

Operational Capability Showcase Summary

HIRTA ITS4US Deployment Project

<https://its.dot.gov/research-areas/ITS4US/>

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16. Abstract The Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) is currently in the operations phase (Phase 3) of the ITS4US program for its new program "HIRTA Health Connector: Bridging the Gap Between Healthcare and Transportation" (Health Connector). Per the goals of the program, Health Connector project is focused on improving transportation access to healthcare in Dallas County, Iowa. This document serves as the Operational Capability Showcase Summary (OCSS) for the Health Connector project. The Operational Capability Showcase Summary (OCSS) documents observations and results from the Operational Capability Showcase (OCS). This includes a summary of the execution of the OCS, lessons learned for conducting showcase in the future, as well as planned modifications to or additional considerations for future outreach activities.			
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Operational Capability Showcase Event Purpose

The Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTa) Health Connector, as part of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) ITS4US Program, was required to plan and stage an Operational Capability Showcase (OCS) no later than the first 12 months from the beginning of Phase 3, which began on September 9, 2024.

Held on July 11, 2025, at the Waukee Family YMCA in Waukee, Iowa, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM, the showcase was an event intended to communicate to media and community members the capabilities, intent, and value of Health Connector. The event highlighted the following:

- **Technology in Action:** Attendees engaged in hands-on demonstrations of HIRTa's Health Connector wayfinding and ride booking systems, showcasing how transit and technology combine to serve populations throughout Dallas County.
- **Community Voices:** HIRTa leadership, community health partners, and real riders who benefit from these services were available to share their stories.
- **Vibrant Atmosphere:** With inflatables, snacks, and families in attendance, the showcase brought an energetic and welcoming environment that reflected HIRTa's community-driven mission.

Document Purpose

The Operational Capability Showcase Summary (OCSS) documents observations and results from the OCS. The purpose of this summary is to document:

- Execution of the OCS, in contrast to the Operational Capability Showcase Plan (OCSP).
- Lessons learned for conducting showcases in the future.
- Planned modifications to or additional considerations for outreach activities for the remainder of Phase 3 and beyond.

Document Organization

The OCSS consists of the following sections:

- Chapter 2 Operational Capability Showcase
- Chapter 3 Operational Capability Showcase Attendees
- Chapter 4 Resources Developed or Updated for the Operational Capability Showcase
- Chapter 5 Post-Operational Capability Showcase Activities
- Chapter 6 Lessons Learned

- Appendix A. OCS Media Advisories
- Appendix B. Acronyms

Project Background

For context, the HIRTA Health Connector project scope and a high-level system overview have been included. Additional information can also be found at the [Health Connector website](https://www.transithealthconnector.org) (<https://www.transithealthconnector.org>).

Project Scope

Health Connector is an innovative solution that addresses bottlenecks associated with transportation access to healthcare for HIRTA's communities. Some of these challenges are key reasons behind missed appointments or unacceptable preventive or as-needed healthcare trips in the HIRTA service area. For this deployment, the HIRTA team has implemented a scalable and replicable solution that enables access, for all users, to non-emergency medical transportation for riders and their caregivers by resolving transportation access barriers with the use of advanced technologies. This solution allows Dallas County residents or anyone traveling to or from Dallas County seeking a medical appointment to explore their transportation alternatives and book medical and transportation appointments simultaneously through smart device (e.g., smartphone) applications or an equally effective alternate method. Further, this solution includes information and wayfinding services to guide them at every step of their trip.

In addition to addressing mobility needs, the proposed deployment will recognize the net impact that access to health services has on patient healthcare outcomes as well as both the financial and health outcomes from the perspective of the healthcare community and Dallas County Health Department (DCHD).



Figure 1. Overview of Health Connector System Concept (Source: HIRTA team)

Figure 1 provides a high-level overview of the Health Connector system concept and trip journey. For more information about the key capabilities of the proposed Health Connector technology, refer to the Concept of Operations (ConOps) and System Requirements Specifications (SyRS) documents.

There are five main goals for the Health Connector Concept, which include:

- Improved health outcomes through increased access to medical transportation for Dallas County residents
- Self-reliance and spontaneity for everyone
- Efficient transportation management capabilities for medical transportation services
- Financial sustainability of medical transportation programs
- Safe medical transportation services

System Overview

There are a variety of subsystems and components being deployed as part of Health Connector. The core subsystems are as follows:

- **Traveler-end Subsystem:** includes the tools and technologies (phone/interactive voice response (IVR), mobile/smart devices, web-based tools) to be used by Travelers seeking transportation services for their healthcare appointments as part of their pre-trip, during trip, on arrival, and return trip activities. This includes both a mobility-on-demand (MOD) application for planning, booking, and payment, as well as a wayfinding application for more detailed guidance within care facilities.

This application, provided by Via, the selected (MOD) vendor for Health Connector, also provides real-time status updates for on-demand trips via push notifications and allows Travelers to discover options, plan trips, and book rides. Mobile/smart devices will be used as part of the Traveler-end subsystem but are outside the scope of this procurement.

