



Transportation & Health Access Team Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 17, 2013

3pm – 4:30pm

Ellsworth City Hall Auditorium- Second Floor

Present: Michael Reisman, Miranda Wilson, Sandi Duchesne, Sandie Dubai, Jo Cooper, Jim Fisher, Rebecca Hobbs, and Nina Zeldin.

Introductions & Updates

Sandie Dubai, Healthy Acadia's Project Director for the CTG grant, explained that the grant is funded by the ACA through the CDC to reduce chronic disease. Increasing transportation access to medical services is identified as an objective of the grant.

Michael Reisman, Executive Director of the Beth C. Wright Cancer Center, has experience helping people in need of transportation services. He has worked for Island Connections, and is a volunteer for Friends in Action (FIA). He pointed out that while there are a lot of transportation options, it is hard to overcome some people's reluctance to use public transportation.

Jo Cooper, Director of FIA, reported that 95% of FIA's activity is coordinating volunteer rides. Currently, FIA is focusing on volunteer recruitment. Jo found a series of free public service announcements called "Got an Hour?" that she will be using to help recruit volunteers.

Rebecca Hobbs, Executive Director of the Next Step Domestic Violence Project, shared that transportation is very important in helping her clients to build new lives; yet securing transportation is a major challenge.

Miranda Wilson explained that the majority of her ASPIRE clients don't have cars or driver's licenses, and as a result find it extremely hard to get a job. She shared that new assessment processes are being put into place that will help her serve her clients better. Her clients will soon be required to visit with representatives from the Maine Medical Center in Portland who will use five screening tools and provide CASIS and ONET training. A small part of the process will be to assess for domestic violence with short, general questions. Written reports of the assessments will be sent to Miranda, who will then be able to better meet the needs of her clients by connecting them with appropriate resources.

Jo recommended Miranda call Mark Green from WHCA about Helping Hands garage. They may be able to help some of Miranda's clients to access cars.

Sandi Duchesne, a consultant with Green Light Solutions, is finishing up work on a federal grant on how to link transportation, housing & work. The project completion date has been extended to June. She is also working with Jim Fisher, from the Hancock County Planning Commission (HCPC), on an update study for a corridor plan that was written in 2010. Maine doesn't have the money to maintain its existing roads, so the challenge is to find money for projects that will have benefits that would impact the whole region.

Jim Fisher explained that in the original study planners were asked questions about intermodal activity, to prepare for less car intensive travel. Since then, FRACKING, (mining for natural gas by pumping pressure into ground) has allowed the US to be more independent from needing oil from other countries, but the environmental problems associated with FRACKING are huge.

Gas prices make it difficult to make transportation plans, e.g. as gas prices rise, people drive less, and drive more efficient cars, which causes the state to lose transportation revenue.

Information about the transportation corridors can be found on HCPC's website.

Healthy Acadia Program Associate, Nina Zeldin, announced that 10 new people expressed interest in joining the Transportation Action Team through the survey conducted at the Summit in November. Sandie Dubay will invite them to the next team meeting.

Jo shared that Summit also generated calls to FIA, asking about how to start volunteer driver organizations.

Jim Fisher noted that the DOT is working on long-range plan on short time line, hoping to get it completed by June. The plan will look out 10- 20 years, rolling over every 5 or 6 years. Part of the process is a transit plan for the state that Sue Moreau is working on. The State limited GO Maine, and gave carpooling planning to the turnpike authority. The State typically asks town about what they'd like to do, but the DOT is so far behind on their work plan, they may not ask towns this year.

Jim is trying to organize a transportation center for all vendors to use, which will hopefully optimize bus routes. He noted that increasingly, young people are not getting their drivers' licenses. They are moving to the cities where there is public transportation and bicycle routes. This doesn't help in attracting young people to rural areas. Suburbia has been hit even harder. He also pointed out that Hancock County's population is aging and declining, and that increasingly a large portion of drivers will not be able to drive at night.

Transportation and Health Access Awards

Sandie Dubay announced the following eight Transportation and Health Access Awards:

- Bucksport Bay Healthy Communities – to increase volunteer drivers.
- Friends in Action – to partner with Gouldsboro to develop a volunteer driving program.

- Island Connections - to work on recruiting and training volunteers, as well as conducting background checks on volunteer drivers.
- WHCA: To increase volunteer drivers, and advertise to promote their services to health care providers.
- Mano en Mano/Hand in Hand: To provide interpretation services to schedule medical appointments, English instruction for taking driving road tests, medical interpretation, and training new volunteers.
- MCMH: To conduct a diabetes education program.
- UMaine Cooperative Extension To conduct a diabetes self-management program.
- Swans Island-Mill Pond Health Center: To provide Get Fit scholarships, increase telemedicine capabilities, and to conduct cooking classes as well as physical activity classes.

