



MCHENRY COUNTY
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PTAC)
AGENDA • JULY 29, 2015

Public Meeting

Conference Room C

2:00 PM

667 Ware Rd., Woodstock, IL 60098

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. *Roll Call*

B. *Introductions*

II. MINUTES APPROVAL

1. Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) - Public Meeting - Jun 17, 2015 2:00 PM

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

IV. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES - NONE

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. *MCRide Program Update*

B. *Taxi Program Discussion Update*

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. *MCRide Fare Increase Discussion*

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

September 9, 2015 at 2:00pm at the McHenry County Administration Building

VIII. ADJOURNMENT



MCHENRY COUNTY
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PTAC)
MINUTES • JUNE 17, 2015

Public Meeting **Conference Room C** **2:00 PM**
667 Ware Rd., Woodstock, IL 60098

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hobson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

A. Roll Call

- Regional Transportation Authority Director: Blake Hobson
- Pace: Mary Donner, Kisha Hearn
- Metra: Rick Mack
- Pioneer Center: Tom Riley
- Dorr Township: Bob Pierce
- Continuum of Care: Ronald Ecklund
- Illinois Bureau of Blind Services: Susan Dalton
- McHenry County Planning and Development Department: Dennis Sandquist
- McHenry County Division of Transportation: Scott Hennings, Kirsten Mellem, Jeffrey Young
- McHenry County Council of Mayors: Janell Jensen
- Public:
 - Donna Copeland (Northeastern IL Agency on Aging)
 - Lisa Armour (Village of Huntley, Assistant Village Manager)
 - Andrew Celentano (Community Member)
 - Todd Nelson (McHenry County Bicycle Advocates)

B. Introductions

II. MINUTES APPROVAL

- 1. Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) - Public Meeting - Mar 11, 2015 2:00 PM

Motion to approve minutes by Ron Ecklund. Seconded by Sue Dalton. No discussion. Approved unanimously by voice vote.

RESULT: ACCEPTED BY VOICE

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Hobson asked if anyone from the audience wanted to make a public comment. Seeing none, meeting was continued.

IV. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

None

V. OLD BUSINESS

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Jun 17, 2015 2:00 PM (Minutes Approval)

A. ITF to PTAC Name Change Approved by County Board

Mr. Hennings updated the group on the County Board approval of the name change from the Transit Plan Implementation Task Force to the Public Transportation Advisory Committee.

B. Transit Component of the 2040 Transportation Plan

Mr. Hobson explained that he had a meeting with the Transportation Committee Chair and the County Engineer where it was reiterated that the PTAC bylaws stated that the purpose of the Committee is to implement the Transit Component of the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan: Service Recommendations and Implementation Report. The PTAC should use this as a guiding document for the meetings and activities of the Committee. Mr. Hobson wanted to make sure everyone had a copy of this document, which was provided in a digital and hard copy by MCDOT staff.

C. MCRide Program Update

March Expansion Ridership Data

Mr. Hennings provided an update on the MCRide Program. MCRide was recently expanded in March and we have finally received March and April data from Pace. 5 cities and 3 townships were added to the service area. Ridership is slightly increased from previous months, which is expected given the addition of new townships and municipalities. Three documents were shared with the group. First, was the origins and destinations map shows all the trips that occurred during the month of April. Second, was the Pace Subsidy and Ridership charts show a dramatic increase in the Pace subsidy to the program, which was part of the new contract to cover almost 50% of the operating cost of the MCRide program. Third, was the MCRide Ridership Report, which shows monthly ridership by trips, distinct riders, and breakdown by type of rider. There was a question regarding a clarification of the trips vs. Distinct riders categories on the report. The trips are based on the "funding source" which is a carry-over from when we individually billed each municipality based on number of trips within their boundaries. We use this code now to show trips that have an origin and destination in the same municipality. The distinct riders category is based on the registration information of the rider, which is provided to us by Pace, so we know how many individuals ride the service from each community. We use the city that the rider registers as their home address to determine how many people each municipality is serving.

D. Taxi Program Discussion

Summary of PTAC Taxi Discussion

In general, opinions varied among PTAC members about how best to incorporate taxis into the MCRide program. However, a few recommendations received consensus from the entire group which are summarized below.

What is the Problem?

The first question the group considered is, "what is the problem we are trying to solve by adding taxis to the mix of MCRide transportation providers?" **PTAC members generally wanted to see longer MCRide hours of operation, with transportation available until 10:00 pm on weekdays.** MCRide's current hours of operation (6am-7pm) are not meeting the needs of some users, including students taking late night classes, low income shift workers, and non-drivers wanting to access entertainment opportunities after 7pm. MCDOT staff have also received transportation requests from workers whose shift start at 6am. Because MCRide buses don't start running until 6am, these people are also not able to use the service. In general, PTAC members did not feel it was necessary to provide service 24 hours a day, as is done in Kane and DuPage counties, nor did they feel it was necessary to provide Sunday service.

