



Minutes for the RCC Meeting November 16, 2022.

The RCC Chairperson, Valerie Shaw, called the meeting to order at 9:10am. The meeting was held in person at the Tuscarawas County Senior Center, Dover, Ohio. The meeting was in person and no virtual option was offered, though Macie Moore with ODOT was permitted to video conference into the meeting for her presentation. There were eighteen people in attendance with Macie attending virtually.

Madam Chairperson reviewed the housekeeping items and the meeting agenda and welcomed members and guest speakers. Ms. Hill called the roll and made sure the attendance sign-in sheet was complete.

Madam Chairperson reviewed the minutes from the last RCC meeting on September 21, 2022. Minutes were sent to all members prior to the meeting for their review. There were no corrections or additions. Motion to accept the minutes as presented was made by Sandy Burrier; seconded by Shannon Hursey. Motion carried.

Cherie Wetzel and Jill Cunningham provided our “Local Spotlight” segment highlighting both Tuscarawas County and the services provided by the Tuscarawas County Senior Center.

Jill Cunningham, Mobility Manager for Tuscarawas, Carroll, and Harrison counties provided an overview of activities and facts about Tuscarawas County. Welcome to Tuscarawas County, a Native American word meaning “mouth of the river”. Much of our popularity as a tourist destination in Eastern Ohio comes from our nearly 20 museums and over 300 events and festivals throughout the seasons. The food scene is alive with farm fresh options, ethnic cuisine, homemade pastries and even a pizza trail! Enjoy tastings at one of our nine wineries or from one of our four breweries. Some of the season’s upcoming holiday events are:

Christmas tours at Reeves Museum, going on now through December 30th.

Warther’s Christmas Tree Festival, happening now through November 20th.

The Polar Express at the Dennison Depot, available multiple times running two weekends, December 2-5 and December 9-11.

Christmas in Zoar, December 3-4, (Donnie’s Tavern)

Newcomerstown Christmas Wonderland, beginning November 18th.

On Dec 10th-It's a Wonderful Life Radio Play at the Ohio Star Theatre in Sugarcreek. Also currently playing is "Our Christmas Dinner" the musical.

Light up Sugarcreek

Luminary Walk- The Norma Johnson Center

The Tuscarawas Performing Arts Center (The PAC)

Tuscarawas County is rich in history and community. I great place to spend the day or stay for a weekend.

Cherie Wetzel, Transportation Director for Tuscarawas Senior Center, provided an overview of the Senior Center and its offerings. The Tusc. Senior Center was established in 1979 and moved to its current location in 2005. They provide transportation and have in-home services and minor home repair services as well. The Tusc. Senior Center hosts the mobility management position and has 5 satellite sites to best cover the entire county. They have a computer lab and a library, as well as exercise equipment and a walking track located in the basement level. The Center provides hot meals for Seniors as well. Year to date the Tusc. Senior Center has provided about 24,000 trips and served 800 clients travelling over 300,000 miles. In a typical pre-covid year, the Center provided approximately 50,000 trips a year serving over 1200 clients.

Macie Moore, ODOT, Office of Transit video conferenced into the meeting to provide an update on the Mobility Ohio Pilot taking place in four of our counties including Tuscarawas, Coshocton, Guernsey, and Muskingum.

Macie reported that there was a meeting held October 28, 2022, in Cambridge which included the three "contract partners" to review the structure of the RTRC (Regional Transportation Resource Center). The three contract partners are OMEGA for mobility management functions and oversight; AAA9 acting as fiscal agent for the RTRC; and SEAT who will provide brokerage call tracking functions.

ODOT is keenly interested in having regional input and has decided to establish three committees to provide feedback for the project. The operations committee will consider policy and procedures for the brokerage and tracking of calls into the RTRC. Members will be the 3 transit directors (Howard Stewart, Shannon Hursey and Valerie Shaw) and Shon Gress, with ODOT as chair. The finance committee will consider invoicing and money tracking policies and procedures and be led by AAA9. OMEGA will lead the Marketing committee working with regional mobility managers to develop consistent messaging.

The three committees will all report to a regional TAC who will then be responsible to a Board of Directors. The Board will adopt policy and have final decision-making authority. Currently it is anticipated that county commissioners from each of the four counties in the pilot will recommend one person to be appointed to the Board of Directors. This appointee may NOT be a transit director or have any conflict of interest created by their organization potentially benefiting from the RTRC. Guidelines are being developed for the commissioners as they consider who to recommend for the Board. The Board will also be responsible for the hiring of an Executive Director.

ODOT is hoping the Board will be established by February or March of 2023. County workshops will be held after a Board is established and the committees have had a chance to meet so that some structure is in place and some of the expected questions can be answered.

