

Route 12 N Transit-Paratransit Feasibility Study

MINUTES

November 24, 2009

Present: Ellen Avery, *Monadnock United Way*; Harry Costick, *Home Healthcare, Hospice, and Community Services (HCS)*; Gary Fox; Janet Kingsbury Warren, *American Red Cross NH West Chapter*; Jason Rasmussen, *Southern Windsor Regional Planning Commission*; Tara Sad, *State Representative, Cheshire District 2*; 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 9:05 a.m. and introductions were made. Since the October 29, 2009 meeting, four individuals have been added to the committee. These individuals represent Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region Planning Commission (Pat Crocker), Southern Windsor Region Planning Commission (Jason Rasmussen), Windham Region Planning Commission (Matt Mann) and Monadnock United Way (Ellen Avery). Two of these new committee members were present at this meeting.

II. Minutes of October 29, 2009

The minutes of October 29, 2009 were approved as submitted by a unanimous vote.

III. Updates

A. Local Match

Jason Rasmussen asked the committee if new partners will be included in the local match. He also questioned whether a staff member or organization that is funded by federal dollars can contribute staff time or resources towards local match as this may be a conflict of funding sources. J.B. Mack responded that from his estimation, the committee is able to meet local match requirements without adding any new in-kind contributions.

B. Stakeholders

For the benefit of new committee members, J.B. Mack explained the structure of the committee and reviewed the differences between the three different tiers of stakeholders. Tier 1 stakeholders serve as members of a steering committee that guide the planning of the project and attend monthly meetings. Tier 2 stakeholders are organizations that will be made aware of the project and invited to participate in surveys and forums. Their involvement will be less formal than Tier 1 stakeholders. Tier 3 stakeholders are members of the general public that may have an interest in new or expanded transportation services.

Prior to the meeting, Tara Germond had asked committee members to inform five potential stakeholders about the study. These contacts were taken from a list of possible stakeholders that had been created for a

previous meeting. Stakeholders from hospitals, educational institutions, and employers were to be asked if they would be willing to serve as Tier 1, steering committee members. Committee members reported their progress with this task.

- Brian Waterman contacted the Howard Dean Center, Collen Mollica from Vermed, and Ellie Applegate from Springfield College. One of his contacts was incorrectly listed as Sonic Circus. The correct contact is Sonmax. Tara Germond will update the stakeholder list to reflect this correction.
- Harry Costick contacted Van Chesnut of Advance Transit, who will be willing to help out. He also contacted Sandi from the Keene Senior Center, who is willing to be a Tier 2 stakeholder. Susan Newcomer of the Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce did not respond to his phone call nor did Valerie Mahar of River Valley Community College. The contact information for Fred Martin was not current.
- Janet Kingsbury Warren spoke with Nancy Collins from the American Cancer Society, the women's auxiliary leader from the American Legion, and Steve Wilson from Maplewood Nursing Home.
- Gary Fox contacted Pat Noble from the Bellows Falls Senior Center. She is interested in attending steering committee meetings if possible. He also spoke with Pat Burk from Southeastern Vermont Community Action, who expressed that SVCA would like to see a service provided on Route 30 in Vermont and between Brattleboro and Keene.

J.B. Mack mentioned that SWRPC will be posting the project webpage for committee members to use to make future contacts.

Tara Germond will send out talking points on the study that can be used to guide future conversations with stakeholders and will send out the link to the project's webpage on the SWRPC website.

C. Survey

J.B. Mack informed the committee of a meeting that he and Tara Germond had with Therese Sieber and Niall Moran of Keene State College's (KSC) Sociology Department. Niall Moran has agreed to take on the development and analysis of a survey for the Route 12N study as a project for his research methods class. Students will develop the survey in February for mid-March administration. It will be the committee's responsibility to administer this survey in time for students to analyze the results in mid-April.

KSC has asked that the committee provide input to help tailor design of the survey. To facilitate dialogue around what elements should be included in the survey J.B. Mack distributed a survey that was created by SWRPC for the Route 10 Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) project. He explained that this survey can be used as an example; however, it will need to be modified as its focus was on people that need to get to work.

J.B. Mack explained that when SWRPC carried out the Route 10 JARC survey there were two sets of surveys. One was a direct survey, which involved door to door surveying. The other was a perceived need survey that was distributed to employers and institutions to answer questions on behalf of employees or clients about their perceived need for transportation. Jason Rasmussen responded that it might be helpful to have two separate surveys as the average person may not have thought about using transit services and the employer may have a different perspective. The group agreed that it is logical to have both a direct and perceived survey.

J.B. Mack explained that the JARC survey included an educational component that defined each type of transit service and asked participants how likely they would be to use each type of service. J.B. Mack asked the group whether this survey should directly ask which types of transit services would be preferred; or, should questions be more subtle, eliciting responses that need interpretation to determine which transit services are most needed and useful.

Tara Sad inquired about the reaction of participants to the JARC survey. She asked J.B. Mack if people objected to any of the questions asked and if the survey took too much time to administer? J.B. Mack responded that surveys typically lasted between 8-10 minutes and that people were not objectionable to this amount of time.

J.B. Mack asked the group to brainstorm types of factual information to include in the survey. The suggestions from the group are compiled into the following list:

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| -Age | -Number of vehicles in the household |
| -Income | -Support for increase in gas tax to support public transit |
| -Level of education | -How often do they travel on Route 12 (weekly, daily, monthly, etc.) |
| -Members of Household | -What are the most frequented or most important destinations? |
| -Place of residence | -Willingness to pay for transportation |
| -Proximity to Route 12 | -Perceived level of spending on transportation (estimated dollar amount) |
| -Employed or unemployed | |
| -If employed, place of employment | |
| -Any disabilities | |
| -Current method of getting around | |

The committee agreed that questions should be asked about what types of services the person being surveyed needs to access (e.g. getting to work, accessing shopping, going to medical appointments, etc.). These questions can be tailored to address where people live and where they are trying to go.

Brian Waterman noted that Connecticut River Transit (CRT) is interested in knowing where people are going. For instance, they know people are going to Keene but do not know where in Keene they are going. This information would be helpful for CRT to know where to coordinate drop off locations.

Another question to include is what time of day do people need transportation? Is transportation needed for events at night? Do people need service 24 hours everyday or just a few hours a day?

The committee discussed the possibility of having surveyors calculate the cost spent on transportation by survey participants by multiplying their estimated daily commute (in miles) by the IRS calculation for mileage (~0.555 cents/gallon). Group members also discussed the possibility of incorporating information on the monetary and environmental savings that could be provided by transit services into the survey. While the expense of transportation and the degree of emissions reduction provided by public transit may be helpful information to provide participants, J.B. Mack suggested that this information may be more appropriate to include in a handout given to the participant after the survey is completed. He cautioned committee members to stay away from questions or information that may be leading. He noted that it may be best to include this educational information on the website.

J.B. Mack asked the group for suggestions about how to deliver the survey. Tara Sad responded that asking questions door to door is the preferred way. From her experience, telephone calls can

be seen as obtrusive and impersonal. J.B. Mack noted that volunteers would be needed to conduct a door to door survey. Tara Sad mentioned that it would be easier for larger companies to administer the survey as they contain a concentrated mass of people. Gary Fox questioned if the survey results would be skewed if only certain institutions and groups were targeted. J.B. Mack responded that SWRPC has traditionally targeted the demographic that has greater need for transportation (elderly, youth, low income, disabilities) first and then examines mainstream society. Janet Kingsbury Warren added that more of the mainstream population will be incorporated in the survey administered to employers.

J.B. Mack asked if any of the committee members have experience conducting a newspaper survey. No committee members described having specific experience with this type of survey but did cite the Keene Sentinel, Eagle Times and Town Crier as the main newspapers in the study corridor area.

Jason Rasmussen questioned how large a geographic area will be surveyed. J.B. Mack responded that Charlestown is the northern most town included in the study but the survey should be kept open to certain destinations like Dartmouth Hitchcock, which is located outside the study region.

Tara Germond and J.B. Mack will finish developing survey guidelines and have the committee review them before sending them to KSC.

IV. Request for Proposals

J.B. Mack explained that a consultant will be hired to conduct a technical evaluation of transit and paratransit services along the Route 12 N corridor. He distributed a list of consultants that an RFP will be sent to and asked the group if they know of any others that should be added to the list. Jason Rasmussen noted that Resource Systems Group (RSG) does transportation work in the White River area. Harry Costick added that the NH Transit Association has worked with RLS in the past. It was also noted that Tom Crickelair is a good consultant.

J.B. Mack stated that a draft RFP is being developed and will be distributed to the committee for their review and feedback. He noted that it is his intention to have an RFP distributed in January. Although the survey will not be completed until April, it would be helpful to have assistance from a consultant early in the process. Once it is completed, J.B. Mack plans to send the RFP to the NH Planners Association, NH Transit Association and Vermont equivalents for posting on their websites. He welcomed any other suggestions for distributing the RFP.


V. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at the American Red Cross - NH West Chapter, 83 Court Street in Keene, NH at 10:00 a.m. on January 5, 2009.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Tara Germond
Assistant Planner