



St. Johns County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, February 18, 2004

Northeast Florida
Regional Council
Brian D. Teeple, Executive Director

St. Johns County Commission
Hon. Jim Bryant, Chair

State of Florida Transportation
Disadvantaged Commission
Peter Gianino, Chairman

MINUTES

The quarterly meeting of the St. Johns County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board was held on Wednesday, February 18, 2004, at 2 p.m., at the St. Johns County Council on Aging, 180 Marine Street, St. Augustine, Florida. Chairman Bryant called the meeting to order with the following members present:

Commissioner Jim Bryant (chair)	Rick Tallman
George DeAntonis	Shalanda Vickers
DeWeece Ogden	Marc Wichman
Betsy Preuss	

Others Present: Brian Nourse, Greta Larkin, and Cathy Brown from St. Johns County Council on Aging; Talena Hicks from NEFAAA; and Others

Staff Present: Stephen Jones of NEFRC

Announcements

Ms. Brown announced they were given an award in December, one of three in the nation, for *Innovations of Excellence* regarding the Sunshine Bus. On Monday, she is going to Washington to present a speech to the 50 governors' key policy people on the capacity of a small rural county to be very innovative, response-driven and cost-efficient in providing public transportation.

Mr. Jones announced that the mother of Ms. Palmer, Regional Council's secretary, passed away this morning.

*Additions, Deletions, Changes to the Agenda

Mr. Wichman moved to accept the agenda; seconded by Mr. Tallman; motion unanimously carried.

*Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wichman moved approval of the minutes of the quarterly LCB meeting of November 19, 2003; seconded by Mr. Tallman; motion unanimously carried.

Northeast Florida Regional Council Update

Update on Medicaid Funding Crisis and Recent CTD Actions

- CTD Executive Director Termination/Interim Replacement – Mr. Jones reported that the TD Commission met on December 19 in Orlando and terminated John Stanley as its executive director and Lisa Bacot was selected as interim executive director. Ms. Bacot has worked with Joanne Hutchinson for several years and is very knowledgeable about how the legislative process works. Mr. Jones said the Commission seems very comfortable having her in that position for now, and it is unknown if the Commission will offer her the position permanently or if it will look for someone else.
- Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation RFP – Mr. Jones said there is currently a crisis within the Medicaid system statewide. Medicaid usually contracts with individual coordinators in the counties, but in order to save some transportation dollars, it has put out a 41-month statewide RFP for Medicaid non-emergency services. Mr. Jones has a copy if anyone is interested. Currently, three entities have responded to this RFP -- the Commission, and two private for-profit companies, MV Transportation and Logisticare. Medicaid will announce an intent-to-bid on March 3. If the contract goes to either MV Transportation or Logisticare, they will then sub-contract with entities around the state to provide those Medicaid non-emergency services. The problem is that one overall management entity will then be responsible for setting the re-imbusement rate.

There have been numerous issues with the RFP – many of which have to do with bonding. St. Johns County will be affected because about 31% of its total revenue comes from Medicaid.

Ms. Brown said that they made a business decision as the operator to stay out of the process statewide. She said they decided that every response would be in the interest of serving the riders. They didn't take sides; they didn't go to meetings. She added that their first and most important interest is providing rides in a safe manner. Ms. Brown confirmed that they have been approached to sub-contract.

Mr. Nourse stated his experience with the original proposal by the TD Commission to assume the Medicaid responsibility didn't see them treated very favorably. He said that despite some of the writing in the booklet, it was their experience that TD offered about a 30% reduction in their rates, which was already reduced from the general rate. He added that Medicaid requires that they do non-emergency transport night and day, seven days a week, 365 days per year, and does not compensate them for that, at anything but \$1.50 per mile. He said a lot of the Medicaid trips are cost-consuming – not profitable. He pointed out that the TD Commission also threatened to take away their contract as a TD provider, effective immediately, if they failed to sign an agreement with them at whatever rate the Commission decided. He said that there are a lot of questions about how the TD Commission is going to handle the contract.

Mr. Jones included in the packet an assessment of the effects of the Medicaid RFP by Boyd Thompson of Ride Solution in Putnam County.

