



Town of Sudbury

<https://sudbury.ma.us/transportation/>

Sudbury Transportation Committee

Minutes

Friday, April 22, 2022

10:30 AM

Via Town Zoom Conference Call

Core Members Present: Daniel Carty, Alice Sapienza, Adam Duchesneau, Doug Frey, Bob Lieberman, Debra Galloway

Core Members Absent: Dan Nason

Advisory Group Present:

Advisory Group Absent: Charlie Dunn, Scott Nix, Beth Suedmeyer, Carmine Gentile, Bethany Hadvab, Silvia Nersessian, Mary Warzynski

Guests: Sandy Lasky, Linda Faust, Kay Bell, Lynn Puorro

Confirmation of Quorum

The statutory requirements as to notice having been complied with, Dan Carty as Chair convened the meeting at 10:33 am. Dan Carty made an announcement that this was a public meeting, and the meeting was being recorded via Zoom and by Sudbury TV. He took a roll call, noted a quorum was present, then announced that he was making Adam Duchesneau co-host of the Zoom session.

Selection of Clerk

Debra volunteered to take meeting minutes.

Administrative Updates

Dan set out the agenda topics (but not the order) for discussion:

- Update on Select Board meeting
- Town Meeting Articles
- Memberships and extensions
- Financial status update (Adam)
- Administrative Items
- Discussion about Annex Transportation (if time allows)
- Items from previous Transportation Committee meeting

Membership

Dan thanked Doug Frey for his service to the Transportation Committee as he is moving out of Sudbury and leaving the Committee. All Committee members expressed gratitude to Doug and will miss him. Dan noted that the Commission on Disability will be meeting to appoint a new liaison, expected to be Kay Bell (a guest today), to the Transportation Committee soon, hopefully in time for the next Transportation Committee meeting.

Financial Status

Adam reviewed the expenditures and resources available for the GoSudbury programs via his updated spreadsheet. He explained that there is about \$15-\$16,000 left of MeadowWalk mitigation funds. We expect to receive a new check from MAPC for \$14,000 in the next 2-4 weeks. This will bring our funds available total to about \$30,000. He did note that in March and April we had an unexpected increase in ridership, whereas the program was consistently costing about \$9,000/month, the cost increased to \$13,000 per month for two months in a row. We will pursue additional MAGIC funds that remain, and should expect to receive an additional \$5,000 more. This should ensure support for both pilot programs through June.

Dan noted that we await Sudbury Annual Town Meeting to learn of the vote on Article 14, in which the Transportation Committee proposes that the Town utilize free cash of \$100,000 toward the two pilot programs in FY 2023. He proposed that the Committee wait until after the vote before discussing next steps.

During the last month, the GoSudbury Uber program inadvertently reached the credit limit due to the unexpected increase in ridership. Dan shared that the GoSudbury Uber program was suspended for less than a day, but did affect a couple of rides. Adam reported that the Town has increased the Uber credit limit to \$10,000 which should eliminate the risk of this happening again.

Dan noted that there will be a transition of the taxi grant funding agency from MAPC to Mass Development. Alice reported that she expects that funding in the next grant cycle will likely be reduced. This is due to the fact that the TNC's (Transportation Network companies (i.e. Uber/Lyft)), experienced lower volume of ridership during the pandemic, thus reducing the funds available. Alice expects that Mass Development will not assist with general procurement agreements as MAPC has done. This means that if we would like to establish an agreement with Annex Transportation, we would be responsible for due diligence to ensure their accountability.

Uber

Dan noted that Uber recently sent out communications to riders about masking. Masking is now optional for both rider and driver, unless required by local authorities. We decided it would be valuable to share with our riders that masking is still recommended. Alice noted that it would be wise to review the language of the legal waivers on the GoSudbury application as well.

Publicity

At the last meeting, the Committee discussed the need for a renewed publicity effort. Dan shared on screen the draft communication about transportation from Debra and Ana Cristina. Recommended edits by Alice and others included: to ensure that URLs are written in full for the paper version of the flyer; to add a note about masks being recommended; and to remove the item listing that taxis are available for essential workers.

Kay Bell explained that for low vision screen readers, links to information should include a longer title that includes a clue to what that information is for. For example, instead of “Click Here”, we would write “Click Here for additional information about GoSudbury”. In that way, the screen reader will read out loud a description that is more informative for the user.

Sandy emphasized the need for expanded publicity based on a friend’s experience with a neighbor who was not aware of the program. Dan observed that we should hold off on any new publicity until after the Town Meeting vote.

Linda asked if there might be money in the budget to establish a recording about the transportation information that would be available to those who have no computer access. Dan will research voicemail service that could be used to set up such a system.

Alice reiterated the need to also put out a paper flyer to share transportation information with residents who are not reached with electronic methods. Sandy added that we could add a note on the flyer to ask people to share the information with neighbors and friends.

Bob asked about the planned methodology for publicity with this flyer. It was noted by Dan that the plan includes email to various email lists, paper flyers to be distributed to: Senior Center, library, housing, etc. Suggestions included: following up on Linda’s idea to offer a phone recording with information, and Kay’s idea to give flyers to the Food Pantry to put into grocery bags. Kay also recommended outreach to the Clergy association and the Town Social Worker. All publicity will be on hold until after the vote on the Transportation Article at Town Meeting.

