



BILLINGS AREA
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
COORDINATION PLAN

2025

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This coordination plan, as required by the Montana Department of Transportation and federal regulations, provides an overview of the structure and practices of the Billings Area Public Transportation Coordination Group and Technical Advisory Committee along with a summary of current and anticipated coordination efforts in the Billings, MT area including prioritized projects for the current funding cycle. Billings is the largest city in the state with a population of approximately 120,000 people (according to 2020 census counts) and covers a geographic area of over 43 square miles. Roughly, two-thirds of the city is located within the Yellowstone River valley with the remainder of the city located north of a sandstone cliff formation above the river valley; Billings is also in close proximity to a significant rail hub for the region (Laurel, MT) which presents a number of challenges regarding transportation where rail and vehicle traffic interact. Regarding demographics, according to 2018 census estimates, 22.7 percent of the population is under the age of 18 years while 18 percent is over the age of 65 years. Further, according to the same source, 9.1 percent of the population under the age of 65 presents with some form of disability. Approximately 11.1 percent of the population falls below the federal poverty level; the area's median household income is \$69,692 annually.

The Billings area is served by a variety of health care providers, human services organizations, senior services agencies, private transportation companies, and a single public transit operator. As transit funding is limited at the local, state, and federal levels, it is imperative entities within the Billings area coordinate transportation services and needs in order to maximize mobility for residents and minimize duplication of services.

The primary purpose of this plan is to refine existing methods and develop new strategies that increase mobility for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income populations through public and stakeholder input. The identified strategies update the current Billings Area Public Transportation Coordination Plan and involve the public transit operator as well as other area agencies/entities. All area transportation and human services providers are welcome to participate in the group.

Public Transit Sources of Funding and Eligible Projects

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) administers a variety of public grant programs across the nation. This coordinated plan focuses primarily upon those outlined in 49 U.S.C. 5310, but the public transit operator may also utilize other funding sources in support of goals outlined in this document. In regard to FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, funding may be utilized for both traditional and non-traditional projects, as recommended by the Coordination Group and selected by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Goals

The overall goal of this plan is for all providers listed in this coordination plan to work closely with each other and the lead agency, the City of Billings MET Transit, to:

1. Provide more effective transportation solutions for improvements to ridership, improved access to jobs, and reduced congestion.
2. Minimize duplication of services and ensure more efficient provision of transportation services and resources.
3. Identify transit best practices, enhancements, and human service transportation coordination projects which may help improve transportation services and coordination.
4. Identification and discussion of community needs and recommendations on how to best meet those needs.
5. Ensure adequate and appropriate outreach efforts including seeking participation from non-participating local agencies and entities who may not qualify to receive state or federal transportation funding.

As the lead agency, MET Transit is committed to including the following groups and organizations in the coordinated process:

1. Existing and potential transit riders including the general population, individuals, with disabilities, seniors, and low-income groups.
2. Area transportation planning agencies and transportation providers, including both private and non-profit entities.
3. Human services agencies.
4. Other public and private agencies which administer health and medical, employment, vocational rehabilitation, independent living, and other essential services.

COORDINATION STRUCTURE

Management of the Coordination Plan is facilitated by the lead agency, MET Transit, in conjunction with other agencies and interested parties. In order to ensure efficient and effective group coordination and planning, the overall Coordination Plan will involve input from two distinct groups: the Transportation Coordination Group and the Coordination Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

Coordination Group

The Coordination Group is composed of representatives from area agencies listed in this plan, as well as members of the public and any other interested groups. Coordination Group meetings are held at least once per quarter and open to the public with the meeting date, times, and locations published in accordance with the MET Transit Public Participation Plan. These meetings are intended to aid in determining the needs of and prioritizing solutions and services for transportation in the City of Billings area. Once needs and potential solutions are identified,

the Coordination Group will make recommendations on projects to be considered by the Coordination Technical Advisory Committee.

