



Community-Based Transportation: Conference Observations

Following the conference, Greater Twin Cities United Way culled these observations from the discussions generated and information shared that day.

This conference brought into focus important issues for United Way as it considers its continued role in regional transportation and social services. Among them:

There is no one solution. The transit needs for those without are so varied—by geography, physical abilities, and income—that no one solution will work for all. We need to test and support a variety of models that will, at minimum, lower the costs of transportation for funded agencies while providing the same levels of service.

There is a need for a coordinated legislative policy. United Way needs to partner with the Metropolitan Council in crafting a regional legislative agenda. We need to dispel the common misperception that Metro Mobility meets the needs of all transit-dependent populations. We need to explain to legislative committees what specialty transit is, how it influences the delivery of social service, and what role United Way plays.

In preparation for that, a public education campaign is needed to give faces to the numbers. Who doesn't have a car? Who uses specialty transit? Who provides specialty transit?

We also need to re-survey agencies to gain a better understanding of what transit is being provided regionally. Specifically, we want to learn the number of vehicles in use, how much each agency spends on transportation, how many rides are given annually, and what transit options are used beyond what the agencies provide.

Finally, we need to target specific rules and legislation that produce unnecessary barriers to specialty transportation.

The lack of van drivers is a major barrier for social service agencies. Van drivers are the Achilles' heel of many agencies. When van drivers are not available, programming either stops or staff is pulled to drive. Some possible solutions include developing van driving as a career path through some of our agencies or recruiting retirees as community van drivers. (Rural organizations depend heavily on volunteer drivers and have been successful in maintaining their volunteer fleets.)

Agencies continue to struggle with insurance issues and misinformation. Many agencies have misconceptions

regarding their car insurance. We need to more aggressively disseminate information to agency CEOs, CFOs, and others through strategies and partnerships with organizations (such as MAP and the Wilder Foundation) that provide capacity building for nonprofits. Additionally, we can create and distribute informational documents.

Agencies don't know their full transportation costs. Nonprofit agencies range widely in their understanding of their true transportation costs. Volunteers and staff need to understand these costs when looking at an agency's budget. Many agencies lack knowledge or expertise in billing third parties for applicable transportation costs. Fleet planning is also often absent. Centralized tools for assessment and software to track trips, maintenance, and driver training could help many agencies understand and manage their expenses.

Collaboratives for sharing ride resources are unlikely to produce substantial results in the short term. The project tested by Volunteers of America and its collaborative partners, attempting to bring in separate organizations and build a new structure with newly created authority, is a time- and staff-intensive process. It requires system-wide commitment and a high level of risk tolerance.

Regional van-based ride providers are more efficient deliverers of specialty transit services. We need to explore the possibility of helping regional van providers more completely supply transit services to the nonprofit community.

Taxicabs are a solution in some cases. For-profit providers of transit (buses, taxicabs) provide important services to agencies. Many agencies, however, are uninformed on how to make the best use of these resources and how to make the best financial deals.

Continued dialogue with special groups is needed. Youth, immigrant populations, and rural services all have specific barriers to accessing reliable transportation that meets their needs. We are beginning to understand the dynamics in some immigrant populations; we have not yet addressed the transportation needs of youth, although agencies are spending thousands of dollars annually to move youth from school to programming to home.

We need to target specific rules and legislation that produce unnecessary barriers to specialty transportation.

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Conference on Community-Based Transportation Improving Access for the Transportation Disadvantaged

October 2, 2001 • St. Paul, Minnesota

A Summary Report

The ability of clients to find transportation is often seen outside the mission of human service organizations. However, transportation is more than a commodity—it is an integral part of obtaining and maintaining self-sufficiency, providing the means to get to jobs, the grocery store, childcare, medical appointments, and other essential services. Reliable transportation has been called the “to” in “welfare-to-work” programs. It also can mean the difference between independent living and institutionalization for seniors and people with disabilities.

In 1999, Greater Twin Cities United Way launched the three-year Transportation Alternatives Initiative, bringing human service agencies and volunteers together to find creative ways to connect clients to jobs and services. This conference was part of the continuing effort of United Way to raise awareness of transportation barriers and their impact on self-sufficiency and to provide opportunities for sharing solutions.

