

Sudbury Transportation Committee Minutes

Friday, October 21, 2022 10:00 AM

Via Town Zoom Conference Call

Dan Carty, Chair, called the virtual meeting to order at 10:01 AM

Core Members Present on Zoom screen

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 Nerssessian, Mary Warzynski

Guests: Linda Faust

Confirmation of quorum

The statutory requirements as to notice having been complied with, Dan Carty as Chair convened the meeting at 10:01 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 noted a quorum was present, then announced that he was making Adam Duchesneau co-host of the Zoom session.

Selection of Clerk

Kay was volunteered to take the minutes.

Past takeaways - ongoing items

1. Finances, survey responses so far, Sudbury Foundation grant, Annex, MPO tech support, Uber geo-fencing. Won't do minutes this time; will recap items from last meeting.
2. Vouchers for Uber urgent requests update: Debra talked to Community Social Worker, Bethany Hadvab. She keeps some vouchers on hand for Uber urgent need. It's a limited supply. Can request if needed. Vouchers can be bought online, so we could do that ourselves, too. There have been no urgent requests so far.
3. Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) requesting input. Kay reported the media coverage was simply related to the long-term project "Beyond Mobility 2050" general outreach for ideas for the future direction of transportation.

4. Survey: Ana Christina Oliveira had received some paper responses. Those likely need to be entered still.
5. Dan spoke with Select Board Chair, Charlie Russo. Will discuss that with the finance agenda item.

Finance

1. In September Uber charges were down about \$1000. JFK charges were down about \$600. Tommy's Taxi charges were up \$1600. Tommy's Taxi was at its highest since February at \$4100. It's unclear why exactly.
2. Dan showed graphs demonstrating burn rate. At current rate of about \$10,000 monthly it is projected that we will run out of funds in March. To sustain funding until the end of June we would have to cut the rate of spending in half now. We worked on scaling back costs with the ride caps and new copays, but usage increases have kept our run rate high.
3. Alice pointed out that if Mass Development MPO grant comes through, that would pick up all the taxi expenses. She will ping them again. The delay in response has been disappointing. Adam suggests that if by the end of November, the MA Development funds don't come through, we will have to consider other funding or cost cutting options.
4. Dan explained that the Select Board (SB) has a goal setting meeting on Monday, Oct. 24, and this year transportation was in the top six. It's not certain if it will continue to be so in the coming year. The Council on Aging passed a motion to ask SB to support funding transportation on permanent basis rather than have to annually appeal to Town Meeting.
5. Dan's discussion with SB Chair Russo and Interim Town Manager, Maryanne Bilodeau, boiled down to that transportation funding will be included in the upcoming budget discussions season.
6. There was \$300,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds and about \$100,000 just went to buy a transportation van for Park and Recreation.
7. Kay believes that the demonstrated demand justifies, even with our new limits, the Town putting in even greater funds to meet the need.
8. Dan suggests examining the up-to-date data to understand if more riders or same number with more rides.
9. Bob notes that July spending was \$8,868. In August we put in the new limits and copays, and August it was \$11,575 and September \$11,645. Even with limits the program usage is increasing ridership demonstrating need. How can the Select Board and the Town not support it and let it run out of funds in February?
10. Dan would like to know if it's more people using the service or the same people using the program more often. We need to be able to answer that question.

