

SOUTHWEST IOWA PLANNING COUNCIL

Transit Advisory Group (TAG) Meeting

June 22, 2023, 11:30 a.m.

Atlantic Golf and Country Club (102 W. 29th St., Atlantic, IA) OR via Zoom

Minutes:

Call to Order: Mark Lander called the meeting to order at 11:30am.

Roll Call: Introductions were made and those in attendance included: Travis Halm, MAPA; Mark Lander, Transit Director SWITA; Mindy Jensen, Communications Coordinator SWIPCO / SWITA; Danielle Bruce, SW IA Mental Health Disability Region; Talya Kamies, Allen Place; Sara Brown, Allen Place; Krystina Elings, Allen Place; Megan Brix, Zion; Angela Hawkins, Zion; Shope Van Ert, Zion; Tami Jensen, City of Council Bluffs; Savannah Tellgren, League of Human Dignity; Jan Schnack, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program; Sherri Clark, Nishna; Sara Large, Salvation Army; Ashley Henry, Crest Services

Discussion points:

Additional hours for the taxi in Red Oak – Danielle Bruce discussed that some of her staff have shared the concern that work transportation after 5pm is difficult to come by and often, clients are unable to take certain jobs because they do not have transportation. Lander shared that the biggest issue for them is that this is typically a one-off situation rather than several people needing transportation to one location at the same time. Lander shared that the policy is for SWITA to pay drivers at least 2 hours if they are called out for after taxi hours trips. Lander shared that financially they cannot do one person trips after 5pm because of this. Lander stated that they also have driver shortages which also hinders the transportation situation when the driver goes on a lunch break. Sherri Clark shared that she understands the challenge of not having drivers or even staff to work hours as Nishna also has this concern. Sherri stated that they try to step up to help clients when they can after the taxi hours are done but they also have staff shortages. Lander asked Jan Schnack if she could possibly look into finding volunteer drivers in that area and then he would be willing to find a vehicle for them to lease to do rides after the taxi hours are done. Jan stated that she doesn't have anyone right now, but they can start looking into this.

MCO transportation and group transportation – Megan Brix shared her concerns about groups ending at 6pm but the clients not being picked up until after due to not being able to schedule pick up for these clients that far out or if they can schedule it, the drivers arrive late. Megan shared that they also have concerns with late drop offs and pick ups for other MCO transportation for appointments. Megan also shared that they have issues with the drivers also arriving and then honking the horn to announce that they have arrived for pick up rather than waiting for the person to come out. Sara Brown shared that her biggest concern is that she has attempted to schedule trips a month in advance when she makes the calendar for activities, but she has been told that is too early and she needs to call the day of but then calls the day of and is told that she has to call at least a few days in advance. Talya Kamies shared that she wanted to make sure that SWITA knows that they do appreciate the service, but they want to ensure that the concerns are known. Lander shared that he would like for anyone who has concerns or complaints to address them as they happen by emailing him (mark.lander@swipco.org) or Kristen Templeton (Kristen.templeton@swipco.org). Lander stated that trips should be able to be scheduled up to a month in advance, but best practice would be to at least call a week in advance. Lander shared that they could email the request to Kristen or swita@swipco.org, that way the transit office can have time to review the request and look for drivers and get back to them in a timely manner. Lander shared that SWITA drivers try to arrive as on time as possible but other factors can cause late trips. If someone doesn't arrive on time or waves and says they need 10 minutes to finish something, then this can cause other trips to be off schedule. Lander shared that he would instruct the drivers to no longer honk to signal they have arrived at Zion but that clients will then need to understand that if the driver waits a set amount of time, they will then leave as they have other scheduled trips.

Affordable alternatives to the bus in Council Bluffs – Sara Large shared that they have noticed that most low-income individuals do not live close enough to take the Council Bluffs bus. Sara stated that several low-income apartments are too far from the bus stops to use the bus and then this population is struggling to access affordable transportation. Lander shared that SWITA is a rural transportation service so they cannot provide this type of transportation within Council Bluffs. Lander shared that one possible solution he can offer is that he can lease a vehicle from SWITA to a volunteer organization who is willing to provide rides to low-income individuals. Lander shared he has at least one vehicle he is willing to lease for \$1 per year if Sara can find a volunteer program with a willing driver.

Other Discussion – Sherri Clark asked Lander if SWITA had any extra vans to lease out. Lander stated that they may have one available soon, but it is not wheelchair accessible. Sherri stated that due to new homes they are opening soon, she would like to be kept in mind for one vehicle or more once he has one available.

Future meeting dates:

September 28, 2023, will take place at SWIPCO annual meeting in Hamburg, IA (location and time will be sent out as soon as it is known).