

McHenry County Transit Plan Implementation Task Force

Agenda

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Transit Plan Implementation Task Force

Donna Schaefer
Chairperson
McHenry Township

Lyn Orphal
McHenry Co. Board

Anna May Miller
McHenry Co. Board

Tina Hill
McHenry Co. Board

Sue Low
City of McHenry

Jay Nolan
City of Harvard

Brian Sager
City of Woodstock

Paulette G. Pelletier
Village of Fox River Grove

Tamara Valentine-Garza
Richmond Township

Jack Freund
Grafton Township

Robert Miller
Algonquin Township

Don Kopsell
Nunda Township

Jack Nichols
McHenry Co. PADS

Daniel Byars
Centegra Health System

Karen Patel
McHenry Co. EDC

Patrick Wilmot
Pace Suburban Bus

Donald Kopec
(CATS) Chicago Area
Transportation Study

Shamus Misek
U. of Illinois, Chicago

Joseph DiJohn
U. of Illinois, Chicago

DATE: Thursday, June 15, 2006

TIME: 1:00 - 3:15

LOCATION: McHenry County Division of Transportation
Large Conference Room

1. Call to Order

2. Public Participation

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

4. Presentation by TranSystems, Pace, and DuPage County

- Rationale for Implementation Steps
- Critical Points to Consider for Coordinated Services
- Critical Points to Consider for Taxi Vouchers
- Other Transit Plan Implementation Considerations

5. Approval of Sub-Committee Working Groups

6. Next Steps

- Schedule Sub-committee meetings
- Identify and pursue necessary regulatory changes
- Refine estimates of ridership and cost and current transportation expenditures
- Compare costs of individual trips of CDRS system to the cost of subsidizing taxi trips

7. Next Meeting

8. Adjournment

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IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE MCHENRY COUNTY TRANSIT PLAN MINUTES

Thursday, June 15, 2006

1:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

McHenry County Division of Transportation
Main Conference Room

Call to Order

Chairperson Schaefer called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance

Chairperson Donna Schaefer; Lyn Orphal; Tina Hill; Brad Fink (Sitting in for Sue Low); Jack Freund; Patrick Wilmot; Tammy Valentine-Garza; Shamus Misek; Joe DiJohn; Robert Miller; Jack Nichols

Robert Miller arrived at 1:40 p.m.

Members Not in Attendance

Anna May Miller, Jay Nolan, Brian Sager, Paulette Pelletier, Don Kopsell, Daniel Byars, Karen Patel, Donald Kopec

Other Attendees

John Labaj, Deputy County Administrator, Administration; Joseph Korpalski, Director of Transportation/County Engineer; Jason Osborn, Transportation/Planning and Program Coordinator, Division of Transportation; Holly Ostdick, Planning Liaison, McHenry County Council of Mayors; Lynn Otte, Project Manager, TranSystems Corporation; Mona Comici, Project Administrator, PACE; Mark Shelton, President, MDS Inc./PACE/RTA Consultant; Frank DeVita, Operations Manager, McHenry Township; Jack Slaughter, Department Specialist, Centegra Health System; Sally Ann Williams, Paratransit Manager, PACE; Mary Keating, Assistant Director, County of DuPage; John Isbell, Public Works Director, City of Woodstock; Melanie Nebel, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Crystal Lake; John Rossi, Supervisor, Grafton Township; Donna Adamson, Receptionist, Division of Transportation.

Public Participation

None

Approval of April 20, 2006 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes by Ms. Orphal and seconded by Mr. Freund. The April 20th meeting minutes were approved except for an amendment expressed by Mr. Misek stated as follows: "There will be a need, at some future date to consider establishing another committee to explore, examine, seek opportunities regarding other transportation service alternatives for areas

(Huntley, Harvard, Marengo, etc.) not included in the McHenry County Transit Plan. In addition, we cannot lose sight of the need to provide educational awareness/marketing materials/something to get the message out to employers, employees, residents, etc., of what current transportation services/options exist or can exist.”

A vote was taken among the members present to amend the meeting minutes of April 20, 2006 with all members voting “aye”; motion carried.

Presentations

Presentations were made by:

- Lynn Otte, Project Manager, TranSystems Corporation
- Sally Ann Williams, Paratransit Manager, PACE
- Mary Keating, Assistant Director, Health & Human Services, County of DuPage

Lynn Otte from TranSystems Corporation indicated that she will be available to assist McHenry County with its transit needs.

