

# **GREATER ANACONDA REGIONAL COORDINATION PROJECT**

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## **DISCLAIMER**

The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Montana Department of Transportation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Frontier areas of Montana face many challenges, including transportation within, and to small communities (towns), as well as transportation to larger communities. People living and traveling in frontier areas need reliable transportation for a variety of purposes, including employment and educational opportunities, as well as medical, recreation and other “life” purposes. The greater Anaconda area (consisting of Deer Lodge, Granite, and Powell counties) fits into the definition of a frontier area and has similar transportation issues. The goal of this research project, which was conducted by the Western Transportation Institute in cooperation with the Montana Department of Transportation and other stakeholders, was to develop a plan for coordinating public transportation (transit) and specialized transportation providers in the greater Anaconda area.

For this project, the tasks were as follows:

1. Data Collection and Analysis;
2. Development & Evaluation of Alternatives; and
3. Implementation Plan.

The first phase of the project consisted of the first two tasks: collecting data from the existing transit systems, interaction with stakeholders, and laying out various alternatives for public transportation system coordination in the region. In the first phase, the WTI research team collected and analyzed all necessary information so that coordination alternatives could be developed and analyzed. This phase included interaction with stakeholders, and a review of prior data, including transportation plans in the three-county area. The second phase of the project included reviewing and selecting coordination alternatives, and creating a plan for implementing the selected coordination options. This document includes information from both phases of the project.

With respect to jurisdictional organization, it should be noted that Anaconda and Deer Lodge County are a consolidated city-county government. For the purposes of planning transportation services, however, this document refers to Anaconda as an individual community, as well as the town of Philipsburg and city of Deer Lodge.

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## **2. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter provides information about the existing transportation entities in the greater Anaconda area. There are six entities in Anaconda, two in Deer Lodge, and one in Philipsburg. The following descriptions provide detailed information regarding service areas, service population, budget, and operating organization.

### **2.1. AWARE Inc. Anaconda**

AWARE Inc., a private, non-profit corporation, provides quality community-based services to persons with challenging mental, emotional, and in some cases, physical needs who would otherwise be served in a more restrictive setting (or perhaps not served at all). AWARE operates 11 facilities: two homes for those with Developmental Disabilities (DD Homes), seven Youth homes, and two Independent Living homes.

For transportation services, AWARE operates nine mini vans and two 12-passenger vans. None of the vans in Anaconda are accessible; however, AWARE has 4-5 accessible vehicles in Butte. (Currently, AWARE is not required to have an accessible vehicle.) AWARE staff members drive vehicles as a part of their jobs. A majority trips are within Anaconda; however, a trip from Anaconda to Butte is provided every other day. Occasionally, AWARE reports providing a trip to Missoula. AWARE is satisfied with its current vehicle fleets and transportation services.

### **2.2. American Cancer Society - Road to Recovery, Anaconda**

American Cancer Society Road to Recovery is a service staffed by six to eight volunteer drivers who provide transportation to those who need help getting to and/or from their cancer treatments. They also currently provide rides to patients on dialysis (up to three times per week). While drivers are volunteers, the program provides a payment to help them with their costs: \$15 per roundtrip to Butte, or \$40 per roundtrip to Missoula, Helena and/or Bozeman. People who use the service and other supporters can make donations to the Anaconda Community Hospital Foundation, which manages a fund for the Road to Recovery program. Between January 10 and the end of April (2012), the service gave 20 rides (roundtrips). While this calculates to an average of about 1.5 roundtrips per week, the service may sometimes give three or more roundtrips in a single week.

### **2.3. Anaconda Transit Service, Anaconda**

Anaconda Transit Service is a taxi service licensed by the Public Service Commission of Montana. Based in Anaconda, it primarily serves Anaconda, Deer Lodge, Philipsburg, Butte, and Helena. It also provides services to Missoula, Bozeman, and Billings with 24 hour advanced reservations. It allows a maximum of three passengers per trip and charges \$ 10 per round trip in Anaconda and \$ 55 per round trip to Butte. This taxi company operates one Ford Explorer vehicle. The owner stated that the service is busy now, and is not necessarily interested in more business at this time.

### **2.4. Community Hospital/Nursing Home of Anaconda**

Community Nursing Home (CNH) of Anaconda is a 62-bed facility licensed by Medicare, Medicaid and the Veteran's Administration. CNH has a Care-A-Van service to transport

residents to and from doctors' appointments, and special outings. The service also provides local rides to families and friends who want to visit the residents of the nursing home.

CNH operates a 15-passenger and a 12-passenger vehicle. Each vehicle has two wheelchair accessible spots. Ninety percent of CNH residents' medical needs are being met locally, so out of town trips are rarely required. The transportation service has two part-time drivers. Drivers are responsible for scheduling rides for CNH residents (and their families and friends). In recent years, transit demand has been increased from 2,701 rides in 2010 to 4,666 rides in 2011. This transportation program has a budget of \$ 31,000 per year through the Community Hospital and CNH of Anaconda.

