



RCC/Steering Committee Meeting Minutes February 21, 2024

The RCC/Steering Committee meeting was held in person at the AAA9 Conference Room, 710 Wheeling Ave., Cambridge, Ohio on February 21, 2024. Sixteen people were in attendance and two non-voting guests attended virtually.

Madam Chairperson, Shannon Hursey, called the meeting to order at 9:02 am. She welcomed members and guests, reviewed the meeting agenda, and asked for all attendees to sign the sign in sheet for attendance records.

Madam Chairperson called for a review of the minutes from the most recent meeting which took place January 17, 2024. Minutes from that meeting were provided to all members prior to the current meeting for their review. There were no corrections to the minutes as presented. Motion was made by Sonja Trbovich to accept the minutes as presented, with a second by Jill Cunningham. The motion was carried unanimously with none opposed.

Deborah Hill, Regional Transit and Mobility Programs Coordinator, Omega, then began the regional business portion of the meeting.

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) report has been published and all members received both a pdf copy and a link where the report can be accessed. All were encouraged to share the study results with stakeholders and any other interested parties. The SROI study may be found at the following link:

<https://omegadistrict.org/programs/transit/sroireport/>

It may also be found in its entirety on the OMEGA website at:

www.omegadistrict.org under “programs”, then “transit”, then “SROI report”.

Following the report link, the one-page report deliverable targeting legislators was shown. This document was also made available to all members and was

distributed at the Ohio Loves Transit Legislative Day event in Columbus. Requests for either or both documents can be made to Dhill@omegadistrict.org

The major task at hand for this meeting was the beginning of the revision of the Regional Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Plan which is due to ODOT by June 30, 2024. The revision, the first revision of the inaugural plan, will cover five years from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2028. The revision must include a revised list of Regional Unmet Needs, a SWOT analysis, Regional Goals, Regional Strategies and Regional Action Items as well as other demographic and analytical data.

To develop the Regional Unmet Needs, several data sets were reviewed. These included the Regional Survey of Unmet Needs CY 2023 results, current top trip generators, current and year-to-year regional performance measures data, and the most recent list of unmet needs.

The CY 2023 Regional Survey of Unmet Needs yielded 838 responses. This number is significantly less than CY2022, but we believe that is mostly due to the fact that we also conducted five additional surveys to gather data needed for the SROI project. Some results from the survey included:

1. Public Transit is being mostly utilized for medical trips.
2. The majority of responders use transportation 1-4 times per month and are generally satisfied.
3. When asked how services could be improved, respondents chose “operate on Saturday, travel outside the county, end services later in the evening, and operate on Sunday” as the top needs. These were the same top requests seen in the previous survey results.
4. The number one additional accommodation requested was a travel/transportation companion. This was also the most requested in the previous survey and led to the current study and potential pilot program for a volunteer companion project.

We then had a discussion about regional data collection and the timing of the data collection. ODOT has recently changed their program funding cycle to coincide with the state fiscal year rather than the calendar year. To be more in line with this decision, we discussed the possible benefits of also moving to a state fiscal year for data collection. This will leave a six month “gap” of data which could

either be used separately with a footnote that it covers only a six month period, rolled into the next data cycle which would then represent an 18 month data cycle and need to be noted as such, or ignored with survey and other data collection systems just starting fresh July 1 , 2024. The decision of what to do with the six month “gap” will be left to a future meeting, however, there was a motion made by Sonja Trbovich to switch to a State Fiscal Year data cycle to align with ODOT programs, seconded by Sandy Burrier. Motion carried, unopposed.

We next considered top trip generators both by county and regionally. The top trip destinations ranged from within the OMEGA counties all the way to Cleveland and Columbus. Each county provided the top destinations and, to a county, medical facilities and dialysis locations provide the highest demand on public transits. There was discussion that the high demand for medical trips and the critical need to provide Medicaid trips in order to generate match funds is leading to high trips denials for trips of any other kind and creating a large, and growing, lack of capacity for local trips.

The group proceeded to review regional performance measures both for CY 2023 and to consider year-over-year data results. It was noted that the region as well as individual providers were all experiencing higher no shows rates and higher trip denial rates. Nearly half of all no shows were Medicaid trips. There was discussion of why we might be seeing these results, and several concerns were brought forth including,

High trip denials are a result of capacity issues. Medicaid trips MUST be accommodated to acquire critical match funding, but those trips are crowding out local trips and increasing out of county/ out of region demand which is straining public transits and transportation providers in the region.