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Published by the Center for Transportation Studies

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Minnesota's Community-Based Transportation Challenge

Speakers: **Robert Johns**, Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) • **James Colville**, Greater Twin Cities United Way • **Ken Willcox**, Greater Twin Cities United Way Transportation Alternatives Committee

Robert Johns, CTS director, opened the workshop by explaining how CTS was asked to partner with Dakota Area Resources and Transportation for Seniors (DARTS) to study the effects of transportation systems on various groups of people.



Robert Johns

"Community-based transportation... includes transportation other than cars and mainline buses," Johns said. "Community-based transportation doesn't get the visibility other transportation systems get, so today we want to give it the recognition it deserves."



James Colville

James Colville noted that United Way began studying transportation and funding options in 1998, but soon realized that its separate efforts could not handle the Twin Cities' growing transportation needs. "Our goal today is to share with you what we've learned so far—but more important, we want to learn from you," he said. "Transportation is a complex issue with a lot of twists and turns," Ken Willcox added. "In 1998, planning groups that monitor needs and issues in the community found that transportation hindered people's access to the services they need. That's when we asked ourselves, 'What's the point of offering United Way-funded services if no one can get to them?'" Willcox noted that the major focus of United Way programs is to improve people's self-sufficiency—and a big part of that is mobility.

According to Willcox, United Way is uniquely positioned to bring various social service agencies together to work on the transportation challenges, but they will not be easy to solve. "To begin the problem-solving process, we wanted to better understand the transportation issues," he said. So United Way talked to representatives from various areas of transportation, researched literature to find out what other agencies were doing, and held focus groups with its clients.



Ken Willcox

Willcox and his team discovered that for many people, every trip is problematic because they either don't have access to bus lines or their destination isn't located on a bus line. "The distance one lives from the center of the city also increases the problem, as does the complexity of the transportation need," he said. "We also found that people have transportation preferences, and if they can't take their preferred method, they may not make the trip at all."

Several United Way agencies own vehicles, and all face the challenges of maintaining vehicles, training drivers, and paying for insurance, Willcox said. Although none of these agencies uses their vehicles full time, there is no vehicle sharing among agencies. That presents an opportunity for United Way to help the agencies that have vehicles operate them more efficiently,

Willcox said. "We want these groups to work through these issues and find a way to better share transportation resources. We also want to pursue ways to provide better access to car ownership and influence public understanding to stimulate new public-sector solutions."

Willcox urged workshop attendees to share ideas and support one another to positively impact community-based transportation. "We need to make transportation more accessible not just to our United Way clients but to all people who are transportation disadvantaged."

Turning the Trickle Down Theory on Its Head: **Maybe What's Good for Elderly, Disabled, and Disadvantaged Travelers Might be Good for Other People**

Sandra Rosenbloom, Director, Roy P. Drachman Institute for Land and Regional Development Studies, University of Arizona

Keynote speaker Sandra Rosenbloom reported that there is an increasingly larger share of people who have difficulty getting to jobs, appointments, or other services. "As the population ages, there will be more and more people who cannot drive themselves. I don't see our society being prepared for that any more than [it's] prepared to deal with those who need to get to jobs in the suburbs or who are disabled and need help getting around," Rosenbloom said.

Rather than taking what's left over after "mainstream" transportation issues are discussed, Rosenbloom recommended finding ways to help disadvantaged travelers because those solutions will benefit everyone. We need to think of the disadvantaged first, she said, rather than treating them as an afterthought. "We need to recognize that their needs are not marginal, and [we] must understand their needs and not assume we know what they are when we never bother to ask."

According to Rosenbloom, most transportation modeling done today relies on outdated data. "These old models treat disabled, older, and reverse commuters as marginal," she said. Rosenbloom said that transportation models must be changed to account for society's changing needs. "We have to demand that transportation modeling be done with better data and that the planning process doesn't just tack on a few pages regarding disadvantaged travelers at the end of a report. This information has to be part of the planning from the beginning."

Transportation planning must include all modes of transportation, including walking, Rosenbloom said. In addition, since transit is a community service, public transit agencies must be given more financial help, but at the same time, more must be demanded of them. Public transit operators need to offer a family of services to meet different people's needs, Rosenbloom explained. "These operators must be more responsive to their market and be more creative in their offerings. We need to help them get the money necessary to change, then demand that they take care of the disadvantaged traveler."