Transportation Summit Review

The group expressed appreciation for all the people who volunteered their time to make to Summit a success, including the speakers, the set up/clean up crew, the audio and visual recorders, the reception desk helpers, and the photographer.

Jim Fisher and Sandie Dubay showed the team a power point presentation that summarized the ideas generated by the Summit breakout groups and surveys. Ideas were grouped into four categories: research, communications, decentralizing services, and supplying transportation.

Research:

- Systemic town-by-town planning that considers population needs and assets should be conducted.
- Planning at town and community levels is necessary, as one big solution will not work for all places.

Communications:

- A state wide marketing campaign about the small steps needed to get volunteer driver organizations active in each community would be helpful, as would volunteer recruitment and training.
- Volunteer Driver organizations could use software that would make it easy for volunteers to choose and sign up for rides (Island Connections on MDI utilizes such software).
- Utilize 211 Maine. We have an information system set up, but how can it be utilized?
- Bring community members who have transportation challenges to the table as active participants. Extend invitation to brokers and riders to participate.
- Use social media, such as Face Book, to connect different groups and volunteer driver organizations.
- Use software to facilitate ride sharing.

Decentralizing Services:

- Bring radiation treatment to the Ellsworth Area, eliminating the need for cancer patients to travel great distances.

Jim mentioned that he had spoken to Jack Frost from MCMH about decentralizing transportation services. Jack felt bringing radiation treatment to the Ellsworth area would be cost prohibitive, but telemedicine has potential.

Supplying Transportation:

- Car dealerships could donate a vehicle for use, making the vehicle available at designated times, such as once a week.
- To address the concerns and reservations many people have about accepting a ride from a stranger, organizations can stress the training required to become a volunteer driver.
- The use of modified zip-cars would improve transportation options.
- Partnering with a business to purchase a high efficiency vehicle that would be used by the business to get employees to and from work, while a community organization would use the vehicle during the day to take clients to their appointments.
- Organizations/businesses could use incentives or disincentives to promote carpooling.
- An expansion and controlled F.A.R.E. idea could bridge gaps that exist.
- Increasing water transportation options may be helpful. Boats are an efficient mode of transportation when operated slowly.
- Explore how tour boats and cruise ships could be used for day passengers traveling between cities.

Discussion- As far as exploring water transportation options, Jim noted that he felt maintaining/increasing the Bar Harbor to Schoodic Peninsula, and Eastport to Lubec ferries made sense. While many at the Summit maintained utilizing school buses in their down time would not be an attractive option due to the size of the seat, Jim and Sandi Duchesne pointed out that sharing school buses is working in other states.

Other Summit Ideas:

- Media campaign to encourage ridership & reduce stigma.
- Create safe transportation environment.
- Volunteers who help the first time riders to increase comfort.
- Volunteers provide their schedule and rides are organized that way.
- Car sharing for people who can no longer drive but still have a car.
- A regional transportation broker.
- Coordination amongst providers.
- Expand involvement with churches, car dealerships, education institutes and businesses.
- Look at the needs of specific populations- children, seniors, mentally challenged, unemployed, employed, those with language barriers.

Transportation Mapping

Jim Fisher presented various transportation-mapping routes of people in Hancock County generated by information gathered by the census. The mapping routes show place of residency, distance to work, as well a mode of transportation. All of information is available to the public, useful for planning transportation needs, and can be found on the HCPC's website: <http://www.hcpcme.org>.

Other

The group discussed the news that CTS never secured the performance bond required by the state in order to have received a Maine Care transportation brokerage service contract. Having already paid CTS, if Maine were to terminate the contract due to a failure to perform, the state would not be able to be reimbursed. CTS is claiming the money is spent, and in fact more money is needed in order to perform adequately.

Next Steps

Sandie Dubay will invite the people who expressed interest in joining the Transportation Team to the next meeting.

The team will choose objectives to focus on based on the ideas generated at the summit. After the next meeting, with new people participating, the group should have a better idea on ways in which to move forward.

Jo noted that the needs of the aging population should be focused on.

Michael noted the importance of improving the coordination of volunteer driver organizations.

Next Meeting:
Meeting January 28, 2014
3-4:30pm
Ellsworth City Hall- City council Chambers
and via Conference Call #: [1-832-551-5102](tel:1-832-551-5102)
Pass Code: 101003#