

Tri-County Council
for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
Serving Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester Counties

Executive Board Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2020

Joe Mitrecic, Chair, called the meeting of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, Executive Board to order on Wednesday, January 15, 2020 at the Tri-County Council Multi-Purpose Center in Salisbury, at 6:10 p.m.

Voting Members in attendance: Joe Mitrecic and Ted Elder, Worcester County, Eldon Willing and Rex Simpkins, Somerset County, Josh Hastings, and Larry Dodd standing as proxy for John Cannon, Wicomico County.

Guests in attendance: Mindie Burgoyne, Maryland Department of Commerce, and Pat Schrawder on behalf of Mary Beth Carrozza.

Staff in attendance: Greg Padgham, Brad Bellacicco, John Donegan, Becca Webster, Monique Snyder and Brenda Howard.

Upon a motion made to vote made by Larry Dodd and seconded by Ted Elder, the minutes of the October 23, 2019 were approved unanimously with no opposition.

Old Business

Shore Transit Update – Brad Bellacicco

Funding

- FY20 FTA-MTA Operation and Capital grants have been paid for the period July – November, 2019.
- The Department of Human Services (DHS) 3rd quarter funding request for \$416,407.25 is at the State Comptroller's Office.

Routes:

- Fixed route ridership is still good, at about 420 and 180 OTD per day. BEACON is still gathering data for the MPO study on ways to increase ridership.
- Shore Transit met with Rob Hart from the Worcester County Commission on Aging. Mr. Hart is willing to pick up four people south of West Ocean City starting December 2 if he can get funding from Worcester County. Mr. Bellacicco requested that Shore Transit and MTA be involved in any presentation to the Worcester County Commissioners.

Vehicles:

- The revenue fleet currently exists of forty- two buses. Four small and four medium buses have been ordered, and we are waiting on paperwork from MTA to order three medium and three small buses through the FTA grant, which totals \$850,000.00.
- The diesel bus fleet currently stands at:
 - 2007 models – 2
 - 2008 models – 3
 - 2009 models – 1
 - 2010 models – 2
- Small Buses
 - 2003 models – 1
 - 2009 models – 4
 - 2011 models - 5

The 2001 van formerly in inventory was retired last month.

MTA

Shore Transit has requested permission to buy the FTA granted buses off the state contract, and Shore Transit is gathering information for the FY21 ATP due in part on January 24th with the remainder due March 23rd.

Staffing

- Shore Transit currently has eighty-five employees, of which fifty are drivers.
- Six more are needed and six have recently been interviewed to fill those vacancies.
- Two more dispatchers are needed also.
- Three staff recently moved from full to part-time, and one driver is out on an extended medical leave.

Safety Plan

- The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has required that all transit agencies receiving federal funds create a Safety and Transit Asset Management plan that complies with recent Congressional guidance. Shore Transit has coordinated with MTA and their consultant KFH to complete a Safety Management Plan as an annex to the Tri-County Council Policy and Procedures manual approved in 2018. Safety performance targets, such as zero fatalities or injuries, 90% system reliability and .0052 accidents per 100,000 service miles. KFH consultants have reviewed the plan for compliance, and made minor revisions. With the approval of the Executive Board, they will turn the final plan in by March. We are planning to replace radios with computers on the buses with the capacity to text to and from the driver and dispatcher. Radios are being phased out, and Mr. Dodd asked that without the radios, what measure was in place for emergency assistance. Mr. Bellacicco explained that each bus had a button on the computer screen that will alter the call center directly. John stated a backup plan is possible to keep radios on the buses short term.

A motion was made to approve the submission of the safety plan by Ted Elder, and a second by Eldon Willing. The plan was approved unanimously as written.

Shore Transit SSTAP Funding – Worcester County – John Donegan and Brad Bellacicco

SSTAP funding is a senior and disabled funding source that is state sourced only with no federal component. There is a local match requirement of twenty-five percent. These funds are awarded to the counties by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). The counties annually approve their assignment to the Tri-County Council (TCC) and the TCC Board passes a resolution accepting the funds on the county's behalf annually. With SSTAP funding, the TCC/Shore Transit is responsible for as much senior ride service in Worcester County as the budget will allow. That budget is approximately \$125,000 state with a \$41,250 match. That is not a lot of funding for this task and the grants have been flat funded for over a decade. As discussed past meetings, TCC/Shore-Transit has been oversubscribing SSTAP funding in both Wicomico and Worcester Counties by more than 100% and need to cut back the services provided to be in line with the budget.

Worcester County Commission on Aging is a not for profit entity providing senior services in Worcester County. TCC Senior Management staff met with Mr. Rob Hart, the Executive Director and Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins to discuss streamlining services. Mr. Hart advised he has a mandate from Worcester County to provide rides to all seniors who want or need them. Our efforts to meet both goals have resulted in an impasse. At a subsequent meeting with Mr. Hart on the issue, Mr. Hart discussed his intention to have Worcester County Commission of Aging take over SSTAP funding for Worcester County and provide the services. It is also understood that this was approved by the Board at the Worcester County Commission of Aging and will happen effective 7/1/2020. Mr. Hart has notified MTA of these actions and it is our understanding that they will take no action until they receive written approval from all parties, Worcester County Commissioners, Worcester County Commission on Aging and the Tri-County Council. MTA also advised that if this was to occur, the Worcester County Commission on Aging would be responsible to provide all senior/disabled rides in Worcester County, not just the ones for Worcester County Commission of Aging participants. Mr. Hart stated his intention is to provide assistance to and from the house/destination to the bus and expressed the need for funds to establish a call center.

