

Legislative Task Force on Veterans' Transportation

Minutes

November 30, 2009

Participants

Michael Ward - Chair
Barry Vertner
Jim Booker
Jim Willis
Tressa Perlicheck
Steve Bender
Jim Palmer
Frank Van Cleave
Paul Evans
Cindy Howe
Sherrin Coleman
Ed Massa
Mike Ward
David Fairclo
Elanna Schlichting (Phone)
Fritz Graham (Phone)
Ben Hier (Phone)
Alina Aaron (Phone)
Angie Giley (Phone)
Shaun Benson (Phone)

Introductions were made and Chair Ward opened a presentation on Oregon current Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Brokerage system. Both Sherrin Coleman from ODOT and Tressa Perlicheck from DHS helped in the presentation.

The Task Force learned there are eight transportation brokerage systems in the state, the oldest being the Tri-Met system established in 1994. A color map was provided to outline the boundaries of each broker by county. Ridership for the month of August 2009 was 118,289 individual rides brokered by the system.

Currently, the system only provides transportation for Medicaid eligible clients on Oregon Health Plan Plus. However, a number of the brokers are expanding their services to other groups of riders, including veterans.

Logistically, a rider calls a broker for a ride to a non-emergency medical appointment. The broker determines the eligibility of the caller and then determines the most cost-effective ride that can meet the needs of the rider. The most cost-effective ride could be a volunteer driver, a bus, a cab or some other means of transport. In 2000 or 2001, the

Oregon Department of Transportation partnered with DHS' Division of Medical Assistance Programs (DMAP) and the two programs share the cost of the rides.

Cindy Howe noted that veterans do fall through the cracks in the transportation system. She believes that veterans do not know all the transportation options available to them. Her experience is to reach out to veterans instead of making them come to the brokerage. She also noted that the brokerages cannot advertise their services, which makes it difficult to get the word out to veterans.

Tressa Perlicheck stressed that only OHP Plus patients are eligible for the current program. Cindy Howe responded that her brokerage also helps non-eligible people find other modes, such as bus passes, dial-a-ride and more.

Mike Ward of Disabled American Veterans reiterated the DAV's experience running a veterans' transportation system. Cindy Howe asked why DAV cannot partner with the brokerage system. Mike Ward indicated that because the program is national and volunteer based it cannot receive any money for their service and there are regulations in the way of partnering. The Task Force discussed this issue and how it might be worth looking into so that money could be provided for DAV rides via some mechanism and how regulations might be able to be changed to incorporate DAV in the program. Mike Ward indicated that Title 19 eligible veterans ride the DAV vans although as Medicare/Medicaid eligible they could use the brokerage system. This issue may need more discussion.

Chair Ward then handed out the Oregon Intercity Passenger Timetables for Fall/Winter 2009 to show the Task Force what intercity transportation already exists. The Chair also handed out a white paper entitled Overview of Public Transit Programs. The chair outlined several programs, including the following:

- Nonurbanized (rural) Area Funding Formula Programs (5311), which contains two sub programs (Intercity Bus Program and the Rural Transit Assistance Program).
- Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program (5310)
- Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (5316)
- New Freedom Program (5317)
- Special Transportation Fund
- Mass Transit Vehicle Replacement

Each of these programs has funding for germane uses. Special attention was paid to the Special Transportation Fund. Chair Ward suggested that local entities work with their counties to be sure veterans transportation issues be included in the Special

Transportation Fund (STF) agencies Coordinated Plan. If not, those needs would not be funded through Public Transit's STF program.

Both Chair Ward and Cindy Howe noted that the Mass Transit Vehicle Replacement Program is well funded at this time. In addition, Oregon has received millions of dollars in ARRA funds targeted for public transportation. This has resulted in hundreds of additional vehicles be purchased by public transit agencies around the state this biennium. This could easily result in a number of used transit vehicles available to entities that simply have to ask. Cindy Howe noted that her organization provided a bus to a senior center. DAV's Mike Ward noted that his program rules stated they have to have new vehicles. However, the Task Force discussed that there may be a way to use these old vehicles for veterans' transportation.

The Chair said he was pleased with the discussion and outlined that the Task Force is in the learning stages and that it will soon get to a stage where solutions are outlined and debated.

The Chair asked staff to outline how this Transportation Task Force fit into the larger scheme with the other two veterans' task forces currently meeting.

The Chair asked if there are other stakeholders who should be part of the Task Force. Suggestions included the following:

- More public transportation specialists (specifically Karen Friend from Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council – COIC)
- Volunteer Coordinators who work with brokerages
- Portland Medical Center transportation specialists
- Roseburg and White City VA transportation specialists

The Task Force agreed to meet again during the first week of January. The Chair asked others to feel free to suggest agenda items for future meetings. Shaun Benson and DAV will present their program at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 p.m.