

Rural Transit Advisory Group

December 16, 2015

Committee Members Present: Alissa Dozier, Andrea Shaffer, Diane Drew, Jay Dunn, Leslie Stanberry, Emily Dobson, Becky Gillen

Others Present: SHOWBUS Representative – Laura Dick, Joselyn Stewart

Committee Members Absent: Gary Minich

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 23, 2016 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 514 County Board Room, County Office Building.

Ms. Stanberry made a motion to approve the minutes from the prior meeting (6/24/15), seconded by Ms. Shaffer and the motion carried 6-0.

Public Comments: None

SHOWBUS Update –
Laura Dick distributed reports showing stats.

November ridership was down some due to the Holiday. Otherwise, it remains fairly steady.

Executed contracts have been received. They went to court for payment and that case continues to protect and make certain that money continues to flow. The first two quarters of estimated downstate funds have been paid. There is no legal precedent for doing it, because the downstate money is set by legislative action. It is a specific amount of money per entity. IDOT sent a list to the Comptroller acknowledging that the money could be appropriated, but they only did so at 2015 levels which amounted to incredible cuts by a number of agencies because they were held to the amount of money they pulled down in 2015, not the money they had been approved for. For Champaign it was a loss of about \$6 million. The reason for that is that some years they use more money for capital. There is a feeling that the department does not have the right to change appropriations that were set legislatively. The court case continues to question that. There is, at least, money flowing, and transportation entities that had been forced to close are now open again.

The Capital program had \$78 million under executed contracts. Most of that has been put “on hold”. You are allowed to submit bills for the “on hold” projects, but you probably won’t be paid. Some of the projects went forward. We were allowed to buy the building that had been approved, but all of the money to renovate the building was zeroed out. All of the money for radios has also been zeroed out. A new application stating the most critical needs was allowed. Most of the agencies simply resubmitted because it would not have been submitted in the first place if it was not critical. Nothing has been heard about that.

A lot of the county based meetings Ms. Dick has been attending are talking a lot about cuts in programs. They are running out of any types of cash reserves and a number of them have been refused bank loans because their money is tied to the state. Even though they have executed contracts, nobody knows how good that contract is.

It will be a very interesting next few months. SHOWBUS has decided not to cut back on services because legislatively, they have not been cut. So a cutback in services cannot be justified. Care is being taken about expanding, but requests for new services are coming in as agencies try to trim their budgets and cut back on their own transportation. Ms. Stanberry asked about the requests for expansion of services. Ms. Dick explained that they are in negotiations. In terms of priority, Macon is at the top for expansion because the numbers are low. She said they are being very careful trying to coordinate with other transportation entities to make sure toes are not being stepped on. As funding goes down, some transportation agencies are increasing costs. She said they have not done that, but said that they do not want to compete with the ones that have decided to increase. Macon is definitely a top priority in terms of developing service contracts.

HSTP Update –

Ms. Dobson reported that they had met last week and were very happy to have 2 representatives from the Macon County Board there. Both Gary Minich & Jay Dunn attended. Sub-committees worked on what they would like to see in the future and things that are going on out in the communities. That is all in preparation in making the new 3 year plan.

Bus delivery delays were discussed. Some have been on back- order for several years. Decatur has been waiting for 2 ½ or 3 years.

The new Region 8 Coordinator is planning to do a consumer survey at agencies in the community to see if needs are being met and how improvements can be made. That might lead to another area for service contracts or something that would help.

The Statewide Independent Living Council has announced that Aging and Easter Seals are going to be working together to insure that senior transportation becomes available to all. That may be another area where there may be some service contracts too. There was also discussion about making all staff of all providers aware of people with disabilities and how to work with them. Ms. Dobson said she had taken that information to the Statewide Independent Living Council and they are going to be putting that into their 3 year plan as well so that a curriculum can be developed where people with disabilities can go out and meet people and talk to them about their issues, how they can help people and the efficiency of the service. Every Center for Independent Living has a disability awareness team so each center would be doing their own under the guidance of this curriculum. Once that is done, it would be available to any other agency that might be interested. There was a lot of good discussion around people getting their needs met.

The next meeting is March 10, 2016 in Decatur at Macon Resources. Everyone is invited. The last meeting that was held in Decatur was one of the biggest meetings ever. It is nice to see because it shows there is a lot of interest in public transportation in the area.

Ms. Drew questioned Ms. Dick about the fact that at least 50% of the riders are seniors and asked how Macon County compares with other counties. Ms. Dick said it is pretty comparable, but there are exceptions where the riders are younger such as in Kankakee where there are some high poverty areas and younger riders use the service to get to work. The rest of the counties have riders with disabilities or are seniors. Service contracts also affect this. Ms. Drew commented on the high number of seniors in Macon County and said she just wondered how that affected the comparison with other counties. Ms. Dick said it was pretty comparable.

Ms. Stanberry asked about the survey Ms. Dobson had mentioned and asked if there would be an assessment team or how it would work. Ms. Dobson was not sure and it is still in the draft stage, but it sounded like surveys might be sent out to the agencies so that people could be asked to fill them out. Ms. Stanberry said they have a lot of people that come on the bus and wondered if it would matter if they came on SHOWBUS or the city's bus. Ms. Dick said that could be a problem. She said Kankakee had done a survey and halfway through they realized the data for urban was getting confused with data for rural. Ms. Dobson suggested that they could possibly color code them, but there are several such as SHOWBUS, Decatur Public Transit, Operation Uplift, Alpha & Omega, etc... Another problem could be the use of language that is not necessarily understood by the public. For example, if asked if they use rural public transportation, they might say no even though it says rural public transportation right on the bus. When further questioned about if they use SHOWBUS, they say yes, they've used it for years. They don't connect it with public transportation. They think of the City bus. Ms. Stanberry told a story that could affect results about how many people had responded to a past survey saying they were Native Americans because they were born in the USA.

Ms. Dobson reported that she had learned at the Region 8 meeting that TRIPP is now officially out of business. There were comments that it had been a good idea and it was too bad it had failed.

Ms. Drew asked if Ms. Dick contracted with Health Alliance. Ms. Dick confirmed and said that Health Alliance has pulled out of the dual eligible. Molina just fired Logisticare which was their transportation and brought in a new firm, Secure Transportation from California. When their president came in, his comment was that it is really empty once you get out of Chicago. They are supposed to start up and SHOWBUS has contracted with them as well. When Health Alliance stopped the dual eligible, there was confusion about differing communication telling them that they would revert to the state or to Molina. Both Ms. Drew and Ms. Dobson said that they would have a choice. Ms. Dobson said the area representative from Health Alliance had come and done a workshop to explain how this would work and he said they would have a choice. They can choose to revert to the state or they can choose to go to Molina. Everyone agreed that it is very confusing. Ms. Dick said there is a new group called Choices that is supposed to be piloting another project where they are going to come in and be an umbrella for all the MCO's. They also are not sure how that is going to work, but they are mainly starting with wards of the state. Ms. Stanberry asked Ms. Drew what her opinion was about managed health care and the future. Ms. Drew said there are lots of problems. Members discussed this issue. Ms. Dick said that currently they are paying, if they know where to bill, but there is quite a number they are not able to bill. Code changes are also a problem.

Ms. Dobson mentioned that Ms. Drew's 30th anniversary at work was featured in the newspaper today. Everyone congratulated her.

OTHER UPDATES – none

NEW BUSINESS – none

Chair Dunn announced that the next meeting will be March 23 which is after the next HSTP meeting.

Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Dobson, seconded by Ms. Stanberry, motion carried 7-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m. Minutes submitted by Jeannie Durham.