Coordination Technical Advisory Committee

The Coordination Technical Advisory committee is a five (5) member committee composed of representatives from area agencies responsible for providing services to the distinct groups identified in the Federal Regulations regarding section 5310 funding. Specifically, the group will include one representative each from agencies responsible for providing services to seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income populations; each representative should be an individual with the authority to recommend or make decisions regarding projects and transportation coordination within their respective agencies. The group will also include representation from the lead agency, MET Transit, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Agencies and members are as follows:

- Adult Resource Alliance of Yellowstone County
- Riverstone Health/Healthy By Design
- COR Enterprises
- Billings Urbanized Area MPO
- City of Billings MET Transit

This group will meet at least once per quarter following the quarterly Coordination Group meetings to discuss and develop recommended projects. Identified projects will be assessed for feasibility, potential impacts, and overall effects on area transportation and coordination efforts; periodically, the CTAC may invite outside members directly involved in proposed projects to provide further information for or discussion on the identified project. Should multiple projects be identified and recommended which exceed available funds, the group will select and prioritize projects based upon majority consensus; application for these projects will then be submitted for funding. Prior to final recommendation and application for funding of projects, the CTAC will publish a public meeting notice and allow for public comment on selected projects.

AGENCIES INVOLVED

Coordination Technical Advisory Committee Agencies

MET Transit: As MET Transit is the local designated recipient for Federal Transit Administration 5307 operating funds to provide public transit service, it serves as the lead agency in coordination efforts. MET has been providing public transportation since 1973 and currently provides both fixed-route and paratransit services. Paratransit is public transportation for individuals who are, due to a disability or other condition, unable to use the MET fixed-route service. Paratransit service was originally established in 1977 by Special Transportation, Inc, which was assumed by the City of Billings MET Transit in 1997 under the new designation of MET Special Transit; MET Transit has since renamed all operations under paratransit to MET-PLUS. Paratransit service meets the transportation needs of a broad spectrum of people who otherwise could not travel locally.

MET provides fixed-route and paratransit service from approximately 5:45 am to 8:15 pm, Monday through Friday and 8:00 am to 6:00 pm on Saturdays. MET serves any disability group, ambulatory and non-ambulatory, including seniors with disabling conditions. Provided rides include trips for employment, educational, medical, shopping and recreational and any other reason. MET coordinates with many different agencies, as well as the general public, to provide transportation within the City Of Billings. The State of Montana Developmental Disabilities Division regularly coordinates with MET for client rides while area skilled nursing facilities and hospitals coordinate for transportation when they are unable to provide transportation. Montana Medicaid and Adult Resource Alliance of Yellowstone County both contract with MET to provide medically related transportation, as well as support for waiver services.

Billings Urbanized Area Metropolitan Planning Organization: The Billings Urbanized Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) oversees transportation planning for the Billings Urban Area. The urban area encompasses the City of Billings, as well as a planning area extending approximately 4.5 miles outside the city limits. The MPO prepares a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) each year that contains the discussion of projects to undertake during the upcoming program year, including transit specific projects. The UPWP is supplemented by a five-year Transportation Improvements Plan (TIP). The TIP is a fiscal planning program for federally assisted highway and transit improvements for the Billings Urban Area. Every five (5) years, the MPO prepares an Urban Area Transportation Plan that assesses the transportation needs and recommends actions to address those needs. As the MPO exists as a requirement for both Federal Highway and Federal Transit funding in the small urban area and is directly involved in all aspects of area transportation, MPO involvement in coordination efforts is essential for addressing and planning for existing and future transportation needs.

Adult Resource Alliance of Yellowstone County: The Adult Resource Alliance (ARA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, has been serving seniors since 1975 and provides a comprehensive range of services which support the organization's mission and vision, providing effective service and leading collaborative efforts to ensure seniors remain independent with the highest possible quality of life. Since opening its doors, ARA's programs have continued to expand with the Billings urban area to include Medicare and Medicaid enrollment and education, nutritional programs providing congregate meals at 11 locations, delivering Meals on Wheels (MOW) to home-bound seniors, non-emergency medical transportation, and the Alliance Volunteer RIDES Program (AVP) providing non-medical rides throughout the community, including to ARA meal sites.

Riverstone Health: Riverstone Health was created in 2008 as a single identity that grew out of the Yellowstone City-County Health Department. The foundation of their work has been Health, Education, Leadership and Protection (HELP). In their medical and dental clinics they provide care to 20,000 patients each year. Through their Montana Family Medicine Residency they train doctors to help meet Montana's shortage of family medicine practice physicians and provide health services, such as WIC and Maternal Child Health, to help families and young children. They provide hospice services and focus efforts at preventing infectious diseases to make the whole community a safer and better place to live.