- **HIRTA Transportation Management Subsystem (TMS):** A TMS refers to any subsystems and components related to the operational backend functions involved in service delivery. HIRTA's TMS includes the Mobility-on-Demand TMS (MOD Platform TMS) in addition to other functions that support Health Connector from outside of the MOD platform such as the call center software. The TMS also hosts two interfaces (middleware products) being developed by the HIRTA team and will be made freely and publicly available on GitHub under a permissive license to support interfacing with State of Iowa Medicaid transportation broker(s) and the Electronic Healthcare Record (EHR) system. The initial production codebase is currently available on GitHub, however, development continues to be ongoing to add additional features and integrations.
 - **MOD Platform TMS (also referred to as "VOC"):** Provided by Via and includes the technologies used to assist customer care and operations staff with Traveler registration, eligibility management, reservations, scheduling, dispatching, billing, and administration activities. The MOD Platform TMS is a subcomponent of the HIRTA TMS and refers to the specific platform provided by Via.
- **Vehicle Subsystem:** refers to the technologies deployed on vehicles to support driver-end functions for driver-dispatch communications, manifest management, support just-in-time dispatching, turn-by-turn navigation and Traveler details and location to assist drivers in locating Travelers at the time of pickup, on-board information and fare payments. On all HIRTA-owned vehicles, drivers use tablets running the driver app. On other vehicles, drivers may use the driver app on their tablet or their phone.

- **Wayfinding Subsystem:** refers to the technologies and infrastructure used for providing outdoor wayfinding as well as indoor positioning, information, and translation on request to travelers. In addition, this category includes components that assist customers with information during the on-board leg and other points on their trip. Multiple commercially available wayfinding systems have been deployed. Health Connector partners providing such technologies include:
 - **Wayfinding Codes** provide wayfinding and translation assistance at healthcare facilities and onboard vehicles.
 - **Infotainment Devices** inside vehicles present relevant information about the project and specific destinations during the onboard leg of the trip.
 - **A kiosk** provides options for booking return trips from a healthcare facility and checking the status of your trip, all without needing a mobile device.
 - **External Systems:** These systems, external to Health Connector, have been identified for close coordination among HIRTA and partners for providing efficient transportation services for medical trips or for collecting data for performance measurement needs.
 - **Medicaid Transportation Broker:** refers to the State of Iowa Medicaid broker. Currently, Access2Care's system is used for booking and managing Medicaid trips. HIRTA is one of the providers used by Access2Care. Medicaid trips will continue to be booked by Access2Care when requested by Travelers. Medicaid trips will be ingested in the HIRTA system when assigned to HIRTA. At that point, a Traveler using Medicaid benefits will be able to use Health Connector Traveler tools.
 - **Health Navigator- and Healthcare-end Subsystem:** refers to the limited access MOD platform that is available to health navigators and healthcare customer care staff to request trips, modify trip requests, and check on trip status on behalf of Travelers. Additionally, health navigators and the health administrator at the Dallas County Health Department (DCHD) use a Microsoft Access-based information and referral (I&R) product to track the status of referral activities and for coordination with Dallas County residents' health navigation/social care services.
 - **EHR/Medical Record Subsystem:** refers to the systems used by partner hospitals and clinics for booking medical appointments and maintaining their appointments, including discharge and any subsequent referral activities. Participating healthcare partners use different EHR services. The following bullet points outline participating healthcare partners and the EHR systems they currently employ. Health Connector will develop a new interface with at least one healthcare partner's EHR system.
 - Dallas County Hospital – Currently using Veradigm EHR, transitioning to Epic EHR
- Health Connector may look to expand to additional partners overtime, including:
- Mercy One Hospital – Epic EHR, Epic EHR provides a publicly available API
 - Other regional clinics – Veradigm EHR

- **Eligibility Management System:** refers to the system that manages traveler registration and funding eligibility. Travelers register for Health Connector directly through HIRTA by completing a registration form hosted on HIRTA's Health Connector website. Funding eligibility is designated and managed with Via's system.

- **Other:** Additional relevant details for the system to be deployed are as follows:

Supporting systems: These are existing systems and are not part of Health Connector. However, the TMS exchanges data with these systems, or HIRTA staff may interact with these systems for certain operational functions, as needed. Specifically, this refers to the phone system, payroll, driver or vehicle information management, vehicle maintenance management, customer service management, safety event reporting, and other systems and processes for data collection and reporting.

Table 1 provides more detail on these technologies, with each subsystem broken down into components and subcomponents.

Table 1. List of Subsystems, Components, and Subcomponents

Subsystem	Component	Subcomponent	High Level Description
HIRTA TMS	Hardware Components	HIRTA Supporting Hardware	Includes HIRTA-owned, health navigator, and healthcare partner phones, tablets and computers.
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Scheduling	Allows for advanced and real-time scheduling, driver/vehicle assignment, batch optimization of trips booked in advance, and real-time optimization.
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Manifest Building/Runcutting	Allows for vehicle manifest creation and distribution.
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Dispatch	Allows for shift creation, modification and monitoring, ride assignment, ride status updates
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Cost Allocation and Billing	Allows for trip verification, billing and invoicing, reimbursement and accounting, and reporting.
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Performance Management and Reporting	Allows for reporting of defined performance key performance indicators (KPIs), custom reporting through direct data access (DDA) and data sharing.
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Notifications	Allows HIRTA staff to receive audio notifications and push notifications to Travelers and drivers.