11. Debra looked at the individual riders and their demographics. She will work it up and send it out. Alice tracks the Uber similarly.
12. Bob suggests not to get caught in analysis paralysis. Need to have the data and make a plan and make a decision.
13. Alice is chagrined by the lack of response from the agencies to which we have applied for financial and other assistance. Dan agrees and mentioned that until we hear for sure we have to assume we will not have that funding.
14. Dan spoke with Sonia Shah, Executive Director of Sudbury Foundation (SF). Speaking for herself, not SF members who decide. She understands what we're trying to do. She mentioned Quaboag Connection. Dan asked for clarification before Transportation Committee resubmits its \$100K application: Is it too much money? Is it the right goal? Biggest request they've ever done was for a multi-year program for a couple of playgrounds \$150K. Ballpark is usually \$20K to \$40K. They don't tend to fund operational items. We are in a development stage and not yet at operational level. Dan heard we likely won't get that much. Potentially SF could fund a short fall of an operation as we've been discussing. Next submission would be due January 1, 2023.
15. Question was raised as to whether we ask for a lower amount and explain the demand has been growing beyond anticipation. Adam agreed with that, suggesting perhaps \$40K which could bridge the program through to when potentially free cash funds from the town would kick in. Debra agreed.
16. Kay asked are we still a pilot program? If we cut back offerings we are fully aware we will not be meeting needs we have proven we know about. Alice agrees. And if we hold ourselves out as a Livable Community and a Dementia Friendly community, that is frustrating.
17. Public Comment: Linda Faust, Boston Post Road. If we are going to ask for less money what will that mean for the time we want to ask for more money?
18. Dan explained that the ask for a reduced amount is only related to the grant request and is in response to advice from Sudbury Foundation staff. The rest of the request for funding are related to Town Meeting and that's still a work in progress.
19. Dan sees a general consensus and now we need to decide what action to take.
20. Dan will draft a SF application rewrite. The focus will be filling gap due to rapid growth.

Program operations

1. Alice reported that we will be getting tech assistance from MPO. Have not yet received the scope of work. Their senior leadership is looking at it. Got the word on this on 10/20/22.
2. Alice will ping Mass Development again. It's late. She expected word sooner and believes we will get something.

3. In July we moved and voted to go from contiguous town to mileage calculation geo-fence. It appears that did not get through to Uber. Adam will follow up. Deb told about a rider going within 10 miles but wasn't contiguous so was told to pay the highest rather than the middle copay.

Survey

1. Dan anonymized the responses. The survey went out to all signed up: 162 taxi, 118 Uber. 45 responses for taxi (28%), 29 for Uber.
2. Dan shared survey report with graphs showing mostly 5s, with a few split 4 and 5. There is also verbal feedback. Most gave freeform comments. Members need to look at the work-in-progress report after the meeting. Members are good with the format of the report.
3. Deb will send a reminder to users. This data will support funding requests.

Annex

1. Adam eventually got response. But recently made contact and found what details they needed and sent them that. He will soon receive back from them and can have the interim town manager sign the contract.
2. They do their own dispatch. We send them our list of qualified riders. Riders then book rides on the website and can use phone for that. They are all WAV rides. Then Annex can include them and do the billing.
3. Are we to open Annex to medical only or all uses? For consistency of service we should provide for all purposes and include monthly limit just like Uber program. Adam will ask if Annex can implement the 20-ride limit.
4. We will need to communicate to the WAV rider base about the new option.
5. We still would like to have a beta tester/early adopter or two use Annex before we send out to all.

To Do's - Takeaways

Dan: Zoom transcript to Kay

Alice: Follow up on the Mass Dev grant

Deb, Alice, Dan: See what they can do with rider data

Dan: redraft Sudbury Foundation grant application

Adam: Uber geo-fence

Deb and Ana: send reminder for survey

Deb: draft Annex info page and find beta tester

Adam: tie up the legal-eze with Annex

Next time

Do we curtail further? Hope is not a strategy.

Look at the Sudbury Foundation grant application draft.

Annex may be ready start.

Will have more information about the SB: is this a high priority goal again?

Sudbury Doing Good will be on Nov 5. Table share with COA.

Dan did a belated took s roll call of all present at the meeting: Alice Sapienza, Adam Duchesneau, Debra Galloway, Bob Lieberman, Kay Bell, Dan Carty.

Next meeting

Friday, Nov 4, 2022 at 10:00 AM

Minutes

Adjournment

Dan took a roll call of the votes of the six members present. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 AM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kay Bell.