

Southwest Colorado Transit Coordinating Council

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, November 17, 9:00 AM to 12PM
Conference Room, Durango Transit Center, Durango

Attendees: Laura Lewis Marchino, Rebecca Levy, Jason Meininger, John Egan, Martha Mason, Nita Purkat, Musetta Wollenweber, Teresa Malone, Bryan James, Randy Sipes, Peter Tregillus, Conor Wakeman and Rick Evans.

I. WELCOME/BACKGROUND

Conor Wakeman welcomed the group and the Council's Facilitator, Rick Evans.

II. ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA

The agenda was reviewed and Peter asked if he could give an update on 5309 Coalition—CASTA.

III. INTRODUCTIONS

Self-introductions were made. Members identified their organizations and what was currently happening in their organizations.

Conor—Attended an AmeriCorps conference in Estes Park and attended sessions on managing meetings, and asset based development. He also attended a transportation conference by National Association of Development Organizations in St Louis. He attended several transit and freight related sessions and will pass along the information.

Nita— Said she brought information on Medicaid transportation and is very interested in Peter's information on the 5309 Coalition.

Musetta—Said she had nothing new to report.

Teresa—Southwest Colorado Community College is buying transit passes for its students and working to receive funding to provide flashing lights and improve the safety crossing at Camino Del Rio at 7th Street. It is an \$11K project and they are about \$1000 from getting it funded.

Brian—Works for the Area Agency on Aging and is here to learn.

Randy—Works for Durango Mountain Resort and is also here to learn.

Peter— Works with Roadrunner Transit and talked about a recent conference call on federal earmarking. He said the newly elected delegation is against earmarking, which has benefits of putting that money back into the federal agencies where we apply to for funds. He said it is important for us to educate Scott Tipton about the district's needs and let him know what we are doing. Colorado's rural trips per capita are the highest in the nation. Peter is also a CASTA Board member and would be happy to forward on any issues we may have. (CASTA is the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies. They provide conferences, trainings and advocacy.)

Laura—Works with Region 9 and updated the group on the SW Regional Transportation Planning Commission and its purpose. She and Peter stressed the importance of having transit providers be visible at the meetings so the meetings are not always about highways.

Jason—Works as a La Plata County Planner and is here to listen.

Becky—Represents the Town of Mancos and said she is here to listen/learn. She shared the community’s survey on transit and commuting patterns. Becky will send information to Laura who will forward to other interested groups.

Martha—Works with the Southwest Center for Independence and said the office experienced a flood on the 2nd floor of the West Building. She has been trying to get organized since then.

John—Works with Mountain Express in Archuleta county. They have been very busy and did a promotion for their system using suckers. He distributed the lollipops to the group and said riders were more than happy to take them, and loved getting something. He said he also did a monthly survey, which was positive. He said that he is working with Peter Schauer, a transit consultant with bus systems, who worked with Montrose on their transit system. Peter will be doing a site survey between now and the first of the year on how the Mountain Express can bolster its system.

Rick—Is the Principal at RAE Consultants and is a CDOT-funded resource to help the group with coordination.

IV. REVIEW OF SEPT. 30th MEETING

Conor provided an overview of the last meeting which included: introductions and information sharing about each organization and establishing some priority issues. The priorities that will be reported on today are 1) Information sharing, 2) Medicaid report, 3) grant coordination and mobility manager/fiscal agent and 4) transit advocacy. Other items mentioned were coordinating medical trips and focusing on increasing transit service on the Highway 160 corridor.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Each of the Priority Areas was updated.

A. Information sharing

1. Conor discussed **Google groups**. A “how-to” sheet was distributed about how to join and use the Group and Conor said he sent the group an invitation to join the Group. Everyone should be able to join without having an account on Gmail. Comments included:

- Becky said she really likes Google Documents as it doesn’t clog up email when large documents are attached.
- The pages and files section will be discontinued.
- Laura asked about what notification is provided when someone posts something on Google Groups. Rick also asked to be included in the group.
- Conor volunteered to put the PowerPoint presentation from the NADO Conference on Google Groups and suggested that we could start a discussion about that.
- John asked for an online demonstration. Conor will follow up with him.

2. 211--Agency forms and services form.

Conor asked all the providers to fill out the 211 “Agency Forms” and if interested, also fill out the “Services Form” to submit to 211.

- He distributed a Resource Guide done by an Iowa Transit group. We could do something similar.

- 211 is a phone based information service. Our region is based out of Grand Junction and the more information they have, the more accurate and helpful it will be.
- There is also work underway to have a Southwest Colorado web-based resource: SW Connect Network website. Any information given to them will be forwarded to 211.
- Musetta used 211 in the 1990s in Denver.
- Martha thought it might be a “doorkeeper” for client non-duplication.
- Peter said we have to do this.
- Rick stressed that the group needs to make sure that the LCC is not overly dependent on Region 9. A more organic the process is better, in terms of achieving long term success.