Membership and Extensions

Dan noted that the Select Board authorization for the Transportation Committee extends only through May 31. Should Town Meeting vote to support the Committee’s Article for funding, Dan will request that the Select Board extend the Committee for another year. Some Transportation Committee members received notification about renewing membership recently. We hope that members continue to participate in the Committee and appreciate the participation of liaisons from the Council on Aging and Commission on Disability.

Annual Town Meeting

At a recent Select Board meeting, Dan and Alice provided a report to the Select Board on the Transportation Committee’s progress and shared the Town Meeting Article 14 request for \$100,000 to support the GoSudbury programs. The warrant article was supported 4-1 by the Select Board and will be voted on at annual Town meeting.

Dan and Alice also shared and briefly discussed the so-called “business plan” created by the Transportation Committee as requested by the Select Board. Dan explained to the Select Board why we used Newton as a comparison town for our “high” option of service, which is a regional approach.

Dan feels that the “high” option involving the regional approach requires the most commitment and effort, but is most likely the best option. Dan acknowledged that Sudbury is ahead of other towns in setting up and managing new local transportation options.

Alice added that the Making the Connections grant interim report indicated that there is a lot of infrastructure required to implement this type of regional plan for transportation service. The other towns need assistance. However, the conversations that have taken place in the making the Connections process have enabled towns such as Concord to make plans that will enable to them to implement new transportation systems. Concord will be asking the town to support a part-time to full-time Transportation Planner, as well as plan for a tourist trolley through town. The consultant involved in Making the Connections indicated that several towns are looking to add staff to support transportation planning and operation.

Although we have not had the bandwidth (with the current level of work needed), Alice stated that we are in a good position with all of the work done on our two pilots and the regional effort, to apply for federal grants identified by Sen. Eldridge in recent discussions with Dan Carty. This type of collaboration involves not just town's working together but also four different regional transit authorities (RTAs) which intersect with the current towns in the Making the Connections grant. There may need to be some overarching structure put into place to ensure coherence amongst the RTAs.

It was noted by Adam that local regional transportation groups (such as CrossTown Connect) have been in place for a while and we should keep trying new efforts.

Dan reported that former Select Board member Kirsten Roopenian commented about regionalization at a meeting, noting the success of the Senior Tax Relief programs and the Community Preservation Act, which Sudbury also took the lead on.

Dan will add this item to our next meeting agenda as the Select Board would like us to report back in May.

Other Updates

The Transportation Committee awaits decisions from the Select Board regarding ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds that would assist in extending our two pilots.

BayPath Elder Services grants helped fill gaps in last year's funding for our pilot programs. Debra is unsure that she will apply for BayPath funding this year due to reestablished eligibility requirements that are prohibitive. Bob Lieberman shared that BayPath Elder Services is merging with Springwell Elder Services in July. It will be a larger organization and this may improve options for funding.

Annex Transportation

Discussion was postponed until grant process begins with Mass Development.

Curtis Middle School

The Curtis Bike Safety Group has reached out to the Committee to discuss bike safety in Sudbury. Dan has reached out to them and plans to attend one of their regular Wednesday meetings.

Making the Connections

Alice is working with Adam to ask for an extension on this program through December 31. Discussions in their meetings have made it clear that staff time is a precious commodity. Transportation needs to be a town position and not just a committee of staff and volunteers.

Adam observed that the town of Concord is going with a different model from Sudbury. They will ask their town for a transportation position first and then implement programs, whereas we started a program first and now are asking for staff. On the plus side, we were able to get the service started quickly.

Alice graciously acknowledged the Transportation Committee's work. We have great data from Sandy and Dan. We have provided over 2,000 rides. We are on the forefront of how to do effective regional collaborations. Sudbury has been working on Transportation since 2014 thanks to Debra and the COA. The groundwork we have done has been an asset to getting transportation services started.

AARP Livability Survey

Dan shared the data Alice extracted from the AARP Livability Survey. The Survey report provides granular detail about livability indices, such as housing cost and lack of transportation options. It confirms what our Needs Assessment found, that housing cost burden and transportation are serious challenges for the town. Sudbury scores a 58 out of 100 on the Livability scale due to the housing and transportation challenges.

Report to MAPC

Alice submitted the latest bimonthly report to MAPC on use of their funding. She thanked Adam for helping to discern the number of rides paid for with MAPC funds vs. other funding sources. Alice also thanked Sandy and Dan for the survey material as she was able to incorporate some of the results into this report. Dan thanked Alice for the hard work on this report.

Upcoming Opportunities

Dan reported that there are interesting transportation related meetings coming up.

- The MPO Transit Working Group is holding two meetings: May 27 on School Transit and May 31 is their quarterly Working Group Meeting.
- Mass DOT is hosting an Innovation Conference at the Worcester DCU Center on May 24, and 25. Dan will attempt to attend on May 25 if possible. He will also reach out to Sen. Eldridge again about state/federal opportunities.

MPO Technical Assistance

Alice observed that our application to the MAPC for technical assistance in the past resulted in the grant opportunity for Microtransit. She proposes that the Transportation Committee apply for technical assistance again with regard to the regional transportation effort, especially with regard to collaborating with multiple RTAs. This effort will also illustrate for the Select Board that we are serious about a proposal to move Sudbury toward a possible regional transportation solution for residents. Dan will add this item to the next agenda for discussion.

Meeting Minutes

April 1, 2022, Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes were reviewed on screen with edits. Alice moved to approve the minutes, Doug seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting

The next Transportation Committee meeting will be Friday, May 6, at 10:30 AM via Zoom.

Adjournment

Doug moved to adjourn the meeting, Dan seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:37 AM.