Subsystem	Component	Subcomponent	High Level Description
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Reservations and Customer Service	Allows for Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) to perform traveler registration, customer profile creation, trip booking, and trip cancellation and to assist with broker or third-party contractor trips, self-service tools, and translation services on behalf of travelers. Also allows CSRs to contact Travelers and view Traveler trip history and relevant KPIs.
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Operations Management	Allows for driver manifest management, management of third-party provider and Access2Care trips, dynamic vehicle reassignment, real-time capacity management, and access to real-time trip details.
HIRTA TMS	MOD Platform TMS	Safety Event/Incident Management	Allows users to report and modify details on safety events, as well as assign risk levels to the events.
HIRTA TMS	Health Navigator & Healthcare-end Subsystem	N/A	Provides health navigators and healthcare partners a limited access version of the web-based MOD Platform TMS available to HIRTA operations staff. This subsystem allows health navigators and healthcare partners to perform trip planning, trip booking, trip cancellation, translation services, and appointment management on behalf of Travelers as well as to access real-time trip status and trip feedback.
External System	Health Navigator & Healthcare-end Subsystem	I&R	The product used by DCHD to track the status of referral activities and for coordination with Dallas County residents' health navigation/social care services.
HIRTA TMS	MOD-EHR Middleware	Electronic Health Record (EHR) Software	Provides platform for partner hospitals and clinics for booking and maintaining medical appointments.

Subsystem	Component	Subcomponent	High Level Description
HIRTA TMS	MOD-EHR Middleware	EHR Application Programming Interface (API)	Allows for data exchange between the MOD Platform TMS and EHR software, including confirmed medical appointment data, trip booking confirmation, medical appointment changes or cancellations, and trip status. The current healthcare partner, Dallas County Hospital (DCH), uses Veradigm EHR which does not have an available API. DCH plans to transition to Epic EHR in the future, which will require API integration.
HIRTA TMS	MOD-EHR Middleware	EHR Read-Only Webpage	Allows HIRTA staff and healthcare partner staff to access real-time information through the MOD-EHR middleware.
HIRTA TMS	MOD-Medicaid Middleware	Brokerage	Provides the State of Iowa Medicaid broker, which uses Access2Care, the ability to perform Medicaid trip booking and management.
HIRTA TMS	MOD-Medicaid Middleware	Medicaid API	Allows for data exchange between the MOD Platform TMS and Medicaid broker, including service requests from the Medicaid broker and service confirmations, trip status, and trip performance data from the MOD Platform TMS.
HIRTA TMS	MOD-Medicaid Middleware	Medicaid Read-Only Webpage	Allows HIRTA staff and Access2Care staff to access real-time information on Medicaid-funded trips through the MOD-Medicaid middleware.
HIRTA TMS	Reporting Database	CyBox	Provides file sharing and file storage for performance-related datasets and reports.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Hardware Components	Personal Devices	Includes Travelers' personal web-enabled devices, such as smart phones and tablets to deploy the Traveler mobile application and Traveler web application.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Mobile Application	Registration	Allows Travelers to perform registration and preference management and to input funding eligibility and mobility aid/accessibility needs.

Subsystem	Component	Subcomponent	High Level Description
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Mobile Application	Trip Planning	Allows travelers to select pick-up and drop-off locations, trip brokering, and multimodal trip planning.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Mobile Application	Travel Assistance	Provides Travelers with additional assistance in planning/booking trips through a HIRTA contact and FAQ page.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Mobile Application	Trip Booking	Allows travelers to submit on-demand, pre-scheduled, and recurring trip proposals and to access third-party services if no Health Connector rides are available. Also allows Travelers to perform trip cancellation, rebook for modifications, and to input mobility aid/accessibility services needed, requests for personal companions, and number of passengers.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Mobile Application	Translation Services	Allows Travelers with limited English proficiency (LEP) needs to access translation services before, during, and after a trip.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Mobile Application	Payments	Allows Travelers to select from the following payment methods for Health Connector trips: electronic payments/credit cards, account debit, discount codes/coupons, cash or check, and debit account replenishment.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Mobile Application	Traveler Notifications	Allows Travelers the ability to subscribe to receive trip-related notifications and add up to 5 individual contacts to receive notifications on their trip status.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Mobile Application	Trip Information	Allows Travelers to perform vehicle identity verification and Traveler identity verification, obtain real-time trip status information, and share ride status.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Health Connector Traveler Web Application	N/A	Provides the same functionalities and comprises the same components as the Traveler mobile application. Provides additional translation service abilities through Google Translate.
Traveler-end Subsystem	Interactive Voice Response (IVR)	N/A	HIRTA's IVR system allows Travelers to obtain automated Traveler assistance and notifications by phone.

