

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
VTrans Davis Building
Montpelier, Vermont
March 16, 2017**

ATTENDEES: Joe Flynn, VTrans
Michele Boomhower, VTrans
Barbara Donovan, VTrans
Ross MacDonald, VTrans
Tim Bradshaw, VTrans
Amy Rast, VTrans
Jackie Cassino, VTrans
Mark Sousa, GMT
Sarah Thayer, RCT
Mary Grant, VPTA
Jim Moulton, ACTR/STSI
Randy Schoonmaker, DVTA
Peter Johnke, VCIL
Lee Cattaneo, COVE
Katharine Otto, SWCRPC
Chip Desautels, VT Translines
Michael Harrington, VDOL
Mike Tuller, RRPC
Daniel Currier, CVRPC
Marshall Distel, CCRPC
Robert Moore, LCPC, GMT, RCT
Josh Donabedian, ACRPC
Gary Holloway, ACCD
Mollie Burke, Legislature
John Sharrow
Bethany Whitaker

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS

Michele Boomhower called the meeting to order at 1 PM and introduced Joe Flynn, newly appointed Secretary of Transportation. Joe Flynn briefly reviewed his background with the Agency of Transportation and Public Safety, and stressed his commitment to maintaining quality of service in Vermont.

2. MEMBERSHIP/REAPPOINTMENTS

Barbara Donovan said word has not yet been received on (re)appointments by the Governor's Office to the Public Transit Advisory Council for members whose terms have expired.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 15, 2016

MOTION by Peter Johnke, SECOND by Jim Moulton, to approve the minutes of 12/15/16 as written. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

4. BUDGET ISSUES, QUESTIONS, EXPANSION ABILITY

Barbara Donovan reported there were slight increases on the state portion of the budget. The budget amount is about the same as last year (level funded). The capital line item is slightly less in the proposed budget than in the previous budget.

Michele Boomhower reported the House passed H.494 (transportation bill) which includes the Public Transit budget. The Senate Transportation Committee has taken testimony, but has not yet acted on the budget.

5. LEGISLATION, DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS, BUS REGISTRATION FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT CHANGE

Barbara Donovan said staff requested a change in how state funds are distributed to providers so there is flexibility and this seemed to be favorably received by the legislature. Grant amounts will not change unless there is a mid-year adjustment. Staff also requested a change in registration for the 100 mile from the base requirement. Twenty-two (22) new routes have been added in the last five years so the system has expanded to the limits of the budget. Staff is trying to find funds through greater efficiencies to cover further expansion.

Rep. Molly Burke spoke about the VW resettlement money that must be used for specific purposes. There is a bill in the legislature that is proposing an RFP be done to hire an administrator to assure the money is used as specified and not used for other purposes. The legislature is also working on safety issues dealing with marijuana, , and lowering the BAC to .05 with any traceable amount of THC in the human system. To date there is no reliable standard for marijuana and the BAC for any type of school bus is .02. Commercial vehicle limit is .04. There is also a bill regarding liability for moving a vehicle involved in an accident on the highway.

Barbara Donovan suggested possible uses for the VW money could be for public transit non-diesel buses or as in-kind money for state providers.

6. REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

Dan Currier reported CVRPC is working on the Next Generation Plan and reaching out to human services and health care agencies serving underserved populations to figure out which routes are working and which are not. CVRPC is working with the Transportation Advisory Committee.

Mark Sousa, GMT, said his company is doing a route analysis and holding public meetings in all five counties in the system. GMT is working with the regional planning commissions. Recommendations will be submitted to the GMT Board. A fare analysis is also being done. Cost to implement any changes will be identified.

Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission

Katharine Otto reviewed the A to B Mobility Project. SWRRPC is a 10 town region. A study was done of how people get from point A to point B. Existing services (over 40 different services) and solutions for gaps were identified. An interactive online map of the service areas is needed as is a process to update the service information on a regular basis.

Michele Boomhower asked about opportunity for organizations to link together. Katharine Otto said there are opportunities. Stakeholders need to be known.

Barbara Donovan mentioned the need to ensure in the planning of facilities that covered archways are high enough to accommodate accessible buses and vans.

Marble Valley Regional Planning Commission

Mike Tuller reported public hearings on route changes have been held and underperforming route times have been shifted.

There was discussion of recruitment and retention of drivers, especially with an aging workforce, and agreement a qualified driver is a valuable commodity. The labor market for drivers is tight. Drivers must get a CDL and pass drug tests. VT Translines has increased the starting pay rate to \$20 per hour to attract drivers and starting pay for wash bay employees is \$15 per hour to get people who are dependable. Mary Grant said they are not experiencing a driver shortage in the Northeast Kingdom. Two to three drivers are volunteering per week and there is a backlog of van drivers. Department of Labor, the Chamber, and the schools have been helpful.

