

Passenger Transportation Plan - Regional Planning Affiliate 1, UERPC  
Transportation Advisory Group Meeting Notes  
September 26, 2014, 9:00 a.m. - 325 Washington Street, Decorah, Iowa

Present: Spiff Slifka (Howard County Business and Tourism), Teresa Bissen (Families First), Bethany Ellingson (Families First), Jenna Sutton (NEICAC Transit), Michaela Collins (UERPC), Karla Organist (UERPC)

1. Introductions & discussion regarding purpose of the TAG. Michaela Collins, new staff member at UERPC will be working with the TAG to produce the Passenger Transportation Plan.
2. Mobility Manager Update:
  - Commuter route: Getting ready to launch. There will be service running Monday through Friday in the morning and afternoon/evening. Jenna will let us know when it is set to begin. Karla will send out short article that ran in the UERPC newsletter to the committee (see attached).
  - Image revamp: Three buses are now wrapped in EARL. As new buses are added to the fleet, they will be EARL buses too, until the whole fleet is changed out.
  - CTAA TA: Amy Conrick will be in town on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. Plans are to ride the commuter route and discuss marketing. There are two visits left to use as part of this TA grant.
  - Wheels for Work still has funding available for about 12 to 13 more loans.
  - Earl Henry will be retiring at the end of the year. NEICAC's plan is to have a new Transit Manager hired before Earl leaves so that there is time for training/mentoring.
3. Passenger Transportation Plan:
  - Survey has been activated on Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RPA1PTP>), committee members are asked to forward the link to other agencies and stakeholders they work with and also complete the survey for their agencies.
  - Reviewed goals of the Passenger Transportation Plan. Identified strategies and projects to include in the next plan (listed in no particular order):
    - Work to streamline TMS
    - Clarify/Correct Charter Rule
    - Better Communication between all entities (housing, economic development, health, tourism, workforce, businesses...)
    - Consider a networking conference (in conjunction with NIBN conference?)
    - Develop a transportation stakeholder map
    - Focus strategies on various counties
    - Support, maintain and promote NEIAGo.com
    - Maintain a Mobility Manager within the region
    - Continue to re-image Public Transit
    - Marketing for Public Transit
    - Seek new/additional financing for Public Transit (employer transportation benefits, advertising, bus amenity sponsors, grants, partners with grants...)
    - Capitalize the Wheels for Work loan fund
    - Expand commuter routes
    - Develop "how-to" guides to make transportation Easy
    - Bus replacement plan (from NEICAC)
4. The next meeting was set for November 21<sup>st</sup>, at 9:00 a.m. Meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Have you seen EARL?

It has been two years since the Northeast Iowa Mobility Solutions Team participated in the national Job Access Mobility Institute through the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and attended an intensive 3.5 day summit in Washington, D.C. Our team of local economic development, transportation and employment specialists collected data, surveyed commuters and employers, identified our issues and proposed solutions to make public transportation in our region the link, and not the barrier, to accessing jobs, child care and other destinations.



Issues were easy to identify: the cost of Public Transit, when traveling beyond a community with in-town service, is prohibitive for many; most people did not know that Public Transit exists in our area; and if they did know about Public Transit, thought it was not for everyone to use. After gathering a lot of feedback, it was determined that we needed to focus on two areas: getting more people on the bus – which will reduce the cost for all riders; and revamping the image of Public Transit to change the general public perception that the bus is “not for them.” The team developed two major concepts to work on these issues. The first concept was “EARL.” As the team collected information from the region, it was clear that any public transportation option had to be easy, affordable, reliable, and really, life changing, for our residents. We also heard that many people, when needing a ride, considered “who” they could call for help. Easy, Affordable, Reliable, Life-Changing – that’s EARL! “Who” can you call? EARL! The second concept was to develop several commuter routes along our major roadways to connect our workforce to our worksites, creating corridors of connectivity across the region.

Today, NEICAC-Transit is bringing these concepts to reality. Three Transit buses are boasting the EARL logo and they are working on a pilot commuter route between Calmar, Decorah and Cresco! As funds become available, the whole fleet will be rebranded with the new EARL logos. NEICAC-Transit is a nonprofit service and can accept donations – let us know if you want to help spread the EARL message to more buses!

