

# Human Services Transportation Plan Steering Committee

**Tuesday, December 5, 2023 – 12:00 PM**

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC)

Suite 401, 456 Fulton St., Peoria, IL 61602

## Meeting Minutes

### 1. Welcome, Introductions, & Roll Call

Reema Abi-Akar called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

RURAL AREA SUBCOMMITTEE				
Name	Organization	Representing	Present	Absent
Shelly Entrekina*	FCRT/FCRC	Fulton	~X	
Barb Long*				X
Doug Manock*	Fulton County Board/PCOM	Fulton		X
Audra Miles*			X	
Joe Coffin	Thrive Community Services	Knox		X
Kraig Boynton	City of Galesburg	Knox	~X	
Hannah Fuchs	Marshall-Stark PCOM	Marshall		X
David Lueders	Marshall County Board	Marshall	~X	
Mary Patton	AARP	Peoria	~X	
Heather Bouchez	Best Buddies	Peoria	X	
Traci Dowell	MSW Projects	Stark		X
J. Thomas Howes	Stark County Board	Stark		X
Vivian Hagaman	Tazewell County Board	Tazewell		X
Max Schnieder	Tazewell County Board	Tazewell		X
Tyler Rogers	ADDWC	Woodford		X
Troy Maxwell	We Care	Woodford		X
URBAN AREA SUBCOMMITTEE				
Dawn Harper	EPIC	Agency	X	
Jodi Scott	Advocates for Access	CIL	X	
Dr. ShamRA Robinson*	Greater Peoria Mass Transit District	Provider	X	
Angel Marinich*			~X	
Kylie Rathmann	Express Employment Professionals	Agency	X	
Chris Mitchell*	Paratransit Users	User	~X	
Connie Schiele*				X
Jim Bremner	Washington Township	Partner	X	
Greg Cassidy	TCRC	Agency	X	

\* = Shared seat

\*\* = Proxy Vote

~ = Present via phone or internet

Also in attendance:

Reema Abi-Akar, TCRPC  
Jared Arthur, Snyder Village  
Meghan Brake, TMCSEA  
Dawn Cook, Tazewell PCOM

Gavin Hunt, TCRPC  
Melissa Ohrwall, IDOT  
Nicole Stephens, Heartland Health  
Adrianna Tuszynski, Snyder Village

## **2. Public Comment**

No public comment

## **3. Approval of October 17, 2023 minutes**

Due to a lack of quorum, the minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

## **4. Provider and Agency Updates**

### ***Tazewell County Resource Centers (TCRC)***

Greg Cassidy informed the committee of TCRC's open house in its new building a week from Thursday. Greg offered information and invitations to the Committee.

### ***Express Employment Professionals***

Kylie Rathman reported no new updates but stated that Express Employment Professionals is still experiencing the same issues brought forward in previous committee meetings.

### ***Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (GPMTD)***

Dr. ShamRA Robinson reported that ICC Express (Route 20) is back on its regular fixed-route schedule. Shuttles were being used for Route 20 because of the detours during the Bob Michel Bridge construction. Route 20 is now running every 30 minutes, and GPMTD is focused on meeting timepoints for the route. She said that she was told that the estimated completion of the Bob Michel Bridge is within the next couple of weeks.

### ***Fulton County PCOM***

Audra Miles reported preparations for 5311 compliance review with RLS on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

### ***Tri-County Regional Planning Commission***

Gavin Hunt reported that TCRPC staff have been conducting a ride-along on CityLink buses throughout the Peoria region. He said that they have made substantial progress on this initiative, especially as it pertains to documenting supplemental services that help bolster the fixed-route services offered by GPMTD.

### ***Advocates for Access***

Jodi Scott gave no report.

### ***Washington Township***

Jim Bremner reported that he was hoping to receive feedback from the committee regarding possible methods, strategies, or successes in advertising disability transit services. He also reported that he attended the Washington Services Fair hosted by the Chamber of Commerce at Five Points. Many vendors were present, but attendance was not as high as Washington would have liked. Bremner added that similar events could play a role and find some success engaging with residents about offered transit services.

