



COUNTY OF HUNTERDON NEW JERSEY
HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL
LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE
YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION
MENTAL HEALTH BOARD



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- REFERENCE:**
- Council
 - Mental Health
 - Youth
 - Disabled
 - Substance Abuse
 - Transportation

Approved November 9, 2016

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, September 14, 2016, 1:30 p.m.
Human Services Conference Room

MINUTES

<u>MEMBERS PRESENT</u>	<u>EX-OFFICIO</u>	<u>STAFF</u>	<u>GUESTS</u>
T. Antosiewicz		E. Neukum	S. Lax
D. McDaid		K. Tustison	C. Yard
T. Shepherd		C. Hammerstone	C. Martin
		S. Dziamara	C. Taglienti

I. CONVENE: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT:

“This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21. Notice of this meeting has been provided in the Hunterdon County Democrat, the Courier News, and the Hunterdon Review. A public notice announcing this meeting has also been placed in the lobbies of the Hunterdon County Department of Human Services, the first floor of the Main Street County Complex, 71 Main Street Building #1, Flemington, NJ; the first floor of the Route 12 County Complex, Building #1, 314 State Route 12, Flemington, NJ and County Clerk’s Office.”

Chairperson, D. McDaid, opened the Transportation Advisory Committee at 1:30 p.m. with a quorum present.

II. MINUTES: The Minutes of May 18, 2016 and July 13, 2016 were approved.

III. REPORTS:

A. Transportation – E. Neukum reported that the LINK changeover to fixed routes (effective August 29, 2016) experienced some difficulties in service. In an effort to explain to the passengers about the boarding and riding procedures and how the system works, E. Neukum has gone on several ride-a-longs to speak directly with the passengers. Although LINK drivers have been advocating the changes, she will work more closely with the drivers and First Transit to clearly communicate how the routes are designed to work together.

E. Neukum provided the following as an example: Routes 15 and 18 provides service through the Clinton Park and Ride to access Flemington, as well as Routes 14, 15, 16 and 19. Route 18 into Flemington is a large route with many necessary stops, which results in the bus not matching up with the other connecting routes. She is working to incorporate Route 17 as a shuffle to assist getting the riders to their destinations in a timely manner. Ridership on Route 18 is shy but is picking up for Routes 5 and 9. E. Neukum and First Transit are working together to re-adjust the routes to provide a more efficient and smoother transportation service.

B. Systems Operations - First Transit Report – C. Martin echoed E. Neukum's comment that there were some difficult bumps along the way when they rolled out the new Shuffle Routes. As with many new things that are introduced to the public, there is usually a high volume of phone calls and the LINK route changeover was no exception. First Transit provided answers to many questions and explained to the passengers how to make transfer connections to get to their destinations. This week the number of calls to First Transit actually decreased.

Martin spoke with E. Neukum regarding a driver who expressed concern about having a shelter for passengers while they wait for the bus in the jury lot.

First Transit is above their goal with drivers on staff, but they currently have an ads placed in the Treasure Hunt and the Courier News. If they can hire another six or seven drivers, it will facilitate a four-day work week for drivers and the system will run more efficiently.

C. Fiscal – K. Tustison stated there was nothing significant to report, but did comment that by the next meeting he should have enough data from the route changes to provide a report. He did report there has been a significant increase in the LINK income eligibility applications he has received, which is a result of the route changes.

D. New Jersey Transit – There was no representative in attendance, therefore, no report was made available.

E. Marketing Outreach – T. Shepherd also commented about the challenges experienced with launching the new routes, as well as, a printing delay for the new bus schedules. Moving forward, the schedules will be printed and made available. The challenges experienced did reveal the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the entire system, including the transfers. As a result, HART is making a bigger effort to show the entire route system. HART plans to have more posters that will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the overall system; posters with the entire system included on them and having the entire system available for presentations and for one-on-ones. C. Taglienti will continue promoting the travel training, which helps people understand the changes and the new system.

Extensive dialogue ensued regarding the importance of outreach and the major issues encountered by the seniors and people with disabilities.

S. Lax reported the majority of calls received by the Hunterdon Helpline are seniors and folks with disabilities that are long-time LINK riders; now they no longer want to ride the LINK nor do they even want to call the LINK. HART's website is typically not accessed by the seniors to get more clear information.

Sensitivity training was discussed and that it should be provided to staff and the bus drivers to address and accommodate the needs of these demographic groups. A welcoming, friendly conversation can help people understand, so that they do utilize this service, which is very beneficial for them.

The LINK, as a consolidated transportation service, provides curb-to-curb service. It is not a door-to-door service. When riders have a lot baggage (there is a five-bag limit) and may also have a cane or walker, they are unable to carry all their bags. The rider's expectation is that the driver will carry their bags from the bus to their door; the drivers are only able assist the passengers and their bags on and off the bus. It is at this point the driver faces a difficult decision: to either help the senior with six to eight bags to their door or continue on the scheduled route with the remaining ten or more passengers to get dropped off in order to begin the afternoon run on schedule. If the transportation service was a paratransit, in order to help the people who cannot carry their bags, then there is a limit on the number of people who can board the vehicle at one time. E. Neukum stated that it is a frustrating situation on both ends; there are 22 routes to cover 26 municipalities within the County.

S. Lax acknowledged the situation, but offered that there are enough resources that can provide a different kind of outreach that can resolve up to 80 percent of these issues. One example is to work with the Food Pantry so they can provide reminders about the five-bag limit for people that ride the LINK. For the random 'renegade' that always insists on being over the limit, there may be an agency resource with someone who can identify with the individual to explain in a way they can understand the limitations. She also stated that there are people who feel they are being yelled at, that they do not understand, and that many of the seniors have beginning signs of dementia. By reaching out to their caregivers and/or their service providers, such as Friendly Visitors or Volunteer Shoppers, they can help these individuals who can help alleviate some of the issues and make the system more palatable for everyone. E. Neukum responded that there is not a clear solution for some of these issues where people do need extra help, that it is unrealistic at this time to have an aid ride every single bus to help with the extra the bags.

C. Hammerstone stated that when a determination is made for solutions, they must be consistently applied across the board; i.e., if there is a day that there is not a lot of riders, that driver still cannot divert from the normal process and help out with the bags as that would become the expectation; one person sees then they expect the same courtesy another day, even if the bus is full. C. Hammerstone wants to also get the message out that we are not being unpleasant or unhelpful and that a solution will be established for plan that the bus drivers will follow across the board. A suggestion was made to have an aid arrive at the passenger's home to assist with their bags. C. Hammerstone commented about educating riders about what the LINK service can and cannot provide. E. Neukum provided another example: The LINK bus stops at the recreation center at Hampton Manor, a rider with their five-bag limit lives five doors down and can carry only one or two bags at a time; the remaining bags are left on the curb while the rider makes several trips, which is also physically too much for the rider to retrieve the bags.

A question was posed about a process to collect, consolidate and analyze this information, such as an

Excel spreadsheet, to determine if there is an access situation, a training situation, or a simple courtesy for loading; the collected information can determine if the problems are systemic or may be for special or one-time issues to be acted on.

S. Lax provided a comment that seniors are less likely to file a complaint and that it is difficult for them because when someone has spoken to them inappropriately, they feel there will be retribution and rather than go through the hassle they simply choose not to ride.

Another issue was addressed regarding the Food Pantry that provides special meals during the holidays that results in extra bags added to the regular amount of food received. E. Neukum had suggested the Food Pantry open on a special day just for holiday meals, however there are not enough volunteers to cover the extra days. She also asked if they could have a driver deliver the special meals to those who cannot get out or maneuver the extra bags; this, however would create a liability issue. First Transit has delivered Food Pantry items in the past at other locations to those who cannot get out or cannot carry the heavy bags and that offer still stands. E. Neukum asked for a list of individuals from Senior Services and S. Lax will provide a list from the Helpline so they can coordinate designated days with the Flemington Food Pantry to make these food deliveries on their rounds.

A question was raised again about collecting complaint information, which E. Neukum responded to that there is a process to input complaints/concerns into a database that is capable of running reports.

C. Martin stated First Transit will provide an in-service day on Columbus Day, October 10. If provided specifics, they can offer time sensitivity training, along with the other training planned for that day.

S. Lax conveyed that any outreach and/or education to work with the seniors regarding the LINK services are most welcomed.

