

RATS

Rockford Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization

City of Rockford, Public Works Department
425 East State Street, Rockford, IL 61104

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RATS MOBILITY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES September 11, 2007

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dia Cirillo, Center for Tax Budget and Accounting; John Strandin; Boone and Winnebago Counties Workforce Investment Board; Darcy Bucholz; Boone and Winnebago Counties Workforce Investment Board; Melinda Trier, Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging; Richard Hunt, RAMP; John Slattengren, Boone County Council on Aging; Michael Williams, Rock River Training Corporation, Steve Haight, Careers, etc.; Rick McVinnie, RMTD; Paula Hughes, RMTD; Lisa Brown, RMTD; Dennis Hendricks, RMTD; Ron Schoepfer, RMTD; Jon Paul Diipla, RATS

OTHERS PRESENT: Shelton Kay, Crusader Clinic; Meaghan Kehoe, Winnebago County Health Department; Jeff Joyce, North Central Illinois Council of Governments; Erica Interrante, IDOT-DPIT; Becky Tobin, Boone County; Dan Jacobson, City of Love's Park; Gregg Wilson, Rockford Public School District #205; Lori J. Mitchell, Village of Machesney Park

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Cirillo and Mr. Diipla called the meeting to order at 10:10 am. Introductions were given by all persons present.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda was unanimously approved.

III. DECISIONS LEADING TO THE MOBILITY SUBCOMMITTEE & IV. IDENTIFYING KEY DECISIONS MOVING FORWARD

Ms. Cirillo began the meeting by acknowledging all the partners that have been active in the Getting to Work in Greater Rockford (GWGR) initiative and by distributing copies of the executive summary of the GWGR study as well as PowerPoint slides of her presentation. Ms. Cirillo also explained that the agenda was revised to focus on specific issues.

Ms. Cirillo gave a presentation on the Getting to Greater Rockford initiative. The presentation explained the aftermath of welfare reform and the impact that it had on low-income individuals as well as the shifts in the economy from industrial to service based economies. Also, affordable housing did not match where jobs were located, therefore transportation to these new jobs is important.

Ms. Cirillo explained the historical difference between Transit and Human Service Organization and that each field respectably had their own "languages"/ways to approach matters. Ms. Cirillo mentioned that there were two goals of the Getting to Work in Illinois (GWI) initiative which were to work with local stakeholders (started 2004) and to bring together state agencies involved in funding transit (it was noted that 64 different

federal funds could be used for different populations for different purposes for transit). Ms. Cirillo explained the importance of involving both parties in transportation and that transportation happens on the community level. Getting to work in Illinois was that process of involvement. Ms. Cirillo then briefly discussed other regions in the GWI initiative.

Ms. Cirillo then went into a discussion of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program, which is a federally developed program that was developed in 1998 (program worked on state level to create an interagency committee). JARC acknowledged that most transit systems do not have money to connect to new area job centers because of the shift in the economy, sprawl etc. The JARC program was created to close those gaps. It was also explained that a provision was enacted which stated that a plan had to be in place that involved local stakeholders to receive this funding. Ms. Cirillo also explained that there was a move away from just providing rides to the philosophy of mobility management through programs such as JARC.

It was also briefly mentioned that in the fall of 2003, the United We Ride initiative was launched. This was the creation of the Federal Interagency Committee on Transportation to bring together federal agencies that fund transportation. This was done to figure out the best way to serve the community.

Ms. Cirillo discussed the outreach sessions conducted by GWGR and the results from this process. Findings from the process stated that there was a need for more fixed routes in Rockford; transit service needed to be expanded after 7pm and on weekends to areas where jobs exist; flexible and affordable service for transit disadvantaged populations was desired. Also, other findings were that more meaningful info on routes and available service was desired; information at bus stops, more bus stops and information on transit through community organizations and employers would be preferred. Other findings from the study were that there were no formal institutional relationships between transit planners/providers and workforce investment boards. It was noted that the public would like to see that happen and that there was not always an open data flow between organizations. Therefore, cooperative measures would help to move planning processes forward.

