

Dial-a-Ride Transit Services Restructuring

General Information

About Dial-a-Ride (Transit Link)

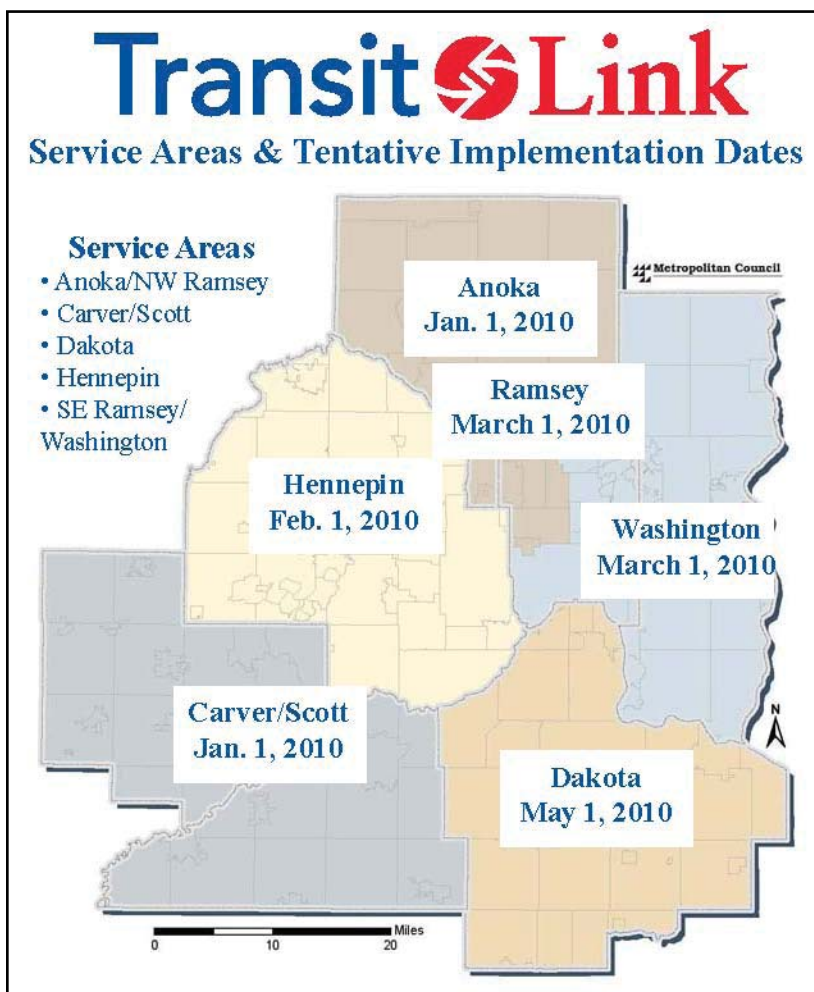
Dial-a-Ride service is minibus or van service for members of the general public in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Dial-a-Ride is a shared-ride service, and rides must be reserved in advance. Fares will be based on the distance traveled, though groups who travel together are eligible for a discount.

Dial-a-ride service is intended to augment regular route transit service, rather than duplicate it. The Council's goal is to help riders reach their destinations – this may involve a combination of regular route and dial-a-ride transit.

Dial-a-ride transit is different from ADA-certified service. Anyone in the general public may access dial-a-ride services. Typically, ADA-certified riders require additional assistance, due to physical, cognitive or psychological limitations.

Customers who need assistance or are unable to get themselves to a regular route or dial-a-ride bus may qualify for Metro Mobility service. The changes to dial-a-ride service have no impact on the current Metro Mobility and county ADA service. Dial-a-ride service is curb-to-curb service – drivers will not normally provide door-to-door assistance to riders.

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Coordinating Service Delivery

The Metropolitan Council is currently restructuring dial-a-ride service to assure it is equally available to the general public throughout the region, where regular route transit is not available. An advisory group of transit and human services officials from each of the seven metro-area counties helped establish standard operating guidelines and funding strategies.

Currently, dial-a-ride service in the metro area is a “patchwork” system: 20 different government and non-profit organizations provide the region’s dial-a-ride services. Some services overlap with one another and with regular transit routes, while other providers are limited to providing service in a specific area, which may inhibit coordination. Still other communities have no transit option.

In many cases, local organizations created service to meet a need identified by a particular group – such as providing transportation for the local senior center or community groups. However, the Federal

Transit Administration requires that federally supported transit must serve the public broadly and equitably.

These providers have a wide range of operating guidelines. For example, weekday service hours fall within the 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. timeframe recommended by the Council, though they vary considerably. Only four providers offer weekend service. The fare structure varies from donation-based to more than \$5 per one-way trip.

Under the restructured service, each county in the metropolitan area will coordinate service. Five counties will contract with a vendor for service -- four contracts will be managed by the Metropolitan Council. Anoka County will manage its own contract, and Carver/Scott counties will operate their own dial-a-ride service, using the operating parameters established for the whole region.

Contract Implementation Timeline			
County	Request for Proposals Released	Request for Proposals Due	Implementation Date
Hennepin	Aug. 1, 2009	Sept. 30, 2009	Feb. 1, 2010
Ramsey & Washington	Sept. 29, 2009	Oct. 13, 2009	March 1, 2010
Dakota (tentative)	Nov. 13, 2009	Dec. 18, 2009	May 1, 2010

The Metropolitan Council has approved a number of standard operating guidelines, including:

Operating Parameter	Guideline
Hours of Service	6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Weekdays
Reservation Scheduling Hours	7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Weekdays
Advance Reservation Window	Up to 5 business days in advance
Service Type	Curb-to-curb with limited assistance
Pickup Window	0-30 minutes
Vehicle Wait Time	3 minutes
Advance Cancellation Window	At least 1 hour prior to scheduled pick-up time
Walking Distance to Regular Route Stop	¼ mile from Nov. 1 to March 31 ½ mile from April 1 to Oct. 31
Distance-Based Fares (one-way)	Up to 10 miles \$2.25 10-20 miles \$4.50 More than 20 miles \$6.75
Group discounts are available and ADA-certified riders pay a maximum of \$4.50 per direction.	

Riders will be able to call one phone number region-wide and be directed to the appropriate customer service representatives for each county. In addition, riders will be able to use the Metro Transit scheduling/trip planning resources to better coordinate with regular route transit.

Local communities may provide service beyond these guidelines – such as providing weekend service – by using local funds to support the activities.

Funding Transit Link Service

More than 450,000 riders used dial-a-ride services in the seven-county metro area during 2008. The Metropolitan Council provides about \$5 million per year to dial-a-ride programs throughout the region, often augmented by local funding.

For More Information

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