



# MARATHON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA

**May 22, 2024**  
**2:00 p.m.**

**Large Conference Room**  
**210 River Drive, Wausau, WI**

**Committee Purpose/Mission Statement:** *To coordinate the county’s specialized transportation.*

The meeting site identified above will be open to the public. Instead of attendance in person, Transportation Coordinating Committee members and the public may attend this meeting by telephone and video conference. **Persons wishing to attend the meeting by virtually may call into the telephone conference beginning five (5) minutes prior to the start time indicated above using the following number:**

**PHONE NUMBER:** 1-408-418-9388  
**Access Code:** 2490 716 6556

When you enter the telephone conference, **PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!**

**Members:** *Yee Leng Xiong – Chairman, Gayle Marshall– Vice Chair, Deb Hoppa, Bill Conway, Jay Schoenborn, Chantelle Foote, Arran Hersey, Dean Verhein, Kathi Zoern,*

## 1. Call to Order / Introductions

## 2. Public Comment

## 3. Approve Minutes of the October 25, 2023 Meeting

## 4. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports and Possible Action

- A. Transportation Coordinating Committee Orientation – Mack
  - Review of related ordinances under section 2.05, including Mission, Membership, Duties and Responsibilities
  - Brief Overview of Last Terms Discussion
  - Discussion regarding Potential Areas of Committee Focus during this Term.
- B. Financial and Service Delivery Report – North Central Health Care
- C. Financial and Service Delivery Report – Metro Ride

## 5. Policy Issues Discussion and Committee Determination to the Health and Human Services Committee for its Consideration and Possible Action

- A. Acceptance of the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Needs Assessment - NCWRPC

## 6. Set Future Meeting Dates and Times

## 7. Adjourn

*Any person planning to attend this meeting who needs some type of special accommodation in order to participate should call the County Clerk’s Office at 715-261-1500 one business day before the meeting.*

SIGNED   
PRESIDING OFFICER OR DESIGNEE

EMAILED TO: Courthouse, Daily Herald, TPP Printing, City Pages  
Midwest Radio Group, Marshfield News

EMAILED BY: AA  
EMAILED DATE/TIME: 05/15/2024 10:30am

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE:  
By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Transportation Coordinating Committee  
Minutes  
Wednesday, October 25, 2023  
Large Conference Room  
212 River Drive, Wausau, WI**

<u>Attendance:</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Yee Leng Xiong – Chair	X	
David Oberbeck – Vice-chair		X
Chris Dickinson		X
Matthew Rosenbloom-Jones		X
Ben Lee		X
Kathi Zoern	X	
Bruce Lamont	X	
Gayle Marshall	X	
Donna Krause		X
Dean Verhein	X	

**Also Present in person or Webex:** Dave Mack, Lance Mueller – CPZ; Jenny McKenzie – NCHC

**1. Call to Order**

The agenda being properly signed and posted, and the presence of a quorum, the meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm by Chair Xiong in the large conference room, 210 River Drive, Wausau, WI 54403.

**2. Public Comments – None.**

**3. Approve Minutes of the June 28, 2023 Meeting**

Action: MOTION / SECOND BY VERHEIN/ MARSHALL TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 28, 2023 MEETING AS DISTRIBUTED. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSENT.

**4. Public Hearing for the 2024 85.21 Elderly and Disabled Transportation Application**

This is a required public hearing for the public to be able to provide input on the County's Elderly and Disabled Transportation (85.21) grant application. Chairman Xiong opened the Hearing by reading the notice and asked multiple times if anyone was present that would like to address this committee as part of the Public Hearing. With no one coming forward to address the Committee, the Chairman closed the Public Hearing. No comments on the application were received.

