



Town of Sudbury

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

Sudbury Transportation Committee

Minutes

Friday, November 15, 2024

10:30 AM

Via Town Zoom Conference Call

Core Members Present: Daniel Carty, Debra Galloway (late), Alice Sapienza, Bob Lieberman, Cheryl Wallace, Adam Burney

Core Members Absent:

Advisory Group Present: None

Advisory Group Absent: Martha Welsh, Chief Scott Nix and Carmine Gentile, Maura Carty

Guests: Jill Dube (Sudbury Sr Center), Linda Faust and Kay Bell (Sudbury residents)

Confirmation of Quorum: The statutory requirements as to notice having been met, Dan as chair convened the meeting at 10:32 AM. He made an announcement that this was a public meeting, there should be no expectation of privacy, and the meeting was being broadcast live via Zoom and recorded by Sudbury TV. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present. Adam agreed to be co-host.

Selection of Clerk: Alice volunteered to take meeting minutes.

Administrative Updates: Dan summarized topics for today's meeting: approval of minutes, Metropolitan Area Planning Council meeting (**Transportation Funding Solutions: Raising Awareness, Raising Revenue**, Adam and Dan will attend on 11.21), taxi vouchers, survey results, Select Board meeting, and Sudbury Doing Good.

He began with the Sudbury Doing Good day's experience. There were about 40-50 tables of organizations represented, and Dan thanked Daniel Fitch from the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority, who was present (along with a Catch Connect vehicle in the parking lot). He said that transportation material was available at the Senior Center and Council on Aging tables. Cheryl added that she was happy to refer new residents to town to the transportation options available.

Another administrative update was about the recent Department of Transportation (DOT) grants. Alice mentioned a training program that will be held on January 9, to review the new software system used to oversee DOT grants, and the grant certification form that she had electronically "signed" so that the Catch Connect grant was formally underway. She added that grant funding was now

available and that MWRTA would be submitting invoices to Sudbury. Adam said he will find out the mechanism for reimbursing MWRTA from the account used to accept the grant funds.

Although Dan had not had time to prepare his finance summary, he did review with Shawna the numbers and said that September and October totals were roughly the same (around \$12,000/month for GoSudbury Uber and taxi). Including the earmark amount, about \$80,000 remain for GoSudbury expenses, bringing the town's program funding to an end within 6 to 7 months. Adam said he had the paperwork ready to apply for the second portion of the state earmark (\$31,250), which could be received in the next few weeks. This fact of financial precarity led to a discussion of the recent Select Board meeting.

Presentation to Select Board, 6 November: Although the desired response to Dan's transportation update to the Board was not a straightforward "let's continue" (i.e., with town funding for transportation), Dan emphasized that discussion was ongoing, even if he was not optimistic at this time. When he met with the town manager, there was no money in the budget for transportation—however, remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds (e.g., unused by recipients such as the new Fire Station and some schools) could be allocated to the Go Sudbury programs. There is also the option of more MWRTA transportation funded not by grants but by recalculation of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) assessment (which the town still must pay). The group talked about grant funding and, although state and federal grants are always available, there is the need for a dedicated staff person to investigate and then apply for relevant monies. Dan said he would bring up the subject of how to increase grant writing efforts at the 3 December Select Board meeting, because some town funding will be necessary for program sustainability.

Bob noted that, given the multiple millions of dollars in the town budget, it should be possible for some money to be allocated to these programs that have helped hundreds of needy residents. He also reminded everyone that, according to the town census, residents 60 years and over in Sudbury account for 26% of the total population—and this is a growing segment.

Again, Dan said it is possible for money to be included in town budget, but he is not optimistic. He did ask the Board about other issues the Transportation Committee might work on, including commuter shuttles and bike sharing (primarily a Rail Trail topic). He also brought up the "safety net" option of setting aside town money for the social worker to use as needed, and he talked about that with the town manager (who will bring this up with the social worker).

Adam remarked that we have long been discussing the sustainability of the Go Sudbury programs and we are now in "alarm mode." He continued that we need time to prepare residents for change, and to help those in most need. We also need time to work with the MWRTA and town on options.

