

Rural Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes – May 26, 2020

Participants: Sophie Shulman, Dave Norman, Erin Fisher, Ann Rajewski, Heather Jones, Glenn Krause, TJ Burr, Zoe Devito, Sarah Curtis, Troy Larson, Judy Martin, and Molly Thompkins

Action Items:

- Jarett Hughes to coordinate with Ann Rajewski about best practices and examples from other states and transit agencies
- Jarett Hughes will coordinate with Jim Collins about next steps for committee planning
- Jarett Hughes to look into the DASH, Drivers Assisting Seniors for Health, and Easter Seals volunteer driving program

Key Notes and Takeaways:

Update on Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) Brokerage Expansion

Jarett Hughes and Ann Rajewski offered brief comments about the forthcoming NEMT brokerage expansion. The Executive Committee of the Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging asked Jarett not to draft a memo to the Joint Budget Committee regarding concerns over the expansion. Ann informed the group that Intelliride, who already contracts with the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), was granted the contract for the statewide brokerage. Ann hopes that next steps involve improved communications with HCPF and she hopes that the Department will welcome collaboration and dialogue with the local transportation providers as they adjust and adapt to the new brokerage model.

Group Discussion

The group had a conversation about how COVID-19 impacts have reshaped planning processes and service provision. The question was then posed in response to these issues – what are the ideal solutions and what does the future look like for rural transit?

The consensus of the group was that transit agencies and those involved in state planning are still very much in reaction mode – this makes long-term thinking and planning very difficult. Concerns over funding and sustainability, repurposing of existing services, and addressing unique system challenges is primary focus right now. Further, it was noted that state agencies have to be careful about prescriptive guidance because no one size fits all will work in Colorado. With this said, it was stated that the time for change is now – now is the opportunity.

Comments from folks around the state included the following:

- Demand is currently being met, for the most part, but the decrease in ridership means a decrease in dollars coming in for transit agencies.
- Efficiency is significantly down, meaning costs are up, and incoming dollars are down.



Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging

- Voucher programs have been effective in certain parts of the state and particularly in some counties within the Alpine Area Agency on Aging region.
 - o Older Americans Act guidance is encouraging voucher programs
- Mesa County experienced with vouchers but there was too much demand and the program was not sustainable.
- Volunteers driver as part of a voucher program may be useful – senior companion program or peer support?
- Should we try to promote Uber and Lyft in rural areas?
- Important to push the value of transit to funders and may be worth looking into a transit specific grant opportunity library
- Need for platform to share best-practices and innovative approaches – role for CASTA?