Ms. Williams introduced herself as a PACE employee and the Project Manager for the Ride DuPage program. Ms. Williams responded to Ms. Schaefer’s question on the loss of jobs for township dispatchers and other township employees. Ms. Williams stated that DuPage did not have to do away with any existing call centers from any municipality or township because the program was consolidated. Someone managed the coordination, but all other services were already conducted through PACE. Therefore, DuPage did not have any dispatchers or schedulers that were discharged. But in McHenry County, this would be the case. A comprehensive coordination of all those who are participating would be needed. It must be decided who would be the lead agency, coordinator, or central person. The main reason for coordination is to do away with fragmentation. The idea is to pull resources together. One major problem is calculating cost. Everyone tracks cost differently.

Ms. Schaffer asked if there were any direct provision of services, or were services just contracted from private sector providers.

Ms. Keating, who is the Assistant Director of Health & Human Services for the County of DuPage, stated that DuPage County bids out those services and manages those contracts. There is staff on site with the contractors to ensure that services are rendered.

Ms. Schaeffer stated that McHenry Township and other townships’ cost per unit of service is less than PACE. In other words, if sponsors take the amount of money that is budgeted for each program and give it to PACE, less service would be received.

Ms. Williams stated that it depends on what is incorporated in those costs. Ms. Williams further stated that PACE offers more services in general and is generally a better transit experience.

What PACE provides now under Ride DuPage is:

- A call center - subsidized with DuPage County funds
- Consumer relations – personnel for consumer inquiries and resolutions
- Monitoring of contractors
- Technology – automatic scheduling equipment
- Communication with taxi cab services
- Inspections
- Some rolling stock
- Sensitivity training

Ms. Williams stated that this is why it is important to come up with the same line item costs and possibly why the cost per unit of service is more than most transit providers in McHenry County.

Ms. Williams stated that sometimes sensitivity issues arise with individuals not familiar with people with disabilities. However, it doesn't happen often. She further stated that PACE provides training for drivers. Taxi cab companies must be trained in how to deal with sensitivity issues. PACE guarantees sensitivity training through contracts.

Ms. Schaefer stated it must be demonstrated that service and mobility will be enhanced in order for other organizations to participate.

Ms. Schaefer posed a question for Ms. Otte as to the differences between McHenry and DuPage Counties. Ms. Otte stated that DuPage County is more densely populated and has other, different characteristics that are not comparable to McHenry County. Ms. Otte further stated that the Implementation Task Force (ITF) must lay out the characteristics of the County's program. The common focus appears to be "to make more with what you have." Once the characteristics have been gathered and a decision has been reached as to what is needed, the impact will be studied and determined. For example, Ride DuPage offers service twenty-four hours a day, every day. This may not be what McHenry County desires and therefore that characteristic needs to be examined.

Taking DuPage County as an example, Ms. Schaefer asked Ms. Otte to describe the process for implementation, especially pertaining to partnering and the role of McHenry County.

Ms. Otte deferred the question to Ms. Keating. Ms. Keating stated that DuPage County required the sponsors to accept that there are no geographic boundaries, no restriction on days or hours of service, and there are shared rides. The individual agencies are able to determine the fare and eligibility.

Ms. Schaefer reiterated that DuPage County implemented the voucher system and that it was easy to establish. DuPage County also offers taxi cab services. McHenry County does not offer taxi cab services extensively.

Ms. Keating stated that PACE is providing capital money. She clarified that PACE is not providing additional money to DuPage County but is using previous capital money for different uses.

Ms. Schaefer asked about sponsorship and if sponsors were primarily municipal.

Ms. Keating responded that most sponsors were municipal. This raised the issue of boundaries. For example, McHenry Township does provide service to residents of the City of McHenry even though the City of McHenry does provide service. Ms. Keating stated that Naperville and the Naperville Township pooled their money for sponsorship and formed the Naperville Partners. Funds are pooled so there is no need to track, and it is then easier to coordinate.

Ms. Keating continued to state that each sponsor can set their own regulations. For example, DuPage County will sponsor low-income families but will not sponsor the general public. It is also the sponsor's decision on which fee to charge.

Ms. Keating stated that there is a centralized scheduling and registration system. The client file is readily available upon reservation. Each rider has his or her eligibility sponsorship on file. The scheduler knows what services are available for each rider.

The City of McHenry/McHenry Township is contracted with PACE and Dial-A-Ride services which provides similar services for seniors. Ms. Schaefer questioned, "How do you make a determination as to who is the sponsoring entity?" It would be easier to collaborate like Naperville Partners as referred to earlier.

Ms. Schaefer stated that McHenry County does not have financial interest because it has not provided transit services in the past. Ms. Keating responded that McHenry County should be interested in sponsoring a Coordinated Demand Response System (CRDS) because it will increase the quality of life for residents of McHenry County.

Ms. Schaefer stated that for there to be a County effort, assurances must be made that what is received in a consolidated program is as good as what is being offered now. Again it goes back to incentive, especially if partnering is involved.

