

Route 12 North Transit/Paratransit Feasibility Study

MINUTES

January 5, 2010

Present: Harry Costick, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS)*; Pat Crocker, *Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC)*; Janet Kingsbury Warren, *American Red Cross- NH West Chapter (ARC)*; Brian Waterman, *Connecticut River Transit*

SWRPC Staff Present: J.B. Mack, *Senior Planner*; Tara Germond, *Assistant Planner*

I. Welcome and Introductions

J.B. Mack called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m. and introductions were made.

II. Minutes

The minutes of the November 24, 2009 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

III. Survey Design

J.B. Mack reviewed the guidelines developed for the Market and Needs Survey. These guidelines have been sent to Niall Moran, professor of the research methods class at Keene State College that will be developing the survey. Tara Germond will meet with this class at the end of January to discuss the project and to review the survey guidelines in more detail. J.B. Mack asked the group to provide feedback on these guidelines and to identify any items that should be changed or added.

Janet Kingsbury Warren noted that the survey used for the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) study along the Route 10 corridor serves as a good example for this project. According to Ms. Warren, this survey was written in a way that made it easy for the interviewer to ask questions. However, she remembered that it was very difficult to administer the employer survey created for this study and wondered if the group should continue to develop an employer survey for this project given past experiences. J.B. Mack agreed that the employer survey was difficult to administer. He stated that the survey created for this study will need to be very clearly written and easy to follow, with explicit directions for employers.

Pat Crocker inquired how survey participants will be selected. J.B. Mack responded that demographic data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau will be cross referenced with other data to identify areas along the study corridor with a higher need for transportation. These high need areas will be targeted for administering the door to door survey. In the past, SWRPC has gone to mobile home parks, assisted

housing developments, social service agencies, and neighborhoods where a conglomerate of the population is in need of transportation services (areas where a high percentage of the population is low income, aging, disabled, or under the age of 17). Pat Crocker noted that conducting the survey door-to-door is preferred to a web-based survey as many are without internet access.

J.B. Mack clarified that Keene State College Students are unable to administer the survey due to complications with institutional policies and procedures. In turn, SWRPC staff and volunteers will be responsible for carrying out the survey. J.B. Mack stated that SWRPC intends to provide training to all volunteers on how to administer the survey. Janet Kingsbury Warren suggested speaking with Geraldine Liebert, Director of the Monadnock RSVP/Volunteer Center, about recruiting volunteers to administer the survey. This organization has done a great deal of volunteer placement for the American Red Cross.

The group discussed the guidelines produced for Survey 1 (Door-to-Door survey) and for Survey 2 (Employer Survey) separately. Their suggestions and comments are listed below.

Comments concerning Survey 1 (Door to Door Survey):

- Add a question to capture people's willingness to pay for services (e.g. How much would an individual be willing to pay to travel from Walpole to Keene?).
- Have individuals identify their primary destinations. As a follow up question, ask how much are they willing to pay to travel to this destination from their home?
- It is important to give a range of prices for fares as individuals may be unfamiliar with public transportation. Current transit systems in the study area have posted suggested donation prices ranging from \$1.00 -\$3.00 a ride.
- The survey should gauge both interest and comfort level with a particular service. To accomplish this, the participant must be informed of different service types and asked how comfortable they are with the idea of each service. However, the group agreed that it is more important to identify comfort level than it is to identify the level of interest in a service.
- Identify any objections that an individual may have to a type of service or that may preclude them from using a service (i.e. concerns about safety, reliability, convenience, and cost). Once these concerns are noted, the surveyor should address potential solutions to these objections and ask the participant how comfortable they would be taking the same service, if these solutions were in place.
 - For example, a participant notes that they would not be comfortable riding a bus to work because there is a possibility that they may miss it and be left stranded. The interviewer would document this concern and then ask, 'if an emergency ride home program was available (briefly define this program), would you be comfortable taking a bus to work?'
- Add questions to identify how far people are willing to walk to a service and where natural waiting areas (e.g. Walmart parking lots?) are located.

- There was a comment about designing the survey questions in a more educational manner (with reference to the JARC study).

Comments concerning Survey 2 (Employer Survey):

- The group discussed the idea of having the Human Resources Department of an organization or business complete Survey 2. This department would also be responsible for distributing Survey 1 to the organization's employees.
- There was a suggestion to market Survey 2 as a transportation and customer satisfaction survey.
- There was concern that the cost of 0.55 cents per mile does not accurately capture the full cost of owning and operating a vehicle. Tara Germond will reexamine the cost of driving.

IV. Request for Proposal

J.B. Mack has developed a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) that is ready to be sent to consultants. This RFP models the tasks listed in the grant proposal, except for a slight modification of the project schedule. The proposed RFP deadline for consultants is January 29, 2010. He asked the committee to provide feedback on this draft.

A committee member asked if the RFP includes a requirement that the consultant provide cost estimates for each of the service types recommended and identify potential sources of funding. After reviewing the RFP it was determined that it adequately addresses these requirements under tasks 4.2 and 4.4.

The committee shared concerns about the time-table for the project. The RFP lists a project end date of June 30, 2010. Pat Crocker noted that it will take at least 60 days before a consultant can start the project. She estimated that it will take about six weeks to receive and review proposals, select a consultant, and begin work on the project. Janet Kingsbury Warren suggested keeping June 30th as the project end date but allowing for the consultant to suggest an alternative date.

Brian Waterman asked if New Hampshire directs additional money to its CMAQ program to support the development of new routes. Harry Costick and Pat Crocker responded no. They added that New Hampshire's Constitution prohibits spending gas tax money on non-highway projects and that there is \$50,000 allocated for transit for the entire state.

There was a brief discussion about working with state representatives to gather more legislative support for transit. There was also mention of working with the NH AARP chapter.

V. Market and Needs Study

Tara Germond spoke about her progress on the market and needs study and presented the maps that she has created to date. The demographic data that has been mapped (by census block group) includes the percent of the population living at or below the poverty level, median household income, percent of occupied households with no vehicle available, percent of the population age 65 or older as well as age 17 and under, and percent of disabilities. She has yet to collect and map data on major employers, educational institutions, health facilities, public transit routes, and major destinations. She will contact

the other Regional Planning Commissions involved in the study to see if they have any of this data available. J.B. Mack suggested that greyhound stops be incorporated into the study.

VI. Other Matters

Brian Waterman discussed Connecticut River Transit's (CRT) progress with their search for a new Executive Director. There are five individuals being considered for this position including Mr. Waterman. He also noted that the Board of Directors of CRT has approved the use of CRT's funds to support his time serving on this committee.

J.B. Mack noted that he is still working on developing a template letter to document in-kind contributions. He stated that, if it is helpful, he can fill out the necessary information for the agencies. However, each agency will still need to sign off on this letter. In addition, he made mention of a park and ride study that SWRPC has undertaken using Geographic Information Systems and other data to identify parcels and vacant lots in the region that may be suitable for the development of park and ride facilities.

Pat Crocker provided an update on the State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation. She noted that, in the absence of state funding, existing and developing Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC) should continue to make progress within their region by collaborating with regional transportation providers and agencies to begin coordinating regional services.

Janet Kingsbury Warren spoke about the American Red Cross' volunteer driver program. She noted that 120 people volunteer regularly taking people to local destinations as well as long distance trips such as Boston, Concord, and Manchester. Many of the volunteer drivers prefer to use their own vehicles and not many ask for mileage reimbursements.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 2, 2010 at Community Alliance. Potential discussion topics for this next meeting include developing criteria for reviewing submitted proposals and for selecting a consultant and an update on the market and needs study.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tara Germond
Assistant Planner