Rosenbloom said that in many major metropolitan areas, more people commute out of the city than commute in. For the most part, transit operators are not addressing this change, so the outward-bound trips get what's left after the in-bound trips are scheduled. Service delivery is also a problem, Rosenbloom said,



Sandra Rosenbloom

in that too often people must go to several different places to accomplish one thing. Therefore, agencies should consider locating certain services together and ensure that hours of operation match the bus schedule. "We should also look at the method of delivery," she said. "Why do people have to go to the services? Why can't the services come to the people?"

Rosenbloom believes that communities must now play the new role of mobility providers and managers. "Transportation isn't a simple problem. This is complicated because people are complex; we have different needs that change day to day." Since the old methods aren't working, a wide range of transportation options and solutions must be developed because more and more people will need these services, Rosenbloom said. "I believe that we can come up with solutions to these complex and difficult problems if we work together."

Minnesota's Current Situation: Innovations and Barriers

Moderator: **Sandra Vargas**, Hennepin County

Speakers: **Richard Graham**, DARTS • **Jack Tamble**, Minneapolis Community Education • **John Barrett**, Rise, Inc. • **Sandy Froiland**, Anoka County Job Training Center

According to Richard Graham, community-based transportation should be given the same recognition as light rail, fixed rail, and public transit. He explained that more people get to where they want via community-based systems than by other transportation systems. "We need to present community-based transportation to policymakers in another way," Graham said. "Today, there isn't a lot of openness within policy development of transit systems. The important next step is to include more transit people."

Sandy Froiland said that in early 1997, her agency formed a steering committee to find gaps in the agency's services. The committee found a great need to improve transportation options for residents.

"Because the transit issues are complex, we thought it was essential to hire an independent broker of transportation information within our agency," Froiland said. "Our clients can now work with a transportation staff member and work on their own transportation strategies."

Froiland noted that southern Anoka County has good fixed bus routes; further out, however, the transportation options are limited. Thus, car ownership in these areas is a viable option. "We took the best parts of other programs that offered no-interest loans to create our own car loan program," she said. In this program, loan appli-

cants must have held a job for 30 days and must show they have some income to repay the loan. Froiland said that the program is doing well and currently sees a 63 percent payback rate.

Froiland said that her agency's transportation committee meets regularly to monitor outcomes and review statuses. In addition, Froiland recognized that forming multiple partnerships is important in trying to meet the various transportation challenges and readily acknowledged that her agency cannot solve these issues alone.

Panelist Jack Tamble reported that of the approximately 50,000 students in the Minneapolis public schools, about 42,000 take part in after-school activities. Almost all of these students get program-sponsored rides, Tamble said, but funding cuts have threatened these rides.

"This school year, \$25 million was cut from [the total school district budget], and there will most likely be another \$15 to \$20 million in reductions next year," Tamble said. Transportation is an easy target, which means that children won't have transportation to after-school programs as they have had in the past, and transportation will become a barrier to their participation.

Tamble said that his agency's partners will meet later in the year to discuss the challenge and try to find a solution.

"We must look at every possible resource to figure this out. There's no easy answer in sight, but one thing is for sure: this will have a dramatic impact on our students."

According to panelist John Barrett, Rise, Inc. started handling its own transportation needs in the mid-1980s when the bus company it worked with was sold to another company that subsequently raised prices. Today, Rise, Inc. provides transportation to clients who have no other means of transportation.

Rise, Inc. received a grant to study other similar agencies in Anoka County that handle their own transportation and find ways these agencies could share resources. Initially, Rise has worked with the Anoka Traveler, a supplement to Metro Transit. Barrett hopes to tie into the Traveler's computerized route system and combine route information in order to provide more extensive, yet cost-effective, transportation opportunities. "By bringing agencies together, we hope to find ways to create efficiencies where public transportation can do more," Barrett said.



Panelists John Barrett, Jack Tamble, Sandy Froiland, and Richard Graham with moderator Sandra Vargas.

Solutions for Minnesota: Policy Issues

Moderator: **Terri Barreiro**, Greater Twin Cities United Way

Speakers: **Jay Lindgren**, Metropolitan Council • **Mary Cummins**, Minnesota House of Representatives • **Lee Pao Xiong**, Urban Coalition

Moderator Terri Barreiro asked audience members to think of personal situations in which they themselves became transportation providers. “We don’t typically look at transportation as a common problem that we need to think about together,” Barreiro said. “We usually look at it from the perspective that we are solving only our own transportation problems.”

