

# AGE FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION WORKGROUP MINUTES



Date: 08/11/2020

Time: 03:00 PM

Facilitators: Brad Cross and Bruce Gartner

## In Attendance

Terri Hansen	Brad Closs	Paul Verchinski
Marian Vessels	Nancy Riley	Jason Quan
Bruce Gartner	Jennifer White	Edward Akuffo—presenter
Kim Sherman	David Nitkin	
Brian Muldoon	Kathleen Krintz—Recording Secretary	

## Minutes Approved

Minutes are approved for June - July meeting was canceled

First: Paul Verchinski

Second: Kim Sherman

## Announcements:

New member: Jennifer White is the Senior Community Engagement Officer at the Horizon Foundation. Horizon Foundation has been working diligently over the last several years in advancing Complete Streets and investing in biking and walking infrastructure in Howard County. She is a member of the Complete Streets Implementation Team.

## New Business:

### Brief Presentation by Columbia Cabs – Edward Akuffo

Columbia Cab has provided safe, clean and reliable taxi service to residents and visitors of Columbia and Howard County for over 25 years. They have over 50 cabs ready to serve 24 hours day, 7 days a week. They serve in and around Columbia, Ellicott City, Jessup, Savage, Laurel and the surrounding areas.

### Questions and Answers

- Bruce: On average about how many vehicles are currently operating?
  - Edward: Pre-COVID about 25 cabs. Currently running about 10 cabs.
- Bruce: How many trips are done in a day, month, or year?
  - About 200 a day; approximately 40 of those calls are from RTA (pre COVID).
- Terri: Does Columbia Taxi provide services to people with mobility concerns such as manual wheelchair users who are able to transfer to the car themselves?
  - Edward explained that yes they can help someone with manual wheelchair upon request.

- **Marian: Is there an extra cost for storage of wheelchair? Are drivers able to assist someone from door to door?**
  - Upon request the customer can get help with door to door.

**Bruce wanted to let the group know Lyft will be on the September call. Lyft has been slowly rolling out pilot programs and currently has a sense of what Howard County does. He provided some background for the different challenges within the County. Also sent the data that was provided at the June meeting, including the para-transit service area. Here are some of the highlights that was sent to Lyft based on Transit Delivery Challenges (which was emailed to the workgroup):**

- **Active and Aging Population**
- **Connectivity to MTA Commuter Rail (MARC) and Commuter Bus**
  - **MARC**
  - **Commuter Bus**
- **Downtown Columbia Traffic and Reduce the need for single occupancy vehicle**
- **General Transit System Expansion**
  - **Catonsville to Ellicott City**
  - **Columbia to Howard County Public School System Headquarters and a regional school**
  - **Columbia to Elkridge and Columbia to Turf Valley**

**Lyft and Uber are done in real time. Unlike paratransit which must be scheduled. The purpose is to see what is intriguing and discuss what the work group might find interesting to hear about from Lyft. Contracts with outside companies, employee background checks, and drug testing all must be kept by the company. Ideas offered:**

- **What kind of pilot program and how do you structure things?**
- **Follow up and do more solicitation that workgroup can follow up on.**
- **Marian wants to know anything in their training program around seniors and persons with disabilities.**
- **Marian heard Lyft has been looking at buying an adapted vehicle for power chairs for those who cannot transfer. She would like to know if they have examples of those programs.**
  - **Are they up and running?**
  - **What is the funding mechanism?**
  - **Information about potential**
  - **What other jurisdictions are they currently working in?**
  - **Not all vehicles are lift equip and are hand operated ramps. Would want to see that there is more engagement around seniors and what is the ability to help people with door to door service.**

**Bruce wanted to mention about concierge service. Presumably organizations can get involved in. But it is always about a funding source.**

- **Marian there are folks who do not have smart phones. More flexible for people to use the Lyft App.**
- **Terri need to look at people with a variety of ability levels. Age-Friendly is all about options, and varying opportunities for people to maintain and be independent as possible and also be involved in the community.**