Ms. Cirillo then explained some of the desired routes that were identified by GWGR in the Rockford area. These proposed routes would connect to 12% of jobs in the Rockford Area. Desired routes and improvements were to Belvidere assembly plant, Cherryvale route, extended hours on E State St. past 11pm and extended hours past 6pm on Machesney Park industrial centers route.

Ms. Cirillo asked Ms. Brown for an update from RMTD.

Ms. Brown explained that RMTD has had and continues to have good communication with their passengers regarding service and that when RMTD asked the community about their needs, the concerns of passengers and the community were the same. Ms. Brown also discussed the importance of Cherryvale Mall in terms of jobs for the community and that a route to the mall became a top priority due to demand identified through community groups, the GWGR group and RMTD riders.

Staff at RMTD was able to create a route to Magic Waters. Brown also acknowledged the Park district for their help in the creation of the Magic Waters Route. Ms. Brown explained that the route was a success due to the fact that there were 800 riders in ten weeks. It was noted that during this time RMTD Paratransit had also seen an increase in ridership.

Mr. Haight then asked whether Cherryvale still challenged RMTD going to Magic Waters. Ms. Brown explained that they did at first. However, RMTD provided service there at the request of the Park District.

Ms. Cirillo referred to the GWGR executive summary. Participation among organizations that served transportation dependent populations was great and around 60 persons. Community surveying was also done to receive feedback. She noted that other findings from the process also turned out other ideas such as van shuttle service programs. Ms Cirillo also mentioned that meaningful discussion of communications and what options people have are important. She also explained that the list of recommended projects in the executive summary was a good place to have the Subcommittee start from and that many stakeholders were involved in the creation of the list of needs.

Ms. Cirillo then began discussion of the Human Services Transportation Plan. The plan is a requirement that all transportation agencies/experts would communicate with representatives from transit dependent

populations. It was also noted that two other programs came out of 2005 law (SAFETEA-LU). JARC was renewed and the New Freedom program was created to augment existing ADA services. Law (SAFETEA-LU) required that HSTP be developed to explain how the funding would be programmed. It was noted that each metropolitan region, rural area and state must have an HSTP. The way that the HSTP is developed and how projects are determined is different from each region. The Rural HSTP is also different from the Urbanized Area HSTP.

Mr. Joyce then explained the Rural HSTP structure and explained that there were different HSTP regions in Illinois. It was noted that the HSTP was created for the purpose of coordinating; bringing different stakeholders together to better use transit availabilities. It was also mentioned that there were 62 federal sources that were funneled into JARC and New Freedom program. Mr. Joyce stated that he is in charge of creating plans for his regions (Regions 1 & 3) and also commented that the Mobility Subcommittee was well into the process of determining what is available and what needs are present. He then briefly reiterated that the Rockford Area was under the planning jurisdiction of an MPO.

Mr. Joyce then briefly explained the funding structure in the state; 60% of funding goes to Chicago, 20% is divided among the other MPO's (5) in the State and the last 20% is used in rural areas

Ms. Cirillo introduced Ms. Interrante (IDOT) who is the HSTP Program Manager for the State of Illinois.

Ms. Interrante explained that the state had to lay a framework for the rural areas. It was also explained that a regional map had to be developed for this process and that it took six months to do so. The regional HSTP map was developed by studying existing services as well as statistical data. Public feedback was also taken into consideration during the process. She also explained that there may be a division in Region 1 for an East and West Plan (The East Plan would be for Winnebago and Boone Counties and the West Plan would be for Stephenson, JoDavies and Carroll Counties). Ms. Interrante explained that structuring the plans this way was only an idea at present time. She then mentioned that the state had developed a template for the HSTP which was based off the requirements from the FTA.

