

Missouri Transportation Taskforce

Legislator Briefing in Jefferson City, MO

January 14, 2020

Attendees: Rep. Scott Cupps, Senator Wayne Wallingford, Rep. Steven Roberts, Cory Schmitt, Chad Eggen (Boonslick RPC), Ed Thomas (Camden County), Mayor Gerry Murawski (City of Lake Ozark), Katherine Carter (Sen. Wallingford's Intern), Andrea Holloway (Opioid TX Specialist at DMH), Pete Breting (Pike County SB40), Jack Gamble, Bill Gamble, Sarah Topp (Gamble and Schlemeier), Teresa Wilke (Silver Arrow Strategies/Cape Girardeau)

Cory Schmitt and Ed Thomas

- Developmental Disabilities Council Task Force - August Meeting and focus on improving transportation coordination for all residents, beyond individuals with disabilities
- Follow up has included 8 months of conference calls
- Thanked Steve Roberts who offered to provide room to build awareness regarding needs, better coordination among state agencies
- We don't know what we don't know – FY19 numbers across budgets were not clear so we don't know how much we are spending on transportation
- MODOT is clear in their types of funding in the budget, but DSS has one known category and the others are not
- MO Health Net spent more on NEMT than all other transportation programs combined
- In some cases numbers aren't tracked at all or data is tracked as part of a specific service
- Appears to be different accounting standards; if there are contracts they track some of the numbers, but from overall state perspective those numbers are not crystalized
- Our ask is not for more money but for a mechanism to improve upon the system within current dollars
- Our incentives from SB40 Board perspective is increasing community inclusion and accessibility for the Developmentally Disabled population
- Federal dollars can be used to match FTA funds, so we need to help local actors understand how they can braid their funding more creatively
- Camden County found that using local dollars to match transportation they were able to free up spots in other waiver programs and serve more individuals
- It cost \$4 per trip with public transit, but the same route cost \$24 roundtrip using NEMT
- There is an existing statute that authorizes the Coordinating Council and there are already mandates at MODOT, DMH and other agencies to report to legislators
- The statewide taskforce has volunteers who can break these pieces up and examine what is happening
- In Perry County, they found that many of the riders on intercity transportation were going for jobs; people often have to travel across county lines to get to work
- Our ask is that we look into this; we need coordination and cooperation and we know the state agencies are already strapped and may not have capacity for this kind of analysis; a volunteer task force might be a good option for examining this data
- We know what the benefits are in Lake Ozark through our needs assessment, 100% of match is funded by local businesses.

Gerry Murawski, Mayor of Lake Ozark

- Our incentive to invest in public transportation was to address two priorities: (1) We wanted to serve seniors in the area and (2) we wanted to move tourists who come to the lake area in the summer.

- All businesses contributed. The local people weren't used to using the public transportation, but the tourists were and started using it right away. Locals took a while. We made it extremely user friendly, which is key in encouraging use of rural transportation.
- Expanded to 800 riders per month in the second year (ran for four months, 12pm to 2am)
- OATS manages and runs the service, and they could contribute half of the costs with state and federal funding, so businesses contributed the second half
- It helped that those who rode the transit spoke with business owners about it.
- Next phase may include a TDD, which would still allow businesses to control use of the dollars.
- We had to help people see the tri-county area as a single community so that folks felt connected to people living on "other side of the lake" which is lower income and has limited employment opportunities
- Employers on the tourist side also needed workers from the "other side of the lake"
- Much of the focus and priorities are dependent on the economic base of the community - retail is faltering, tourism is good "for now" but industrial may have more difficulty
- There are many factors that influence the employment base in rural areas - we created a CDC to help facilitate building workforce housing and I'm also working on education
- State grants appear to be tailored for urban areas – Columbia, St. Louis, Kansas City – and not focused on rural areas; Different in rural areas, example - it is often expensive to bust through rock to build infrastructure for housing in rural areas

Ed Thomas and Cory Schmitt

- The tourism workforce works odd hours (no 9-5 jobs); We used OATS, SMTS to run transportation, but people want to seek funds to purchase their own vehicles rather than partnering with public options
- Those vehicles sit idle and unused but it would be more efficient if we invested in a single provider
- Huge opportunity for agencies to save costs and increase mobility options for the entire community by partnering with existing providers such as OATS and SMTS to provide service.
- We saw a 270% increase in ridership from 2016-2019 and a large portion of these were people getting to work, even on weekends
- Missouri needs a common framework rather than isolated innovations
- Need to promote a collaboration mindset across the whole state
- MPTA has some information that could be used but we need direction and authority from state decision-makers
- The statute that authorized the Coordinating Council was updated in the 2018 session, so someone has initiated looking at the statute within the last two years

Bill Gamble

- What can we do to coordinate and match for federal dollars?
- We need to at least explore it and look at it
- Remember that other federal funds can be used to match FTA
- Missouri is in a unique situation in that our gas tax can't be used on transit
- This requires us to coordinate and maximize funding opportunities for services

Discussion

- Coordination will look different in each region, so there should be local direction as well
- Rep. Cupps (MO-158) relayed challenges identifying data for public transportation and recognized the impact that drivers have on transit dependent individuals; recognized connection with mental health
- There are also a lot of local organizations (e.g., churches) that are willing to provide transportation

- Medicare transportation doesn't inject funds back into the community (Cupps)

Final Word

We need to take a closer look at the statewide data surrounding current transportation services and barriers/gaps so we can identify opportunities to improve coordination and efficiency to deliver enhanced services to people in need of transportation. We've been able to do that in individual counties, but need statewide approach and support of efforts to improve access to transportation services and funding opportunities to increase agency capacity.