- Paul wanted to know if Bruce had talked to other counterparts of different branches and agencies of similar size to see if there is a cost savings using Lyft or Uber for paratransit type services.
  - Bruce stated a consultant group has looked into those on-demand services and the cost is not less. MTA has something similar which offers their caller a ride versus an ADA-related service and the cost is meant to be at a different price points.
  - Jason stated that with Uber and Lyft their cost is not the allocated cost and are not profitable. Their cost may continue to rise, and it is subsidized by private capital.
  - Bruce also reminded the group that if the drivers don't want to show up for work, they don't. If people don't feel safe, they will not use that service. Hard to guarantee the user experience and the availability in those situations.
  - Paul stated that is a problem for anyone who is disabled especially if the service does not show up.
- Bruce two ways to think about:
  - Other options available either at no subsidy or some level of subsidy above and beyond what is currently provided.
  - Baltimore City has a pilot program. People can get a subsidize ride to and from certain areas (grocery stores, for those in "food deserts").
- Brad mentioned Uber does have some form of service where a person can pay for a ride and then pick up another person somewhere else.
- Jennifer has a question as to how this could look in Howard County potentially. Would Lyft work with those localities to identify which type of model or component would be best? Or provide a template and add our own type of service? And how will these items be crafted to a particular pilot programs in different communities?
- Bruce it is my understanding that they are open to considering anything. My pitch was:
  - What the needs are
  - What is the priority for the County
  - Is funding available
  - What is the demand
- Terri mentioned looking back at the reports and the survey to see how our community has answered some of the questions that were asked in regard to transportation. And see what the surveys told us.
- Bruce based on the bullet points mentioned earlier, that is the best summary coming from a core transportation issue.
  - not enough trips
  - limited to one a day
 He reminded the group all those different limitations have to be done because of strained resources. Maybe put a little bit of money to one element so the cost would be more limited. Here are some of the types of calls RTA and OOT have recieved
  - More direct grocery

- Senior Housing to a grocery store
  - Fixed route keeping it on the main line not taking people door to door
  - First or last mile system only goes once an hour
  - school system in Columbia (provide some funding)
  - expansion to get seniors outside of Howard County to services beyond County boundaries to the events and services.
  - And connecting to MTA is a need.
  - Bruce has mentioned that there is an expansion to Catonsville which would connect to MTA and allow greater access to Baltimore.
- Marian asked if it was true that a person living in an apartment who uses manual wheel chair but still needs assistance getting around when calling RTA to go outside of Howard County was told the only option was a private van service. The van service cost is around \$160.
  - Jason's response was yes that was true; the ADA service runs along the fixed routes only. And the GPT service is within Howard County only.
  - Marian stated there will be more seniors using mobility scooters and if people don't live on a fixed route there really is no opportunity for social activities, or recreation, church. She asked if the senior centers were on the fixed routes.
  - Jason said most of the senior centers are on fixed routes with the exception of the ones out in the Western part of the County.
- Terri stated there is a bus for the East Columbia center but does not take you to the building and it is a walk uphill to get to the building. And if you are talking about a place to shelter for awhile that is not convenient/available at all 50+Center sites.
- Bruce was saying Marian brought up a good issue and there is only a limited amount of money to put towards any expansions. If there was a way to get the cost per person on the paratransit down it may be possible to do that.
  - Is there a prioritization of these types of trips that this work group can help with?
  - Should an expansion for the medical, socialization or some other designation should be considered?
  - On the Complete Street side, talking about how to evaluate projects, is it serving a vulnerable population, is it safety improvement, have these core measurements been looked at?
  - What would be the next important step for GPT?
  - Marian was wondering if this work group was looking at seniors in particular and is there some sort of hybrid the group can look at. Possibly talk with Neighbor Ride about the expansion for people's potential for getting seniors out more and is there potential to combine funding through a number of sources?
  - Bruce always thinks about the senior centers and is that the place this work group should focus on.
    - Investing in those Centers
    - Programs at the centers



Is there something about the paratransit service that isn't being provided and is it maximizing the activity and usage of the centers. Could use some creative thinking in how the group can help with the social service priorities.

