

Transportation Advisory Board Meeting

9/30/2020

ATTENDANCE:

Jennifer West, Lisa Stroud, Randy Wiggins, Maria Hass, Tom Brownback and Rhonda Taylor were in attendance on the Zoom meeting. Robin Caldwell, Denise Cross and Dennis Myers will be emailed the minutes as will any in attendance who would like them.

Jennifer opens meeting with greeting and introduction of Tom Brownback with NCWORKS and asked him to tell everyone about himself.

Tom told everyone about his journey to Murphy and his family as well as the states' current Covid phase 2.5 that NCWORKS is currently operating under.

Jennifer stated that we do provide transportation for employment needs. We are currently at about 50% of the pre Covid numbers of transported passengers. The deviated-Fixed Route (Downtown and Around) has been at about 20 trips a day which is down from the 40 plus that it normally would transport daily.

Demand Response which is not a daily route but is medical appointments and all other services that people call in and schedule in advance for various destinations is running at around 50 percent capacity as well. The use is increasing but there is still room for growth.

Jennifer stated that we are open to ideas of ways to get in touch with our customers through outreach.

Lisa had posted a link to a survey on the CCT webpage, but due to it being a free service powered by Survey Monkey, the number of people who were allowed to participate in it was limited to 62 but we could only retrieve data on 40 of those. This was an anonymous, voluntary survey that was open to anyone who chose to participate.

Ten questions were asked in the survey:

Age range-Most respondents were over 60 or older.

Race-Most respondents were White/Caucasian with African American, Latino/Hispanic. German and others rounding out the total.

Gender-Most respondents were Female.

Language-90% of respondents spoke English with a small number of Spanish, non-verbal, hearing impaired and other.

Education-Most respondents finished/graduated high school with some graduating from college.

Transportation needs-75% of respondents' transportation needs were medical related with the remainder being shopping, employment and other.

Need assistance- The majority of respondents stated that they had issues regarding transportation, food and needed other indirect support.

Mobility Aids-40% of respondents used a cane or walker, 12% utilized a wheelchair with the rest being ambulatory or no mobility assistance needed.

Downtown Route in Andrews-28 of 40 respondents answered Yes.

How often do you use the service? -most responded once a week with some more than once a week.

Jennifer stated that since the beginning of the Covid changes, 62 percent of our passengers use our services to go shopping as well as going foodbanks and we were previously assisting the Murphy Senior Center in delivery of the food boxes.

The next issue discussed was status of the possible addition of a deviated fixed route operating in Andrews like the one currently in Murphy.

Jennifer stated that Mike was the last one to discuss the possibility of a route in Andrews with the previous Andrews administration. Since she has become the Director, we have been unsuccessful in creating any type of communication with the new Mayor or Town Manager.

Randy asked what the Andrews route might look like.

Lisa answered that we would canvas the mobile home parks and public housing complexes to see who might be interested in using the service and base a route on the need of those residents. The possibility of only operating one day a week in order to check viability was the initial idea.

Randy stated that Andrews is more populated than Murphy and asked if there could be certain days that would be more beneficial for the residents, such as special programs that the stores might offer on some days that are not offered every day.

Billing was the next issue as to how the route could break even to keep the department in the black, Andrews had previously had some financial issues but it was improving and that Sandy Dobson is the current manager and could be contacted about the route and the possibility of the town contributing to offset the operation cost in order to keep it feasible.

Jennifer commented that it would be billed by the mile and not by the trip.

Grant Updates:

The CARES 5311 operation and Admin Grant- The second round of the CARES has increased reimbursable amount to \$379,131.00 up from \$169,082.00, the CARES grant money does not have to be spent on issues directly related to Covid. We have used some of this money to purchase and install physical barriers in all the vehicles. This is located between the driver and the customers. (Sneeze guard barrier.)

The third round of CARES possible for capital. The money may be used to purchase a new camera system for the vehicles instead of a new vehicle. The current system we have is 10 years old and is having issues as to updating and use.

The 5311 CTP Grant covers administrative cost of 85% this application is due December 1st with a public hearing planned for November 2nd. The proposed amount is \$172,930.00. This is approximately a \$3,000 increase from the current fiscal year.

The 5310 grant is for Seniors and Disabled, we are currently working on the amount and possibly the same amount as last year may be requested but we may ask for more to cover any lost grant money.

Combined Capital Grant-Normally, we would use this capital grant to replace a vehicle since it offers a 90% reimbursement. Unfortunately, due to the Covid issues, the number of miles that we usually travel is less so we do not have any vehicles that have reached the mile limitation that are required to be met in order for us to be able to replace them.

Lisa-The current HBSS system we are using is outdated but we will be updating from 7.0 to 8.0 and hope for improvements for the maintenance records to be available on the program as well as the possible addition of the fare cards with the Qr code. This would potentially enable us to allow passengers to pre-pay for services and help in the case that the current handwritten pass should be lost or stolen. The new system would allow us to put the riders name and assign them an identification number. The driver could scan the card and add the correct amount when they collect the money and it would also show the driver how much if any funds were remaining on the card or when the Downtown and Around pass expires. People could also come by the office to obtain a reusable plastic card. We would need to purchase a printer and the blank cards. The cards are similar to the ID cards which the county employees use. This would possible reduce the need to handle so much cash. Currently we have a no change policy, cash or check only, payable when the passenger is picked up. (The customers are informed of this policy and told their fare before they are picked up for transport.) Attached is a copy of the fare recording policy. If the customer doesn't have correct fare, the remainder of the extra would be considered a donation and not pre-payment for future transportation.

Randy asked about the money, and if it cannot be carried over.

