

# AGE FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION WORKGROUP MINUTES



Date: 09/08/2020

Time: 03:00pm

Facilitator: Brad Closs and Bruce Gartner

## In Attendance

Brad Closs

Bruce Gartner

Brian Muldoon

Nancy Riley

Manuel Evangelista

Calvin Ball

Jackie Eng

Bruce Fulton

Jason Quan

Emily Ellis

Marian Vessels

Carl Delorenzo

Terri Hansen

Jennifer White

Paul Verchinski

Calli Cenizal

Molly Nur

Kathleen Krintz – Recording Secretary

## Minutes Approved

First: Paul Verchinski

Second: Brad Closs

## Announcements:

Dr. Calvin Ball will be speaking at today's meeting

Emily Ellis will be presenting for Lyft

## New Business:

Dr. Ball: Thanks to Terri for doing a fantastic job convening and moving my vision of being Age-Friendly for this County where people of all ages can have the best quality of life possible. Thanks to Bruce and Jason and Carl and everyone else who has been working so hard just with County Government. I especially want to thank all the volunteers who are making this investment of your time and talent. I Truly believe that Transportation is one of the great equalizers and is one of the most democratized entities we can have to insure accessibility and for people to live their very best lives. I remember when then County Executive Ken Ulman came and talked to me about his feelings of highlighting and elevating transportation. There was some level of skepticism on what that would look like and how that would be realized and you all have not only helped insure that over these years and have been able to move things forward, but with your work here you are building an incredible strong foundation so not just current but future generations of older adults and residents of all ages can have a viable transportation system. In addition to quality of life having viable accessibility to affordable transportation is an economic necessity. When talking to businesses and CEO's from not just the state, but the region and the nation they list transportation as one of the key factors that they evaluate when coming and investing in Howard County. And finally, as we are looking at this global health crisis, one of the things we are seeing is the importance of accessibility and the ability to move around and get to where you need. Not only a safe and convenient but as we are looking at the comorbidities of the people who are getting COVID-19 and dyeing. The top comorbidities

are diabetes, hypertension and excessive weight. A transportation system that is not just about vast transportation but also allowing people to get around is good for the health of our economy and the health of people. I wanted to share my appreciation and to let you know how important I think this is and also to hear the groups thoughts as to where things are.

Brad said the first thing this work group did is come up with a vision statement. It is important to include all ages, abilities and the access. There are 7 very active members on the task force. This groups approach was to;

- Review current services
- Identify gaps and opportunities
- Vision – review of best in class examples

#### Develop Action Plan

- Look at the County with a 3-pronged approach
  - Columbia
  - Ellicott City / Elkridge
  - Rural areas
- Our methods over the last several months were presentations by County Office of Transportation (OOT), subject matter experts and providers, review of best practices.
- The volunteers for this committee
  - Brad Gartner – County Staff
    - ✓ County Staff needs assistance to determine how private sector can assist in meeting transportation needs
    - ✓ Also help to prioritize some of our existing efforts and communication to the public how to access our services and become engaged in the decision-making process.
  - Bruce Fulton
    - ✓ Neighbor Ride wants to continue to be part of the larger solution for transportation for older adults in the County providing the comfort and peace of mind of volunteer base transportation.
    - ✓ Through investments in technology and its volunteers, Neighbor Ride is continuously looking to both expand its services and make them more “plug and play” with partner organizations including local Government, and other non-profits and health care organizations.
    - ✓ Continue to foster and create engaging opportunities for Howard County to leverage its greatest resource – its residents services to their fellow neighbors.
  - Brad Closs
    - ✓ After spending 8-years working on enhancing quality of life for Howard County seniors, serving on this task force is a continuation of that effort.
    - ✓ Opportunity to serve the County in a volunteer capacity and make a difference for our fellow residents
  - Jennifer White
    - ✓ Horizon Foundation continues to advocate for funding and policies that promote a more bikeable and walkable Howard County so families can easily build physical activity into their daily routines
    - ✓ Horizon Foundation is also committed to advancing complete streets goals and serves on the Complete Streets Implementation Team.

