

**Fort Peck Transportation System
Coordination Synopsis**

by

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DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Western Transportation Institute, the Montana State University System, or the Fort Peck Transportation System.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Fort Peck Transportation System received a grant from Easter Seals Project Action to develop a coordination plan for the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. The Fort Peck Transportation System led the coordination effort. Montana State University-Billings provided the primary support to the Fort Peck effort. As part of this project, a contract was implemented with the Western Transportation Institute to provide technical assistance.

The coordination effort was instituted to ensure that all organizations operating transportation services in and through the Reservation were working in harmony to provide the highest level of service possible, with the available transportation assets.

In addition to the coordination effort, the Fort Peck Transportation System had a Transit Development Plan (TDP) created by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. in March 2002. The recommendations within the TDP would be incorporated into the coordination effort to the maximum extent possible.

The main assistance offered by the author was to review the TDP, and attend a meeting focused on transportation on April 21, 2004. After that meeting the author provided a list of recommendations for improving coordination on the Reservation, which are included in the remainder of this document.

2. COORDINATION SYNOPSIS

Due to weather conditions, and other factors, there had only been one other coordination meeting prior to the April 21, 2004 meeting. At the meeting on April 21, it was noted that there was still information that needed to be gathered so that a foundation could be established for the coordination effort.

Following is a basic list of steps to be taken to further the coordination process in the Fort Peck area.

1. Data gathering

Only one meeting had occurred prior to the meeting on April 21, 2004. Due to this fact, there was an overall lack of information on the assets of each agency that provided transportation within and through the Reservation. It is vital that this information is gathered so that a comprehensive list can be developed of the vehicles and funding sources available to provide transportation on the Reservation.

Further, all agencies that have a “scheduled” service should list the respective schedules. Even though a service may not be printed in a schedule, if the service is “routine”, it should be included. The data collection should also try to determine how full the vehicles are during their “scheduled” runs.

2. Data analysis

Once gathered, the data should be analyzed to determine if there is unused vehicle time (vehicles sitting idle), unused vehicle capacity (vehicles with open seats), or funding sources that are not being utilized, or are not being leveraged with other funding sources. The analysis should show which agencies have vehicles with spare time and/or capacity. The analysis will also highlight any duplication of service, such as when three different vehicles travel to Billings.

3. Basic coordination plan

Once the data has been analyzed, priorities should be set and a basic coordination plan should be developed. The plan will document the data collected and the data analysis, and list the priorities set by the coordination committee.

The plan should list action items and timelines, as well as which organization is responsible for the various action items. The plan should determine how to take advantage of any spare vehicle time and/or capacity. The plan should also address how to eliminate any duplication of services.

The Fort Peck Transportation System needs to continue the process it has started, and ensure that the various entities providing transportation services on the Reservation continue to meet and discuss how to improve their coordination efforts. The next section lists other recommendations for the continued coordination effort.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fort Peck Transportation System (FPTS) has begun the process of trying to improve transportation coordination within the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. This process began with the most important step of coordination: communication.

If coordination efforts are to succeed, it is important that all agencies providing transportation services within and through the Reservation continue to talk to each other. In addition, more information (data) needs to be gathered and analyzed to determine the most appropriate coordination strategies.

Utilizing the *Montana Coordinated Transportation Handbook*, the Fort Peck Transportation System should be able to sustain the coordination effort that began with the grant from Easter Seals Project Action. The coordination efforts should also be tied to the recommendations put forth in the Transit Development Plan created by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.

One issue noted was that the name of the transportation system (Fort Peck Transportation) may give the impression that service is for American Indians only, and that the system only operates on the reservation. Changing the name may lead to more non-tribal members riding the system. Changing the name should be tied to the coordination effort, and an overall marketing campaign to provide increase knowledge of transportation options within the Reservation.

In addition, the Fort Peck Transportation System should investigate utilizing fixed routes or deviated routes in Wolf Point and Poplar, with other vehicles feeding into those routes from the smaller outlying communities. Wolf Point and Poplar are the two main communities in the Fort Peck Reservation, and established fixed routes within these communities should increase the efficiency of the transportation service.

Finally, the Fort Peck Transportation System should investigate consolidating with other agencies, so FPTS becomes the transportation provider within the Reservation. Consolidation typically leads to efficiencies, and a reduction in the duplication of services. This would increase coordination not only on the Reservation, but to outlying communities, such as Plentywood and Billings.

It is believed that by following these recommendations the efficiency and effectiveness of the transportation system in the Fort Peck Indian Reservation will increase, and coordination will be improved.

4. REFERENCES

Fort Peck Transit Development Plan Update. Prepared by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. for the Fort Peck Transportation System. March 2002.

Montana Coordinated Transportation Handbook. Prepared by the Western Transportation Institute for the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities. Copyright 2003, the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities.