

Committee and Others in Attendance:

Rebecca Wheat, Advocate-BroMenn ADS
Shelley Perry, Connect Transit
Shelly Snider, Connect Transit
Holly Phillips, Homes of Hope
Rickielee Benecke, LIFE-CIL

Kim Tarkowski, LIFE-CIL
Michael Predmore, Marcfirst
Laura Dick, SHOW BUS
John Corey, Volunteer
Jennifer Sicks, MCRPC

The session was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

Ms. Sicks advised that no requests for public comment were received.

Committee agreed to table the minutes for future review.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

None. The Committee moved directly to provider status and discussion.

URBAN AREA PROVIDER PROGRAM STATUS

Advocate BroMenn

Ms. Wheat asked Ms. Dick if SHOW BUS was planning to host a driver training session. Ms. Dick advised that such training is planned, and she will contact Ms. Wheat with details.

Connect Transit (CT)

Ms. Snider advised that dealing with multiple managed care organizations (MCOs) is a challenge, as each has its own procedures and there is no standardization of practices. Preparations are underway to bill Molina through Secure. It would be preferable to have one MCO for transportation services, or greater consolidations. Ms. Wheat noted that the MCO options cannot be limited to one organization, as choice in MCO must be available. Ms. Benecke noted that the process for establishing credentials for riders should be examined and overhauled.

CT has sent out mailings regarding Medicaid use; there will also be information distributed regarding Molina. Ms. Dick noted that whatever level of transparency is possible with these organizations, it is difficult to determine if their services are correlated with the state's requirements. For CT, the brokers are the crux of the matter; there is no issue with the state, except with the matter of multiple trips per day by one rider. Ms. Wheat noted that the state specification was too permissive, and allowed minimum standards to be met in any way the MCO chooses. Ms. Snider noted that standardizing credentialing would be a good start. In addition, get everyone using the same geodata and service area definitions to address assignments of trips to providers.

Ms. Snider confirmed that CT service is limited to the incorporated areas of Bloomington and Normal. She noted that changes have been made as a result of recent public input, and that there will be additional discussion regarding the fare and Olive route issues on June 17th.

Faith in Action (FIA)

Ms. Herr was unable to attend.

Homes of Hope (HoH)

Ms. Phillips noted that a resident died in March, prompting some reorganizing of living space. HoH has acquired another house for occupancy by older residents. Another vehicle for residents' transportation was also obtained.

Marcfirst

Mr. Predmore advised that Greg Chadwick is serving as interim director following the retirement of Ms. Furlong. Currently the trustees are preparing the budget for the next fiscal year.

LIFE-CIL

Ms. Benecke noted that LIFE-CIL staff are currently emphasizing advocacy, notably in connection with recent concerns about Connect Transit regarding public comment, proposed fare increases and the removal of the Olive route. She noted that Mr. Calhoun has been very active in these efforts, and has been working with CT staff directly. Complaints regarding CT known to LIFE-CIL have soared, although this may in part be due to the recent publicity regarding these matters.

Ms. Tarkowski inquired about the status of accessibility-based revisions to the CT app, and how soon there would be results on that front. Ms. Perry noted that the issue is being worked on with the app provider, and that she expects it to be resolved within a week.

SHOW BUS

Ms. Dick noted that the IDOT – OIPI continues to have difficulties processing paperwork and carrying out other functions in a timely fashion. She also noted that Zoe Keller is now the SHOW BUS case manager, in addition to her work on the CVP program. Ms. Dick is very pleased with Ms. Keller's responsiveness and assistance as case manager.

SHOW BUS has joined the Human Services Council. Ms. Dick noted that she has received a NOSA regarding grants for ADA compliance, specifically with respect to stop announcements. She is considering the grant to fund audio equipment for this purpose.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Ms. Sicks noted that there has been no further word regarding the status of the FY 2019 CVP program, nor about the results of the FY 2018 CVP round. It was noted that IDOT may have decided to reset the grant schedule and to restart the program later this year. The difficulties for agencies that have not recently sought new vehicles, and may now be looking at delivery no sooner than two years from now, were discussed.

The Committee moved to discussion of primary barriers to access for transportation services and locations, in support of the HST plan update. Ms. Dick noted the importance of defining the mission to be fulfilled by the plan.

Ms. Benecke noted that the history with Connect Transit is one of repetition of the same issues over and over again, with little result. One concern is that riders are unable to physically reach the bus stops, due to incomplete or inadequate infrastructure, specifically stops that do not meet ADA accessibility standards. Riders are reporting that they are unable to ride the fixed routes due to these issues, and are being forced to use Connect Mobility instead, at higher cost and with less flexibility and timeliness. In addition, some riders are not well served by the current route structure and Ms. Benecke noted issues such as riders not being able to reach signs for pickup, delays and longer trips due to transfers, and lack of general ADA compliance at stop locations.

Ms. Sicks inquired as to how many complaints LIFE-CIL has received regarding lack of bus stop access. It was noted that there are a number of locations on the west side, including a stop on Morris that opens into a ditch. Ms. Dick noted that some locations near Miller Park may have been impacted by the park.

Ms. Perry noted that in order for CT to follow up and make corrections based on rider complaints, they need to have more detailed information identifying the route, the stop location, time of day and any other available information. Issues with respect to stop locations can be added to the process for determining priority in the Better Bus Stops program. Ms. Benecke noted that Mr. Calhoun is having direct discussions with Mr. Dave White at CT regarding such complaints. Ms. Snider inquired as to Mr. Calhoun's familiarity with the Better Bus Stop initiative, noting that in addition to determining priority based on site-specific conditions, implementation can also be affected by other factors over which CT has no control, including the jurisdiction in which the stop is located. It can be a lengthy process to reach agreements with local jurisdictions or owners of private property in order to make infrastructure improvements.

Ms. Benecke noted that in 2015-2016, LIFE-CIL strongly advocated that the route changes and conversion to stops rather than flag stops should be postponed until all new stops

could be made fully accessible. For riders who prefer to use the fixed route system rather than Connect Mobility, insufficiently accessible stops are a barrier to fixed route use. Ms. Parry noted that there are limits to the funding available to make such improvements, including funding options negotiated with Bloomington and Normal, which requires prioritizing the stops for improvement. Ms. Wheat noted that more data supporting these priorities is useful, but further noted that the ADA standards and requirements are the law. Ms. Sicks noted that MCRPC staff have done research and outreach on this topic, noting that the law does not require that infrastructure improvements be completed before service begins, or be done ahead of all other funded projects and operations.

Ms. Dick noted that the standards change, resulting in less consistency, further noting that SHOW BUS encountered the same concerns as a result of transit restructuring in Kankakee. Transitioning into a stop location system from flag stops also created issues in determining locations for and the number of stops needed. Ms. Dick inquired if the impact assessment of the system redesign included the affect of the transition itself on riders and providers, and also inquired if it is possible to return to the prior system organization until the issues with the stop locations are resolved.

Ms. Benecke noted that the fare proposals are a real income barrier for lower-income riders, including changes for Connect Mobility. Ms. Wheat noted that in some instances, non-profit 5310 providers were more responsive.

The Committee agreed to continue the discussion regarding the vision statement defining the HST plan.

NEXT MEETING

The Committee is scheduled to meet on July 10, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. Ms. Sicks asked that the Committee members consider possible dates for an extended field trip (perhaps a full afternoon, 1-4 pm), and a short list of places to visit and assess.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.



Jennifer Sicks
Land Use/Transportation Planner
McLean County Regional Planning Commission