



Town of Sudbury

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Sudbury Transportation Committee

Minutes

Friday, January 31, 2025

10:30 AM

Via Town Zoom Conference Call

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

Core Members Absent:

Advisory Group Present:

Advisory Group Absent: Martha Welsh, Chief Scott Nix, Carmine Gentile, Maura Carty, and Dani Marini-King

Guests: Kay Bell

Confirmation of Quorum: The statutory requirements, as to notice having been met 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 broadcast live via zoom and recorded by Sudbury TV. Roll call was taken, a quorum was present.

Selection of Clerk: Debra Galloway was assigned the duties of Clerk for the meeting.

Review of Action Items: Dan Carty provided updates on the following Action Items:

- Taxi Data
- Dispatch
- Taxi Voucher service
- Minutes
- Future Program Planning – Catch Connect Expansion/other (e.g., possible grant opportunities)

Dan Carty reported that the Transportation Committee Annual Report has been signed by all core Committee members and will be submitted to the Select Board office today. Dan thanked the Committee for their feedback on the report.

In the last Transportation Committee meeting, the Committee asked how many GoSudbury Taxi rides, which are costly and not sustainable, could possibly have been provided by the Sudbury-

Wayland Boston Hospital Shuttle. Dan reported on the analysis that he and Alice conducted using raw data from the taxi rides, with personal information removed.

Dan shared the data analysis of the Taxi Rides on the screen for the members to view. The spreadsheet included raw data on GoSudbury Taxi rides for a 3-month period: September, October and November. In order for a ride to meet the criteria to have been provided through the Boston Hospital Shuttle service, the ride would need to be on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday; have taken place during the Hospital Shuttle hours; and had an origin or destination that would likely be a Hospital shuttle destination (Newton, Boston, or Jamaica Plain).

Dan's analysis revealed only 29 taxi rides met the criteria with a potential cost savings of \$2323.28. The total number of rides for the 3-month period was 347 and the cost was \$27,298.18. Dan was surprised at the low number of rides that could have taken the hospital shuttle. Adam noted that \$2,323.28 represents only about 10% of rides during the time period.

Alice examined the specific health care facility destinations among the 347 rides. She found that there were additional rides that could be considered as shuttle rides, if the shuttle route was slightly altered. For example, there were taxi rides to destinations close to the Newton area that could potentially be added to the shuttle route that could make it more useful to the people using the taxi service, such as the Chestnut Hill Medical Offices and Wellesley Hills Physician offices. Needham medical offices also see a fair amount of GoSudbury taxi trips. Adam noted that these destinations seem not to be too far off the general Hospital Shuttle route to be added to provide more ridership opportunity.

Alice shared the significant number of medical taxi rides to Framingham, Marlborough and Concord to the hospitals or physician offices that should be kept under consideration as the Committee plans for the future. She noted that 20-25% of Uber rides are to health care facilities and incorporating those rides would probably double the number of rides that go to the three towns.

Alice also stated that MassDOT officials have discussed how difficult "mode shift" is – such as when people are asked to move from using a free taxi service to using a van shuttle service.

Dan commented that it is clear that not allowing taxi rides during the shuttle service days will not result in significant savings under the current circumstances.

Tyler Terrasi, Public Information Officer at the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA), suggested this information be shared with MWRTA Administrator Jim Nee and IT Director Daniel Fitch. Tyler also noted that adding destinations further out from the original route could add time to the current travel schedule.

Debra Galloway reported that she and Asst. Director Jill Dube have researched the idea to have Taxi dispatch not allow rides to Newton/Boston during the Hospital Shuttle hours of service. CrossTown Connect dispatch indicated that would be a complicated new caveat to the service restrictions. Allowing some rides on Tuesday-Thursday but specifically restricting rides to Newton-Wellesley and Boston only during the Hospital shuttle hours could be challenging. CTC Dispatch also felt it would be quite confusing for the taxi riders to understand.

Alice commented that we could also take into consideration the Uber rides that are used for medical destinations and that this could potentially double the number of ride opportunities during the Hospital Shuttle service time. Dan reported that he can add Uber data into the analysis spreadsheet for the next meeting.

Dan stated that these are interesting considerations, but it's important to keep in mind that the funding for the Hospital Shuttle ends on June 30, 2025.

Adam reminded the group that should the Taxi program move to a voucher system, the vouchers could cost more on Hospital shuttle days.

Dan reminded the group that we need to be aware that the Hospital Shuttle is for both Sudbury and Wayland residents so changes need coordination with Wayland and MWRTA.

