



## *Lessons Learned*

### **Coordination Coalition Initiative**

*This report provides an overview of the Lessons Learned from the two selected agencies participating in NADTC's Coordination Coalition Initiative.*

#### **Introduction**

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center's (NADTC) mission is to promote accessible transportation in communities throughout the country and does this partly through technical assistance and projects like the Coordination Coalition Initiative. NADTC established the [Coordination Advisory Committee](#) in July 2021, which is comprised of stakeholders from across the country who represent a variety of public and private organizations, in rural and urban areas, and in different sectors. The Committee has provided expertise and insights on NADTC's work, conducted case studies and helped to develop the [Coordination Committee Toolkit](#). This toolkit ultimately guided the coalition teams through the process of establishing successful outcomes.

As part of the Coordination Initiative, NADTC selected two communities to improve coordination and collaboration around a particular transportation-related problem area through a facilitated coalition team planning process. At the conclusion of this initiative, the coalition teams presented their final projects on a national webinar. [The Coordination Coalition Initiative Showcase](#) recordings and each team's Action Plan have been made available on NADTC's website.

#### **Coalition Teams**

Selected teams participated in a 2-day event to develop an Action Plan, which focused on a specific community transportation initiative. Following the 2-day event, NADTC conducted ongoing targeted technical assistance for 8 months to ensure the projects were sustainable with long-term success. The following agencies were selected for this opportunity through a national competitive application process.

### *Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging (Topeka, Kansas)*

A non-profit that covers a rural and small-urban service area and works with older adults to provide supportive services and transportation. The coalition team consists of human services organizations that serve older adults and people with disabilities, mobility managers and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Sections 5307, 5310, and 5311 providers. The team has been working together for many years and meets regularly to discuss the gaps and barriers within the region, and to collectively apply for grant opportunities as they become available. Through the coalition process with NADTC, the team formally named themselves, "Kansas Coalition for Accessible Regional Transportation."



### *ConnectAbility of MN (St. Cloud, Minnesota)*

A non-profit that covers a rural and small urban service area and works with people with disabilities, both physical and invisible, to provide various forms of caregiver assistance, modified and assistive technologies and transportation. The Transportation Department at ConnectAbility leads the Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC), which is a program funded through Minnesota DOT and FTA Section 5310. The RTCC consists of volunteer driver programs, aging and disability agencies, and transportation providers that guide the region's transportation coordination activities. Through the NADTC coalition team process, the team formally named themselves, "Connect Central Minnesota."



## **The Coordination Coalition Framework**

The coalition teams were committed to addressing transportation needs and barriers in their community or region. Each team conducted a 2-day facilitated event that brought together human services organizations and transportation providers to develop an Action Plan for long-term success and sustainability.

NADTC staff lead this process using the following Framework:

*Step 1: Establishing a Sense of Urgency*  
*address barriers, large or small, allow members to determine priority*

*Step 2: Creating a Vision*  
*establish a focus area and create a vision to guide conversation*

*Step 3: Developing an Action Plan*  
*create broad objectives and detailed steps to lead the group to success*

*Step 4: Growing Your Coalition*  
*continue to identify and invite new members to join the conversation*

*Step 5: Structuring Your Coalition for Sustainability*  
*organize and develop sub-committees to carry out the detailed action steps*

This Framework is designed to strategically work through all the impeding issues, and as a group, narrow the team's focus into a comprehensive Action Plan. NADTC facilitated a dialogue and asked thoughtful questions to get team members thinking about potential solutions. Objectives and steps were documented into a plan that can be used as guidance for current projects or to prepare for future funding opportunities.

## **Coalition Action Plans**

At the conclusion of the 2-day event, each team had a fully developed Action Plan to use as a foundation for collaboration towards a certain goal. The process is facilitated by NADTC; however, coalition team members generate the ideas. Each plan is comprised of key focus areas that serve as a path for the group to follow. Broad objectives are broken down into actionable steps that use a SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time Bound) to measure the successful completion of an objective. When developing action steps, it is very important to have realistic expectations and remain flexible during the implementation phase. The project may not go in the direction as originally planned; however, the Framework allows coalition teams to add or remove steps, as necessary.

## **Lessons Learned**

The Coordination Coalition Initiative provided targeted technical assistance and transportation industry expertise directly to two communities. The following are lessons learned from the 8-month work with these local coalition teams that can be used by others as they work to build or develop a coalition.

### *Designate a Leader*

Great leaders can inspire and motivate their team toward a common vision or goal. When implementing a project, a designated leader coordinates meetings and keeps everyone on track, so the group feels informed and engaged. Coalition groups are often led by agency staff, case workers or program managers, but incorporating decision makers or elected officials into the coalition can keep them informed about the issues, provide immediate clarification on certain issues, or accelerate projects to completion.

### *Develop a Plan*

NADTC used the Coordination Coalition Framework, as previously described, to strategically develop a plan with each team. Every element of the process builds to the development of a fully realized plan that can be used for a current project or when funding becomes available. Going through this process gives team members a targeted focus and a foundation for collaboration and task-oriented outcomes. The planning process moves groups away from "having a meeting just to have a meeting" and into being productive during regular gatherings and reaching established goals. When discussing and reviewing the process, both coalitions made similar comments that they have always talked about the issues but have never gone through a facilitated planning process.

### *Delegate the Work*

All the activities should not fall on one person. By delegating tasks to group members, it allows them to feel engaged and part of the solution. Members can be asked to lead sub-committees where ideas can be further developed outside the full group. By dividing into sub-committees, a more in-depth conversation can take place about a designated element or objective of the Action Plan. The coalition teams used sub-committees to develop an elevator pitch, design a new logo and branding, organize, and attract new members and research available funding sources. Often when a pivotal member of an organization leaves, a project or program can sit idle or fall apart, and by having this foundation and a network of partners creates sustainability and longevity.

### *Join an Existing Coalition*

Transportation agencies do not need to be the lead agency for coalition work toward improving transportation access. Local or regional human services organizations like health care, aging and disability services or workforce may already have an effective coalition. By joining an existing coalition group, transportation challenges can still be discussed and addressed without duplicating efforts.

### *Communicate Clearly*

During the planning process it is imperative that team members have constant communication, either by the team lead or through sub-committees. Providing meeting notes and following up on assigned tasks keeps everyone informed and will keep the project moving forward. Having open communication can prepare team members for conversations during sub-committee meetings or when convening as a full group. When implementing a project, having well informed members can lead to productive planning and successful projects.

### *Use a Group Facilitator*

A facilitator can provide an outside perspective and help group members think in new ways. Group members should come with an open mind and without assumed outcomes, which can often obstruct creative thinking. It is important that the facilitator remain neutral and allow group members to guide the decisions and outcomes. As the facilitator for these coalition teams, NADTC staff conducted monthly check-in meetings, not only to monitor their progress, but to provide input and ideas to help them develop their plan.

## Final Thoughts

Riders rely on transportation agencies to provide safe and reliable access to the care or services that they need. The presence of a community coalition, either lead by a transportation agency or a human services organization, can better coordinate these services and form trusting partnerships throughout the community. The [Coordination Committee Toolkit](#) was developed as a way to enhance new or existing coalition teams along with the lessons learned presented in this document. NADTC's work with the coalition teams solidified the importance of developing an action plan as a foundation that keeps everyone organized and on track, guiding the group to sustainable and successful outcomes.

A special thanks goes out to the partner organizations and members of the Kansas Coalition for Accessible Regional Transportation and Connection Central Minnesota. Your hard work, dedication and welcoming atmosphere made NADTC's Coordination Coalition Initiative a true success.



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