



La Crosse Area Planning Committee

*Metropolitan Planning Organization
Serving the La Crosse/La Crescent Urbanized Area*

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Minutes of Committee on Transit and Active Transportation Meeting, September 13, 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the CTAT held on Thursday, September 13, 2018 at 3:00 pm in room 1107 of the La Crosse County Administrative Center, 212 6th St N, La Crosse, WI.

Members Present: Francis Schelfhout (non-voting), Kurt Wayne, Sandy Sechrest, Cathy Van Maren, Ginny Loehr, Jim Longhurst, Jack Zabrowski, Rick Diermeier, Leroy Brown, Adam Lorentz, Jackie Eastwood. **Excused:** Carolyn Dvorak, Peter Fletcher, Steve Johnson, Susan Lundsten, Krista Heinz, Linda Larson. **Others Present:** None.

Jackie Eastwood called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

1) Approval of minutes of the July 12, 2018 CTAT Meeting:

Sandy Sechrest motioned to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2018 meeting; Rick Diermeier seconded. All others were in favor.

2) Introduction of new MTU Transit Manager:

Adam Lorentz introduced himself as the new transit manager for MTU. He stated that MTU has a great foundation, but also has lots of room to grow. He has been amazed at the level of support he has received so far. Coming from the private sector from UPS he will be able to provide a fresh perspective to move MTU forward to new levels.

3) New MTU Circulator route:

Adam Lorentz stated that the new circulator was developed to provide access to grocery stores, medical services, the Main St library, and recreation for residents of an identified food desert in La Crosse. The service provides 30-minute bi-directional service during the day and hits major destinations like Festival Foods, Gundersen, Mayo, the YMCA, the library, and the La Crosse Center. He said that there has been a great response so far, with over 200 rides given during the first four days of service. His focus will be on first-time riders and working with the businesses. He stated that Gundersen has been very supportive.

In response to a critique by Sandy Sechrest of the route map to include the stops and service days, Mr. Lorentz stated that he opted to highlight the major destinations for marketing and to reduce clutter, but that marketing the route should have begun three months ago. He plans on having an open house at the Grand River Station, another ride-along with Mayor Kabat, and a job fair at Gundersen. He also stated that MTU will be rolling out its automatic vehicle location (AVL) program in November so that riders can get real-time information for the location of their bus.

4) Update on the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan:

Jackie Eastwood stated that Peter Fletcher was unable to attend and that she would update them from a summary that she received. Ms. Eastwood proceeded to say that the coordinated plan is required by federal transportation legislation and in Wisconsin that responsibility has been given to the regional planning commissions. Peter Fletcher at the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) has completed three such plans so far. Each county of the nine-county RPC has its own plan and then there is one overall regional plan. Ms. Eastwood then summarized the plan goals from the July 31 meeting in West Salem as well as the strategies for La Crosse County. Regional transit authorities were emphasized for coordination and sustainable local funding. The final plan will be submitted to WisDOT in October.

Ms. Eastwood continued with Mr. Fletcher's report by providing an update on the SMRT stating that ridership during the first six months of 2018 was about 10% higher than for the same period in 2017. The routes between Prairie du Chien, Viroqua, and La Crosse were impacted for two days by the heavy rains and flooding with a total loss of around 56 hours of revenue service.

A request to expand the service hours for the Tomah route is included in the WisDOT grant for 2019. This would provide service in the middle of the day, resulting in three round trips per day. The City of Prairie du Chien would like to pass its sponsorship of the SMRT service on to a more centralized agency, which Mr. Fletcher is evaluating. A change in sponsorship as well as the expansion of hours will require re-bidding the service that is currently being provided by Running, Inc. Bids are expected to be received this month and the transportation provided selected in October/November. The service contract will be awarded for five years beginning in January 2019.

5) Update on TAP applications:

Francis Schelfhout reported that no projects in our area were funded. The closest project awarded is in Sparta. He explained that of the \$15M allocated to the State of Wisconsin and after the TMAs got their allocations, only \$1.5M-\$1.7M was left over for each of the five DOT regions. He stated that a combination of a lack of funds and not stressing criteria of other agencies that sit on the ranking committee such as Tourism and DNR contributed to projects not being funded. He went on to say that there will be another solicitation next year for 2020 and suggested that the narratives hit the targets for the other ranking groups as well as for DOT. The discussion then progressed to the Safe Routes to School applications and awards.

Jim Longhurst voiced his frustration with spending so much time applying for such a small amount of funding. He stated that the Bicycle Federation will be lobbying on this issue and arguing for more TAP funds at the state level. Cathy Van Maren added that there are several groups like the Sierra Club pushing for more equitable transportation funding and suggested that we connect with some of them.

6) Update on STP-U project ranking:

Jackie Eastwood informed the committee that the TAC recommended funding the City of La Crosse Gillette St project and three buses for MTU with Surface Transportation Program – Urban funds. Ms. Eastwood stated that MTU has 55% of its revenue fleet beyond its useful life and obtaining funding for three new buses will help significantly.

7) Sign locations for extension of the Route 1 regional bike route:

Jackie Eastwood stated that the committee had approved the routing at its May meeting, but as she was working on sign locations, she realized that a portion of the route would go through a mobile home park whose road is privately owned. She had spoken to Matt Gallager who said that the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee can use funding for easement acquisition. Ms. Eastwood presented an alternative routing that would use Shelby Rd, Broadview Pl, and the Pammel Creek Trail if pursuing a route through the mobile home park was infeasible. Jim Longhurst opined that we should keep the approved routing on the west side of Mormon Coulee Rd to serve the residents of the mobile home park and the neighborhoods.

Ms. Eastwood segued into a proposal by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) to have the MRT signed in Wisconsin. Ms. Eastwood stated that the committee had talked about moving the signed MRT through the City of La Crosse from its current alignment along the bluffs to the Route 1 bike route once it was signed. Francis Schelfhout stated that the MRPC is taking ownership of the MRT through Wisconsin and has composed a draft resolution asking the WisDOT to sign and mark the MRT. He commented on the resolution that the MRT is not "marked" anywhere—only signed—and that marking is completely off the table. He communicated to the MRPC that he would take the resolution [a copy of which was distributed to the committee] to the local groups engaged in bicycle routing. He informed them that because state and federal roads through incorporated municipalities are connecting highways under the jurisdiction of the local municipality for sign installation and maintenance that they will need to engage the municipalities also.

8) Other updates and information items:

Sandy Sechrest stated that September 25 is National Voter Registration Day.

Rick Diermeier asked Francis Schelfhout if educational signs could be placed along the road by private property owners to which Mr. Schelfhour replied that they need to be outside the State roadway right-of-way and should comply with local sign ordinance.

9) Future agenda items:

None suggested.

10) Other business; Adjourn; Next meeting to be announced:

Jim Longhurst motioned to adjourn at 4:08 pm; Kurt Wayne seconded. All others were in favor.