

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
VTrans 5th Floor Board Room
Montpelier, Vermont
December 14, 2017**

ATTENDEES: Joe Flynn, VTrans [left at 1:15 PM]
Barbara Donovan, VTrans
Amy Bell, VTrans
Emily Parkany, VTrans
Joe Segale, VTrans
Jackie Cassino, VTrans
Richard Amore, ACCD
Van Chesnut, Advance Transit
Jamie Feehan, VPTA
Chip Desautels, Premier/VT Translines
Peter Johnke, VCIL
Katharine Otto, SWCRPC
Michael Harrington, VDOL
Mary Grant, RCT
Jim Moulton, Tri-Valley Transit
Stephen Falbel, Steadman Hill Consulting
Meredith Birkett, VLCT [via telephone]
Elaine Haytko, VPTA [via telephone]
Mollie Burke, Legislature
John Sharrow, private transit carriers

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS

Barbara Donovan called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM. Introductions were done. Secretary of Transportation, Joe Flynn, welcomed all to the meeting and expressed appreciation to everyone for their interest and positive effect on services in the transit program.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 21, 2017

MOTION by Katherine Otto, SECOND by Michael Harrington, to approve the minutes of 9/21/17 as presented. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

3. VTRANS RESEARCH PROGRAM

Emily Parkany introduced the work of the VTrans Research Program with a budget of \$1.2 million supporting TRB, NCHRP, AASHTO, TSPs (44%) and research projects (56%). NETC and UVM each receive \$100,000 in funding. Tasks performed by the research program include managing and reviewing research, coordinating TACs, field activities (data collection), dissemination of research results, and implementing research results. A research symposium was held in September that covered 30 projects, half from UVM research and half from VTrans innovations. There was discussion of public

transportation intersecting with many other projects. The program is looking at how the research projects benefit VTrans. Ideas for projects are welcomed and can be forwarded to Emily Parkany.

4. AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

Joe Segale, VTrans Policy and Planning, discussed autonomous vehicles (AV) and reviewed the types of AVs: connected vehicle, automated vehicle, and connected automated vehicle. A connected vehicle is operated by a person and communicates with other vehicles, infrastructure, or networks. Automated vehicles are either fully or partially self-driving. Connected automated vehicle is a combination of connected and automated functionality. The technology is still developing. The evolution of vehicle automation goes from driver to some driver assist to total vehicle automation. The interstate could be a total vehicle automation corridor. Uber is using AVs. There are AV **transit** vehicles. It is anticipated that by 2020 up to 2% of vehicles will have some automation. By 2030 up to 20% will have some automation and by 2050 up to 65% will have automation. There is a time period where there will be a mix of vehicles on the road. Other forecasts say 95% of passenger miles will be in shared AVs by 2030 assuming shared electric vehicles and the average family will save \$5,600 per year. The impact of AVs will be determined by whether there is shared vehicle service or people own their own vehicle. Overall the impacts appear to be positive. Issues with AVs to consider include who the vehicle operator is, being able to change speeds as the situation dictates, how to handle impaired driving, distracted driving, vehicle registration and driver licenses, how police will pull over an AV, training on how to use the vehicle, and recognizing and reacting to emergency and police vehicles. Long term issues include the role of technology in transit and the role of transit with AVs, service in urban versus rural areas, impact on the labor force with driverless cars, and opportunities/challenges in Vermont with AVs.

Mike Harrington pointed out drivers are being removed with AVs, but another component is added. There may be need for more IT technicians so the number of employees may not change, but who is being employed may change.

Jim Moulton commented companies that see opportunity will determine what the transportation industry looks like.

Peter Johnke, VCIL, said there is no mandatory universal access planned in the design of AV vehicles which is a concern for people with disabilities.

Katherine Otto said the driver of the vehicle is an important resource as ambassador, helping people navigate schedules, and ensuring passengers get to their destination.

Van Chesnut said there are incredible advances in technology, but how to maintain and pay for infrastructure is antiquated. Dirt roads do not have embedded technology, for example, and Congress continues to rely on a gas tax for funding. Large tech companies that will handle the AV transportation system need to get involved at the macro level.

Richard Amore urged looking at how land use is affected and the amount of land allocated for roads and parking. AVs will help reduce sprawl. Joe Segale added less pavement means prices go down. Mr. Amore pointed out water quality improves with less pavement.

Steve Falbel said the role of government and non-profits need to be defined to avoid being subservient to large tech companies like Apple or Google. There are many questions such as who owns the vehicle and the role of the vehicles in terms of public service. Joe Segale agreed DMV laws have to be clarified.

