

Eastern Transportation Planning Region Transit Working Group #1 – Meeting Minutes

Date: July 8, 2013
Time: 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm
Location: Limon Community Center
Limon, CO

Meeting Attendees:

Ann Rajewski – CASTA
HJ Greenwood – Northeastern Council of Local Governments (NECALG)
Darlene Thorndyke - NECALG
Bob Churchwell – City of Burlington
Larry Worth - Transit and Rail Advisory Committee Representative
Jo Downey – East Central Council of Governments (ECCOG)
Joe Kiely – Town of Limon,
Terry Baylie – ECCOG – Senior and Transit Services Director
Bev Newbanks – ECCOG Advisory Board, Lincoln County Department of Social Services
David Foy – Washington County Commissioner
Dave Stone –Town of Limon
Tracey MacDonald, CDOT Division of Transit and Rail – Project Manager
Karen Schneiders, CDOT Region 4
Myron Hora, CDOT Region 4
Scott Weeks, CDOT Division of Transit and Rail
Holly Buck, FHU
Beth Vogelsang, OV Consulting – public participation
Suzanne O’Neill, Transit Plus
Cally Grauberger, Transit Plus – Eastern Transit Plan Manager

Welcome and Introductions

The group did self-introductions and answered if they were part of the last plan development. About half the Eastern Transit Working Group were involved in the development of the last plan.

Project Background

Tracey MacDonald of CDOT gave an overview of the Statewide Transit Plan process and the timeline for completion of the Statewide Transit Plan and the Regional Transit Plans for the rural planning regions. She reviewed the work plan, plan goals and objectives, and guiding principles. She then reviewed elements of the Statewide Transit Plan and the local/coordinated plans. Tracey described this group’s role in the process and the relationship to the Statewide Steering Committee. She explained that information will be shared between the Statewide Steering Committee and the Eastern Transit Working Group (TWG).

The next meeting of this group will be September 23rd in Akron and November 18th in Limon. The TWG asked that the team try to schedule the TWG meetings in conjunction with the TPR meetings to limit travel time.

State Transit Vision

Vision – Tracey explained that the Statewide Transit Steering Committee has started working on the statewide transit vision statement. Key words and themes that they identified include but are not limited to: connectivity, accessibility, affordable funding, educating the public, transit benefits, coordination, integration, economic development, safety, and communication. The Draft Vision statement will be sent to TPR Working Groups once it has been reviewed by the Statewide Steering Committee.

Coordination Plans

Cally Grauberger of Transit Plus provided a brief overview of what a coordination plan is and what will be prepared for this coordinated transit plan. A more detailed document was provided in the handout.

Regional Characteristics

Cally presented materials developed for the Community Profile and Eastern TPR 2008 Plan Summary. Even though Morgan County is part of the Upper Front Range TPR they will also be included in the Eastern TPR as a major trip destination for eastern residents.

Comments/Edits on Maps made by Eastern TWG members:

- The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) map has an error for Elbert County. The consultants are aware of the issue and will verify the data.
- It looks like high schools were included on the Activity Map. If they are, they should be removed since they would most-likely not be served by this type of transit service; should only include colleges and universities.
- A request was made to verify the correctional facilities shown on the map.
- A request was made to add hospitals to the activity center map. Court houses should be added as well.
- Numerous requests were made to have the maps show the percentages and the actual numbers for ease of comparison within the county boundaries of the map.
- The group asked the consultant to verify how “group” homes are counted in the census for purposes of mapping. The same question was asked for the prison population and how the census counts these residents.
- A statement was made that aging veteran data would be interesting to have in the plan. The project team felt that this data would not be readily available for the plan.
- On the commute pattern map, Logan County to Phillips County and Washington County to Yuma County illustrated commuter flows west to east that were higher than expected. It was suggested that this could be explained by the large number of beef and pork processing plants in those communities. The team will recheck this data.
- There was a request to change the commute pattern map into 2 separate maps. One map with the commuter flows (arrows) and one with the people riding transit (purple shading) for clearer understanding. Also there was a request to add a fourth arrow to distinguish between 200-500 trips and 500-1000 trips daily. There was a request for the maps to include the actual numbers.
- There is a Workforce Center in Elizabeth that should be added to the Activity Center Map.
- Some large employers, like school districts, have employees dispersed throughout an area. Trip pattern data is not always as relevant to transit operations when you consider employment characteristics.

