GOVERNMENT GRANTS

5.4.1 Title III-B – Administration on Aging

Title III funds the nationwide network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) which provides programs and services to help seniors maintain their independence and quality of life. Title III-B provides funding for supportive services including transportation. Title III-B funds are not specifically earmarked for transportation services, but the Older Americans Act requires AAAs to consider transportation as a priority service when developing their service plan. AAAs typically provide transportation directly or through contracts with public transit agencies.

When providing transportation services using Title III funds, transportation providers are not allowed to charge a fare to senior citizens. Seniors may be asked for a donation. Operators are also not allowed to ask customers' ages.

5.4.2 Social Services Block Grants (Title XX)

The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) program provides funding to states and territories for programs helping individuals achieve economic self-sufficiency while easing neglect, abuse, and exploitation of adults and children. Funding is provided to states, based on their population, and is typically awarded to local social service departments. The program is administered by each state. Some of the funding may be used for transportation services. In fiscal year 2003, approximately \$5.5 million was awarded to the State of Montana under the SSBG program. The Department of Public Health and Human Services administers the program in Montana.

5.4.3 Community Service Block Grants

The Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) program provides funds to States and to federally and State-recognized Native American Tribes to support local non-profit community action programs. The local community action programs provide a range of social services to lessen the causes and conditions of poverty. Many of these programs provide transportation for their customers. The Department of Public Health and Human Services administers the CSBG program in Montana.

5.4.4 Medicaid

Medicaid, a Federal program, provides medical assistance for low-income individuals and persons with disabilities. The program requires that states provide transportation for Medicaid recipients to access

health care services. Medicaid will pay for transportation costs for the least expensive mode of transportation to the nearest health care provider.

Medicaid transportation services in Montana are administered by the Mountain-Pacific Quality Health Foundation (Foundation) through a contract with the Department of Public Health and Human Services. To be reimbursed for Medicaid transportation services in Montana, the transportation agency must be enrolled as a Medicaid Provider.

There are three types of Medicaid transportation providers in Montana:

- **Ambulance Services** – All emergency Medicaid transportation is provided by ambulance services; ambulance services may also provide non-emergency transportation, usually to non-ambulatory individuals or for scheduled medical procedures.
- **Specialized Transportation Providers** – Serve persons with disabilities; these providers operate specially equipped vehicles such as wheelchair vans or stretcher vans.
- **Commercial Transportation Providers** – All other transportation providers fall into this category including city buses, van services and taxis.

All non-emergency transportation services require prior authorization from the Foundation in order to receive reimbursement. Guidelines for Medicaid transportation providers are outlined in the General Information for Providers manual and supplemental manuals for specific types of services provided.

5.4.5 Head Start

Head Start is a Federal program providing a variety of services to disadvantaged preschool children. The Department of Health and Human Services designates local public, private nonprofit or private for profit agencies to serve as the Head Start agency in their community. The Head Start program provides 80% of the funds needed to operate the local program with a 20% local match.

To make the program more accessible, Head Start agencies may use some of their funds for transportation. Because Head Start transports children, strict new requirements have been implemented regarding the safety equipment of the vehicles used. These requirements were passed in 2001 and include that:

- Head Start agencies must provide transportation to the program for as many families as possible or give reasonable assistance for families to arrange transportation to the program.
- All Head Start vehicles must be ADA compliant.
- All Head Start vehicles must have at least one bus monitor.
- All Head Start drivers must have a CDL and must pass criminal history, driving record and background checks.

- All Head Start vehicles must be either school buses or vehicles designed to carry 11 or more people, including the driver, and must meet all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety standards for school buses.

Under the new requirements, those providing Head Start transportation must also make reasonable efforts to coordinate transportation resources.

5.5 NON-GOVERNMENT SOURCES

5.5.1 Donations

Some systems that do not charge customers or specific customer groups for transportation may ask that customers pay a suggested donation if and when they can afford it. For instance, transportation providers operating with Title III funds are not allowed to charge seniors for services. Many systems operating with Title III funds ask for donations.

5.5.2 Advertising

A traditional source of revenue for larger transportation systems, such as city buses, is selling advertising space on the outside and inside surfaces of buses. Advertising is not typically a substantial source of income; however, when resources are tight, no possibilities should be overlooked. Systems providing fixed route bus services are often able to acquire benches and covered bus stop vestibules as in-kind services, with the provision that advertising will be placed on them.

5.5.3 In-Kind Contributions

In-kind contributions are donations of services or materials that are not expected to be paid for by the system. While in-kind contributions typically include services and equipment, they should be accounted for as revenue in your system. In-kind contributions can be particularly beneficial in that they may be usable as local matches to Federal funds. Specific requirements vary from program to program; for instance, in-kind contributions cannot be used as a local match for MDT TransADE program funds.