- Other CTD Updates/CTD Meetings - The TD Commission is having a special meeting on Friday, February 20, via conference call to discuss the CTC changeover in Flagler County.
- FY 2004-05 TDTF Allocations – Mr. Jones stated that these are funds that come from the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund at the State level. St. Johns County's allocation for trip and equipment grants for the upcoming 2004-05 fiscal year is \$238,701. All the TD grant allocations for the coordinators were down this year due to the lowering of the interest income into the TD Trust Fund.
- 2004 CTD Award Nominations - Mr. Jones made the Board aware that the TD Commission is again asking for nominations for numerous awards which will be given out at its annual conference. He said that St. Johns County has won many of the awards in past years. The cutoff date for receipt of the award nominations is April 1.

Section 5307 Funding for SJCCOA – Mr. Jones reported that recently the St. Augustine area in St. Johns County was designated by the U.S. census as an urbanized area, and as such and after much debate, has been included into the boundaries of the First Coast MPO. St. Johns County had originally advocated becoming its own MPO, however, after much negotiation, it was decided to expand the boundaries of the First Coast MPO and include the St. Augustine area. The newly designated urban areas of St. Johns County were receiving funding from the FDOT through the 5311 program, which is for rural transportation, however, since they are now considered urbanized areas, they no longer qualify for 5311 money. Fortunately, they now qualify for 5307 funding, which is for small urbanized areas.

Mr. Jones then reported there is a problem with the way the federal rules are written for obtaining these new 5307 funds however, as there is a lag period for new MPOs. In order to get 5307 funding, there has to be an established Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a long-range transportation plan, etc., which are typically things that are done on an ongoing basis within an MPO. There is money available in the interim, but the problem is when the rules were written, it was never anticipated what to do if an urbanized area comes into being but then gets absorbed into an existing MPO. So now, the process has begun to attempt to get 5307 funding, which will total about ½ million dollars for the SJCCOA for the transit program. In the meantime, the 5311 money is going to expire, and then only 5311-F money will be left, which expires in October. As such, on October 1, the SJCCOA is facing the loss of all FDOT money for operations. Both the FCMPO and the County are aware of this situation.

Mr. Jones made the Board aware that the County is going to be applying for 5307 funding on behalf of the SJCCOA. In the meantime, the MPO has passed a resolution endorsing the St. Johns County Commission as the recipient of the 5307 monies, and they are currently in negotiations with FTA in Atlanta, and if they can't get anywhere with the district officials in Atlanta, they will go to Washington for resolution of the matter. He said this is a long process, but when complete, it will be worth the effort.

Ms. Brown said she got a ruling from Derrick Scott yesterday that the SJCCOA doesn't have to redo its plan and can go straight to the State TIP.

Mr. Nourse said they received a contract for 5311 funding last week. It's the regular amount they would have received per year, but now they are excluded from using it within the urbanized areas.

Federal/State Legislative Issues

- 2004 TD Day at the Capitol – Mr. Jones said that TD Day will be March 17 in Tallahassee, and the Commission has a partner in sponsoring the luncheon this year. If anyone intends to go, there is a form in the packet that needs to be filled out and sent in so there can be a head-count of attendees by March 5. Mr. Jones noted that although he has never attended TD Day before, he is planning on attending this year.
- TEA-21 Authorization Update – Mr. Jones said he has not heard anything on TEA-21 in the last month. Comm. Bryant said TEA-21 was passed a few days ago.

Miscellaneous Local News Stories of Interest – Mr. Jones included a few news items in the packets for the Board's review.

Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) System Update

Quarterly Non-Sponsored Trip Report - Mr. Nourse reviewed the quarterly report of October 2003 to December 2003, stating that total trips were up slightly and the Sunshine Bus trips were up significantly – about 1,000 rides during that period. TD rides are about the same. Stretcher and wheelchair rides continue to increase, which are both burdens on the system, as only one client can ride at a time. Discussion ensued regarding why these trips were increasing.

Mr. Nourse explained an incentive program they had in effect. He said that each of the employees in the transportation department gets a \$50 bonus if he/she hasn't had any accidents/incidents in or around his/her vehicle, or been reprimanded during that quarter by the supervisor. On a monthly basis, if there are no accidents or incidents, each employee in the entire department receives a \$20 gift certificate to an area restaurant. Mr. Nourse expressed that this incentive program seemed to be working very well.