What Type of Taxi Program?

Next, with the problem identified, the group turned its attention to what type of taxi program was desired. Two types of programs were discussed in detail: first, a taxi voucher program run by County staff, similar to the program Huntley provided for seniors before they joined MCRide; and the second, a “lowest cost provider” program administered by Pace. **The PTAC debated the merits of both programs but eventually settled on the “lowest cost provider” model as the preferred alternative due to Pace’s expertise in working directly with taxi companies to enforce strict safety standards.** In addition, working through Pace to add taxis to the program - keeping it as one service with one phone number - would minimize rider confusion, especially among the riders with a disability and the senior population. However, it was mentioned that solving the problem of expanded hours of operation does not necessarily require working with taxis, but instead could be done by keeping MCRide buses on the road longer. **On this point, the PTAC recommended that if the cost of using taxis to expand the hours of operation was higher than simply using MCRide buses, then taxis should not be used.**

Should we Means-Test Riders?

Finally, the PTAC debated whether or not to begin means-testing riders who would use the proposed subsidized taxis. MCRide has historically not means-tested riders for various reasons. For one, the participating cities of Crystal Lake, Woodstock, and McHenry had their own dial-a-ride programs that did not verify income as a condition for using the service. These “legacy” dial-a-rides were merged into one program in 2012 that became known as MCRide. While MCRide has always been primarily concerned with providing transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, it is common to have empty seats on the bus that could be occupied by “general public” riders. Opening the service to all general public riders thereby helps fill the buses and lowers our overall cost per trip. In addition, if MCRide were to income-test general public riders, this would require an extensive verification system that the County is currently ill-equipped to manage.

The PTAC had mixed opinions on this topic. Many members argued that if taxis were used to supplement the existing service, some limitations (age, disability status, or income) should be used to ensure that people do not take advantage of the system. For example, many people currently take a market-rate taxi to and from the Metra station to get to their job in Chicago. Many of these people are not low-income, but theoretically could take advantage of a subsidized taxi service if it was available to anyone without limitations. However, means-testing also has its disadvantages. Implementing an income-based means-testing system would undoubtedly discourage many low-income people from using the service because of the necessary paperwork involved. PTAC members representing township and municipal MCRide partners mentioned that they do not have staff available to verify rider income. Also mentioned as a possible issue to resolve if MCRide begins means-testing are general public riders who are not low-income, but nevertheless cannot drive for various other reasons such as a DUI.

PTAC Recommendation to the Transportation Committee of the County Board

Overall, the PTAC recommends expanding the hours of operation of the MCRide program. The highest priority is adding hours in the evening, and the PTAC thinks 10:00 pm is an appropriate time to stop service on weekdays. Of lesser priority is expanding hours in the morning, and adding service on Sundays. While all of these changes would be beneficial to riders, the first step should be to add hours in the evening.

How the hours of operation are expanded, whether by adding taxis or continuing with the mini-buses, is entirely at the discretion of the Transportation Committee of the County Board. The PTAC further recommends that the Transportation Committee invite Ms. Sally Williams (Pace) to provide an overview of how Pace works with taxi companies in other areas of the region. If taxis are used, the PTAC recommends working with Pace to the greatest extent possible in order to minimize rider confusion and to ensure that safety standards are in place for the riders.

Finally, the PTAC could not come to a consensus on the issue of means-testing, but would urge the County to carefully consider the consequences subsidizing taxi trips for general public riders, something that is not done in other programs around the region.

Discussion of Taxi Memos and Recommendations for the Transportation Committee

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2015-2019 Five Year Transportation Program

Mr. Hennings informed the group of the recently passed 2015-2019 5-Year Transportation Program, that the County is required by law to produce, showing the planned program of County transportation projects. This is a planning document that provides guidance to the MCDOT, Transportation Committee, and County Board. Staff provided a digital and hard copy of this document. Mr. Hennings informed the group that the Program is over-programmed by \$40 million dollars. This means that the MCRide program is competing with other transportation projects for scarce dollars. The recent trends in funding sources show the decline in MFT and property tax dollars, which are not offset by the steady increase in RTA sales tax dollars. The increase in fuel efficiency is a contributing factor to a decline in MFT and will only continue. Therefore, it is important for this committee to advocate for a sustainable funding source for all transportation projects and to continue funding the MCRide program in order to keep providing needed transportation services to the clients each member of this Committee represent.

VII. PTAC MEMBER PRESENTATION (IF TIME PERMITS)

There was no time for these presentations.

A. Susan Dalton - Illinois Bureau of Blind Services

B. Ronald Ecklund - Continuum of Care

Mr. Ecklund provided a handout on his topic, which will be discussed at the next PTAC meeting.

VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

July 8, 2015 at 2:00pm at the McHenry County Administration Building

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25pm by Rick Mack and second by Mary Donner. There was no discussion. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.