

COA Transportation Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 3, 2015 at 3:15 PM

Present: Alice Sapienza, Phyllis Bially, Barry David, Debra Galloway; Absent: Pat Tabloski with permission

Guest: Susan Iuliano, Selectman

Alice opened the meeting at 3:15 PM and reviewed the current issues that the committee is working on: what transportation services are needed for seniors and persons with disabilities in town, whether and how a fixed route can be added to our transportation system, whether and how we can get “The Ride” to come to Sudbury.

Current and Needed Information on Transportation Demand

Debra has received requests for extended and additional transportation service for some residents who are living with disabilities, as well as some seniors. There has been discussion about how more service can be added, including: adding part-time service in the evenings, or weekends, adding another van, getting a fixed route system in Sudbury, and thereby getting “the Ride” service in Sudbury (door to door service in and out of town for those with disabilities).

More data are needed with regard to the population of residents who are living with disabilities and in need of transportation. Approximately 3% of current van riders are disabled. A discussion ensued about the ways to gather data, including: a survey, contact with other agencies, contact with housing developments in Sudbury. A written survey was considered but ultimately decided against, as it might not yield a lot of response. Susan Iuliano agreed to talk with Sheila Cusolito, Executive Director of the Sudbury Housing Authority, to determine if Sheila had any estimates of people in this housing who also qualify as disabled (physically or mentally).

From health and aging research completed by the subcommittee, we do know that the proportion of residents with disabilities will increase as they age.

Another aspect of demand was discussed in terms of a “fixed route” bus/van that would travel from Marlborough through Sudbury along Route 20 and terminate, possibly, in Wayland. Currently, there are two developments with residents for whom this could be attractive—Longfellow and Coolidge—and additional housing proposed for development of the Raytheon property could add to that demand.

Next Steps Regarding Disability Data

Phyllis will contact housing developments in Sudbury that do not have eligibility requirements (as this would skew results); as noted above, Susan will contact the SHA; Barry will get in touch with HESSCO Senior Services to see about additional data; Debra has already contacted BayPath Elder Services and is awaiting a response about data on disability.

Transportation Options

With regard to what services to recommend to the COA, the group discussed the growing current and projected future needs for transportation resulting from new 55+ housing that is planned at the Raytheon property, as well as the aging of Sudbury’s population in general. Some options are described below:

Dial a Ride

Dial a Ride is an MWRTA service offered to Wayland residents 65 years or older or disabled of any age. From feedback she has heard, Debra noted that the extended hours are great, but the rides can be very long and drivers are not necessarily consistent, nor do they get to know riders the way Sudbury van drivers do. However, it is worth researching the possibility of adding a Dial A Ride type of service here. Perhaps the Dial a Ride service could be wrapped around the current Sudbury schedule to extend it?

Fixed Route

A fixed route service is a bus that travels either up and down Route 20 from Marlborough to Nobscot Rd., Landham Rd., Coolidge Apts., or Wayland, or circles down Landham Road and back up Nobscot Road on a scheduled basis most of the day. A fixed route service would most likely be half paid for by the State. In addition, ADA requirements would require that "The Ride" be offered for those who are disabled and unable to access the fixed route. It is unclear whether "The Ride" would be offered only within ¾ mile of the fixed route or for the whole town.

Questions arose about the demand for a fixed route. If there is not enough volume of riders the fixed route would most likely be cancelled. We believe that people at Longfellow Glen would use it, and at Coolidge if the route goes to Coolidge. Most likely there would also be demand from the proposed Raytheon development (both market rate and 55+), but it is hard to determine whether demand would be great enough to maintain the route, especially right now before the Raytheon development has even started.

The fixed route cost estimate from the MWRTA is \$250,000, with half paid by the state, so the cost to Sudbury would be \$125,000. Sudbury has about \$80,000 left in the MBTA assessment for transportation, so there would be a need for \$45,000 more dollars from Town or other source to pay for fixed route. It was decided that more information is needed to make a plan for a fixed route. A fixed route is considered a longer term project, though we will try to get information as soon as possible.

Debra will contact MWRTA staff to determine cost of adding Dial a Ride service full time or supplemental to extend hours. She will also find out if The Ride would be offered only within ¾ mile of the fixed route or to the whole town if Sudbury gets a fixed route bus service. In addition, based on advice from Susan Iuliano, Debra will file a "placeholder warrant" with the Town for a possible request for additional funds for transportation at the 2016 town meeting.

FISH Volunteer Medical Transportation

The subcommittee concluded the meeting with a discussion of FISH. Another part of transportation services provided in Sudbury, FISH provides rides to medical appointments by means of volunteers driving their own cars. Current demand for this service is high, but the system is very stressed. The FISH coordinators are having to deny some rides due to a lack of available volunteers. Many of the regular volunteers have aged and are no longer doing FISH rides or have cut back on the number of rides they offer. Various methods were discussed to recruit additional volunteers, including: making announcements at upcoming events, such as the holiday luncheon; sending notices to the Town Crier, churches; possibly putting a flyer in the Town Census? (this might also be a way to send out a short survey?). Debra will follow up on these ideas.

Respectfully submitted by Debra Galloway, with input from Barry David.