

Passenger Transportation Plan - Regional Planning Affiliate 1, UERPC  
Transportation Advisory Group Meeting Minutes  
January 27, 2017, 9:00 a.m. - 325 Washington Street, Decorah, Iowa

Present: Sam Castro (NEICAC Transit), Curt McNew (NEICAC Transit), Michelle Barness (UERPC), Fern Rissman (UERPC), Spiff Slifka (Howard Co. Business and Tourism), Janna Diehl (Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging), Stacie Cooper (Helping Services), and Joe Drahos (Iowa DOT – by conference call).

1. Meeting called to order at 9:00 a.m.
2. Notes from the October meeting were reviewed.
3. Mobility Manager/Transit Update:
  - Castro shared that EARL is handing out ride tokens as a means of marketing regional transit services. The tokens are good for a free in-town trip in certain cities (Decorah, Waukon, Cresco, West Union, Oelwein, Guttenberg, etc.).
  - Castro explained that EARL is still searching for drivers. He provided posters for distribution by TAG members.
  - Castro shared that EARL will participate in the Leprechaun Lap in Waukon on St. Patrick's Day. It will provide safe-ride shuttle services to festival participants. EARL will also offer shuttle services during Nordic Fest and Ragbrai this coming summer.
  - McNew provided information on four new transit buses regional transit will receive in April of 2017. They are the design required to also serve hospitals and nursing homes. Four to five additional buses may be incorporated by the end of 2017.
  - There was discussion by committee members regarding the use of transit buses by athletic groups at area schools and colleges.
  - Castro introduced the idea of incorporating lending libraries on regional transit vehicles to provide a more appealing passenger experience. Incorporation in certain vehicles could target specific groups, such as young riders. Slifka indicated she may be able to provide more information on where and how mobile lending libraries have been implemented by others. Castro indicated they would also need to identify a business to build the mobile library shelves, or another mechanism for sharing the books could be explored. McNew suggested working with libraries on the initiative, and suggested starting with Cresco as they regularly purge books which could be recycled in the lending library. Rissman suggested connecting with high school students regarding building the mobile library shelving.
4. Barness and Castro introduced the topic of planning Design Thinking Workshops to tackle regional transit issues, including increasing rideshare opportunities in the region. Castro explained the need for more transit options in the evenings and on weekends. McNew explained that there would be changes to Medicaid with regards to work shelters, requiring people to both live and work in the community, which will increase the need for individual or small group transit options on varying schedules. TAG members suggested that Spectrum and similar organizations should be involved in the Design Thinking Workshops (and their clients well), in addition to church groups, industries and their employees, government & their employees, etc. McNew suggested inviting CTA to help lead / plan the Design Thinking Workshops.

TAG members discussed that rideshare / carpool situations would be advantageous in a climate where it has been difficult to hire regional transit drivers. There was some side conversation regarding how EARL could advertise to and attract retirees as transit drivers.

There was discussion regarding how to determine the demand for alternative transit options such as van pools. Barness explained that the upcoming Passenger Transportation Plan update may provide some data. McNew explained that regional transit has observed the need for after-hour transit options. Cooper also suggested TAG arrange a survey with chambers of commerce or economic development to disseminate to the public to assess

transit needs. Members suggested that other survey methods could include facebook, twitter, employer websites, schools, UERPC or survey monkey.

Barness will work on developing some introductory materials to provide to potential attendees of a Transportation Design Thinking Workshop which she will share with TAG at a future meeting. Castro will continue to compile lists of unmet transit needs during his EARL outreach events.

5. Barness reviewed the 2018 Passenger Transportation Plan update timeline and process. Drahos shared some general guidance from the DOT on the update.
6. Barness initiated discussion on planning for a transportation networking conference. Slifka provided background on the goal, which is found in the 2015-2020 Passenger Transportation Plan. She explained the precedent for the conference, which was chamber of commerce / economic development networking conferences that have been successful in the past. In previous discussion of the issue TAG had found the issue of transportation to be central to economic development and thought that it may be the chamber group that would like to help coordinate the conference for that reason. The chamber events typically involve a social hour, keynote speakers, etc.. Slifka suggested that Barness run the idea by Jason Passmore of HCED / NIBN. There was discussion around holding the conference in the fall of 2017. Castro shared that he had confirmation from Jeremy Miller of the Iowa DOT as a keynote speaker for the conference. The group discussed topics for the conference, including transportations impact on the economy/jobs, volunteerism and transportation, etc. The group discussed the format of the conference, with ideas including a networking/social hour, a keynote speaker, work groups/think tanks, etc. Slifka recommended that the chambers, economic development and tourism groups be involved. Others suggested healthcare, housing, childcare, school, workforce, and non-profit / service stakeholders also be involved. Cooper suggested Barness speak to Fayette County Interagency Group and Rissman suggested contacting Julie Mann of the Child Health Specialty Clinic.
7. Castro initiated discussion of a stakeholder map TAG has been working on. The map could show overlapping transportation services to understand gaps in service. Iowa State students in the transportation planning and GIS departments may be able to assist with development of the map. Castro shared information on a grant that may assist with funding this effort requiring a local match of \$3,500. Howe suggested such a map might also show employees and where they are living / working. Members suggested that the map should also visualize transportation to-from small, outlying cities in the region. Howe may be able to assist in applying for a grant to assist with this work. Members discussed that such a map would be interesting for employers trying to understand need and options for employee transportation. Rissman explained the importance of recruiting graduates from local colleges/universities to stay and work in the area, and suggested the map could shed some light on transportation issues in the region to improve on this effort. She went on to explain that the transportation needs of young professionals needed to be assessed somehow as they may differ, with young people being more interested in alternative or multi-modal transportation alternatives. Members discussed rideshare options again, using Uber as a successful example for providing flexibility. Castro shared information on the new Iowa Rideshare website, which helps match riders/passengers for carpools, vanpools, etc. Howe suggested doing an article on the rideshare website for the UERPC website.
8. Committee members set the next two dates for TAG meetings as Friday March 31<sup>st</sup> and UERPC, and Friday May 19<sup>th</sup> at UERPC. The meetings will be held at 9 am.
9. Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.