

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
VTrans Ground Floor Meeting Room
National Life Building
Montpelier, Vermont
March 15, 2018**

ATTENDEES: Barbara Donovan, VTrans
Dave Pelletier, VTrans
Jackie Cassino, VTrans
Ross MacDonald, VTrans
Dan Dutcher, VTrans
Time Bradshaw, VTrans
Richard Amore, ACCD
Lee Cattaneo, COVE
Brittany Whitaker, VEIL
Van Chesnut, Advance Transit
Chip Desautels, Premier/VT Translines
Peter Johnke, VCIL
Michael Harrington, VDOL
Dave Lahr, VDOL
Jim Moulton, Tri-Valley Transit [via telephone]
Donna Baker, GMCN [via telephone]
Elaine Haytko, VPTA [via telephone]
Mollie Burke, Legislature
Wendy Harrison, SEVT
Erica Roper, WRC

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS

Barbara Donovan called the meeting to order at 1:10 PM. Introductions were done.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 17, 2017

MOTION by Peter Johnke, SECOND by Michael Harrington, to approve the minutes of 12/17/17 as presented. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

3. PUBLIC TRANSIT POLICY PLAN

Jackie Cassino, VTrans, gave an overview of the Public Transit Policy Plan used to make decisions on implementing and funding transit projects. The Public Transit Plan is part of the broader Long Range Transportation Plan. VTrans executive staff, PTAC, Regional Planning, and an internal working group are involved in the plan update. Input is gathered from regional organizations and focus groups. The update is projected to take up to 18 months. Key milestones will be reported to PTAC.

4. LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Dave Pelletier, VTrans, reported on the update of the 2040 Vermont Long Range Transportation Plan. The long range plan contains all components of the transportation system and is a long term (20 year) view. The long range plan guides development of other transportation plans and establishes priorities and direction for VTrans. The update began in 2017 with stakeholder meetings. Existing conditions were reviewed and future trends reported. Meetings were held with regional planning transportation advisory committees (TAC). Goals, objectives, and strategies for the plan are being drafted in 2018. Meetings will again be held with stakeholders, TACs, and the public. The final draft will be available summer of 2018. Vision 2040 supports a safe, reliable, accessible, multimodal transportation system that enhances Vermont's quality of life, public health, and economic well-being. Changes in the state for consideration in the plan include the population demographic (aging and growing slowly), funding, energy and environment (transportation is the largest use of energy and source of greenhouse gas emissions in the state; the state has been experiencing heavy precipitation events), alternate fuels and technology (electric and autonomous vehicles). The state is grappling with lower revenue from the gas tax due to the increased number of electric vehicles on the road so other options for revenue generation are being considered, such as vehicle miles traveled. Existing conditions, trends, stakeholder and Regional Planning TACs input are the themes the long range plan is based on with the goals of safety/security, system preservation and optimization, mobility options, economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and livable, healthy communities. Information on the plan is posted on the VTrans webpage.

Rep. Molly Burke mentioned the bill she introduced to incentivize the purchase of electric vehicles by offering a sales tax holiday and one cent per kilowatt hour for charging.

5. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

Mike Harrington and Dave Lahr with the Department of Labor gave a briefing on the workforce development offered by the Department of Labor for both the employer and the employee. The services are mainly designed for un- or under-employed people, but the training program, VCCD, is to help those already employed. Services include helping people find a job, helping employers find suitable employees, and helping individuals with training needs. There are pilot programs in electric, plumbing, and house building. The majority of the funding for the program is federal (92%). The state has 12 American Job Centers across the state (offices were formerly known as employment & training or the unemployment office). The offices list job orders (ads), do customized hiring, do job fairs, and hold hiring events. Transportation in Vermont has come a long way in the past 30 years. The system needs a workforce to support it so people can get to their jobs. Technology is moving at a rapid pace and people need to be trained to work on the new equipment. The state program includes on-the-job training (state offsets costs from 10%-50%) and the work experience program where the state covers wages and workers compensation for the employer while the employee receives job training and work experience. Vermont has a low unemployment rate so the talent already has employment. It is difficult to reach disenfranchised youth. The Department of Labor welcomes any opportunities for pilot programs.

Erica Roper, WRC, asked if a workforce transportation analysis has been done. Dave Lahr said the statistics can be compiled. Barb Donovan said there is a lack of drivers and mechanics in the industry. VTrans is looking at accepting military licenses for passenger transportation. Mike Harrington noted there is a gap between what is needed and what is available. There is discussion of talent pipeline management through ACCD, Dept. of Education, and Dept. of Labor to see where the industry is going in five to 10 years and the education and skills that are needed. Education and licensure takes up to six years.

Lee Cattaneo, COVE, suggested allowing people interested in driving a bus and working toward licensure to be involved at 18 years old rather than 21 years old. Barb Donovan agreed this is worth further discussion. There is a program through the Federal Transportation Administration for developing employees for the transit industry. Ms. Donovan will provide information on the last application process.

