

## **North Reading Transportation Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes 9/21/23**

Attendance: Dan Greenberg, Rebecca Griffin, Diane Norris, June Storey, Rich Wallner, Lil Hartman

Members Absent: Alexis Arsenis

The Ride: 3 people have now applied. 1 gave feedback to Kim – the wait times make this a full-day affair.

Volunteer luncheon occurred with 5 of 6 active drivers attending. They learned the new dispatch software / sign up system.

June will post additional flyers to recruit drivers: suggested Ryers and churches

Lyft is working with Lil to identify tax-exempt status options. Lil left message for Division of Local services regarding this question last week.

Minutes were approved.

Discussed ride statistics. New client coming in for dialysis, split rides and now someone who needs a ride home only after eye appointment, and transportation to the T. Ride into Boston can be 90 minutes at rush hour. Senior center van did a long-day for one client recently. Chair car cost \$400 for wheelchair accessible option when senior center vans are not available. Last month the senior center vans did 898 one-way trips. 2 part-time drivers are at full capacity and a substitute position remains vacant. On Mondays, 2 vans full-day are just able to keep up with in-town ride requests, with occasional requests to seniors that they find an alternate ride.

Discussed wages on drivers. FY25 budget request should include higher rates of pay for existing drivers. Market rate research to include: Reading Senior Center, NRPS (~\$22/hour max – split shift PT), and Woburn (\$20/hour PT), Middleton (\$16.65 PT).

#### **Budget Planning**

\$50,000 from June Town Meeting warrant article

\$50,000 from state earmark – receive contracts in October from EOEA.

\$5,000 potentially available for a hybrid or plug-in EV van. Would need to be accepted ~ 10/25 and spent by 4/15ish

MassDOT: \$90,000 request which requires matching, which can be met by the warrant funds

Spent: \$150/month starting Sept 1 on RideScheduler

\$60 on volunteer food

\$400 for ride on 9/26

Up to 7 hours so far from senior center drivers (\$16/hour)

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**Additional grants open:**

MCOA Transportation Service Improvement Grant up to \$25,000

\$25,000 for updates to senior centers (MCOA)

\$10,000 for senior center outreach & marketing (MCOA)

--All MCOA grants will be reviewed by Dan and Senior Center staff

Community Compact: spending timeline, maximum award, is Transportation the town's top priority?

MassDevelopment Taxi Grants – need to follow up with them about when/what will be posted for RFP

Capital: We have a 15-year old van and an 8-year old van. DPW recommends retiring the 15-year old van despite its relatively low mileage. The incoming van from MassDOT (expected June 2024) will be a 4-passenger low-floor van with ramp for all riders to enter, replacing the 15-year old van. The 8-year old van can last another 7 years if maintained well.

\$50,000 for PHEV minivan. Note that the auto workers strike may impact vehicle inflation. Concern that they may not do well in the snow. Consider SUV instead? Let's review options before recommending specific purchase, at 10/12 meeting. Dan will check with funder if the vehicle model can shift.

Woburn approximates \$100,000 cost for SUV with wheelchair lift.

**VOTE:** Committee recommends that the Town maintain a minimum of 3 vehicles dedicated to senior / disability transportation, as of June 2024. All 4 present voted to recommend.

Dan recommends having more vans on the road with more drivers just to support the senior center usage.

Partnering for vans: Schools meeting with Lil, Friday.

Great use of taxpayer funds, cheaper than buying our own backup van!

Ask: can we access a van as a backup when needed with senior center drivers?

Can we ask you to pick up seniors during the school day with your drivers? How do we transfer funds?

Special Municipal Employee for two part time jobs, if they go over 19 hours would they need benefits?

Reading backup van? Gather more information but local partnership with school preferred.

Operating Budget:

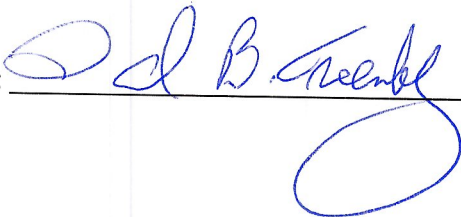
Driver salaries to be evaluated, Further discussion on coordinator expected 10/12.

Survey to be discussed 10/12.

Updates from members:

Dan: Beverly has 5 EV school buses of 50 vehicles. Has 6 charging stations with grant funding. DEP and MPC funds – state diesel reduction funding. Vendor is Highland Electric in Beverly.

June: Woburn Senior Center is built in a school, nice brochure. Transportation via two vans, part-time drivers for senior center and food pantry only. Most other rides by taxi voucher.

Minutes approved:  Date: 10/12/23