The high trip denial rate might also be a result of Medicaid required trips. Medicaid trips tend to prefer trips between noon and 5pm with a high demand at about 2pm. This overcrowding of trips at specific times of the day leads to higher denial rates. Also of note, providers report there is a change in attitude toward travel preference in the afternoon as opposed to the morning, especially in the

senior population. Also noted is an increase in the number of same day and last-minute requests. Since Covid, there has been a change in the public perspective of public transit and a desire for single rides per vehicle, which is not in line with public transit objectives, nor sustainable as a practice. Discussion about a need for a public education/outreach campaign was initiated to help riders understand that public transit is not a taxi service available on demand and able to transport one person at a time. Both the public and staff (who make every effort to be accommodating to their riders) need an awareness that single ridership is not a right or a guarantee of public transit and their services. We spoke briefly of the possibility of looking to see if there might be funding opportunities to put video screens in busses that could promote public awareness of the eventuality that riders ride with others as well as safety messages or other important public service announcements and that might aid in the public understanding and acceptance of public transit policy, options, and limitations.

Finally, it was also noted that changing traffic patterns and current major road construction within the region, especially between Zanesville and Columbus, make it difficult to schedule trips effectively which also impacts trip denials.

Taking all this information and data into account, we looked at current unmet needs and revised them. The newly revised Regional Unmet Needs are as follows:

REGION 9 UNMET NEEDS

1. Adequate Numbers of Drivers, Staff and Vehicles to Provide Currently Requested and Expanding Services.
2. Adequate 5310 and 5311 funding and match funding sources and availability.
3. Creative Funding Strategies for Those Financially Challenged but Not Covered by Medicaid or Other Transportation Funding Assistance Programs/Sources.
4. Expansion of Transportation Services including:
 - Non-medical Service Hours
 - Saturday and Sunday Service Hours
 - Service Options After Hours
 - Full Coverage Service in Rural Areas
 - Out of County (OOC) and Out of Region (OOR) Transportation

5. Available and Adequate Number/Sources of Transportation Companions
6. Adequate Employment Transportation Options
7. Adequate Cohesive Technology Systems Across Region that Interface with State Agencies (Ex. JFS, DD, Aging)
8. Education of, Advertising to, and Increased Awareness by the Public of Available Transportation Options, Including Understanding of Funding Sources.

A motion to accept the Regional Unmet Needs as revised was made by Shon Gress with a second by Alexandra West. The motion was approved with none opposed. Though these unmet needs were voted upon, and the motion carried, the revised list will be sent to members for additional review and an adequate comment period. Final approval will be sought at the next meeting.

Our attention then turned toward the revision of the most recent SWOT analysis which was assessed in CY2022. There was a point-by-point discussion of the current SWOT segments, and the following represents the revised SWOT analysis as developed by members.

SWOT-STRENGTHS

- 1. Regional Commitment to Provide Excellent Transportation Services including Driver and Transit Staff Commitment/Passion for Riders Needs and Satisfaction.**
2. Beneficial and Collaborative Relationships with Stakeholders.
3. Person-Centric and Supportive Relationships with Clients.
4. Mobility Management Network and MM – Led Initiatives.
5. Steering Committee Support.
6. Inclusion and Utilization of Social Return on Investment Research Results.

A motion to accept the SWOT- Strengths as revised was made by Shannon Hursey with a second by Tracy Haines. The motion passed with no one objecting. Though these Strengths were voted upon, and the motion carried, the revised list will be

sent to members for additional review and an adequate comment period. Final approval will be sought at the next meeting.

SWOT – WEAKNESSES

- 1. Lack of Drivers and Staff Adequate to Provide Current and Expanding Transportation Services.**
2. Lack of, or Very Limited, Same Day, After Hours and/or Weekend Services.
3. Lack of Extended Service Hours and Public Transit Routes to Support Coordinated Employment Opportunities (primarily but not limited to 2nd/3rd shift)
4. Lack of Transportation Coverage in the More Rural Areas of Counties.
5. Lack of Available and Affordable Out of County (OOC) and Out of Region (OOR) Transportation.
6. Lack of Transportation Funding Sources for Those Not Qualified for Medicaid or Other Funding programs.
7. Lack of Transportation Companions for Vulnerable Populations.
8. Ridership Holding Negative or Misunderstood Perceptions of Public Transit Regulations and Limitations.
9. Lack of Funding Opportunities and/or Partners and the Inability to Create Match Funds to Access Federal and State Grants.

A motion to accept the SWOT- Weaknesses as revised was made by Sandy Burrier with a second by Jill Cunningham. The motion passed with no one objecting. Though these Weaknesses were voted upon, and the motion carried, the revised list will be sent to members for additional review and an adequate comment period. Final approval will be sought at the next meeting.

SWOT-OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Enhance Rider Experience Through Improved Customer Service and Expanded Transportation Services.**
2. Create Employment Transportation Initiatives.

