

McHenry County Transit Plan Update
Focus Group for Individuals with Disabilities - 5/22/2018

Attendees:

Andrew Parker—*TranSystems*
Scott Hennings—*McHenry County DOT*
Susan Borucki— *McHenry County DOT*
Sidra Huq – *MCC Autism Awareness Club*
Aijiaz Huq
Debbie Klosinski— *Options and Advocacy*
Jamie Wilson
Greg Lofgren
Grazynia Minios— *MCC*
Debbie Espy— *Pioneer Center*
Louis Hamilton and daughter
Jenny Farley— *Lake County Center for Independent Living*
Kristin Murray— *Lake County Center for Independent Living*

Minutes:

MCRide was the transit mode used most frequently by attendees and attendee's clients. Challenges to using fixed routes include bus stops being too far away from homes/destinations; having to cross large roads (like Randall Road) to get to the route; missing sidewalks/crosswalks; route times are inconvenient; and fixed routes do not run on time.

Problems using MCRide include the bus arriving too early; lack of electronic fare payment; high and/or inconsistent fares; and the MCRide vehicle not arriving at the destination on time. There was also a problem of poorly scheduled trips which force riders to travel far out of their way to pick up or drop off other passengers; this results in very long trip times. One suggestion for fare payment was to allow disabled riders to pay fares using their ABLE account (Lyft recently started this for their disabled riders); ABLE allows disabled people to have saving accounts that can be used for many needs (including transportation) without it counting against SSI income or being taxable.

The MCRide taxi service came under particular criticism. Complaints were lodged about unmarked vehicles (e.g., rider did not know the car was an MCRide vehicle); poor communication (e.g., rider unaware a taxi was picking them up instead of a bus); drivers smoking or talking on their phones while driving; and perception that the vehicles/drivers were unsafe, especially for children or individuals with disabilities (e.g., riders or rider's parents unaware if taxi drivers screened like bus drivers and no identification that the driver was the actually the licensed, screened driver).

Most clients use transit to go to work or workshops. Attendees said that service area gaps for MCRide include Algonquin (e.g., Randall Road, Algonquin Commons, and senior living facilities), Lake in the Hills and Cary (e.g., high schools, downtown area). The operating hours are too short and need to be longer to accommodate 2nd shift workers. One attendee also mentioned longer weekday hours would help

disabled individuals be able to use MCRide to partake in movies and shopping in the evenings after work; so they can reach these destinations like everyone else.

In terms of preferences, the top three priorities involved MCRide and are to have 1) **better coverage**, 2) **longer service span on weekdays**, and 3) **electronic fare payment**.

Additional places that riders would like public transit to take them include Lake County, Woodfield/Schaumburg and O'Hare Airport. There was not much perceived demand for out of county trips.

Other comments included:

- Poor rapport with Pace management regarding needs of the disabled and operational challenges in the county.
- Fixed routes will no longer wait for transfers any more at Woodstock Metra station and social service agencies were not made aware of this policy change.
- Lake County Demand Response and MCRide transfers are not seamless; there is not always another bus waiting at the transfer point.
- There is a belief that Pace cares more about the bottom line than their passengers.
- There needs to be an understanding of the special needs of some MCRide users.
- There is a disconnect between dispatchers and drivers on what they can do regarding schedules (over-scheduling so that drivers have difficulty safely meet the timetables they are given).
- Many disabled individuals have a very limited income and have a difficult time paying for transportation. A system needs to be put into place to address this need for low income riders.