CNH recognizes a local service need in Anaconda and estimates a significant increase in demand would likely occur if a public transportation service were offered. CNH would consider becoming the lead transit agency, if such an agency were needed.

## **2.5. Metcalf Memorial Senior Citizen Center, Anaconda**

Metcalf Memorial Senior Citizen Center runs a transit service for senior citizens. The primary function of the service is to transport seniors to the Center for congregate meals (lunch). The 13-passenger vehicle (twelve passengers + 1 wheel chair) is typically operated between the hours of 10:30 am to 2:00 pm, Monday-Friday. In addition to congregate meals, the service will take seniors to medical appointments if there is time in the schedule. In addition, service is scheduled to Butte for the first or second Monday of each month, which seniors primarily use for shopping opportunities.

This system has a part-time driver, and the Center's manager is responsible for day-to-day operation of transit and scheduling rides for clients. The budget is approximately \$20,000 per year, with about \$7,000 per year coming from a County Mill Levy.

While there is recognition that additional service to senior citizens is desired (there is a need for more service within Anaconda, as well as out of town trips), it is uncertain whether or not the Board that oversees the Center would participate in a coordinated transportation program at this time.

## **2.6. BSW Inc., Anaconda (and Butte)**

BSW Inc. is a non-profit organization that serves people with disabilities and special needs. BSW has one house in Anaconda that can serve up to seven residents. BSW has a wheel-chair accessible van and a mini-van in Anaconda.

In Butte, BSW has six independent living group homes and two supported-living homes. BSW Inc. provides a transportation service to people with disabilities and special needs, especially to its day program services, where individuals can work on a variety of projects, and/or receive other services. Transportation is funded by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Program and, for some, through Vocational Rehabilitation. The average monthly expenses for all transportation services (Butte and Anaconda) are \$10,000. BSW Inc. provides transportation during the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. This transportation is a curb-to-curb service. BSW Inc. will also provide transportation to and from recreational activities. Transportation is available for Community Living Services consumers on a 24 hour basis set by the BSW Inc. management.



BSW Inc. has a total of 16 vehicles and provides 2,500 to 3,000 rides per month. The transportation service is operated by BSW Inc. employees, who are responsible for driving buses and scheduling services.

BSW is concerned about the current rate of reimbursement by DPHHS, and is worried that future cuts may reduce funding for their transportation services.

## **2.7. Granite County Medical Center, Philipsburg**

Granite County Medical Center in Philipsburg operates a demand-response general public transit service. While the service operates primarily between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm (Monday-Friday), service is available on the weekend, if a prior reservation is made.

The system operates a 2008 12-passenger vehicle (with a total of 6 wheelchair accessible spots), and a 1995 vehicle with a similar passenger capacity. Service is provided within a 100-mile radius of Philipsburg, and ninety percent of the rides provided are out of town trips (70% to Missoula). The total transit budget is approximately \$29,000, with \$17,000 from the Montana Department of Transportation and \$12,000 from the Granite County Hospital District.

This transit system has a high operation cost because of low demand of rides and greater geographical distances to nearby cities. The system administrators are open to coordination with other transit system in the region.

## **2.8. Powell County Council on Aging, Deer Lodge**

Powell County Council on Aging (PCCA) provides services to senior citizens to enable them to remain independent, with a focus on serving those with social and economic needs.

The PCCA has a 12-passenger vehicle with one accessible spot (wheelchair station). On average, PCCA provides 130 to 195 rides per month [145 rides (April 2012?); 161 rides (March); 137 Rides (February); and 193 Rides (January)]. A majority of rides are being made provided within Deer Lodge for shopping and medical appointments. Infrequent out of town rides are provided to Helena and Missoula for medical appointments, and to Butte for shopping.

The driver schedules all trips (ride requests). This service is administered and operated by Powell County, and the vehicle is insured through the County.

Based on conversations within the community, PCCA has opened the service to people of all ages, effectively serving as a public transit service. Rides are available from 9 a.m. - Noon; 12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m., Monday-Friday, except on holidays. PCCA is also experimenting with trips that are a maximum of five miles out of town.

Challenges for this service include a small budget (approximately \$24,000 per year), and lack of a spare vehicle.