Ms. Interrante explained the flow chart in handout she distributed. She explained that providers who receive funds will submit projects to regional coordinator and from that point a plan will be developed from the listing of projects. It was also explained that public involvement is essential and that a committee will be created to review the process. Committee meetings that would take place would be open to the public.

Ms. Interrante stated that a Regional Program of Projects will be developed. All rural plans received will be put into this. The process was further explained that the Plan, Regional Plan of Projects, 5311 AND 5310 projects will go to DPIT office to be scored. JARC and New Freedom will go the State Oversight Committee. It was then noted that all projects need to be endorsed by regional committee and those projects go back to DPIT for final approval and processing. Projects are then put into the STIP.

Ms. Cirillo clarified that the Rockford area will have its own HSTP and it will develop by the MPO. Rural Areas will have their own HSTP. She explained that Rockford's plan will help to designate projects eligible for funding. Mr. McVinnie stated that the funding for the MPO's would not be on a competitive basis.

Mr. Joyce explained that MPO's in the state would not compete for funding amongst themselves. He also mentioned that projects that would serve outside of the urbanized area would need rural funding sources. RTC will also put together a plan. A subcommittee will also be formed from members of Region 1 for the process. Grant applications would go through that committee for prioritization of projects. Ms. Interrante stated that projects that would service rural areas would have to be put into the rural HSTP (funded by 5311 program). Mr. McVinnie mentioned that the Boone County Council on Aging would qualify for that process because of the rural component that they serve.

Ms. Cirillo made a suggestion that a future meeting of the Mobility Subcommittee should focus on how to connect the urban and rural area HSTP(s) of the region.

Mr. Joyce mentioned that the main aspect of the HSTP was to prevent duplication and that preventing duplication would improve efficiency in transit services provided.

Mr. Strandin asked for a better map for the RATS MPO than that of the one displayed in the HSTP Region Map. Mr. Diipla said that he would send this information to the Mobility Subcommittee.

Ms. Cirillo briefly recapped on what the HSTP was, the process to develop it and why the plan is necessary. She also mentioned that this is the first time that the RATS MPO will develop a Human Services Transportation Plan and that the development of the plan will be an ongoing process.

Ms. Cirillo then brought up the discussion question, "*What's the best way to create a system in Greater Rockford*"

Discussion took place on this question. Mr. Strandin posed the question of whether or not developing programs from 1st year projects constitutes as new service. Ms. Brown used the example of the service to Magic Waters as a new service route, therefore the project was eligible for funding.

Mr. McVinnie then stated that funding is initial and for the 1st year of service. He stressed the point that new projects started need to be self-sustaining after the first year. Mr. Strandin followed up by stating that initial funding affects what you plan on later years because funding available at first is only seed money.

Ms. Hughes mentioned the fact that JARC monies need to be matched and Mr. McVinnie stated that as of right now state funding is used as the match, but that this might not last.

Ms. Cirillo then posed the question of "*what's the best way?*" to decipher what are important transportation needs. It was suggested that the Mobility Subcommittee review the Executive Summary of the Getting to Work in Greater Rockford program.

Mr. McVinnie mentioned that the IL-173 and Riverside Boulevard projects are two new areas that were not looked at in 2005, however they are concerns at present time.

Mr. Haight stated that extending hours on E State Street would assist in getting people to jobs and that this improvement was important in the Getting to Work in Greater Rockford findings. Mr. McVinnie inquired as to whether or not extended hours would be considered as new service

Ms. Cirillo explained that extending the hours of routes could be defined as new service under JARC. Mr. McVinnie mentioned that extended hours does not mean shorter headways. Ms. Cirillo stated that shorter headways do qualify under JARC as well. Mr. Williams then brought up the notion of conducting a cost benefit analysis at some point to assist in determining projects.

Ms. Cirillo briefly recapped that the discussion brought up issues of process and criteria as well as issues that the Getting to Work in Greater Rockford program identified. She also stated that the Mobility Subcommittee at some point needs to develop criteria for projects.