Mr. Nourse said the Greyhound Bus Station closed with no notice to them, and their new location is not convenient for the TD program to use. He added that the unit next to them came available, so they are now leasing that space, which will give them twice the space. They will build out the front area to make a Sunshine Bus lobby, and will reroute the buses to meet there.

Old Business

There was no Old Business to discuss.

New Business

*2002-03 Annual CTC Evaluation - Mr. Jones distributed the annual 2002-03 CTC evaluation and asked the Board and CTC staff for assistance in filling in some of the categories.

Mr. Jones stated this year there was a significant increase on expense per passenger trip, per vehicle mile, and per driver hour. He said the CTC needs to keep a watch on this especially if there will be a reduction of funds from Medicaid in the future. The fleet utilization is very good, with passenger trips per vehicle going up significantly, as well as trips per driver hour and trips per vehicle mile. Discussion ensued on the rising cost of Casualty and Liability Insurance.

Mr. Jones said the only recommendation he had as staff was to keep a very close watch on the rising insurance costs and continue to monitor opportunities to curtail these costs.

Mr. Jones included performance data for the last six years. He said the pie chart which has the revenue stream shows that the SJCCOA is pretty well balanced compared to several other systems around Northeast Florida. The local revenues are about 27% which is one of the highest in the region for the counties served by the NEFRC. Mr. Jones and Mr. Wichman commented on how well the St. Johns County COA has been running for the past few years.

Ms. Brown said the Health and Human Services is a methodology where they present needs for the community, and the County currently is doing an assessment on wants vs. needs. She stated that one of the things they are facing Thursday with the presentation to help Human Services is the purchase of services from SJCCOA which is about ½ million dollars. She said that some citizens think we are getting a grant for this, and they don't like the extra \$45,000 that has been in the budget to go to TD this issue has been put on the table yet again. She added that the chairman

has defended this, because it allows the SJCCOA to not deny a ride. She asked if everyone could lend some support to this Board and the Chairman's fight for the people, specifically, by writing a letter on one's own letterhead to Dr. Max Wilson, chairman of the Health and Human Services Advisory Council. The letter can be sent in care of Ellen Waldon, Social Services Department.

Mr. Wichman moved to approve the annual evaluation as amended by the Board; seconded by Mr. Tallman; motion passed unanimously.

Member and Department Reports

Department of American Veterans - Mr. Tallman made the Board aware that the DAV chapter here lost its charter for a while, but now it has been re-chartered and has about \$57,000 that it needs to spend. The DAV has a charitable foundation called the *Colorado Trust* that helps chapters buy transportation vans for veterans. Mr. Tallman said they met last night and he's asked that they look into the feasibility of buying a van for the St. Johns County veterans. DAV will pay for insurance, oil, gas, and maintenance on the vehicle. Mr. Tallman asked if the County could help with getting drivers through the TD program. The Board agreed that a coordination contract that would allow other riders on that vehicle, with a veterans preference, might work. The TD drivers could drive the vehicle and the DAV could maintain it. Mr. Jones added that by counting those trips, it would help with obtaining TD money. Mr. Tallman pointed out that funding for the drivers would have to come from the County.

Review of 2004-05 FDOT Section 5310/5311 Grant Applications – Mr. Jones included in the packet the 5310/5311 grant applications for the Board's review. There was no representation from FDOT at the meeting so there was no discussion on this issue.

Update on NEFAAA Staff Changes – Ms. Vickers said the NEFAAA has a new executive director, Linda Levin, from Miami, and there are still about 3-4 jobs open at their agency.

Dept. of Children and Families Update - Mr. Wichman said the Department of Children and Families is collapsing three districts of Northeast Florida into a single zone, which will be housed in Jacksonville, resulting in a reduction of many jobs throughout the three districts. He said he has no idea if he will have a job, or if he does have one, if TD will be a part of his job.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 19, 2004, at 2 p.m.** at the St. Johns County Council on Aging, 180 Marine Street, St. Augustine, Florida.

Adjournment

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.