

Rural Transportation Committee Notes for informal meeting

January 22, 2014

Committee Members Present: Diane Drew, Emily Dobson, Marilyn Piasecki, Gary Minich, Andrea Shaffer, Leslie Stanberry

Others Present: Laura Dick, Eileen Sierra, Paul McChancey, Joe Moretti

Committee Members Absent: Alissa Dozier, Mark Wicklund

Next meeting: February 26, 2014, 2:30 p.m. in Room 514 County Board Room, County Office Building

Emily Dobson called the meeting to order. Gary Minich made a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting, seconded by Andrea Shaffer and motion carried 6-0.

Kathie Powless, Veteran's Administration, was present, distributed some information and addressed the committee members. She stated that she wanted to explain about the veteran's van that her department has. She explained that their van which goes Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday is not wheelchair adaptable, but there is a van that goes 5 days a week to and from Danville and Springfield that is. If anyone is in a wheelchair or has oxygen, they can ride that van without a problem. They pick up at the same place which is Kmart. She also explained that her office gives out bus cards. Last year 180 were given out and so far this year, 18. Each bus card is for 20 rides to and from. If the veteran is going to school, they can get one monthly rather than every 2 months. She said that there are numbers on the brochures and information she handed out and encouraged them to give them a call if they needed them. Kathie explained that they can schedule the rides for their van and the number for the one from Danville that goes 5 days a week is 554-5003 and is on the information. Emily Dobson thanked Kathie for coming and stated that the information is very good to have. She said she knew that the Veteran's transportation is one of the things that were discussed at the regional meeting last week and it just keeps growing.

Update from Showbus: Laura Dick reported that the December rides were down for 3 reasons: weather, school vacations and some of the out of county riders who had been riding stopped once the weather turned bad. We were doing that as a favor, but hopefully they will be picked up by the new service that should be starting in their county. January may be down as well if we have any more polar vortexes. She said that they had been able to continue to drive, but if people were using mobility devices, once the weather went below zero, we suggested that maybe they reschedule because lifts don't work well at that temperature. The hydraulics start getting slow and once the lift doors, all the warmth in the bus got out. People were very, very cold. So, even though Showbus never shut down, people were encouraged to think about rescheduling for other than mandatory transportation such as dialysis. This week was not so bad, but next week is going to again dip below zero. That does impact. If people want to ride, ok, but we do warn them that it is going to be really chilly.

A generic poster that is good for all of the counties has been worked up. Laura distributed them and said she could get more if needed.

She reported that they are still negotiating with St. Marys. It takes a very long time because any change in their transportation has to be approved through their legal department and the State of Illinois because it has to do with grants funded by the State of Illinois. That is looking up. One thing they are looking at and we are encouraging is their census went down with the closure of that previous transportation provider. They are really excited about being able to be more effective in the non-urban area. That is why we are interested – to open up that service for the non-urban area.

Laura said they are hoping for Spring and they are hoping for spring and that no one else slides into their buses. They've had a lot of cars sliding into the buses in the last few weeks.

Leslie stated that she had put the Showbus routes in the December / January newsletter. She said she got the information off the webpage and would try to do that a couple of times a year at least. Laura expressed appreciation and said they could do more special community trips when it warms up. Leslie said that they had closed down their center a couple of times just because it is not safe for the seniors to be out. She said if they were open, a few would come in. Laura said that their problem is with the dialysis folks who don't have a choice. There are routes that are way out in the country that they were doing a deviated fixed route because they don't require people to call in. A lot of them do not have phones. The alternative is to take a chance and not run the route only to have someone waiting out in the cold. You just can't be sure they'll get the message if we announce a closure. Emily said that she had noticed that some of the other providers had closed. You just have to have and use good judgment.

HSTP Region 8 report: Laura said that they are beginning to manufacture vehicles. Unfortunately, they have not started on most of the vehicles we need. A little bit of a hiccup that was run into and is being looked into was that in the past, buses were funded in such a way that IDOT paid the vendor directly and the groups would pay for the licensure, title costs, etc... She said that she is working with an agency that was notified that they could pick up a bus, but they were notified that they would be required to pay the full cost of the bus and then they'd be reimbursed by IDOT. That really changes things. She said that they did front the money for the buses that were piggybacked out of Minnesota because they had no choice. That was a third of a million dollars. That was very expensive and she said she had to take a sort term loan out. This is very concerning because there are actually about \$4 million worth of buses on order. She said she was not sure as to whether this was going to be the new procedure or if it would be straightened out.

Emily reported that she had gotten an email from Eileen Brown, the Region Coordinator, in regard to vehicle delivery information. She read that the simple answer is that spring throughout the summer will be the period of time for vehicle delivery. Macon Resources and Easter Seals are still owed vehicles for calendar year 2012 and 2011. The calendar year 2013 orders, which Emily thought might include the Macon County buses, would be included in the last round of grant applications. She said, though, that ours was covered by the startup money, so we are not sure where that is going to fall. People who were awarded vehicles in calendar year 2013 should be getting notifications now in the mail. Once they have their grant agreement or contract, it will take another whole year. Emily said that it looks like such a nice system when you first start working with it because you fill out your application, make a presentation to a regional group, pretty much

everybody gets awarded in the region. Then to have them wait 2 or 3 or 4 years longer to get a functioning vehicle that they can actually use to transport the people that live in our county is very disturbing. Leslie said that this is not new and that she could remember waiting a year or two for vehicles. Laura said the big disappointment is the contract. We not only have to wait for manufacturing, but IDOT has to go out for bids with your contracts. Emily said it makes it very difficult for those present to do what they are trying to do which is get rides for people. It looks like the vehicle procurement part of the process is still going to be on going for a while. She said she did bring up the question as to whether there was any sort of advocacy effort that could be done as an HSTP group or as a local group to try to move this along. As far as anyone can determine, there is not. Now we are at the mercy of the manufacturing process and then we will be at the mercy of whether Laura can dole out the cash for the vehicles when that comes to pass. That is going to be a huge deterrent to us. Laura asked Emily to wait a few days so she could email some more information to her when she gets it.

