

Rural Transit Advisory Group

September 24, 2014

Committee Members Present: Gary Minich, Alissa Dozier, Emily Dobson, Leslie Stanberry, Diane Drew, Mark Wicklund, Marilyn Piasecki

Others Present: Bruce Bird, Paul McChancy, Joselyn Stewart, Laura Dick, Dennis Fisher, TRIP Coordinator Leanna Morgan, Dial-A-Ride Administrative Director Susan Starwalt

Committee Members Absent: Andrea Shaffer

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 22, 2014 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 514 County Board Room, County Office Building.

Mark Wicklund called the meeting to order.

Gary Minich made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 27th meeting, seconded by Emily Dobson and motion carried 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – none

UPDATE FROM SHOWBUS

Laura Dick reported that the St. Mary's rollout is still going very smoothly. They've been a joy to work with.

Laura passed charts and information out. The units are up because of St. Mary's. Laura said she is very excited about the contract. It is a balancing act to make sure we keep working hard in getting the general public transportation numbers as special contracts are added. As they are added, they should be to the benefit of the not for profit agencies as well as the transit and create more visibility for SHOWBUS in the various areas. One of the elements that is especially exciting is that while St. Mary's population is pretty stable, it is different from other adult based services, but there have been increasing calls from rural people interested in taking part in that program. That is one of the very big reasons we like to do that work. That is to expand the population in the rural areas.

The IPTA conference was held. Mike Healy is still working hard on getting bus contracts in place. Word was received today that the very large capital contract that had been approved was executed. Along with that capital contract, we hope that the rest of the buses will flow. If so, the buses will be delivered within the next year or so.

Still working hard with IDOT and trying to get the money released from the bus accident at the end of December, 2013. It is hopeful that the money from the insurance can be used for the repair 4 vehicles, two of which belong to other agencies. That would give 4 more in the fleet. They've promised to get back with us in the next 10 days.

Emily asked how it was going with getting the new buses that didn't work repaired. Laura said they met at the conference and Mike Healy was there. They have agreed that when we bring a bus up, they will make an appointment for us so diagnosis will be done on the same day it is brought up. That is what we needed to have happen. We can't just drop a bus and not hear for weeks and weeks. Mike Healy was very instrumental in reminding them that it is a good thing to be responsive. We're hoping it will be resolved. There are still some wiring issues. That is a bit of an improvement.

UPDATE FROM HSTP

Eileen Sierra was not present at the meeting.

Emily Dobson did not attend the last meeting.

Gary Minich reported. HSTP Region 8 met in Shelbyville at the Shelby County Community Services Facility. We took a tour of the facility. By-law changes were passed. They broke out into the 4 new groups that had been set up in June. There will be written reports coming of what transpired in those break out groups.

Information on vehicle delivery was passed out. There was no change. Everything is running way behind schedule, but at least it is moving.

The next meeting is December 11th @ Charleston Transition. Emily said there is usually a carpool going so if anyone needs a ride, just call.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mark Wicklund said he had received some phone calls & emails from a marketing group with inquiries about placing brochures and flyers in the buses. Mark said he would like input from the board on placing items like that in the buses. Emily asked Laura if this was a common practice. Laura said many years ago they allowed not for profits to put plaquards on the outside of the buses. She said they don't do that any longer because they go all over the counties. Brochures, especially if it is a short term thing where a not for profit is running a survey and they want help in getting surveys filled in. She said they are hesitant to take on lots of brochures because that makes the driver responsible for keeping track of them. Requests are considered, especially for not for profits or if it is the request of the county committee. Emily asked if Dial-A-Ride allowed it. Susan Starwalt, Administrative Director for Dail-a-Ride explained that with flyers, they participate similar to SHOWBUS in short term situations, but if it is a situation where they want to advertise their business, they need to be on the outside of the bus and they need to pay for the advertising. It does generate the local match. She said their hospitals do contribute as direct donations so they would hand out a flyer for them if they asked. She said they also go to Douglas, Champaign & Effingham Counties and it seems that the people that advertise on the buses appreciate that because they get multiple county exposure. Marilyn Piasecki asked if there were talks with others to do some stuff like what is being done now with St. Marys. Laura said they have not been approached. Mark Wicklund said that the person he spoke with was open to further discussions, but she was marketing and not actually inside the business. Laura said that once you start one contract, no matter how much you talk about the contracts you have outside of the county, it's not the same as having a local contract where they can see that we actually do show up, we actually don't lose anyone and we build up a reputation locally. She said it will begin to snowball. Mark Wicklund said his concern with authorizing brochures because if it starts with one, who's next and then you end up with a bus full of papers. As far as the surveys for service groups, that are short lived, handed to the passenger and then done with. He said he had no problem with those, but he wanted input from the board and wanted to know if there was interest or not. Marilyn said that

