

Draft Addison County E&D Committee Quarterly Meeting Agenda

June 29, 2021

The Addison County E&D Committee provides oversight and guidance for Tri-Valley Transit's programs to assist elders and persons with disabilities in Addison County. Programs supported by the committee get users out of their homes to medical appointments, to local adult day-care, to senior meal sites and for essential shopping. These services supplement regular transit services in the area, filling in gaps left by programs like Medicaid.

Attendees: Tim Bradshaw (VTrans), Amy Buxton (TVT), Mary-Claire Crogan (TVT), Bill Cunningham (TVT), Michelle Eastman (AgeWell), Erica Marks (AgeWell), Jim Moulton (TVT), Mike Winslow (ACRPC)

Minutes:

- Thoughts on E&D summit - committee members are looking forward to the return of in-person events. The on-line format presented limitations for networking and participation.
- Ridership report and updates from TVT - Bill reported there was a surge in ridership which has since levelled off. Ridership from Age Well clients increased by 100 riders May over April. Even with the increase in ridership, TVT is not hitting capacity issues.
- Update on volunteer driver workforce and their vaccination status - Amy reported that TVT has 24-25 drivers and others are coming back. There are two days per week where more volunteer drivers would be particularly useful, Wednesday and Thursday. TVT has not yet returned to its peak of 32-33 drivers, but has greatly improved over the nadir of 12. In recent weeks 3 or 4 more volunteers have been recruited. Michelle said she was considering moving the days of the week when senior lunches were offered and will take the Wednesday Thursday gap into consideration. Those lunches start August 19. Amy reported that, of the volunteers who have voluntarily reported vaccine status, only three are not vaccinated. The difference in driver vaccine status sometimes creates confusion with customers as to where in the car they are allowed to sit.
- Discuss plan for opening buses back up to 100% (9/13 mask mandate, masks + sanitizer onboard, sanitize vehicles). Jim reported that TVT has returned to full capacity as of May 13th when the state lifted emergency restrictions. Masks are still required on all busses and with volunteer drivers as per federal guidelines. Drivers offer masks to riders that don't have them. Plastic barriers remain in busses; sanitizer is still available; and extra cleanings are on-going. Wheelchair transports and safety of drivers
- Wheelchair transports and safety of drivers. Bill sought feedback from the group on how to approach situations where ramps for wheelchair bound clients are insufficient. TVT is encountering such situations more often. As volunteer drivers age it becomes more difficult to assist clients to get in and out of their houses. Ramp building is done by community civic organizations, and they usually have specs they follow when building ramps. Mary Claire identified some resources for getting ramps built for clients: the Vermont Center for Independent Living has a house access program, both Lowes and Home Depot will install ramps and offer financing, and Upward Mobility in Chittenden County also offers financing and installation. Michelle added that United Way emergency funding may also be available.

Bill asked if partner organizations could help facilitate discussions with clients when ramps were found inadequate. Erica said case managers could assist with these discussions and even with coordinating ramp building, but cautioned that Age Well only has two qualified ramp designers in all of Chittenden and Addison Counties. Tim noted that there may also be federal grant funding available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and he would share contact information.

- Updates from VTrans. Tim reported that the statewide work plan and new manual were available. The next phase is follow-ups on the customer surveys from 2020. Mike mentioned that Middlebury College students had undertaken some of that work. Tim asked about the status of providing links from the TVT website to the ACRPC maintained E&D page. Tim noted that the recovery and job access program would begin on July 6. This program would serve customers not eligible under traditional E&D funds. VTrans is considering the long term viability of this program.
- Erica reminded the group that AgeWell will help publicize requests for volunteer drivers. Mary Claire will send Erica a fresh write-up.
- Training needs - Rider training and Driver training (dementia & Alzheimers). There is an item in the Southern VT E&D workplan that says the transit provider will: *“Provide recurring training for drivers and staff on assisting individuals with a disability and working with E&D partner agencies on educating and training staff and drivers on assisting individuals suffering from Dementia or Alzheimer’s”* And the partners will: *“Work with (the transit provider) on driver training opportunities including better awareness of the transportation needs of individuals suffering from Dementia or Alzheimer’s”*. VTrans suggested the committee should add similar language to our work plan. The committee agreed. Jim said Elderly Services can help with transportation-specific training. Bill noted CSAC may also be a resource. Erica said Age Well has a dementia trainer on staff. Tim said he will investigate the status of VTrans development of state-wide travel training (an introduction to public transportation for those that have not needed it in the past).