



Town of Sudbury

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Sudbury Transportation Committee

Minutes

Friday, May 16, 2025

10:00 AM

Via Town Zoom Conference Call

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

Core Members Absent:

Advisory Group Present:

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

Guests: Jill Dube (Sudbury Senior Center Asst. Director/Outreach Coordinator), Linda Faust, Kay Bell

Confirmation of Quorum: The statutory requirements as to notice having been met, Dan Carty as chair convened the meeting at 10:00 AM. Dan 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. Dan assigned Adam Burney as co-host. Dan stated that he would like to end by 11:00 AM, if at all possible. Alice noted that she had a hard stop then.

Selection of Clerk: Alice was assigned duties of Clerk for the meeting.

Introduction: Dan reminded the group that he would present an update on the Transportation Committee's work to the Select Board on 20 May. He added that a number of interesting events are coming together: the membership of the Committee expires (and is up for renewal), the chair position also expires (and is up for renewal), Uber and taxi company contracts are to be renewed and/or renegotiated, and a decision has been made about using CrossTown Connect service for dispatch.

For today's meeting, Dan wanted to spend time for review of his draft for the Select Board. He also expected to go over the current financial situation briefly and will recap his prior meetings with (1) social workers, (2) Town Manager, and (3) the MWRTA (as well as Jill and Nickole from the Senior Center).

Transportation to Farmers Market: To provide subsidized transportation to the Farmers Market and Fair at Fairbank on 31 May, Adam suggested at the last meeting that the Senior Center enroll those needing a ride in our current program, allow them to take rides on that day, then unenroll them after the event (if they do not otherwise qualify for GoSudbury). Funds to pay for rides are available from

the Social Work department and could be transferred after the fact to the appropriate account. The Senior Center staff agreed that this was very doable.

Department of Transportation Grant Carryover: Dan asked Alice about an earlier request from MA Department of Transportation regarding the amount of money remaining from the Hospital Shuttle grant. Alice reported the following: The original grant was for \$127,000. MWRTA invoices (not including any additional amounts billed by Sudbury):

- Invoice 680 (Paid) Aug 6- Dec 31 2024 \$27,900
- Period Jan - April 2025 (To be invoiced): \$18,450
- Projected Invoices May - June 2025: \$10,500
 - Total Invoiced FY 25: \$56,850
 - Total Carryover: \$70,150

She reminded the Committee that essentially all the ridership thus far has been from Wayland residents, because Sudbury offers free taxi rides to medical appointments. Thus, most/all of the carry-over amount (if allowed to be carried over) would likely be used by that town.

Current Financial Status: Dan screenshared his financial summary of transportation sources and uses of funds, noting that we have about \$147,000 remaining, or about 16 months' use (Uber, taxis). Adam explained that the ARPA allocation included the state earmark, and Dan said there is a possible future supplemental amount from the state (thanks to Rep. Gentile) of about \$50,000.

MWRTA Meeting: With respect to the Select Board update, Dan said that the most interesting and possibly most important news to be presented was the outcome of a meeting with the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) about the Catch Connect Sudbury shuttle. Jim Nee (Administrator of the MWRTA) was very positive about the effectiveness of the shuttle and encouraged the Town's continuation after the grant ended. Daniel Fitch provided an analysis of the resources needed to continue the shuttle. Based on this, Sudbury would need to pay only the "local share" of about \$41,000 at the current level of service. The MWRTA assessment of the shuttle service follows below:

MWRTA continues to see ridership and adoption increases of its Catch Connect service in Sudbury, serving 20- 25 customers a week for an average of 60 trips per week over the last two months. Ridership trends continue to rise with this service over time. Given the limited hours of service (Monday – Friday 12:00 pm – 6:00 pm), MWRTA is very encouraged by ridership and efficiency growths over the trial period and would be interested in continuing to provide Catch Connect service with a commitment from Sudbury to assist with the local share. Ridership and efficiency have exceeded expectations for a pilot program of this type.

Expanding the hours and geography of the shuttle, given current evidence of its use, were discussed. For example, shifting the start from noon to 8 or 10 AM might be beneficial, because of the demand at noon when the current service begins. If the later hours tail off as they have to date, the shuttle could operate from 8 AM through 4:30 PM based on usage. In addition, a link to another MWRTA route such as Nobscot or Acton commuter rail could be considered for geographic expansion. Jim noted that geographic expansion could increase wait times (now about 15 minutes from request

time), but a second van for an additional “spoke” of the Sudbury route might work well. Again, adjustments in expansion could be made as use dictates.

Adam agreed that this was very helpful and positive for the Town. He had met with MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council)/MAGIC (Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination) at a recent meeting and had spoken about more efficient regional networking. The area needs improved north/south connectivity, and potential collaborations between Via and MWRTA were suggested. Adam asked MAPC to help in these efforts and said that Sudbury will continue to push for better regional transit options.