if you start with one, you have to let everyone and that could be a problem because you are creating more work for the driver and that is slowing them down as they have to make sure they're not on the floor and the bus stays clean so people don't slip on them. Leslie said she didn't think the advertiser would get much out of it in the end because when people get on, they don't want more paper. There's plenty of that for the bus drivers to have to pick up and worry about, such as candy bar wrappers, etc... already. Emily Dobson added that it would be silly to start doing that now versus after buses are actually located in Macon County because you never know where that bus is going to go. Laura said that years ago, they did, when local match was impossible, they allowed plaquards, but they were a problem because in going from county to county, the riders would get confused because there might be 4 county health departments, etc... She said they finally said no because it was not working. She repeated that mainly when they do it, it is when it is a survey and they are trying to get info or a special interest brochure or if the County group requests it for short term. Brochures as a whole, get difficult. Gary Minich said that marketing this program is something he is concerned about, but agreed that he could see how putting brochures on buses could be a problem, particularly when you're serving the handicapped. Things do tend to get scattered on the floor and become slip hazards.

TRIP Coordinator, Leanna Morgan, explained that they are coordination and resource center in the 12 county region HSTP covers. Macon County is one of the counties.

When a person or another agency calls in, their first call is going to be the transportation provider. If they haven't made that call, we can make that referral and get them to who they need to be in contact with, whether it's SHOWBUS or Decatur Mass Transit or whoever, we'll have them go there first. The brochure has instructions as to who to call and how to coordinate that themselves, but if they still can't navigate the system, they'll call back in to us and we'll make those calls for them a lot like a travel agency would do. It's a single point of access. They can call with one call and TRIP will make all the calls for them or refer them to where they need to go. It may be a Faith in Action, but we'll make the calls and figure out what they need to do. Sometimes we help them reschedule medical appointments to a day when they can use the existing routes of the transportation provider. Most of the time, it just a referral to where they need to go. Sometimes the provider might switch them back to us if they can't change an appointment. We do what we can to get them another route or get them rescheduled. It just depends on where they need to go.

Ms. Morgan handed out packets and explained they contained a flyer with procedures and step by step instructions for passengers. If they need medical transportation and are using Medicaid, everything they need to know before they call First Transit is in there. Provider phone numbers are there. The HSTP flyer is included. It has all the transportation providers such as SHOWBUS & Decatur Public Transit. She told members to share the information with anyone it might be useful to. Extra brochures and flyers were available if anyone wanted any to make available to the public.

Gary Minich asked how TRIP advertised and marketed their services. He said his biggest concern is how to get the information about all the services that are being provided to the people that need them. Ms. Morgan said a lot of theirs comes from referrals, mostly from the providers or other agencies. Ms. Morgan said she has been marketing more to Macon County in the last year. She said she went to the Macon County Health Department and they've started referring passengers to her. She said it is starting to pick up a little bit and they've been seeing the numbers pick up. For example, if SHOWBUS had someone they couldn't help, they would refer

them to TRIP and they would try to find an alternative or help reschedule the appointment so they could go with public transit. Ms. Morgan said that TRIP is not a public transportation provider, so they are really helping them get the resources they need and help them navigate the system.

