

Rural Transit Advisory Group

December 14, 2016

Committee Members Diane Drew, Becky Edwards, Alissa Dozier, Emily Dobson, Gary Minich
Present:

Others Present: SHOWBUS Representative – Laura Dick, Henry Dick
Bruce Bird, County Highway Engineer, Theresa Churchill – H&R Reporter

Committee Members , Leslie Stanberry, Jay Dunn
Absent:

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 22, 2017 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 514 County Board
Room, County Office Building.

Diane Drew made a motion to approve the minutes from the prior meeting (9/28/16), seconded by Gary Minich and the motion carried 5-0.

Public Comments: None

Old Business: None

NEW BUSINESS:

SHOWBUS Update – Laura Dick reported that in looking at the minutes from the last meeting, September 28th was probably the last good day in quite a long time. On September 28th, the thought was that payment was going to be made. Between 9/28 and 10/4, all transit agencies found out that through a series of miscommunications \$157 million had been diverted or never put into the downstate transit fund. As a result, no one would get their advances. Unfortunately, the federal contracts had not yet been released so no one could get any federal money. So, from the end of September until just recently, it was pretty much survival mode. A number of rural transits did not make it and had to close. SHOWBUS was extremely fortunate. The bank gave an extended line of credit. He frankly said that having state money as a guarantee was really difficult to sell to his compatriots. So, it took quite a while before he did agree to write off and allow an extension. That was really appreciated.

There was a lawsuit and the day after the lawsuit that was held in Kankakee County where the judge indicated that the money should be paid to River Valley Metro. At that point in time, they did move in enough money to begin paying out state money. In the meantime, the federal contracts were gotten out and a bit of federal money was received. That was a saver for the downstate. Most everyone is still waiting on the 2nd quarter of state money. That is supposed to be an advance so 3rd quarter should be getting received. There is no discussion of when that will be paid. At the moment, they are up and running. There are no plans to cut back because there is a continuing appropriation. In theory, there is no reason to cut back and until it is known for certain that they are going to change the legislation, business will continue as status quo. It was a really challenging few months. It was difficult on employees. A lot of employees are looking for other work being afraid of what might happen in the next few months.

SHOWBUS was given approval to do warranty work on the super medium duty vehicles, at least on the modification parts because there was so much trouble with them with leaking, loose wiring and small little jobs that meant a 2 ½ hour drive one way, waiting for the bus, and a 2 ½ hour drive back. That is good news that we are able to do some of that warranty work and get the buses back on the road.

Other than that, the big concerns for right now are that the social service agencies are continuing to struggle. DeWitt County Human Resource Center opened up for at least services for folks with developmental disabilities. Otherwise, people were going to have to be transported much further than they should be transported for services. In other counties, it is being seen that they are having to transport. Another social service center has been lost and the end result will be that people will be transported, if nothing goes wrong on the route, about 58 minutes. You really are not supposed to have anyone on the bus longer than one hour. The limits are being pushed as these agencies close. It is very hard on the communities. It is being watched closely.

The impact of the closure of Health Alliance Connect is also being watched closely and the uncertainty of what entities are going to replace Health Alliance. There are so many stories, it is hard to know, but SHOWBUS will try to be as responsive as possible.

Negotiations are underway on a building in Macon County and the hope is that the negotiations will finish and there will be a shed by January or February. It was slowed down a little when it looked like there might be an embarrassing situation of signing a lease and then having to tell them that the first month's rent could not be paid. That would not be a good way to start the relationship. Hopefully, that is on track. Ms. Dobson said that is something that has been anticipated for a long time. She asked if having a shed in Macon County would increase visibility and ridership. Laura confirmed, saying yes, it would do several things. One, it will make SHOWBUS more attractive to recruiting more local drivers. That is a really big plus. Responsiveness to Medicaid riders is always a topic and one possibility would be having a smaller vehicle situated in each county. To do that, a secure shed is needed. In every instance, the growth in the country has been galvanized by a local shed. It just makes a huge difference. People see it. There are still a lot of calls from people wondering what is SHOWBUS. People still don't get it. We may have to get out there and push it a little more once that shed is in place.

Ridership reports were distributed and Laura reported that the counts are a little lower. The counts in Blue Mound for the same two months last year are down a bit, but not significantly. They will probably bounce back up.

Diane asked Laura if she had been in contact with Meridian. Laura said yes, but it had been months ago. They wanted all the information immediately. It was forwarded and that was the last heard from them. She said she had been told they were still in negotiations with the State, but haven't finalized the contract. She said she did not know what the status is. SHOWBUS does not have a signed contract with them, but they have all the information. Diane said they don't have a contract either and she had just gotten another email wanting her to send it to someone else. She said there was a representative from Meridian at a meeting last week and he was talking like it might be February 1st. Emily asked Diane and Laura to tell those present what Meridian is in case there were people in the room that did not know. Diane said it is another managed care agency and it is believed that they may take the place of Health Alliance, but nobody is really sure. She said they do still have a few Health Alliance clients and she asked what would happen if they decided to go to Meridian. He said we could bill out of network. It is all kind of up in the air.

Laura asked if Molina was here. Emily said yes, but they've been suspended from advertising or doing anything to improve or increase their services until such time as there are two providers in place. Laura added that at one of the last meetings she had been to, something was said about St. Mary's no longer being a provider for Molina. It was unsure if that was correct or not.

HSTP Update –

Gary Minich reported that they had met last week in Sullivan at the Moultrie County Beacon. Much of what Laura was saying was echoed in the general atmosphere there. Funding, which has been a problem for the past couple of years, seems to be coming to a head. The West Central provider had to shut down and there is another one, Monroe Randolph possibly.

The goals for 2017 were looked over and approved. Beyond the purchase, updating, and maintaining equipment, which is all dependent on money that may or may not be there, he said he was particularly impressed with Laura's presentation about the line of credit. That is predicated on the fact that the state is good for the money. The goals were approved and the next meeting is in March.

Emily continued talking about the goals saying that some of the things are improving coordination among the providers and the agencies, working on trying to improve and expand service and increase the outreach. Those are things that the HSTP will be working on alongside other people and in getting more information out there for people about what it is to ride the bus. One of the things that HSTP is working on right at this time is Travel Train. They have learned that a lot of people don't understand how to ride the bus, look down their nose at people who ride buses, are afraid to use the bus and the bus is there as a benefit to them. They're trying to go around the region and do some different travel trainings to help people understand it and become more comfortable with using the vehicle. That may help increase ridership all over the region. Emily said she had just come from a TPC (Transition Planning Committee) meeting which a group that works on transition for kids with disabilities going from high school to adult life. Who needs transportation more than they do? One of the things that is planned for that group is actually have the Travel Training for the kids and their parents in an early evening setting so that SHOWBUS, Piattran, and Decatur Macon Transit can work with them to get people a little more interested in using public transportation. She said they would work on trying to get that out to other groups as well. The whole idea is that now that everybody has rural public transportation, now let's grow that. At the next meeting, which will be held in Decatur on March 16 at the SAIL office, long range goals will be worked on. She encouraged everyone to attend.

OTHER UPDATES – none

NEW BUSINESS – none

The next meeting is March 22, 2017. Gary Minich made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Diane Drew and the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m. Minutes submitted by Jeannie Durham.