5.5.4 Charities and Foundations

Local and national charity organizations and foundations, such as United Way and Easter Seals, may provide funding for specific transportation initiatives. Charities can have strict requirements for the use of their funds and may not emphasize coordination to the extent that the Federal and State governments do. On the other hand, charitable funding may have fewer restrictions than government funding. Make sure you clearly understand the requirements of the specific charitable funding.

5.5.5 Corporate Sponsorship

Local businesses may also be an innovative source of funding, through sponsorships or contributions. Businesses may take this as an opportunity to demonstrate their good citizenship, promote goodwill in the community and support a worthwhile cause. Corporate sponsorships can be a win-win situation, generating revenue for the transportation system, goodwill for corporate partners and visibility in the community for both. Corporate sponsorships also have the potential to bring in funding with more flexibility than governmental funding. Local businesses may offer some sort of sponsorship if you can show ridership figures that indicate that the transportation system is bringing them customers that would not otherwise use their services.

5.6 NON-TRADITIONAL FUNDING

The previous sections listed the most common sources of funding for transportation providers. However, numerous other sources of funding could possibly be used for transportation services. Many transportation providers actively and successfully seek out creative and non-traditional funding sources for their programs. In essence, the only limitation on possible funding sources is the amount of time available to research and complete applications.

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) has put together a resource guide listing over 50 programs from which transportation funding is or may be available. This guide is located on their website at <http://www.ctaa.org/ct/resource/funding.asp>.

6.0 REVIEW OF TRANPLAN 21

This project included a task to review TranPlan 21. TranPlan 21, Montana's long-range transportation policy plan, is part of an ongoing process that regularly identifies transportation issues, evaluates public and stakeholder needs and priorities and establishes and implements policy goals and actions. This process guides MDT in the development and management of a multimodal transportation system that connects Montana residents and communities to each other and the world.

MDT developed the original TranPlan 21 in 1994 and 1995 with an update completed in 2002. The purpose of the 2002 update was to ensure that MDT continued to address customer priorities and that transportation funds are effectively spent on the programs and projects that reflect those priorities. Another focus of the 2002 update was determining how MDT could best support economic development through transportation policy and programs. It is currently updating the plan again to reflect changes implemented as part of the Federal SAFETEA-LU legislation.

The importance of public transportation in Montana as defined by Public Transportation Policy Paper (Montana DOT 2007):

- Mobility for elderly and disabled
- Access to social service
- Basic mobility for Montana's residents
- A tool for managing future traffic growth and congestion and improving air quality

Issues relevant to this project:

- Desire for a multimodal transportation system (Tell people about the alternatives to the automobile)
- Need to promote public transportation
- Concern about lack of coordination between systems (Help providers see what other services are out there)

Issues Arising From Existing Conditions and Trends relevant to this project:

- Public transportation is not well understood
- Need for improved coordination and cooperation between providers

Related Policy Goals and Actions

- Policy Goal A: Promote and support increased use of public transportation systems.
 - Action A.1. Support local promotional/educational programs to publicize public transportation and opportunities.

- Action A.6. Monitor and report on transit system performance using the public transportation management system.
- Policy Goal B: Preserve existing intercity public transportation service and encourage/facilitate the development of new services.
 - Traveler information can help the use of services and help people find connections between systems, especially in finding the public transportation systems that travel into urban areas.
- Policy Goal C: Work to improve service to social service passengers and the transportation disadvantaged – the elderly, children at risk, low income and persons with disabilities – through facilitating interagency funding consolidation.
- Policy Goal D: Identify and implement transportation demand management actions that will work in Montana.
 - Action D.1. Continue to work with metropolitan planning organizations and urban areas to include demand-side strategies in their plans.
 - Action D.2. Work with other State agencies to develop a transportation demand management program for State government.
 - Action D.3. Support the implementation of rural ridesharing.
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy Goal A: Institutionalize Bicycle and Pedestrian Modes
 - Action A.2. Work with the Department of Commerce to maintain bicycle-related tourist guides and information.
- Roadway System Performance Policy Goal C: Improve the productivity of the roadway system.
 - Action C.2 Identify and deploy cost-effective Intelligent Transportation Systems applications to improve safety and system productivity.

Implementing a One-Stop Shop can help MDT and its partners address, among other items:

- The needs of an aging population
- The need to focus on inter-urban corridors and to have better communication of travel options
- Market travel and tourism routes better
- Provide better information about public transportation
- Include social services transportation and the need for better coordination

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The previous sections and the Appendices provide a list of possible elements that could fit together in any variety of ways to create Montana's One-Stop Shop. In this section, we provide an actionable implementation plan which will provide the best service for Montana's customers at the most affordable cost.