Mark Wicklund went back a couple of months to what prompted them to ask Ms. Morgan to come and talk with them. He said there was apparently a survey or questionnaire TRIP had done that showed Macon County was underserved. Ms. Morgan said she didn't have any reports of that. She said she did have on the annual report that the numbers look kind of low. She said they started their marketing based out of Coles County. The marketing in Macon County hasn't picked up until recently and they are starting to see more numbers from Macon County. As far as unmet needs in Macon County, she said she did not have those numbers. She said a sub-committee at HSTP had been started regarding unmet needs in the region. She said she only has what passengers have called in to her and most of them have been referrals and they have been able to work out coordination for some of those passengers.

Laura asked if the passengers TRIP had been able to coordinate were rural, urban, . . .? Ms. Morgan said some of them have been within the city limits. The ones that have been rural have been referred to SHOWBUS and they haven't gotten calls back from them. She said they may just not have had the number. One was going to St. Louis and they set them up with AOK.

Susan Starwalt explained that the purpose of TRIP is not to do what SHOWBUS is already doing in Macon County. This is for long distance trips, typically. Decatur has a couple of great hospitals and there are more people coming from outside areas to Macon County and Decatur to get those specialized services. TRIP is not for the typical grocery store situation, but is for long distance court, medical, treatment, etc.... TRIP would market more to dispatchers within our region or case workers that deal with transportation related issues on a regular basis. Marketing to the general public just confuses people. She said did not know either where the unmet needs came from, but in a lot of cases, because they are doing long distance transportation, it's money. People cannot afford the fare to get that far. It's more like a 50 miles trip, not a 2 mile situation. Those would be the unmet needs. Laura said they struggle with that same thing in other counties too. She said they have the issue of what to do with the folks that are not within the SHOWBUS region, but they want to come into the region. She said that because Decatur has the wonderful hospitals, dealing with that struggle and whether it should be a priority will come up in the future. If for some reason, there is no other provider in a nearby county, but that county is not within the SHOWBUS region, is that something you want SHOWBUS to consider, which would mean it would have to be made sure that somebody else's toes were not being stepped on. It does take resources away from your residents. It's a hard questions, but Macon is going to be one to have to deal with it because of the rich resources here and because it is surrounded by rural area. Marilyn said there are a lot of people coming into Decatur, not necessarily from Macon to outlying area because we do have so many services here. Many come from Moultrie County. That is what TRIP is for. TRIP coordinates those long distance trips, not with their own vehicles because TRIP does not have vehicles, but using existing services. They also help with Medicaid approved long distance trips. Ms. Morgan stressed that they work with the existing transportation providers and utilize as many existing routes as possible. Lesley asked if they involve Faith in Action. Ms. Morgan said they've made quite a few referrals to them. There are several of them within the region and most of them have been contacted at some point. If people don't have the money to pay for public transportation, that may be the best option for them. All of the options are considered in determining what is best for the passenger. She said they also get calls from

veterans who don't know the routes going to Danville. She said they make the calls to the American Legions and VFW's to find out route information and who they need to call.

