



COUNTY OF HUNTERDON NEW JERSEY

HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MENTAL HEALTH BOARD



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REFERENCE:

- Council
- Mental Health
- Youth
- Disabled
- Substance Use Disorder
- Transportation

Approved May 11, 2022

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, March 9, 2022, 1:30 p.m.
Via Conference Call

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

M. Westlake
J. Ricketts
J. Hager
M. Bartelli

EX-OFFICIO

L. Williams

STAFF

E. Neukum
L. Nauman
K. Tustison
M. O'Reilly
K. Fullerton

GUESTS

K. Hillmann
L. End
T. Shepherd
K. Melchers

I. CONVENE: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT:

“This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21. Notice of this meeting has been provided in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Courier News. A public notice announcing this meeting has also been placed in the lobbies of the Hunterdon County Department of Human Services, the first floor of the Main Street County Complex, 71 Main Street Building #1, Flemington, NJ; the first floor of the Route 12 County Complex, Building #3, 314 State Route 12, Flemington, NJ and County Clerk’s Office.”

E. Neukum read the Open Public Meeting Statement and opened the Transportation Advisory Committee at 1:30 p.m. with a quorum present.

II. MINUTES: J. Hager made a motion and M. Bartelli seconded to approve the minutes of January 12, 2022. There was one abstention. All were in favor. The minutes for the January 12, 2022, meeting passed.

III. CORRESPONDENCE: No correspondence at this time.

IV. PRESENTATION: No presentation.

V. Reports:

A. Transportation – Erin Neukum: E. Neukum stated the tablets were received in October 2021 and are now able to use them since the GDS Backing (wireless tablet holders) arrived. L. End took the initiative to change all of the parts over that hold the actual tablet and then connect to both ends of the tablet so they may charge. As a result, Communications was able to change out the wiring inside the bus, so the tablets are now hardwired. So far, there had been no issues except for one tablet which may be a bad tablet that will be going back to Samsung for a switch-out. E. Neukum commented that these tablets are holding a charge, which is amazing since the last set of tablets had a little issue of holding a charge. When she spoke with the company rep, he assured that these tablets will hold charge.

All of the buses that are funded through 5310 and CMAQ, were inspected in January 2022 by NJ Transit. All of the vehicles passed. There were two small items that needed to be fixed; the windshield wiper fluid was low and actually frozen in the one of the vehicles and there was an issue with one of the lifts; it was getting stuck and it was fixed as well. The only two vehicles they couldn't inspect at that time were (1) a vehicle is still out in Washington, NJ being fixed at the shop. It had been in a accident in June 2021 and this is how long it is taking to get parts; and (2) the other vehicle was not able to be pulled from service that day but was pulled at a later date to be inspected and it passed.

B. Systems Operations – Easton Coach: L. End conveyed the main issue Easton Coach is experiencing is the staffing of their drivers. There is still an ongoing shortage. Easton Coach has been trying to entice people to come onboard, as well as ask their employees if they know someone. Easton Coach is offering a \$2,000.00 hiring bonus for signing up.

K. Hillmann interjected something she found interesting over the last couple of months. Even though there is a driver shortage, the plus of how New Jersey works is funding goes from federal to the state to the counties. Each county has discretion of what and how they can utilize the monies. She described a situation noted in Essex County and further explained how she found out how there are LINK transportation buses that transport among counties throughout the state. She suggested looking into obtaining funding through a federal level. Discussion ensued.

L. End continued to provide his report on enticing people to join the driver team employed by Easton Coach. He noted there are other locations and facilities that are looking or CDL drivers as well as they are having problems. Currently, Easton Coach has 13 full time employees and one part time employee. He stated he lost one of their good employees in December 2021 because of a retirement after 27 years. There was another employee that decided he was going to go part time. Unfortunately, he has a few drivers on medical leave; hopefully one will be back as soon as April. L. End conveyed it is tough keeping up with the required demands. Easton Coach is required to run eight shuffles a day which are eight drivers, as well as try to run as many Demand Response runs that they possible can; anywhere between six and eight. He has two dispatchers that have CDLs who help out with the runs. This does hamper the dispatch office by limiting the employees that make schedules and manage phone calls. They have helped out when needed to keep up with the demand. L. End stated they are seeing more people requesting transportation. The Arc of Hunterdon opened last week who have 14-15 clients that are seeking transportation. Others like CEA, High Point and StarThrower Group, Inc. also is seeking transportation earlier in the morning. Due to this demand, Easton Coach is asking some of the clients who are calling in for rides to please schedule after 10:00am so the request may be accommodated. A lot of the riders

are used to going out by 9:00 am going shopping and returning home early. This worked during COVID and they did not have as many riders. They are trying to get as many people out there for employment, workshops, as well as doctor's appointments. They need take priority first.

