

Passenger Transportation Plan - Regional Planning Affiliate 1, UERPC
Transportation Advisory Group Meeting Notes
October 25, 2013, 9:00 a.m. - 325 Washington Street, Decorah, Iowa

Present: Dee Hosek (Howard Cty. VA), Roger Thomas (Elkader Development), Sherry Buchheit (Workforce Specialist), Fern Rissman (IowaWORKS), Greg Zars (Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging), Spiff Slifka (Howard County Business and Tourism), Stratis Giannakouros (Luther College), Amy Tucker (Upper Iowa – by phone), Earl Henry (NEICAC Transit), Karn Pankow (NEICAC Transit), Karla Organist (UERPC), Kay Fisk (NTS)

1. Introductions

2. Guest Speaker: Kay Fisk, Development Director, Neighborhood Transportation Service (NTS) from Cedar Rapids. Kay shared reasons behind and the content of a bill that she is proposing to the Iowa legislature to provide funding for employment transportation. The group was provided a handout with the following information:

- Proposal: Iowa Employment Rides Initiative, *Creating transportation stability for rural and urban economic growth*
- Purpose: Connect individuals to employment transportation
- How it Works:
 - Funding must be used for employment transportation
 - \$1,000,000 funding statewide
 - Funding requires 50/50 cash match
 - Fares cannot be used as match
 - Funding for operations only
 - Funds distributed through a competitive grant system
 - Transit agencies eligible recipients
 - Nonprofits are eligible sub-recipients
 - Maximum request is 15% of total pool (\$150,000)
- Examples of how it could be used:
 - Expansion of existing services or service hours (nights/weekends)
 - Subsidized rides for low-income workers
 - Ride share programs – for rural and urban areas
 - Van pool programs – for rural and urban areas
 - Taxi vouchers
 - Employer shuttles
 - Intercity shuttles
- Potential partners and/or supporters:
 - Iowa Transit Providers
 - Iowa Mobility Managers
 - Transit Advisory Groups
 - Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA)
 - MPO's
 - Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Groups
 - United Way Chapters

There was much discussion and many questions and suggestions for Kay. It was noted that it is important not to dwell on the loss of funding resulting from the MAP-21 bill, but rather to move forward to identify funding that will fill any gaps preventing transit agencies from providing the necessary services in their areas. What can we do? When Kay lets us know that it is the appropriate time, she has asked that we let legislators know of the importance of the bill to our area and how we support it. She may also request letters of support from our agencies.

3. Karn and Karla gave a report on the presentation our region made at the IDOT Commissioner's meeting and what we covered as far as passenger transportation.

4. Job Access Mobility Institute Update:

- JAMI team is merging with the Transportation Advisory Group going forward, may still meet as a sub-committee as needed
- The EARL Transit image change has been approved by NEICAC leadership. They are in the process of finalizing logo design, making decisions on bus color and devising roll out plan.
- Commuter route is progressing. Based on research, we've decided to focus on Cresco, Ridgeway, Decorah and Calmar as our pilot service area. Given the right number of riders, which seemed very reasonable to attain, the routes could become self-sustaining with fares.
- Karla, Karn and Troy Vande Lune met with NICC stakeholders on 10/23 to gauge interest in helping in some way with the service. The meeting was very positive.

- Karn will be determining some sponsorship numbers (\$\$) and other sponsorship ideas to respond to the questions we received, and to be better prepared for meetings with other stakeholders and businesses along the proposed route.
 - Over the next couple of weeks, we will focus on engaging other businesses along the route
 - Once we have our partners in place we will start working on fine tuning the details of how the service will work.
5. Updates on PTP TAG Projects:
- Mobility Manager Update:
 - Housing route shuttle had a slow start – no riders the first 2 months, but we did have 2 riders last month. Continue to work with partners to promote the service.
 - College Break shuttle ran for the first time Oct 18th. Riders included 9 students from Luther and 1 general public person!
 - Wheels for Work program has officially launched.
 - 6 applicants to date: 3 declines, 1 approval – car purchase completed, 2 in process
 - Continue to look for additional capital to build the revolving loan fund
 - UIU West Union shuttle is not happening this year, but we hope to revisit the idea in the future.
 - CTAA Rural Technical Assistance grant award has been finalized.
 - Project focuses on assistance in developing strategies to establish new and enhanced transit services in our 5 county area to better accommodate employment and other task related trips.
 - As part of the project we will need to establish an advisory committee. More info on this to come.
 - NEICAC is planning to participate in statewide “Public Transportation Supports America’s Veterans” campaign to help pay tribute to veterans on Veteran’s day.
 - All Transit staff will be wearing support button on November 11th
 - We are going to run newspaper ads recognizing all transit employees who are veterans
 - Plan to offer free in-town rides to veterans on any of our scheduled in-town services on Nov 11th
 - Marketing: Discussed the progress on the NE Iowa Transportation Portal website and a possible web address. Committee members are to send ideas to Karn. One that came out at the meeting was: 5Ride.com
 - Collaborations/Stakeholder Outreach: Karn presented a transportation talking points/fact sheet for committee members to use as they visit with legislators and others (attached). Let Karn know if you have any feedback.
6. Other: There will be no PTP update this year, but we are scheduled to complete a full update of the region’s Passenger Transportation Plan by February of 2015.
7. The next meeting was set for January 24th, 2014, at 9:00 a.m. in UERPC’s Decorah office