Jim expressed disappointment with the current drop in ridership numbers. Ridership numbers currently sit at ~100 riders/month, compared to ~125 in the summer. Jim assured the committee that Washington is looking for ways to boost ridership numbers and engage the community. He noted that currently, the main advertising campaign involves posting flyers at local businesses and common destinations.

Related to schools, Jim noted that coordination with the school is going well, with 5-6 students utilizing services regularly. Jim also clarified that while the disability service meets the needs of individuals aged 18-59, service for ambulatory individuals who fall within the qualifying age does not exist.

### ***EPIC***

Dawn Harper restated staff shortages.

### ***Snyder Village***

Jared Arthur gave no new report.

### ***Tazewell County PCOM***

Dawn Cook gave no new report.

### ***Marshall County Board***

David Lueders reported that the Illinois 17 Lacon Bridge has reopened, improving transportation services from Marshall County to services in Peoria.

### ***AARP***

Mary Patton reported that the ICC (Illinois Commerce Commission) has cut back on Peoples Gas and has not decided on Ameren. Mary added that Ameren is planning to fight for the additional things that they have asked for during negotiations.

### ***City of Galesburg***

Kraig Boynton reported a finalized agreement with a firm that is developing a transit study for the City of Galesburg. Kraig confirmed that the study will also take potential rural options into consideration.

### ***Fulton County Rural Transit (FCRT)***

Shelly Entrekin gave no report.

### ***Tazwell-Mason Counties Special Education Association (TMCSEA)***

Meghan Brake gave no new report.

### ***Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)***

Melissa Orhwall reported that IDOT still anticipates being able to announce CVP (Consolidated Vehicle Procurement) awards in early December. IDOT is currently waiting for vendor contracts to be awarded. Vehicle production timelines are not definite, but once information from the selected vendors is available, IDOT will share it through the 5311 email list and the CVP mailing list for nonprofit partners. For partners with Rebuild or discretionary 5339 funding through the statewide capital section for paratransit vehicles, instructions on how to order the vehicles will be provided through capital project managers. Questions about concurrences should be directed to capital project managers, while vehicle-specific questions can be sent to the CVP team.

Low and no emission pilot: The chassis for all 50 zero-emission battery, electric paratransit vehicles have been ordered. Once CVP awards are announced and orders placed, the CVP team will start the contracts for chargers, workforce development, and technical support. Regular meetings will also be established for partners involved in the project to ensure that projects remain on schedule. All utility providers will assist transit agencies with planning for charging infrastructure. Finally, Melissa said that IDOT must be notified within 14 days about accidents involving injuries; in these instances, send Jeff Waxman an email with the basic information known at the time, then he will send a list of all required documentation.

### ***TransDev (CityLift/CountyLink)***

Angel Marinich reported that CityLift and CountyLink are still short staffed, but both are aggressively recruiting and training to fill in some of their staffing gaps. All non-management staff have received pay increases, and Angel expressed some optimism that the pay increases will help recruit and retain staff. TransDev is actively seeking an additional driver to help service Washington and Pekin. Ridership requests in Pekin have increased, so another route was created to meet the needs of that increase.

### ***Heartland Health***

Nicole Stephens reported that Heartland Health is working to recover funds that were taken away this year. Last year Heartland Health utilized a contact service called Quality Med Transport. Utilizing the same service is not a possibility unless it is part of a specific grant. Currently, Heartland Health is working with organizations, such as Molina and Meridian to ensure that

patients are getting to medical appointments. Issues utilizing other services like rideshare have presented issues because of the poor reliability of those services as it pertains to cancellations and maintaining pick up schedules.

### ***Paratransit User***

Chris Mitchell expressed enjoyment of the community outreach events for the Active Transportation Plan. Chris offered her input on Washington's community outreach initiatives, stating that restaurants and other public places could prove useful for community engagement.

### ***Best Buddies***

Heather Bouchez informed the committee that she may have some participants looking for driver and janitorial positions.

