

Sudbury Transportation Committee Minutes draft

Thursday, June 9, 2022 10:30 AM

Dan Carty, Chair, called the virtual meeting to order with roll call at 10:33 AM

Core Members Present

Dan Carty, Chair; Deb Galloway, Adam Duchesneau, Bob Lieberman, Alice Sapienza, Kay Bell

Core members absent - none

Advisory members present - none

Advisory members absent

Martha Welsh, Dan Nason, Chief Scott Nix, Representative Carmine Gentile, Bethany Hadvab, Beth Suedmeyer, Silvia Nersessian, Mary Warzynski

Others present

Ana Cristina Oliveira, Linda Faust

Confirmation of quorum

The statutory requirements as to notice having been complied with, Dan Carty as Chair convened the meeting at 10:32 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 roll call, noted a quorum was present, then announced that he was making Adam Duchesneau co-host of the Zoom session.

Selection of Clerk

Kay was next on the roster and was present to take the minutes.

Administrative business

1. The Select Board re-upped the Transportation Committee (TC) for another year.
2. Membership adjustments: Dan Nason has been unable to attend regular meetings. He has been appointed as an advisory member.

3. Quorum remains four.
4. In the Select Board's current round of ARPA funds distribution, Transportation Committee's request did not make the cut. Some funds remain so it's still possible to receive some funds.
5. Select Board requested that TC submit a business plan recommendation this summer.
6. Dan went over topics to be covered: MPO for business plan; "power riders," info from Sandra Robinson from Needham, and any others members have.

Updates and Discussion

1. Adam reported that he had a positive talk with **Annex Transit**, located in North Chelmsford. They specialize in Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV))accessible rides for any purpose. He showed their computer interface with helpful features; they are open to our subsidy program; hours are 5:30 AM or 6:00 AM to 11:00 PM; "ready for anything." Adam asked for TC green light to engage with Annex. This would be in the category of a livery service (funded by MassDevelopment). Adam would need to process a contract with them (consulting town legal) and determine what pot of funds is appropriate for paying Annex. He sees this option as fitting under the GoSudbury! umbrella. Dan inquired about use of Sudbury's dispatch service. Adam expects Annex rides would be done through its existing booking interface. Annex also offers a phone service for booking back up. Kay asked if they have plenty of drivers. Adam said they assured him they are ready for more demand, showed how booking works, and said he would inquire about their suggestions for lead time for booking rides. Dan asked for a sense of the TC. Alice interjected that Tim Kelley of JFK Transportation is sensitive and we may need to provide careful explanation about adding Annex as an option. Kay asked about the scope of training for accessible service, such as knowing a blind passenger cannot see the vehicle arrive. Dan suggested Kay connect with Adam on this type of detail. Debra mentioned the need for clear procedures for riders. Adam agreed that these types of details will need to be included in arrangements with Annex. Dan gave a nod to former member, Doug Frey, who found the Annex service and brought it to TC attention.

2. Adam confirmed that Tommy's Taxi, JFK Transportation, and Annex Transit are all in good standing with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and, therefore, eligible for receiving funds from the next round of grants, specifically the MassDevelopment application.
3. Adam reported that Acton is "in" to participate in the next round of funding, as well as Stow and Bolton, but Maynard has opted out at this time. Alice and Adam could only report that Concord was "ambiguous" so we still need some clarification from Concord.
4. Dan will follow up in connecting with the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. He did send a collection of documents to TC members with funding and usage pattern data; and Sandy Lasky's survey results.
5. Adam's financial update: Month of May invoice from JFK was \$3872 and from Uber was \$6185.38. The Uber charge was highest ever by about \$1000. JFK has stabilized as has Tommy's Taxi. He said we are billing about \$13,000 a month in total. The MAPC grant with about \$5000 left will deplete with the May and June charges. Meadow Walk mitigation has about \$5000 remaining and Uber will use up the rest of those funds. The TC will then roll into the \$100,000 Article 14 funds that Town Meeting approved. Adam will send TC members the updated Go Sudbury! Accounting 220607 spreadsheet.
6. Update followed concerning Sandra Robinson, who is Executive Director, of the Needham Community Council, a non-governmental organization that runs transportation offerings through Lyft. They employ concierge service with 24-hour advance pre-booking, with "shoes and coat on" call again for the actual ride booking. Rides on M-F 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM. Program name: Transportation of Last Resort. Soft distance limit – within town and five miles beyond. As requests are processed, they sometimes say no if too far. No more than 10 rides per month. Concierge redirects to other option if there is one. One staff person runs it with volunteer concierges. WAV vehicles available through The Ride. There is a COA van. They send a monthly letter to each user stating cost to program. Participants qualify by age over 18 years with no financial bar. Program is not for work commute. Debra expressed

interest in sending out “cost of rides used” statement. Discussion of the sensibilities of low-income riders and possible use with heavy-use riders.