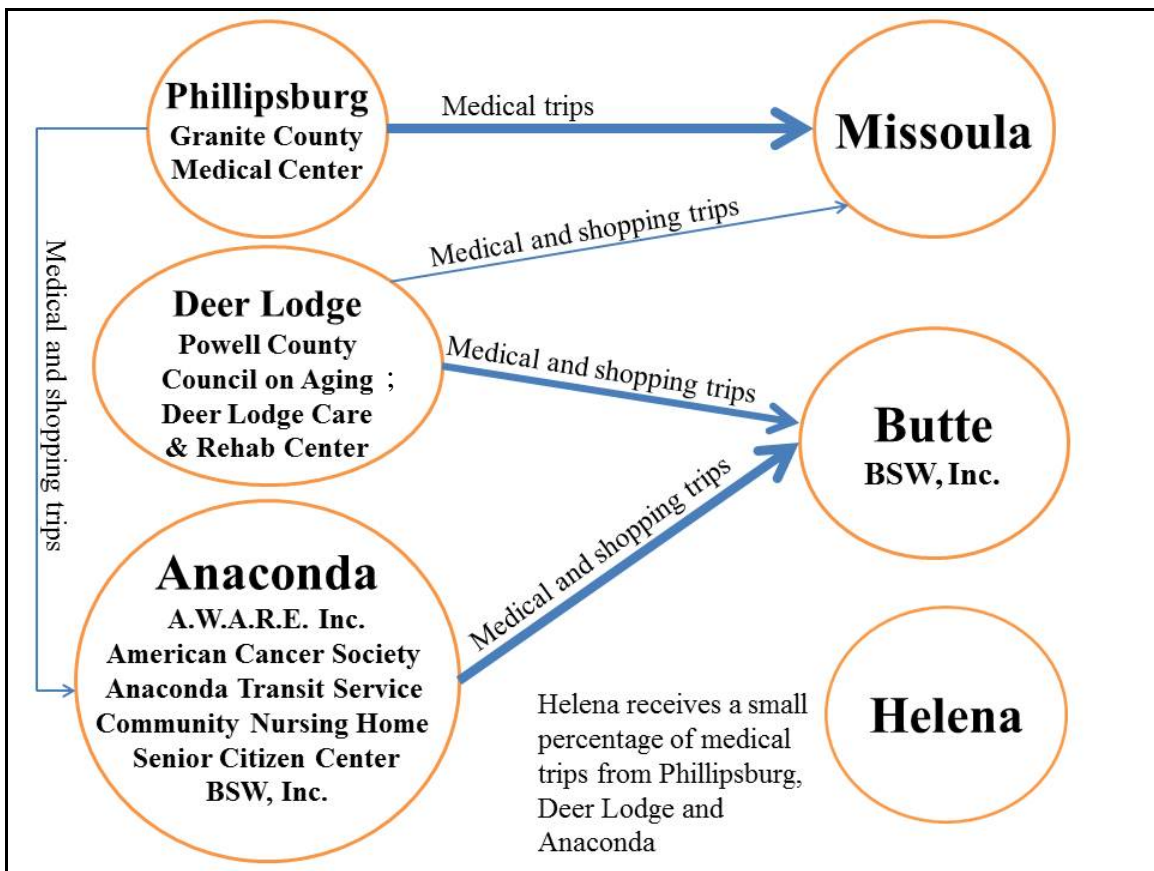
## **2.9. Deer Lodge Care & Rehab Center, Deer Lodge**

The Deer Lodge Care & Rehab Center is a private facility in Deer Lodge that provides a host of supportive services, primarily to those with developmental disabilities. The Center has a capacity of 60 residents, with 51 residents currently. The Center operates a Ford Econo Van that is lift-equipped. The center operates the van primarily for out of town medical trips to Butte, Helena and Missoula, with the majority of the trips to Butte. The Center believes a second van is

needed for in-town trips for medical and other purposes (such as rides to the grocery store). The Center would consider coordinating with the Powell County Council on Aging if a suitable plan is developed.

### 2.10. Summary of Available Services

A summary of the services and where they travel out of the area is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Greater Anaconda Area Transportation Services & Destinations**

A summary of the information on the various services is also provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of Transportation Services**