COR Enterprises, Inc.: COR was originally known as the Billings Sheltered Workshop and has been in operation since 1971; they provide vocational rehabilitation and developmental services for persons with disabilities. COR Enterprises services include Organizational Employment, Community Employment and Community Support Services. Aside from the Yellowstone County and Billings area, this agency also provides services in Lewistown, Bozeman and two Native American Reservations in Eastern Montana.

COR Enterprises provides rides for their clients primarily Monday through Saturday. The agency does provide rides on Sundays for special events and services needed by their clients. Most rides are provided between the hours of 7:00 am and 4:30 pm; however a number of rides are also provided during evening hours depending on the client needs. Transportation is provided for a variety of services, including employment, medical, shopping and recreational purposes. COR Enterprises regularly coordinates with both the MET fixed-route buses and MET-PLUS; MET Transit currently provides fixed-route service to COR's primary facility in Billings on Lampman Drive. COR also coordinates and provide transportation for clients from other agencies such as the PD Waiver Program, Developmental Disabilities and the SDMI Program. COR Enterprises also has vehicles available through an individual agreement for other agencies as needed, including Eagle Mount, to use when COR is not using them.

Coordination Group Agencies

Listed below are providers who regularly participate in the Coordination Group meetings and participate in the coordination of services.

A.W.A.R.E., Inc. (Anaconda Work and Residential Enterprises): AWARE is a private, non-profit corporation that was started in Anaconda, Montana in 1976. Since AWARE's start over 45 years ago, it has grown into an organization that has helped and continues to help thousands of people across Montana achieve their potential. AWARE is governed by a seven member Board and presently employs more than 800 people in multiple communities around the State. AWARE offers a variety of services in fully licensed and nationally accredited programs, geared towards improving lifestyles and opportunities for Montanans affected by disabilities or mental challenges. In Billings, AWARE operates 4 adult group homes, 2 adult DD autism group homes and 1 youth mental health group home. A second, youth mental health group home is scheduled to open in the near future. AWARE also operates a day service work program that provides a variety of work and day activities including janitorial services, sensitive document disposal and community employment. AWARE operates the Enterprise Learning Center in collaboration with Billings public schools that provides educational and vocational programs to autistic youths in the Billings area. AWARE also manages the "Growth Through Art" program which is located at AWARE's main office facility. Many of the individuals participating in this program utilize MET Special Transit.

AWARE provides transportation services to their clients who reside at their group homes. Clients are transported on a daily basis to and from their respective residential settings for a number of reasons which include but are not limited to; work, school, after school activities, medical visits, community events and family visits. Transportation services are

provided for whatever need arises with service available seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Big Sky Senior Services: Big Sky Senior Services is focused on providing low-cost, in-home services to Senior Citizens and Adults with Disabilities to maintain independence, increase quality of life and prevent elder abuse by helping them remain connected in the community. Services offered include: Personal care, nursing medication setup, elder abuse awareness, representative payee services, guardianship, dementia education, transportation to medical appointments and grocery, and supporting senior independence in the home.

Billings Clinic: Based in Billings, Billings Clinic is Montana's largest health care organization and serves a vast region covering much of Montana, northern Wyoming and the western Dakotas. Billings Clinic manages 11 Critical Access Hospitals and has other partnerships across the region. Affiliated hospitals are located throughout Montana and Wyoming. Billings Clinic is a physician-led, integrated multi-specialty group practice with a 304-bed hospital and a Level II trauma center. It also operates a number of clinics providing a full range of medical services. Billings Clinic's vision is to be a national leader in providing the best clinical quality, patient safety, service and value.

Intermountain Health Care: Intermountain Healthcare is based in Salt Lake City, Utah, and provides high-quality, affordable, and personalized healthcare to the people of Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Kansas. Intermountain Health delivers care by taking a proactive approach to help you stay well. As an innovative, nonprofit healthcare system, Intermountain invests back into improving the care they deliver. Intermountain Healthcare has more than 63,000 employees, 385 clinics, and 33 hospitals. Locally, representatives from the Intermountain Healthcare St. Vincent Regional Hospital participate in coordination efforts.