3. ARCH Project—Conor looked into this program at the recommendation of Christina Knoell from AAA. The ARCH Project is about formalizing a single point of entry for long-term care. For this group, Conor said we could support it but that it appears to be outside the LCC’s purpose. The group agreed.

4. Driver and other trainings—Roy was not in attendance and Conor will follow up with him. Peter said that CASTA participates in the federal Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) that provides training resources nationwide. Conor will inquire to see how LCC members can obtain CASTA training information. Nita says she does.

It was recommended that Conor call Angie Hamm at CASTA to find out the communication mechanism. He will also ask if private providers can be members or access the training programs.

Rick mentioned that agencies can obtain some RTAP training materials without having to become a CASTA member. Nita said that there are tapes and CDs from RTAP so you can do in-service trainings on your own (www.nationalrtap.org).

5. Vanpooling summary—Conor said there was a phone conference last Monday with Vanpool Services Inc. (VPSI) and information on this vanpool provider was distributed. Economic development groups and chambers of commerce were invited. Working with large employers in the area could be important. Discussion included:

- Identify employers that might be interested.
- For one example system riders paid \$125 per month for a 40 mile one-way trip.
- The riders pay for the service and are billed every 30 days for the upcoming month.
- Riders sign a contract on a month-to-month basis.
- Randy mentioned that there are new rules for fingerprinting for commercial transportation providers but that those requirements don’t apply to vanpools.
- Rick said that working with VPSI is just one of many vanpool options. The next step for Conor would be to have conversations with communities, and large employers. If there was a lot of interest, VPSI could make another presentation.
- The question was asked about to how to handle conflicts that arise in vanpool groups
- Rick asked if the LCC wanted to have a vanpool sub group.
- VPSI uses a range of vans, from 7-passenger to 15-passenger. VPSI does not require a CDL to drive a 15-passenger van, but some organizations may require that license just for safety purposes. VPSI stated that five (5) people/riders are the required minimum to start or keep a vanpool in operation.

- The Transportation Planning Region (TPR) may be interested in hearing more about vanpool options.
- John said the issue in Pagosa Springs is that they can't get to doctor appointments in Durango.
- Would Mercy Hospital establish a vanpool program?
- Vanpool drivers are typically riders who volunteer to drive and ride for free. The rest of the riders split the cost of the vehicle, insurance and fuel. VPSI takes care of maintenance, arranges for insurance coverage, and provides a Guaranteed Ride Home.
- Conor will put VPSI information on Google.
- La Plata County Government could be a great vanpool provider.
- Conor suggested Park & Ride locations could be vanpool stops.
- Rick asked Peter if the Southern Ute Tribe might be interested in starting a vanpooling program.

B. Medicaid reimbursement

Nita distributed a lot of material on the Medicaid program that provides many services for low-income individuals, with transportation being one service. She explained that transit providers can obtain reimbursement for medical and non-medical trips if they become certified Medicaid providers.

Information included:

- Medicaid requires a lot of paperwork. However it can be helpful as a funding source. Nita stated that for ambulatory trips the reimbursement rate is \$1.64 a mile. Therefore, \$260 would be reimbursed when taking one patient to Durango from Dove Creek.
- State law stipulates that this service must be available in all counties.
- Medicaid is controlled by County Human Services Departments and each County is run somewhat differently.
- Medicaid eligibility requires that no other transportation be available for those meeting the income limits.
- Usually the person wanting Medicaid-funded transportation calls his or her county Human Services Department which does the paperwork and looks for provider. Some counties contract with private transportation brokers (San Luis Valley) to manage Medicaid transportation service.
- Wheelchair van trips pay a higher reimbursement rate.
- When there are multiple Medicaid riders on a vehicle the provider is reimbursed 100% for the first rider, ½ the rate for the second rider and ¼ of the rates for all others.
- If traveling out of state it must be shown that this transportation is the most appropriate and cost effective method.

Nita explained several of the forms:

- There is a form the doctor needs to sign.
- Medicaid needs a prior authorization form that needs to be signed by the county. It can be for multiple trips for the same client.
- As a provider, you do your billing through a website portal.
- Trainings are offered through the website, mainly in Denver but also some in Grand Junction.
- Nita recommended that you don't attend the general information training, which isn't worth the time, but the transportation-specific training is.
- Renee Robinson at the state is the person to help with enrollment.

- Nita will get electronic copies out to the LCC group.
- John found that it wasn't worth his time since he lost certification.
- Peter is not currently a certified provider. He is trying to apply broadly to include mental health treatment, etc. It is taking much longer than it should. The Southern Ute Tribe or SUCAP application is "in development".
- Rick reinforced that while the paperwork is cumbersome, Medicaid funding is a way to help support an overall system.
- Nita said you can back bill for 3 months, but the doctors must be willing to sign.
- Musetta said she might need to look into this.
- Nita stated that Medicaid is absolutely vital to her program.
- Nita is willing to go through this process in person with anyone who is interested.
- Martha said she can contract with other agencies to help people moving out of nursing homes.