**5. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports and Possible Action**

**A. Financial Service Delivery Report – North Central Health Care (NCHC)**

Discussion: McKenzie discussed the financial reports provided for NCHC's service during the months of June, July, and August. Costs were up significantly, and they are down to only 5 volunteer drivers. Part of the barriers for volunteers to drive is the cost of insurance as rates can go up by as much as 40% if they become a volunteer driver. The Chairman discussed that this committee may need to create a letter to provide to the state legislature that would support legislation addressing the increased cost in insurance. The Chairman will follow up with Mack and McKenzie to draft this letter.

Action: FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.

Follow through: NCHC STAFF WILL CONTINUE TO INFORM THE COMMITTEE REGARDING ITS SERVICES AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION. DRAFT A LETTER REGARDING THE INCREASED INSURANCE COSTS.

B. Financial and Service Delivery Report – Metro Ride

Discussion: Mack provided an update on Metro Ride as Rosenbloom-Jones was not present. Rosenbloom-Jones is resigning from the Director position at Metro Ride, and they are currently looking for a new director.

Action: FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.

Follow through: METRO RIDE STAFF WILL CONTINUE TO INFORM THE COMMITTEE REGARDING ITS SERVICES AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION.

C. Elderly and Disabled Transportation Needs Assessment Status Report

Discussion: Mack explained the County had hired the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to perform a transportation needs assessment for Marathon County. This involved having several public meetings over the summer to obtain public input. A meeting was also held in October with transportation professionals. Regional Planning has developed a survey and they will be sending it out shortly.

Action: FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.

Follow through: ONCE THE SURVEY IS READY, MACK WILL DISTRIBUTE THE SURVEY TO THE GROUP.

6. Policy Issues Discussion and Committee Determination to the Health and Human Services Committee for its Consideration and Possible Action

A. 2024 85.21 Elderly & Disabled Transportation Application

Discussion: Mack discussed how this is an annual grant application. Marshall asked if staff time counted towards the match. Mack shared the match must be a cash match, so staff time does not contribute to it. Marshall also asked if the ¾ mile radius from the metro ride route for paratransit service left any of the population out of service. Mack explained that NCHC covers all of the county and any area not served by Metro Ride in the City of Wausau.

Action: **MOTION / SECOND BY LAMONT / ZOERN TO APPROVE THE 2024 85.21 ELDERLY AND DISABLED TRANSPORTATION APPLICATION. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSSENT.**

Follow through: THE DRAFT APPLICATION WILL GO TO THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE FOR APPROVAL THEN ON TO THE COUNTY BOARD FOR FINAL APPROVAL.

7. Meeting Time, Location, Agenda Items:

To Be Determined by the Chairman

8. Adjourn

Action: There being no further business to discuss, **MOTION / SECOND BY ZOERN / MARSHALL TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 2:30 PM. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE, NO DISSSENT.**

Submitted by:  
David Mack  
DM: lm  
10/25/2023

Marathon County  
Transportation Coordinating Committee  
New Member Orientation Material  
2024

1. County Board Code of Ordinances Chapter 2.05 (10) [Transportation Coordinating Committee](#)
2. WisDOT Elderly and Disabled Transportation Grant Program to Counties [85.21 Funding](#)
3. 2024 Statewide 85.21 Funds [Allocation](#)
4. 2024 85.21 Grant [Application](#)
5. 2024 Elderly and Disabled Transportation [Memorandum of Understanding](#)
6. Locally Developed, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services [Transportation Plan](#) 2024-2028
7. Marathon County Transportation Program [Needs Assessment](#), 2023
8. 2023 Transit Development Program ([TDP](#)) for the Wausau Metropolitan Area

# MARATHON COUNTY ELDERLY & DISABLED TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

---



---

Marathon County Transportation Program

DECEMBER 2023

PREPARED BY: NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

## SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS NEEDS

---

With the reality of limited resources, it is not possible to meet all needs all of the time, a number of strategies were identified to restore and bolster the capacity of the MCTP to maintain a reliable, affordable transportation option for essential trips by elderly and disabled residents with limited transportation resources while attempting to fill in some of the gaps in the system where unmet needs remain.