<i>Agency Name</i>	<i>Days and Hours of Service</i>	<i>Vehicle Type</i>	<i>Accessible or Non Accessible</i>	<i>Type of Service Provided</i>	<i>Out of Town Trips</i>	<i>Riders</i>	<i>Unmet Need</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Fares</i>
<u>AWARE, Inc</u>	24/7 Hours a day for clients enrolled into AWARE DD Program	9 Standard Mini-Vans & 12-passenger vans.	No Accessible vehicles in the fleet in Anaconda	Based on client needs; no restrictions on purpose of trip.	In town trips for work center, medical, and nutrition. Some out of town trips for medical appointments	Clients of AWARE	None	State Contract with DPHHS	
<u>American Cancer Society, Anaconda</u>	As needed for cancer treatment and other medical issues	Vehicles of Volunteers	No Accessible vehicles	Based on client needs; no restrictions on purpose of trip.	Trips to Butte, Missoula, Helena/or Bozeman	Clients of ACS.	None	No fixed budget.	\$15 for Butte, \$40 for Missoula, Helena, & Bozeman roundtrip.
<u>Anaconda Transit Services, Anaconda</u>	As needed by any citizens.	Ford Explorer	No Accessible vehicles	Based on client needs; no restrictions on purpose of trip.	Trips to Anaconda, Deer Lodge, Philipsburg, Helena, Butte, Missoula, Bozeman, and Billings.	Any citizens of the region.	None	No fixed budget.	\$10 within Anaconda & \$55 for Butte.
<u>Community Hospital/Nursing Home of Anaconda</u>	Monday-Friday 8AM to 5PM	15 Pass and 2 wheelchair 12 Pass and 2 wheelchair	Accessible	Medical and Activities for Nursing Home Residents	Less than 5 trips a month for NH Residents	Elderly	Denied Service to community members	\$31,000 Through the Hospital and Nursing of Anaconda	
<u>Metcalf Memorial Senior Citizen Center, Anaconda</u>	Mon, Tues, Thurs, and Fri 10:30AM to 1:30 PM Wednesday 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM First Monday of each month 10:30 AM to 5:30 PM	12 Pass Bus with 1 Wheelchair Station	Accessible	Nutrition, Shopping, Senior Activities, Some Community Events and some Medical	Bus Travels to Butte the First Monday of the Month for Shopping	Elderly and people with disabilities	Out of Town Medical Trips	\$20,000 County Levy funds, Title 3B Funds, participant contributions	

**Table 2: Summary of Transportation Services (cont'd)**

<i>Agency Name</i>	<i>Days and Hours of Service</i>	<i>Vehicle Type</i>	<i>Accessible or Non Accessible</i>	<i>Type of Service Provided</i>	<i>Out of Town Trips</i>	<i>Riders</i>	<i>Unmet Need</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Fares</i>
<u>BSW, Inc., Anaconda.</u>	8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, however, available for 24 hours.	16 Vehicles	Accessible	Vocational Rehabilitation Center, and Recreational.	No.	People with Disabilities and Special Needs.	None.		
<u>Granite County Transit, Philipsburg</u>	Mon-Fri 8:00AM to 5:00PM Available 7 Days a week with scheduling required	Two-12 Passenger and or 6 wheelchair stations	Accessible	Medical, Shopping, Dental, and Recreation	90% of the service is out of town trips. Providing service within a 100 mile radius of Philipsburg	Nursing Home residents, General Public, Elderly and Disabled	Monetary needs are always an issue because of operational costs.	\$29,000. \$17,000 from MDT, \$12,000 local (Hospital District) funds	
<u>Powell County Council on Aging</u>	Mon- Fri 9:00AM to 12:00PM and 12:30PM to 4:00 PM	12 Passenger with 1 wheelchair station	Accessible	Medical, Nutrition, Shopping, anything in the city limits	No out of Town Trips are provided at this time	Elderly and Disabled	Out of Town Transportation for shopping. No weekend or after hours transportation.	Estimated \$20,000 to run program using Title IIIB, State Program, State one time only county levy and donations.	
<u>Deer Lodge Care &amp; Rehab Center, Deer Lodge</u>	No fixed schedule.	1 Ford Explorer with a lift chair.	Accessible	Medical	Mostly Butte, Helena, and Missoula	Elderly and Disabled	In town needs.		

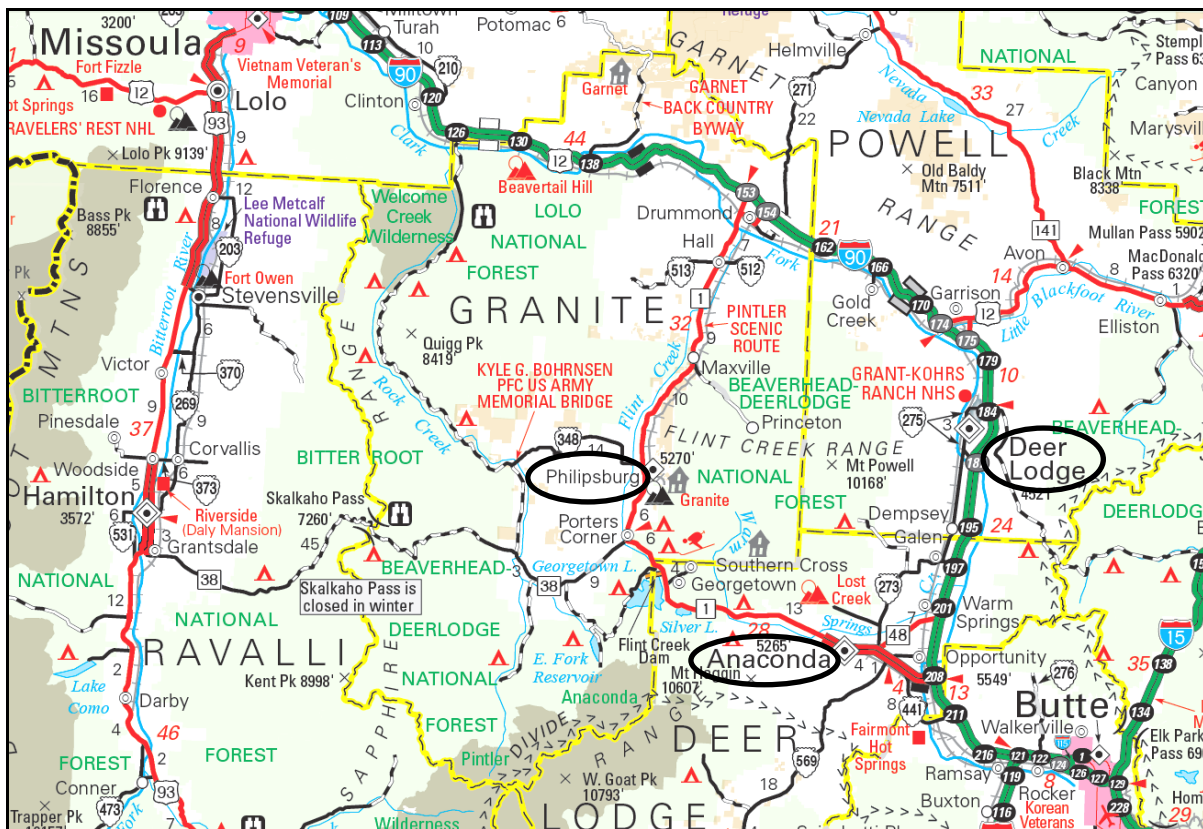
Notes:

Taxi service (Mining City Taxi) based in Butte. This service indicated that it will not typically do point to point transportation in Anaconda, and that their service area is within a 65 mile radius from Butte.

Rimrock Stages-Trailways provides service from Butte and Drummond to Helena and Missoula.

## 2.11. Conclusions

In the greater Anaconda region, there are nine transportation services. These services are operated by various organizations and supported by various funding agencies such as county governments, not for profit foundations, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services, the Montana Department of Transportation, and other entities. These transportation services cater to the needs of various groups ranging from the general public to seniors, citizens with disabilities, and medical patients. A majority of services are provided for people who have medical appointments both in town as well as out of town (generally in Butte and/or Missoula). These transportation services are based in three main locations: (1) Anaconda; (2) Deer Lodge; and (3) Philipsburg. As shown in Figure 2, these communities are separated by varying distances, and are in three different counties.



**Figure 2: Greater Anaconda Transportation Area**

The Deer Lodge and Philipsburg transportation services have a relatively low demand as compared to the services in Anaconda. However, this may change in the near future, as the Powell County Council on Aging is opening its services to the general public.

The most frequent out of town trips are from Anaconda to Butte, a distance of approximately 25 miles. Philipsburg to Butte is approximately 55 miles, and Philipsburg to Missoula is a distance of about 78 miles. Deer Lodge to Butte is 38 miles, and Deer Lodge to Missoula is a distance of 84 miles.

In the following section, options for coordinating services among the various transportation services are presented.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

This section provides information on the various alternatives that were developed to improve coordination in the Greater Anaconda region.

The most likely (and beneficial) coordination efforts would be as follows:

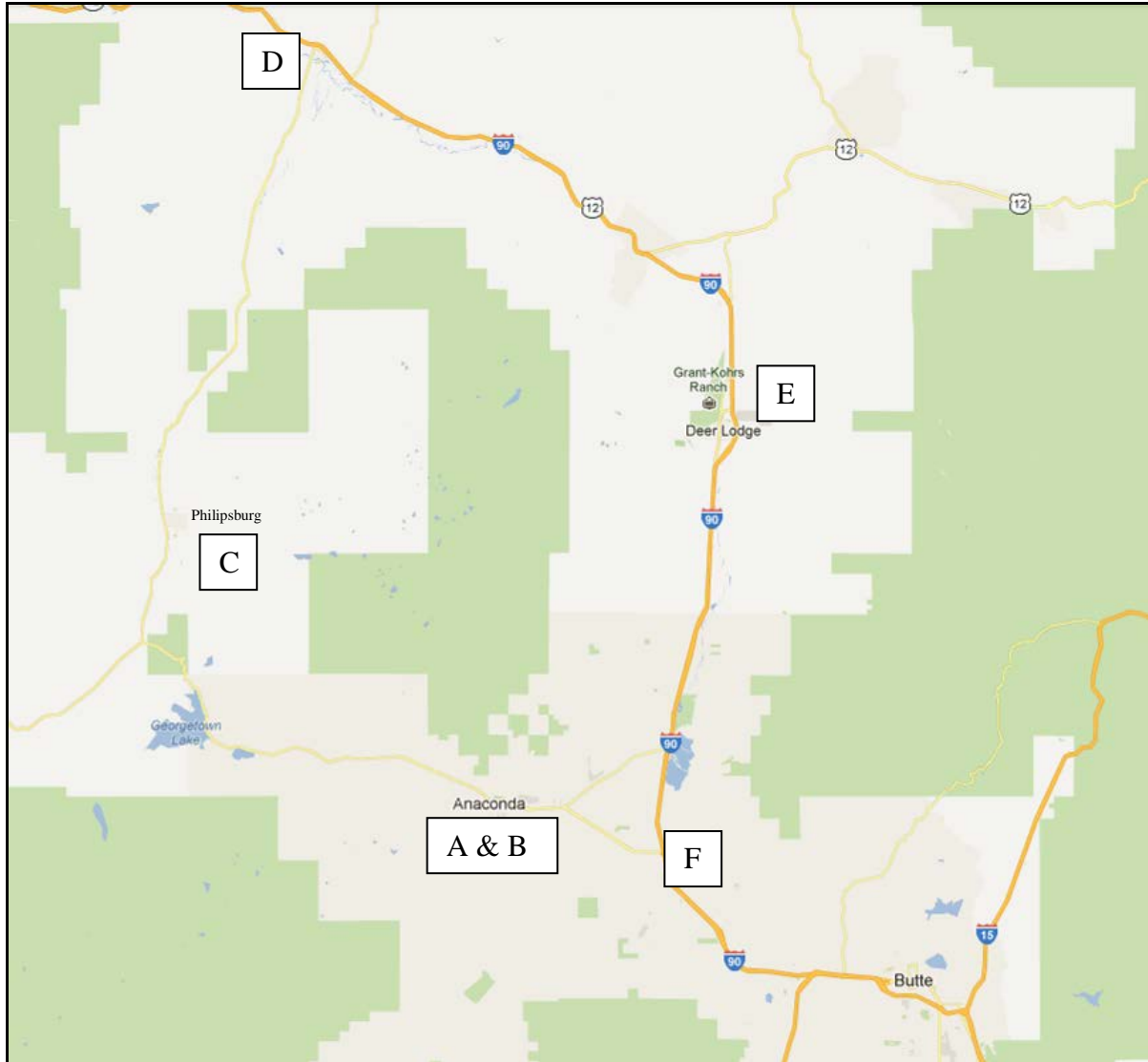
- 1) Within Anaconda
- 2) Between Anaconda and Butte
- 3) From Philipsburg (and Deer Lodge and Anaconda) to Butte
- 4) From Philipsburg (and Anaconda and Deer Lodge) to Missoula

As shown in Figure 3, there are several “coordination points” where services could meet based on the various trips/services within region.

Point A is for coordination of services within Anaconda. As noted later within this section, Anaconda could benefit from a consolidated system. Point B in Anaconda would be a coordination point for Philipsburg trips going to Butte, or trips from various Anaconda services that are returning to Butte.

Point C would be for coordinating trips from Anaconda and Philipsburg to Missoula. The Anaconda services would likely travel to Philipsburg and transfer their passengers to one bus that would then go to Missoula. In this scenario, the vehicle going to Missoula would stop in Drummond (Point D), where people from Drummond who wanted to go to Missoula could also get on the bus. Further, a bus from Deer Lodge could also meet in Drummond to transfer people on to a bus going to Missoula.

Point E is Deer Lodge, where coordination can occur between the Powell County Council on Aging and the Deer Lodge Care and Rehab Center. This coordination would include both local and out of town trips. If a service from Deer Lodge was traveling to Butte, it could meet Anaconda services at Point F (the junction of MT-1 and US-90), where riders from Anaconda and/or Philipsburg could transfer onto a vehicle for the ride to Butte.



**Figure 3: Possible Coordination Points for Transportation Services**

It should be noted that during discussions with the various transportation providers, there was a recurring discussion that the majority of the trips in the area are for medical purposes. Further, after the various medical treatments, most of the riders need to be returned home with minimal delay. Therefore, any alternatives to be considered should take into account the scheduling considerations of the various riders, their specific appointments, and their ability to wait before returning home.

The alternatives developed are based on the three levels of coordination, which are: 1) Communication; 2) Cooperation; and 3) Consolidation. The specifics of each alternative are provided in the remainder of this section.

### **3.1. Communication**

During interviews with the various transportation providers, one common theme was that there was not many effective ways for the transportation providers to communicate with one another, other than picking up the phone.

While there are very sophisticated communication systems available, one of the simplest (and perhaps efficient) options is a group e-mail or text messaging. Since many of the drivers also act as dispatchers, they would need to communicate with one another when a ride is scheduled to a more distant community. A task that would make this effort easier would be to schedule days of the week when the various services would be going to more distant cities. For example, if the Anaconda services noted that they would be traveling to Butte on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, then it would be easy for the Philipsburg and Deer Lodge services to match that schedule so they can coordinate all trips to Butte. If trips to Missoula were offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays, communication to coordinate trips would also be simplified.

