

Minutes
Public Transit Elders and Persons with Disabilities Regional Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Friday, February 17, 2023
10:00am – 11:30am

Attending: Jason Rasmussen (MARC), Colin Bratton (WRC), Tim Bradshaw (VTrans), Christine Howe (SEVT), Margaret Lewis (TGP), David Neumeister (Windham County Seniors' Health Collaborative/Windham Aging), Sue Pollard (Springfield Area Adult Day), Amanda Jordan Smith (Mount Ascutney Hospital)

Welcome and Introductions: All present introduced themselves.

Public Comment: David gave an overview of the Windham County Seniors' Health Collaborative. The project focuses on the population over 60 in Windham County. Topics addressed include transportation, housing, healthcare (disease management), income, wellness programs, and workforce. Transportation is very important for aging at home. The phase 1 report, which is mostly data, is available at <https://www.windhamaging.com/>. Phase 2 of the project - starting in April - will include regional meetings with stakeholders, formulating objectives for 2035, and identifying hurdles. The phase 2 report is expected to be published around end of 2023. David asked that the E&D Committee host a listening session focused on the future of transportation in Windham County. There was general agreement that the E&D Committee would be a good venue to host these listening sessions and that it would fit well with the move to a mobility for all model for the Committee.

Minutes Approval: Maggie made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 21 meeting. Christine seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

Spending and Budget: Christine reviewed the FY23 spending and budget through December for each partner. Volunteer and staff driver shortages and fuel costs remain a challenge. As a whole, funding is in good shape to cover areas where there are overages, especially when factoring in the additional \$75,000 mid-year adjustment. Maggie asked if The Gathering Place should expect to continue to contribute cash match in future years. Christine confirmed that they should. With budget season coming up, Christine proposed that the Committee begin to hold monthly meetings. Going forward, there will be an additional COASEV shopping trip in Townshend with cash match contributed by Valley Cares.

Overall spending was at 20% which is a little higher than the target of 17%. Partner-specific highlights follow:

- Bellows Falls Senior Center has already expended its budget but is willing to continue to provide the 20% partner cash match. That combined with an overall healthy budget means transportation services will be able to continue uninterrupted.
- Mount Ascutney has not yet spent any of their budget because they still have funding left over from Rides to Wellness, which is expected to run out around May/June. Mount

Ascutney is unlikely to use its entire allocation this year so some of these funds may be able to be reallocated elsewhere.

- Rockingham and Wilmington Meals and Shopping are trending high and expected to reach their budget by March. Budgets were formulated based on available cash match and were expected to be low. The Council on Aging is now able to provide a higher level of cash match than anticipated due to increased funding.
- Springfield Adult Day and The Gathering Place are both still rebuilding their census to pre-COVID levels and have healthy budgets.
- Social trips will resume after being put on hold for a week due to budget. The majority of social trips are for shopping trips taking place between regularly scheduled dedicated shopping trips. This indicates that there is a need to reevaluate shopping trips. The next most common is personal care – which is the primary purpose of the program.

VTrans Updates: State funds to match projects are tight. Transit operating expenses have been increasing and are expected to continue to increase over the next five to ten years. SEVT driver wages are expected to increase to remain competitive. Across the state, the number of volunteer drivers is still less than half what it was before COVID while demand has rebounded faster and overall ridership is around 80% of pre-COVID levels. Gas prices and an aging population remain challenges to attracting volunteers.

The community driver program is just beginning. Amanda expressed interest in the program.

Microtransit is seen as one potential cost-effective method of providing service. Tim asked Christine if she had ridership numbers for the Windsor microtransit pilot. Overall 100 rides have been provided so far. The middle of the week tends to be the busiest. Outreach continues to promote the service. Some trips to Mount Ascutney Hospital that would have fallen under E&D have been provided through the microtransit service. The scheduling flexibility of microtransit has greatly improved the quality of service.

The recovery and jobs access program is seeing increasing use in SEVT's service area.

Partner Updates: None

2023 E&D Summit: Tim shared that the 2023 E&D Summit will be on June 9th from 9:30-12:00. The rough agenda includes:

- Mobility for All Committees
- The Community Driver Program
- Recovery and Jobs Access
- Data and trends review
- The new scheduling and dispatch software (HBSS)
- The equitable delivery of services
- In-kind and cash match

Amanda recommended including more diverse participation and incorporating equity training as part of the summit. Christine brought up communication – technology, hearing impairments, etc - as a barrier to providing quality service. Christine offered to be a part of any panel on microtransit.

Next Meeting: March and June. A doodle poll will be sent out to determine a date and time.

Motion to adjourn by Christine, 2nd by Colin. Motion passes unanimously.