Through the input and discussions brought together for this study, the following recommendations were identified to help address the elderly and disabled transportation needs in Marathon County:

- Maintain Existing MCTP Transportation System and Restore Service Capacity:
  - Engage in and Sustain More Active Recruitment of Volunteer Drivers and Address Volunteer Issues
  - Focus on Communications and Messaging
- Utilize the CILWW New Freedom Regional Volunteer Driver Program
- Increase Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advocacy at All Levels: Local, State and Federal
- Encourage Wausau Urban Area Communities to Support Transit Services
- Encourage Statewide Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Legislation
- Explore Creating County Level Mobility Manager Position
- Consider Study for Reestablishing County Route Service

The remainder of this section discusses each of the identified recommendations.

### **1. Maintain Existing MCTP Transportation System and Restore Service Capacity**

It is a general finding of this study that the current model of service for the Marathon County Transportation Program (MCTP) through North Central Health Care (NCHC) and Metro Ride Paratransit is generally well received by those who use it. The biggest area of concern is the recent reduction in service through NCHC due primarily to a severe lack of availability of volunteer drivers.

Another issue identified, that may be undermining the program, is lack of awareness and program confusion due to the current complexity of the elderly and disabled transportation delivery system statewide as a whole.

As a result of these findings, this recommendation has two components:

- Active recruitment of volunteer drivers.
- Focus on Communications.

### **A. Engage in and Sustain More Active Recruitment of Volunteer Drivers and Address Volunteer Issues**

Most counties are struggling with maintaining volunteer drivers post Covid. The MCTP had 35 active volunteer drivers pre-covid, but currently they are down to just 5. To handle this situation, trip workload has been shifted to paid drivers and service reductions have been implemented. These reductions include trip purpose for rides limited to medical, 3-day notice (up from 2) and no same day.

This has worked in the short term. MCTP rides dropped significantly in 2020 and 2020 due to Covid but recovered well in 2022. This situation is not cost efficient or sustainable. To return to 2019 trip levels, the goal is to restore MCTP service standards of providing for medical, nutrition and employment trip purposes, 2-day notice and providing same day rides when able.

To accomplish this, efforts to recruit and retain volunteer drivers must be ramped-up and sustained. This should be a significant effort beyond the capacity of one or two staff people with other responsibilities. It is proposed that the County and TCC endorse a team effort involving personnel from the MCTP, County Planning, Wausau MPO, and ADRC-CW. The team should also include NCHC, United Way of Marathon County, GWAAR and CIL New Freedom. CIL has had some recent success in recruiting new volunteer drivers. Recognizing the importance of volunteers to aging and disability programs and the difficulties faced with attracting new volunteers, Wisconsin DHS has created a volunteer program coordinator to provide resources and assistance:



Samantha Margelofsky  
*Volunteer Program Coordinator*  
Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources  
**Wisconsin Department of Health Services**  
[Samantha.margelofsky@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Samantha.margelofsky@dhs.wisconsin.gov)  
608-267-3228

The United Way has several programs and staff dedicated to volunteering efforts, including the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Marathon County.

This includes a searchable posting board for community volunteer opportunities. This is good, however, one finds the NCHC call for drivers buried on page 17 of 27. The competition for volunteers is significant. Looking at just calls for drivers, in addition to NCHC/MCTP, there are a minimum of 8 other organizations seeking volunteer drivers for various purposes, including:

- Faith in Action
- Habitat for Humanity
- Wausau Area Mobile Meals
- ADRC Meals on Wheels
- The Neighbors Place
- The Salvation Army
- Marathon County Hunger Coalition
- The Open Door of Marathon County

In addition to participating in other volunteering events, such as the United Way's recently reinstated annual Volunteer Fest, the team should work to develop special efforts dedicated to volunteer driving. These efforts should include coordinating with the other entities seeking drivers (noted above) on ways to work together to maximize the available volunteer driver pool.