Under this option, all transit agencies will create a common minimum communication (coordination) program. A list of e-mail addresses and/or cell phone numbers would be needed to implement this solution. Then if a service were scheduling a trip to a larger city, it would send out an e-mail and/or text message to the other services to see if anyone would want to add a rider onto the trip. With minimal requirements, this coordination alternative would provide the opportunity for all transportation services to be included in this solution. Citizens of the region would have greater accessibility to transit services through this program and at the same time, each transit agency would have an opportunity to maintain its own identity and freedom of operation.

Items that would need to be addressed to implement this solution include the fares that would be charged between the various towns/cities, as well as insurance issues related to carrying passengers who are not clients of the specific program/service (e.g., AWARE taking a senior citizen on its vehicle from Anaconda to Butte).

### **3.2. Cooperation**

With cooperation, there are typically written documents (agreements or memoranda of understanding) that guide how agencies/organizations work together. As an example, the Senior Citizens Center in Anaconda does not have a spare vehicle. Granite County Transit does have a spare vehicle. An agreement between these two organizations would allow for the Center in Anaconda to use the spare vehicle from Granite County in an emergency. An agreement would cover issues such as insurance requirements, payments, and maintenance.

Another formal agreement could be developed between the Powell County Council on Aging and the Deer Lodge Care & Rehab Center. During discussions, the Powell County Council on Aging noted that they provide very infrequent trips outside of Deer Lodge, while the Deer Lodge Care & Rehab Center provides mostly out of town trips. Further, the Center said it may need a second vehicle so it can meet the needs of its customers for in town trips. This is an excellent example of how coordination could be implemented to meet the transportation needs of people in the Deer Lodge area. The issues that would need to be addressed in this agreement would include the cost of providing transportation to another agency's clients (either on a per-ride or per-mile basis), along with ensuring proper insurance coverage (because each agency would be providing transportation for more than their own clients).



Multiple agreements could be signed by an agency to ensure maximum coordination. For example, the Metcalf Senior Citizens Center in Anaconda could have one agreement with Powell County Transit for spare vehicles, and a second agreement with the Community Hospital/Nursing Home of Anaconda for out of town trips.

While no consolidation would take place, there would be formal agreements in place that would define the various coordination efforts that would be implemented among the various agencies and organizations.

### **3.3. Consolidation**

Consolidation occurs when the transportation services of multiple agencies/organizations are organized under a single agency. The single agency then provides transportation services for a multitude of agencies/programs/purposes. Consolidation can often help in streamlining administrative costs, as well as leveraging local funding.

Consolidation is typically easier when the multiple agencies are in the same community and/or county. With the current project, there are three primary communities (Anaconda, Deer Lodge and Philipsburg), and three counties (Deer Lodge, Granite and Powell). However, in the United States there are many multi-community or multi-county transportation services.

Consolidation can also help leverage federal funds (Federal Transit Administration funds), which are administered in Montana by the Montana Department of Transportation. Granite County Transit (in Philipsburg) is currently the only service receiving these funds in the area.

Consolidation would allow the various providers in Anaconda and Deer Lodge to pool their funds and leverage them to create a public transportation system. It should be noted that all systems have minimal administrative costs, so there would not be a significant gain simply by consolidating the administrative functions of the various programs.

Under this proposed alternative, two consolidated services would be created: (1) Deer Lodge County Public Transportation (covering Anaconda and Philipsburg); and (2) Powell County Public Transportation (covering Deer Lodge). The selection of these two entities is based on geography (although the distance from Anaconda to Deer Lodge is only two miles less than the distance from Anaconda to Philipsburg), and population (Philipsburg has a population of 820, while Deer Lodge has a population of 3,111, and the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County population is 9,298).

Under this proposed alternative, the various local funds being spent on transportation in Philipsburg and Anaconda would be combined to leverage even more federal dollars. The same scenario would take place in Deer Lodge, as the funding being spent by the Powell County Council on Aging and Deer Lodge Care & Rehab could be used to leverage funds in order to create a public transportation service in that area.

### **3.4. Conclusions**

This section presented a range of coordination alternatives, from the more informal communication options to the consolidation of services. In the next section, we discuss how these various options were analyzed, and which alternative(s) were selected for implementation.

#### **4. SELECTION OF ALTERNATIVES**

Stakeholders held preliminary discussions to review and consider the alternatives. On an individual basis, most of the people involved in the project supported the enhancement of transportation services and recognized that there are opportunities to initiate and implement a public transportation system in the area. However, during the timeframe of this project, none of the organizations were in a position to step forward and agree to be the lead agency (the recipient of the grant funding). As a result, the project never advanced to the point of selecting specific alternatives to implement.

After the election in November 2012, stakeholders re-visited the alternatives. The Deer Lodge County - Anaconda government was thought to be a logical choice to serve as the lead agency. However, given the elections and other priorities, there was not enough time to go through the process of submitting an application for Federal funding. Based on the information herein, however, there may be the ability to continue the process to select a coordination/implementation alternative, and submit an application for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for Fiscal Year 2015.