Ms. Hughes briefly mentioned that 2008 fiscal year just started so that more funding will be available, however match funding is still necessary.

Ms. Cirillo asked if there were any other items or projects that needed to be addressed. Mr. McVinnie stated that there had not been discussion of New Freedom funding and that this needs to be worked on and projects need to be identified for this funding. Mr. Joyce added that New Freedom monies could be used for capital and operations.

Ms. Bucholz then posed the question of a timeline for the completion of an HSTP. Mr. Dipla said that it would need to be done sometime in January of 2008. Ms. Cirillo mentioned that this process is new for all MPO's and that every region has had very little time to complete a HSTP.

It was suggested by Ms. Bucholz to review the Getting to Work in Greater Rockford Executive Summary first to evaluate projects and then determine if anything needs to be added. This would be one possible way to approach the plan. Mr. Haight followed up with the questions of what information on sustainability is needed and how can it be achieved and maintained.

Ms. Hughes briefly mentioned that 2006 New Freedoms money has to be used in 2008 fiscal year. Ms. Cirillo brought up the issue of waivers as a possibility to retain the funding if projects were not identified. Ms. Cirillo also mentioned that the grant that she is funded by will expire on October 30th, 2007 and that she will be active with the Mobility Subcommittee until that date. Ms. Cirillo then asked what other information was necessary in the process of creating the HSTP.

Ms. Brown responded to the question by stating that public involvement is an important component and that at sometime a public hearing is necessary regarding the plan. Ms. Cirillo described outreach methods such as creating focus groups and hosting open houses regarding the HSTP. At that time, Ms. Cirillo suggested that the Mobility Subcommittee hold an information session on transportation financing to help in understanding the process and that one aspect that the Mobility Subcommittee should focus on is how they want to outreach to the community.

Ms. Trier mentioned the idea of locating data that determined where low-income individual persons are located in the Rockford Area as well as trends to where they are moving. Mr. Haight stated that the middle class may also start to take public transit to cut back on gasoline costs and that this may factor in at some point.

Mr. Joyce added to the Ms. Trier's comment regarding low-income populations and stated that specific data is collected by the school district. However, there might be some issues pertaining to confidentiality that would prevent access to that data from the school district. It was noted that the MPO currently has data as to the location of low-income individuals in the area and that they would be a possible source for that data.

Mr. Wilson briefly stated that the school district is going back to zones and also mentioned the issue of public transportation buses not providing service close by to schools (i.e. across the street from a school, etc). Mr. McVinnie said that RMTD is not able to provide school bus services because RMTD buses do not posses that same technology that is onboard the yellow school buses. This will be a topic for further discussion.

V. Subcommittee Membership

Mr. Diipla went over RATS Resolution 2007-8 to explain the duties and powers of the committee. Mr. Diipla mentioned that the Mobility Subcommittee is a standing committee and that it will not be dissolved once the HSTP is completed. Rather, the Subcommittee will assist in other projects and is not limited to only the HSTP and that new member organizations are welcome. He then briefly discussed the RATS Cooperative Agreement and stated that the document outlines the powers and duties of RATS as well as the Technical and Policy Committees. Mr. McVinnie asked whether or not there would be any information regarding the Mobility Subcommittee posted on the RATS webpage because that would be useful in public outreach.

Mr. Diipla explained that there is currently information on the Mobility Subcommittee on the RATS webpage under the Subcommittee link and that more information such as Resolution 2007-7 and 2007-8 will be posted.

Mr. Haight then asked whether or not members had to be identified by name. Mr. Diipla said that it should be done and explained that when the Resolution was drafted, members that were already active in GWGR were added to the list. Mr. Diipla explained that new members could be added to the Mobility Subcommittee and that the list was not final the way that it stood at the time of the meeting. Mr. Diipla added that if anyone knew of other organizations that are were not present to invite them or to let him know to contact them.