- **Marian Vessels**
  - ✓ Interested in assuring that the County provide accessible, usable and safe public transportation, as an individual with a mobility disability and a member of the Transit and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
  - ✓ Interested in options for transportation that is accessible to those of us not living on or close to a bus route.
- **Paul Verchinski – Former FTA official and member of BRTB Public Advisory Committee**
  - ✓ Improve access to and frequency of bus services, including improvements to bus stops, better marketing of bus services and travel training
  - ✓ Interested in increasing:
    1. The efficiency of paratransit services
    2. The supply of volunteer transportation programs
    3. The number of driver support programs
- **Nancy Riley**
  - Wanted to represent the senior population I serve that relies on public transportation for their everyday needs, shopping, doctor appointments, attending college classes or attending 50+ centers. Making sure their transportation needs continue to be accessible and affordable.
  - ✓ Wanted to make sure that Howard County continues to be a place where all ages can live and thrive
- **Jackie Eng**
  - ✓ Here by virtue of by serving on the Pedestrian Transportation Plan Advisory Committee for the Association of Community Services. Have been really committed for the past several years to transportation issues. Continue to push if everything were ADA accessible then everybody in the community would be served.
  - ✓ The same approach is appropriate here. Have services for our aging community and then can also have services that extend to the entire community
  - ✓ I agree with Dr. Ball that transportation is an absolute economic necessity.

#### Transportation Workgroup Focus Areas

- Public Transit
- Private Sector Involvement in Transit
- Pedestrian and Bike Programs
- Educating the Public on Services

#### Whom did we talk to?

- Office of Transportation
  - ✓ Complete Streets
  - ✓ Bike Howard
  - ✓ Walk Howard
  - ✓ Transportation Development Plan
  - ✓ RTA Ridership Data for Fixed Route, General Paratransit and ADA On-demand
- Subject Matter Experts
  - ✓ Dr. Paul Schonfeld, University of Md
  - ✓ MMTB Presentation
- Transportation Providers
  - ✓ Edward Akuffo – Columbia Cab
  - ✓ Bruce Fulton – Neighbor Ride
  - ✓ Lyft – 09/8/2020

## What did we learn?

- County is shifting from Masterplan approvals to Project Design and Implementation Planning (Complete Streets, etc.)
  - Transit System Improvements
    - ✓ Continued focus on fleet improvements/service reliability (11 buses in next 18 months)
    - ✓ COVID-19 impacts will continue to be felt until at least January 1 (Fares, service limits)
    - ✓ Continued focus on technology improvement
      - Real time bus
      - Mobile payments
      - Automated bus stop announcements (FTA Grant)
      - Fare capping
    - ✓ Fixed route expansion on hold due to Pandemic
- Opportunities for collaboration between public and private transportation
  - ✓ Neighbor Ride
  - ✓ Columbia Cabs
  - ✓ Lyft/Uber Partnerships
  - ✓ Need to develop mutual beneficial approach between providers
- Bike and Pedestrian Projects
  - ✓ Existence of masterplans will help focus investment
  - ✓ Complete streets policy will improve project deliver
    - Community Engagement
    - Prioritize Vulnerable Population Areas
    - Design Manual Updated to improve design
- Challenges Identified
  - ✓ Money doesn't grow on trees (reduced state funding)
  - ✓ Potential transit users not aware of services
  - ✓ Current transit service area is limited
    - Rural Areas – no fixed route service
    - Ellicott City/Elkridge – higher density – little service
    - Commuter Bus – MARC – limited usefulness
  - ✓ Limits on GPT (trip purpose) and ADA (proximity)
  - ✓ Neighbor Ride – age 60+ only (service for persons with disabilities is limited)
- Historic county development approach has made biking and walking improvements difficult to implement quickly

## What's Next?

- One additional private sector presentation (Lyft)
- Listening Sessions
  - ✓ Validate our current understanding
  - ✓ Identify gaps in our approach
- Develop Recommendations
  - ✓ Determine priorities
  - ✓ Provide recommendations

Dr. Ball stated that it is evident that this group is putting a lot of work and thought into this process. Transportation is one of the most intractable challenges - primarily for 3 factors.

1. Expensive and a great deal of resources
2. It takes numerous partners at all levels of government & private sector to move forward.
3. It takes a long time to get things done. Some transportation projects take several years.

The time that you are investing is something that will be long lasting. You are working on an issue that many jurisdictions (more than 3,000 counties around the nation) are addressing. Very few can get it right. This group is on the pathway and I think that you are making it so that this transportation system will be better for people of all ages, social economic levels and abilities. I am so proud of the work you have done thus far.

- Terri: Howard County was many steps ahead before we even decided to be an Age-Friendly Community - as far as where we were with Transportation. I believe this group is going to take us so many further steps ahead. The fact that we have Complete Streets, Walk Howard and Bike Howard just puts us so much further head then other jurisdictions when they started out.