Kay Bell (guest) thanked the group for all they have done and are doing, and said the discussions often revolved around ways to keep transportation going as a town service. She used the example of the Energy and Sustainability Committee and remarked that they had advocated strongly for a grant writer and now that person brings in enough money to pay her/his own salary. Could we work on something like that before reducing services? (Alice commented that Acton had advocated over a number of years for an override on property taxes to sustain transportation services.)

Cheryl asked about MBTA-adjacent community zoning and whether that had an impact on public transportation services. Adam responded that the new requirement was housing-focused and transportation was not an integral part. Cheryl countered that more/denser housing would bring more people, and that more people increased the need for adequate transportation. Dan brought up the Cold Brook development which, as a 40R project, offered onsite residents a shuttle to commuter rail services.

Catch Connect/Hospital Shuttle Survey: As of the meeting date (11.15.24), we have received about 50 survey responses, and Daniel Fitch offered to have a QR code for the survey available in the MWRTA vehicles. Alice reviewed results she had distributed earlier, noting that about half of those responding had actually used one or both of the new services. What is concerning is the lack of awareness of many respondents, even though the Senior Center was noted as the major source of information for those who were aware. Debra asked if we could use the electric billboard (when not used by DPW) to “advertise” the shuttles, and Dan recommended a FlashVote survey of residents (Adam said there are about 2,000 people registered for FlashVote surveys).

Despite best efforts, Dan noted that each communication outlet addresses a limited group, but that we need to keep adding outlets such as the billboard and FlashVote. Adam asked whether the FlashVote survey would focus on awareness of or need for transportation services, and he agreed to work with Dan on this. In any event, both awareness and need are important influences in use of new transportation options.

Taxi Costs and Vouchers: Given the response to the presentation on November 6 to the Select Board, Dan asked if we should plan to use vouchers if the taxi program cannot continue. Alice recommended that we quickly cap taxi rides, and Debra noted we would go from six one-way rides/month to four, unless there were approvals for a special need. Debra also brought up again the option of asking for donations (these could be assigned to an existing revolving account), even though they would not be tax deductible. Cheryl said that, if people know the program is in financial difficulty, they would be likely to support it. And, she asked, Sudbury is a wealthy town and why is there not enough money to support Go Sudbury? Perhaps pop-up information on Sudbury TV would increase awareness of these programs and the help they provide to residents.

Another tactic for reducing taxi outlays would be stricter limits on qualifications. Dan said we need to be careful, if we change rules on eligibility; Adam recommended checking with town counsel on whether there would be any liability for the town if these were changed. After discussion, Dan agreed to follow up with Sudbury TV (information on transportation) and Adam will follow up with town counsel (regarding eligibility) and with the finance director (regarding the mechanics of dealing with donations). Cheryl emphasized that we are now in a position where we need to ask residents for help... In the near term, Dan asked for a motion to reduce taxi rides to four one-way trips/month by 1 January 2025. Adam motioned to approve and Alice seconded the motion; roll call was unanimous.

Uber Surge Price Problem: Debra reviewed a recent spate of problems with the “surge price” aspect of in-town Uber rides during the times that the Catch Connect shuttle is available. Uber tech support is no longer available to make system changes for clients using the Dashboard (as opposed to Vouchers), and Adam proposed that, rather than attempt to fix the glitch, we raise the in-town price from

\$3 to \$5 per ride and eliminate the surge option. Dan asked for a motion to keep the copay at \$3 and turn off surge pricing. Adam motioned to approve and Alice seconded the motion; roll call was unanimous.

Other Updates: Adam noted that the owner of Annex asked why no Sudbury residents were using his service (Annex is described in the most recent subsidized transportation material on the website) and he asked that this be investigated. Debra said that she and the MWRTA did a presentation at Musketahquid Village that was well attended and received.

Minutes: Dan shared the minutes from 4 October and, after review and discussion, asked for a motion to approve as amended. Bob moved to approve and Adam seconded that motion; roll call was unanimous. Dan next shared the minutes from 1 November. After review and discussion, Alice moved to approve and Adam seconded the motion; roll call was unanimous.

Next Meeting: Because of the Thanksgiving holiday, the next meeting was set for 10:30 AM on 6 December 2024, via Zoom.

Adjournment: Dan stated he was thankful for the committee's work and asked for a motion to adjourn; Alice responded that the committee was thankful for his leadership and moved to adjourn. Debra seconded the motion, and roll call was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at noon.