

Northern Transit Interlocal Coordination Plan Outline Fiscal Year 2026

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Northern Transit
"Enjoy the Ride!"
Interlocal



***Montana Department of Transportation
March 3, 2025***

1. Date Adopted by Board of Directors:

- The Board of Directors of Northern Transit Interlocal is actively involved in setting policy for Northern Transit Interlocal. For the purpose of obtaining cost-effective insurance, Toole County agreed to be the lead agency of Northern Transit Interlocal; minutes showing approval by the TAC and formal approval of the Coordination Plan by the Toole County Commissioners/TAC Board of Directors on February 18, 2025, are attached.
- Please see Affidavit of Publication (submitted to section indicated through Black CAT Transit Data Management System and attached organizational chart.)

2. Agencies Involved

- Northern Transit Interlocal was formed by the communities of Shelby, Conrad and Cut Bank and counties of Toole, Pondera, and Glacier in the fall of 2005.
Northern Transit Interlocal by-laws are on file.
- Northern Transit Interlocal processed capital project grants in FY2023. Currently they are still in the development stage. All Bus operated by Northern Transit Interlocal include:
 - 1 – 2020 Dodge Caravan ADA – 5 Passenger - Gas; ADA Accessible
 - Mileage – 12/31/2023: 100,179
 - 1 – 2017 Ford Econo – 27 passenger – Gas; Accessible
 - Mileage 12/31/2023: 90,747
 - 1 - 2017 Ford Econo – 27 passenger – Gas: Accessible
 - Mileage 12/31/2023: 89,756
 - 1 - 2017 Ford Econo – 19 passenger – Gas: Accessible
 - Mileage 12/31/2023: 150,705
 - 1 – 2009 Ford F450 – 21 passenger – Diesel; Accessible
 - Mileage 12/31/2022: 231,997
 - 1 – 2017 Ford Econo – 13- passenger- Gas: Accessible
 - Mileage 12/31/2024: 160,284
 - 1 – 2013 Ford Econo – 17- passenger- Gas: Accessible
 - Mileage 12/31/2024: 202,471
 - 1 – 2009 Ford E-450 22 – passenger- Diesel: Accessible
 - Mileage 12/31/2024: 229,433
 - 1 – 2024 Ford E-450- 19 – passenger- Gas: Accessible

- Mileage 12/31/2024: 13,553

1 – 2024 Ford Transit – 9 passenger – Gas: Accessible

- The first day of bus service was Monday, March 3, 2008. Please see attached schedules for current route information. One of the 27 Passenger or sized vehicles in fleet to match passenger load, provides transportation from Shelby to Kalispell on Tuesday and Friday weekly schedule. The 19 passenger 2017 bus typically operates the morning schedule to Great Falls on Monday and Thursday. Our 21 or 27 passenger bus provides afternoon transportation from Shelby to Great Falls on a Monday and Thursday afternoon. (One a.m. run; One p.m. run). NOTE: Glacier County Transit, Toole County Transit, & Pondera County Transit work the outer areas of each county to bring passengers to an NTI pick up point. For example: Glacier County Transit brings passengers from Browning & Cut Bank to meet the NTI bus in Shelby that goes onto Great Falls.

- Brochure included as indicated on specified section in Black CAT application system.

- Maintenance Plan and Driver's Manual on file.

- Drug and Alcohol Policy on file.

- Participating agencies include City of Shelby, City of Cut Bank, City of Conrad, Toole County, Glacier County and Pondera County. Logan Health Systems and Benefis Hospital make annual donations to the operating expenses for Northern Transit Interlocal. The working relationship between medical providers and Northern Transit has grown over the years. NTI provides them with statistical data annually that indicates the number of passengers/patients that make the connection to their facilities, via Northern Transit Interlocal. The amount of additional funding from these two major medical companies is a driving force in the success and growth of NTI. NTI also receives grant funding from Town Pump Charitable Foundation. NTI also coordinates services with Blackfeet Transit, Eagle Transit, Great Falls Transit, Liberty County Transit, & Northern Montana Transit.

3. Agencies not involved:

- All agencies associated with Northern Transit Interlocal Coordination Plan continue to participate.

