

Southwest Colorado Transit Coordinating Council

March 29, 2012 Minutes

Attendees:

John Egan

John Ehmann

Rik Opstelten (by phone)

Laura Lewis Marchino

Martha Mason

Peter Tregillus

Jason Ragsdale

Amber Blake (by phone)

Betty Bewley (by phone)

Jason Armstrong

Amanda Saunders

Noelle Melchizedek (by phone)

Sue Fletcher (by phone)

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:30 am by meeting facilitator John Egan. Introductions were made by those present and on the phone.

There were no requests for additions / changes to the agenda.

The January 2012 Meeting minutes were approved as presented without discussion or dissent.

Organization Updates:

Updates were given about the work of Council members' organizations. Among the information offered:

- John Egan gave a synopsis on the initial experience with Mountain Express' call & ride system. It has not been as difficult as he thought it might be. It is working well to receive calls the day before and put driver manifests together. Mileage is being cut dramatically (40-50%), reducing operating costs. Laura Lewis asked about ridership response. John indicated that ridership was stable in February (year over year) though March is running light. He has been distributing free coupons to try to ease the transition and make the service visible. The seniors transportation program is still continuing pretty much as before. There have been some complaints about change but that is to be expected.
- Peter Tregillus noted that his dial a ride service has seen tremendous growth. They recently acquired another vehicle using a small local match. The Bayfield to Durango service after budget cuts is working, but the finances are really tight. He has advised the Bayfield Board that he will be coming back to them this fall to restore their contribution level back to 2011 levels and thinks there is willingness to consider such a request. He will talk about work to try to restore inter-city bus service later in the meeting.
- Martha Mason still has not yet heard back on the outcome of her recent grant request to the National Center on Senior Transportation which would provide support for ride vouchers so she assumes she did not get it. She has put in another grant application to assist victims of domestic violence.

- Amber Blake explained that the Main St. trolleys are running at capacity and leaving some riders behind. Durango Transit asked the City Council to fund a new trolley; however they declined to do so at this time. The trolley has been free since 2008 but the Council recently directed staff to put donation boxes on them and run a marketing campaign promoting donations. DT will be going back to Council about funding another trolley again sometime in the future.

Ridership overall is up about 20%. Work on the Durango's Multi-Modal Transportation Plan is continuing. Several new grant applications have been filed (on 2 of them John Ehmann provided a letter of support on behalf of the Transit Council. Transit training sessions through employers will be beginning soon. They have had several businesses sponsor free transit days. This is an opportunity used in lieu of any direct advertising on the buses.

John Egan asked about what was driving the ridership increase. Amber said it was generally related to rising gas prices without offsetting wage growth. Some workers have also been affected in recent years by the increased unemployment and work cutbacks making their personal budgets even tighter.

She also gave notice that the CDOT Policy Options Workshop on April 17, 2012 will actually be at the Durango Public Library.

An invitation to employers interested in travel training will be posted on their website shortly and she will make the information they are using available to other providers upon request.

- Jason Armstrong described some coordination he has been able to arrange with Adaptive Sports and Special Olympics to arrange out of the region travel to athletic events for persons not in Community Connection programs. He also has received help with medical transportation from New Freedom (associated with La Plata County's Senior Center and which operates on a donation basis). They have put a new engine in one vehicle to extend its service life in the fleet. He noted that the state is de-funding regional centers and that will probably increase the demand for services from community programs generally and for transportation too. They are providing some trips to Grand Junction and are open to collaboration. They are waiting to hear final details from CDOT on the release of funding for a new vehicle.
- Amanda Saunders with 4Core noted a recent meeting she had with a representative to the Southern Colorado Clean Cities Coalition. They are promoting use of alternate fuels. They are working with Mesa Verde National Park to convert their vehicles to propane. They have some funds available to put on a publicity program. Laura Lewis gave some history of past efforts on clean energy in the region, noting the lack of alternate fuel filling stations. Amber Blake explained that bio-fuel inconsistency has caused them to step away from use of them for now because of performance and maintenance issues. The Southern Ute Growth Fund's start-up Solix is developing bio-fuel from algae production that might offer a better, more consistent product in the near future. John Egan

noted problems with compressed natural gas at high altitude. Amanda Saunders noted that propane doesn't have that issue. Amanda agreed to give an update on the work of the Clean Cities Coalition at the next meeting.

Moving from planning to action:

Presentation from Rik Opstelten of Project Action

Rik Opstelten introduced himself and asked how many people in the meeting were involved in the Project Action kick-off event. A handful were there. He referred people to his outline distributed before the meeting for a summary of main lessons from working with community groups across the country. He noted the importance of clear leadership for coalition success. It is also vital to have shared responsibility and accountability within the group to do the work to implement action plans. Groups also need to bring on additional people over time to avoid stagnation due to people feeling overburdened or drifting away. Project successes need to recognize to keep people energized and build community support. Groups also need to be willing to reach out for technical assistance and other help from time to time.

He noted that simple coordination tasks often hinder groups. Often groups have a leadership structure that does not allow them to get and maintain traction. It may not be settle who is setting agendas and monitoring project progress. Among the options for leadership are committees (with chairs or co-chairs) or a steering committee, often comprised of the founding kick-off event members, or rotating leadership by project and meeting.

He observed that groups often do not maintain and develop their relationships thru on-going communications. The more people communicate, the better they understand each other and their needs and the more likely they are to work together productively. Central hubs for communication like Google groups can sometimes facilitate communications. (The Council shared with Rik that its previous short-lived experience with a Google group was not successful. Other strategies will be considered but for now the main strategy is by email.)

