

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
NATIONAL LIFE BUILDING
5th FLOOR BOARD ROOM
MONTPELIER, VERMONT
September 19, 2013**

ATTENDEES:

Barb Donovan, VTrans
Dave Pelletier, VTrans
Ross MacDonald, VTrans
Scott Bascom, VTrans
Susan Bartlett, AHS
Bill Clark, DVHA
Will Rowe, DAIL
Bill Watterson, CCTA
Robert Young, Premier Coach
Jim Moulton, ACTR
Randy Schoonmaker, DVTA
Jim Ware, GMCN
Rebecca Gagnon, CRT
Minga Dana, MVRTD
Susan Russell, CVCOA
Van Chesnut, AT
Paola Pekalde, UVM
Brian Lee, UVM
Senator Jane Kitchell, Vermont Legislature
Lee Cattaneo, COVE
Mary Grant, RCT
John Sharow, Mountain Transit
Peter Johnke, VCIL
Jamie Feehan, VPTA

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS

In the absence of Chairman Chris Cole, Barbara Donovan called the meeting to order at 1:08 PM. Introductions were made. Barb Donovan asked the council to consider having a theme for each meeting. The present meeting theme would be 'research'. The theme for the meeting in January could be 'budget' and 'Act 250 involvement'.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 20, 2012

MOTION by Jim Moulton, SECOND by Bob Young, to approve the minutes of 6/20/13 as written. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

3. VTRANS PUBLIC TRANSIT PROGRAM UPDATES

Dave Pelletier reported:

- The Public Transit Section has published the availability of grant funds for the operation of three intercity bus corridors connecting Rutland to White River Jct.,

Route 7 on the western side of the state from Albany, NY to Burlington, and continuing service from White River Jct. to Springfield, MA. There was good attendance at the public meeting held for potential bidders. The Public Transit webpage has the questions/answers from the public meeting, a timeline, and the original request for proposals.

John Sharro asked how public transit providers subsidized by the administration versus private carriers are handled. Barb Donovan said fully allocated costs are being requested so the comparison is “apples to apples”.

- Staff is working with a consultant to refine the scope of work to update the Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP) to define this type of transportation, identify needs, suggest solutions to provide as much service as possible. PTAC is the advisory committee on the update of the plan. There will also be targeted outreach, focus groups, regional planning involvement.

Senator Kitchell asked about compliance with Map 21. Dave Pelletier explained there are no substantive changes in programs. Map 21 authorization did roll JARC and New Freedom programs into 5311 non-urbanized rural transportation program. Elderly & Disabled (E&D) remains separate. The plan needs to be updated because any need for a project must be reflected in the plan in order to be in compliance with Map 21. Sen. Kitchell mentioned adult day programs and the hourly rate paid (\$15) being low for the level of care needed. The cost of transporting cannot be underwritten. Medicaid will not cover moderate need people, only high need. Senator Kitchell reminded the group of the \$100,000 in critical care money set aside annually in the Public Transit budget. The waiver needs to be modified to include transportation. Barb Donovan assured the issue of need will be mentioned in the plan update.

Peter Johnke, VCIL, asked if there are cost allocation changes planned to address the issue of unexpected impacts on charges, especially to the Ticket-to-Ride program. As modes are adjusted for ride sharing (i.e. volunteer to wheelchair accessible vans which are more expensive) the current cost allocation process causes other rides to pay more. Mr. Johnke asked if better coordination of rides will cause programs such as Ticket-to-Rider to cost more because the number of trips divided by the number of riders should be a wash or less even if the cost of the entire bus trip is more or whether the cost will be greater to the rider because the mode itself is more expensive.

Van Chestnut suggested the plan be more general with goals and policies so as not to exclude any worthwhile projects.

- KFH Group is compiling data on routes and performance and will prepare a report for the legislature by mid-January 2014. This is an annual report required by VTrans through state statute. PTAC will review the report prior to going to the legislature. Efforts are made to improve routes that are not performing well before the route is eliminated.
- Ross MacDonald reported Go Vermont has entered into a contract for service along the Connecticut River Valley for outreach services. CATMA in Chittenden County, Addison County, and Upper Valley have a TMA in place to react to business in the state and provide information on efficient modes of transportation. Go Vermont looked into taxi or rental cars for the Guaranteed Ride Home Program. Google Transit is the best search engine. Information will be added on how to get assistance.
- Way-to-Go Vermont commuter challenge will be held in the fall to examine participation in public transit. The website is: waytogovermont.org. Posters advertising the event are available.
- Phase 1 of the trip planner service includes Google Transit, GTFS files for all routes, and maintenance and update of information. Phase 2 is going out to bid for the best trip planner available at the current time. There are some providers on Google Transit already.