4. Needs Assessment

- Please see Five-Year Transit Development Plan, Chapter 4, “Needs Assessment” – on file at MDT.
- Please see attached “NTI Ridership Satisfaction” surveys.
- Attached ridership growth graph that helps us to better provide the routes and services designated to our local area. NTI has inquired about installing on board GPS location, and on-board video recording devices. A comprehensive communication system between dispatch & drivers has been in development. Our IT department has us connected to the Transit App, which is fast becoming the leader in bus transit in the world. All transit routes, schedules, and information has been available with Google Maps & Apple Maps.
- NTI has continued to add safety measures as situations arise and as the transit industry grows. NTI has added additional safety procedures, such as sanitizing all surface areas of the bus throughout the scheduled route following all passengers off-loading. In December 2022 NTI initiated a Passenger Code of Conduct Policy to increase on board passenger safety, we understand passenger conduct needs to be addressed to protect passengers & drivers and becomes even more important as ridership numbers increase.
- NTI added an expanded route for Fiscal Year 2023, beginning service from Browning to Great Falls on Monday weekly. The route mirrors the Thursday Orange route schedule. TCT Transit is looking to add an additional in-town service day in Shelby. Presently TCT operates in the town of Shelby on Wednesday weekly. Feasibility, passenger input and statistics have proven another in town day is necessary. TCT will look to send submittal to MDT for requesting an expanded route sometime in near future.

5. Public Involvement

- Please see attached Golden Triangle Contact Information List which defines the entities who have been invited regularly to discuss and

participate in the development of the application and Coordination Plan.

- Please see newspaper articles, NTI dedicated website, Facebook internet posting and fliers updating the public and inviting public participation.
- NTI has a dedicated Facebook page for its Passengers. Here passengers can offer feedback, share pictures from their trips with NTI, and read up on the latest policy changes or added services. NTI strives to work with the public directly by updating local political leaders in all the areas we service with annual updates. Directly NTI attends home or health care shows, attending chamber meetings or events, and just making our public we serve feel like family. The more people understand the service NTI provides for them, the more riders for the transit, and it offers them a safer way to travel. Facebook, Instagram and dedicated websites have definitely helped passengers get the information they need easier & make their own reservations.

6. Private Sector:

- There are no private transportation providers in our service area.

7. Plan for Growth and/or increase Ridership.

- Northern Transit Interlocal, in conjunction with Glacier County Transit, provides a complete transportation link from Browning to Great Falls on Thursdays, and an In-Town Route on Wednesdays in Cut Bank. We also currently have Pondera County Transit & Glacier County Transit working with Northern Transit Interlocal to provide Transportation to Kalispell from Conrad, Shelby, Cut Bank, & Browning every Tuesday and Friday weekly.
- Northern Transit Interlocal, in conjunction with Pondera County Transit, provides a link for residents of Conrad and Valier to meet with the bus to Kalispell each Tuesday & Friday. Pondera County Transit also runs to Valier on Mondays and Thursdays allowing residents in these rural towns to connect with the NTI bus going to Great Falls on Monday and Thursday.

With new protocols in place for public safety, our ridership was negatively affected in 2020. NTI Board of Directors, Transit Director

and employees alike worked hard to bounce back from the pandemic scare and bring back riders to our transportation system. Education on-line through all our internet related services, reaching out to the general public through news articles, radio, in person conversation etc., started to see more and more passengers riding with NTI. 2021 was an excellent year for NTI, ridership numbers grew and were only 16% under the record ridership numbers of 2019. 2022 was a record ridership year for NTI, giving 17,474 rides. The addition of the expanded Browning to Great Falls made a big difference in rider ship count for Fiscal Year 2023. This past year, 2024 NTI gave another new record number of rides 19,884.

- Our advertising on a bus campaign we started 3 years ago was a huge success. We now have 18 advertisers to date. Helping our local businesses is essential for the growth of not only NTI, but our communities, and business partners alike.

- Please see the attached ridership chart showing the current year's ridership in comparison to previous years.

- **8. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings:**

- The TAC meets on a quarterly basis. Meetings are advertised on the area radio station as well as published in the Regional Newspapers, Website, Facebook, & Instagram pages.

- **Please see the attached minutes:**

- **Meeting where the Coordination Plan was approved February 18, 2025**

- Please see attached organizational chart.
- Please see attached public notice.