Mr. Strandin asked about transportation and government agencies that were already involved in the process at other levels and whether or not it precluded them from being voting members of this committee. Mr. Diipla stated that he would have to find out.

Mr. McVinnie asked if this committee reports to the Technical committee. Ms. Bucholz said that it was her understanding that the Mobility Subcommittee is a subcommittee of the RATS Technical Committee and that the structuring was that the Mobility Subcommittee would make recommendations to the Technical Committee, which would then make recommendations to the RATS Policy Committee. Mr. Diipla confirmed this.

Ms. Bucholz then posed questions such as whether membership should be by agency, what would be done if there is not participation from an agency, how many times does an organization have before they are dropped off the subcommittee and how many are needed for a quorum? Ms. Cirillo then posed the question of who would lead the Subcommittee. In response, Mr. Diipla said that he would get that information as well as previous information asked for by the Subcommittee.

In response to the organization voting question, Mr. McVinnie stated that organizations should get one vote.

Organizational structure was then discussed by Ms. Bucholz and Mr. Haight. Ms. Bucholz explained that the previous organizational structure of membership in GWGR was flexible and loosely based. Mr. Haight explained that this was the case because they were a grassroots organization. He then brought up the fact that some organizations on the listing have not been participating. The subcommittee can open up an invitation to them, but if they are not responsive and active then they might not be included officially. Mr. Diipla said that organizational structure would be a discussion topic on the next meeting agenda. Mr. Strandin then asked about City Legal department and whom the subcommittee would contact if needed. Mr. Diipla said that he would inquire about whom to contact regarding legal counsel.

Mr. Diipla asked Mr. Haight which organizations listed were not active and Mr. Haight responded by listing off those organizations. He then brought up the idea of sending out a letter to those organizations to ask for their participation. Ms. Bucholz mentioned that focusing on inviting agencies would be a good idea and Mr. Haight explained that agencies might approach participation in a top-down fashion meaning that someone from an organization would be appointed to the subcommittee. In doing so, those organizations concerns and thoughts would be voiced in the Mobility Subcommittee. It was also mentioned by Ms. Bucholz that government officials may appoint members to represent them.

Following that discussion, Mr. Hunt posed the question of when, where, how often the Mobility Subcommittee should meet. Mr. Haight stated that the GWGR group originally met monthly, then every other monthly. However, he felt at this point that the Mobility Subcommittee needs to meet monthly to complete the HSTP. Members present agreed this upon.

Mr. Diipla asked which day of the week would be better to meet; Monday or Tuesday. Mr. Hunt mentioned that there might be meeting conflicts due to holidays as well as other scheduled meeting. Mr. Haight added that placing the meeting time at 10am on the second Tuesday of each month would avoid holiday conflicts. It was agreed by members present that the Mobility Subcommittee meetings would be held on the second Tuesday of each month at 10am.

Ms. Brown asked where the Mobility Subcommittee would meet, either at the YWCA or RMTD. Mr. Strandin stated that YWCA is still good to meet and Mr. Haight mentioned that it was a good location for those who had to travel in from Boone County. Ms. Brown invited to hold meetings at RMTD if there was ever difficulties in scheduling a meeting at the YWCA or elsewhere.

Mr. Diipla then confirmed that the next meeting would be 10:00am, October 9th 2007, at the YWCA in Rockford. It was reiterated by Ms. Cirillo that the Subcommittee would meet the second Tuesday of every month at 10am.

In closing, Mr. Haight mentioned the issue of membership and outreach to new members. Ms. Cirillo reiterated that sending a letter to organizations regarding participation would be a helpful tool. Mr. Strandin then stated that having someone from the Rockford Area Economic Development Council participate in the subcommittee would be beneficial. Mr. Haight asked Ms. Cirillo if she would be back for the next meeting. Ms. Cirillo stated that she would return for the next Mobility Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Haight entertained a motion to adjourn, which Ms. Brown seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.