Further, toward the end of the project, the Powell County Council on Aging indicated that it may apply for FTA Section 5311 funds to create a public transportation service that would provide rides in the (City of) Deer Lodge area. If this effort moves forward, that service could be a model for implementation of a public transportation service in the Anaconda/Philipsburg area.

It appears that stakeholders are open to further discussion and consideration of these alternatives. If there is continued interest in the creation of a regional transportation service, the alternatives herein should be reviewed one final time, and an alternative selected. Once an alternative is selected, an implementation plan would be created to ensure that the transit service (or coordination effort) is realized.

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

As noted in the previous section, an alternative for implementation was not selected, due to lack of a lead agency. However, the Powell County Council on Aging used the information gathered as part of this project to submit an application for FTA Section 5311 funding. Also, the information herein can be utilized to continue discussions among stakeholders, identify and secure a lead agency, and submit funding applications in the future, so that coordinated public transportation can be implemented in the greater Anaconda region.

While an implementation plan was not developed, there were positive outcomes to the project. The next section provides the conclusions and recommendations.

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The greater Anaconda region includes the cities and towns of Anaconda, Deer Lodge, and Phillipsburg, and three counties: Deer Lodge, Granite and Powell. The total population in this area is 23,421, with the population scattered among significant geographic distances (4,790.12 square miles, roughly the size of Connecticut). In addition to travel within and between these three localities, residents also need transportation to larger cities like Butte and Missoula for medical care and other services.

As is the case in other rural areas (with small populations and significant geographical distances between destinations), it is challenging to provide cost-effective alternatives to private automobile travel in the greater Anaconda region. There are currently nine organizations in the greater Anaconda region that provide transportation services to residents, but often, these services are reserved for designated clientele or persons with specific needs (i.e. seniors, people with disabilities, etc.).

The current transportation providers and other regional stakeholders have a strong interest in expanding access to transportation services. The Western Transportation Institute (WTI) identified and analyzed alternatives related to improved coordination of transportation among current providers. WTI also facilitated meetings among stakeholders to discuss potential implementation of these alternatives. This project yielded numerous benefits:

- Identification of existing resources available for transportation services, including vehicles, staff, and funding.
- Identification of viable alternatives to enhance transportation coordination in three categories: communication, cooperation, and consolidation. The alternatives require varying levels of time, complexity, and resources, ranging from initiatives as simple as email notifications of scheduled trips to more comprehensive initiatives such as consolidated services.
- Creation of a forum for coordination. The meetings brought together regional stakeholders to identify needs, discuss available resources, and evaluate alternatives. The meetings helped establish and/or strengthen working relationships among potential partners. The forum could serve as the structural basis for ongoing interagency collaboration and coordination.
- Development of a proposal for enhanced services within Deer Lodge. Using information developed by WTI for this project, the Powell County Council on Aging may apply for FTA Section 5311 funds to create a public transportation service that would provide rides in the (City of) Deer Lodge area.

The project did not result in the implementation of coordinated transportation services for the entire Anaconda region, as none of the organizations were in a position to serve as a lead agency at this time. One factor that may have played a role in limiting the success of the project is that the greater Anaconda region includes three counties and significant geographical distances, which may make the coordination process seem complex and overwhelming to agencies with limited time, staff, and resources.

However, the alternatives identified in this report can be implemented in the future. Hopefully the dialogue can continue, a lead agency identified, and a coordinated public transportation

service can be implemented in FY 15. Recommendations that may help move the process forward include:

- Identification of a local champion. WTI's research and meeting facilitation provided a foundation of guidance information and helped initiate a potential coordination process. However, a local champion is likely needed to identify, secure, and lead local partners to implement a coordinated system.
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities. Organizations may be more willing to serve as a lead agency if they have more information about what this role would entail. For example, during the meetings, some of the organizations did not realize that a lead agency is only required to manage the grant, and does not necessarily have to provide transportation services.
- Technical assistance. While WTI recommends leadership by a local champion, ongoing technical assistance from WTI or a similar organization could provide resources and expertise to assist stakeholders in moving the process forward.
- Continue moving ahead. The Montana Department of Transportation and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services have been having a series of roundtable discussions, and regional coordination is a topic of interest. Hopefully providers in the region will continue to work with these organizations and the Montana Transit Association to plan and implement a coordinated public transportation system in the area.

Hopefully the information provided herein, and the dialogue between providers that took place during the project, can be used as a springboard to further meetings and planning. If so, there is a chance that a coordinated public transportation system can be implemented in the greater Anaconda area in near future. As Leonardo Da Vinci said,

“I have been impressed with the urgency of doing.  
Knowing is not enough; we must apply.  
Being willing is not enough; we must do.”