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## Meeting Minutes

### Regional Planning Affiliation 1 (RPA-1) Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) meeting Friday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

**Members in attendance:** Janna Diehl, NE Iowa Area Agency on Aging; Lori Egan, NEICAC EARL Transit; Spiff Slifka, Howard County Business and Tourism; Amy Chicos, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Jenna Mockler-Gjerde, Luther College; Clara Muggli-Toyloy.

**Members absent:** Shannon Nix, Upper Iowa University.

**Others in attendance:** Aaron Detter, UERPC Transportation Planner.

1. Detter started the meeting off with a welcome at 2:00 p.m. Members did introductions as the group welcomed a new representative from Luther College, Clara Muggli-Toyloy.
2. Detter provided an update on Regional Planning Affiliation 1 (RPA-1) planning activities and work products. He informed the group that he recently completed an economic impact analysis of regional trails. He also noted that he is working with the City of Decorah to collect GIS data on walkability and accessibility, and that this can set an example for other communities who want to collect spatial data for any kind of infrastructure.
3. NEICAC/EARL Transit Director Lori Egan provided updates on the ongoing driver transit driver shortage, which is a state and national issue, as well as an upcoming driver safety training. She noted that they are looking at possibly decreasing some of the in-town service and that they would have public hearings if any changes are to be made.

Chicos and Egan discussed the transportation challenges in connecting employers who need workers and people who are looking for work, with Egan reiterating the catch-22 of not being able to hire drivers in order to assist with other worker shortages as it relates to transportation.

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Chicos and Egan also discussed the training that EARL drivers receive. Chicos raised the possibility that EARL could work with NICC on some sort of training that feeds into being able to be an EARL driver.

Detter raised the issue discussed at the previous meeting of Luther College student transportation and how aware the students are, especially international students, of the transit services. Detter also brought back up the conversation about Luther looking at incorporating a student fee structure and having a transit pass “built in” to their student ID card, or they would get a transit card.

Muggli-Toyloy noted that, overall, students are under-aware of the transit services available, but that they have been communicating that to the international students more, so they are more aware. She noted that the bag-limit policy has been a concern and a challenge for some students with shopping. She asked if the EARL driver trainings include any training on serving diverse populations, communication barriers, etc. Egan noted that the drivers do get diversity training when they are hired. She also asked that if there are incidents, Egan would like to hear about it to be able to follow up with the driver.

#### 4. General member updates/Floor items

Chicos noted that Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation can provide free ADA/accessibility consulting to businesses, and that this includes assessment of website/online accessibility. Detter asked if this consulting is only available to private businesses or if public entities like municipalities and counties could utilize the free services. Chicos noted that she would look into that and find out.

Slifka mentioned the possibility of a kind of “Amish model” as a solution for some of the college student transportation challenges, meaning a network of volunteers who can drive students to where they need to be during certain times, and that this could be a back up to transit and other services.

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Slifka also noted that the NEI Housing Trust Fund just approved a five-county revolving loan fund of \$500,000 to work with developers on housing projects, and that they hope to have that in place by the end of the year.

5. Detter noted that the next meeting would not be for several months, most likely late winter or early spring, but that members can always contact him with ideas for meetings or anything that they'd like to get the group together to discuss in the meantime.
6. The meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.