

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
NATIONAL LIFE BUILDING
5th FLOOR BOARD ROOM
MONTPELIER, VERMONT
September 25, 2014**

ATTENDEES: Chris Cole (Chairman), VTrans
Barb Donovan, VTrans
Dave Pelletier, VTrans
Scott Bascom, VTrans
Susan Bartlett, AHS
Representative Mollie Burke, VT State Legislature
Susan Schreibman, RRPC
Van Chesnut, AT
Robert Young, Premier Coach
Randy Schoonmaker, DVTA
Lee Cattaneo, COVE
John Sharrow, Mountain Transit
Mary Grant, RCT
Jim Moulton, ACTR/STSIVPTA
Brian Lee, UVM TRC
Samantha Tilton, UVM TRC

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Chris Cole called the meeting to order at 1:07 PM. Introductions were made.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 19, 2014

MOTION by Bob Young, SECOND by John Sharrow, to approve the minutes of 6/19/14 as written. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

3. UVM RESEARCH UPDATE

Brian Lee, UVM Transportation Research Center, and graduate student, Samantha Tilton, provided a handout summarizing the Personal Transportation Plan Pilot Project and the Veteran's Transportation Community Livability Initiative and their progress to date. The following was noted:

- The outcome of the project is to create a personal transportation planning tool to enhance mobility to individuals with physical disabilities and to improve veterans access to transportation.
- To date, existing literature, research and resources have been examined, a representative list of service providers to the target populations have been interviewed, and focus groups have met to discuss needs, hardships, and mobility.
- Themes were identified from the focus group discussions. The themes will help design a broader survey to reach out to a broader population for information.
- An overlap in themes was evident directly related to transportation and personal health or family situation (i.e. having family to help).

- Themes included independence, scheduling issues, fatigue, frustration with options, but appreciation of options, winter weather impacting mobility, isolation and the amount of work just to go out, and cost especially on incomes limited due to inability to work or retirement.
- The focus groups concurred people with physical disabilities that hinder mobility can envision the effort to get to their destination, but have fear and uncertainty about the return ride. The preferred option is to stay home and this is thought of as a safety option, not isolation.
- The focus groups gave positive feedback on SSTA and CCTA drivers who showed compassion to riders with mobility challenges.
- Next steps in the project include scheduling more focus groups and synthesizing the information into a survey to get a better representation of the target populations.

Jim Moulton asked how cost, fear, and uncertainty will be addressed with the personal transportation tool. Brian Lee explained fear is about the unknown and not having current information. The planning tool will take stock of available resources, family and/or social networks, and a backup plan. Electronic devices (Smartphone) can assist with information on resources and creating a database of information on what works for the individual.

Bob Young asked about follow up in a year to see if improvements are needed. Brian Lee said the survey instrument that will be built can be reused to track progress.

Randy Schoonmaker suggested the planning tool be sent to the support network as well as clients so all understand the entire picture. Brian Lee said the providers and clients will decide which tool works best in each case.

Susan Bartlett mentioned the accessibility of public places and the very accepting attitude in Norway toward people with disabilities. Ms. Bartlett said people need to be educated so they are comfortable around persons with disabilities. The benefits will be two-way.

There was continued discussion of the universal design of the transportation planning tool. Brian Lee invited everyone to participate in a simulation exercise to experience what it is like to board a bus in a wheelchair. Contact Barbara Donovan if interested. John Sharrow suggested having bus drivers do the simulation. Mary Grant explained the extensive training they do every year with drivers using wheelchairs and blindfolds. Brian Lee stated his research assistants are developing a list of helpful suggestions to service providers some of which are as simple as announcing the bus stop.

4. VTRANS PROGRAM UPDATES

Dave Pelletier reported VT Translines operated by Premier Coach began service June 9, 2014. There are two services: Burlington - Route 7 to Manchester, Bennington, Albany, and in Rutland - Route 4 to White River Jct. to Hanover. Both services show a steady increase in trips from June through August. The Route 7 service shows a larger increase.