Rep. Molly Burke mentioned the continuing education and professional development requirement for childcare providers who typically are not making a livable wage. There are also the problems of limited availability of childcare and lack of transportation to childcare. Canada offers free childcare. This would be a big investment for the state, but would be well worth it.

Chip Desautels, Translines, spoke of the need for drivers with a CDL because current drivers are nearing retirement. It is difficult to find qualified workers. Transline may train an individual for a CDL if the right person is found. Mike Harrington said the Vermont Training Program could be helpful to offset labor costs during the training period.

Rep. Molly Burke asked if drivers using medical marijuana are disqualified. Chip Desautels said the federal requirement of a random drug test must be passed or the individual is eliminated from the potential pool of drivers. Barb Donovan said reports of drug or alcohol impaired drivers are rare and usually are during the pre-employment period.

6. UPDATE ON MOD PROJECT

Ross MacDonald gave an update on the Mobility On Demand (MOD) project which is a trip planner for transit trips captured on Google Maps. The information would be helpful to ACCD, Dept. of Labor, and other agencies in the state. A grant was received to address the rural aspect of MOD using GTFA Flex data. The vision is to have a publicly owned "Travelocity" that shows all modes of transportation in the state (open trip planner using open source data). Currently only transit is shown, but taxis, Uber, shuttles, vanpools will be added this calendar year. Intercity connections are part of the next phase. There are two pilots underway on real time locator function. Estimated cost for available modes is not shown yet. Those with a smartphone can access the trip planner app. Those without a computer can use the GoVT or Efficiency Vermont call center. Data on origins and destinations, length of stay, trip bookings, number of site hits, and such are being tabulated.

Ross MacDonald will check to see if Greyhound is in the project.

7. VW SETTLEMENT FUNDS

Dan Dutcher, Policy Manager, reported on the use of funds from the VW settlement for reporting false emission data. Vermont is seeking to invest in a site for a fast charger for electric vehicles. The formula for payout to individual states is based on the number of VW diesel cars operating in the state with fraudulent emission systems. Vermont is to receive \$18.7 million in the settlement and up to 15% (\$2.8 million) can be dedicated to electric light vehicle charging equipment (the state is trying to buildout the electric vehicle charging infrastructure). ANR is administering the trust funds. In addition to the electric vehicle supply point it is likely an RFP will be done for two electric bus pilot programs, one for public transit and one for a school bus. There may also be money for replacing older diesel vehicles with electric buses. The goal is to reduce noxious emissions. At issue is the newer diesels are cleaner than the older diesels, but the long range goal is to electrify fleets.

Erica Roper asked if there is data on the age of fleets for all the diesel vehicles. Barb Donovan said there is \$18 million worth of needs. The lifespan of a bus is typically 12 years. A bus must be a model year 2009 to quality. The state is working carefully to be ready when the funds are available.

Information on the settlement is posted on the ANR and VW settlement webpage.

8. ROUTE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Tim Bradshaw, VTrans, stated every year a route performance report must be done. Data are compiled from providers throughout the state. There are seven systems in the state. The report helps VTrans ensure the public transit investment is spent well across the state. There are various types of routes: commuter routes (rural and urban), tourism routes, volunteer drivers for demand response rides. Urban service has the largest number of routes. Chittenden County makes up a significant portion of the transit routes. Costs have increased 24% and ridership fluctuates. Cost per trip increased 12% in FY17. Operating costs have remained steady. E&D cost was \$4.15 million in FY17 (80% cover by federal funding). The average E&D cost/trip is \$23.37. Having volunteer drivers reduces cost. Volunteer drivers covered 43% of the E&D rides in FY17, van rides covered 38% and buses covered 16%. The number of E&D rides is highest in Chittenden County followed by Rutland, Windsor, and Grand Isle/Essex. The Vermont transit system met the performance standards in FY17 for productivity and cost effectiveness. The complete route performance report is posted on the website.

Erica Roper asked if user cost or fare data was analyzed for affordability by the user. Barb Donovan said not every route or system charges a fare. The fares are all heavily subsidized. Half of the Medicaid trips were for opioid users.

Van Chesnut, AT, commented on the difference in policy between Vermont and New Hampshire, and the value of the route performance report.

Peter Johnke urged looking at the volunteer driver issue statewide due to the difficulty in finding drivers. Barb Donovan pointed out typically people who volunteer like to drive and like people. It is easier to find drivers in rural area. Also, the lower the unemployment the lower the volunteerism. Vermont's unemployment rate is low.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Budget

Barb Donovan report the FY19 budget shows a small increase and includes \$750,000 in federal money and \$75,000 in state money mainly due to changes in capital. VTrans is trying to decrease administrative costs.

Legislative Update

Barb Donovan reported no significant legislation has been presented.

Next Meeting(s)

- June 21, 2018 – Montpelier (joint meeting with TPI)
- September 20, 2018 – Montpelier
- December 13, 2018 - Montpelier

Agenda items:

Budget and Legislation

Reporting and Goal Setting

Research and New Initiatives

Planning Initiatives

10. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 3:35 PM.

RScty: MRiordan