MOU/contracts still need to be written, negotiated, and signed with the 3 contract partner agencies. This process will begin after the Federal Grant has been formally secured and accessed. The non-profit which will eventually become the RTRC also needs to be established, and legal ramifications and safeguards are being looked at currently.

Macie tasked the RCC members with providing feedback to her including what the region is expecting from the county workshops in terms of information they hope will be provided to them and who should be invited to those workshops (it is too premature to have them be open to the general public, though those meetings will also occur at a later date). Macie then ended her call and left the meeting.

What followed was a very open and robust discussion of issues and ideas about the county workshops and the pilot program in general and in specific. Ms. Hill took notes of the discussion and will send a summary of the notes to the RCC members who are present at the meeting and directly involved with the pilot for comment and review before sending them to ODOT before November 22, 2022.

Following the lengthy discussion about Mobility Ohio, the meeting returned to agenda items. Our first speaker, Katie Grubbs, Community Impact Coordinator for the United Way of Muskingum, Perry and Morgan counties, presented a slide presentation that detailed the mission of the United Way and the ways in which the United Way has supported transportation through grants to the three counties. In fact, the United Way has been a generous and committed partner in several counties in Region 9 including Muskingum, Coshocton and Tuscarawas in providing grant funds through the mobility managers that have helped provide trips or gas cards for those that are in need of transportation but fall outside other funding sources – they need the trips but are financially challenged to pay for them. Mobility managers in all three counties have helped dozens of persons who “fall through the funding cracks” to get needed transportation and the region is very grateful for the generous support of the United Way. Ms. Grubbs’ slide presentation may be found in its entirety on the OMEGA website at www.omegadistrict.org

Our next speaker was Debra Cook, Executive Director of the Tuscarawas County Veterans Services Office. She reminded the group that they are NOT the VA (Veteran’s Association, a federal agency) but are rather a liaison between the VA and vets. It is mandated that there be one Veteran Service office in each county, and they are a county-funded agency, but they operate under and adhere to federal VA guidelines. They are federally mandated to provide trips at least once a week to VA hospitals. They provide transportation services only to the VA medical facilities and can only transport county residents. They currently transport vets to VA medical facilities in Cleveland, Canton, and Akron primarily. The Tuscarawas Veterans Service Office is funded by a small percentage of the local property taxes. Clients call directly into the center for trips and a 48-hour notice is preferred. They currently have 5 vehicles and of those, 2 are wheelchair accessible. Ms. Cook brought brochures and literature about the transportation and other important services they provide. She is also a veteran herself and we thank her for her service to this country.

Turning to regional business, Ms. Hill first presented several results from the regional survey of unmet needs. This survey takes place throughout the entire year and for CY 2022 we have received over 1900 survey responses. These survey responses help the region to collect the direct voice of seniors and persons with disabilities on unmet transportation issues they face and provide both a regional and county-to-county comparison of needs. The survey responses help the region to develop a list of unmet needs, and goals and strategies, which is inclusive and sensitive to the specific needs of seniors, disabled persons, and persons of low income.

After a review of some of the survey questions and responses (these can be seen in the meeting slide presentation located on the OMEGA website at www.omegadistrict.org) there was a review of the SWOT analysis for CY2023. This analysis was developed within the Steering Committee and then reviewed for comment before being presented to the RCC membership for review and comment. Motion to adopt the SWOT analysis as presented was made by Cherie Wetzel with a second by Tracy Haines. The motion passed unanimously.

The Regional Unmet Needs for CY2023 were presented for discussion. The unmet needs were also developed and reviewed by the Steering Committee before being presented for review and discussion at the RCC meeting. Motion to adopt the Regional Unmet Needs as presented was made by Joe Crocker and seconded by Jill Cunningham. The motion passed unanimously.

A calendar for next year's meetings was presented. Ms. Hill will follow up with meeting invitations. The RCC will continue to meet quarterly in conjunction with the Steering committee. Meetings will "travel" throughout the region with lunch offered afterward. The addition of the local spotlight segment has also been appreciated and will continue. The first RCC meeting in 2023 will be January 18, 2023 and be held at AAA9 offices in Cambridge. The speaker topic will be Social Return on Investment.

For the good of the region, several announcements were made:

1. Kevin Buettner has returned to OMEGA as Transportation Director! 😊
2. OPTA awarded Valerie Shaw, CCCTA Director, the Rising Stars under 40 Excellence Award!
3. Howard Stewart was elected as OPTA's next Vice President and is slated to become OPTA President the following year!
4. Lisa Leckrone, our colleague in Region 8, Perry County, was awarded Mobility Manager of the Year.
5. SEA transportation has moved to a new location in Tuscarawas County and Access Tusc Public Transit will relocate to a larger building at the end of the year, also in Tuscarawas County.