7. Linda Faust asked why Maynard opted out of participation in the taxi grant and program. Alice explained that they had issues with the amount of liability insurance the taxis were carrying. They are still involved in discussions.
8. **Ridership and cost patterns:** Dan provided spreadsheet data on rider usage (*anonymized*) and cost per rider. Bob analyzed and noted that out of the 100 registered participants, two riders have accounted for 42% and the top ten riders for 76% of cost.
9. A most-frequent rider had been contacted by Senior Center staff two months ago to explain impact of such frequent use on the program and asked that rider curtail usage. Members discussed how some uses within the current guidelines can be inefficient, over-usage, or inappropriate and the need to establish policies to improve on that without overly restricting usage. Adam suggested that for the Uber program a simple policy could be a ride-cap per month; it would be easily understood by riders and easily implemented by Uber. Cost of Uber rides can occasionally jump from the usual price due to unavailability of a driver or surge pricing. Alice pointed out that the average cost per ride has remain around \$20 and that’s a good thing.

Some options for new policies were discussed:

1. Ride cap generally.
2. Personalized approach to correcting by reaching out to high-use riders to discuss options.
3. Have everyone re-register and learn new eligibility and policies and procedures as we transition to a Town funded program in July.
4. If a rider were mis-using the program and were informed about it, and then continued to mis-use, what steps would we want to use? Suspend for a few days or just contact on phone, or what?
5. Possible eligibility change: 18 and with financial challenge, and 60 instead of 50, as the age, without a financial need.
6. Dan suggested a 20 rides per month ride cap for Uber rides.

7. Alice suggested that the draft of adjustments to policies submitted by Debra and Ana Cristina is a good starting point and based on the discussion they could edit it to bring in for further discussion and a vote.
8. Re-registration, if eligibility and rules are to change, is strongly supported by some. If the only change is to implement a 20-ride per month cap on the Uber program, Adam suggested that changing eligibility and re-registering is a lot of work.

Action Items for changes

1. Adam will investigate details of the mechanics of implementing a ride cap with Uber.
2. Dan will investigate the language in the waivers ~~riders agreed~~ to see what there is about potential adjustments to program details.
3. Debra and Ana Cristina will further develop adjustments to policies and procedures.

The topic of changes to co-pays needs attention as well. It will need to be discussed at next meeting and the report from Sandy Lasky can enlighten the discussion.

MPO

Alice explained that we are approaching them for technical support to assist us and accordingly is going to the Town with scenario 3 of the business plan presented at an earlier Select Board meeting.. The other 2 scenarios are incremental improvements on the current offerings and the third scenario is a more sophisticated and effective approach to addressing transportation needs for Sudbury.

1. How do we collaborate with multiple regional transit authorities (as suggested by Representative Gentile and others) and the MBTA?
2. How do we deal with home rule – municipalities' unique prerogative to set local policies?
3. How do we go beyond a "point A to point B" approach to address broader transportation needs, e.g., commuting to education and certification for

improved employment? This is the difference between patronage (number of riders) and coverage (informed by values).

4. How do we carve down a long-term strategy into what are coherent steps we can begin to take? Travis Pollock suggested that there may be potential beyond the reach we have attempted so far for regionalized efforts as Lexington, Bedford, and Burlington have been trying to regionalize their efforts, too. Newton has expanded their own borders, too.

MPO and MAPC are thinking about getting the DOT involved. That would provide access to federal grants. MAPC and MPO are impressed with Sudbury's transportation work so far. Dan said the Select Board is looking to us for a recommendation: What do we do? And if regional is the answer, what appetite do these other towns have to participate?

Next meeting

Friday, June 24, 2022 at 10:30 AM

Minutes

April 22, 2022: Edits had already been offered. Alice moved and Adam seconded the motion to accept the minutes of April 22. Dan took a roll call of the votes of the six members present. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Kay moved and Debra seconded the motion to adjourn. Dan took a roll call of the votes of the six members present. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kay Bell.