

**WINNEBAGO COUNTY
SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL MEETING**

Minutes

DATE: Tuesday, February 20, 2024

TIME: 1:30 p.m.

PLACE: Teams Video Conference

PRESENT: Nicole Davis-Dawald (Winnebago County Aging Resource Supervisor), Valerie Hoff (Commute with Enterprise), Brian Jacobson (ADVOCAP Director of Volunteer Services), Steve Tomasik (Transit Operations Manager for Go Transit City of Oshkosh), Susan Garcia Franz (Winnebago County Health Department), Collin Kafka (ECWRPC), Brenna Root (ECWRPC), Kim Biedermann (ECWRPC), Sara Schneider (Valley Transit)

1. **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS** – **Nicole Davis-Dawald** called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Nicole welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made by everyone attending.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – No public in attendance.
3. **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE COORD PLAN AND TEAMING WITH ADAM BELL CORELLI, COUNTY EXEC OFFICE:** Members discussed a variety of topics and issues for Adam to address at the next Committee meeting as follows:

Vision for transportation – The Committee wants to hear the County exec's office vision for transportation in Winnebago County in order to align goals.

Route 10 / Go Connect – **Steve Tomasik** stated he would like to see county support for programs such as Route 10 and Go Connect. During the last three months prior to Route 10 ending there were 1554 rides (which is the most rides ever) and the remainder of year the ridership for Go Connect was 1200. Members discussed that a viable option along with the funding needs to be available to riders. Steve stated that in the upcoming months same day rides will be resuming for Go Connect.

Advocating for Populations – **Sarah Schneider** shared that she wants to ensure the county exec's office has an awareness of "the voice of the rider" and advocated for keeping programs such as Route 10 and Go Connect which serve populations such as refugees and the employment workforce who are trying to cross and connect to the two main transit systems. Underserved populations, Title 6 compliance obligations, and ADA requirements should also be addressed.

Neighboring Counties – **Brenna Root** reported that neighboring counties also have issues with emergency medical transportation and rural transportation needs. Assisted living facilities are supposed to be providing transports but instead have been relying on county transports which in turn takes services away from the people who are in more need of it.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment / Data Collection – **Susan Garcia Franz** pointed out that a needs assignment could provide prospective on populations being missed for transits or experiencing a lack of transportation. Having data is crucial to making decisions that provide solutions to issues. I.e.) Review the Route 10 ridership data noting impacts each time a change was made. Susan also shared DOT funding is available for connecting transportation however applications are due in January for the following year's funds. The County is part of the \$2.7 million grant funded through Greater Oshkosh EDC helping businesses and wondered why transportation services were not included as part of what that funding provides. **Steve Tomasik** provided data from past studies concluding that in 2018 when UW-Oshkosh ended their transit revenue agreement funding amidst talks of sustainability through mass transit this resulted in plummeting ridership. Susan felt that more data should be collected on transportation barriers and offered to hold focus groups at places such as the Senior Center to begin gathering more information. ADVOCAP provides data on their ridership to **Nicole Davis-Dawald**. Steve reported that in 2023 Dial-a-Ride Senior had a 28 percent decrease in transports compared to 2022 along with a small decrease in rural transports. These decreases are likely accounted for by soaring agency tickets increases as Family Care agencies are utilizing agency tickets rather than providing transit services in-house.

Appleton School Transports – **Sarah Schneider** stated that the Appleton School District provides funding to Valley Transit for "limited-service routes" for educational transports.

Winnebago County ADRC Transport Funds – **Nicole Davis-Dawald** reported that the ADRC receives transportation funding through the 85.21 grant. 85.21 grant funds along with county match funds are distributed to Go Transit, Valley Transit, and Neenah-Menasha Dial-a-Ride.

Winnebago County Board's Priority Listing – **Brenna Root** shared that the first priority listed by the Winnebago County Board is to have a county supported vision for transportation throughout the county, engaging the county executive and planning department.

Limited Number of Contractors – **Sarah Schneider** stated another barrier is the difficulty finding contractors due to the limited number of contractors available.

In-house Drivers – **Steve Tomasik** stated that being able offer city employment along with a pension may attract a better quality of drivers and would allow for more efficient transport services. Steve spoke about vans with lifts, multi-seating capacities, and cutaways.

Educating Seniors – **Susan Gracia Franz** talked about educating seniors that utilizing transport services is a better economic choice than paying all of the costs associated with newer vehicles, insurance, and upkeep. Data collection could be done at facilities including determining the number of seniors asking others for rides rather than utilizing transportation services, if they would use transports if these services were available or easier to get, etc.

Determining Needs of Different Market Segments– **Sarah Schneider** spoke about different users having varying service needs – seniors, ADA accessibility, employers, workforce. Sarah posed the question of what sector of the market is driving the demand for the two systems to connect. She emphasized efficiency is essential as having stops all the way along the route is not as viable a solution as an express connector bus would be.

Transportation Services for Employment – **Brian Jacobson** reported that ADVOCAP is currently in the process of hiring someone who will look at systems that provide employment opportunities which will include some transportation services. **Valerie Hoff** added that Commute by Enterprise partners with companies in offering their program as a benefit for their employees. Companies often express budgeting concerns when there are not enough employees needing transports to meet the minimum. Teaming with another employer is a potential solution. **Steve Tomasik** elaborated on the idea of a coordinated system where one pool of vehicles completes all of the rides in the area.

County Transportation Funding – **Susan Garcia Franz** gave a reminder that prior to privatization with Veyo and MTM, the County used to receive that transportation funding. Bringing the funding back in-house with a fleet of vehicles could eliminate a many of the issues that started when privatization occurred. **Nicole Davis-Dawald** will talk with Adam about the possibility of the county having some sort of fleet. Most other counties are utilizing at least one vehicle and hire a driver. Valerie stated she has a counterpart in Tennessee who works with a county and will reach out to see what those services entail and added that Commute by Enterprise has the ability to work with cities and counties to essentially use vehicles as shuttles.

4. **VEYO TRANSITION UPDATES:**
5. **GO TRANSIT UPDATES:**
6. **MRH AND WINNEBAGO CATCH A RIDE UPDATES:**
7. **VALLEY TRANSIT UPDATES:** **Sarah Schneider** reported that the Wisconsin Association of Mobility Managers (WAMM) is hosting their spring conference in Appleton this year on April 15 to 17. Let Sarah know if you are interested in attending or being a speaker for a break-out session.
8. **NEXT MEETING DATE** – 05/21/2024 AT 1:30 p.m.
9. **ADJOURNMENT** – With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted by: Nicole-Davis-Dawald, Human Services Department