A ramped-up recognition program and incentives package should be designed and implemented. Some ideas for this identified during this study include:

- Recognition Luncheon(s)
- Provide Meals
- Arrange Discounts (One idea was work with area vendors to assemble a special volunteer drivers discount card. Could feature gas and auto service discounts among others.)
- Think outside the box

Beyond Covid, there are a number of factors affecting volunteer driver participation. The team should work to identify and address these barriers. Discussions for this study have identified the following issues: mileage reimbursement rates, gas prices and insurance issues. Gas prices have stabilized and decreased somewhat, and the federal mileage reimbursement rate is expected to increase next year. These factors could be highlighted in recruitment efforts. The insurance issue is a larger concern.

Personal auto insurance companies are causing volunteer driver programs to lose volunteers due to non-renewal of coverage or increasing premiums on auto



policies for volunteer drivers. Some insurance agencies classify commercial activity as receiving any compensation, even mileage reimbursement and are non-renewing coverage or increasing rates as a result. Basically, volunteer driving is being lumped into livery services (for-hire vehicles that are used by businesses to generate revenue by transporting people) and transportation network companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft because they are getting “compensated” for their services.

GWAAR has been working with a coalition to advance legislation to protect volunteer drivers from insurance companies classifying volunteer driving as a commercial activity. The team should contact GWAAR and encourage them to press this effort and find out how Marathon County can support what they are doing. Outreach to stakeholders should explain the issue, the effort to change the law, and how they can talk to legislators about the importance of this problem and the need to pass this legislation.

The team must also broaden the promotion and advertising for the volunteer driver positions. Getting the word out to a wider range of agencies and stakeholders will increase awareness of the problem and help circulate the message on the need for volunteer drivers. Outreach should include area churches and other community service organizations. Some agencies contacted during this study expressed interest and willingness to help. The need for volunteer drivers should also be posted on the Volunteer Opportunities page of the County website.

## **B. Focus on Communications and Messaging**

While many are aware of the MCTP, the many programs and providers can cause confusion among potential users. Going to the Internet to find out more about MCTP and transportation provided by the County, illustrates this problem. Looking on the County’s webpage doesn’t reveal it despite having a transportation section on its Services page, and a sampling of various key word searches in Google for the program yield NCHC’s website (norcen.org), the ADRC and various private services. While NCHC’s page is useful, someone looking for the Marathon County public transportation program might easily dismiss it as a private company program and not what they are looking for. The ADRC page of related and unrelated “transportation” services across multiple counties that need to be sorted through. Then, the limited info on the “Marathon County Transportation Program” again appears to attribute it to NCHC.

The County should work to clarify the identity and ownership of the Marathon County Transportation Program (MCTP) on the Internet and in other future resource publications, like those of the ADRC and others. The webpage should be hosted on the County website and redesigned to represent the MCTP as a County / public service and clarify NCHC's role as a contracted provider.

Similarly, the NCHC's program brochure is a quality piece, but it should also be redesigned to clarify program identity and roles.

It is apparent that the Marathon County Transportation Program needs an education component to help potential users understand their options. One of the primary reasons that a need for a ride goes unsatisfied is not that service is unavailable, but that the individual in need of the ride is either unaware of the services that are available or is misinformed about the availability of service or program requirements.

Most county transportation programs have detailed websites, service guides and brochures. The County should consider the development and maintenance of a website, Facebook page, guide and brochure for the transportation program. Although there will be individuals within the elderly and disabled communities that do not use the internet for various reasons, many are tech savvy. In addition, these tools would be useful to families and caregivers that are supporting someone who is elderly or disabled as well as professionals such as case managers and social workers assisting these persons. An annual mailing about program availability, costs, etc to keep entities informed about MCTP is another option. An email blast format was suggested.