Bob Lieberman noted that adding stops and trying to do something for everyone might add a lot of time on to each Hospital shuttle route. Cheryl stated that even with 2 vans doing one route, the time added could be significant. Cheryl added that from her experience adding in one of those other locations might add 40 minutes to the ride.

Debra shared that there are also significant taxi rides being provided to towns that are serviced by the Sudbury Senior Center Connection vans. Encouraging these riders to use the van service could also reduce taxi costs. Dan commented that we could make an additional effort to encourage people going to Framingham, Marlborough, Concord to use the Sudbury Connection van.

Dan noted that some of the rides were not able to be provided by either the Connection Van or the Hospital Shuttle as the ride was provided at 6:30 AM. However, he's willing to also consider the taxi rides with respect to the Sudbury Connection van service hours and see what the overlap is.

Debra described how the taxi voucher program might work through the Senior Center. We could consider starting it when the current contract for dispatch ends in September, if we decided not to continue. It will be a significant amount of work for the Senior Center staff, but is most likely doable.

Debra shared that Weston COA has a part-time Transportation Coordinator to facilitate their programs and to assist riders. Jill and Debra had a productive meeting with them. They use paper vouchers, and riders buy vouchers in advance and schedule their own rides. That means staff are not involved in dispatch. They also have levels of copays based on destination zones. They use an RFP to find transportation providers but have only had one provider respond recently, JFK Transportation in Natick. There would need to be a lot of education for the riders in the community.

Alice warned that JFK has a lot of social service contracts and may not have the availability to provide the service. JFK is the only provider in the area to offer wheelchair-accessible transportation. Tommy's Taxi does not offer wheelchair-accessible transportation.

Dan asked Debra and Jill to provide details to the Committee about how the voucher program could work as a Senior Center program (hours per week, etc.) and to keep in mind that the current Taxi program also provides an accommodation for the wheelchair riders using the Uber program.

Adam wondered if the GoSudbury Uber program use could eventually be transferred to the Catch Connect service. We could expand Catch Connect to additional hours and/or geographic area.

Dan mentioned that if we move to a Taxi voucher system and riders are reserving rides directly with the Taxi company, there would be a large savings on dispatch costs. Perhaps this money could be used to help fund a part-time Transportation Coordinator.

There are about 16 months of funding left to continue the Uber and Taxi programs.

Adam talked about how the Hospital Shuttle is not bearing fruit and the Uber program is really a convenience program and perhaps we need to move forward to expand the Catch Connect service to provide a similar amount of on-demand service.

Adam recently used the Catch Connect service and it was on time to what the app estimated, but he did notice the map showed the Catch Connect van driving by his location twice and then to his destination before coming back to pick him up. When he got on the van, he noticed that they have a little flyer that lists all the other Catch Connect services in the region.

Some of the Catch Connect services provide rides from 6:45 AM to 10:00 PM, or on weekends. They are creating this Microtransit network, with the possibility of connecting from Framingham to Wellesley, or Hudson. Sudbury is in the middle of these networks but not connected and is offering more limited hours of service.

Debra voiced her support for expansion of the Catch Connect service, and connecting the service to other Catch Connect or regular bus routes in neighboring towns.

Cheryl emphasized the need for expanded hours, saying that the Catch Connect service is not there for many people who have appointments in the morning.

Bob stated we need to remember we can't be all things to all people.

Dan noted that Catch Connect Sudbury has been successful providing over 800 rides during the first 6 months of service. Dan mentioned that Jim Nee talked about the possibility of expansion of the service as a grant opportunity. However, we cannot forget that expansion equals a cost increase.

Dan reviewed the Action items from the last meeting and determined that all of the items were accomplished.

Adam will be looking for an update on the earmark funds for the next meeting.

Dan indicated that the Flashvote survey will likely launch next week.

Minutes:

The January 17 Minutes were reviewed with edits, Alice made a motion, and Debra seconded the motion, to approve the Jan. 17 Minutes as edited.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be Friday, February 14, at 10:30 AM.

Action Items:

- Debra will provide Dan with the Connection Van service days and hours.
- Debra and Jill to create a one-page summary of the Taxi voucher program proposal.
- Dan will talk with Jim Nee about the prospects for a Catch Connect grant for expansion in the next fiscal year, as well as an update on the Hospital Shuttle.

Adjournment: Adam made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:31 AM; seconded by Alice and voted unanimously.