## **5. Presentation and Discussion: Transportation and Funding Overview**

Reema Abi-Akar shared a presentation on transportation funding. She shared that the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) has many resources pertaining to transportation and several topics discussed at HSTP Steering Committee meetings. Here are the key takeaways:

- A few years ago, NADTC surveyed transportation providers about key topics, such as communication, driver training, coordination, funding, challenges, and technology. The NADTC received responses from a wide range of service providers, including transportation contractors, medical contractors, senior living facilities, and aging agencies.
  - Medical services had the highest percentage of transportation use, followed by grocery shopping, pharmacy, and social services.
  - Only 58% of respondents reported that their communities have a fixed-route public transit/complementary paratransit service, while only 43% said they had a demand response public transit service.
- For HSTP, IDOT divided Illinois into eleven regions; we are in Region 5, covering Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Knox, Stark, Marshall, and Fulton counties.
- Region 5 Public Transit Options:
  - Public Fixed-Route Bus Services: CityLink (Greater Peoria) and Galesburg
  - Demand-Response Paratransit Services: CityLift (Greater Peoria) and Galesburg
  - Public Demand-Response Services (Rural): CountyLink (Peoria County), We Care (Tazewell and Woodford counties), Fulton

County Rural Transit (FCRT), and MSW Projects (Marshall and Stark counties)

- Common funding sources for public transit are FTA Section 5307 (urban funds), 5310 (increasing the mobility of seniors and people with disabilities), 5311 (rural), state funds, and fares.
  - The Illinois Department of Transportation Office of Intermodal Project Implementation (IDOT-OIPI) oversees **HSTP**. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) apportions funds to IDOT-OIPI to fund this program.
  - Urban areas over 200,000 in population receive direct apportionments of **Section 5310** funding from the FTA. Tri-County receives direct funding from FTA for the Peoria-Pekin Urbanized Area. Tri-County handles 45% of these funds, while the competitive IDOT Consolidated Vehicle Procurement (CVP) program handles 55%. Both rural and urban areas are eligible for this 55%.
  - Greater Peoria Mass Transit District is the region's sole urban recipient of **Section 5307** funding. FTA grants funds to urban transit providers that have a population of over 200,000.
  - The **Section 5311** Funding Stream is for rural transit providers. Several 5311 recipients exist in HSTP region 5. This is passthrough funding from the FTA to IDOT-OIPI to rural recipients.
  - IDOT-OIPI supports a percentage of operating and administrative costs of downstate public transit systems through the **Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP)**. This funding stream is for non-Chicagoland transit systems.

Reema asked the committee three questions, and attendants responded:

1. What funding sources does your organization use?

Fundraising  
Advertising  
State contracts  
Local service agreements  
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission  
Ridership fees  
FTA (Federal)  
Property tax income (government entity)

2. Have funding issues prevented you from carrying out transportation services?

- Yes – cannot expand to serve more potential passengers
- When there are driver shortages, it limits riders' jobs/employment options
- Lack of knowledge of where to start and what resources to use
- People don't know where the routes are
- Unavailable for "after hours" – second shift, weekends
- Competitive funding prevents innovation & creativity
- No safety at bus stops – dark and cold
- Some improvements there

3. If not funding, what resources would benefit you? (*or: What do you struggle with that's not funding-related?*)

- Barriers with funding options, geographic areas
  - Cannot commingle services – can't swap vehicles if needed
  - Loss of efficiency
- Complicated policies to navigate
  - Even more so for the rider
- Route times and options – hard to accommodate riders and schedules
- Partnerships and collaborations

## **6. HSTP Coordinator Report**

Reema reported that the Active Transportation Plan is underway, along with forthcoming community engagement events. Reema also mentioned that the Bob Michel Bridge is expected to reopen soon.

## **7. Other**

Kylie inquired about the relationship between this committee and taxicab services, specifically wanting to address taxicab/livery driver price gouging. Other members noted that municipalities might be the ones who would hold the regulatory power to address this issue.

ShamRA sought information about the upcoming Active Transportation Plan focus group event. Reema noted that the focus group is a collection of topical experts from different industries and professions that might have some insight into possible active transportation improvements.

## **8. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:06 p.m.