The County should work as a conduit for improving communication between all providers and agencies & interest groups including advocates, social workers, case managers, other health care workers, residential administrators, etc. Sharing of information about each other's operations and programming and how they affect one another can improve awareness and service delivery. At the Stakeholder Group Meeting the concept of a "Transit Summit" was suggested.

A county-wide transit summit provides an opportunity for transportation providers, benefit providers (MCOs, etc.), advocates, agencies and care providers for the elderly and disabled, as well as, local officials and other interested parties and stakeholders to come together to enhance program awareness, share system/program information, promote advocacy, address common issues and develop cooperative solutions. State (DOT, DHS, etc) officials and staff and elected representatives should be invited to attend/participate – possibly acting as presenters where appropriate. The transit summit could be annual or

periodic, as needed. Transit summit planning and implementation may be eligible for 5304 program funding with match being potentially “in-kind”.

There is also a need to get awareness out in the rural areas of the county of the programs that are available and how they work. One suggestion was to get more educational resources out where the elderly and disabled frequent like churches and community/senior centers.

Other options for information and education include: present at senior group meetings; get families information on the programs, possibly through the ADRC as part of a packet of things they need to know; develop a newsletter to be sent periodically to residents of the county to explain the services that are available; and putting program information in the Senior Review, area newspapers and town newsletters.

United Way 211 was identified as a source of information. The United Way holds quarterly interagency meetings which may be a good opportunity to provide a session with information on what's available. The County should work with both the United Way and the ADRC to improve resource material and messaging not only about the MCTP (including Metro Ride Paratransit component) but how the overall transportation system works in relation to all the various programs and providers.

## **2. Utilize the CILWW New Freedom Regional Volunteer Driver Program**

The MCTP should work with the CIL New Freedom to explore options to integrate the two programs. This would involve coordinating with Midstate Independent Living Consultants (MILC) which has a Memorandum of Agreement with CIL for providing service in Marathon County. The CIL program can reinforce MCTP service and fill in gaps in service need.

The primary function of the CIL New Freedom program is to provide gap service to supplement other existing programs. To fulfil that mission, CIL New Freedom operates 7 days a week, 24 hours a day including evenings, weekends and holidays. Advance notice is preferred, but they work to accommodate need at any time subject to driver availability. This includes hospital discharge, another significant area of unmet transportation need. Trip purpose is unrestricted, so the CIL service can be used not only for medical, nutritional, and employment related needs, but also educational, volunteering-related, recreational, social and other needs. The program also provides rides that cross community

boundaries that other programs cannot. All of this is in order to try and address rider unmet needs when other programs are unavailable.

All of these operation parameters address the major on-going unmet needs in Marathon County that the MCTP does not have the resources to provide. Working with the CIL program provides the County with a mechanism to fill in those gaps in service to meet more of the community's transportation needs. CIL could also be utilized as a back-up option to help fulfill rides the MCTP can't due to scheduling conflicts or driver availability. By working together, this would assist CIL in meeting its service obligations under its agreement with MILC.0

The CIL New Freedom program would have to be incorporated with the communications and messaging recommendations noted above along with the other components of the system (NCHC and Metro Ride) so that potential county program users become more aware of this option to promote awareness and build ridership.

If successful, the County should consider integrating CIL New Freedom as a third leg of the Marathon County Transportation Program together with MCTP-NCHC and Metro Ride Paratransit.

### **3. Increase Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advocacy at All Levels: Local, State and Federal**

Marathon County / MCTP should work to coordinate advocacy outreach to local, state and federal officials and elected representatives to address concerns and issues facing elderly and disabled transportation. Government entities must be mindful of lobbying restrictions associated with program grant funding and other regulations. However, information and education efforts can be made to increase awareness of concerns and issues, and other stakeholders can be encouraged to boost outreach. This includes families and caregivers that are supporting someone who is elderly or disabled as well as professionals: advocates, social workers, case managers, other health care workers, residential administrators, etc. that are assisting these individuals and families. Other related professional associations and support organizations, such as the Wisconsin Public Transit Association and GWAAR, are also a valuable resources in these efforts.