We suggest an approach in three phases: Proof of Concept Pilot Project (Year 1); Statewide Deployment (Years 2 – 4); and Improve, Expand, Automate and Integrate (Years 5 – 7). MDT and its partners can determine a region of the state that has the best chance of success for a One-Stop Shop pilot project implementation.

An overarching need to consider is configuration management for the One-Stop Shop information – can the agencies keep their information up-to-date? Or is this a task for MDT or a consultant? If the One-Stop Shop is successful in operations after 1 year, MDT and its partners should expand the offering to the rest of the state.

Phase 1: Proof of Concept Pilot Project (Year 1)

- Determine Pilot Project Area
- Obtain Stakeholder Buy-in
- Database Development
 - Transit providers information into common database of resources within the pilot project area
 - On-call services to keep information up-to-date
- Create A Directory of Transportation Resources for the Region
- Add a Menu Item on 511
 - Listing of public transportation providers by county
 - Offer provider contact information (at the least)
 - Enable transfers to transit providers
- Upload Pilot Region Schedule Data to Google Transit
- Additional MDT Public Transportation Webpage Development
http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/public_trans.shtml
 - Section 508 compliance (ADA accessibility)
 - Links to Google Transit, Greyhound and Amtrak
 - Links to all transit providers with service description, contact information and telephone numbers at a minimum
 - Optional – develop pages for all (Wiki style for providers to update or use database to automatically populate pages)

- Make Information Available to MDT, 511, 211 Operators, Transit Providers, etc.
 - Link to MDT Public Transportation Webpage from all transit provider websites.
 - Coordination with 211 center in the pilot project area
 - Provide the State government website “chat” operators with the One-Stop Shop material and links
- Market Service

Phase 2: Statewide Deployment (Years 2–4)

- Upload Schedule Data to Google Transit Statewide
- Develop and Print Directories
- Decision on Live Operators

Phase 3: Improve, Expand, Automate and Integrate (Years 5–7)

- During Phase 2, options to expand the services in Phase 3 and their associated costs will be developed. At this time, any Phase 3 estimates would entirely be speculation.

Estimated costs for the Implementation Plan are in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Estimated Costs – Implementation Plan

Element	Amount	Notes
PHASE 1		
\$ 44,000		
Obtain Stakeholder Buy-in	\$ 4,000	For consultant time for phone calls and/or meetings with potential stakeholders and partners.
Website Development and Maintenance	\$ 15,000	Includes additional webpage design and set up for Section 508 compliance changes to http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/public_trans.shtml .
Google Transit Development Work	\$ 13,000	Pilot region provider scheduling and origin/destination information in Google schema format.
511 Development: Menu Selection and Call Transfer capability	\$ 9,000	Add a public transportation menu item, provider floodgate message and call transfer.
Involve 211	\$ 3,000	Includes training 211 call center staff members and providing “directory” to the pilot region call center.
PHASE 2		
\$ 120,000		
Google Transit Development Work	\$ 35,000	Statewide provider scheduling and origin/destination information in Google schema format.
Directory Development	\$ 25,000	Includes graphic design, consultant time to develop the list of recipients and printing and shipping costs. Printing costs vary widely; depending on whether the directory is printed using a standard computer printer or the project is handled by a professional printer.
Live Operator	\$ 60,000	One full-time salary and benefits and necessary equipment.
PHASE 3		
TBD		

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Appendix

Focus Group Moderator's Guide and Summary Report

Appendix A

Focus Group Moderator's Guide and Summary Report

A.1 FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR'S GUIDE

OVERVIEW OF THE MEETING

- 11:30–11:35 Welcome and Introductions
- 11:35–11:50 Topic 1: Awareness and Familiarity with Existing Informational Services
- *How familiar are you with existing services?*
 - *Which services have you used?*
 - *What did you like or not like about the services you have experienced?*
- 11:50–12:10 Topic 2: Existing Needs
- *What are your biggest informational system needs and why?*
 - *What are your customers' biggest informational system needs and why?*
- 12:10–12:20 Topic 3: Roles for Various Organizations
- *What should the role of MDT be in meeting these needs?*
 - *What should be the role of other state and local organizations?*
- 12:20–12:35 Topic 4: Preferred Types of Information Services
- Participants will brain storm a list of types of services that would be useful to their organization.
 - Moderator will then have the group rank the desirability of the services that are mentioned.
- 12:35–12:50 Topic 5: Willingness to Partner with MDT
- *What types of information are you willing to share with MDT?*
 - *What types of information are you not willing to share? And why?*
 - *What barriers do you think would prevent your organization from partnering with MDT?*
- 12:50–12:55 Topic 6: Other Comments
- Participants are given an opportunity to make open-end comments.
- 12:55–1:00 What's Next?
- Consultant Team provides an overview of the project and explains how the focus groups will be used.
 - Participants ask questions.
- 1:00 Adjourn

Topic 1: Awareness and Familiarity with Existing Informational Services

MODERATOR: *I'd like to start by telling you about some of the existing transportation and other traveler information services that are being used in Montana and other parts of the United States.*

Moderator will give those attending a brief overview of some of the services.

