

Draft E&D Committee Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Joint Meeting of the Addison and Orange/N. Windsor E&D Committees

April 7, 2022

The Addison County and Orange/N. Windsor County E&D Committee provides oversight and guidance for Tri-Valley Transit's programs to assist elders and persons with disabilities in Addison, Orange and N. Windsor 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: Jim Moulton (TVT), Stephanie Stearns (TVT), Matthew Arancio (VTrans), Katharine Otto (VTrans), Stephanie Riley (VTrans), Tim Bradshaw (VTrans)

Addison: Mary Claire Crogan (TVT), Maureen Conrad (AC-HHH), Bill Cunningham (TVT), Erica Marks (Agewell), Mike Winslow (ACRPC), Ellie Bishop (CSAC)

Orange/N.Windsor: Rita Seto (TRORC), Mike Reiderer (TVT), Jade McClallen (TVT), Jeanne Kern (CVCOA), Amanda Smith (Volunteers in Action, MAHHC)

Minutes:

- A. **Introductions and TVT E&D Organization Chart:** Members introduced themselves. Mike shared the organization chart (below) and Jim reviewed the relationships shown there. He explained the differences in the types of affiliations. Mike W. will share a copy of the organization chart in the minutes and post to the VTrans E&D Teams site.
- B. **Review joint meeting purpose and E&D work plan guidance:** To provide a joint understanding of the E&D committees and the relationship under the TVT umbrella and how they can cooperate and share information.
- C. **Discussion topics:** Topics that are universal and not unique to any particular region.
 - a. **Recruiting volunteer drivers with partners** - Roughly 75 drivers pre-Covid throughout the TVT service area, but many lost during Covid. Number is about half what it was pre-Covid. Difficult to provide enough rides without drivers. TVT has revamped its recruitment process. Streamlined and simplified the application process. Now a four page application (down from 16 pages) - two pages of general information and a few necessary state forms for background checks and DMV review. Also now emphasizing means to give back to the community. For example, TVT set up a "Shopping Buddy" program. It began with a social media campaign inviting people to just bring someone shopping with them. Another good tool has been VPR interviews with staff which has generated at least three applicants. Nonetheless, there is still a huge need for more volunteers. Most

volunteers now drive quite a bit and do not have more capacity. Need new people coming in. Anything that can be done to promote the need is welcome. Erica is doing an open house in Middlebury and May and would like information to share with volunteers. Mary Claire noted that Front Porch Forum has been a very effective recruiting tool and invited participants in sharing posts in their local communities. Mary Claire will share a blurb for the minutes. Another success has been “refer a friend”. Volunteer coordinators have also been leaving brochures in common spaces.

Recruitment blurb to share to Front Porch Forum and/or other social media:

Shopping Buddies Desperately Needed

You grocery shop for yourself every week, right? Turn this mundane chore into an uplifting experience by bringing along a senior neighbor who can't drive herself/himself to access food. Please call Amy Buxton at Tri-Valley Transit, 802-388-2287, for more information. You can relieve desperate need just by sharing a ride. TVT will handle all the logistics and even pay for your gas!

Amanda mentioned April 17-23 is National Volunteer Week; a good opportunity to recognize volunteers and share successes.

- b. **Wheelchair ramp assistance** - TVT's drivers were finding some wheelchair ramp situations very difficult, putting the driver and the client at risk. TVT began training staff, providing an itemized checklist, to document conditions and justify requested modifications. Outreach included notice of community resources for purchasing and building ramps. Subsequent steps have been less successful. TVT will be reaching out to partners, because they don't have the capacity to get changes implemented. Case management is the next area of concern. Jade noted the problem isn't just ramps, but access issues in general and gave an example of a muddy driveway. Jeanne said she finds the resource very useful to provide a starting point for the case managers to talk with clients and families. It helps clarify that transportation isn't always the limiting factor in providing services. Jim noted that the costs involved with fixing problems can often be the issue. Katherine asked if the Department of Health could be helpful in finding funding as equity is the current focus. DOH recently received an equity grant that perhaps as partners we could reach out. She also suggested Habitat for Humanity as a possible resource.
- c. **Training needs with partners** - Alzheimer's and dementia training was identified specifically. TVT asked what partners' areas of concern were and what resources might be available for providing training; noting however that time for training is a challenge and TVT prioritizes providing rides over additional driver training

especially while short staffed. Partners were asked to consider training needs and share them with TVT for future incorporation. Mary Claire suggested a training about body mechanics - how to facilitate movement from a wheelchair to a vehicle. Maureen offered that CSAC provides such training and would be happy to help TVT with such training, but would prefer that we're a bit further from Covid as training must be in person. Jade suggested partners bring updates regarding assistance resources.

- d. **Means of partner participation** - One challenge TVT has is when a new partner expresses interest in the TVT program. Funding constrains participation and the limit has grown. Demand for services is returning to pre-Covid levels, but the cost of providing services has increased due to both fuel and labor costs. Rita noted that this issue was raised at the first E&D Summit. Case studies of on-boarding new partners would be an interesting topic for the summit. Katherine noted that partners do not have to have a financial link to the E&D committee. Unmet need is a different question than the logistics of bringing in a new partner. Vtrans wants to know more about the unmet need out there. In ONW, creation of a new adult day center brought the topic to the forefront. Jeanne noted it becomes challenging as an existing partner in evaluating the extent of the need they are able to meet. To what extent does the eligible population just stop asking for rides? Partners need to continue to work with TVT to determine how to provide services. Will new financial partners detract from existing partners' ability to meet identified needs? Another constraint is drivers - both volunteer and paid. VTrans has been discussing whether or not to include recovery centers in E&D committees; they would have a separate funding source. VTrans did increase E&D budget for TVT (significant compared to other programs around the state), but it is still a constrained program.

Katharine noted that Equity is an emerging new framework through which funding may be viewed going forwards. The way things have been done in the past with regard to funding and program priorities may change as a result. Tim noted there's a limit to what FTA will allow in terms of matching funding. E&D has been an 80:20 program, but as it becomes more operations oriented that would require a 50:50 program.

The Middlebury area is close to finishing planning for microtransit. TVT perceives microtransit may allow outreach to a larger number of people and provide more rides. Studies are queued for Woodstock and Bradford.

- D. **E&D Summit:** A handful of items were identified as potential topics. 1. How to incorporate a new partner into E&D groups? Ways to engage with a transit provider as a partner. Partnership is driven mostly by funding and what impacts to grant? Question to

VTrans policy. 2. Procedures for onboarding for new partner and partner ED staff turnover 3. Alzheimer / dementia training – how do other partners train volunteers? Is there a statewide consistent standard? Looking for best practices and resources. 4. E&D reporting centralization – need clarification from the State compliance requirements and expectations of performance review. 5. Town signature process which is burdensome to public transit providers - question to Legislature on even considering allowing joint petitions.

Maureen - Addison County has three towns that require petitions from citizens. ACHHH has found partnering with other organizations helps in collecting signatures. If they are going to require more work to get on the ballot, they're going to increase their "ask". It's the only way to justify the time spent collecting signatures. United Way has been advocating on this issue in Addison County.

Jim noted that a request from the legislature would be to identify standards around the state that would allow joint petitioning. He's hoping the Summit can serve as a forum for discussion of what those standards might be. Mary Claire noted that towns change petition standards which are difficult to keep up with.