

LIAISON REPORT

AGENCY: HIRTALIAISON: Kris Peters

1. Need for Program. Describe who the target population is and whether their numbers are increasing or decreasing. Indicate the source of this information. Also, indicate how the program/service is different and how it is similar to others and what would happen if the program/service ceased to exist. List the priorities established by ASSET Funders, which the programming addresses.

The Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency, HIRTA provides door to door transit services in the counties of Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Story and Warren. On July 2, 2012, HIRTA began operating services directly in Story County. Rides are provided on a demand-response door to door bases, and scheduled 24 hours in advance. Same day services for Medical Appointments are scheduled as space is available.

In Story County, as in all others, services are **open to the public** and **door to door**, meaning riders can be picked up at their home, dropped off at their destination and returned to their home. Services may be used for any purpose, shopping, pre-school, medical appointment, beauty shop or just to visit a friend.

HIRTA provides monthly transportation to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC). Transportation and weekly transportation to Des Moines.

HIRTA services offer drivers assist customers in/out of the vehicles and in carrying packages or groceries to the door; however, drivers are not allowed into the home. All trips are open to the public and are handicap/wheelchair accessible, and seatbelts to be worn at all times.

Under contract with CyRide HIRTA provides Dial-A Ride services. Eligibility is approved by CyRide based on a person's inability to use CyRide's regular service. This is determined by federal rules based on the person's disability preventing them from:

- Traveling to a bus stop
- Boarding the bus, and/or
- Inability to understand how to ride the bus.

It is a service where drivers assist customers in/out of the vehicles and in carrying packages or groceries to the door; however, drivers are not allowed into the home. It provides a wheelchair lift-equipped service that is available when fixed-route buses are running and is a safe transportation service that requires seatbelts to be worn at all times.

Dial-a-ride ridership is traditionally the elderly, those with disabilities, or those with other types of special requirements that cannot be taken care of by Cy-Ride or other service. It allows individuals to get to doctor's appointments, assisted-living programs, and/or take care of their day-to-day needs.

2. Program Strengths. Pick two to four factors that contribute most importantly to the program/service outcomes. Do not list everything that is satisfactory. We will assume that things not mentioned are okay. For each strength describe some supporting evidence.

1. HIRTA has a lot of dedicated employees who see their business as part of a service industry that is moving people and not buses.
2. HIRTA is always looking for ways to help and serve when new needs arise:
 - a. They have started conversations about adding a route from City Hall to the Admin Building to the Justice Center in Nevada as that has been determined as a need.
 - b. They have contracted with the Boys and Girls Club of Story County this year to provide more services to the younger generation, especially those in Nevada who have more limited access to services.
 - c. They have added weekly Des Moines Medical trips back into the schedule.
 - d. The addition of an unscheduled vehicle and mobile supervisor, has improved on-time performance and allows for someone to pick up the slack if a driver is running behind, or has a breakdown, etc.
 - e. They added a winery shuttle, Iowa State Fair, Pella Tulip Time, Covered Bridge Festival and expect add more of these types of activities in the coming year.

3. The HIRTA Board is very supportive, hands-on, and Supervisors from each county are seated on the Board.
4. HIRTA has become very involved in the community working with the Freedom Flight, Special Olympics, and summer lunch program.
5. They have done a great job marketing their service to Assisted Living Centers, Retirement Homes, and local churches.
6. Administrative costs that HIRTA carries are covered by State Transit Funding so that additional funding received goes to operations and/or capital expenses instead of overhead costs, thus the ability to lower the costs of rides to serve more people and be more affordable to the ridership.

3. Program Weaknesses. Select factors that detract most from the program/service achieving its outcomes. Present details as described above. Recommendations for reducing these weaknesses should follow the discussion of each weakness.

1. Weaknesses for HIRTA are becoming less and less as they work through the issues and because they are so willing to work with the entire community to make their services better.
2. Because there are so many individualized services requested, and the bus drivers are really just that, bus drivers, it is difficult to provide the services that some agencies and individuals are requesting.
3. They now have most of their buses equipped with surveillance cameras due to grants and a few bus replacements. This has been very beneficial to the safety of the passengers and drivers.

4. Financial Outlook. Current funding concerns should be described. In addition, the assessment of the program's plan to cope with shrinking resources should be given.

HIRTA is financially sound and their administrative costs are low. However, as stated above, with older buses there are always large maintenance costs associated with the buses.

5. Internal Management Practices. Summarize your assessment of the management of the agency, and the role of the Board. If there are deficiencies, details should be provided. Conclude with recommendations when appropriate.

HIRTA is small but mighty in their management. Administration consists of an Executive Director, Operations Manager, 2 Regional Operations Supervisors, Mobility Coordinator, Accountant and Admin. Assistant. The remainders of the staff are customer service reps, dispatchers, and drivers. The Board and the management are in constant communication and the Board is very involved and knowledgeable in the operation and financials.

6. Agency Suggestions/Comments. Make note of any suggestions, comments or questions agencies may have with regard to the ASSET process, budget forms and or anything else that relates to the process.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT:

This has been a good year for HIRTA and they have continues to work with the task force in updating process and goals. many things that go into one individual trip.

Compliments have been much more frequent and they have been able to achieve a lot of efficiencies this year.

A mobile supervisor was added in FY16 with a small minivan that was purchased by Cy-Ride and funded with the help of the DOT, United Way and HIRTA. Its purpose is to step in and do pick-ups just to keep buses on time or for rides that need immediate attention.

Two new vehicles are scheduled to be added to the fleet by October 2017, which will allow for less maintenance costs.