

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
Marble Valley Regional Transit District
158 Spruce Street
Rutland, Vermont
June 16, 2016**

ATTENDEES: Chris Cole, VTrans
Barb Donovan, VTrans
Minga Dana, MVRTD
Ken Putnam, MVRTD
Ed Bove, RRPC
Sandy Thorp, RCT
John Sharrow, Mt. Transit
Bob Young, Premier Coach
Jamie Feehan, VPTA
Mary Grant, RCT
Van Chesnut, AT
Jim Moulton, ACTR/STSI
Randy Schoonmaker, SEVT
Mark Sousa, GMTA
Matt Mann, WRPC
Lee Cattaneo, COVE
Mollie Burke, Legislature

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS

Chris Cole called the meeting to order at 1:10 PM. Introductions were made.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 17, 2016

MOTION by Jim Moulton, SECOND by John Sharrow, to approve the minutes of 3/17/16 as written. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

3. MINGA DANA, MVRTD

Minga Dana and Ken Putnam welcomed all to MVRTD and the newly upgraded facility. There was discussion of MVRTD adding routes to Castleton College to accommodate additional needs. Minga Dana said the selectboard for the Town of Castleton does not want any more expansion in the town, but the college wants the expansion. Rutland Economic Development Corp has been working with Castleton. The towns the bus travels through are interested in additional runs. Representative Russell supported the project.

Barb Donovan announced state funding for the route in the amount of \$73,000 has been approved as part of CMAQ funds. Since 2011 there have been 15 new routes started across the state. More will be starting in July. The routes have been successful. VTrans is maxed out on funding, state and federal, so expansion is not possible without finding new

and clever ways to deliver services. Ridership is growing. The service is delivering what people need, but there are costs.

Chris Cole stated the Manchester to Bennington route is to be funded this year. Vermont received a planning grant in 2011 to look at connecting Bennington-Manchester-Rutland via rail. The preferred alternative was a separate train from Rutland-Bennington-Manchester-Albany and the Ethan Allen Express going to Saratoga as another separate train. The state has a vision for a train route on the western corridor, but there are hurdles so there is intercity bus service from Manchester-North Bennington-Bennington-Albany to the Amtrak station in Albany. The bus will wait if the train is late. The service will be put out to bid in FY17. The bus service will have through tickets with Amtrak so the service is seamless for passengers. Brattleboro and Bennington have greater economic development opportunity being closer to New York City versus northern portions of the state. As opportunities grow the state needs to be thinking how to connect.

Chris Cole gave a brief update on train service to Montreal. The Canadian government introduced legislation to change the laws and establish pre-clearance. The United States needs to do the same. The station in Montreal will be upgraded.

Chris Cole mentioned a study of a commuter train from St. Albans to Montpelier is in Year 1 of a two year study.

4. VTRANS STRATEGIC PLAN

Chris Cole reviewed components of the strategic plan, including the mission, vision (investment across modes to support economic development), goals (goals 1-5 apply to public transit), objectives, strategies, actions. The state has doubled investment in routes. Projects are under design and permitting now. The strategic plan is the bible. All is linked back to the strategic plan.

Strategies for meeting public transit goals were reviewed. The strategic plan helps determine if performance standards are being met or not. Barb Donovan briefed the group on the route performance measures that are in place driven by the standard for number of riders and cost per trip. Under performing routes will have to change or be eliminated. Riders will be helped to find a different ride.

The transit providers in attendance made positive comment on the route performance measures.

Barb Donovan gave an update on the procurement of buses. GMTA led the process for purchase medium sized buses. A good price was secured due to the large purchase. GMTA is also taking the lead on purchasing larger buses. Mark Sousa, GMTA, said New Hampshire DOT is included in the procurement so the purchase is large. John Sharrow asked about leasing buses. Barb Donovan said there have not been dramatic changes in the standard bus in order to lease. Electric buses excepted. Chris Cole said the feds are interested in owning the asset. Money has been saved by doing statewide procurement. The program is good and working well.

Chris Cole noted each state agency is required to decrease energy use. Barb Donovan added the state has to plan on how to reduce vehicle miles traveled, increasing ridership, and decreasing single occupancy vehicle miles traveled. The Accountability Act is where performance measures come into play. Transit uses ridership and cost per ride.

Other planning activities include Go Vermont as a clearing house of transit information, a grant to improve mobility of people who need to get to doctor appointments or medical treatments, a grant for mobility on demand (bus, carpool, vanpool). There is also AVL (automatic vehicle location), statewide trip planning. Technology will drive performance measures and change why people are willing to use transit. Chris Cole noted VTrans has been working on quality customer service. Knowing who the customer is and the needs will allow the service that is needed to be provided. VTrans is always working to get out deliverables as promised.

Mary Grant mentioned dealing with high end users with drug issues and her staff receiving threats on a regular basis. Staff must be trained to de-escalate situations. Customer service is a challenge in today's world. Video systems have been a lifesaver to keep vehicles and drivers safe. Chris Cole said there is training information available for drivers. Mark Sousa said GMTA partnered with Vermont State Police hostage negotiators for de-escalation training with drivers. Barb Donovan said de-escalation training can be added to the RTAP training. John Sharrow said there are programs on dealing with special needs passengers.