C. Mobility Management

Laura said that she received information from CDOT and Mobility Manager applications are due in the spring (May 2011) for a two year cycle (FY 2012-13). Other information included:

- Need a local 20% match
- Would be a two year application
- What governments would want to partner to obtain the match required?
- Laura visualizes a Mobility Manager helping with all the projects the LCC group is discussing including grant writing, collaborative projects, consolidated dispatch preparation, maybe vanpools. The details need to be defined.
- The group liked the idea.
- A fiscal agent would need to be identified to receive the grant, and office space would need to be found and specific projects/tasks identified.
- A Mobility Manager would work to keep the group moving forward and help the region build transit capacity.

D. Advocacy

Peter said advocacy is basically about providing information to the people who make decisions (elected officials, etc.) to help them understand what it takes to operate transit service, and keeping them informed about upcoming funding opportunities. He mentioned that many transit agencies in the region started going to Transportation Planning Region (TPR) meetings, just to show them that "we exist".

- Government agencies need to understand funding options and that the region's ability to continue and to expand service depends on obtaining local match. Agencies providing transportation need to demonstrate that they are safe and credible. Passengers could be encouraged to write thank-you notes to the government agencies that provide funding. Peter said he asked for less money in 2011 to acknowledge that we are all in the same difficult financial situation.
- We want to make sure that potential funding agencies understand that we need sound transit infrastructure in the region.
- We as providers and agencies representing those who need transportation need join groups and get involved in comprehensive plans and other planning.

There were several suggestions concerning advocacy around medical transportation needs: 1) Talk to Mercy Hospital. Karen Midkiff with the Foundation; 2) Talk with senior centers and see what the needs are.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Organization

Rick summarized what many of the Local Coordinating Councils are doing around the state and referred the group to the Local Coordinating Council Handbook completed for CDOT by TransitPlus, Inc. Conor will put that report on Google groups.

- In summary, Coordinating Councils can be anything they want to be, from informal to very formal. Rick gave the example of NWCCOG where there isn't even a staff person. They have sub-regional groups but the overall regional group is taking on most of the project. On the other hand, Region 10 is trying to create a formal structure but they don't appear to have identified specific action items.
- Peter stated that in the Region 9 everyone seems to be interested and sees the value in taking on specific and mutually beneficial projects. Does a more formal structure offer more benefits?
- Teresa said if the goal is to get a part-time person to drive the projects we have identified, then do we need to be a formal organization? Let's not form something we don't need.
- Rick stated that his understanding is that, in terms of providing funding for a Mobility Manager, he didn't think CDOT would fund a new agency but that any of the Region 9 Coordinating Council member entities could apply on the behalf of the LCC. Becky doesn't like having another layer of government.
- Conor will make a short list of what we have actually done and projects that are underway.
- John would like to know what other councils have accomplished recently in Colorado.
- Rick will send information on the current CDOT-funded LCCs.

VII NEXT MEETING

Items to work on before the next meeting were identified:

- Let's try Google groups and share what you think at the next meeting
- Fill out 211 forms
- Conor will follow-up on the following: Driver training opportunities, contacting Fort Lewis College and major employers
- Laura will contact Karen Midkiff at Mercy Hospital
- Put documents on Google Groups—Medicaid, NADO, LCC Handbook, start discussions
- Teresa recommended a subcommittee to spend some times getting clear on what our priorities are as a Local Coordinating Council. Based on what we see as our priorities, we can flesh out if and how a Mobility Manager could help. The subcommittee can then present what they have come up with at the next meeting. The group was in agreement. The focus of the sub-committee will be to identify priorities for coordination and increased service, and then how the Mobility Manager position should be structured, if appropriate.
 - The key is to focus on long-term goals. Get job descriptions of other Mobility Managers in the state.

- Advocacy needs to be included when developing priorities and is a component of any application.
- Teresa, Conor, Peter and Laura volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Conor will distribute what the subcommittee accomplishes to the group.
- Teresa will develop a draft agenda and they will meet after the holidays as needed.
- Need to look at whether priorities are different for public and private entities.
- Look at goals throughout Hwy 160 corridor.
- Timelines for local governments with respect to decisions on local match. Go for the 2012 budget cycle.

The group then began to discuss their specific needs:

Becky said there is a need to take children to the Durango Rec Center, shopping and other recreation elements. Martha said that access and affordability are critical. There is no transportation for afterschool activities. It was requested that each group member post their individual needs on Google Groups. Conor will ask for that information, which will also be used in developing more specific RCC goals. Those present were asked to list their top 10 transportation needs by the end of the year.

Conor mentioned three transit organizational examples and distributed a handout with basic information on the groups. He will put out additional info and this will be put on the next meeting agenda. There were questions about Transit Authorities and Peter will provide more information at the next meeting.

The group decided to meet in late February and consider the possibility of video conferencing. The sub-committee will meet after the holidays and make recommendations to the overall group.

VIII. SUBGROUPS

This item on the agenda was included in case subgroups wanted to meet. None did.

The meeting adjourned at 12:08pm. Meeting minutes were submitted by Laura Lewis

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