



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

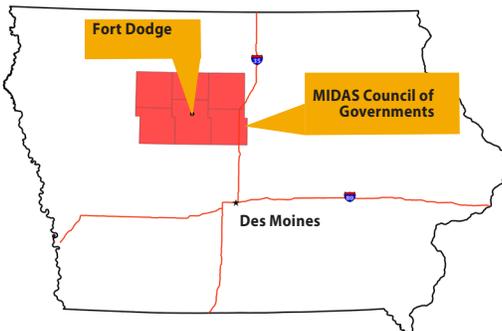
An Information Service for Rural and Specialized Transportation Providers provided by the Kansas University Transportation Center

Regional Coordination Increases Options

By John Elias

Iowa has a long history with regional transportation coordination. Beginning in the mid-1970s, regional coordination in some portions of the state showed how transit could be delivered more efficiently. Encouraged by early successes the Iowa Department of Transportation formed 19 urban and 16 regional transit agencies with a mandate to improve transportation across the state.

Mid Iowa Development Association Council of Governments (MIDAS) coordinates transportation across 3,500 square miles in six counties in central Iowa. MIDAS owns and operates demand-response service across all six counties. Agencies in Pocahontas, Humboldt, Calhoun, and Hamilton Counties maintain their own unique identities while all rides are scheduled through MIDAS. MIDAS also operates a fixed-route service in Fort Dodge (pop. 25,000), an intercity connection and feeder service, school buses in Webster County in partnership with the local school district and Head Start buses.



In response to requests from a large employer, Electrolux, MIDAS began vanpool services in 2008 between Fort Dodge and the company's Webster City factory. The first vanpool trips served only five commuters but the Electrolux vanpool has quickly grown to provide more than 90 passengers daily service its 23-mile route.

Regional direction

Iowa DOT's mandate for regional transit created Region 5 served by MIDAS. The private non-profit organization coordinates and dispatches all transit across those six counties offering nearly 800,000 rides in 2008 from its offices in Fort Dodge. The original organization of the region took some time, however.

MIDAS Transit Manager Rose Lee reports that the first steps began with a piecemeal approach and small efforts at coordination. After those first slow efforts and considering the early success of the more aggressive adopters Iowa DOT's transportation plan mandated regionalization. This mandate created the impetus to coordinate transit, to everyone's benefit.

All decisions regarding transit are made at the regional level.

MIDAS Council of Governments consists of 18 members tasked with managing the finances of the region, planning future growth and providing transit (8 of the 18 current members have transit backgrounds). Each of the six County Board of Supervisors appoints council members "to represent the interests of the County, the cities within that County and economic development within that County." MIDAS receives all funding from state and federal sources and apportions funds to local providers based on a formula considering both mileage and the number of riders. Lee was able to ease initial local concerns about job loss during the transition to regional coordination by guaranteeing a job somewhere within the organization to all existing employees. Fares and ridership policies are set by the MIDAS Council of



Service Area	6 Counties
Population	102,000
Model	Full Service

Mobility Services

- 1-Call Central Dispatch
- Demand Response Buses
- Fixed Route Service
- Route Deviation - Pick Up
- Commuting Vanpool Program
- Intercity Feeder Busing

Case Study



MIDAS buses feature Rural Transit District 5 branding across the region

Governments. Additionally Lee employs three County Coordinators based in Fort Dodge to maintain daily contact with designated areas. Driver hiring, training and substance abuse testing are handled at the regional level as well. Maintenance and garages are necessarily spread across the region but mechanics are also hired regionally by MIDAS.

Centralized dispatch

Centralized dispatch reinforces and promotes regional transit. Riders across the six-county region call one number for information about mobility options or to schedule a ride. All agency buses are equipped with Ranger® mobile data terminals from Mentor Engineering. Ranger® uses

cellular technology to connect to the central dispatch at Fort Dodge, the only city in the region whose population exceeds 10,000.

Drivers get real-time passenger information and rides can be scheduled in minutes rather than hours. The central dispatch uses RouteMatch™ software and automatic vehicle location technology from the Ranger® to schedule demand-response buses and track the fixed-route DART buses efficiently. Lee reports that the software and Rangers® provide real-time data used in dispatching rides and accurate information for state and Federal funding purposes without hiring additional staff. RouteMatch dispatch software provides

Software and on-vehicle MDT provide real-time data used to dispatch rides and generate funding reports.



DART fixed-route buses the ability to deviate from those routes and offer pick-up/drop-off at the passenger's door for a \$2.50 fee.

Efficiency expands options

The efficiencies possible through regional coordination allow MIDAS to offer extensive service over a spread out rural population across its six-county service area. In addition to strengthening demand-response, coordination allows MIDAS to branch out to help the Webster School district provide bus service and explore innovative solutions like the Electrolux vanpool. MIDAS's DART service even partners with Jefferson Lines inter-city bus service to enable citizens of the six-county region to connect to cities throughout the state via transit, a remarkable service for a small community to offer.

MIDAS's regional coordination enriches the transportation options for the community through increased efficiency and provides mobility options in the rural heartland rarely experienced.

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