Effort will be focused on making the Route 4 service more effective and efficient, but marketing will continue for both services.

Mollie Burke asked about the Connecticut River line from White River Jct. to Springfield. Dave Pelletier said the numbers have not yet been received. The matter will be pursued. Ms. Burke mentioned the signage at Exit 3 in Brattleboro for the bus station that does not exist at that location. A sign could be posted at the train station for the local bus and the inter-city bus service though. Ms. Burke also suggested marketing the connection onward with the VT Translines service. Barbara Donovan said service information is being input to Google Transit for trip planning.

Randy Schoonmaker stated all Vermont bus stops on service routes could use signage.

Barbara Donovan mentioned Greyhound may be starting routes in southern Vermont. The program in Massachusetts provides vehicles to Greyhound which is cutting costs for Vermont. Massachusetts has ramped up their program and is also doing mapping.

Van Chestnut asked if the state will go through the process to see if a route is sustainable once all the data are gathered and benchmarks established. Dave Pelletier confirmed that is the plan. The state is required to make some level of investment if there are no other alternatives and the private sector is not providing service.

Dave Pelletier reported Megabus added a new stop on their Burlington-Boston route in Montpelier at the Dog River Road Park & Ride.

Barbara Donovan took an impromptu survey of the Council to see where people look for transportation service from one destination to another. Replies included online, Greyhound schedule, links on transit providers' websites, GoVermont, the internet, Google Transit.

5. DRAFT NCSL COORDINATING COUNCILS REPORT ON VERMONT

A copy of the draft 2014 update of the State Human Service Transportation Coordinating Council Overview and State Profiles Report was provided to PTAC. Barbara Donovan said according to the report Vermont stacks up very well against the other states. The PTAC is the state coordinating council for Vermont.

Van Chestnut asked if Medicaid and CMS will be considered. Barbara Donovan will forward the comment to the state coordinating council.

6. HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PLAN

Dave Pelletier provided the Council with a handout highlighting funding, transportation gaps and issues uncovered while doing the plan update, and strategies to be prioritized. Major funding programs are intact per the data collected (E&D transportation \$5 million, statewide Medicaid nonemergency transportation \$11.7 million, DAIL/Reach Up \$2.4 million). It was noted DCF spends \$1.3 million on transportation of children served by the agency to daycare.

There was discussion of marketing and increasing a program beyond what funding and service can support. Mary Grant noted with E&D transportation they prioritize critical care and medical trips first. E&D does not have an income limitation like Medicaid, i.e. “means testing”.

Randy Schoonmaker suggested looking at reclassifying methadone trips as critical care trips. Dave Pelletier noted more methadone clinics are being opened in more places and that is having an impact.

Jim Moulton suggested under coordination strategies volunteer driver recruitment and retention is the first priority followed by implementation of statewide software and Smartphone apps.

Dave Pelletier will email the handout to the Council. Feedback is requested by October 3, 2014. The draft plan will be sent to the Council for discussion at the next meeting.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Meeting Schedule

There was discussion of holding three PTAC meetings in the year rather than four meetings as legislated. A change in the legislation is needed to change the meeting schedule.

Next Meeting

Barbara Donovan will forward proposed meeting dates.

Meeting on Transportation Costs by State Agencies

Susan Bartlett reported on a meeting with Agency of Human Services that provide transportation services. Accrued cost to the state for transportation services by these agencies is \$20 million. The objective of the meeting was to figure out a comprehensive system of transportation for the people who are served. The outcome of the discussion strongly suggested the best approach is to provide the people served with an affordable car of their own. Jim Moulton pointed out \$240 million is spent on personal automobile ownership and maintenance in Addison County to make the point that \$20 million, while a significant amount of money, is still a fraction of what individuals spend on automobile transportation cumulatively.. The focus should be how to change the transportation system to achieve the goals.

8. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 3:08 PM.