Lee Pao Xiong said that when the Urban Coalition surveyed clients about their biggest challenges, childcare and transportation were named as the top two. One of the reasons, according to Xiong, is that society is caught up with consumption in terms of land use. “We continue to build roads out to companies that build in the middle of nowhere. It should be the other way around,” Xiong explained. “Employers should locate their businesses where the people are and should be responsible for the transportation needs of their employees.”

One idea Xiong has discussed with Mn/DOT is carsharing as a way to overcome some transportation barriers. “Perhaps people could buy time with a vehicle as they do with a time-share condominium,” Xiong suggested. “I think the next step is to start a pilot program to see if carsharing will work.”

Although this is one potential solution, Xiong asked the audience to think of other solutions that don’t involve four wheels. “In Asia, the bicycle dominates the streets,” Xiong said. “How could that concept work here? Perhaps we need to start children early with other modes of transportation and not just the bus or freeway.”

Xiong also stressed the need for comprehensive planning—that is, looking at how transportation is tied to affordable housing. “We can build all the roads we want, but if people can’t get to where they want to go, where they live, or where they want to live, it doesn’t matter,” Xiong said. “We need to look at the whole transportation connection.”

Panelist Jay Lindgren stated that under the Ventura administration, and with the leadership of the Council’s current chair, the Metropolitan Council’s goal is to integrate its services to better meet the area’s changing transportation needs. “My hope for this workshop is to focus on all of the issues and figure out how to deal with transporting various people to the various places they need to go,”



Panelists Lee Pao Xiong, Mary Cummins, and Jay Lindgren with moderator Terri Barreiro.

Lindgren said. “We also need to look at the big picture and ask, ‘How will things look down the road—maybe not a week from Thursday, but for the long haul?’”

As a member of the Transportation Policy Committee in the Minnesota House of Representatives, Mary Cummins acknowledged the many funding challenges plaguing transportation. “We can’t give you enough money, so it seems,” she said. “We have to figure out a way you can make do with what you have. The demands are so great, and there isn’t enough money to meet them all. I want you to give us ideas today on how we can do things better and more efficiently.”

Reaction and Reflections

Sandra Rosenbloom recapped the morning’s discussions, stating that for many agencies, transportation is a key part of their services—but since it’s not the core of what they do, it’s often the first thing that gets cut. “We have to find some way to deal with this,” Rosenbloom warned. “When we add all the people together who need specialized transport, they are not a minority.”

Although partnerships will play a key role in dealing with transportation issues, Rosenbloom recognized that coordination is hard work. “We look for the best collaborations, but sometimes we make mistakes. Nonetheless, we need to keep trying. Perhaps we should talk about a family of services,” she said. “Even if transportation is not your primary service, your clients may need a variety of transportation options, and you need to find ways to provide them. Since you can’t do it all on your own, partnerships of all kinds, including family volunteers, must be fostered.”

Rosenbloom said that public transit is part of the problem, in part because providers have promised things they can’t deliver. “We need to pass legislation that requires public transportation to be available when people need it,” she said. “Look at fire engines, for example. They sit unused most of the time, but they are there when needed.”

Finally, Rosenbloom suggested that agencies trying to overcome transportation barriers would have more clout in presenting these issues to the legislature if they worked together. “We

need to show legislators the work you do and its impact on people’s lives... They need to hear your stories so these issues become something tangible to them.”

Concurrent Learning Sessions

Medical Providers’ Role

Moderator: **Hannah LaMere**, Metropolitan Health Plan

Speakers: **Barb Klatt**, Hennepin County Medical Center • **Susan Leskela**, HealthPartners • **Jocelyn Schwartz** and **Tou Vang**, Medica • **Fausto Iglesias**, Metropolitan Health Plan • **Laura Thadepalli** and **Renee Brethorst**, UCare Minnesota

Representatives from one health care provider and four health care plans discussed the role that they play in ensuring that their patients and clients have access to transportation for medical appointments and care. Although they are required by regulation to provide transportation to those who receive Medicaid assistance, the health plans recognize that preventive care for all its members can help reduce the number of emergency room and urgent care visits.

Rides are provided by regular route transit, taxicabs, volunteer driver programs, and specialty vehicles. The number of rides and the costs for providing these rides continue to grow annually and have significant budget implications. For example, Metropolitan Health Plan is providing about 100,000 rides per year at a cost of \$500,000.