State of Montana DPHHS Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP): The Montana Developmental Disabilities Program's central office is in Helena with regional offices in Billings, Glasgow, Great Falls and Missoula. DDP contracts with private, non-profit corporations to provide services across the lifespan for individuals who have developmental disabilities and their families. The focus of the program is to tailor care to the individual and provide it in as natural an environment as possible.

United Way of Yellowstone County: United Way of Yellowstone County is the primary community-building organization in South Central Montana. They provide leadership to effectively mobilize people and financial and strategic resources to improve people's lives. They identify and address the community's priority needs and provide solutions that achieve measurable results and sustained community change.

Other Identified Area Agencies

MET Transit has identified the following local area agencies who occasionally participate or may be interested in participating; contact was made via invites to the local coordination group.

Advanced Care Hospital of Montana
Affinity
Aspen Grove
Aspen Meadows
Aspen View Retirement
Autumn Springs Assisted Living
Beartooth Assisted Living
Billings Bible College
Billings Nursing & Rehabilitation
Billings School District #2
Billings Taxi
Billings Yellow Cab
Blind & Low Vision
Central Court Village
City Cab
Eagle Cliff Manor
Edgewood Vista
Fraser Tower
Golden Advantage Senior Services
Head Start, Inc.
Highgate Senior Living
Human Resources Development Council
Interim Health Care
Job Connection
Lasting Legacy
LIFTT
Magic City Terrace
Mental Health Center
RSS

RSD
Morning Star Senior Living
MSU-Billings
Montana Center on Disabilities
Northern Rockies Oncology
Parkview
PLUK
Prairie Towers
Rainbow House
Rocky Mountain College
Rocky Mountain Home Care
Rocky Mountain Hospice
S.T.E.P.
Sage Tower
St. John's Lutheran Ministries
Sweetwater Retirement
Synergy Home Care
Tender Nest
Total Transportation
Vintage Suites
Visiting Angels
Vocational Rehab
Volunteers of America
Westpark Retirement Village
Yellowstone County Human Services
Yellowstone Naturopathic Clinic
Yellowstone River Nursing & Rehabilitation
YMCA
YWCA

PARTICIPATING AGENCY FLEET STATUS

Most recent reported fleet information for agencies participating in the Coordination Plan are as follows:

MET TRANSIT

Year	Make	Model	Mileage	ADA Lift Equipped	Passenger Capacity	Currently in Use?
2015	Eldorado	Aerotech	144,505	Yes	16	Yes
2017	Elkhart	Coach	138,982	Yes	16	Yes
2017	Elkhart	Coach	130,135	Yes	16	Yes
2018	Elkhart	Coach	107,085	Yes	16	Yes
2018	Elkhart	Coach	118,853	Yes	16	Yes
2018	Elkhart	Coach	119,680	Yes	16	Yes
2018	Elkhart	Coach	114,519	Yes	16	Yes
2018	Elkhart	Coach	131,927	Yes	16	Yes
2019	Elkhart	Coach	93,082	Yes	16	Yes
2019	Elkhart	Coach	73,466	Yes	16	Yes
2019	Elkhart	Coach	76,962	Yes	16	Yes
2023	Ford	Transit	4,663	Yes	7	Yes
2023	Ford	Transit	6,345	Yes	7	Yes
2023	Ford	Transit	8,363	Yes	7	Yes
2023	Ford	Transit	8,895	Yes	7	Yes

ADULT RESOURCE ALLIANCE

Year	Make	Model	Mileage	ADA Lift Equipped	Passenger Capacity	Currently in Use?
2004	GMC	G31	89,000	Yes	12	Yes
2003	GMC	G31	91,000	Yes	12	Yes

BIG SKY SENIOR SERVICES

Year	Make	Model	Mileage	ADA Lift Equipped	Passenger Capacity	Currently in Use?
1997	Buick	LeSabre	168,596	No	3	Yes
1999	Ford	Windstar	182,817	No	3	Yes

COR ENTERPRISES

Year	Make	Model	Mileage	ADA Lift Equipped	Passenger Capacity	Currently in Use?
2024	FORD	Endura	4,080	Yes	11	Yes
2022	FORD	Transit	6,363	Yes	9	Yes
2019	FORD	Elkhart	80,389	Yes	14	Yes