3. Create Transportation Companion Initiatives.
4. Mobility Ohio Pilot Program.
5. Promote Social Return on Investment Results in All Aspects of Transit and Regional Coordinated Plan.
6. Expand Use of Technology (Scheduling, Operations, and Administration)
7. Develop Creative Transportation Funding Strategies for Those Riders who Fall Outside Medicaid and Other Transportation Program Guidelines but Still Face Financial Hardship in Securing Needed Transportation.
8. Create and Increase Direct Rider Representation, Advocacy, and Participation, of Seniors, Disabled Persons, and Persons with Low Income.
9. Establish and Enhance Specific Transit Access Points Between Counties.
10. Educate and Inform the Region (Public and Providers) to Produce a Common Regional Knowledge of Transportation Options.
11. Partner and Coordinate with All Available Resources to Improve Collaboration and Enhance Mobility Options.
12. Increase/Expand Transportation Providers in Very Rural Areas of all Counties.
13. Streamline Regional Performance Measures for All Providers.
14. Educate Local and State Politicians About Transportation Funding Limitations, Needs, and Impacts.

A motion to accept the SWOT- Opportunities as revised was made by Sonja Trbovich with a second by Tracy Haines. The motion passed with no one objecting. Though these Opportunities were voted upon, and the motion carried, the revised list will be sent to members for additional review and an adequate comment period. Final approval will be sought at the next meeting.

SWOT-THREATS

- 1. Loss/Lack of Adequate Funding and Local Match.**

2. Shifting ODOT Priorities Away from Providing 5310 Operating Cost Funding.
3. Loss/Lack of Drivers, Staff, and Vehicles.
4. Threat of the Unknown and Potentially Negative Consequences from Mobility Ohio Pilot Program, Including Loss of Personal Connection with Customers, Loss of Transit Autonomy/Identity, and Loss of Funding Due to Program Changes.
5. Inability to Obtain New/Additional Vehicles Sufficient to Provide Requested and Expanding Transportation Services Extending for an Unknown Period.
6. Increased Trip Denials Due to Lack of Vehicles, Staff, Capacity Restraints and Funding.
7. Loss of Trips and Reduced Capacity for Same Day Trips and Short Notice Trips Due to Out of County (OOC) and Medical Trip Commitments.
8. Increased Costs to Provide Services and Lack of Reimbursement (Loss of Recovery).
9. Lack of Broadband, and Reliable Cell Phone Service in Rural Areas.
10. Interstate and Intrastate Regulations That May Threaten or Conflict with Coordinated Transportation Initiatives.
11. Lack of Ambulette and Non-Emergency Ambulance Providers.
12. Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities Who Receive Funding for Transportation Services Over-Utilizing Transit/Transportation Capacity Without Equitable Compensation.
13. Persistent Negative Public Transit Perceptions and False Stereotypes.

A motion to accept the SWOT- Threats as revised was made by Sandy Burrier with a second by Shannon Hursey. The motion passed with no one objecting. Though these Threats were voted upon, and the motion carried, the revised list will be sent to members for additional review and an adequate comment period. Final approval will be sought at the next meeting.

Lastly, focus turned toward the revision of Regional Goals. Discussion of current goals was followed by the development of revised Regional Goals, which included:

REGIONAL GOALS:

Goal 1: To Maintain and Expand Transportation Services and Options.

Goal 2: To Educate and Inform the Public, HHS Agencies and Organizations, and other Stakeholders as to the Transportation Service Options and Funding Available.

Goal 3: To Ensure and Increase Equity, Access, Inclusivity, and Safety in Transportation Services and Options.

A motion to accept the Regional Goals as revised was made by Tracy Haines with a second by Jill Cunningham. The motion passed with no one objecting. Though these Regional Goals were voted upon, and the motion passed, the revised list will be sent to members for additional review and an adequate comment period. Final approval will be sought at the next meeting. Regional Strategies and Action Items for the fulfillment of these goals remain to be revised/developed but will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Under regional announcements:

Kevin Buettner has left OMEGA and accepted the position of Transportation Planning Director at Belomar. His contributions to our communities were many and he is wished all the best in his new position.

Nicki Silver has left her position as Mobility Manager for Muskingum and Guernsey counties and taken a position as Pediatric Case Manager with MVHC. She spearheaded a wheelchair ramp program as well as securing tens of thousands of dollars in funding for those who fall between the gaps of transportation program funding. We wish her great success in her new position.

Joe Krocke is leaving JFS Tuscarawas for an IT position with JFS Stark. We thank Joe for his dedicated service and wish him success in his new role.

SEA is under the directorship of Ada Mears, as Kevin Hannahs officially retired at the beginning of the year. Ada is working roughly three days a week as her health continues to improve and Kevin is temporarily working as a driver to help out with driver shortage issues. Many thanks to Kevin for his dedicated service and all good wishes for Ada's continuing health improvement.

Horizon's is in critical jeopardy of discontinuing all transportation services. This will be highly impactful because they are the only providers of later in the evening transportation services in Tuscarawas County.

There were no other announcements for the good of the Region.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sonja Trbovich and seconded by Jill Cunningham. All approved. The meeting concluded at 11:54 am.