

Passenger Transportation Plan - Regional Planning Affiliate 1, UERPC
Transportation Advisory Group Meeting Notes
July 20, 2012, 10:00 a.m. - 325 Washington Street, Decorah, Iowa

Present: Fern Rissman (WIA, UERPC), Dee Hosek (Howard Cty. VA), Earl Henry (NEICAC Transit), Katie Angell (Helping Services of NE Iowa), Amy Tucker (UIU), Jan Heikes (Winneshiek & Allamakee County CPC), Karn Pankow (NEICAC Transit), Karla Organist (UERPC), Ashley Christensen (UERPC)

Invited but unable to attend: Rachel Jaster (G&G), Carol Keune (Fayette County CPC), Heather Homewood (Allamakee Cty. VA), Lynda Springer (IDHS), Katie Hageman/Mindy Buchheit (Postville Childcare), Shanna Hale (Opportunity Homes), Bruce Butters (Northland Agency), Daniel Rotto (Hometown Taxi), Lori Matter (Howard Cty. Res. Care Facility), Fay Halverson (Gunderson Clinic – Lansing), Ed Josten (RISE), Jean Gage (Clayton County CPC), Chalsea Carroll (Howard County CPC),

1. Introductions and a review of the notes from the April 13th meeting
2. Updates from NEICAC:
 - Earl provided an update on installing MDC's in 50 buses which will allow them to collect travel data and keeps drivers informed and connected to dispatchers. In addition, three new buses are expected soon.
 - Karn Pankow was hired as the Mobility Manager – her full title is “Operations and Mobility Manager”
3. PTP Project Discussion:
 - Mobility Manager: Karn shared her vision for the position and how the goals of the position align with the PTP project goals. The main goal of the program is to understand and meet the needs of the region's non-driving population through an effective transit (small “t”) system.
 - i. Job overview: The Operations and Mobility Manager will assist the Transit Director with the day-to-day operations at Transit as well as build partnerships and relationships with area organizations and other transportation providers to develop a healthy and safe transit network that works for the region. She will be looking for new programs that enhance the system (like the Wheels to Work program) and funding to implement the new programs too.
 - ii. Survey/data collection: At first, Karn will be collecting a lot of data regarding rider needs and what options exist in the five-county region for transit. She asked the group to review two surveys/questionnaires that she intends to utilize to collect information from 1) agencies, organizations and employers whose clients or employees would use transit options and 2) transit providers. Email Karn with your comments: karn@neicac.org
 - iii. Outreach: Through the survey process, Karn will be personally contacting the organizations and employers, and following up with transit providers. She asked the committee's help in sending names of entities that she should be thinking about contacting.
 - iv. Website: Another part of the position involves the development of a local transportation website that is easy to navigate and provides information to the public about what options are available and how to contact transportation providers.
 - Marketing: Karn announced that the funding that supports the Mobility Manager position has some budget for marketing. This will include the website and outreach. She hopes that by leveraging the website as marketing, the private transit providers will be more likely to provide her with information about their business – in the long run ridership should increase for all providers. The committee offered suggestions for additional marketing ideas:
 - i. Vehicle signage
 - ii. Speaking engagements (community orgs and events, city councils, county supervisors, interagency meetings...Fern requested Karn come speak to the Promise Jobs group at one of their upcoming meetings.
 - iii. Magnets, business cards, brochures
 - iv. Move-in day promotions at local colleges (rides to ... at various times during the weekend...)
 - Stakeholder Outreach: Earl and Karn explained the potential impacts that the newly signed transportation bill could have on our state and region. The following is an excerpt from the State DOT's initial summary of the bill's impacts to transit:

Public Transit

- Total funding levels will remain fairly constant at \$10.6 billion in FY 2013 and \$10.7 billion in FY 2014; and with 20 percent of the program funded with general funds and 80 percent from Mass Transit Account.
- Job Access Reverse Commute Program was eliminated and combined with the urban and rural formula programs
- New Freedom Program was eliminated and combined with the urban and elderly/disabled formula programs
- Bus and bus facilities program is downsized and turned into a formula program.
 - Reduced from \$984 million to \$422 million.
 - \$65,500,000 will be allocated so each state receives \$1,250,000
 - Remaining funds will be distributed with a formula with factors heavily weighted toward major metropolitan centers.
 - Iowa will receive significantly less funding for bus replacement and facilities.

Much relies on how the federal transit agency and the state transit office decide to implement the program. The committee also discussed what the barriers are to a fully integrated transit system for the region. Conversation revolved around school buses, regulation, usage perceptions and affordability. Before next years' Days on the Hill begin for various stakeholders, we will want to develop bullet points or an elevator speech that can be embedded in all of our special interest messaging.

- Collaborations: Through Karn's outreach efforts, several opportunities for collaboration exist. Apart from councils and supervisors, committee members suggested utilizing students for technical assistance with the website or marketing. Tax incentives for employers who subsidize employee transportation and carbon offsets were discussed as ways to encourage more support for public transit. Karn will also get together with Amy at UIU to discuss what can be done to provide cost-effective transportation for students and residents in Fayette.

4. Committee member items:

- Jan reported that in the latest consumer survey conducted in Allamakee & Winnebago counties transportation was not ranked as the number one need of clients. This is the first year that has ever happened leading her to believe that things are improving in that area and transit providers should be pleased.
- There was some discussion about what Luther College is doing in the realm of transportation for its students. This led to a conversation about rideshare opportunities. It is hoped that the website could have an area for connecting people.
- Karn shared a little about how NEICAC is currently a demand-response provider but is learning about something called "deviated fixed route" which might work in a few of our communities. It is like a fixed route, but with more flexibility.
- To make transit more affordable for everyone takes more riders – we should be looking at expanding our reach beyond those who **need** public transportation to include those who **want** public transportation.
- Jan recommended that the free clinics are contacted as part of the outreach efforts. Their clients are not set up within a service system, yet could use more information on transportation options.

5. Next Steps:

- Review and provide feedback to Karn on her questionnaires
- Send lists of employers/agencies who may have transportation needs or wants to Karn
- Like the Promise Jobs group meeting, let Karn know if you have a meeting planned whose attendees would benefit from a presentation by Transit.
- Karn and Amy will visit

6. Next Meeting: October 26th, 2012, 10:00 a.m. at UERPC's Decorah office