Rik advised that responsibilities be assigned to specific people and not all assigned to the large group, but also not to too few people. Having several people working on something together can create mutual accountability and back-up. Tasks should be divided into digestible steps reasonable to achieve between large group meetings. Outreach efforts should be thought out and progress should be tracked. Objectives and action plans should be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.

Rik once again offered Project Action assistance wherever the group identified a need for support and highlighted the recently set up bulletin board to allow information exchange between the various community teams and Project Action. John Ehmann encouraged Council members to check it out as it has been helpful to him.

Rik highlighted some of the strategies and successes of several communities around the country. John Ehmann indicated interested in learning more about Dallas'

distributed one call center. He also asked about the degree to which other action groups received support from local public officials. Rik indicated that local governments have sometimes provided active assistance in-kind as well as financially but it is important to know what you need and want and it is important to ask.

Presentation from Noelle Melchizedek, CDOT specialist to Coordinating Councils

Noelle reviewed the history of the Jefferson County Coordinating Council. It was aided by Easter Seals Project Action initially and local Aging Well discussions that were on-going. It has been meeting for several years. They have made substantial use of the Local Coordinating Council Handbook. They have had two facilitators. The previous facilitator helped develop bylaws. The JeffCo Council is just now moving into projects. The two priorities right now are transportation services gap analysis and developing communication & messaging strategies.

The gap analysis will, in phases, identify areas of need and possible new action and coordination. They will be putting the transit need information into a GIS system. A graduate student intern will be hired via Council member donations to help with the gap analysis work.

They have a white paper about the Council but haven't previously done much with disseminating it. Council members are going to make a series of community outreach efforts to gain visibility, get feedback and recruit new members. They are trying to get Council members to identify their work as being done as Council members.

They have partnership agreements identifying participation requirements. They are starting committees with lead persons for coordinating work and communications back to the Council. They are also preparing to apply for their first joint grant for program activity. They recognize the importance of systemically building organizational sustainability as well as doing program work.

She noted that moving from planning to action has been challenging for many Councils across the state and the important thing is to chip away at it consistently, even in small ways.

John Ehmann thanked Noelle for her assistance in reaching leaders of several other transit organizations with experience in areas of relevance to our Council and getting useful information from them. A write-up of one conversation was provided before the meeting and write-ups for two others may be distributed later.

Noelle promoted the LCC group activity being held in conjunction with the CASTA conference May 8th. She also mentioned that work is underway to make teleconference participation in the State Transit Coordinating Council possible in the near future.

Old Business:

Action Plan Update: John Ehmann indicated that he had updated the action plan again and wanted Council feedback as to whether the changes were acceptable. Without objection, further updates will be made and reported to the Council as appropriate, staying consistent with the original objectives.

Amanda Saunders asked about the transit guide and highlighted the opportunity to coordinate with SW Connect. John Ehmann explained that a first draft of a guide had been prepared. He also indicated that there has been some background research done about one call centers and SW Connect might play a role in such a future development.

Defensive Driver Training: Kent Harris will offer PASS driver training sometime in the next few months. It appears Council members have about 10 drivers that they would send.

New Business

a. Working together in 2012:

i. As a Council

ii. Identify your own cooperation / coordination goals and partners

The opportunity was made available to Council members to identify which action plan items they considered priorities and to identify options for cooperation / coordination with the Council or specific partners. One response was given.

Peter Tregillus gave a summary of his investigation into the possibility of organizing inter-city Greyhound replacement service. John Valero at CDOT has indicated strong interest in making state funds available to fully finance such service, especially for a Durango to Grand Junction. Peter suggested a follow-up call on the topic. Several Council members indicated interest in participating and a time was arranged for April 3.

b. Medical Transportation Survey

Several responses to the medical transportation survey prepared by John Ehmann for Council member response were received and distributed. Ed Gilbert of Cortez Cab suggested having an opportunity for information exchange between medical trip providers and those in need of organizing medical trips. With the support of the Council, an opportunity for such a medical transportation marketplace discussion will be arranged at a future Council meeting. John Egan noted the availability of several resources with expertise on aspects of medical transportation service. If Council members want speakers on specific topics within this field, please let John Ehmann know and he will look into making arrangements for future presentations.

- c. **Regional Transit online guide & brochure:** A first draft of a Regional Transit guide has been prepared and distributed. Input is requested to make the information accurate and complete to the satisfaction of the provider. Further attention will be given later to design to make it more attractive and user-friendly. 4Core has previously expressed willingness to host the same information on their website and that will be explored after the material has been revised, reviewed and approved. Other organizations will be encouraged to link to this guide and / or directly link to other transit providers most relevant to their clients. John Egan asked the group to provide their input by April 9. Several members suggested that there were other smaller providers not yet listed in the draft guide. John Ehmann will prepare a second draft and will try to include information on additional smaller providers.

Report: John Ehmann reported on some of his other transit outreach efforts. He has been talking with several state level transit taskforces on veteran transit including consideration of grant funding for a one call / one click center to meet veteran transit needs and those of the broader community. He offered to find information for the Council or share information from the Council as requested.

Announcements:

Next meeting: The group will look to meet again in May or June. A doodle calendar survey will be distributed later to help finalize a time. The offer for others to take a turn at facilitating the meeting was made but there was support for John Egan continuing to provide his assistance. Peter Tregillus offered to be the under-study if needed. (John Egan, in turn, reinforced his strong interest in the replacement greyhound service discussion. Peter indicated he would be checking in with those interested with 1 to 1 calls.)

John Ehmann explained that the Coordinating Council would be able to offer mileage reimbursements for those attending from outside Durango if they were not being reimbursed by their own organization. Reimbursement requests were distributed as requested.

Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned shortly before 11:30 am.

Minutes submitted by John Ehmann