

Hutchinson Area Transportation Services (HATS) Facility

In the late 1980's and early 1990's the City of Hutchinson, Minnesota Department of Transportation and McLeod County Highway Department were all wrestling with facility needs at the same time. Through informal and formal networks, the three agencies became aware of each other's needs. In 1991, the three agencies began laying the groundwork for unprecedented partnership effort.

A feasibility report prepared for the three agencies identified the potential for significant savings if a single, combined facility were constructed. The report forecasted additional savings for combined sand/salt storage facilities, coordinated purchasing of fuel and materials, and the potential for sharing equipment. Another key benefit identified in the report was the likelihood of increased operational efficiencies and improved coordination between the three agencies. Building cost savings of about \$1M and significant operational savings were also identified.

Formal planning for the facility began with preparation of a "Framework for Tri-Agency Agreement", prepared with input from each of the agencies. In 1994, the three agencies received a grant from the State of Minnesota Board of Government Innovation and Cooperation. This grant helped with the planning and development of the project. Joint Powers Agreements were subsequently approved by all three agencies. A Joint Powers Board consisting of 2 representatives of the City, and 1 each from the County and State, operates the Facility.

All levels of staff were involved in designing operational parameters and in the original design of the project. Construction on the facility began in the spring of 1995. On October 31, 1995 the facility was opened to the agencies and the facility became fully operational in January of 1996.

The facility continues to evolve as a successful partnership effort, with all three agencies recognizing its value to taxpayers and to their own operations. The facility includes local offices for the Minnesota State Patrol. In 1999, Mn/DOT added a significant amount of office space for their design and construction efforts in this region and added vehicle/equipment maintenance. Also in 1999, the County added vehicle/equipment maintenance. In 2001, Trailblazer Transit moved into the facility. In 2002, Mn/DOT constructed additional cold storage for the facility. In 2006, McLeod County added office space for their Highway Department, and both McLeod County and the City of Hutchinson added vehicle/equipment storage buildings on site.

This award-winning facility has been successful at serving State, County, and City operations. HATS is anticipated to continue growing as it meets future needs of partner agencies. This facility serves as a model for shared facilities statewide. Several shared facilities in Minnesota and beyond have included a visit to the HATS Facility in the early stages of their own processes.