



Town of Sudbury

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

Sudbury Transportation Committee

Minutes

Friday, August 18, 2023

10:00 AM

Via Town Zoom Conference Call

Core Members Present: Daniel Carty, Alice Sapienza, Debra Galloway, and Bob Lieberman

Advisory Group Present: None

Advisory Group Absent: Martha Welsh, Scott Nix, Carmine Gentile, Bethany Hadvab, Silvia Nersessian, Mary Warzynski

Guests: Ana Cristina Oliveira, Lynn Puorro (Sudbury TV), Linda Faust

Confirmation of Quorum: The statutory requirements as to notice having been complied with, Dan Carty as Chair convened the meeting at 10:04 AM. Dan Carty made an announcement that this was a public meeting, and the meeting was being broadcast live via Zoom and recorded by Sudbury TV. He took roll call, noted a quorum was present, and announced that he was making Debra co-host of the Zoom session.

Selection of Clerk: Alice volunteered to take meeting minutes.

Acton Items: Dan reviewed action items from last meeting (8.4.23):

- Commission on Disability (CoD) member for the Transportation Committee has been proposed: Elizabeth (Bessie) Struck. Struck will be interviewed by and seek approval from the Select Board at the 8/29/23 meeting.
- Dani Marini-King was asked by Dan and agreed to be an Advisory Group Member of the Transportation Committee representing Sustainable Sudbury. Dan sent her the third scenario from the business plan presented to the Select Board last year.
- The State earmark for Sudbury, proposed by Rep. Gentile and amounting to \$125,000, has been awarded for support of GoSudbury transportation programs. The money should be available around October. Dan will determine if there a term in which the money must be spent, and he suggested that the committee may not need to request additional Town funds at the upcoming Town Meeting.
- As promised, Dan created a "medical ride parser" for the Uber dashboard data, consisting of likely addresses for healthcare facilities in the area. This will allow us to track medical rides (in addition to the taxi data, which are solely for medical rides).
- Survey data on registered GoSudbury riders will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Dan will follow up on the status of the MAGIC \$10,000 awarded to the Community Compact initiative several years earlier.

Finances: Dan shared his screen with the Excel summary (initiated by Adam Duchesneau), showing the amount of Town funds used for Uber and the amount of MassDev funds used for taxis. Alice noted that, with the cap of 6 one-way rides/month for each rider imposed in February, we had spent about a quarter of awarded funds in 6 months. Because the grant will end in January 2024 (one year from when the money was received), she recommended that we increase the cap to 10 one-way rides/month so that less money needs to be returned at the end of the grant period. Bob calculated that, with the increase, the likely taxi expenditure will total about \$7,000/month, which will be within the remaining MassDev funds.

After discussion, Debra made a motion to increase the taxi ride cap to 10 rides per month as of 1 September; Alice seconded the motion, and roll call response was unanimous. Ana Cristina will inform registered rides via email, and Dan will ask Leila to update the transportation material on the Town web page.

Town Assessments for Transportation: *A very brief primer on assessments is appended.*

Debra provided a 7-year summary of Sudbury's assessment (i.e., payment for) MBTA and MWRTA services. Total assessment ranged from \$121K in FY17 to an estimated \$133K in FY23, although the prior two years revealed a marked shift in amounts to MBTA (increase) and MWRTA (decrease). The likely payment by the MWRTA for Sudbury's CoA vans/drivers/maintenance, etc., is expected to be \$122K.

Grants: Dan noted that Debra and Alice had met on 8.16.23 with Jim Nee (administrator of MWRTA), Julie Secord (Wayland CoA director), and Shawna Levine (Wayland CoA project coordinator), to discuss an upcoming Community Connections grant opportunity. Julie and Shawna had commented on the frequency with which Wayland residents needed transportation to Boston hospitals, and Jim Nee suggested that we consider a Boston Hospital Shuttle proposal. This would be dedicated to Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston (Weston staff had also discussed with Debra the need for medical transportation) and likely have the following characteristics:

- Residents of the three communities would be picked up and dropped off door to door.
- At least 24-hour reservation would be required.
- The shuttle would operate from about 8:30AM-6:15PM, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.
- Destinations would include Newton-Wellesley Hospital, the Longwood Medical Area, and Mass General (by Charles St).

Jim will provide some "back of the envelope" calculations as to transit times and costs. Information on medical demand will be collected by the three communities, and we will meet again to discuss the initiative. Jim believed the project would be very economical as well as meeting scoring criteria by the MPO for awarding these grants.

Ensuing discussion of the committee addressed the continued need for taxi and Uber services—taxi for frail individuals or those undergoing treatment who would be less able to take long trips, and Uber for unexpected needs (i.e., unable to fit the 24-hour reservation criterion). All agreed that the proposal was very interesting and would be available, depending on seats, for all residents and not only our target groups (the latter would take priority for reservations).