A wonderful, café style, Thanksgiving Dinner was provided to those who wished to enjoy lunch with the group by the Tuscarawas County Senior Center and was thoroughly enjoyed! Thank you for hosting not only the meeting but the meal as well.

Hearing no other announcements, Madam Chairwoman adjourned the meeting at 11:57 am.

The Steering Committee report was given by Deborah Hill, OMEGA Regional Transit Planner. Regional goals, strategies, and action steps have been completed. In anticipation of the Regional Coordinated Plan Revision which will take place next year, the next agenda items will include review/revision of the SWOT analysis, Origin-Destination mapping, and analysis of the survey for unmet needs data results.

The meeting topic was next introduced. The topic brought focus to “Barriers Before the Bus Doors Open and Barriers After the Bus Doors Close”. Ms. Hill began the topic exploration by providing an exercise in barriers created by language – either because of different home languages or because of illiteracy issues. She reviewed a diverse list of disabilities that affect how and why transportation is sought and delivered and how barriers must be in the forefront of all aspects of transportation. Deb also provided an exercise to demonstrate how people may feel unequipped or unable to navigate life’s challenges and transportation needs.

Misty Smith, AAA9, then provided an age sensitivity experience to help us better understand issues faced by the aging and senior population. Depth perception issues, sight impairment and hearing loss, dexterity challenges, memory loss issues, and illness were all “experienced” and points made how each related to transportation needs and limitations; AAA9 will provide this sensitivity training for drivers, businesses, etc. upon request at no charge. The slide presentation may be found on the OMEGA website.

Kayleen Carpenter, Rose Community Management, manages Riverside Towers in Coshocton which is a housing facility for seniors and those with disabilities. She also lives with Cerebral Palsy. She provided a “Fireside Chat” of the reality of what it is like to be disabled through all aspects of life from childhood throughout adulthood. She also offered valuable insight on transportation issues.

Kayleen passionately and authentically shared how transportation brings back dignity and independence to individuals with disabilities. She also highlighted the need to bring a companion rider for transportation as support, which has also been identified as a regional unmet need through the regional surveys. She mentioned how solving barrier issues for one disability can inadvertently become a barrier to another segment of the disabled population. For example, raised curb ramp “bumps” are helpful for those with vision impairment but are also, inadvertently, very difficult for persons who have depth perception issues. She suggested the benefits that might be gained if providers would plan routes based upon disability and mobility issues. She also mentioned that though the vast majority of transportation drivers were excellent and caring, still the need for sensitivity education for drivers on different types of disabilities is needed.

Lastly, Kayleen spoke about the recent outing that 30 of her residents were able to take to the canal boat rides in Coshocton solely because of CCCTA and the free fares within the county. A trip had not been taken in 12 years and she was able to truly make the RCC members feel how life changing and

impactful transportation is and what a high impact the efforts of providers have on the lives of those people they serve through transportation.

In discussion with the group, and from the other presentations, it was clear that there are social returns on investment that need to be highlighted and considered in transportation in addition to the data driven results we currently track. These social returns on investment need to be included in our regional metrics and specifically added to the Regional Coordinated Plan.

The calendar for the rest of 2022 was then addressed. The fourth quarter November meeting will be hosted by the Tuscarawas Senior Center, Dover, Ohio with lunch afterward at the Senior Center. The meeting topic will be “Veteran’s Services and the United Way”.

Madam Chairperson called for the “Good of the Region” Announcements which included:

- * Nicki Silver, Mobility Manager for Muskingum and Guernsey counties, received a \$1500 grant from United Way for gas cards for those who need transportation but fall thru the cracks of other funding sources. She is also updating the Region 9 Resource Guide to include food pantries and homeless shelters.

- * Senior Services of Belmont County (SSOBC) is expanding their home delivered meals program to include an 11th route – they serve over 1,200 meals a day to seniors. They are also purchasing a generator so they will be able to serve as a warming center in the winter and for emergency use.

- * Tracy Haines, Mobility Manager for Coshocton County, was awarded \$2,500 from United Way for NEMT for people who are not eligible under other funding programs. They also received a Coshocton Foundation grant for more than \$70,000 for match funds for the multiuse path project on CR 621. A TAP grant of over \$800,000 was awarded to complete the multi-use path project.

- * Invitation was made for everyone to join us at the Steak and Stein Restaurant in Roscoe Village after the meeting.

There were no further announcements. Motion to adjourn was made by Kevin Davis, with a second by Sheri Wetzel, and Madam Chairperson called the meeting adjourned at 10:49am.