Subsystem	Component	Subcomponent	High Level Description
Vehicle Subsystem	Hardware Components	HIRTA Supporting Hardware	Includes on-board mobile tablets for deployment of driver application, driver terminal GPS receiver and magnetometer for vehicle tracking, and two-way radio for operations communication.
Vehicle Subsystem	Hardware Components	Third-party Driver Devices	Third-party vehicles operating Health Connector trips will use GPS-enabled smart devices, including phones and tablets, to deploy the driver application.
Vehicle Subsystem	Driver Application	Scheduling	Allows drivers to receive trip assignments, Traveler details, trip manifests and waiting locations, as well as contact Travelers and input breaks and break requests.
Vehicle Subsystem	Driver Application	Navigation	Allows drivers to receive turn-by-turn navigation, live support, Traveler information and translation services and track driver locations and manifest updates via cellular data coverage or cached data in the event of lost connectivity.
Vehicle Subsystem	Driver Application	Trip Performance	Allows drivers to input information on pick-up status, no-shows, drop-off status, payment status, and pre-trip and post-trip vehicle checks as well as to send non-medical emergency safety messages.
Wayfinding Subsystem	Hardware Component	Kiosks	Physical, static hardware systems through which Travelers are able to book trips and check trip status.
Wayfinding Subsystem	Hardware Component	NaviLens Codes	Located throughout the healthcare facility to assist with Traveler navigation within the facility and to pick-up locations.
Wayfinding Subsystem	Hardware Component	Personal Devices	Includes web-enabled smart devices for scanning codes and deploying the wayfinding application.
Wayfinding Subsystem	Wayfinding Application	NaviLens/NaviLens GO App	Provides Travelers the ability to perform wayfinding within the healthcare facility, including buildings, offices, check-in desks, referred buildings/offices after discharge, and door entrances.

Subsystem	Component	Subcomponent	High Level Description
Wayfinding Subsystem	Wayfinding Kiosk CMS	N/A	Communicates with the wayfinding kiosks to provide information to Travelers and allows healthcare facilities and other relevant parties to update code content.
Wayfinding Subsystem	NaviLens and Cloud Platform	N/A	Cloud-based server that handles traveler wayfinding requests and traveler wayfinding guidance through the mobile wayfinding application.
Performance Management	ISU Performance Management System	Public Dashboard	Provides an interface for public-facing information regarding Health Connector performance.
External System	Eligibility Management System	N/A	Contains a database that regulates who is eligible for Health Connector rides and the use of discount coupons or credit.
External System	Eligibility Management System	Funding Entities	Organizations funding customer trips that will interface with the system for automated billing and payment processing.
External System	Third-Party Platform	N/A	Platform for managing vehicles and operations available for Health Connector service that are not operated by HIRTA (i.e. TNC platform).
External System	Medicaid Broker System	N/A	The State of Iowa Medicaid broker, which uses Access2Care for booking and managing Medicaid trips.
External System	EHR Medical Record System	N/A	Systems used by partner hospital and clinics for booking and maintaining medical appointments.

These various components make Health Connector operations possible. Key capabilities of the technology solution are as follows:

- Enable the Traveler to use a smart device (e.g., smartphone) application or equally effective alternate methods to schedule and manage transportation services to medical appointments through the Health Connector Traveler app. This app will:
 - Provide Travelers options to choose from available providers.
 - Provide on-demand response if needed by Travelers.
 - Send Travelers an alert before arrival and again when the vehicle is approaching.
 - Keep Travelers informed on trip progress.
 - Provide directions (audible and visual) on where to meet the vehicle/driver. On arrival, drivers should have the ability to automatically confirm Traveler identity.

- Provide the Traveler with wayfinding solutions through indoor and outdoor navigation technologies to provide personal concierge-style travel from origin to destination through a wayfinding app. This will include:
 - Locating the healthcare facility entrance when dropped off by vehicles
 - Locating the desired room when inside the healthcare facility
 - Locating the correct vehicle when boarding
- Allow Travelers to use Health Connector for all contactless payment needs related to transportation.
- Enable Travelers or their caregivers to book and pay for another local trip as an additional leg along with the medical trip.
- Allow healthcare staff to book transportation for patients while medical appointments are made, using the mobility-on-demand operations center.
- Track the status of linked transportation and healthcare appointments using a webpage to ensure that any changes to medical appointments include an accompanying change to transportation services.

Chapter 2. Operational Capability Showcase

Objective of the OCS

The OCS is a media event to communicate the capabilities, intent, and value of the deployment. During the OCS, HIRTA showcased the operation of technologies deployed under Health Connector with the goal of highlighting the added value of the project to HIRTA operations, riders and other related stakeholders. The showcase included a series of presentations and informational resources from HIRTA, healthcare partners, and other related community organizations that were open to the public. The showcase also included demonstration activities related to Health Connector and general activities to encourage community engagement. The intention was for community members and the media to come away from the OCS with an understanding of the service offerings and direct impact of the project in reducing bottlenecks related to transportation access to healthcare for HIRTA services communities.

The OCS was held at the Waukee Family YMCA in Waukee, Iowa, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM on Friday, July 11th. This site was selected for its central location within a HIRTA service area and high potential for community engagement, as well as availability and quality of the space.

Activities at the OCS

As described in Section 1, Purpose of the OCS, the showcase included activities aimed at highlighting the following themes:

- Technology in Action
- Community Voices
- Vibrant Atmosphere

The sections below include the activities featured throughout the showcase, as well as descriptions and sample photographs demonstrating how these activities helped highlight these themes.