Via and Uber: Alice reminded the group that the Town must be prudent in its support of transportation providers, and that the RTA hourly cost was very expensive because of the high fixed costs associated with public transportation (hubs, vehicles, as well as employees). Newton has received Community Connections funding for several years, using Via Transportation. That company employs drivers but has no hubs and uses third-party providers of vehicles (i.e., much lower fixed costs). Alice has contacted the company and hopes to have them present to the Committee sometime after Labor Day.

Another consideration worth exploring is the “first mile/last mile” option now available from Uber.¹ This option uses an electronic voucher that allows selected riders (i.e., those approved for the option) to have a first or last mile Uber ride with a predetermined subsidy (by Sudbury). The Town’s new Uber contact, Andy Willard, will be in touch with those who have designed this program and provide more information for us in the upcoming weeks.

TMA: Alice suggested that the Committee have a focused discussion on the use of/benefit from a transportation management association (TMA) at the next meeting. Since CrossTown Connect is no longer operating (except for dispatch), we need to consider if a TMA will be useful in the future.

Minutes: The minutes of August 4th were reviewed. Alice moved to approve with recommendations noted; Debra seconded the move; approval on roll call was unanimous.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Friday, September 8, at 10:30 AM by Zoom.

Adjournment: Bob moved to adjourn this meeting, Debra seconded, approval on roll call was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 10:56 AM.

¹ Public transportation usage suffers from a variety of issues that decrease the number of potential riders that ultimately choose an alternative form of transportation to get to their destination. One of these challenges, known as the First Mile/Last Mile (FM/LM) problem, is the requirement of the rider to get from the starting point of their journey to the place of transportation, which in turn requires another leg of their journey from the transportation station to their destination. Whether due to travel time, cost, or some other personal factor (such as an undesirable walk to the bus stop on a cold Ann Arbor winter morning with snow on the ground), the distance between a point in the journey and the transportation station has long presented a challenge to individuals trying to increase access to public transportation within a city.
<https://futurist.law.umich.edu/potential-solutions-to-the-first-mile-last-mile-problem/>

PRIMER ON ASSESSMENTS²

Cherry Sheet. Named for the cherry-colored paper on which it was originally printed, the Cherry Sheet is the official notification from the Commissioner of Revenue of the upcoming fiscal year's state aid and assessments to cities, towns, and regional school districts.

The purpose of the Cherry Sheet is to ensure that local budgets reflect realistic estimates of the amount of revenue a municipality and regional school district will actually receive from the state during the upcoming year, as well as the amounts that will be assessed upon local governments to pay for a variety of state or sub-state programs in which they participate. The Tax Rate Recapitulation Sheet, filed by local assessors with the Division of Local Services to certify property tax rates, must reflect the receipts and charges contained on the Cherry Sheet (1).

MBTA and RTA Assessments. The MBTA is composed of 175 communities: the 14 original member communities of the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), and 161 additional communities, which are receiving direct MBTA service. Chapter 161A of the Acts of 2000 increases the number of communities that constitute the MBTA from 78 to 175. The additional 97 communities have been receiving MBTA service; however, the original authorizing language made no provision for these communities to be assessed.

The Authority is required to assess each community's share of the overall Authority's assessments. All communities associated with the Authority must contribute to the MBTA State and Local Assistance Fund an amount not less than \$136,026,868. After fiscal year 2006, this amount has been adjusted each July 1 by the rate of inflation unless the total assessment exceeds 102 1/2 percent of the previous year's assessment. The individual communities' assessment is determined based on the following formula.

Each community's MBTA assessment shall equal its weighted share of the total population of the authority. Chapter 161A, Section 9 has determined the weights for each community. The population figures utilized in this calculation should be the most recent from the United States Census Bureau.

... Beginning on July 1, 2001 (FY02), a community that is also a member of a regional transit authority (RTA) pursuant to Section 2 of Chapter 161B shall have 100 percent of the amount assessed for the operation of such RTA credited against its share of the assessment. The total amount of regional transit authority credits authorized will be re-assessed to the communities identified in the enabling legislation as the original 14 cities **Cherry Sheet Manual Massachusetts Department of Revenue** Division of Local Services 38 and towns and the 51 cities and towns based on the weighted percentage of said communities' share of their population. The reallocation shall be done based upon the weighted population of each community to the total population of the aforementioned 65 communities (1).

Regional Transit Authorities (2). Operating funds come from a variety of sources, such as Federal formula funds, yearly State Contract Assistance (SCA) funds, RTA fares, and local assessments from the cherry sheet, see above. "Local assessments [are s]till paid in arrears. [The a]mount [is] calculated by local rules, but broadly reflects cost of share of service received. Municipalities that are in an RTA and in the MBTA service area can offset their payment to MBTA by amount paid to RTA (2).

² Material drawn from the Mass. Dept. of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Cherry Sheet Manual (1); and the MassDOT RTA Overview and Update (2).