

Passenger Transportation Plan - Regional Planning Affiliate 1, UERPC
Transportation Advisory Group Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2017, 9:00 a.m. - 325 Washington Street, Decorah, Iowa

Present: Sam Castro (NEICAC Transit), Curt McNew (NEICAC Transit), Michelle Barnes (UERPC), Spiff Slifka (Howard Co. Business and Tourism), Jami Schwickerath (Iowa Vocational Rehab Services, IVRS), Mindy Myers (IVRS), Deana Hageman (Choice Employment), Janna Diehl (NEI3A), and Judy Holthaus (NEIBH).

1. Meeting called to order at 9:10 a.m.
2. Recap of October 2017 Transportation Summit. Attendees shared thoughts / feedback.
3. Mobility Manager/Transit Update:
 - Castro explained that EARL transit is looking at connecting routes to Cedar Rapids to better serve the sizable number of commuters heading there from NE Iowa regularly.
 - Discussion of ridership numbers. Generally, ridership has gone down somewhat because of lack of drivers; but rural ridership is up by almost 15%, partially due to the rider discount program implemented
4. McNew introduced topic of changes to Medicaid/MPO services that will be impacting employees and transit riders in Iowa starting in December of 2017. The changes may cause some riders to lose their providers, or be shifted to a new provider. Attendees held a lengthy discussion of the issue, covering a number of concerns, such as:
 - MCOs are significantly cutting their services, including reducing coverage of transportation costs
 - The changes will generally bring costs back to transit riders,
 - Some employees/employers may attempt to contraction transportation but many won't be able to afford it.
 - It is likely that a number of employees will lose their jobs because their or their employers are unable to meet the cost of transportation put on them

Attendees discuss options for taking steps to address these issue/concerns, including some of the following:

- EARL Public Transit will be involved in connecting with state/federal legislators during events in February
- All other TAG members to continue to attempt to communicate with legislators via their own organizations about the negative impacts of the Medicaid/MCO changes to region's employees/riders
- UERPC to follow up with other COGs about how they are dealing with this Medicaid issue (especially when transit sits under umbrella of the COG organization, but in general)
- All TAG members to assist with distributing flyers on Iowa Rideshare (to help fill gap of transportation need), which will come from Sam Castro. To be posted at businesses, agencies, and public locations. Public transit will also try to advertise about option of Iowa Rideshare via radio.
- All TAG members to assist with sharing information on the Medicaid/MCO changes and impact to employees on their agency/organization websites
- TAG members with information on the actual number of employees/riders impacted to forward data to Castro and McNew at EARL Public Transit, who will help compile information for sharing with publications. Information will also be shared with Kim Hudecek who is writing an article about the issue to be published in early December.
- Potential sharing on this issue at the next 6-County Supervisor/Engineer meeting in January
- McNew to present on issue at Dec. 4th NEICAC/Transit Board meeting
- UERPC to look into prioritizing issue at next legislative event

Other topics from the Medicaid/MCO change discussion were:

- Importance of continuing to work with employers regarding helping to fund or coordinate transportation choices for employees

- Iowa Rideshare or other rideshare programs could help fill the gap for transportation needs
- Articles on the issue could become a series, versus a one-time occurrence
- Are there other grants available to help provide funding bridge for employees that will struggle with cost of transportation?

5. Work related to Passenger Transportation Plan:

- Barnes reviewed community and agency transportation survey results, and feedback from small group discussions at the Transportation Summit with TAG members. There was discussion about the information.
- The group had an open discussion of open discussion of coordination issues for regional passenger transportation
- Review of previous PTP goals/objectives, and drafting of proposed goals and strategies for the PTP update were deferred until the next meeting in December

6. The next meeting date was set for Thursday December 7th at 9 am at the UERPC in Decorah.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.