Molly Burke asked how AVs handle snow conditions. Joe Segale said the car will recognize the conditions and proceed accordingly. There is already technology that recognizes loss of traction by the tires.

Van Chesnut suggested doing a survey project to see what technology is available for transit buses and perhaps do a demonstration project in Vermont. It may be possible to retrofit vehicles. Barb Donovan will forward the suggestion to the VTrans Research Program.

Chip Desautels said newer transit buses have some added technology to improve safety and efficiency. The investment in the technology is much less than the cost of a lawsuit.

Mary Grant pointed out trucks have technology mandated by federal standards that logs when the driver is going too fast or slow, limits the number of hours of operation, and shows where other vehicles are in proximity to the truck.

5. RIDES TO WELLNESS INITIATIVE

Steve Falbel, consultant, gave an update on the Rides to Wellness Program that is funded through an FTA grant. The program provides Medicaid and E&D rides to people in rural areas and coordinates with health centers, transit providers, and social services agencies. Currently there is a draft implementation plan being reviewed at the pilot sites of Mount Ascutney, Northeast Vermont Regional Hospital, and Northern Counties Health Care in St. Johnsbury. The program is working with IT to determine feasible performance measures. VT 211 may be the public facing side of the program. Components of the program include performance goals and measures, constituencies, mechanics, and sustainability. Seed money of \$25,000 will be given to two pilot areas for the program. Remaining funds will be used by VTrans for the program across the state. Next steps include finalizing the implementation plan, refining road maps, training, implementation in January/February, and establishing tracking and data communications.

Mike Harrington asked the number of assisted rides expected. Steve Falbel said the rides have increased in the areas where similar programs have taken place. Over a thousand rides per year are expected.

Molly Burke asked what happens when funding runs out. Barb Donovan said federally qualified health centers have funds and can continue the program. Offering a revolving loan fund to health providers is another way to continue the program.

6. VTRANS/ACCD BETTER CONNECTIONS GRANT PROGRAM

Jackie Cassino, VTrans, and Richard Amore, ACCD, explained the Better Connections grant program that awards funding to municipalities outside Chittenden County for master planning for transportation, land use, and infrastructure issues. Only communities that will implement their master plan will receive a grant. ACCD and VTrans provide the expertise and help connect with partners and consultants. Successes with master planning include St. Albans, Barre, and Jericho. Annually VTrans and ACCD provide \$200,000 for the communities. There is a 10% local cash match to the award. Three communities per year receive an award. The grant program is in its fourth year. Sister agencies, such as ANR, Technical Assistance, Water Quality, Department of Health, are being informed about the program to strike up a partnership. There is demand for the program. Projects that have been funded include Mad River Valley Active Transportation Plan (Blueberry Lake Trail User Guide), Vergennes Downtown Basin Master Plan including the marina, Montpelier Complete Streets Design Guidelines, Springfield Main Street Master Plan, and Island Pond Revitalization Master Plan. Pre-application meetings are being held until 12/31/17. Applications are due January 31, 2018. Awards are done in March for work to begin in May/June. Chittenden County towns receive federal highway dollars so these towns do not qualify for the Better Connections grants and can apply for funding through the CCRPC work program.

Mike Harrington asked if there has been a project that looked at accessibility to local airports. Mr. Amore said he is not aware of such a project.

7. PUBLIC TRANSIT PUBLIC POLICY PLAN

Jackie Cassino said the Public Policy Plan needs to be updated every five years. PTAC is asked to provide feedback. A consultant will be hired to help with the plan update. Both the state policy plan and the federal human service transportation coordination plan must be updated and will be combined into one plan. Send comments to Jackie Cassino by the first week in January, 2018. jackie.cassino@vermont.gov. The plan will address connections between cities and to the national transportation network, transit dependents, the environment, and economic development including transportation to work. Barb Donovan noted an E&D plan is needed and will be added as an addendum to the plan.

Mary Grant said AHS must be involved. AHS was supposed to work with public transit providers per a legislative mandate, but instead AHS hired a private company to provide services.

8. SURVEY RESULTS

PTAC will complete the survey in the next two weeks. There was mention of sharing information and learning about other agencies. Private carriers need to be included in the survey.

9. OTHER BUSINESS*Next Meeting(s)*

- March 15, 2018 - Montpelier
- June 21, 2018 – Montpelier
- September 21, 2018 – Montpelier
- December 13, 2018 - Montpelier

Agenda items:

Budget and Legislation

Reporting and Goal Setting

Research and New Initiatives

Planning Initiatives

10. ADJOURNMENT**MOTION by John Sharrow, SECOND by Mary Grant, to adjourn the meeting.****VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM.

RScty: MRiordan