Emily said that the HSTP had a really good meeting about a week ago where there was a lot of discussion on changes to medical transportation that are coming about as a result of the managed care that the State of Illinois, as part of the new Medicaid waiver program. She said they had both of the managed care organizations that serve Macon County in the room. They both did a little presentation on how it works with them. Up until now, people on Medicaid that needed medical transportation had to contact First Transit and their Medicaid transportation division approved or denied Medicaid transportation. Now that these two managed care organizations, Health Alliance & Molina, have come into the Macon County area, each one is taking the place of the Medicaid provider for the people they serve. They are providing their own transportation services. Individuals that are enrolled with one of the managed care organizations no longer contact First Transit. It was a very interesting meeting and we learned a lot about medical transportation that we hadn't known. There was also a discussion of veterans transportation. She said she was really happy that Kathie had come today and shared their information with them. In some areas of the region, they do not have the type of service that we do have in our area where people who use oxygen or a wheel chair are not able to use VA transportation and they end up having to try to go through their local rural provider or their urban provider to try to get to their VA facilities for their treatments and appointments. We discussed that type of transportation and those needs as well. The next HSTP meeting is February 27 in Urbana. We do have a carpool that goes there from Decatur. We leave from the Macon Resources parking lot at about 8:30 a.m. for the 10 a.m. meeting. The meeting is usually over by 11:30. Sometimes we stop for lunch, but we are usually back between 12:30 and 1:00 p.m. She said that she was not sure exactly what would be discussed at the February 27 meeting as they are waiting for applications to come out for another vehicle procurement. The HSTP takes on the responsibility of reviewing the applications.

New Business: Emily said that it has come to their attention that the committee needs to elect a vice chair. Diane Drew requested a copy of the by-laws be sent out to committee members. Gary Minich made a motion to nominate Emily Dobson as vice chair, seconded by Andrea Shaffer, and the motion carried 6-0.

Leslie asked Laura if there was anything she could think of that the committee could do to help. Laura mentioned the posters that had been distributed earlier. Leslie reminded them that May will be Senior Rama and that might be a good time to get some word out. Several members mentioned that they had had booths last year. Laura said the other thing is presentations. She said that if you know of a group that would be willing to have a speaker come to let her know.

She discussed routes and whether they make it so a bus is steadily on the same route all the time. She says that works well in established communities, but she didn't think Macon County was ready for that yet. Contracts and getting them going are extremely important.

There was discussion about how they thought the new medical transportation rollout is supposed to be provided to people who are dual eligible. Marilyn Piasecki explained that she thought that was supposed to happen in April. When they are dual eligible, then Molina & Health Alliance will start picking up and provide services to people for their associations. Laura explained that Molina hires a company called Logisticare and Logisticare went out and contracted with transportation providers. Health Alliance set up a whole new corporation called Health Alliance Connect and they are not only trying to get this up and rolling, they are trying to learn the system. With their name recognition, they've had a lot of people go with them. Marilyn said that Molina & Health Alliance will have a certain number that their people will contact and it will actually be Showbus. Laura agreed and explained that the two of them are extremely different. Logisticare had it set up where they send information and we say yes or no and send it back to them. Health Alliance is making calls to see if we can do it, if we say no, they call another provider to see if they can do it, but they are mandated to provide the transportation. They are trying very hard to work it out. It is a huge change. First Transit will not go away for a while because there are some populations that are exempt from this rollout to managed care.

Leslie asked how many vehicles are on order for Macon County. Laura said that because of the inter-governmental agreement, it doesn't matter. There was a big push for downstate operating systems program money and you were not eligible for that until FY14. But you were allowed to be included in the FY12 under CBT asking that the money that was reserved for Macon be used. They thought there was X amount of money in that fund. They found out there was only Y amount and the application was pulled while they decided how much money was in the reserve. In the meantime, it doesn't matter because Macon will be covered by the intergovernmental agreement. Leslie asked if talking with Andy Manar would help. Laura said the new guy with IDOT is trying very hard to get this up and rolling. He attended the HSTP Region 6 meeting and did a wonderful job.

Emily asked if there was a PCOM yet. Laura confirmed that it is Jerry Stokes who is part of the McLean County Highway Department. Emily asked Laura to explain what a PCOM is. Laura explained that IDOT wanted an individual to be named who would be responsible for all districts. If you were a Mass Transit District, it would be someone in the Mass Transit system. Since we are not a mass transit district, the PCOM had to be a county employee. The difficulty with that is that no body has the money to pay another employee. The person who this was assigned to is an employee that has had this added as another duty on his plate. Emily said that she understands that only one is needed from McLean County because of the intergovernment agreement. Laura confirmed.

Emily announced that the next meeting would be held on February 26, 2014 at 2:30 p.m.

Gary Minich made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Andrea Shaffer and motion carried 6-0.