Despite health care organizations’ efforts to get clients to take regular route transit, only about 10 to 15 percent do so. So organizations are trying different models to better coordinate transportation service in order to increase efficiency and decrease costs. One example is transportation broker systems, in which the medical provider contracts with various taxicab companies and specialty transit operators to provide rides for its clients.

Common challenges for health care organizations include inexperience in negotiating with vendors to provide service, language barriers between drivers and clients, the availability of vehicles and drivers to provide service, tardiness, and an unwillingness to provide door-to-door service. Challenges presented by clients include an unwillingness to take public transit, abuse of the service for non-medical trips, and not being ready when a vehicle arrives.

Presenters agreed that there needs to be better communication among the transportation providers, the medical providers, and the health plans that pay for the service. In addition, members and medical providers should be further educated about transportation services and how they are provided.

The Role of Volunteer Drivers in Community-Based Transportation Systems

Moderator: **Hal Freshley**, Minnesota Department of Human Services

Speakers: **Linda Elfstrand**, Tri-County Action Programs Inc. • **Jeanette Aguirre**, Western Community Action • **Sue Olson**, Red Cross

Moderator Hal Freshley shared his concern about forces that may be eroding the social capital—or the idea of neighbors helping neighbors—that have traditionally been relied on to meet transportation needs. “I think volunteers are important for many reasons,” Freshley said. “Even if we

found additional resources for transit, we couldn’t find the number of drivers necessary. We need to think in new ways, modify our use of volunteers in the future, and make sure we aren’t losing something we can’t replace.”

Linda Elfstrand said that Tri-County Action Programs uses volunteers to serve areas where buses aren’t cost-effective. The agency’s service area is about 1,500 square miles and includes some isolated areas and very small towns. “Volunteers help us fill an important niche that either went unfilled before or was very costly.” Elfstrand noted that her volunteer drivers cover 336,000 miles per year, while buses cover about 145,000 miles per year. “If we tried to handle our entire service areas with only buses, we’d never be able to afford it,” she said.

According to Jeanette Aguirre, volunteer drivers are the heart of Western Community Action’s program. “We have about 150 drivers right now, and we make them jump through a lot of hoops to become drivers,” she said. Her agency created a manual of how to start a volunteer driver program as well as a code of honor for their drivers to follow. Aguirre said that drivers are expected to be professional, and they readily live up to the agency’s standards. The agency asks its riders to share responsibility by juggling appointment times to fit its schedule. “That way we rarely have to send a car down the road with fewer than four people in [it],” Aguirre said. “Our riders are willing to cooperate because it keeps costs down.”

Sue Olson said that volunteer drivers help fill transportation gaps by providing rides to a variety of different services, including adult daycare, dialysis treatments, radiation and chemotherapy treatments, shopping, and banking. The Red Cross charges no fee for the riders, but does ask riders to make a donation if they’re able to.

Although Red Cross drivers are volunteers, Olson acknowledged that riders expect, and deserve, good customer service. Consequently, the Red Cross provides customer service training to its drivers and offers incentive programs to encourage drivers to provide safe rides and excellent customer service, she said. “In general, we give our drivers a lot of tender loving care. They are the heart of what we do. They provide a valuable service to the community, and we couldn’t do it without them.”

Sharing Resources for Transportation Service Provision

Moderator: **Kim Sullivan**, Anoka County Transportation Alternatives

Speakers: **Kim Sullivan** • **Carolyn Hawkins**, Volunteers of America

The sharing of transportation service resources begins with a participatory planning process, which brings all participants together to share their perspectives, said moderator Kim Sullivan. The process requires a steering committee, a strong leader, and working groups with members who can make decisions.

Both Anoka County Transportation Alternatives and Volunteers of America used the participatory planning process to develop provisions for sharing transportation service resources.

The Anoka County Transportation Alternatives Project, led by Sullivan, began with a workshop in February 2000 that produced a vision and defined an action plan for the project. Client expectations and provider coordination were identified as the most critical aspects of the project—and the ones that project participants could do the most about. A survey of transportation disadvantaged individuals and those who serve them revealed several things, including: different client groups have individualized needs; transit should be immediate, individual, inexpensive, and on-call; funding is not equal for public and private providers; regulatory restrictions and insurance are prohibitive; and the metro area is a transit-phobic region.