- Public transit web pages
- 511 Road Condition System
- Web-based coordinated transportation databases
- Web-based local human services databases
- Paper schedules (or other manual processes)

Overall, how familiar are you with the transportation information services I just described and/or other traveler information services? This includes both automated and non-automated sources.

Have you used any of these services?

IF YES:

- *Which services have you used? And Where?*
- *What did you like about the services you have experienced?*
- *What did you dislike about these services?*

Topic 2: Informational Needs

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

What types of traveler information do you think residents (and transit users) in this part of Montana need? Please be as specific as possible.

- *Why do you feel that way?*

ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS

[For those representing an specific organization] *What is your organization's biggest informational need? Please be as specific as possible.*

- *Why do you feel that way?*

[For those representing an specific organization] *What do you think is (are) your customers' (e.g., transit users, paratransit users) biggest information needs?*

- *Why do you feel that way?*

OTHER INFORMATIONAL NEEDS

Can you think of any other transportation-related information needs that residents in this part of the State might need?

- *Why do you feel that way?*

Topic 3: Roles of Various Organizations

What role do you think MDT or other organizations, such as DPHHS, can or should have in meeting these information needs?

- *In which areas (roles) do you think MDT would be best suited to help?*
- *What roles should other state organizations, such as DPHHS, have?*
- *What role(s) should local transportation providers have?*
- *Can you think of any other organizations that should have a role? And what role should they have?*

Topic 4: Preferred Types of Information Services and the Best Way to Provide the Information

MODERATOR: Provides an overview of the One-Stop Shop Concept. Then continues with the following questions.

Overall what types of information do you think are most important for MDT to provide and/or facilitate through the One-Stop Shop concept?

The moderator will give the participants 3 minutes to brainstorm a list of the types of information that they individually think are most important.

Once everyone has completed their individual list, the moderator will ask people to share the items on their list. The moderator will write the items that are mentioned on a sheet. Once all the items are listed, the moderator will have the participants rank the items to determine which types of information are really the most important to the group.

Can you think of the best way to provide the types of information that have been rated most important?

For the types of information that were ranked most important, the moderator will ask participants how they think the information would best be transferred or delivered through a One-Stop Shop.

Topic 5: Willingness to Partner with MDT or another organization

What types of information are you willing to share with MDT or another organization, such as DPHHS (or other statewide organization that has been discussed), that would coordinate a One-Stop Shop in Montana?

What types of information are you not willing to share? And why?

- *Why do you feel that way?*

What concerns do you have about partnering with MDT or another organization?

- *What barriers do you think would prevent your organization from partnering with MDT (or another organization, such as DPHHS that coordinates a One-Stop Shop)?*
- *Why do you feel that way?*

Topic 6: Other Comments

Before we end the meeting, do you have any other comments or concerns you would like to share with our group?

A.2 FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT

A.2.1 Overview

During April and May 2007, ETC Institute, in association with PBS&J and Current Transportation Solutions, facilitated focus groups with representatives of local transit agencies and human services organizations from more than a dozen communities in the State of Montana. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather input about issues related to the development of a One-Stop Shop for travel information in the State of Montana.

The focus groups were conducted at three sites: Helena, Wolf Point, and Missoula. One focus group was conducted in each location.

A total of 22 persons attended the 3 focus groups. Of the 22 individuals who attended the focus groups, nine people (9) attended the Wolf Point focus group, six (6) attended in Helena, and 7 attended in Missoula. A wide range of issues were discussed during the focus groups. The topics that were discussed were organized into five major areas of discussion:

- Topic 1: Awareness and Familiarity with Existing Travel Informational Services
- Topic 2: The Needs for Travel Information Services
- Topic 3: Potential Roles for Various Organizations in the Development of a One-Stop Shop for Traveler Information
- Topic 4: Types of Information that Should Be Provided Through a One-Stop Shop and the Best Ways to Provide the Information
- Topic 5: Willingness of Agencies to Partner with MDT in the Implementation of a One-Stop Shop for Traveler Information

At the end of each focus group, all participants were also given an opportunity to make closing comments on any topic.

Major findings from the focus groups are summarized on the following page. A more-detailed description of the feedback that was obtained about each of the five major topics that were discussed is provided on subsequent pages.

A.2.2 Summary of Major Findings

Although a wide variety of information was collected from the people who participated in the focus groups, some of the major findings are briefly summarized below:

- There was definitely interest in developing the concept of a “One-Stop Shop” for traveler information in Montana. Almost all of the focus group participants thought there was value in having a centralized place for travelers and service providers to get travel information in Montana. While consensus regarding the way a One-Stop Shop should be designed and operated was not reached during these meetings, almost all of the focus group participants thought there was a need to make travel information more accessible. A list of the types of information that should be provided by a One-Stop Shop is provided later in this report.