Mark Wicklund referred to the July minutes where Laura had commented about an unmet needs issue originating from TRIP. She had talked with Susan Starwalt. Mark said his understanding was that Susan was not sure of what the unmet needs were in Macon County. Susan said she was not sure where the unmet needs comment came from. She said she & Laura had had a conversation about it, but TRIP would not have said that there were unmet needs and she had no idea where that comment came from. She said she didn't know if it was in a committee within the HSTP. TRIP does track the unmet needs, that that would have nothing to do with the functions SHOWBUS provides. It is typically that the passenger could not pay for the trip or they got another ride at the last minute. These are long distance rides and they take a lot of time to arrange and to find proper payment for the passenger. We could not figure out where that question came up. Mark said his concern was that if there was an unmet need, it would be something the committee needed to address. Susan said she was unaware of an unmet need in Macon County. She said she wouldn't call it an unmet need, it's whatever reason the transportation was not taken. Not that the need was not met, TRIP could coordinate the type of transportation, but for whatever reason, they chose not to take it. Decatur has so many providers between Faith in Action, VA centers, SHOWBUS, and taxis. Laura said it's possible, because at the last HSTP, they are rolling out a type of tool which is in process and they are trying to define unmet need on a countrywide scale. It is experimental. Laura said she absolutely thinks Macon County has unmet need. Every county does, but she said they are responding to the needs and it's a matter of people becoming more aware. This has been seen in other counties where the more services that are provided, the more demand there is for service because the word gets out. All of a sudden they're realizing there is an alternative. The unmet need accelerates the more people get to know you. That is what is going to happen in Macon. You will see the growth gradually increasing and all of a sudden, it's going to explode exponentially. Mark said the concern would be in the survey if it is labeled as unmet need and its more or less that they made other arrangements, he said he doesn't feel that that qualifies as an unmet need. Ms. Starwalt agreed and said maybe they need to change their terminology because that is something that goes out on the monthly reports. Ms. Morgan said the HSTP report had a call that was from this county to another county or maybe they were having trouble getting into Macon County and the reason was put down as to why the person didn't go. She said it might say it was a cost issue or there's no existing routes at the time they need to go. It could be before operation hours. She said she did not think she was getting a lot of those from Macon County. It is more in other counties. Macon County actually has quite a bit of transportation compared to some of the others. Susan said they normally prefer to talk with the people that know what's going on. You don't want to talk to a general passenger because you just confuse them.

Lesley asked how the 50 cents is collected. Ms. Morgan said it is waived if on Medicaid. Most of the ones she's coordinated, they've not been able to collect it. It's just not something to go after them for.

Lesley asked if Ms. Morgan had anything on origin to ? Ms. Morgan said the list is quite large. There are not a lot of repeated trips for routes. She said they don't turn anyone away.

Lesley asked if there were more TRIPs throughout the state. Ms. Morgan said no. They are the only one. Lesley asked if these are the only counties covered. Ms. Morgan said they would take outside the counties and have served quite a bit of the state and that is why the outside region

looks so high. A lot of the agencies that call in don't have the resources or time that TRIP has. We don't try to create routes, try to coordinate and get them back on the existing routes. She said she has a very large database of routes.

Laura said that they had been told that, on a national level, Faith in Actions are being frowned upon and asked if TRIP had seen Faith in Actions begin to drop their transportation programs. Ms. Morgan said not necessarily and said that the Champaign County Faith in Action were recently at a Committee on Aging meeting she had attended talking about looking for more volunteers. She said she wasn't sure what type of volunteers they were looking for though. She said that the last she knew they were still providing transportation and she hadn't heard anything about it. Most riders don't even have to be seniors if they have a medical issue. She said they call around and ask as many questions as they can to see where they need to go and repeated that she had not heard of any cutbacks on their transportation. Emily Dobson said they still do it here in Macon County.

Marilyn asked about the trips that could not be made because of financial issues. Ms. Morgan told about a gentleman that was in Coles County and needed to get back to Chicago. She said they found the train ticket for him for \$19, but he had no money and no way to pay for it. She said she spoke with the Family Caregiver Resource Center in Coles County and they had funding to pay for it as long as he had a caregiver to meet him at the train station. Sometimes there isn't any funding for them. If they're trying to go to a court date two counties away, there's probably not going to be funding for it. There used to be some Title III funding to get the seniors out of the county, but not currently. We have to work with what's available.

The meeting adjourned @ 3:15 p.m.