



ACT Board Meeting

Minutes – May 6, 2020 - 9:00am

Electronic meeting via Zoom

1) Introductions

Members Present: Colin Lentz (SRPC), Rad Nichols (COAST), Debbie Perou (Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels), Scott Bogle (Rockingham RPC), Margi Longus (Ready Rides), Betty Smith (Ready Rides), Cheryl Robicheau (Strafford CAP), Tahja Fulwider (Ready Rides)

Staff Present: Jeff Donald (COAST), Jennifer McGowan (Exeter Hospital),

R. Nichols made an announcement that the meeting was being held remotely via Zoom due to COVID-19 and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency order.

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 4th, 2020 {VOTE}

B. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes as written.

Seconded by S. Bogle

The vote was conducted via roll call of all members present: unanimous in favor

3) Updates and Statistics

J. Donald noted that expenses and revenues were nominal for the most part, with additional capital expenses due to the website update contract. He showed sharp declines in TripLink volume due to COVID-19. J. Donald said his sense was that most riders were fairly calm about the shutdown, with only some anxious calls about getting to the grocery store and only one upset that COAST had shut down. ACT providers focused on medical trips (such as dialysis) or nutrition have not had such a drop in trip volumes.

4) Website and Common Application progress

J. Donald showed some draft layouts for the new TripLink website being developed by a contractor. The site will work on mobile phones and will help people sign up for service through a common application. Members discussed options for photos and content on the draft website. He said the website search function will also help clients find service outside the ACT service area. J. Donald said the website and common application is on-schedule to be launched in July.

5) SFY21 5310 Grant

J. Donald explained that the grant application for SFY21 FTA5310 funds had been submitted. It is technically an extension of the current grant so remaining SFY2020 funds will roll-over into the 2021 grant. The effects on the budget from COVID-19 (due to the sudden drop in ridership) are not totally clear yet but it may require some shifting of funds in the future. This and other funding issues will be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the NH Transit Association.

6) NH DOT's request for funding insights from 5310 recipients

S. Bogle noted that the CARES Act (federal relief funds in response to the COVID-19 shutdown) did not include funding for 5310 recipients. He noted that Jim Jalbert [owner of C&J] was representing transit needs on the NH Governor's COVID-19 response task force and had been reaching out for input from 5310 providers.

J. Donald presented draft comments to be submitted to the Governor's office and NHDOT regarding funding for 5310 providers under the COVID-19 stimulus and long-term economic impacts.

- The state and municipalities are going to have significant budget shortfalls, so the 5310 allocation should be increased in the future
- State revenues are currently \$70 million underbudget - will that impact current funding for the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS)? That would increase pressure on local providers and the municipalities that are asked to provide local match.
- Providers should be able to use federal funds without local match
- Providers should be able to use funds even if they are not receiving trip requests to pay for fixed costs and support drivers.
- Additional funding is needed to ensure transportation services are prepared for extra procedures for sanitation and safety for riders under the pandemic conditions (personal protective equipment, vehicle cleaning supplies, etc.)

He said he had sent the draft comments to members and asked if they had other input on potential requests to the Governor's office regarding funding and service flexibility to serve riders. J. McGowan said the shutdown has created additional challenges with grocery shopping – if group rides are unsafe/unavailable and riders don't have an alternative, they're asking providers to order groceries online. This is an unsustainable request. It's currently challenging to use grocery store online ordering and curbside pickup (or delivery services) due to increased demand and people are staying home. J. Donald noted that NHDOT had indicated that they were comfortable with 5310 funding being used for grocery delivery.

Members discussed overarching funding issues as the pandemic progresses and state and federal funding decisions are made. R. Nichols said ACT and COAST will be continually involved in ongoing conversations. J. Donald said he would finalize the letter to the Governor's task force based on the meeting's conversation and send it.

7) Information Exchange

J. Donald explained that COAST would be resuming fixed route service on Monday, May 11th. R. Nichols noted that fair and pass prices would be reduced in the month of May because the first 10 days did not have service. He noted that there were still service changes at the shipyard due to extra security at the base. COAST is not requiring masks but strongly encouraging riders wear them and requesting that riders only take the bus for essential trips.

J. Donald noted that SRPC and RPC are developing applications for a Tufts Community Health grant in partnership with ACT. He also noted Strafford CAP is in the process of joining TripLink and would start on July 1st

S. Bogle asked about providers' experience with the new DBE reporting form from NHDOT. He said it seemed overly exhaustive and should be discussed at the next SCC meeting to negotiate something less burdensome. Other members felt similarly and supported discussing a more reasonable form.

C. Robicheau said she had received an email about Seacoast Volunteers that would be providing free grocery shopping services for seniors in NH. T. Fulwider added that the town of Newmarket was offering to purchase up to ten grocery items for local senior residents in town. D. Perou added that many of Meals on Wheels clients can't access their money if they're used to going to the bank to get cash and can't drive or use an ATM.

8) Public Comment

No public comments were brought forward by providers and no members of the public were present at the meeting.

9) 9) Adjournment

B. Smith made a motion to adjourn
Seconded by T. Fulwider
Meeting adjourned at 10:05