



COUNTY OF HUNTERDON NEW JERSEY

HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MENTAL HEALTH BOARD



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REFERENCE:

- ☐ Council
- ☐ Mental Health
- ☐ Youth
- ☐ Disabled
- ☐ Substance
- ☐ Use Disorder
- ☒ Transportation

Approved March 9, 2022

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, January 12, 2022, 1:30 p.m.
Via Conference Call

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

S. Lax
J. Ricketts
J. Hager
M. Bartelli
M. Westlake

EX-OFFICIO

L. Williams
S. Van Doren

STAFF

E. Neukum
L. Nauman
K. Tustison
M. O'Reilly
K. McGann

GUESTS

M. Chasky
L. End
T. Shepherd
K. Fullerton
K. Melchers

I. CONVENE: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT:

"This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21. Notice of this meeting has been provided in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Courier News. A public notice announcing this meeting has also been placed in the lobbies of the Hunterdon County Department of Human Services, the first floor of the Main Street County Complex, 71 Main Street Building #1, Flemington, NJ; the first floor of the Route 12 County Complex, Building #3, 314 State Route 12, Flemington, NJ and County Clerk's Office."

J. Hager read the Open Public Meeting Statement and opened the Transportation Advisory Committee at 1:35 p.m. with a quorum present.

- II. MINUTES:** J. Hager made a motion and J. Rickett seconded to approve the minutes of November 10, 2021. There was one abstention. All were in favor. The minutes for the November 10, 2021, meeting passed.

- III. CORRESPONDENCE:** No correspondence at this time.

- IV. PRESENTATION:** No presentation.

V. Reports:

- A. Transportation – Erin Neukum:** E. Neukum stated her report will be covered under

UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

- B. Systems Operations – Easton Coach:** E. Neukum reported Linda Empson left Easton Coach. The staff is sad to see her go and wish her all the best. Matt Chasky has stepped in for L. Empson. E. Neukum invited either M. Chasky or L. End to provide an update for the Systems Operations for Easton Coach. L. End conveyed Easton Coach has been operating as best as they can given the circumstances due to the outbreak of the new variant of the virus. He stated the staff had been slightly affected. The driver situation still continues to be a challenge. One of their drivers just retired after 26 years of service. Luckily, they found a replacement who seems to fit right in without a lot of training. Easton Coach is still managing a couple drivers with medical issues that could present a problem down the road within the next month or so.

M. Chasky added Easton Coach is doing a lot of advertising to seek and hire drivers. They are also offering a sign-on bonus to create some excitement around the drivers and try to work in conjunction with other locations that Easton Coach has that meet the same criteria as L. End had mentioned. They can come in and assist when there may be instances of illness outbreaks.

- C. Fiscal – Keith Tustison:** K. Tustison reported he reviewed the ridership numbers for the last quarter. Since fares have not been collected, there is no new money for the Demand Response and Shuffle runs. The fourth quarter numbers were almost similar to the third quarter; 200 more trips for the On Demand and Shuffle. The third quarter Demand Response trips were 10,043. The fourth quarter Demand Response trips were 10,280. The third quarter Shuffle trips were 12,303 and the fourth quarter Shuffle trips were 12,599. Overall, the numbers have remained the same as they had been. E. Neukum conveyed The Arc of Hunterdon closed their service due to the high number of COVID cases in December, so, to still have an increase in ridership, this is good news. People are still coming out to use the service.
- D. NJ Transit Report:** L. Williams reported NJ Transit is very busy working with a skeleton crew due to COVID. NJ Transit is also preparing for their state management reviews through FTA. They are supposed to be coming out shortly. She commented the website has updated policies, etc. everything looks good. NJ Transit is planning to do their Section 5310 state committee reviews by the end of February into early March. They are also working on getting out the 2022 SCDRTAP agreements. Possibly an extension can be granted to spend the monies due to delays because of COVID.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- A. Prioritizing Trips:** E. Neukum conveyed the County has been continuously seeking to purchase new vehicles for 2021 which had not been possible due to the production of vehicles, the low amount of chips that were available and when a move had been made to purchase the vehicles, there were not chassis available. The co-op that was open for the 2022 chassis was then closed, therefore, the wait is for the 2023 to come out so that vehicles can be purchased. In budgeting for each of those vehicles, the cost of each vehicle had increased significantly. A 16-passenger vehicle that was costing between \$68,000.00 to \$72,000.00 is now at a cost of between \$88,000.00 and \$94,000.00. This is without a destination sign, fare box and a couple of other amenities that are installed on the vehicles for the passengers. Therefore, the County needs to budget around \$100,000.00 per vehicle. This is a huge cost increase. She added she had been advised by vendors that the costs are continuing to