The next steps in this ongoing project have been identified in the provider coordination and client expectations areas, Sullivan added.

The Volunteers of America collaboration, led by Carolyn Hawkins, concentrates specifically on the Minneapolis area. Five organizations, primarily senior and developmental disabilities service providers, are working together to better their coordination and serve a larger number of people more efficiently. Providers use a computerized trip routing system—Trapeze—provided by DARTS to examine how they are routing trips. As a result, the service providers realized that extra vehicles were available to provide trips to riders who would have otherwise not received one, Hawkins said. The fare structure, however, was difficult to address, since each provider had a different fare system with different funding sources, and therefore, different regulations. In Year One, United Way funds were used to pay providers for shared rides. But in Year Two, when United Way funds ran out, the collaboration participants used a formula developed by DARTS to determine the true cost of a ride, including marginal and fixed costs.

If You Build It, Will They Come?

Development and Community-Based Transportation

Moderator: **Karen Lyons**, Metropolitan Council

Speakers: **Jim Barton** and **Joanne Barron**, Metropolitan Council • **Tom Harmening**, St. Louis Park Community Development • **Robert Cunningham**, TOLD Development

One of the most debated questions in urban planning today is “How does community development shape—and respond to—the development of the transportation system?” Presenters from the Metropolitan Council and community development organizations offered their perspectives on implementing real-world development plans that address the needs of all transportation system users.

Senior transportation planner Jim Barton and community development senior planner Joanne Barron discussed guidelines for new development and transportation planning. The Met Council is developing a guidebook for transit-oriented development aimed at encouraging more compact development that is easily served by various modes of public transit.

A key element of this approach, Barton said, is scaling development to pedestrians, not automobiles. Development patterns that make it difficult for people to move around without automobiles have the effect of “stacking the deck” against transit use and enforcing car-based usage patterns.

The goal is to revitalize the area and create a town center while improving the link between jobs and housing areas.

The transit-oriented development guidelines also include such considerations as encouraging mixed-use development and regulating block size, frontages, and street setbacks.

Speaking from the perspective of community development rather than transportation planning, Barron’s ideas were largely complementary to Barton’s, illustrating the strong link between community development and transportation planning in creating transit-friendly communities.

Tom Harmening gave examples of the transit-friendly development process for St. Louis Park’s current “Park Commons” project. The goal, Harmening said, is to revitalize the area and create a town center

while improving the link between jobs and housing areas, improving neighborhood services, and improving facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

Overcoming Language and Cultural Barriers to Using Public and Community-Based Transportation

Moderator: **Debra Ehret**, Center for Cross Cultural Health

Speakers: **Cha Lee**, Southeast Asian Community Council • **Ali Mohamud Ali** and **Oleg Voskresensky**, World Relief Minnesota

Oleg Voskresensky said that the biggest problem for new immigrants is that they have so many needs all at once. “Most of the immigrants come from an unsuccessful, unhappy situation accompanied by emotional stress,” Voskresensky said. “They typically have minimal skills, speak little English—and any jobs they could do are located in areas not well served by public transportation.”

Ali Mohamud Ali agreed that transportation presents huge barriers for immigrants in finding work. The jobs he finds for clients are often located at sites that lack direct bus service, making it difficult for clients to get to their jobs on time or to return home without spending a lot of time on several buses, Ali said. “When we find a job to which a client can take a bus, we must teach the client how to use our bus system. It’s not easy for them to ask the bus driver for help because of the language barrier.”

Cha Lee said that transportation is also a problem for the Asian community, particularly among the Hmong. “Typically, in their hometown the only transportation available was their own two feet,” he said. “Because of cultural and language barriers, Asian immigrants don’t use public transportation very often.” Lee explained that it’s often uncomfortable for immigrants to get into someone else’s car or to get onto a big bus not knowing where, or how, to get off of it. That’s one reason car ownership is a top priority for the Hmong, and family members will often pool money together to purchase a car and then share the car with many others, he added.

Logistics and Operations Support Solutions for Providing Transportation

Moderator: **Carolyn Hawkins**, Volunteers of America

Speakers: **Andrew Krueger**, DARTS • **Bette Undis**, Red Cross

Andrew Krueger explained how DARTS, a senior and ADA transportation provider, is working towards sharing its resources and knowledge by providing operation and maintenance support, driver training, and computer software technology to other community-based transportation providers.