4. PLANNING STUDIES WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

Brian Lee reported on studies being conducted through UVM Transportation Research Center to determine how to use the public transit system more efficiently, assess successes, and make improvements to the tools. There are four phases:

- Assessment of baseline accessibility. People with disabilities and support systems will be contacted on how well needs are being addressed, the providers, and level of service. Existing literature is being reviewed to know the situation across the country for this population. There is overlap with the elderly population, but the focus of the study and the pilot program is on people with disabilities.
- Chittenden County, though not as rural as the rest of the state, is an opportunity for the pilot program because there are areas within Chittenden County that are rural. The pilot will allow a foothold and sharpening of tools before moving to other parts of the state. Chittenden County also allows doing things on a smaller budget with more efficiency and provides a cross-section of sampling in the state as a starting point.
- Other federally funded research projects on transportation by the Transportation Research Center at UVM include:
 - Refugee population transportation issues
 - Veterans
 - Senior access to healthcare and obstacles
 - Transit availability statewide
 - Latent demand for intercity service (tourism travel, overnight travel, travel outside the area for services not available in home town)

Barb Donovan explained the goal is to do an analysis, create a planning process for the focus group, do a performance analysis of what worked or not, and then move to the next group, eventually covering the entire state.

Van Chestnut observed doing an analysis comparing perception to reality is good. Brian Lee agreed, adding part of the study is to expose information gaps.

Rebecca Gagnon asked if physical and mental disabilities are included in the focus group. Brian Lee said these are subgroups. The researchers will work with the state independent living council to determine what is reasonable within a 12 month timeframe.

Jim Moulton asked if all modes of transportation are being considered in order to find the best practical solutions. Brian Lee confirmed this, adding the researchers want to know actual travel modes, characteristics for people to use a common carrier mode, how people access information and are connected to information as part of the mode choice, how people make their plans, and what they need to make a trip with this mode of transportation. Age, household, income, social demographics, and other factors are considered. Mr. Moulton suggested an update on the studies by Professor Lee be included on future PTAC meeting agendas. Brian Lee agreed to forward information to Barb Donovan on items of interest.

Peter Johnke stressed information being accessible to all is key. Rebecca Gagnon added other ways to access the information should also be included.

Sen. Kitchell urged being concrete on how the data and findings are applicable to questions that will have to be grappled with in forming policy. Examples should be included.

5. GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON SUCCESSFUL AGING

Will Rowe, Disability Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), a department with the Agency of Human Services, reported:

- The Governor's Commission on Successful Aging is an Executive Order commission with a cross-section of commissioners including interested parties and competences, Department of Health, VTrans, UVM Council on Aging, Department of Labor, AAA, and AARP.
- One charge of the commission is to encourage an effort to engage mature workers (55+ years of age) in Vermont's workforce (i.e. how Vermont as a community and state government can better engage mature workers in the workforce).
- Recommendations will involve and focus on seniors (65+ years of age) in health care reform and significant concerns with health care given healthcare reform. Dental, vision, and hearing are not covered by Medicare.
- Efforts and initiatives to promote livable communities in Vermont must address mobility, housing (affordable, senior housing), and social integration (staying engaged with friends, family, and community).

- Toby Young is chairman of the subcommittee focusing on identifying efforts and initiatives already underway for ‘livable communities’ and assessing what is needed to succeed, identifying gaps and barriers in moving forward and doing what can be done to employ ‘livable community’ and ‘complete streets’ concepts.
- Baby boomers are now seniors and living longer. The health care system, housing, and transportation system must be ready to address needs.
- Other subcommittees of the commission are work force subcommittee and livable community subcommittee.

Van Chestnut commented on senior housing being built in outlying areas with no bus service and no funding for bus service. Planning at the community level is necessary to avoid this situation. Will Rowe agreed there is an education gap. The commission is trying to provide information.

Susan Bartlett stated federal reductions are having an impact. Transportation is key for seniors and people with disabilities so best use of money and resources to maintain quality of life in urban, suburban, and rural areas must be practiced. It is more difficult for seniors to remain in rural areas and many would move if there was a place to go.

Senator Kitchell commented tapping resources within the community is vital (i.e. volunteer drivers, snow shoveling for seniors, stacking wood). Other ways to utilize traditional responses to aging needs to be identified. When policy is set all collateral impacts must be reviewed.

6. UPDATE ON AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

Bill Clarke introduced Susan Bartlett, his replacement at DVHA. Mr. Clarke reported 35,000 people will be transferred from Vermont Health Plan and Catamount into Medicaid in order to be eligible for public transportation through the Medicaid transportation program. All are not expected to qualify for rides, but an increase in ridership to some extent is anticipated. It is felt infrastructure can meet demand and money is in the budget to serve more people.

7. PUBLIC TRANSIT PLANS FOR SFY14

Discussion will include:

- Act 250 process and transit as a part of the Act 250 application
- Impact fees
- State of funding for transportation (Map 21 solutions to meet funding priorities)
- Electronic information websites by transit providers and ensuring information is accessible
- Full representation at PTAC meetings
- Holding PTAC meetings closer to the statehouse so legislators can attend
- Sending out information via email between meeting dates
- Safety
- Transportation planning initiative and regional planning

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Peter Johnke, SECOND by Jim Moulton, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:08 PM.

RScty: MRiordan