Local elected leaders need to be made aware of the importance of elderly and disabled transportation, informed about the issues facing the transportation

system, and encouraged to support an adequate budget for elderly and disabled transportation.

Some of the concerns and issues that need to be addressed through advocacy efforts include:

- Working to address transportation concerns specific to MA eligibility, adequate funding reimbursement, 5310 requirements and streamlining eligibility requirements.
- Eliminating barriers to intercounty cooperation.
- Enhancing coordination with disabled population, low income, elderly, Family Care and all other programs that provide for transportation services.
- Reducing or eliminating other federal/state program restrictions and regulatory barriers: encourage DOT to change problematic administrative code.
- Encouraging Wausau Urban Area communities to support/provide public transit.
- Promoting enabling legislation for Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) in Wisconsin.
- Addressing levy limits that result in cuts in funding / reductions in service levels for critical public services like elderly and disabled transportation.
- Addressing volunteer driver issues, including but not limited to the insurance classification problem – GWAAR legislative effort (see Recommendation 1A).

There is some overlap between this recommendation and the “Communications” recommendations in this Section. For example, the transportation summit concept (see Recommendation 1B) could be leveraged to assist with the advocacy efforts and goals. Expansion of the summit to a regional (multi-county) or statewide scope can amplify the outreach to DOT and other local, state and federal entities.

#### **4. Encourage Wausau Urban Area Communities to Support Transit Services**

Despite the range of public benefits provided by transit services, the City of Wausau is the only community out of the 7 total cities and villages in the urban area to support a public system. Cities as small as Mauston at 4,000 population recognize the importance of public transportation by supporting a shared-ride taxi service. At various points, transit was extended from Wausau to some of

the surrounding communities, but support within those communities could not be sustained and service was discontinued.

The density of elderly and disabled in Marathon County is highest in Wausau and the surrounding urban area. In addition, medical, residential and other services utilized by the elderly and disabled are scattered throughout the urban area. Historically, Metro Ride serves a significant number of elderly and disabled with its regular bus routes in addition to the paratransit service for those unable to ride a bus. When you consider that the local government share of Metro Ride cost is only about 25% with around 60% coming from state and federal sources, it is probably the most locally cost-efficient way to provide these services. It represents a missed opportunity to support the elderly and disabled residents in these communities.

The cities and villages of the Wausau Urban Area should be encouraged to implement expansion of Metro Ride transit service into their communities. The recent Metro Ride TDP (refer to Section 3 of this study) lays several scenarios with budget projections for extending transit service into the adjacent communities. This recommendation overlaps with the “Communications” and “Advocacy” recommendations in this Section.

## **5. Encourage Statewide Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Legislation**

Transit systems across Wisconsin have explored the creation of Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) as an alternative organizational structure. An RTA would have an independent governing commission and could serve an entire region. The RTA structure would relieve the local municipalities from responsibility to provide the necessary local match to fund transit. However, RTA legislation has been stalled in the Wisconsin Legislature. An RTA remains an option if State legislative support shifts or new legislation supports such an initiative.

State elected officials should be encouraged to pass RTA enabling legislation. Again, lobbying restrictions limit direct action, but MCTP can work in conjunction with Metro Ride to disseminate information and education on this issue to elected leaders and the public. In addition, MCTP should support and coordinate with efforts of entities such as the Wisconsin Public Transit Association to promote RTA and explore ways organizations such as GWAAR might be able to help. This recommendation overlaps with the “Communications” and “Advocacy” recommendations in this Section.

## **6. Explore Creating County Level Mobility Manager Position**

Mobility management is an approach for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services to the elderly and disabled. Mobility management focuses on meeting individual rider needs through a wide range of transportation options and service providers. It also focuses on coordinating in-house services, in this case MCTP and Metro Ride Paratransit, with outside service providers and support programs in an effort to achieve a more efficient transportation service delivery system.