Technology in Action: Health Connector Service Demonstrations

The HIRTA team utilized a conference space at the YMCA to set up resources related to the Health Connector project. HIRTA continuously displayed a testimonial video that featured Health Connector riders discussing how the service has improved their access to medical transportation, as shown in Figure 2. Next to this display, and in other locations within the conference room, HIRTA also displayed sample NaviLens codes which are used to provide wayfinding information at Dallas County Hospital and on Health Connector vehicles. Attendees were provided instructions on how to download the NaviLens application and scan the codes for demonstration purposes, as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 2. HIRTA Health Connector Testimonial Video and NaviLens Code. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25

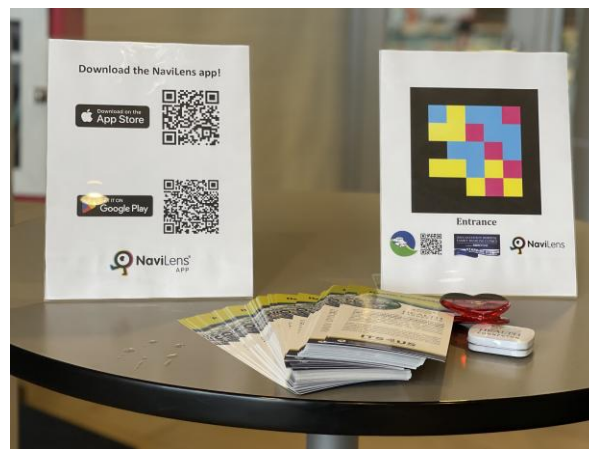


Figure 3. NaviLens Download Instructions and Entrance Code. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25

On display at the OCS was also the Kiosk, as shown in Figure 4, which was installed at Dallas County Hospital during Phase 2 to allow patients to book Health Connector rides. HIRTA temporarily relocated this Kiosk to the OCS site and switched the booking webpage to a demonstration environment, allowing attendees to see the process of using the Kiosk to book and check the status of a ride.

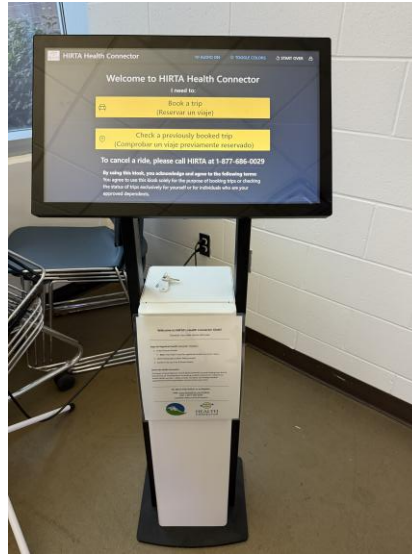


Figure 4. Health Connector Kiosk. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25

In addition to the Health Connector demonstration activities discussed above, HIRTA also set up several tables with promotional materials and a registration form for attendees to sign up for Health Connector.



Figure 5. Health Connector Promotional Materials. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25

Lastly, in the parking lot outside of the YMCA, a Health Connector vehicle was also available for attendees to interact with. The vehicle featured another example of a NaviLens code, which showed

vehicle information, as well as a demonstration of the Infotainment System used to provide riders additional information about their Health Connector ride when used in operation.



Figure 6. Inside (left) of the Health Connector vehicle featuring an infotainment system. (Right) Outside of the Health Connector vehicle with NaviLens code. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25

Community Voices: Vendor and Community Partner Tabling

HIRTA invited several vendors and community health partners to attend the event and connect with attendees and highlight their collaboration with HIRTA in supporting community health and mobility. Vendors set up tables in the lobby of the YMCA which was open to the public and members of the YMCA. The following vendors were in attendance:

- Aging Resources of Central Iowa
- Dallas County Public Health
- Dallas County Hospital
- The Iowa Department of Transportation
- The Epilepsy Foundation of Iowa
- HIRTA Helps
- Waypoint Resources



Figure 7. Vendors and Attendees. *Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25*

Vibrant Atmosphere: Community Activities

In the field and parking lot adjacent to the YMCA, HIRTA organized a community celebration event, which featured family-friendly activities, interactive games, local resources, and local vendors. Local EMS also came out in support of the event, allowing kids to interact with the firetruck on site. This part of the OCS was intended to bring together all members of the community in an energetic and welcoming environment and reflect HIRTA's community-driven mission.



Figure 8. Showcase welcome sign. *Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25*



Figure 9. Inflatables, Ice Cream Truck, and Health Connector Vehicles. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25

Outcomes of the OCS

The OCS successfully demonstrated the goals, technologies, and value of Health Connector. Participants of the showcase saw demonstrations of the Health Connector technology, including NavILens codes, used for wayfinding, and the Kiosk, used for booking rides from healthcare appointments. Participants also had the opportunity to hear rider testimonials and engage with HIRTA staff and healthcare partners, showcasing the health-related resources available to HIRTA community members. Lastly, the OCS acted as an opportunity for HIRTA to market their services to the general public by providing community activities that encouraged families and members of the YMCA to explore the showcase.

During the showcase, HIRTA was able to engage with and get feedback from attendees on their understanding of the Health Connector service and its associated technologies. Key takeaways and lessons learned from the OCS have been added to the Phase 3 Lessons Learned Logbook. These takeaways and lessons learned are also summarized in Chapter 6.