An example is DARTS’ work with the Transportation Alternatives Collaborative. Six agencies, both vehicled and non-vehicled, participate in the collaborative. The program, begun in 1999 and funded by United Way, aims to improve access to services for the clients of all its partner agencies.

In order to form the collaborative, each partner had to sign a confidentiality agreement to protect the interest of its clients and was required to list the other partners on its insurance. A certificate of liability was needed for all the agencies as well. Partners created a uniform set of standards, a memorandum of understanding, and a fare structure using a fare equity formula.

The collaborative uses a decentralized coordination-sharing model, which maintains autonomy but pools resources with a computerized system of trip routing known as “Trapeze.” As a result of its efforts, 120 different people have been provided rides since its inception that otherwise would not have been accommodated.

Another agency working on logistics and operations support is the Ramsey County Red Cross. Because many service providers face problems such as rising costs, inefficiencies, unmet needs, administrative burdens, and a lack of expertise, the Red Cross, led by Bette Undis, stepped in to attempt to coordinate the service providers and solve some of their problems. Undis said that one problem in particular involved funding sources and billing. The Red Cross was able to bill third parties, such as hospitals, daycares, and social service programs, on behalf of the providers, thereby bringing in \$150,000 in new money this year alone. The Red Cross also installed a centralized computer system, PASS, to perform dispatching, route planning, billing, performance evaluations, and scheduling.

Taxis as Community-Based Transportation Providers

Moderator: **David Christianson**, Metropolitan Council

Speakers: **Gerri Sutton**, Metro Mobility • **Basil Weissner**, Airport Taxi/Town Taxi Transportation Company • **Paul Hirdler**, Suburban/Green and White Taxi • **Zack Williams**, Rainbow Taxi

While transit systems such as bus and light rail receive much attention in discussions of community-based transportation, taxicabs are not frequently identified as part of the transportation mix. But for people who don’t own cars, taxis are often the only viable way to reach some destinations without spending unreasonable amounts of time negotiating the mass transit system.

This fact motivated conference organizers to include a ses-

sion on taxis as community-based transit vehicles, which featured a panel of local taxicab industry members presenting the specifics of their business operations and fielding questions from community and nonprofit representatives.

During the session, the taxi operators outlined numerous constraints inherent in their business model that must be overcome in order for community-based transportation to fit into their operations—chief among them the thin profit margins inherent in the taxi business, and the independent-operator status of taxi drivers.

The dialogue that emerged from this session illuminated many differences between taxis and more traditional modes of community-based transportation. However, the panelists unanimously indicated their interest in serving as transportation providers in all metropolitan markets and their willingness to negotiate specific solutions with individual community program planners.

Providing Access to Vehicles

Moderator: **Gina Baas**, Center for Transportation Studies

Speakers: **Stephen Klein**, Community Emergency Assistance Program (CEAP) • **Tina Hoschette**, Metro Commuter Services

A major barrier for people transitioning from welfare to work is access to reliable transportation. It is also a barrier for those who do not qualify for conventional loans to purchase a vehicle. The speakers in this session described two programs that can help people overcome obstacles that limit their access to jobs, shopping, health care, and other types of services.

Tina Hoschette described the Van-GO! vanpooling program that has a special benefit for individuals moving to full-time employment from welfare. Through this Access to Jobs program, participants who join a vanpool ride free for the first month, pay a reduced rate of \$10 for the second month, and pay \$20 for the third month. Beginning with the fourth month, participants are responsible for the full fare, but their employers may subsidize part of the cost through vouchers that can be redeemed for transit and vanpool fares.

Stephen Klein noted that since ours is a car-reliant society, the travel needs of some families cannot always be met by public transportation. Klein provided an overview of CEAP’s car loan, car repair, and car leasing programs that serve families that may not be eligible for traditional car loans or leasing. No-interest loans up to \$3,000 for the purchase of a car, or up to \$800 for repair costs, are available to qualified applicants. Applicants must be part of a one- or two-parent family with dependent children, must be either employed at the same job or in school (post-GED or post-high school) for at least six months, must be current on all monthly bills, and must have a valid Minnesota driver’s license. In addition, qualified individuals transitioning from welfare to work may be eligible for a loan after one month at a job.