Mobility management involves these key steps:

- Developing an inventory of available services
- Identifying customer needs
- Developing strategies to meet customer needs
- Coordinating financial and other resources
- Improving coordination between in-house/public services and programs – public, private and non-profit
- Training staff and volunteers
- Promoting the use of innovative technologies, services, and other methods to improve customer service and coordination
- Developing customer information and trip planning systems

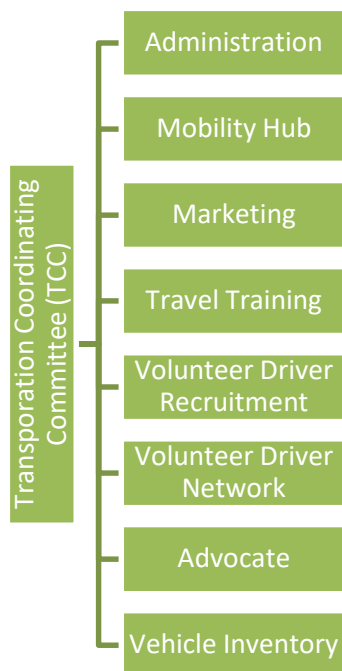
Mobility managers serve as service coordinators, operations managers, and customer travel navigators. They help communities develop transportation coordination plans, programs, and policies, and build local partnerships. Mobility managers may also work to promote policies that favor public transportation. They coordinate transportation services among all customer groups, service providers, and funding agencies and work with human service agencies and workforce centers that coordinate the travel and trip planning needs of individuals who receive human service program assistance.

Two programs administered by WisDOT 5310 and WETAP have awarded projects that include mobility managers throughout the state. The direction that mobility management takes is a local decision and is not limited or mandated by WisDOT other than to ensure project eligibility according to the applicable funding source.

Marathon County, through its TCC and MCTP, should implement a Mobility Manager in cooperation with Metro Ride. In addition to basic mobility management functions, this position could be tasked with shepherding

implementation of the recommendations of this study and providing oversight of the County’s elderly and disabled transportation services provided through MCTP and Metro Ride Paratransit. See **Figure 9** for a conceptual framework for a proposed MCTP mobility management system.

**Figure 9: Proposed MCTP Mobility Management Framework**



### **7. Consider Study for Reestablishing County Route Service**

It was brought up during this study that it may be helpful for the elderly and disabled across the county to have regular transit routes between Wausau and the smaller outlying communities. However, the MCTP has run out-county routes in the past. These have all been discontinued due to low ridership. In addition there are the obvious budgetary and staffing issues.

While this same situation is found in a number of adjacent counties, there are several examples of counties successfully running county-wide transportation routes around the state. Marathon County may want to take a fresh look at the potential for re-establishing county-wide route(s) by developing a feasibility study on the creation of new county-wide route(s). A feasibility study could



evaluate options for organizing and operating routes, including routing, frequencies, fare structures, reservation and scheduling details, etc. This type of feasibility study would be eligible for 5304 program funding.

Looking at county route structures leads to consideration of alternative service models. There are a range of service models used by counties across the state. Many of those that provide county-wide routes have formed full single or multi-county transit systems. This transit system approach opens up additional funding opportunities. The 5304 program could also be used to more generally look at alternative service models for Marathon County. This approach provides an opportunity to prepare in advance for possible service delivery changes in the future while determining if a more detail route feasibility study is warranted.

### **PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

While all of the recommendations presented here represent important steps toward maintaining and expanding the Marathon County Transportation Program (MCTP), the pressing need is to address the volunteer driver problem. Therefore, the recommended top priority of this study is to focus on Recommendation 1.A. The CIL New Freedom program represents a ready-made solution to many of the elements of unmet transportation need within the County, and should, therefore, be the secondary priority for implementation moving forward.