Due the policy of daily deposits and the lack of a system in place to carry over and track any overpayment, this is not something that we offer. Every fare is in the scheduling software and the fares are reconciled on a daily basis. (This is set forth by the NCDOT to prevent fraud.) A copy of this policy will be added to the minutes of this meeting.

Tom asked if any amount could be put on the fare card.

Randy asked if the fare cards could show credits.

Jennifer said the answer to both these questions is Yes.

Jennifer stated that the TITLE IV is completed and is ready to be adopted by the BOC.

Randy asked how this would work.

Jennifer explained that there is a template that is sent to us by the NCDOT where we put our information in and we must insure that everything is in place. It is a requirement of the NCDOT of non-discrimination and lays out the legal wording, public involvement, hours of operation, services provided and if they are available to everyone. We would like some ideas of what kind of public outreach we can use to get public participation on this.

Tom said that he could put it on their website and Randy and Maria agreed that she could also do something to highlight it on the county website, possibly Facebook could be utilized as well.

Randy stated that more demographic participation was in this program due to us using the transportation service to reach minority and underserved customers and probably touches a more diverse group than some other programs.

Lisa added that many mobile home parks are home to residents of a variety of races, disabilities and socio-economic challenges. Many of the elderly have problems with reading so our drivers have been really good about communication with and assisting them with their needs as well as referring them to Denise Cross at the Senior Center for assistance with some of the services that would help make their lives better.

Jennifer said that limited English proficiency, hearing impaired and illiteracy is all a part of the Title IV. We have recently provided Title IV training to all of our employees.

Randy asked about the status of state contract for a broker system for the DSS transportation.

Jennifer informed us that the broker system is back in the works and has a deadline to sign and start the services by July 1st when the next fiscal year starts.

Randy asked if they have come up with a contract yet that will allow Transit to operate and make money from.

Jennifer told him that we have not got any dollar amounts and until we have those we really don't know what the numbers would be.

Randy stated that Region A doesn't have companies, taxies or others to provide service for DSS as Charlotte, Mecklenburg and the other cities may have. And asked about the 3rd party scheduling.

Jennifer said that it would be really difficult to schedule with a third party, since they would tell them what time to be ready along with any other information needed with us not being able to make any personal contact with the passengers. We can change the pickup times but we must go through the broker who will in turn contact the customer. Many of the customers who go through DSS for transportation can't be reached by phone due to bad numbers which would also increase the difficulty of no contact.

Jennifer gave the dates for the meetings for the rest of FY21 which are 12/30/2020, 3/31/2021 and 6/30/2021. She asked if anyone had anything else to add, no one did and the meeting was closed.

CHEROKEE COUNTY TRANSIT POLICY FOR RECORDING FARES:

Recording of Fares

At the end of shift - operator brings collection box to Administrative Assistant the Administrative Assistant empties the box, counts the money and records it on the Daily Fare Log (the initials of customer are above each fare, Senior donations should have "SR" circled beside them, Fixed Route should be noted as "FR": JARC is noted using "P&R" with customer initials and transit donations by "donation"), the admin.

Assistant and the operator will sign the Daily Fare Log and match the manifest collections to receipt collections.

The manifest has an agency column with one of the funding sources for each customer; this designates the agency the customer's fares are recorded under on the Transportation Fees sheet.)

The box is then returned to the operator to be placed back in the vehicle. At the end of the day all money is placed into a safe.

any fares on the manifest (scheduling software shows this now or if a log sheet is used, notations can be made there) that were not collected should have a line through and a notation stating a "no show", "cancel", or a note written at the bottom of the sheet as to why the money was not collected and upon whose authority any trip was allowed without the appropriate fare. **With the current scheduling software all things are computerized and notes will be put in the program as to why the ride was not taken or a fare was not paid.*

When the money is received you verified the correct amount was collected on both the log sheet and the manifest/scheduling software: now it must be put on the Transportation Fee sheet.

There are 6 different funding source columns to record the fares in on the monthly transportation fee sheet.

- 1. All EDTAP funds are recorded in the EDTAP column with the initials of the customer and the amount of the fare below.**

2. All RGP funds are recorded under the RGP column with the initials of the customer and the amount of the fare below.
3. Donations to Transit and EMPL funds are recorded in the corresponding column. Donations should have "Don" or "Donation" above it and EMPL should be listed with the initials of the customer and the amount of the fare below.
4. CARES funds are recorded in the corresponding column with the initials of the customer and the amount of the fare below.
5. Senior Donations are recorded as one sum. Add all senior donations from all routes together for the day: the sum of all routes for the day is the number entered into the Senior Donation column.
6. Fixed Route column needs the total funds collected from the fixed route fares and pass sales for the day entered in. If any monthly passes were sold, write the name of the purchaser at the bottom of the sheet.

All money collected each day is recorded on the Daily Fare Log, the Transportation Fees sheet and the manifest. The totals on all should match. The deposit amounts are pulled from the Transportation Fees sheet.

The deposit sheet is to be dated for the day of deposit. The line beneath the date is for the date(s) the money was received as fares.

1. Add each column separately and that is the amount that is to be deposited into that particular funding source line item.
2. The deposit sheet has a column for each agency just like the Transportation Fees sheet.
3. The total of the deposit is the total of all monies collected on the dates the deposit covers.
4. All money is verified and checks are copied to be kept with the deposit.
5. One copy of the funding source sheet is filed with the daily fare log one is initialed by Assistant and stays with

the deposit which is given to the Director or Transit Coordinator. The checks are copied with the deposit sheet.

The deposit is then given to the Transit Coordinator or Director who completes the steps in Munis and takes to the bank to deposit the funds. The original yellow deposit slip is taken to Finance. A copy of the duplicate deposit slip is given to the office assistant who keeps it with the Daily Fare Log and stores it for any future inspection. The other is stored with the Directors copy.