Ms. Schaefer stated that it is good to know how DuPage County organized and implemented its transit program, but McHenry County is different because of its history. We must be assured that everything is addressed.

Ms. Schaefer stated that all of the individual programs are very limited as to whom they are offered and to where the service will go. Also, the other County's overhead is greater because they are using advanced technology for their dispatch versus an Excel spreadsheet. A comparison of apples with apples must be determined. This is especially hard for non-for-profit agencies because of the use of volunteers.

A big concern Ms. Schaefer stated is PACE. PACE bids with private contractors. Those private contractors must make a profit. Ms. Schaefer stated that she has raised this concern with PACE. Mr. Wilmot from PACE stated that during the Reagan era it was popular to contract with private firms to ensure better service. To this date, that policy has not been re-evaluated.

Ms. Schaefer reminded the group that making money is not the issue; constructing a transit program to provide service for the County is the issue.

Ms. Schaefer stated that PACE has a customer service issue. It is not acceptable for a senior citizen to wait 45 minutes, only to miss their doctor's appointment. The customer service component is critical. This is McHenry Township's incentive, to provide dispatching and call center support.

Ms. Williams stated that when surveyed, consumers mentioned that public servants focus on money all the time. They appear to lose sight of the quality of life issues that are enormous.

Ms. Schaefer stated that if there is not enough money, then nothing can develop. However if this effort proceeds, in time the resources will be available to continue. So it makes sense to collaborate.

Ms. Schaefer pointed out that eventually there will be increased mobility and savings.

Ms. Otte pointed out that if a fabulous service that the County cannot afford is provided, everyone will be disappointed. The voice of the consumer can sometimes provide some additional resources to go into the system to accomplish what needs to be done.

Ms. Orphal asked whether the members of the ITF can ask for funds from government, outside vendors, corporations, and/or individuals so that additional funding could supplement whatever else is being received.

Ms. Otte stated that once a determination is made, outside funding sources would be researched.

Ms. Schaefer added that it was stated initially, in the planning process mode, that

for the immediate term, implementation was going to be handled on a smaller scale and not for a County-wide program. To move forward for the immediate term, the following needs to be addressed:

- Who is interested in participating?
- More information on brokerage is needed.
- Providers need to consider what is important to them.

Ms. Schaefer praised DuPage County for being trailblazers when implementing a transit program.

Ms. Otte agreed with Ms. Schaefer. Ms. Otte stated that first it must be determined who is going to participate and then determine the common needs. The program will develop from those common needs. Others then may want to participate. Having Centegra integrated into the program would be very beneficial for funding.

Ms. Orphal and other ITF members suggested researching other funding opportunities. Ms. Schaefer stated that a developed project must be determined, adding, “We will not be able to first get the money and then determine what we will do.” What the Federal Government is really looking for is a collaborative effort. This is how additional funding may be obtained. What is needed now is for all those who expressed an interest to work with the consultants to further this project. There are people present who have a great deal of expertise in transportation funding.

Ms. Schaefer asked Ms. Otte, “Where do we go from here?” Ms. Otte stated that she will respond within 1½ weeks with the medium for determining common needs and which agencies are interested in participating.

Mr. Wilmot had a suggestion. When Mr. Wilmot was on the West Coast in the Oakland area, assigned to another project for PACE, he assisted in developing a new type of bus service. This project brought together elected officials, transit agencies, Caltrans (like IDOT) and all related partners at one table. Mr. Wilmot stated that this bus service initially started as a non-binding system. As time went on, things tightened up a bit. Then a more binding agreement was negotiated. This might be an approach for McHenry County.

Ms. Schaefer added that once the limitations are realized, some agencies may determine it will not work for their particular area. But if sponsors are serious about wanting to participate, then those agencies must determine what is important. The Implementation Task Force must ask the right questions. This will be the next step.

Ms. Orphal suggested having a public presentation. Ms. Schaefer stated that the Public Transit Authority Commission (PTAC) had several open-house presentations and much activity was conducted on the study. It was already

determined what was needed to be done. Now it must be implemented.

Ms. Schaefer stated that townships cannot provide transit for the general public. The townships are limited to providing transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. A McHenry County risk management representative agreed that providing public transportation is outside a township's statutory jurisdiction.

Ms. Otte reiterated that within 1½ weeks she will present the means to acquire an inventory of what the sponsors or interested parties are willing to provide. Then a turn-around time for implementation will be determined.

Ms. Schaefer said that once information is provided, it will be presented to the subcommittee. Interested parties will determine the geographic areas being served.

Ms. Schaefer asked the participants if there was anything further to be discussed and, if not, asked for a motion to adjourn.

On a motion made by Ms. Orphal at 2:58 p.m. and seconded by Mr. Labaj, the meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting

To be determined