- There was a request to add the Burlington VA clinic to the map.

Regional Transit Needs, Projects and Priorities

A discussion of long-term and short-term needs was discussed with the Eastern Transit Working Group (TWG).

Needs

- Holyoke residents shop in Sterling now that transit service is provided to Sterling. Transit service has economic impacts to the rural communities such as Holyoke. We need to define what the transit system is really there for. It seems to be acting as a taxi service instead of transit. We need to get realistic about service and service costs and the expectations of rural transit. Perhaps we should screen the trips. How many stops? Where are stops located? We should set a realistic expectation about what the service should be used for. Buses can actually hurt the economies in small towns.
- ECCOG does not have medical services in the region and only 4 communities have a grocery store. Transit provides residents access to these services.
- Coordination and scheduling are critical.
- Funding rural service is a challenge: how do we fund it and how far should service be provided? Some areas are very sparsely populated.
- Kit Carson County no longer provides transit services to Goodland, Kansas.
- Transit services should take people to the doctor and recreation such as "meet and eat". We need to define "need".
- The question was asked if it is reasonable for County Commissioners to fund County Express when it provides service for some, but not for others based on location.
- Lincoln County bus now is coordinated to Denver with other uses.
- Prisons need service both directions for day release programs, employees, and visitors.
- Sterling also has Advantage Halfway House. Transit service to this facility only runs until 7 PM.
- CSU and DOLA teamed up to do planning projects. There was a comment that there might have been a study conducted: a labor force study through DOLA's Technical Assistance Program on commute patterns. The consultants will look into finding a copy of this study.
- Currently, Greyhound stops in Limon but does not pick up passengers. Is there a way to have an actual station? Burlington would like Greyhound to not stop just for bathroom breaks since they have found some passengers are moving drugs into the area on Greyhound.

Projects

- Additional operating assistance is needed. Since transit management is handled at the local level, new assistance would need to be flexible for local decision-making to manage the use of funding with limited restrictions.
- The TPR will need replacements buses. It was stated that a survey will be sent to the providers so the exact numbers of buses will be updated.
- There is a need to increase Limon area transit service from 2 days to 5 days
- Attendees were asked to consider what their regional bus services would be in 10 to 20 years. There is a need to continue the bus replacement program. If the use of current funding was expanded to operating, then the current transit programs in the region could look at expanding service capacity.
- North – South regional transit service to connect to regional commuter bus "Life-Line" service was discussed. There will need to be some follow-up discussions on this issue.
- States should allow local governments to use FASTER funds for transit operating expenses.
- CDOT should allocate FASTER funds to local agencies so the funds can be used to match federal grants.

- Maintenance facilities are not critical since vehicles are located across the region. One facility would be difficult. This issue is still important so there is a need to keep it on the list but as a longer term need.
- There was a question as to where the 2008 fleet numbers came from for identifying bus replacements? It was stated that these numbers were developed during the last round of plans.
- As people are aging at home, there is a need for more transit service.

Update on Intercity Bus Study

Suzanne reviewed the Intercity Bus Study work that is being conducted and the need for regional bus service across the state. For the Eastern TPR, there are currently transit services that travel east and west but no focused north- south service. There was much discussion on who would use north-south service but no recommendation was made at this time. There will need to be some follow-up discussions on this issue as the transit update continues.

Public Involvement Approach

Beth Vogelsang with OV Consulting gave an overview of the anticipated outreach plan and asked for input on how best to reach the region's residents.

Feedback from the TWG included possibly having a booth at County Fairs, utilizing the COGs distribution lists/network and providing flyers at Sr. Centers, medical facilities, libraries and other local locations.

Next Steps

Human Service and Provider Surveys will be going out in about 2 weeks. The next Transit Working Group meeting will be September 23, 2013 in Akron.

Adjourn

Tracey MacDonald of CDOT thanked the group for attending and reiterated the value of their participation and that we look forward to working with them over the next several months.

Project Contacts:

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