#### Lyft Team – Local Market Operations and Transit Presentation

- Emily Ellis Market Operations Senior Manager, Mid-Atlantic. Builds programs, partnerships and strategies that support our local communities.
- Calli Cenizal, Transit Partnerships. Leads all city + transit partnerships and program development.
  - ✓ Company Overview and Experience
    - Mission is to Connect Communities through better transportation
      - ❖ Committed to livable cities
      - ❖ Equity and Inclusion
      - ❖ Collaborative Partnership
      - ❖ Innovative Tools – showed examples on smartphones and for people without smartphones
  - ✓ Program Approach and Examples
    - Examples of Senior Mobility and First Mile/Last Mile
      - ❖ First mile/last mile (Example)
        - Agency goals – provide connections to and from transit for people who live in neighborhoods that are from bus stops
        - Program Design – Riders pay \$1 for each Lyft ride to or from the nearest bus stop or transit center
        - Eligibility – Anyone can use the program by entering the program code into the Lyft app
        - Outcomes – Helps ensure that low-density neighborhoods still have access to transit
      - ❖ Suburban solutions
      - ❖ Paratransit
      - ❖ Grocery stores
      - ❖ Late night
      - ❖ Jobs access
      - ❖ Driver Training/Tutorials
  - ✓ How the Tool Works
    - On-demand non-dedicated service to allow for greater flexibility while remaining affordable
    - Platform technology designed with the rider in mind
    - Geofencing ability to define specific service areas, routes and stops
    - Program management tools to streamline administration, including modifying parameters and rider enrollment
  - ✓ Local Footprint

## Questions and Answers

- Jackie – How precise is that first/last mile (especially in our rural areas)
  - First mile/last mile is a term that is used. The organization will decide what the area is and how far. Bridging the gap.
- Paul – Basic Platform the transit is providing the rolling stock (blue bus) and Lyft is providing the drivers. Older adults getting in accessible ride. And is the access ride door to door or curb to curb.
  - All Lyft rides are curb to curb. As far as the blue bus (example) are using standard Lyft vehicles. As far as the door to door - working and exploring that service (due to extra training for the drivers).

Rides that are provided with lifts are they using your platform or has it that done?

- In certain cities Lyft does have lifted enable vehicles available on the platform and are called wheelchair accessible vehicles. It is not a one solution fits all.

Asking for more information on the concierge service. How would someone be able to use that service in Howard County.

The hospital as the partner would be the ones facilitating that. One example is JHU is using the service to transport their employees especially during COVID. And employees can contact the concierge service to get rides to and from work. The other end of the spectrum is using it for patients as it is cost saving for the Hospital, so patients don't miss their appointments for treatments.

Paul stated that would be a plus if that is somehow facilitated in this County.

- Terri said that is sounds like you will put together a package that the jurisdiction is interested in. Was wondering if you had a list of existing packages in case we do not have something in mind.
  - Would not think of it as packages for a couple of reasons. Can send you information about the levers you would control. It is not set up as a package because it is a pay as you go structure.
- Marian stated that this group is looking at an aging population and what is Lyft's policy with helping the individual in and out of the vehicle and helping with any of the equipment they may have.
  - This can be a gray area and there is not a training specifically around how to clasp a wheelchair, and when to help someone to their front door.
- Jennifer wanted to know if Lyft is thinking about how to be diversify especially when it comes to riders who may have special needs. And also, potentially barriers to using the service. Is there a way to attract drivers who have more experiences in this area?
  - The challenge is recruiting the drivers. Lyft is actively working on this. For folks who need a specific vehicle to accommodate their ride, Lyft needs to make sure that drivers actually have the capability and there are many inspections to make sure the vehicle is permitted to be on the platform for giving accessible rides.
- Member asked what is Lyft's experience with people who are not fluent in English.
  - Lyft is able to see that information and make sure the drivers are getting the messages in their preferred language. The rider will also be able to state their preferred language through the app.

## Old Business:

### Review Other Age-Friendly Community Plans

- Terri stated that she had spoken to Bruce before the meeting and it was decided to put on the agenda for next month's meeting. Brian did put together a really good review. A number of Age-Friendly plans that Brian looked at specifically around the Transportation element. Highlighted some possible tasks that other jurisdictions were exploring that this group may want to look at. This group is far ahead of some of the other jurisdictions in where we are. We want to build and also look at what is already there and grow from that, add to it and believe what Brian has provided to us will be helpful. Also has anyone else in the group reviewed other jurisdictions and have seen something that you believe would be helpful to this group please submit that to Bruce or Brad before next month's meeting.

Brad stated that the group needs to move forward on the action plan. Need to figure out a process to narrow down and come to a consensus as to what is available. If members of the task force have any more organizations the group should be hearing from and will be open to those suggestions as well.

## Homework Assignments:

**Next Meeting:** 10/13/2020 - 3:00PM