- Terri mentioned that Brian has spent a lot of time looking at other action plans from other jurisdictions. Was wondering if Brian has seen anything that stands out. There could be something in another jurisdiction that sparks this work group's interest and the group could tweak or grow it.
  - Brad and Bruce reviewed the action plans from different jurisdictions that Brian put together and there were a couple of things that are being done elsewhere.
  - Next wanted to go through what is the action plan frame work for this group.
  - Asked Terri to talk about the refined schedule.
- Brad stated that essentially the group has until February to get our action plans to the Steering Committee. The group will hear from Lyft and try to have other presentations. Need to figure out how this workgroup will finalize the action plans.
  - Terri went over the refined schedule. The Co-chair meeting was action-packed. One of the things that was shared was the modified timeline and working backwards with the six-month extension. Will not be able to have large listening sessions or Focus groups. Think about other ways to get information, still need to get information from the people who were not represented well in the survey. Look at ways to get that information by using
    - Technology
    - phone sessions (townhall meeting)

Terri will be participating in the Housing Taskforce who are doing a public meeting that will start at the End of August and have three dates to participate. Terri will be attending one of those meetings to see how it works for public meetings and to learn from and see how the workgroups could utilize for listening sessions or focus groups. Looking at trying to stay within the six months timeframe and complete in May or June.

One workgroup has already commented that the group does not feel it can be done in this timeframe. If this workgroup feels that this is not enough time to get the action plans done. Please send Terri input as to why the group cannot be done in this timeframe and will bring to County Administration. The goal is to try and have listening sessions and focus groups in their new and different way. Possibly have telephone townhall meetings with smaller groups.

- Bruce stated that information Terri provided was useful, and this group is fortunate that they already have a good start on some action steps. Bruce asked Jennifer based on background for input on how to get listening sessions done.
  - Jennifer stated that a lot of organizations is working on this issue as well. Believe this group should reach out to organizations like Association for Community Services and African American Community Round Table that represent a number of other community organizations because of the networks that the organizations currently have. Use our sphere to influence and share what this group is looking to do and the type of feedback the group would like to solicit. Start by getting an understanding of who is the target audience. Who are the community members the

- group wants to receive feedback from, and thinking about those populations that are underrepresented. Since everyone is doing things virtually, get with the organizations that already represent or serve those communities and make sure those groups our part of the process. Grassroots would be a good organization to reach out to do to the homeless population.
- Jennifer mentioned to partner with some of our other community institutions such as the Library, 55+ centers.
  - Marian mentioned FIRN as a possible organization.
  - Bruce wanted to know if there was a group of health care providers that focus on the ability of their patients to get to the services.
  - David stated hospitals are using their efforts at population health by looking at building up medical center homes with the primary care physician groups and making sure those groups have the full resources and structures to serve the patient population. Transportation would be one of them. There are people who work with medical offices and LHIC is a good one.
- Brad mentioned that Dr. Ball will be attending the September Meeting and the agenda will reflect that.
  - Bruce wanted to add that Jason and he were alerted by the General Manager at RTA and that Maryland was awarded 1.4 million dollars in federal grants for transit and Howard County got \$1.2 million of that. On the other hand, the state is likely to cut our typical award for grant capital purchases which actually makes it a wash. Howard County is doing better then the other Counties.

### Homework Assignments:

Get at least 1 or 2 organizations that the group should reach out to.  
Send Bruce and Brad suggestions for meeting with Dr. Ball

### Next Meeting:

September 8, 2020 at 2:50 PM