



Chittenden County E&D Advisory Committee

Wednesday, June 15th 10:00am

Meeting Minutes

Participants: Marshall Distel (CCRPC), Eleni Churchill (CCRPC), Leah Soderquist (United Way), Chris Damiani (GMT), Adam Lawrence (SSTA), Stephen Falbel, (Steadman Hill), Patti Monahan (Steadman Hill), Gary Rogers, (Burlington), Tim Bradshaw (VTrans), Erin Dickinson (Williston), Erica Marks (AgeWell).

1. Introductions

Marshall Distel welcomed partners to the quarterly meeting. Brief introductions were then made.

2. GMT/SSTA Call Center Study Presentation

Patti Monahan shared a presentation on the E&D, ADA & Medicaid Call Center Consolidation Study, which is being conducted by Steadman Hill and managed by the CCRPC. The impetus of the study came from the 2018 ADA Paratransit and Demand Responsive Services Study, which recommended evaluating options for a consolidated GMT/SSTA call center to identify opportunities for efficiency and cost savings.

The following are three options that Steadman Hill identified to consider for the study:

- Option 1: Centralized Reservations at GMT, Decentralized Scheduling/Dispatch
- Option 2: Contracted Operation of Consolidated Call Center
- Option 3: Centralized Reservations, Scheduling, Dispatch at GMT

After providing an overview of the three options, Patti outlined the project approach and detailed some key findings. Duties of the customer service representatives (CSRs) differ with the GMT call center including fixed route and MyRide services and the CSRs are responsible for different geographic areas. Other findings include: Relationships between CSRs and schedulers/dispatchers are important; there are significant differences in wages/salaries and benefits for call center staff; opportunities for cost savings are limited, but best under Option 2.

The preliminary study recommendation is to continue to include reservations in Chittenden County in the contract currently held by SSTA, while addressing any concerns with service cost or performance through contract oversight.

Leah Soderquist questioned how the potential options would impact the riders' experiences. Patti detailed the current conditions in which riders in Chittenden County call SSTA, while in Washington, Franklin and Grand Isle the calls are handled by GMT. Streamlined communications could be a service quality benefit. However, lower service quality due to loss of knowledge, personal contact between CSRs and the riders whose trip requests they have historically handled should also be considered.

Erica Marks stressed the importance of customer service and the relationships built between the CSRs and the riders.

Tim Bradshaw noted that VTrans would be concerned about any degradation of customer service, especially if cost savings are minimal.

Marshall asked to have the cost savings clarified. Patti detailed how simply centralizing operations would not allow for savings.

Erica asked about the origin of the study. Patti detailed the recommendation from the 2018 ADA Paratransit and Demand Responsive Services Study to evaluate opportunities to create efficiencies.

Tim noted that GMT has already created some new efficiencies with some consolidations in other call centers.

3. GMT Updates

Prior to the GMT updates, Marshall provided a brief overview of the E&D summit. Leah asked for some details about the mobility committee concept and whether this has been implemented anywhere else.

Tim provided some mobility committee details as it relates to Recovery and Job Access Rides. VTrans will be passing along more funding to cover the gaps in services not typically covered by Medicaid and/or the E&D program funds.

Chris Damiani then provided some updates from GMT. The new fixed-route schedule in Burlington with increased headways is now underway. The airport shuttle has also been updated to coincide with the anticipated Amtrak schedule in July. Chris also provided some details about the MyRide pilot evaluation conducted by Stephen Falbel.

4. SSTA Updates

Adam Lawrence highlighted that ridership has returned to 75% of 2019 levels for the E&D program. He also outlined a staffing change on related to the billing department.

5. Other Updates

Marshall provided an overview of the draft FY23 E&D Work Plan. The main goal will be to identify outreach and marketing opportunities to better support the volunteer driver program in Chittenden County. In FY23, CCRPC staff will revisit these previous efforts and collaborate with GMT, SSTA and E&D partners to expand volunteer driver recruitment across our region. United Way has brought in staff focused on volunteer recruitment and placement to support the Neighbor Rides initiative moving forward. CCRPC will engage with the additional staffing capacity from United Way's RSVP and Senior Core department to produce a new marketing strategy for the recruitment of volunteer drivers and to support the long-term growth of the program. CCRPC will also work with United Way to update and distribute the Chittenden County E&D Ride Guide.

Erin Dickinson asked about the role that Williston can have to better support this effort. Marshall responded by outlining how the E&D Committee will play a supporting role in reviewing outreach materials. Marshall will follow up with Erin to discuss in more detail. Tim suggested that Erin visit Go! Vermont (<https://www.connectingcommuters.org/>) for additional resources.

Leah brought up the need to continue moving forward with the Ride Guide refinement and distribution.

Tim mentioned a need to outline accommodations for the deaf community with resources like the Ride Guide.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 14th