As a result of the showcase, HIRTA was also able to register one attendee for Health Connector, who provided valuable feedback as to how she could benefit from the service and what improvements could be made to better serve her particular needs. The attendee had used HIRTA's service in the past and was interested in learning about how Health Connector could help improve both her own and her partner's access to healthcare related transportation. This attendee had been acting as her spouse's primary caregiver and transportation provider, however, was beginning to experience her own mobility challenges which had caused her to miss a medical appointment due to lack of transportation in the year prior. The HIRTA team was able to teach her about Health Connector and how it could be used to provide a reliable transportation option for both her and her spouse and the technologies available to her. The HIRTA team helped her through the registration process for Health Connector and also provided a demonstration of the Kiosk, which she had seen before at Dallas County Hospital, but was not familiar

with. Due to limited mobility with her hands, she provided feedback during the Kiosk demonstration that it might be helpful to incorporate a way for people to use the technology without needing to type on the Kiosk. Following the showcase, the HIRTA team was able to discuss this feedback and brainstorm ways that the Health Connector technology could be improved to make it more accessible to all riders.

Chapter 3. Operational Capability Showcase Attendees

Media Outlets

HIRTA sent a media advisory to 20 media outlets, as well as reminders, prior to the showcase. On the day of the event, there were no outlets that were able to attend the showcase. Unforeseen severe weather and tornado warnings were likely a major factor in diverting media attention on the day of the Showcase. However, HIRTA distributed a press kit featuring highlights of the OCS following the event. This press kit was distributed to the following outlets:

- Associated Press (AP) Des Moines Iowa
- Daily Iowan
- Dallas County News
- Des Moines Business Record Magazine
- Des Moines Cityview (AAN)
- Des Moines Register
- Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism
- Iowa Living Magazine
- Iowan Magazine
- KCCI TV 8 (CBS)
- KCWI TV (CW)
- KDSM TV 17 (Fox)
- KTIN TV 21 (PBS)
- Perry Chief
- The Perry News
- WHO AM 1040
- WHO TV 13 (NBC)
- WOI AM 640 (NPR)
- WOI TV 5 (ABC)

Exhibitors and Partners

Representatives from the following organizations were on hand to connect with attendees:

- Aging Resources of Central Iowa
- Dallas County Public Health
- Dallas County Hospital
- The Iowa Department of Transportation
- The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council

- The Epilepsy Foundation of Iowa
- HIRTA Helps
- Waypoint Resources
- Waukee Fire Department

Public Officials/Local Government Representatives

Representatives from the Iowa Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Joint Program Office (JPO) were on site at the OCS.

Prior to the OCS, HIRTA also invited representatives from local government, including the Mayor and City Administrator, as well as the local chambers, from the City of Perry, the City of Waukee, the City of Adel, and the City of Grimes.

General Public

By hosting the OCS at the Waukee YMCA, a highly trafficked community space, the OCS attracted an estimated 50 attendees from the general public. Attendees included both community members who were aware of the event through HIRTA's outreach efforts, as well as members of the YMCA who were on site.

Chapter 4. Resources Developed or Updated for the Operational Capability Showcase

Video

HIRTA developed an informational video that was on continuous display at the OCS. This video features testimonials from a HIRTA rider who depends on reliable rides to get to her medical appointments; a Community Health Administrator at Dallas County Public Health who explains how transportation impacts community health; and HIRTA's Communications Manager, who shares why Health Connector was created and who it was meant to serve. The video is available on [HIRTA's YouTube account](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PKOUiCxCA8) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PKOUiCxCA8>).

Press Release

HIRTA developed a press release to distribute to media outlets following the OCS event. The press release includes a summary of the project goals and technologies, an overview and photos of the OCS event, and links to further resources about Health Connector. This press release is included in Appendix A.

Media Kit

A media kit has been developed for Health Connector and is available on the [Health Connector webpage](https://www.transithealthconnector.org) (<https://www.transithealthconnector.org>). The media kit contains an overview of the Health Connector, frequently asked questions, information on branding and graphics, flyers available for download for partners and travelers, as well as links to videos and other resources. This media kit continues to be updated as new material is developed.

Chapter 5. Post-Operational Capability Showcase Activities

Engagement with Media

Following the OCS, a press kit was released to the media as described in Section 4. The press kit was released to the same media outlets originally invited to the showcase, listed in Section 3 under Media Outlets. Per HIRTA's knowledge, the press kit was not picked up by any media outlets following the showcase.

Continued Engagement

Through the remainder of Phase 3 and beyond, HIRTA will continue to advertise Health Connector through social media posts, press releases, community meetings, and other avenues of engagement. The Showcase provided HIRTA with valuable insight into the planning and execution of media focused events, which will be applied moving forward. Representatives from the HIRTA team will also continue to share information about Health Connector at conferences, such as the ITS World Congress.

Chapter 6. Lessons Learned

Observations and lessons learned from the Showcase have been recorded in the Lessons Learned Logbook and are listed in the table below.