2019	DODGE	Caravan	80,336	No	7	Yes
2017	GMC	Sierra	99,488	No	5	Yes
2014	CHEVY	Impala	122,693	No	5	Yes
2014	Chrysler	T&C	111,898	No	5	Yes
2013	FORD	Taurus	156,088	No	5	Yes
2012	FORD	Flex	105,774	No	5	Yes
2012	SUBARU	Outback	94,645	No	5	Yes
2011	FORD	Elkart	139,369	Yes	11	Yes
2010	Lincoln	MKS	64,415	No	5	Yes
2010	Dodge	Conversion	153,148	Yes	2	Yes
2009	SUBARU	Forester	77,029	No	4	Yes
2006	SUBARU	Forester	104,839	No	4	Yes
2005	DODGE	Caravan	224,144	No	4	Yes

FUNDING AND 2025 CAPITAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

Agencies identified in this coordination plan have an in-depth understanding of the limits of available funding to provide transportation services to both the groups identified in the 5310 program and the public as a whole. The group has continually discussed innovative means to improve access to transportation by utilizing available funding in more efficient and effective ways. In the coming year, MET Transit intends to continue engaging identified agencies in the coordination plan in re- evaluation of existing coordination practices and agreements. Both the CTAC and Coordination Group understand existing needs in the community which may be better served by evaluating existing practices in ways which utilize available funding in increasingly effective ways.

TransADE

The transportation coordination group has discussed the use of TransADE funds to improve access to transit for the identified groups, and the public as a whole. Currently, MET Transit utilizes TransADE funding in preventing a decrease in available services as the funds help to maintain current service levels provided by the public transit agency. While federal regulations require paratransit service within a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile corridor around fixed-route service, MET Transit currently provides paratransit service beyond this minimum requirement by serving nearly any area within the City of Billings city limits. Without TransADE funding, this expanded service would be detrimentally impacted.

Capital Assistance Projects for 2025

Throughout the course of the discussions in the previous plan year, the existing group identified needs regarding fleet replacement for local area transportation and human services providers as well as modifications to the existing MET Transit practices. Through discussion reflected in the attached meeting minutes, the group identified and agreed upon the following three eligible capital projects:

Priority 1: COR ENTERPRISES ADA VEHICLE

COR has a number of vehicles that have exceeded usable life when considering both age and mileage and has expressed the need for both an ADA accessible Ford Transit style vehicle, as well as a non-ada vehicle, which can be fulfilled preferably with a minivan but a small SUV may also suffice. COR utilizes awarded vehicles primarily for transport of cliental with disabilities between day program sites and client group

homes or residences. COR also utilizes the vehicles in support of daily life activities for individuals with disabilities. Current estimated pricing

Priority 2: BIG SKY SENIOR SERVICES MINIVAN FUNDING

Big Sky Senior Services provides transportations to seniors for medical visits, grocery shopping, and other necessary activities of daily life. Big Sky Senior Services is requesting funding to purchase up to two non-ADA accessible minivans to support these services. The agency is currently in receipt of \$30k in grant funding from a local foundation that they intend to utilize to match this project. The Coordination Committee agreed to allocate \$70k in 5310 funds to support this project.

Priority 3: COR ENTERPRISES NON-ADA VEHICLE

COR has a number of vehicles that have exceeded usable life when considering both age and mileage and has expressed the need for both an ADA accessible Ford Transit style vehicle, as well as a non-ada vehicle, which can be fulfilled preferably with a minivan but a small SUV may also suffice.

Priority 4 : MET TRANSIT BUS STOP/PASSENGER AMMENITY IMPROVEMENTS

MET Transit's fixed-route service underwent a significant overhaul in 2023 including a significant increase in frequency and consistency as well as the move of the entire system into a designated stop system and away from the traditional flag stop system. This move not only significantly increased the overall ridership and usage on the system, but also established over 450 bus stops across the City of Billings when previously no designated bus stops had existed. Consequently, MET Transit has a significant need to update a large number of bus stop locations across the city not only for passenger accessibility, but also to provide for basic amenities such as benches, shelters, and lighting. This project would utilize remaining 5310 funds after award/application of the previous priorities (COR vehicles, funding to support Big Sky Senior vehicles).