- Most focus group participants thought the “One-Stop Shop” should be regionally focused. Although most of the focus groups participants thought MDT should be involved in the development and funding of the One-Stop Shop concept, they thought the concept should be implemented and managed at a regional level. Most of the participants thought there were too many differences from one-part of the state to develop a single system for the entire state. Most focus group participants thought that local transit agencies, TACs, and/or local governments would be the appropriate agencies to oversee and manage “One-Stop Shops” at the regional level. Some focus group participants suggested that the Montana Transportation Partnership could provide overall leadership for the development and implementation of the concept at the state level. Participants in two of the three focus groups thought it would make sense to develop a “pilot” concept for a One-Stop Shop that is initially tested and implemented at the regional level.
- If the “One-Stop Shop” concept is going to serve seniors, low-income persons, and persons with disabilities, it will need to be more than just a website. While a majority of the focus group participants thought a website would be a good way to provide information to residents and travelers in Montana, most of the participants did not think that a website would meet the needs of the state’s low-income and senior populations because these populations often do not have access to the Internet. For this reason, many of the focus participants thought it was very important to design the system in a way that would allow people to easily contact a “live” person to help them.

Topic 1: Awareness and Familiarity with Existing Travel Informational Services

How Familiar Are You with Travel Information Services in Montana?

Most focus groups participants were not very familiar with existing travel information services in the State of Montana. Only 3 of the 22 focus group participants thought they were “very familiar” with the traveler information services and systems that were available in the state of Montana. Fifteen of the 22 participants thought they were “somewhat” familiar with the transportation information services in Montana. Four participants said they were “not familiar” with the travel information services there were available.

Some of the specific comments that were provided on this topic are provided below.

Helena:

- I would say I’m very familiar with the services that are available because I have worked on grants, rules and regulations for number of years.
- I would say I’m somewhat familiar with the 511 service. I called it once.
- I am not really familiar with what is available.
- I’m not very familiar with these things. We just call other agencies when we need information. Our customers usually call us.
- It really depends what you mean by travel information systems. I thought of 511. Other than 511 there is not much out there. Montana does not have systems like many of the bigger cities have.

Missoula:

- I am familiar with the bus system that is in this area.
- We (Missoula Aging Services) are familiar with information that is available because we are focal point for seniors to come to for unbiased information and assistance.
- I'm not that familiar because Montana doesn't really have any structured information systems or sources that are easily accessible by families and/or users.
- I have used 511, but there really is not much else available. We need it, but I am not aware of what is there.
- The Easter-seal website and the FTA website are very helpful. These would be good models to use.
- I have a good understanding of the public part of these information systems, but there are a lot of details and facets that go beyond what the public systems provide and I find myself continually learning about them.
- I get information from brochures.

Wolf Point:

- I'm fairly familiar with 511. I have used it a few times and it was helpful.
- I've used the Lake Montana Road Report.
- I just contact our local transit provider.
- The National Weather Service is one of the main sources of information in this area.

Have You Used Travel Information Services in Montana? And if so, which ones have you used?

More than three-fourths (17 out of 22) of the people who attended the focus groups indicated that they had used travel information services in the state of Montana. Only 5 of the 22 participants had not used information services in Montana.

Among those who had used travel information services, many of their comments involved usage of 511. Participants were asked to list all of the information services they have used. Some of the specific services that were mentioned are listed below.

Where Focus Group Participants Said They Got Travel Information:

Helena:

- MDT's website
- 511
- AAA
- Brochures provided by local agencies
- HATS website
- Bus drivers and riders

Missoula:

- 511
- Other agencies

Wolf Point:

- Daily trip sheets
- Budget and quarterly reports
- By graphing rider-ship information over time
- From the Great Falls website

What do you like and dislike about the Travel Information Services you have used?

The moderator asked focus group participants to list things they LIKED and DISLIKED about the informational services they had used. Their responses are listed below.

Things Focus Group Participants LIKED

Helena:

- I used 511 out of curiosity and seemed to work just fine.

Missoula:

- The Utah Transit Authority's website is cutting edge and is a good model to use.
- Our local TAC serves as a good source of information because all the providers come together to discuss issues that impact their users.

Wolf Point:

- The Great Falls transit schedule was very well done.
- I have used websites where you can get maps online.
- The Washington, DC information system is good to help people find their way around.
- Seattle has an excellent transit information system. I found out how their transit system worked by getting a brochure. Without knowledge of the community it would have been difficult to get around, but the information they provided made it much easier.
- Missoula Mountain Line has information on the bus that is very helpful.
- Rapid City has transportation information at the RV parks.