Suggestions were made to set up customer forums similar to NJ Transit Access LINK forum for seniors that can explain how the system works and they can voice their concerns; this will assist First Transit in addressing concerns from their end as well as the County. T. Antosiewicz spoke to this point, conveying that he does not know what the complaint log looks like, but that an integrated process of logging complaints with their suggestions, observations or best practice is information that may be critical to the operation and could be utilized.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Minutes: E. Neukum called for a motion to approve the TAC Minutes of the May 18, 2016 and July 13, 2016, which were approved after one spelling edit.

B. Election for Chairperson: At the last meeting, D. McDaid was nominated as the Chairperson, however a quorum was not present. A motion was made and passed to elect D. McDaid as the new Chairperson.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. 5310 Grant Application for Minibuses: E. Neukum reported that a grant application was completed for five vehicles: three (3) 12-passenger with two securements; and two (2) 21-passenger extended minibuses with one securement.

B. 2017 Public Hearing for Combined SCDRTAP and 5311 Grant Applications: A combined

public hearing was held on September 2, 2016 for the SCDRTAP and 5311 Grant. Three people attended with several comments/questions made: where does the money go and how does it go back into transportation and there were questions about the reduced fare. E. Neukum had responded by explaining that the public rider fare is 'X' amount of dollars when you cross over zones and that the fare for people with a disability would be less than the full priced rider.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

In May 2016, HART had explained the NJ Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) was updating its Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. C. Taglienti of HART had worked with them to facilitate a focus group of 13 people where NJTPA tested their survey, which took place on June 21, 2016. The next phase is being facilitated for planning sessions with four groups: low income persons, veterans, seniors and those with disabilities. A direct link to NJTPA provides an active, on-line survey available in both English and Spanish; hard copies of the survey are also available in both languages (which were handed out). The basic purpose of the survey is to determine the type of transportation people utilize and what they would like to see in the future for transportation. The planning sessions can provide insight as to where folks want to go, where they cannot go, difficulties they experience, a wish list of information to compile. C. Taglienti indicated it is ok to post the survey wherever it is appropriate; she offered to email the pdf to persons who want to make copies.

The NJTPA determines how to allocate the federal transportation funds that are received for State; this includes funds to operate HART, NJ DOT, all of the county paratransit systems in the State, all of the county planning departments in the State, and all of the other State transportation initiatives. In order to receive these funds, NJTPA is required to put together a Human Services Transportation Plan every few years as a way to inform how the funding decisions are moving forward. The input gathered throughout the region from the focus groups at the upcoming planning sessions will provide helpful information. The survey questions will capture the impacts and quality of life is for these people regarding having access or not having access, such as their employability and any other issues.

HART's funding from NJTPA is contracted as the local facilitator for Hunterdon County. The more information gathered from Hunterdon County ensures the County's needs are documented and the information is funneled into the decision-making for funding allocations for new and expanded services. HART plans to bring back the information to the County for its own operations to determine if there are things missing the mark and if the information can be incorporated into the County Human Services Plan. E. Neukum will have to site page numbers and reference paragraphs County and/or Regional Human Services Plan when she is completing the funding applications.

C. Taglienti is responsible for the project at the HART office and plans to do more direct email outreach to all of the agencies to obtain as many completed surveys as possible; the deadline for input collection is October 1, 2016. C. Taglienti asked members to watch for the emails and they can reach out to her with questions or suggestions. She asked members to let her know if agencies have already scheduled their group meetings and also, if anyone has a particular form that may be appropriate for her to distribute when she is out talking with and distributing surveys to people.

There was mention that NJ Transit conducted the detailed analysis which provided the necessary information to implement the system of new routes. The analysis was based on population clusters which were tweaked to best fit the needs of our current ridership.

C. Taglienti shared a travel-training experience. She provided ride training for a young man to one of his appointments as he had never rode the LINK and wanted transportation service without needing to rely on his family. Their conversation on the ride home from the appointment resulted in another ride training practice; this time to RVCC. The young man now utilizes the LINK services to attend his classes.

There being no further business, the Meeting was adjourned at 2:17 p.m. The next regular meeting will be on November 9, 2016. Members are requested to call the Department of Human Services if they are unable to attend.