As was discussed in our last meeting in October 2019 and published with the minutes, TCC has done extensive analysis on what this service costs, not just in

SSTAP, but in public transit across the board. Shore Transit is always looking for ways to be more efficient, including shared costs and currently provide services for the overall on the road cost of about \$30 per hour. Mr. Hart has stated that he can provide the service for a lower cost, but will need funding to set up systems such as a call center and other resources. If it is the will of the TCC Board and the Worcester County Commissioners for the Worcester County Commission of Aging to take over the SSTAP grant, Shore Transit may be able to aide Mr. Hart with various components such as call center services. Similar services are provided for entities like the Wicomico County Department of Social Services for a 10% fee. Five buses daily provide services to four centers in Worcester County and one bus to one center in Wicomico County. Mr. Elder asked if improved scheduling could reduce the need in Worcester County. In response, Shore Transit currently utilizes complex software to determine the most efficient way to transport residents; however, Mr. Hart's focus is to move a large number of residents from across the county to the each center at a specific time. Mr. Mitrecic and Mr. Elder advised this matter has not yet been brought to the County Commissioners as of yet. Mr. Dodd asked if it would be helpful to invite Mr. Hart come talk to the Board.

TCC Shore Transit is a team effort to provide economies of scale, buying power and larger visibility at the state and local level. We are happy to help our partners in whatever way we can.

As an update to driver compensation packages, John Donegan reported as Shore Transit hires new drivers they have initiated the transition of moving administration of driver compensation under the Tri-County Council Foundation and with the reduction of optional employee benefits, have effectively increased wages up front.

Multi-Purpose Center – John Donegan

Mr. Donegan reported the Multi-Purpose Center heating system is now on and boilers are functioning properly. Repairs have been finished on the pump house, and plans are in the schedule to paint the public area this winter. Two part-time employees hired to help with landscaping during the summer have been able to stay through the winter to assist with painting. There is now 1800 square feet of non-renovated space in Room 116 and plans are in place to prep the space for a new tenant. TCC is seeking three to five bids through the procurement process to renovate the space.

Tri-County Council Organizational Audit and Indirect Cost Rate – John Donegan

Mr. Donegan reported the 2019 audit is finished and the final report should be out in March 2020. TCC has negotiated its annual Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) with EDA, TCC's cognitive agency, for FY21, and was able to reduce Administrative costs resulting in a drop in the ICR from 13.67% in FY20 to 11.69% in FY21. Contracts for payroll services to Departments of Social Services totaling approximately 3.5 million currently generate revenue of just under \$300,000 for the Tri-County Council.

New Business

Lower Shore Workforce Alliance – Special Projects – Becca Webster

Becca Webster reported that unfortunately, the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance (LSWA) has been faced with eliminating two long-term funded programs in Wicomico County, the Computer Resource Lab (CRL) at the American Job Center and the Job Search Center at the Wicomico County Public Library. They were looking at expanding to two other counties when the funders asked the following questions during the approval process:

- Why are we providing services through the library that we provide at the LSWA free of charge?
- How are we assessing the participating visitors and deciding which type of service they may qualify to receive under, i.e. Title I, II, or III funding?
- WIOA title I formula funds allocated to local areas for adults and dislocated workers provide career and training services through the one-stop delivery system. How can we deliver these services in a way that is compliant without the individual becoming a participant?

An analysis determined participants were not being tracked according to required federal regulations. They were not being assessed or tracked through the Maryland Workforce Exchange. In order to capture these participants, LSWA would have to add several staff as we do not outsource adult and dislocated worker programs. After much consideration, it was determined that changing the structure of the agreements to reach compliance was not an effective choice, and free services were available at the American Job Service Center. LWSA gave forty-five day notice to the Wicomico County Library to allow staff to have a chance to job search, and that program ends 1/31/20. Wor-Wic's Computer Resource Lab will be open until March to finish the program they started.

LSWA received a number of calls from Wicomico County expressing concern

over the lost part-time positions, however we cannot justify spending \$45,000 to duplicate services, and could not defend the program based on the requirement of the law. Forty-five days' notice was given to allow staff a chance to job search and those funds will go back into occupational skills training. Mindie Burgoyne questioned why LSWA should duplicate a program with services provided elsewhere in the same area. She suggested reaching out to the library to inform them of the face-to-face services provided at the Job Center. Ms. Webster offered to go before the Wicomico County Council and explain the situation to help clarify the reasons behind the hard decisions made to end the programs. The Lower Shore Workforce Alliance will continue to seek additional ways to partner with the Library and Wor-Wic. It is understood the Library is currently also seeking other funding.

Somerset County Municipal Representative Board Appointment – Greg Padgham.

Tri-County Council bylaws require that each county provide a municipal representative. Effective 1/1/20, the Somerset County Municipal Representative will be Nelson Sheppard from the Crisfield City Council. Mr. Sheppard will serve as a voting member on the Full Council.

TCC Executive Director Itinerary – Greg Padgham

Greg Padgham shared a chronological visitation list that highlighted his day to day as an example of the work accomplished at the Tri-County Council.

Ted Elder asked about the status of broadband legislation for utility companies to use easements to provide last mile broadband service. Greg advised a task force was formed two to three years ago with recommendations to fund \$8,000,000.00 to \$9,000,000.00 to underserved counties or cities with match money to pay for the last mile of broadband service. The last mile is defined as going from the middle mile trunk line fiber optic cable to the individual homes and businesses. He advised a box is now located in downtown Salisbury that can download up to 1 gig. He recommended going to the RMC website to see the maps that show underserved areas in Maryland. Josh Hastings added that Rural Maryland Day is February 4, 2020, and offers a great opportunity to talk to other counties about what is happening throughout the state.

With no other business to discuss, Larry Dodd made a motion to adjourn and Josh Hastings brought a second. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.