Things Focus Group Participants DISLIKED

Helena:

- 511 is not user friendly at all.
- I thought 511 was difficult to use.

- Changes on MDT's website make it hard to find and access information.
- The state's website contains an incomplete listing of providers.
- I don't think MDT's website has any information about public transit. It is mainly about road conditions.

Missoula:

- None of the participants could think of anything they did not like.

Wolf Point:

- A lot of people don't know the numbers of the roads or what to call the road, so the system for using 511 doesn't help much.
- Transportation information in general is overwhelming for someone who has not traveled much. I think a lot of our customers would be overwhelmed with the kind of information that's on the website.

Topic 2: Informational Needs

One of the objectives of the focus groups was to identify the types of travel information that residents and service providers in the State of Montana need. In order to accomplish this objective, focus group participants were given three minutes to write down the types of transportation related information that residents, transit users, visitors, and/or service providers in State of Montana might need.

Participants were asked to categorize each type of information into one of the two areas:

- "Individual" needs, which included information that would be requested by individual travelers (residents, transit users, visitors, students, etc.).
- "Organizational" needs, which would involve information that would be requested by transit agencies and human service providers.

Since many of the focus group participants represented transit agencies and human service providers, many of the "individual" needs involved transit-related information. Participants generally felt that existing information about the availability of transit service for the disabled, schedules / routes, and modes of transit in Montana was very important to provide but very difficult to obtain.

Some of the specific types of "individual" and "organizational" information that were mentioned in each of the focus groups are listed below.

"INDIVIDUAL" Informational Needs

Some of the specific types of information that focus group participants thought should be available for individual travelers (e.g., residents, transit users, and/or visitors) included:

Helena:

- How to find people who are willing to car pool and/or use share-a-ride services.
- Information about local and statewide transit services.
- Contact numbers so you can call someone to get more information.

- Information about where transit stops are located.
- Hours and days per week transit service is available in different areas of the state.
- Schedules for routes.
- Route maps.
- Accessibility of transit services for persons with disabilities.

Missoula:

- Modes of transportation available.
- Fees / Cost to use transportation service.
- Weather conditions.
- Construction information on major roads and highways.
- Trip planning information – how to get from point A to point B.
- Information on which areas are served by public transportation services.
- Accessibility of services for disabled residents.
- Information on how to safely drive a vehicle.
- Information on bus schedules.
- If there are reservations needed for service.
- Local information assistance for seniors and persons with disabilities who may need someone to help them on their trip.
- Information about driver evaluations.
- Eligibility criteria so people will know if they can use certain services.

Wolf Point:

- A listing of what types of services are available.
- A web-site that breaks down the state into regional and local areas. It should then show places of interest and provide guidance on how to get to key destinations.
- Availability of services for disabled residents.
- Cost of using the service.
- Parking information.
- Times of departure and arrival.
- General information about the location of services.
- Local contact numbers so you can call someone to get more information.
- Park and ride locations and if they have handicap access.
- Ability to print out information number if you have questions.

“ORGANIZATIONAL” Informational Needs

The types of information that focus group participants thought should be available for organizations, such as transit operators and human service providers, are listed below:

Helena:

- Where resources (capital and operating dollars) are going. Who is getting them and how much are they receiving.
- I would like links to websites of other organizations.
- Information regarding what equipment is available from other providers; do some agencies have equipment that could be loaned to other organizations on a temporary basis.
- Best practices for emergency procedures; what to do if you have a breakdown of equipment, disaster preparedness, etc.
- How to apply for grants.
- Contact information for other organizations.

Missoula:

- Training related information for those who answer questions about transportation services so they can give clear explanations to those who enquire about the services.
- Best practice information about other organizations similar to yours.
- Information about the accessibility of services for people who have disabilities.
- Have access to something that explains funding sources and the availability of grants.
- Contact information to make referrals to the appropriate agency.
- Access to recreational opportunities.
- The types of service options that are available in different parts of the state.
- Where weekend services and after hours services are available.
- Information about ADA issues, possibly a legal interpretation, so you know what you can and cannot do.
- Information on discount opportunities for services.
- Fees charged by other organizations / Comparable fee rates.

Wolf Point:

- Connections, schedules and costs for other systems.
- Number of people served by other systems, the age of their users, etc.
- Rider's opinion of our system (good or bad) and how to improve our service.
- Parameters of where the system goes (Point A to Point B).
- Good demographics of special groups.

- Information about what services are available.
- Performance data from other providers in the state, including: rider-ship numbers, cost per ride / per mile, fares, and type of operation (is it comparable to our operation).

Topic 3: Roles of Various Organizations in a One-Stop Shop

What Organizations Should Be Involved?

