

Rural Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes

July 24, 2013

Committee Members Bruce Bird, Robert Brice, Alissa Dozier, Andrea Shaffer,

Present:

Committee Members David Williams, Mark Wicklund, Paul Rosenberger, Eileen Sierra, Diane

Absent: Drew, Julie Aubert, Laura Dick,

Others Present: Henry Dick, Emily Dobson, Teresa Churchill

Next meeting: August 21, 2013, 3:30 p.m. in Room 501 Conference Room,
County Office Building

We are not in the Decatur Celebration this year. There was discussion about a marching band. A lady stated that it seems to her that the fact that we started this and got it going for a whole year, it is a celebration. Someone said that if they had more time maybe a marching band could be gotten from one of these home towns.

Mr. Henry stated that they were really nice and they tried really hard to get us in there. Their standards were just too high for us. That was a little disappointing. We have some special trips planned. On the 27th, we're doing a home extension to Tuscola; July 11th to Illiopolis; July 26th the Decatur Swimming Crew will be going to the Spirit of Peoria; August 13th to Arthur. Someone mentioned a gambling boat trip. There would probably be a demand.

Ms. Dobson stated, we are excited about the Long Bridge Support Group taking the CHILL bus to Arthur on the 13th. Then again the CHILL Bus will be going to Springfield in September to the Mary Bryant store. So, we are using them 2 months in a row hoping to help build the word out there.

Then there is the Crowell situation. That's huge. It's the last week in August on Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday. Traffic wise, it would be a lot easier to get in and out of there is there was less traffic on the grounds.

In terms of legislation, the Governor did sign the budget. That will help fund those so that is fantastic.

Ms. Dobson asked if that means then that their money goes in with your money in McLean. He said IDOT was still trying to figure out how they break down the counties.

From my standpoint, how the money comes from IDOT and gets to you folks, I was under the impression whenever we were setting everything up, that there was going to have to be something that was going to have to come to Macon County and we'd have to set up some form of accrual process before it gets sent off to you. IDOT doesn't quite understand right now whether they can send it directly to McLean or it's going to have to come to us. I guess whenever you guys find that out, what kind of process they plan on using, could you please give us a contact? If there is anything we are going to have to set up internally, we are right now going through our budgeting process and I don't know if there are funds coming to us as pastoring them out, I'm going to have to work with the Auditor in setting up line items as far as budget and whose

budget it's going to be going through. Right now is a good time for us to be doing that because we are setting our budgets up, but I am going to need to know that information. Currently, the governor has signed the budget, but IDOT hasn't figured out how to divide out the allocations between the counties. They are interested in doing that. It was not originally allocated county by county. It was by districts. Some of what Laura is doing today with the Illinois Public Transit Association is communicating with Legislators about the best way for us to get this done with the least amount of trauma. We would hate to have a situation. This is part of our present thing where resources are not allowed to be shared between counties. It's great to have a large system, but if you lose the benefit of the large system, then why have it? We will definitely be in communication about that. McLean County is currently rolling it into their appropriations for now, but as soon as IDOT figures out what they are doing, that will change things.

There were a couple of late arrivals for the meeting so a brief recap of the meeting so far was given. There was discussion about the different towns that have larger numbers than the rest of them. This is due to the Red Hat Ladies. Our numbers are so low right now that a large group of people going from one place to another throws off all the numbers.

Ms. Shaffer asked, what is going on in Arthur. They are going to the soda fountain, the buffet, and BBQ's.

Ms. Dobson asked for clarification of a unit. Henry explained that it is one stop. That is the thing about measuring by units. You can spend all day on 2 units for one person and then a driver can also get 50 units in a bus for one day. It's not the greatest measure, but it's what IDOT standards are. It is one unit one way and then it is another unit when they go back. If you make multiple stops, each stop is another unit.

We have now been in business here in Macon for a whole year starting last July. The trend is up. The percentage over the last few months is tremendous. This month we are at 50%. The people that volunteer are 60% up. I think we are getting the resources where we need them.

First of all, when I read through the minutes from the last meeting, I was not able to be here, but I noticed that you were concerned about getting information out on special education. I want to let you know that that happens regularly. I am the chairman of the Transition Planning Committee and pretty much every other time I come to one of these meetings, I get 100+ brochures from Laura and distribute them amongst the vocational teachers. So, that, at this point, is really not a concern, but it is a very good point because that is going to be a good base for consumers riding in the future so I am glad you thought about that.