Table 2. Lessons Learned from OCS

Lesson Learned Title (Key Takeaway)	Issue Summary	Realized/Potential Impacts	Mitigation Action(s) Taken
Lack of attendance from the public and specifically from media outlets at media events	While invited to the OCS, no media outlets were in attendance at the actual event and general turnout was less than anticipated.	This may have been due to poor weather on the day of the event, summer travel, or general difficulty of the timing on a Friday afternoon. Additionally, HIRTA had hosted a media day in August of 2024 which featured similar information, which could have contributed to the lack of media coverage.	Focus more on general community outreach through avenues such as social media, flyers, or in person advertising to increase awareness of events.
Hospital awareness and promotion of Kiosk technology	In preparation for the OCS, the Kiosk was moved from DCH temporarily. At this time, a discussion was had with the front desk staff who provided feedback that they were not aware of how to use the Kiosk and therefore had not been encouraging patients to use the Kiosk to book rides.	While training materials had been provided to DCH staff members on the Kiosk, there needs to be additional resources in case of turnover or changing staff. With staff unaware of how to use the Kiosk, patients have not been using the technology to book rides.	HIRTA will work to develop additional resources for hospital staff, such as a one-pager that could be permanently posted at the front desk. This would provide staff a quick guide as to the purpose of and how to use the kiosk.
Feedback on Kiosk usability	During a demonstration of the Kiosk at the OCS, an attendee provided feedback that the touch keyboard on the Kiosk was difficult for her to use due to lack of hand mobility.	There may be additional technologies that could be investigated moving forward to help make the Kiosk more accessible.	The HIRTA team will continue to research feature upgrades to the Kiosk, such as the ability to scan a QR code or code, that would improve the ability for riders with limited mobility to utilize the Kiosk.

Appendix A. OCS Media Advisories

Media Advisory Press Release Before the Showcase

Health Connector Showcase at Waukee YMCA

What: Join us for the Health Connector Showcase, an event highlighting innovative transportation solutions designed to improve access to healthcare for the community. Attendees will experience demonstrations of HIRTA's Health Connector system, NaviLens technology, and learn how these tools make healthcare rides easier and more accessible.

This family-friendly event is open to the public and will include inflatables, games, resources, and Home Sweet Cone!

Who: Hosted by the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA), featuring HIRTA leadership and community partners such as Aging Resources, Dallas County Public Health, the Iowa DOT, and more.

When: Friday, July 11, 2025 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Where: Waukee YMCA - 325 Warrior Lane, Waukee, IA 50263

Why: Healthcare access is critical. This showcase aims to raise awareness about transportation options that help residents reach medical appointments reliably and affordably.

Media Opportunities:

- Interviews with HIRTA leaders and riders
- Live demonstrations of Health Connector and NaviLens technologies
- Photo and video opportunities

Reminder Before the Showcase

Reminders were sent to riders, community partners, VIPs, and stakeholders via phone and email prior to the event. Here is an example of a reminder before the showcase:

"I wanted to follow up one last time to personally invite you and your staff as VIP guests to the Health Connector Showcase this Friday, July 11, at the Waukee YMCA from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

This event will showcase how innovative transportation solutions like HIRTA's Health Connector and NaviLens are improving access to healthcare across our communities. You'll be able to see live demonstrations, connect with key partners including Dallas County Public Health, Dallas County Hospital, the Iowa DOT, and the US DOT, and enjoy family-friendly activities like inflatables, games, and free ice cream from Home Sweet Cone. There is a backup plan to move inside the YMCA in case of weather.

Event Details:

When: Friday, July 11, 2025 | 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Where: Waukee YMCA – 210 N Warrior Ln, Waukee, IA

I've attached the media advisory for additional information. If you plan to attend or would like assistance coordinating your visit or setting up interviews, please let me know.

Thank you, and I hope to see you there!"

Media Advisory Press Kit After the Showcase

HIRTA Health Connector Showcase Highlights Innovation, Community Partnership in Expanding Healthcare Access

WAUKEE, Iowa (July 11, 2025) – On Friday, July 11, the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) hosted its Health Connector Showcase at the Waukee YMCA, bringing together project leaders, community partners, and residents to spotlight cutting-edge transportation solutions that are transforming access to healthcare in central Iowa.

The U.S. Department of Transportation Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Joint Program Office (JPO) awarded HIRTA a pilot under the ITS4US Deployment Program for its proposed Health Connector concept, which has now introduced an innovative solution to address challenges in transportation access to healthcare for HIRTA communities.

Health Connector is a platform designed to address the needs and challenges faced by various populations in Dallas County, in accessing healthcare services. The objective is to eliminate barriers and ensure enhanced access to healthcare options for all residents.

The July event allowed the public to explore how Health Connector and NaviLens technology are making it easier for residents to get to critical medical appointments. Live demonstrations showed how these tools offer real-time ride information, improved accessibility, and greater reliability for non-emergency healthcare transportation.

"We are proud to show how transportation can be a bridge to better health," said Julia Castillo, Chief Executive Officer of HIRTA. "We are excited to partner with organizations like the Dallas County Health Department and Dallas County Hospital to make a tangible difference in the lives of those who need it most. By integrating transportation and healthcare, we are directly addressing a critical barrier and creating true access for our community members."

The showcase also served as a community celebration, featuring family-friendly activities, interactive games, local resources, and ice cream from Home Sweet Cone.

Representatives from the following organizations were on hand to connect with attendees and highlight their collaboration with HIRTA in supporting community health and mobility:

- Aging Resources of Central Iowa
- Dallas County Public Health
- Dallas County Hospital
- The Iowa Department of Transportation
- The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council
- The Epilepsy Foundation of Iowa
- HIRTA Helps
- Waypoint Resources
- Waukee Fire Department

The success of the Health Connector Showcase reflects HIRTA's ongoing commitment to the community by enhancing transportation and healthcare access. Members of the media are encouraged to cover this uplifting local story and explore how public transit innovation is reshaping community health outcomes.

