

CATS Task Force for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Meeting Date: February 1, 2005

Meeting Location: CATS

Meeting Time: 9:30 a.m.

Members in Attendance:

Heather Tabbert	Kane County
Kimberly Robb	RTA
B. Rancher-McGruder	Chicago Department of Transportation
Greg Polman	Chicago Lighthouse
Christine Montgomery	CTA
Alice Segal	Anixter Center
Mary Beth Clark	Pace
Norm Johnson	IDOT
Beth McCluskey	NCCOM
Eric Weakly	Northern Illinois Area Agencies on Aging
Martha Younger-White	Illinois Department of Human Services

Others In Attendance:

Marcia Halbert	Mather Lifeways
Kelley Talbot	State Rep. Kathy Ryg's Office
Rob Borchert	AID
Mary Keating	DuPage County
Gina Richter	Advocates Network
Kelli Brooks	Lake County Center for Independent Living
Krista Erickson	Lake County Center for Independent Living
Doreen Bogus	Mayors Office for People with Disabilities
Joe DiJohn	University of Illinois
Dan Haligas	Pioneer Center
Bill Kiley	CATS
Claire Bozic	CATS
Russell Pietrowiak	CATS

Introductions: The task force chair was not in attendance so Claire Bozic took over those duties. The task force members and others in attendance introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes:The minutes from the November meetings were approved as submitted, with the following correction: Doreen Bogus's name was added as an attendee.

Regional Updates

JARC Update

Claire Bozic reported that it remains to be seen whether there will be a discretionary program in FY 05 which ends in September 2005. As of today there are only earmarks, including DuPage County, Ray Graham Associates, and Rides in downstate Illinois. A discretionary program could still be announced.

Kane County Paratransit Committee

Heather Tabbert reported that the Kane County Paratransit Committee is considering a taxi subsidy program. The source of funding for the program is a question at this point.

McHenry County Senior Service Referendum Passes

Claire Bozic reported that McHenry County was successful in passing a property tax referendum to fund senior services. The county was surprised that it did pass, and is working on developing its grant program. Kane County will have a similar referendum on the ballot in the fall.

IDOT 5310 Van Program

When this topic was last visited, we learned that the money to fund this program had not been appropriated. Mary Keating stated that she thought there had been an appropriation in January. Staff will investigate the status of the program.

Lake County Coordinated Transportation Services Committee

Eric Weakly reported on the activities of the committee. The committee has 38 volunteer participants. There is currently no official membership or dues. Recently, the committee participated in a legislative forum put on by a number of Lake County social service agencies. The main subject of this forum was transportation. A number of recommendations were made to the legislators at the forum. They were: Lake County Government should create a transportation subcommittee of the Human Services Committee to address human services transportation coordination in the county. Lake County government should be more involved in human services coordination activities. The Illinois Legislature should address the issues of liability problems for volunteer drivers and operating expenses coverage for paratransit. On the Federal level, more money should be available for transportation operating expenses for paratransit and there should be better coordination between agencies. There was cable public access coverage of the forum.

Pace

Mary Beth Clark reported on the series of meetings Pace held with their paratransit partners. Pace believes that local dial-a-ride, paratransit and fixed route services are all part of their family of services. They continue to work with their partners, but they need

more funding because paratransit and dial-a-ride demand has gone up but funding has not grown similarly. They will continue to work with local governments on coordination issues. They believe paratransit coordination must come from the local grassroots level, and this was an effort to see what the local partners want. Coordination at a regional level could lead to local needs not being met.

Draft Testimony for Kathy Ryg Paratransit Subcommittee

The committee first agreed that it was important to submit testimony for the Paratransit Subcommittee hearing.

Comments received via email:

Doreen Bogus (Mayors Office for People with Disabilities) suggested reflecting the importance of access to healthcare by moving that item closer to the front of the list of things transit provides access to.

Brenda Rancher-McGruder (CDOT) commented that, in the paragraph about changing demographics, we may not be making our point very well that the number of seniors and people with disabilities will be growing very much.

Discussion of text:

Nobody thought there was anything objectionable in the text. The comments mainly regarded what should be added.

Eric Weakly thought the text should contain a reference to a regional coordination board. CATS staff response was that the issue had turned out to be divisive, with some members very much in favor of the concept and others very much opposed to it. It wouldn't be possible to craft a statement that the entire task force would be comfortable with. Staff suggested that any agency could submit its own testimony and so could submit testimony advocating for (or against) a regional coordination board.

Martha Younger-White (IDHS) suggested that we were missing some statement about how we got the system we have today, with many human services programs funding transportation services. It came about piece by piece because there were needs for transportation that were not being filled by available public transportation. Because of its history, it has become a very complex and complicated system. Don't make the solution sound so simple, because it is not.

Mary Beth Clark (Pace) agreed that it was complicated but stated that regional coordination could cause local needs to be ignored. She stated that the structure for coordination is developing, and it is based on local funding and commitment.

Mary Keating (DuPage Human Services) said the reason it was so complex was because there wasn't enough funding for a basic level of transportation going to the region's public transportation operators. Something like 75% of DuPage county's paratransit service is not funded by the RTA. This 75% is not dedicated to transportation, so the service it provides is always threatened by other needs that compete for the funding.

Joe DiJohn (UIC) stated that the dial-a-ride service is funded to a significant extent by the townships. If the townships have other needs, this funding could be shifted. Pace requires a local match, and some townships apply for grants from other agencies, like the agencies on aging, for the local match. Also the history of township service is that much of the service was originally provided because of RTA requirements that a certain amount of funding should be spent in the area where it was collected. Most of the dial-a-ride services have been grandfathered in, and the contracts are very old. The level of service is based on providing service based on where money is available to fund it. It is not based on an analysis of needs, with more service going to places with more needs. A needs assessment should be done.

Doreen Bogus (MOPD) explained that in the city, more people used to get transportation through DHS programs because of lax enforcement of requirements that the trips be for medical purposes. When they began enforcing that, many people switched to CTA ADA paratransit. This was a large additional demand without a large additional influx of funding.

Martha Younger-White (IDHS) said there are still many organizations within the city of Chicago who receive funding for transportation, and we should be careful not to ignore Chicago in the discussion.

In summary, a short discussion of how we got where we are today should be added in the beginning. References to centers for independent living providing transportation should be deleted. A description of the current funding stream and how competing needs jeopardize it will be added, and a mention of how an assessment of needs should be considered in providing service, because the amount of service should not be wholly dependent on how much funding a particular location is inclined to provide.

UWP Update

Claire Bozic gave a brief description of the UWP process, schedule and the contents of the three draft UWP proposals that we hope will fund the work of the task force. The first is for a Paratransit Funding Database Update. UIC is currently working with the Statewide Coordinating Council and with the Northeastern Illinois Transit Committee to collect this information. This UWP project would provide some more funding to collect geographic and local level funding and recipients. The second draft proposal was for a consultant contract to develop a regional Human Services Transportation Plan, which would function both as an update to the JARC plan and a new plan for seniors and people with disabilities. The third proposal was the standard request to fund staff to maintain the Task Force for Seniors and People with Disabilities.

Other Business

An intersection design workshop sponsored by CATS' as a part of its Soles and Spokes Series was announced. The workshop will be on Thursday, March 31st and will address

different design needs for various intersection users. The cost is \$150, and a link will be sent out with the next email announcement.

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Next Meeting

The next task force meeting will be held on April 5, 2005 at 9:30 am.