There was discussion of finding qualified mechanics. Master mechanics are aging and retiring. GMT is bringing in apprentices to be trained by the master mechanics. Vehicles today are complicated with computer technology. Joe Flynn mentioned pooling mechanic resources at a common facility and charging businesses for the service. Mark Sousa said union contracts would be a hurdle. Mary Grant said they sub out maintenance work on the vehicles.

Jim Moulton pointed out public transit has a long history of collaboration, especially with equipment procurement, and this has saved money. The group looks for innovative ways to meet challenges and cut costs.

Barbara Donovan said there is no certificate for public transit management so everyone is trained on the job. It would be good for schools to offer a certificate program.

Rep. Molly Burke mentioned the provision in the Transportation Bill for an autonomous vehicle that does not need a driver. The legislature is discussing the issue of aging snowplow drivers who will be retiring and career centers working with apprentices at younger ages.

7. TRANSIT PROVIDER UPDATES

Randy Schoonmaker said the newest park-and-ride in Rockingham (48 car lot) is complete. A 10,000 s.f. addition will be done to the 16,000 s.f. maintenance facility for maintenance, wash, fueling, and storage. Permitting is complete. All the financing is nearly in place. Barbara Donovan commented on the difficulty in marketing transit service if the vehicles are not clean and well maintained so wash bays are critical. Randy Schoonmaker added the bus wash and rinse coat will help preserve the vehicle over the long term so the investment will pay off.

There was mention of public transit service during the recent snow storm (safe and slow). There was good communication between drivers and service alerts helped people get on the right bus. Chip Desautels said VT Translines had no service for two days during the storm due to connecting service (the company will not take a passenger to a dead-end point). Riders with tickets were contacted about the service shut down. Barbara Donovan said VTrans did not receive a single complaint about public transit service during the storm.

8. VTRANS UPDATES

Route Performance Report

Tim Bradshaw reviewed the route performance report on urban, small town, and demand response rides in the state. Elderly & Disabled (E&D) is separate. The following was noted:

- In 2016, 4.7 million riders were served.
- There was a 6% decrease in ridership this past year because of the poor ski season. The numbers are up for 2017.
- Ridership trends are positive and steady. The transit system has experienced growth.
- Ridership showed a peak in FY2013 and has declined in subsequent years.
- Transit costs have been rising (21% on the whole). In 2016, \$28.7 million was spent.
- Operation cost per service category remained steady in 2016 except for intercity service introduced in FY2015. Cost per trip show the tourism, urban, and volunteer services to be the most cost effective and are lower than the statewide averages. Intercity and demand service have the highest cost, but both improved in cost effectiveness in FY2016.
- The E&D Program spent \$3.5 million for 174,000 rides (\$20 per passenger trip). There has been a significant increase in volunteer drivers. Having volunteer drivers is cost efficient. E&D trips include adult daycare, non-Medicaid medical trips, critical care dialysis, and social/personal trips.
- Vermont public transit services met route level performance standards. There are a few routes not meeting the standards and these routes are being reviewed.

Public Transit Incentive Program

Amy Rast explained the public transit incentive pilot program to improve route performance and decrease cost per trip. KFH Group is the consultant hired to do the pilot. Creativity is encouraged in each region and the reward is based on one or more service categories. Roll out of the program is FY2018.

Mobility on Demand (MOD) Grant

Ross MacDonald report MOD uses Google transit maps and open data and open source. All fixed routes in Vermont are captured. Flexible routes and demand services are not captured. The program wants to expand to include better public knowledge of services, more accurate trip planning, and better service provided to the public. VTrans will work with transit providers for feedback on how to present information and book a ride through Hail and Ride and Deviated Fixed Routes. The objective is to have more transit information in the GTFS open trip planner. The program should be running by December 2017.

Mark Sousa said the rural rollout of the GMT Routseshout Program is expected in a couple of months.

Intercity Progress

Barbara Donovan reported:

- A meeting is scheduled with Amtrak to discuss the Bennington thru bus service to the rail station in Albany, how to book tickets, and ticket revenue to the state.
- A grant was received to improve access to medical appointments through the Rides to Wellness Program. A bid will be awarded to determine a structured process that can be measured.
- Grant applications are going out (five year application process). This will help with building future budgets and planning.

9. OTHER BUSINESS*Department of Labor*

Mike Harrington with the Department of Labor said the department is willing to help/support work force development via internships, apprenticeships, training, certifications. Mr. Harrington will give a presentation at the next PTAC meeting.

Federal Transportation Budget

The federal transportation budget cuts appropriation to state transportation departments by 13% which impacts Amtrak, New Starts, and capital items.

Next Meeting(s)

June 15, 2017 – Location to be announced.

Agenda: Reporting and Goal Setting, Joint Meeting with TPI, Department of Labor Connections

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by John Sharrow, SECOND by Mark Sousa, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM.

RScty: MRIordan