



URBAN AND REGIONAL STUDIES INSTITUTE
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

URBS 667: URBAN STUDIES GRADUATE STUDIO SYLLABUS, Fall, 2009

Instructors:

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Purpose of the Course:

The Urban Studies Studio (URBS 667) is not like any other course in the URSI program since it is an advanced learning experience working on an applied “real world” problem for a client. The team approach to problem-solving will be stressed. Each participant working on the project will be responsible for bringing to the group the materials, ideas, and skills that a professional planner or manager working in the public or private sector would be expected to produce. The overall project report (oral and written) and the constituent components will ultimately be brought together in the form of a professional presentation to the client, your fellow students and any other faculty who wish to attend. In the past, students have reported that, while challenging, this course was one of the most valuable experiences in their graduate education and community clients have been very pleased with the products of this Studio.

The Studio Report

One finished professional document will be required that will become part of the permanent record and will be furnished to the client and will qualify as meeting the “Capstone” requirement and the Oral Exam requirement of the Graduate College.

The Studio Class Meetings and Outcomes

The participants in the studio will meet formally every Monday afternoon from 2-5 p.m. in Morris 101. At these meetings, the teams (or sub-groups) will review their project management plan, make an oral status report on their task assignments, agree on future tasks, and work together on project design, data analysis, etc. In addition, it will be expected that team participants will meet informally outside of posted class time to work through the processes leading to the completion of the project (e.g. meet with client, conduct field research). The final requirements of the Studio will be that each team will make a formal PowerPoint presentation of the project findings to the client and to the class and will prepare a written report describing findings, conclusions, recommendations. etc.

Studio Grades

The grades for the Studio will be assigned through an evaluation done by faculty, student's peers, and the responses/feedback from the client. The final product will be evaluated by the faculty on the basis of 40% of the grade. The final presentation will be evaluated on the basis of 20% from the faculty and 10% from your peers. The overall work effort and contribution of each individual student will be evaluated on the basis of 20% peer and 10% from the faculty.

Disabilities

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a documented disability, please see the instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodations and/or contact the Disability Services Office at (507)627-3529 or (800)627-3529.

Fall 2009 Studio Project #1: Region 9 Transit Analysis

Background

Due to the concerns that many residents of the Region 9 area lack transportation accessibility to jobs, health care, shopping, etc, the officials at Region 9 Development Commission wish to examine the alternative strategies for providing improved transit services within the region. In addition, the availability of significant new federal funding for transit based on renewal of the Federal Transportation Act (called SAFETEA-LU), has driven this interest in expanding transit services. Instead of analyzing the potential for transit in the entire Region 9, the Studio team is being asked to examine the potential ridership and costs of adopting a transit system in four counties of Region 9 (Blue Earth, LeSueur, Nicollet and Waseca).

Professor Perry Wood has been involved with the regional MATAPS study (led by MnDOT, City of Mankato, Blue Earth County, etc.) which is interested in providing expanded transit services in South Central Minnesota. Professor David Laverny-Rafter has participated in several transit planning projects in the Twin Cities areas. Region 9 Development Commission is interested in working with local governments in the Region 9 area to seek solutions to common problems such as transit services

Goals of the Project

Reggie Edwards, Executive Director of Region 9 Development Commission has contacted Professor Wood at Minnesota State University Mankato and requested assistance to examine the potential for expanding transit services in 4 counties (Blue Earth, LeSueur, Nicollet, Waseca) of the Region 9 area.

Some possible goals of the Region 9 transit plan Studio would include:

- Document current transit system in Region 9 area. What forms of transit are currently being offered in the area by cities (e.g. Mankato, St. Peter, LeSueur), counties, service agencies, volunteer organizations?
- Document transit-related census data for 4 counties in Region 9.
- Document level of satisfaction of area residents with current transit service (see MATAPS study of citizens opinions on transportation).
- Document the major gaps of transit services?

- Explore alternatives for delivering new transit services (e.g. dial-a-ride, fixed route, corridor-oriented system). in the 4 focus counties
- Document potential ridership and costs related to new transit services.
- Develop a plan for implementing strategies needed to achieve new transit system

Project Elements

The study could consist of:

- Experiences of other Minnesota regions and rural areas in providing transit options. For example, Arrowhead Region in Northeastern Minnesota operates an extensive multi-county transit system.
- Compare census data on level of transit dependency (low-income, elderly, lacking auto ownership) in the four focus counties of Region, in all counties of Region 9 and in the state of Minnesota.
- Conduct internet and literature research into how small towns, rural areas and counties around the U.S. have implemented innovative transit services
- Examine new transit strategies that might be implemented in four counties of Region 9 with details on costs, ridership, scheduling, operations, etc. Interview local and regional officials as to their preferences.
- Explore federal and state grants that may be available to help finance improved transit service in Region 9 area.
- Prepare a PowerPoint presentation of findings
- Prepare a written report of findings and recommendations.

Therefore, the studio will create a plan identifying strategies needed to improve transit services in 4 counties of Region 9

Fall 2009 Studio Project #2: Analysis of MATAPS Transportation Survey

Background

Mankato Area Transportation and Planning Study (MATAPS) was completed in 2003 and is now being updated. In the past, the plan emphasized road improvements but the new plan will focus on a multi-modal perspective including pedestrian, bicycle, transit modes. A key component of the updated MATAPS will include surveys of the higher education community asking questions about travel origins and destinations, modes of travel, satisfaction with transportation, etc. This survey was conducted in Spring and Summer of 2009 and there is a strong interest among MSU, Mankato administrators in analyzing the findings in order to determine the implications for campus planning.

Professor Perry Wood has been an active member of the MSU, Mankato Space Committee and has been asked to examine the 2009 MATAPS surveys and to identify key findings related to strategic campus planning.

Goals of the Project

MATAPS is being updated with the goal of producing a plan to guide transportation policies and decision-making in the multi-county region. The partners in MATAPS include cities of Mankato and North Mankato, as well as counties of Blue Earth, Nicollet, and LeSueur, Region 9 Development Commission and MSU, Mankato. This project will analyze the survey that was conducted on the MSU, Mankato campus in 2009 to identify findings related to planning and policies on the campus.

Some possible goals of the MSU, Mankato transportation survey analysis Studio project could be:

1. Determine the relationship between how faculty, students and staff responded to various questions about travel behavior and attitudes towards area transportation (cross-tab analysis).
2. Determine transportation priorities of faculty, staff, and students at other universities based on campus survey results described in Internet searches and literature.
3. Determine transportation policies and priorities described in campus plan of MSU, Mankato and strategic plan

4. Determine changes needed based on review of the survey results.

Project Elements

The transportation survey Studio project could consist of:

- Conduct internet and literature research on transportation attitudes, policies and plans at other universities based on similar surveys.
- Conduct a cross-tab analysis of findings of the MSU, Mankato survey conducted in 2009 illustrating data findings in tables and charts.
- Summarize transportation policies described in MSU, Mankato campus plan
- Describe findings of the transportation survey in terms of implications for MSU, Mankato's transportation strategies and policies
- Prepare a PowerPoint presentation of findings
- Prepare a written report of findings and recommendations.