

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION  
1 NATIONAL LIFE DRIVE  
MONTPELIER, VERMONT  
March 17, 2016**

**ATTENDEES:** Chris Cole, VTrans [arrived 1:41 PM]  
Barbara Donovan, VTrans  
Dave Pelletier, VTrans  
Susan Bartlett, AHS  
John Sharrow, Mt. Transit  
Bob Young, Premier Coach  
Katharine Otto, SWCRPC  
Charlie Baker, CCRPC  
Bethany Whitaker, VEIC  
Mary Grant, RCT  
Van Chesnut, AT  
Peter Johnke, VCIL  
Jim Moulton, ACTR/STSI  
Randy Schoonmaker, DVTA  
Susan Schreibman, RRPC  
Mark Sousa, GMTA  
Steve Gladczuk, CVRPC  
Matt Mann, WRC  
Lee Cattaneo, COVE  
Kevin O'Connor, UVM  
Mollie Burke, State Representative

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[Note: The minutes reflect the order of the published agenda.]

**1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS**

Barb Donovan called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM. Introductions were made.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*December 17, 2015*

**MOTION by Jim Moulton, SECOND by Lee Cattaneo, to approve the minutes of 12/17/15 as written. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.**

**3. UPDATE ON AHS ACTIVITIES AND TRANSIT**

Susan Bartlett, Special Assistant to AHS Commissioner, reported an audit review of the use of many AHS funds found wide variations in bidding and awarding contracts so the transportation services and many others will be put out to bid. The goal is to have a more uniform program which meets the same state and federal procurement requirements. The transit study showed a 20% increase in spending due to increased access to health care and transportation to substance abuse treatment.

Jim Moulton said according to Pete McNichol the non-emergency medical transportation services will be put out to bid. Current contracts will end December 31<sup>st</sup>. There is a symbiotic relationship between Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation and public transportation including the services for the elderly and disabled which may be impacted. Results have been disastrous in other states when the services were put out to bid and out-of-state providers were brought in for transportation. It seems short sighted at best to go out to bid when in-state providers are doing a good job and the program is being run fiscally efficiently, but is over-budget due to growth in demand. Susan Bartlett said the bidding was in response to the auditors who took issue with sole sourcing bids even though that has been working so well. In addition the large contracts were growing.

Randy Schoonmaker stated there is competition in the industry and with the bidding an organization can come in and provide the transportation with taxicabs. This is a huge threat to the E&D and Medicaid collaboration which is a significant portion of the financial picture for providers.

Lee Cattaneo asked if there will be an impact on the volunteer driver program. Jim Moulton said there would be an impact.

Susan Bartlett urged having a forum of providers and receivers and inviting the gubernatorial candidates as well to educate everyone on the statistical data, what is working well, items of support, and how a difference has been made for children and families with the current program. Also, talk to the Secretary of Administration (Justin Johnson) and State Auditor, Doug Hoffer, and concisely explain why the bidding does not benefit the people served. Chris Cole added if there is not an understanding of the underlying program it is an easy conclusion to reach that competition will get the best price. Other states look at Vermont's program and want the same. Vermont has a coordinated and community based service delivery model with strength from the volunteer drivers. In the end the transportation providers will survive, but will serve a narrower clientele. The real damage will be to the population that is served.

Barbara Donovan noted the vehicles provided are through transit funding, not Medicaid, and the transit providers do not charge Medicaid for vehicle purchase costs. There is question as to whether E&D trips will have to go out to bid if Medicaid trips have to go out bid.

It was noted there is statewide dispatching software that Medicaid benefits from because of the coordinated system, but once the coordinated system ceases then Medicaid will not have access to the system and will have to do its own dispatching. Susan Bartlett said AHS will continue to have programs and the same standards so there is uniformity for providers and consumers.

#### **4. 2015 LEGISLATIVE STUDIES**

Dave Pelletier reported the E&D Transportation Program Review and the Local Public Transit Funding Study are both complete. The E&D review was a thorough look at the

program and provided trends as well as what to look for going forward. The study which showed a good partnership between E&D and non-medical transports was posted to the legislature. The funding study was presented as part of the overall transportation study. There were no 'silver bullets', but some ideas on local revenue sources were explored. The commuter rail study and the Bennington thruway bus service study will be completed next year.

Lee Cattaneo asked about plans for the studies. Dave Pelletier said an E&D Program study is recommended monitoring numbers along with Medicaid program numbers. The annual Route Performance Review has a section on the E&D program. Barb Donovan added studies and documents are cited when applying for federal funding for programs. The study recommended a yearly meeting to review E&D. The meeting could be held in conjunction with the application for federal funding to discuss the areas mentioned in the study.

Jim Moulton stated the positive coordination and interlink between E&D and non-emergency Medicaid transportation created more access and lower cost.

Peter Johnke asked about the percentage of non-emergency medical rides. Dave Pelletier said providers have the most accurate data on the subject. The study showed there are 7,900 non-emergency Medicaid transport individuals throughout the state. E&D has 5,000 individuals. Barb Donovan noted the final draft of the Route Performance report contains data on E&D rides. Other programs have expanded and are serving E&D rides. Transportation providers typically do not turn anyone away.

## **5. LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES**

Barb Donovan reported there is a bill in the legislature on how driver license fines are levied and collected. A task force looked at the cycles of poverty in consideration of statewide license reinstatements by decreasing all fines due to \$30. Chris Cole noted distracted driving and adding points to the fine were added to the bill.

## **6. PUBLIC TRANSIT BUDGET**

Barb Donovan reported three line items increased in the budget, all others remained the same or decreased. The big issue is having enough capital to replace vehicles so a substantial increase was requested. A small increase in state funds for operations was also requested.

## **7. VT TRANSLINES INTERCITY UPDATE**

Barb Donovan reported if the percent of increase in ridership continues the bus runs on Route 7 and Route 4 will be very successful. Staff is recommending both VT Translines and Greyhound agreements be extended for two years. CMAQ pays for three years of service. There is one year remaining of this funding and then the state will have to absorb the service in the budget, but hopefully the increasing ridership will help cover the cost.

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*State Independent Living Council Subcommittee on Transportation*

Peter Johnke said he is on the Independent Living Council Subcommittee on Transportation and they are compiling educational information on what questions will be asked for Medicaid transportation so eligible members will be better prepared when they call for rides.

*Build Your Dreams (BYD) Electric Bus*

Bethany Whitaker announced there will be a 60' BYD electric bus in Burlington. Everyone is urged to visit. Ms. Whitaker said to contact her if interested in having the bus make a stop.

There was discussion of the cost for the electric bus (\$750,000) versus a diesel bus (\$450,000) and the cost of the charge station (\$350,000 for a fast charger - 5 to 7 minutes to charge - plus installation). Federal grants are available. There is a charger for extended range vehicles that costs \$50,000, but these are not available. Mary Grant mentioned the monthly fee or cost per day should be calculated because the cost of electricity is not going down. Also, electric vehicles should be charged when electric costs are low. John Sharrow mentioned the concern of electric buses being quiet and people not hearing them.

*PTAC Meeting Schedule*

- June 16, 2016 in Rutland at 1 PM

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 2:28 PM.

*RScty: MRiordan*