Many organizations could be involved in the development and implementation of a One-Stop Shop for traveler information in Montana. In order to identify which organizations should be involved and what their role could be, the moderator asked focus group participants to brainstorm a list of organizations. The names of the organizations that were mentioned and the roles that were suggested by focus group participants are listed below:

Helena:

- TACs in cooperation with local government and MDT all need to be involved to get things started.
- It makes sense for TACs to take the lead; they should be supported by MDT.
- TACs should have consumer representatives.
- Local governments (cities and counties) should be involved.

Missoula:

- Area Agencies on Aging might be a possible organization; they operate statewide and they already provide information assistance.
- MDT is functionally positioned to take the lead, but they lack credibility among other providers.
- Independent living centers and the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) should be involved; they could help with the creation of a communication network with senior providers.
- Mountain Line and other transit agencies should definitely be included because they have a broad consumer base.
- Independent Living Centers should be involved.
- Montana University System.
- I think Mountain Line and other Transit agencies should be included because they are already involved in marketing.
- The American Automobile Association (AAA) should be involved because they already have a lot of information for travelers.

Wolf Point:

- We should include chambers of commerce and business organizations.
- The Federal Transit Authority (FTA) would be a good partner.

- The MTP (Montana Transportation Partnership) would be a good organization to get the One-Stop Shop process started. They focus on the entire state and they might be able to provide information that can help us here.
- We should involve the Department of Tourism.
- Local organizations and local governments should definitely be involved.

What Should MDT's Role Be?

After a general discussion about the roles of a wide range of organizations, the moderator asked focus group participants to describe the role that MDT should have in the development and implementation of a One-Stop Shop for travel information in Montana. Some of the suggestions are described below:

Helena:

- MDT should be a leader initially to get people to the table; then it should have an advisory role.
- MDT is needed to ensure money is given out equally.
- MDT should evaluate and monitor the distribution of funding.
- MDT should not operate the system.

Missoula:

- MDT should have a role in the initial rollout; we need someone to make this a priority and MDT can help do that.
- MDT can provide technical assistance to the One-Stop Shop.
- They should provide research support.
- MDT could do more if they fix the perception of mistrust that currently exists; most people do not think MDT is open to communication.

Wolf Point:

- MDT is needed for funding and technical support.
- I think everyone sees MDT in the leadership role – at least initially.
- MDT is an obvious for leader because they are connected with all the transportation providers in the state. This system will need to be connected somehow.

What Role Should Other Organizations Have?

The moderator also asked focus group participants to describe the role that other organizations should have in the development and implementation of a One-Stop Shop for travel information in Montana. Some of the suggestions are described below:

Helena:

- I think they should create a transportation partnership with leading organizations in different regions of the state; the State should provide the overall connections, but there should be a lot of local control.

- Local transportation providers have other responsibilities that should be addressed before providing informational services. It's not their main job. Resource limitations limit what they can do already.
- City and County transportation boards should be supported by MDT.

Missoula:

- I'm not in favor of a "One Stop Shop." I think the lines of communication should be more open so that people looking for a service can either be helped by the organization they contact or be easily referred to the appropriate organization. We don't need to create another level of bureaucracy – we just need to connect people to organizations that already exist.
- I think they should have something called the "No wrong door approach." In other words there should be open lines of communications between organizations and willingness to refer people calling about services. It should not matter who you call. If you call one organization they should be able to guide you to the right place that can help you.
- There should definitely be a local contact for this information. Mountain Line should be the lead.
- Communication between organizations is important. Our clients need to be able to talk to a live person. Website won't work for seniors and many of our customers with disabilities.

Wolf Point:

- The Montana Transportation Partnership already involves most of the organizations that need to be part of this process; they don't have the staff support, but MTP could be the policy group to get this started.
- Other organizations should be able to provide their own information to a One-Stop Shop website.
- There should be a place that people can call to get the information in case they don't have access to the Internet; many of the people who use our service do not have access to the Internet.
- MDT should have a funding role; local organizations should be the ones would operate and provide the information to customers.
- Phone-based information is definitely better for the population we serve (elderly, low income, disabled); I am concerned that a web-based service would be useable to the people who really need this information.

Topic 4: Preferred Types of Information Services and the Best Way to Provide the Information

The moderator gave the participants a few minutes to think about the types of information that they individually thought would be most important for a One-Stop Shop for traveler information to provide. Once everyone completed their individual list, the moderator asked people to share the items on their list. The moderator wrote the items that were mentioned on a sheet. Once all the items were listed, the moderator had the participants rank the items to determine which types of information are really the most important to the group.

The types of information that were rated as the most important in each of the three locations are listed below:

Helena:

- Schedules
- Phone numbers / contact information
- Cost information
- Routes / transfers
- Types of transit systems available

Missoula:

- Local contact information
- Schedules.
- Route maps
- Cost information
- Types of transit systems available

Wolf Point:

- Phone numbers / contact information
- Types of transit systems available
- Personal help to arrange how to use the systems
- Routes / transfers
- Cost

Best Ways to Provide Information?