5. AHS TRANSPORTATION ACTIVITIES

Barb Donovan showed the directive to have DVHA do a detailed analysis of Medicaid non-emergency transportation services for the Joint Fiscal Committee. There is potential for big changes. Chris Cole said if Medicaid transits are put out to bid a transit agency will still be the service provider.

Lee Cattaneo said COVE met with representative of the Green Mountain Care Board and discussed the all payer waiver, transportation, and how much it costs to go to the doctor or hospital for appointments. Green Mountain Care Board feels people are using emergency services and have no way to get home so emergency services are bringing them home and looking for ways to pay through the all payer waiver. Barb Donovan said if the mobility grant works then a list can be given to the hospitals and Green Mountain Care Board. Mary Grant said in the Northeast Kingdom volunteer drivers bring people home from the hospital or a doctor appointment and get paid by the appropriate agency (i.e. hospital, Medicaid, E&D). Chris Cole said he will inform Al Gobeille of the situation with Medicaid trips.

Chris Cole mentioned the consolidation of dispatch centers (PCAP). There has not been a problem with 911 calls being lost and the state has seen savings. The call program for Medicaid is centralized as part of the AHS transportation RFP. Multiple dispatch centers for transit agencies could be consolidated. Mark Sousa said the RFP does not address coordinated transportation which is baffling. Chris Cole said by FY17 the study must be

complete before a contract can be executed. The contract can be done in FY18 so the new administration has a chance to weigh in, but CMS is not backing down on putting Medicaid non-emergency transportation out to bid. CMS feels decoupling with transit provides cheaper Medicaid transportation. Jim Moulton said decoupling will mean fixed costs will be fully allocated against 5311 and similar transportation programs. Chris Cole commented how the RFP is structured to get to a program that benefits the users is critical.

Jim Moulton mentioned for profit versus non-profit transit providers and the lack of understanding by people reviewing the RFP having an adverse impact on communities being served and on Medicaid rides. Chris Cole said if the Joint Fiscal Committee does not approve the fiscal analysis because it is not sufficient then the legislature will not approve the study and the contract will not be executed. VTrans recognizes transit provider costs could be impacted. Jim Moulton suggested using the understanding of the impact ahead of time to make the decision on the assessment.

John Sharrow mentioned privatizing school buses which saved state education fund money.

Randy Schoonmaker said the State of Oregon went out to bid for Medicaid transportation and found no savings or net gain, there were fewer public transit routes and control of Medicaid spending was brokered across the state. Chris Cole stated agencies that rely on Medicaid revenue will feel the greatest impact.

6. VTRANS UPDATES

Bennington Thruway Bus Service

There is a train connection with the bus service. Greyhound subsidized trips show ridership is growing, but cost per trip is increasing as well.

Performance Measures Improvement Incentive Program

The program is a way to reward transit management for driving down cost per trip and increasing ridership. KFH is the consultant that won the bid and over a two year process will work with providers, statistics, and PTAC to find ideas on how to drive costs down and increase ridership.

Lee Cattaneo asked if cost per trip is a valid metric for the diverse area being served. Barb Donovan said a compilation of the trips is being used. Filling seats drives down the cost of the bus.

Jim Moulton said there are many factors in play with cost per trip, some in the control of the provider and others outside the control of the provider. How each factor influences the cost per trip must be recognized. Barb Donovan said it is hoped transit providers will take a fresh look at what they have control over.

Van Chesnut noted typically new routes do not perform as well as mature routes in the first year. The cumulative effect over a number of routes should be looked at so service is not expanded then the numbers will level out.

Bob Young urged taking the information in the direction management wants to go.

7. INTERCITY UPDATES

Bob Young reported there has been increase in ridership on both the Route 4 and Route 7 bus services. The Route 7 increase is greater than the Route 4 increase, but the Route 4 route is smaller and a feeder to the Route 7 route. Every month shows an increase in ridership. The intercity route has been successful. Chris Cole said the conundrum is how to serve underserved areas that have the highest need and the least ability to provide the 20% match for the service.

Secretary Cole gave an update on carbon output initiatives which seeks to put a cap on regional carbon emissions and polluters and spend proceeds on a system improving mobility services.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

E&D Transportation

Lee Cattaneo stressed the need for more E&D transportation and funding. The providers are providing rides in concert with other ride requests. Barb Donovan said talking to users and providers about what services are there and what is needed should be done. Matt Mann suggested having a meeting with human service agencies and transit providers.

PTAC Meeting Schedule

- September 15, 2016 in Randolph at 1 PM
- December 15, 2016 in Burlington at 1 PM
- March 16, 2017 in Montpelier at 1 PM
- June 15, 2017 in Wilmington at 1 PM

9. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 3:28 PM.

RScty: MRIordan