I wanted to talk a little about something I just learned about this week. As our organization serves six different counties, Rides Mass Transit has recently taken over serving two of our counties – both of which became available to them because of the financial difficulties providers were having. When Rides Mass Transit got control of these counties, the first thing they wanted to do was to go out and make sure that everybody knew that they were the provider; that they were reliable, that they could be counted on. So, what they are doing is something that we did very early in the process which is going out into the community, holding meetings, listening to people and letting them know what is going on out there as far as public transit and even going so far as to let them actually board the bus and ride around the block or to the edge of town and back. Maybe it is time for us to start thinking about doing something like that in our counties because our ridership has kind of gone up and down, but is really pretty flat. We have not seen a lot of

increase. There are a lot of people out there that have not heard about Showbus. There are a lot of people out there that do not trust the system. How better to teach them than to go to them in person and appeal to them as potential riders to our system. I would think that we should take a little time in one of these meetings and put a plan together and talk to some of our county board folks and have them help us set up in the communities that they serve. Someone said they loved the idea and obviously not everybody gets the paper to get our press releases. The parade would have been great, but going straight to them sounds better. Decatur is our big collection of city folk. When you get outside the city limits you run into a whole different type of person. The people out there are independent and they won't think about calling Showbus and going in to town to get it, they'll think about doing without it. To address that rule there is only one way to do that and that is to go into the communities and talk to the people that are there. If you set up your public meetings, what happens with the primer process is that when we set up the public meetings in the community then people that came to that belong to Lions Club or whatever. Then you get presentations to those groups as well. It really did help to get the word out. That is how we actually got the survey completed so that we could even talk to Showbus. So, everybody needs to think about that a little bit. We'll make it ours and not just do what they do.

Ms. Churchill covers Argenta and Oreama for the paper. The Friends of Argenta are having a big safety day on August 17th. That's a Saturday. I don't know if Showbus would want to be there. A lot of people from town come out for that. She was asked if Argenta does a newsletter. They do. It is called the Prairie Pulse and it's very good. She was asked if they had done anything with individual newsletters at all. She said not that she was aware of. Some might only be monthly. There's a lot of good stuff in there. There was discussion about coming up with a catchy article for it and putting a picture of Showbus in it with a phone number to get the information about it out.

The only other note to be made about the rides thing taking over where the counties had had transportation is that they have already had their budgets and so we are currently dealing with starting a new budget in a new county which still has not been allocated by the governor yet. So, also no vehicle compared to taking over a system where you have all the vehicles. We have a tremendous amount more limitations than when we go into a county that doesn't have. So, we don't unduly put pressure on ourselves about where we should be compared to how quickly. They have 25 buses to start out with where currently, we have not been allocated one vehicle for Macon County. We are pulling from other places. Building a system from scratch takes time. We will be getting more vehicles this fall.

That brings up something else from Region 8. Showbus was allocated to include Region 6. Our money that we had banked for all those years while trying to get something going actually went for 2 vehicles that will be allocated for Macon County. According to the announcement at the regional meeting, those should be delivered at the end of October.

As of May, I was promoted to the President of the Board of ECI and because the former president had a conflict of interest with a lawsuit back in Marshall. There is an official election coming up in a month or two in which I will have a two year term. The staff does all the work for ECI and the only influence I have is being a sounding board for the staff and the board. I will still want to stay here and listen if you will let me. Congratulations were offered.

Mr. Brice stated, I don't have much, but am happy to be here after being in Carbondale this morning. Mark would like to be here and our thoughts are still with him and his family. We'll just keep this thing trucking.

Ms. Churchill stated, she interested in getting a story together with the first year statistics.

I don't have anything other than maybe next month, if we find out who is riding, trying to target the group to work on.

Ms. Dozier stated, I don't have anything except to apologize for being late. 3:30 p.m. is the correct time. Bruce Bird stated that traditionally, this group meets the same day as the Macon County Board Transportation Committee meets. Next month, it falls on the Wednesday that is in the middle of the Farm Progress. There are going to be a lot of people that will get pulled away. We moved the Transportation Committee up one week. Is that something everyone would like to do for this meeting for next month only? Everyone agreed to move the meeting to August 21st at 3:30 p.m.

Tomorrow is the first day that Farm Progress has control of the grounds. The real mayhem is about to start.

We will give that idea to Bob. We don't want to overwhelm them, but maybe we will know more in a month where we will know what we can do. That is not an easy process anyway because you have to find people who are willing and have free time, to see if there is stuff available, if Laura or Henry are available, but it was so cool when we did it before. We had a really big meeting out in Maroa and just to meet people and hear their stories like the 87 year old guy from one of the churches up there that has been driving the ladies to Decatur to get their hair done. You hear so many stories and meet so many different people with reasons that transportation would be important to them. You will love it.

Thanks to everyone for attending.