After focus group participants ranked the above items, the moderator asked participants how they thought the information would best be transferred or delivered through a One-Stop Shop. Some of the suggestions that were made are described below:

Helena:

- Websites would be good; as long as they are designed well and are user friendly.
- I don't think websites are the answers. I believe getting information directly from agencies is the way to go. Our customers won't use a website. They need to be able to talk to someone.
- Via phone would be best. The One-Stop Shop should connect people to the right place.
- We should put inserts in utility bills.

Missoula:

- The rule for the Department of Transportation should be to provide technical assistance; they should provide research on best practices to help set up the One-Stop Shop; maybe they can provide a person to collect all the information from various websites so it can be found in a central location.

- At a minimum, there should be regional centers like in western Montana. Information should be mirrored in local technical assistance and in turn work with all the providers in the region by providing training and information. Information should be available in all fields like the web and in printed material and there should be referral information to a local person to provide individual assistance on what services are best for them.
- MDT's initial role should be to provide technical assistance and gather the research so that the implementation is possible. Then regional centers should coordinate with local service providers in that area to provide updated information. Those local providers and end users can then contact that regional center for information or referral. Also websites should be linked together.
- Regional centers should become conveners to bring providers and consumers together as oppose to a top down decision making process; they should do a pilot test in one area to get it to work; then it could be expanded to other regions in the state.
- There is no funding available for 211. If funding was available for 211 it could be expanded, it still provides no assistance because it is just a referral system. The structure is not well setup in Montana for 211 to work.
- Whoever is in charge needs to be invested in the success in the program that is why local organizations make the most sense to be in charge.

Wolf Point:

- Via phone with a real person instead of a recording
- 211 might work if it were expanded
- Via the Internet is good for the average person, but not for many of the people we serve
- Job Services in Glasgow is doing a One-Stop Shop and transportation will be a part of it; we should see what they are doing

Topic 5: Willingness to Partner with MDT or Another Organization

The last major topic that was discussed involved the willingness of focus groups participants to partner with MDT and share information about their organization openly with other groups. All but one of the 22 participants indicated that their organization would generally be willing to share information and continue a dialog with MDT about the possibility of establishing a One-Stop Shop for travel information. Some of the specific comments made on this topic are provided below.

Helena:

- I would definitely be willing to share our information and provide some staff time to make this work; we probably could not provide much in the way of money.
- I have no reservations about partnering; I think this is a good idea.
- I can't think of any specific types of information that we would not be willing to share; we need a central place for information; I think it would help us all out.

Missoula:

- I am not real interested in sharing our information with others. I would like to see the information we collect to stay in our database and not be given away for free. We would share it with others directly instead of uploading that information to one place. I just don't believe it will be handled correctly.
- I would definitely rather see the information managed at regional level.
- We are certainly willing to pass information along to others; I do not have any concerns.
- I can't make that decision for our organization, but it sounds like a great idea to me.

Wolf Point:

- I think everyone here would be willing to partner.
- We would be willing to provide all types of information about our system with MDT and other organizations.
- I do have a couple of concerns. I'm concerned that the process could get too complex over time. I would also want to know more about what the expectations would be for our organization. How often do we provide reports, etc.
- We can give some of our time, but we don't have any funding.

Topic 6: Other Comments

At the end of the focus group, participants were given a chance to provide any final comments. These comments generally summarized the concerns that participants cared about most. Listed below are some of the closing comments that were provided by participants from each of the groups.

Helena:

- Transportation includes giving services to people and bringing people to services. If they are going to be used, people need to have information. So I think this is a good idea.
- Things have really moved forward in Helena.
- I'm glad this type of research is being conducted. Something good will come of this!
- A One-Stop Shop could be too confusing; keep it simple.
- Access to information is key. Don't make the scope of information too narrow.

Missoula:

- Again, I really think you should think about the "No wrong door approach." Don't just create a website.
- Please keep us involved in the process; I like what I heard today, so I hope you will follow-up.
- Make a system that is regionally managed; a state level system will not work.
- I think this is a good idea; I am glad I had a chance to participate in this meeting.

Wolf Point:

- Trying to contact a real live person is very difficult and costly; would like to see some changes there; this needs to be more than a website.
- I still prefer talking to a real person rather a recording.
- This was very informative; I appreciate the opportunity to be involved.
- I am glad MDT is doing this; I just hope something will happen.

A.2.3 Limitations of the Research

Most of the focus groups participants that participated in this study represented transit agencies in the State of Montana or human service organizations. For this reason, many of the comments that are documented in this report focus on serving the needs of specialized populations, such as seniors, persons with low income and persons with disabilities.

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