Dan added that the MWRTA’s goal is success of their services, so they are now “in Sudbury’s corner,” especially given Catch Connect performance. Bob Lieberman agreed that such willingness on the part of the MWRTA could not have come at a better time. Not only are current contracts ending (Uber, taxis) but public transit authority involvement is in the spotlight—for example, free fares to increase service use.

Cheryl said that we are only asking for a reallocation of funds already available and not seeking additional funds at the Select Board meeting. Thus, continuing the MWRTA shuttle should not be a “hard sell.”

Meeting With Town Manager: In his meeting with the Town Manager, Dan spoke about the benefit of having GoSudbury pilot programs (Uber, taxi) sunset, and added the caveat that emergency funding should continue for a time, possibly under Social Services aegis. The Committee has sufficient funds for the latter initiative, assuming the reallocation of funds to MWRTA for shuttle continuation. Dan noted that oversight of Uber/taxi services will invariably add to Social Service administration time, although staff are already addressing this need fairly regularly. On the other hand, shifting responsibility for dispatch and service administration to the MWRTA (i.e., Catch Connect shuttle) will reduce the current time spent by Senior Center staff on transportation issues.

Select Board Update: Although the draft sent to the Committee for review was too long, Dan said that he believed a brief review of adherence of transportation pilots to Master Plan goals was important. He reminded the Committee that public transport along the Route 20 corridor, such as the Catch Connect shuttle, was a highlight of a prior presentation to the Select Board. Now, the continuation of this shuttle and possible expansion (see above) show how great is the need identified in the Master Plan and how well it is being (and will be) met.

Available for the May 20 presentation is a set of survey results of riders using the MWRTA shuttles. Dan also asked Alice how much had been raised in grants to date, and she responded that, since 2019, Sudbury has received (or been lead on) more than \$600,000 in awards:

- Community Compact Cabinet grant: \$80,000
- MAPC Urgent Taxi first grant: \$23,050
- MAPC Urgent Taxi second grant: \$100,000
- MassDevelopment taxi grant: \$222,338
- Community Transit Grant (Catch Connect): \$75,000
- Community Transit Grant (Boston Hospital Shuttle): \$127,000

Dan will create a draft slide presentation and distribute to the Committee for review before the meeting.

Pending Issues for Committee: Adam summarized the current contract situation: Uber and taxi contracts (two taxi companies) end in June. The Uber contract involving the change to a voucher system and dashboard on 1 July is with the Town Counsel. The taxi contracts will likely need renegotiation, based on status of GoSudbury programs. In terms of dispatch, now being provided by CrossTown Connect, Adam said that we would continue using them through August 31 and then drop that contract. The Town would pay around \$4,000 for that period of dispatch.

Bob asked if, during a period of negotiation with the taxi companies riders continued to use their services, would Sudbury be covered by taxi insurance? Adam said that the Town could ask the companies if we could continue under their insurance for about 2 months while contracts were being settled. Jill added that at least one rider was regularly using the Boston Hospital shuttle; Dan reassured her that the carrying over of the grant would likely permit continued use.

Accessibility remains an outstanding issue for transportation. Aside from the MWRTA vehicles (which have mandatory accessibility standards), only one taxi company could provide wheelchair accessible vehicles but the other and Uber could not. Dan suggested we start looking into alternatives to Annex. In presenting to the Select Board, Dan asked what the appropriate language would be, and the conclusion was that “accessible” would cover use of so-called adaptive technologies, including telephone as opposed to smartphone application booking.

With regard to the Select Board update, Dan noted that Uber usage does not address what Cheryl has emphasized: the congestion along Route 20 in Sudbury. However, the Catch Connect shuttle should help reduce congestion, along with phasing down Uber usage. And, Dan added, although the shuttle cost is currently more than what Uber has averaged for years, the MWRTA shuttle will provide economies of scale. In other words, as ridership increases, MWRTA cost per ride will decrease (and, at some point may drop below Uber as well as measurably reduce congestion). Again, that outcome is in line with the Master Plan goals.

Dan reminded the group that we were created by the Select Board, and it would be important to ascertain their decision about the role of the committee in the future. In addition, could a shared staff person be responsible for grants town-wide, rather than have this be a volunteer effort? And, would there be any way to integrate vehicle use across Town agencies/departments (e.g., CoA vans and Park and Rec vehicles)?

Finally, the issue of bike sharing was described by Adam as more likely to become a reality because the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail was nearly complete. Acton and Concord have regional bike share programs, and the status of Sudbury bike sharing should be determined soon. Cheryl added that the Commission on Disability was looking to purchase adaptive bikes for such a program.

Minutes: Dan screenshared the minutes of the prior meeting (5.2.25); requested any additional feedback; and asked for a motion to approve as amended. Alice moved to approve and Adam seconded the motion; roll call was unanimous.

Next Meeting: The next meeting was set for 10:30 AM on May 30, 2025, via Zoom.

Adjournment: Dan asked for a motion to adjourn; Adam moved to adjourn. Alice seconded the motion, and the roll call was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.