HIRTA has worked alongside Capture Management Solutions, the Community Transportation Association of America, the Dallas County Health Department, Flexlynqs, the Institute for Transportation at Iowa State University, and Via to create Health Connector.

Event Highlights for Media Coverage:

- **Technology in Action:** Attendees engaged in hands-on demonstrations of HIRTA's Health Connector and NaviLens systems, showcasing how transit and technology combine to serve populations throughout Dallas County.
- **Community Voices:** HIRTA leadership, community health partners, and real riders who benefit from these services were available to share their stories.
- **Vibrant Atmosphere:** With inflatables, snacks, and families in attendance, the showcase brought an energetic and welcoming environment that reflected HIRTA's community-driven mission.

Resources:

- <https://www.transithealthconnector.org/>
- <https://www.ridehirta.com/>
- <https://youtu.be/5PKOUiCxCA8>

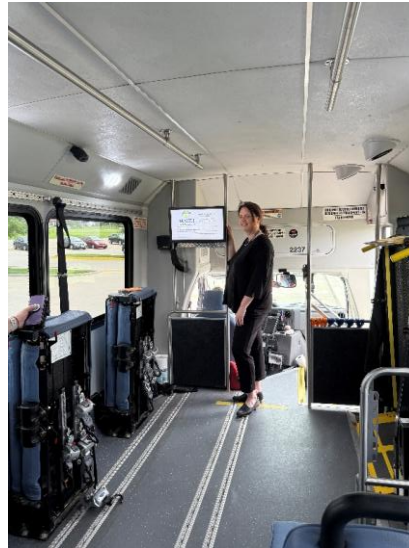
Photos for Use:



Health Connector Team. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25



Left: Health Connector Welcome Sign



Right: Health Connector Demo on HIRTA Bus

Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25



Vendors and Attendees. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25



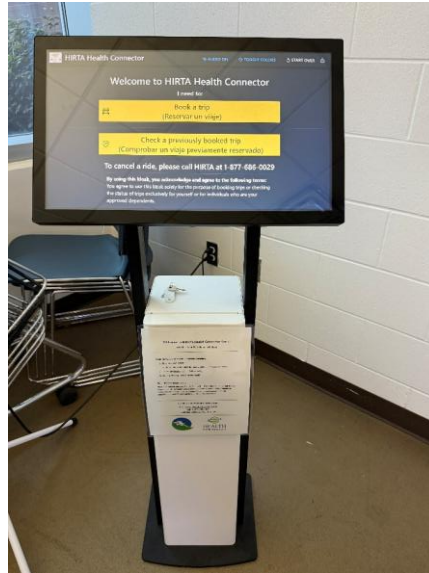
Attendees Visiting the Home Sweet Cone Ice Cream Truck. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25



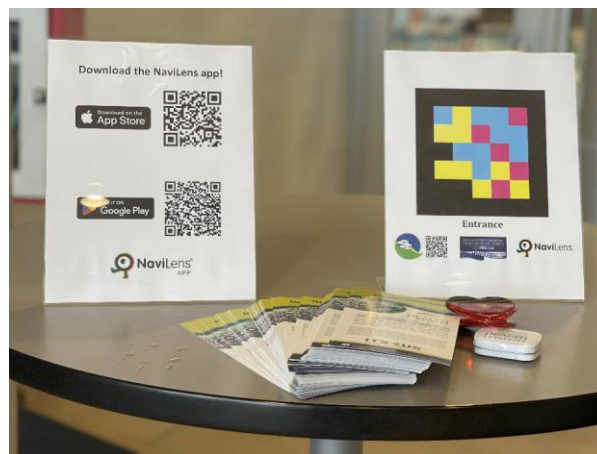
Inflatables, Ice Cream Truck, and HIRTA Vehicles. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25



Iowa DOT Vendor Booth. Source: HIRTA Team, 7/11/25



Health Connector Kiosk. Source: *HIRTA Team, 7/11/25*



Navilens QR Codes. Source: *HIRTA Team, 7/11/25*

Appendix B. Acronyms

Table 3. Acronyms

Acronym	Description
DCH – Dallas County Hospital	Healthcare facility Partner.
DCHD – Dallas County Health Department	One of the project Partners who will lead integration with healthcare services.
DOT – Department of Transportation	The government department responsible for transportation. In this report this generally refers to either the State of Iowa’s DOT or the United States DOT referred to as Iowa DOT and USDOT, respectively.
EHR – Electronic Healthcare Record	Refers to the healthcare information management system used by hospitals for patients’ healthcare-related appointments, transactions and records management.
HIRTA – Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency	Rural, regional public transit agency in central Iowa. HIRTA will serve as awardee for the ITS4US project.
MOD Platform TMS – Mobility on-Demand Platform Transportation Management System	The system used by HIRTA provided by Via for booking, managing, and dispatching rides and shifts for the Health Connector. Also referred to as “VOC”
NEMT – Non-emergency Medical Transportation	The provision of transportation to patients for medical appointments, lab visits, and other routine care.
OCS – Operational Capability Showcase	Media-focused demonstration event that is part of Task 3-C Phase 3, Stakeholder Outreach.
OCSP – Operational Capability Showcase Plan	The plan is Task 3-C Phase 3, Stakeholder Outreach, and describes the objectives and logistics around the Operational Capability Showcase event.

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