



Town of Sudbury

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

Sudbury Transportation Committee

Minutes

Thursday, November 16, 2023

10:30 AM

Via Town Zoom Conference Call

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

Core Members Absent: Bessie Struck

Advisory Group Present:

Advisory Group Absent: Dani-Marini King Town of Sudbury Sustainability Coordinator, Martha Welsh, Dan Nason, Chief Scott Nix, Carmine Gentile, Silvia Nersessian and Mary Warzynski

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

Confirmation of Quorum: The statutory requirements as to notice having been complied with, Dan Carty as Chair convened the meeting at 10:31 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: Debra volunteered to take meeting minutes.

Topics for Today:

- Financial Update
- Select Board/Planning Board Joint Meeting and Review of Master Plan
- Conversations with Uber
- Meeting with RTA
- Annex Invoice
- Hospital Shuttle
- Catch Connect Grant Proposal
- MA DOT Innovation Grant
- Taxi Program Planning

Action Items from Last Meeting:

Schedule Meeting with Jim Nee, MWRTA Administrator
Master Plan and Transportation Committee Overlap List
MAGIC Funds
Email Group – Dan -
Funds – State Earmark Expectations, Town Meeting Fund Use Guidelines
Outreach to Veterans – Completed - Debra
Outreach to Faith Communities – Completed?? – Debra
Update Transportation Committee Webpage – Debra - Complete

Financial Accounts Report:

Dan Carty shared his screen showing the financial accounts that are utilized to pay for the GoSudbury Taxi and Uber programs. Dan shared that the Uber program cost in October was about \$3,000 which is typical, while the Taxi program cost decreased somewhat from September, from about \$8,500 to \$6,400. The Annex invoice was a bit higher.

New enrollment in the programs continues to be slow but steady. The Taxi program had 7 new people register in October and so far 2 in November. The Uber program had 11 new people register in October and 3 so far in November. Alice asked how many people are registered for both programs. Dan will add that metric to the next report.

The Mass Development grant fund has \$29,116 left, and Dan reported that we do not expect to receive additional state grant funding through Mass. Development for the Taxi program in the future. With only two month's worth of invoices left before December 31, we will most likely not use all of the funds. It is unclear whether the remaining funds will need to be returned to Mass. Development.

Annex invoices had a clerical error that Alice noticed and is being corrected. Other details on the invoice are being verified.

Dan congratulated the Committee, in particular Alice who wrote most of the grant application, regarding the awarding of the Community Transit Grant of \$74, 865. This grant will fund a new program offered in partnership with the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA). The MWRTA will provide smaller, accessible vans and drivers to respond to on-demand requests for rides using the CatchConnect app.

Alice, Debra and Ana Cristina have been in discussions with the MWRTA and Julie Secord of the Wayland COA regarding the Community Connections grant. With the recent awarding of the Community Transit Grant, MWRTA Administrator Nee indicated he may want to hold off on submitting the Community Connections grant application. Dan and Debra will be talking with Mr. Nee this afternoon to further discuss the grant. The Committee feels that the second grant that would support a pilot Boston Hospital Shuttle would provide support for Boston hospital transportation, as the Taxi program funding wanes.

Vouchers

Dan stated that we are applying for the MassDOT Transit Innovation grant which has a very short window for applications; they are due on December 8. Alice reported that MassDOT staff have

encouraged Sudbury to apply for this grant and that Uber is also interested in this grant opportunity. Uber could provide “Medical Rescue Rides” when riders miss their public transit connections or have a change in plans due to medical need. This model could be helpful with the Boston Hospital Shuttle service that we will be proposing for the Transit Innovation grant.

Debra wondered how we could accommodate people who use wheelchairs who might need a Medical Rescue Ride. Alice stated that we would need to figure that out, perhaps we could have Dial-a-Ride or Annex Transit help in those situations.

Meeting with Uber

A meeting was held with the Uber staff to discuss the idea of using Uber for the Medical Rescue Rides. Uber staff reported that those needing a ride could be given an electronic voucher to activate if needed. This is a quick way to respond to a more urgent change of plans for a rider.

The Uber staff shared that they have shifted most of their contracts to a “voucher” model. Sudbury is one of the few that still use the “profile” model (which means GoSudbury riders switch between their personal profile and the Sudbury profile). The profile model provides reports that list addresses of origin and destination, whereas the voucher model provides only GPS coordinates in the report. Using the voucher model instead of the profiles is usually simpler for the rider. The rider does not have to be in a separate profile to get a subsidized ride.

Master Plan – Items Related to Transportation

Dan asked for any input into how the Committee’s actions have moved the town’s Master Plan forward. It’s important to tie things back to the Master Plan and to prepare a report back to the Select Board. The Transportation Committee is a special committee created by the Select Board, not a standing committee, and therefore we need to ensure we are continuing to communicate with the Select Board. Dan will be at the upcoming joint meeting between the Select Board and Planning Board. He noted that the current grant proposals the Transportation Committee is working on relate to items in the Master Plan. The Master Plan lists improving connectivity within town including along the Route 20 corridor. Both the hospital shuttle and the CatchConnect grant proposals relate to this goal.

Alice noted that when we talk about the Committee’s work, we can share that we have sought unbiased third-party expert review and support, and received it through requests for Technical Assistance from state organizations. Debra reported that the current Sudbury Connection service has an expanded range as the vans now provide medical transportation to most surrounding towns.

It is important to remember that our goal is to find a way for the services provided to be sustainably funded. The town will need to decide whether this is a continued priority for funding.

Taxi Program

The Committee is concerned about funding support going forward. The current MassDevelopment funds may expire on December 31, 2023. We have additional Town Meeting funds from last year and the previous year. We need to know whether the previous year's funds can still be used. If some limits need to be put into place we may need to act as early as January 1.

The Taxi program is expensive; perhaps there should be a shift to a more affordable way to get people to Boston via the hospital shuttle grant idea. Debra stated we need to be mindful of the fact that a shuttle will not work for all eligible riders. We should maintain some medical Taxi ride service. Dan noted that we should do that, at least for the rescue rides (when a rider misses the shuttle, or needs a ride to another Boston medical facility after an appointment).

Alice noted that we have talked about copays and we should continue considering that as an option to help sustain the program. There are other towns that provide a taxi medical service and ask for donations and have found riders to be quite generous. Debra agreed that a suggested donation might be the easiest way to get additional support without a large investment in staff time.

Ana Cristina suggested that there are people who use the Taxi ride service for medical rides that are within the range of the van. The Committee decided to support notifying people that they should use the Sudbury Connection van to get to medical rides in local towns. Debra and Ana Cristina will come up with language to share with the riders and bring it to the next meeting. We will also need to notify CrossTown Connect dispatch.

The Committee also discussed the idea of encouraging riders to use Uber as opposed to the Taxi service for medical rides. Bob stated that there are people who do not have or use smartphones, or who are afraid of change. The Senior Center does offer Uber tech training, but some will not be able to manage using Uber. Alice noted that there is a concierge service that allows people to call for Uber rides.

Community Transit Grant

This grant was approved and we will be working with Jim Nee, Administrator of the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA), to implement the grant. This project will involve the MWRTA Catch Connect service (wheelchair accessible vans and an app) to provide service mainly along Route 20 in Sudbury.

Minutes: The minutes of October 27 were reviewed. Alice moved to approve with recommendations noted; Debra Galloway seconded the move; approval on roll call was unanimous.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Friday, December 1, at 11:00 by Zoom.

Adjournment: Dan asked for a motion to adjourn. Alice moved to adjourn this meeting, Bob seconded, approval on roll call was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 10:39 AM.