

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 an 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. Cost savings just for building costs were estimated at \$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 two representatives from the City, and one each from the County and State, operates the Facility. All levels of staff were involved in designing operational parameters and provided input into the project's design.

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 to house design/construction personnel in this region and also added vehicle/equipment maintenance. In 1999, the County also 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 Public Works Department. In 2006, both McLeod County and the City of Hutchinson added vehicle/equipment storage buildings onsite. Since then, a variety of shop equipment has been added to enhance both building functions and vehicle maintenance capabilities.

In 2021, a legislative bonding proposal was drafted to add a 90' x 200' tempered vehicle storage building and an updated fueling site. \$6.6M is the estimated cost for the project.

This award-winning facility has successfully served 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 many from out-of-state have included a visit to the HATS Facility in the early stages of their own planning processes.

For more information please contact the City representatives on the HATS Joint Powers Board: Donovan Schuette, Public Works Manager or Justin Juergensen, Finance Director.