As E. Neukum mentioned, they did upgrade all of the tablets which has been a big plus. In the morning, the drivers would come in and kind of fight over where their tablet was, having a working tablet or worry that the tablet would die. The new tablets have been a tremendous help and everything there has been working very well.

Easton Coach is trying a couple of different ideas with the Ecolane system that they have in place. This week, they had been taking what the dispatchers had been putting in and what will be called "mandatory(ing) it into a particular run". This blocks the system from automatically entering where the driver should be picking up. So, it does change the factor around as far as on time performance for pick-ups and drop-offs. This seems to be working a little bit better and different for some of the drivers. They are seeing it is making a big difference. Corporate with Easton Coach has upped the facilities that they have been working with the Ecolane system; they are helping out trying to find where some of these problems have been. The past few days had been quite prolific. As a result, they have been able to pick-up more passengers even though they are short on drivers. They are also finding some free time and some overtime as well. Another positive is Easton Coach are working with some passengers who own and operate a smartphone. There is a mobile app available. It will help Easton Coach with the volume of calls coming into dispatch, scheduled rides, manage reservations and time. L. End conveyed they are working hard on implementing new, helpful ways to improve and enhance the experiences for ridership. They are definitely going in a positive direction.

- C. **Fiscal – Keith Tustison:** K. Tustison reported he does not have a lot for the fiscal update since he provided the 4th quarter trip updates at the last meeting. He stated it is best to wait until after March to provide the update. Fares continue to be not collected.

- D. **NJ Transit Report:** L. Williams reported the 2022 SCDRTAP agreement were released to the counties. NJ Transit is waiting for the agreements to be returned with signatures and then they will be routed and executed for Section 5310 grant award. 2019 awards had been sent out. The county had been awarded one extended cutaway with two accessible securement locations; fare box destination size as well were included in that award. The county was also awarded mobility management money which will provide funding (\$200,000.00) for 3rd party contracting services with Easton Coach. For 2019, there is not federal match requirement, so this is not a match to the county. For 2020 Section 5310, NJ Transit had its state committee review on February 11, 2022, where a lot of stakeholders, internal and external from NJ Transit who reviewed grant applications for 2020. Once they get the programs and projects approved by MTA, they will send out award determinations. For Section 5310, the 2020 agreement had ended. They will be offering the counties the opportunity to extend those agreements until 2022. The reason for this extension is because of the CARES funding for COVID. She is in the process of getting the extension letter prepared for release, signature and execution. L. Williams lastly noted there is a Certified Community Transit Manager Certification Workshop to be held from April 25 to April 26 in Atlantic City, NJ for the transaction conference. This is a two-day certification course. If anyone is interest, please advise L. Williams.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- A. **Transportation RFP – Company Awarded:** E. Neukum conveyed the company had been awarded. The county will be working with Transpo Group USA, Inc. and Steve Fatante will also be working with Transpo and once worked for NJ Transit in 2015. He was part of the original analysis when the county changed some of their Demand Response routes to Shuffle Routes, as well as analyzing all of the data including the people who were riding and gave some suggestions. Again, he will be reviewing with Transpo to do the analysis for the county. They requested quite a bit of data from her, and she was able to give them three items that they had asked for out of 13++. The county has hit the ground running with them and are excited to see what kind of feedback they will produce. This will address all of the apartments that are being built; all of the housing, hours of operation, the service type that is offered and the days of the week service is being offered. E. Neukum conveyed these are all positives and she looks forward to working with them.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. **New Tablets Have Been Installed in the Vehicles:** E. Neukum noted this topic had already been covered earlier in the meeting under the title of Transportation.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

K. Hillmann asked if there will be any advertisement for the LINK via the RFP. E. Neukum stated the team will be reaching out to the builders once construction had been completed and will look into doing that prior to when the buildings are complete as well.

K. Hillmann inquired if it is too late to seek additional funding from the builders for any LINK signage. E. Neukum stated she will certainly look into it.

Discussion ensued regarding Easton Coach's efforts to attract new drivers and E. Neukum addressing the question over funding amongst the counties throughout the state, as well as concerns with the Clinton food pantry.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. J. Hager made a motion and M. Bartelli seconded to adjourn. The next regular meeting will be held on May 11, 2022, at 1:30 pm via Webex. Members are requested to call the Department of Human Services if they are unable to attend/be a part of the call.