increase. E. Neukum conveyed they are committed to transport and take care of the passengers to the best of their ability. The County is planning on purchasing six new vehicles. E. Neukum stated that not only is there a shortage of chips, but there is also a shortage of parts. Most parts are now produced and distributed from Indiana. E. Neukum stated she is awaiting a callback from another company for pricing on vehicles for 2023 so the County will submit a proper budget and she is amazed by the cost of the vehicles. The difference between a 12-passenger vehicle and a 16-passenger is only about \$4,000.00 to \$5,000.00. E. Neukum added she is hopeful some vehicles will be delivered by the end of the year from the previous year's 5310 grants. L. Williams provided her input and offered to get a specific update on the vehicles Hunterdon County is seeking to purchase.

LINK is able to fulfill ridership requests with the vehicles they have currently but if a vehicle goes down, or requires service, it is unknown if there will be enough vehicles to run service in addition to having enough drivers to run service to full capacity. Should it come to that, trips will be prioritized. The first trips that will be looked at are the recreational trips. If they can fit on one of the regular runs, absolutely they will transport, but if they cannot, those trips will be first to be cancelled. The priorities are booking medical, dialysis, employment and shopping.

- B. Volunteer Driver Program:** E. Neukum explained the Hunterdon County Volunteer Driver Program. She had been asked to review the overall program. How many people need trips, how many people were being accommodated and how many trips had to be cancelled. The Volunteer Driver Program is for seniors and persons with disabilities needing to travel out-of-county for trips for medical appointments that are not available in Hunterdon County. If the medical appointment is available in Hunterdon County, it is highly recommended and encouraged for people to find an appointment with a doctor within the County. If they are not able to and/or there are extenuating circumstances, they do their best to schedule a driver. Right now, the volunteers are willing to drive to surrounding counties, and the vehicles are waiting to be equipped with dividers in the vehicles. She was advised 9-10 weeks for the dividers to arrive. It is hopeful the dividers will arrive by the end of this month into early next month. A County vehicle from the Route 31 complex will be utilized for all of the trips.

E. Neukum conveyed all of the drivers will be brought in for a meeting to go over PPE, making sure the passengers are sitting in the backseat, everyone is wearing their masks and when the driver comes back in the office, sanitizing the vehicle will be covered to ensure it had been thoroughly disinfected and all of the debris has been removed to make it as clean as possible for the next passenger. Easton Coach had been helping the Country tremendously by taking trips out-of-county. However, due to a decrease in drivers related to retirement, illness or relocation, it was difficult at times to manage all of the trips and they had to deny trips from time-to-time or had to cancel with 24-hour notice to the passengers.

- C. Transportation Study:** E. Neukum conveyed the RFP had been released for the Transportation Study for two specific key unmet needs as listed in the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. Proposals are expected to be returned by February 3, 2022, discussion will take place in a small committee to review the proposals that will be received and find a company that is able to do the study.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Fares for 2022:** E. Neukum stated at this time, she does not see fares to be collected for the regular LINK Service for 2022. This subject matter is put on hold until further notice. As

soon as she is made aware that fares may be collected again, she will provide the proper notification to the public and all involved.

E. Neukum replied to a question that the County has six volunteer drivers, and the County is always welcoming new applicants. Please spread the word. E. Neukum explained in January of last year, 29 requests were received and 16 were fulfilled. She further conveyed the trip requests remain to be steady between 22 and 30 per month with the exception of November 2021 and December's number had not been review at this time. The maximum amount of accommodated trips totaled 18 out of 34 and in September, Easton Coach was unable to provide any out-of-county trips.

E. Neukum began to convey instructions for the Ecolane mobile app. She started to develop a "how to" list of how to download the app and what needs to be done. She wants to start compiling a list of passengers that have email and then send them the "how to list" which will help them check their trip times and receive notification when the vehicle is on its way.

E. Neukum inquired if Commissioner Van Doren had anything to add or if he had any questions. He did thank everyone participating in the meeting for their service, time and dedication. The committees are important to the County and the residents. Thank you!

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. S. Lax made a motion and J. Hager seconded to adjourn. The next regular meeting will be held on March 9, 2022, at 1:30 pm via Webex. Members are requested to call the Department of Human Services if they are unable to attend/be a part of the call.