

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Date: June 23, 2022
Start Time: 9:30 am
End Time: 2:30 pm
Facilitator: Carrie Ward
Project: 6.12 Human Service Agency Transportation

Attendance

Name	Representing
Ashley Young	Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley
Doug LaGrange	Town of New Scotland Supervisor
Viktoriia Borsuk	NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
Lindsey Bradt	CDTA
Jonathan Willoughby	CDTA
Julie Adamec	Healthy Alliance
Jennifer Dunn	Saratoga Bridges
Diane Conroy-LaCivita	Colonie Senior Service Centers
Judy Dahoda-Taylor	Saratoga County Office for the Aging and Youth
Angelina Searles	Town of Colonie Department of Senior Resources
Denise Figueroa	Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley
Erin Plonka	Albany Guardian Society
Peggy Osborne	Town of Bethlehem Senior Services
Christa Touzin	Healthy Capital District
Marlene Hildenbrandt	Catholic Charities Senior & Caregiver Support Services
Adam Leach	Catholic Charities Senior & Caregiver Support Services
Nilda Giraldi	Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley
Kimberly Berg	NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
Thomas Vaughan	NYS DOT
Robyn Haberman	AARP
Robert O'Connell	CAPTAIN Community Human Services
Deborah Engel	Town of New Scotland Senior Outreach
Doreen Wright	Schenectady County Senior Long Term Care Services
Brian Monaco	Center for Disability Services

Agenda Items:

- 1. Welcome remarks, Sandy Misciewicz, Executive Director of CDTC**

Sandy Misiewicz welcomed the attendees and recognized the importance of providing alternative transportation services so everyone can access a high quality of life.

2. Ride Health by Healthy Alliance, Julie Adamec, Director of Strategic Partnerships

Julie explained that the current program has gone through several iterations. Back in 2018 we recognized that transportation was a barrier to services so we started a program called Circulation. Circulation didn't replace Medicaid or volunteer programs. It focused on social determinants of health to connect communities and organizations together using technology solutions. It was available to Medicaid eligible people – "many, most and all." COVID dramatically reduced the number of ride provided by the program. In 2021 we switched to Ride Health, which runs on the UniteUs platform.

We bring providers together so everyone has access to the services they need. We focus on social care concerns, and providing the right care, at the right time, in the right settings. We partner with over 500 organizations in 22 counties and we receive over 2,000 requests every month.

We believe that we are stronger together - we have strategic partners, including both network and non-network partners. Healthy Alliance provides infrastructure to create connections to social care services to make the right thing to do be the easy thing to do for all case workers.

We ascribe to the 80/20 principle when it comes to social determinants of health – healthcare only makes up about 20% of what impacts a person's health. We want to support people now so later they have better health outcomes. Three factors that keep people from getting the essential things that they need are: 1. Cost, 2. Transportation, 3. Safety.

Ride Health partners with organizations that have money to support the program. There is a screening process to determine eligibility for Ride Health. Eligibility is determined by each partner and how they want to structure their program.

Healthy Alliance provides data and support to organizations in managing their program and customers and track what services they are accessing. The Ride Health UniteUs platform manages the rides and any issues that arise. Healthy Alliance charges a \$1 admin fee per ride to administer the program. For more information contact Julie at Julie.adamec@healthyalliance.us, 518-210-1606, healthyalliance.us.

3. Accessibility in Service Provision

Jennifer Dunn, Director of Transportation, Saratoga Bridges

Diane Conroy- LaCivita, Executive Director, Colonie Senior Service Centers

Peggy Osborne, Coordination of Senior Services, Town of Bethlehem Senior Service

Jennifer Dunn presented on Saratoga Bridges, which was founded by parents so their disabled adult children would have access to resources. The organization serves those 21 years old and up. It provides a shuttle service to its day programs. Services are eligible based on criteria from the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Before COVID, the program served 475 people, now it serves a little over 200. In 2021 the program drove over 720,000 miles. The program uses a curriculum to train the drivers. Each passenger has an information sheet that summarizes medical supports and specific needs.

Aging is a factor that affects a customer's needs that isn't immediately apparent. For example, people with Down's Syndrome often experience dementia later in life. These things are helpful to know when dealing with the customers, to help drivers understand peoples' behavior and their needs.

Saratoga Bridges provides sensitivity training, including The Golden Rule – treat people the way you would like to be treated. It is important to get to know the person because behaviors have a function. Employees have access to important information about each person they are serving to help them better anticipate peoples' needs and manage any difficult situations that may arise.

Drivers receive sensitivity training specific to transportation, including on-board experiences. Ride simulations while blindfolded, wearing thick gloves, or experiencing other sensory deprivations help employees experience what it may feel like to be a passenger on a vehicle under different circumstances, such as around a turn at high speed.

Diane Conroy- LaCivita discussed services provided by Colonie Senior Service Centers. She began by thanking staff that stayed on during the COVID pandemic, a number of whom were in attendance for the ride portion of the workshop. For a number of months, these staff worked over hours every day to maintain critical services and provide food deliveries and other COVID-related services. Colonie Senior Service Centers provided a number of services, including a Driver Fitness Center, Bright Horizons Adult Day Services, Umbrella connecting seniors with handypeople, Tool Box – a volunteer run tool resale shop, Senior Dining, Independent Senior Living Facilities, and the Capital Region RSVP Senior Corps/Volunteer Services.

The organization provides van and wheelchair service to Colonie residents Monday to Friday for medical appointments, pharmacy visits, social activities, shopping and more. In a typical year, the Transportation Services Program provides over 25,000 rides to seniors with our fleet of 12 vehicles. In 2021, CSSC received two (2) new 14-seat buses, through a grant from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation. CSSC is proud to have dedicated and enthusiastic drivers who

provide curb-to-curb Transportation Services, where a senior is picked up at the front door of their home and taken to the front door of their destination.

Peggy Osborne presented on the Town of Bethlehem Senior Services Department. In conjunction with Bethlehem Senior Projects, Inc., the Department provides information and referrals to services, transportation, and social and educational programs for town residents who are 60 years of age and older. There are currently Town-owned ten vehicles in service, including three Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles, a 14-passenger van with no wheelchair accessibility, and six cars. The program relies heavily on volunteers, with 75 to 100 volunteer drivers, helpers and office volunteers. All of the transportation is provided by volunteers.

Current volunteers range in age from 58 to 87, with an equal number of men and women. Volunteers often express that they do not want to be paid or accept donations. New volunteers are approved to drive by a Volunteer Instructor. Training is provided by having new volunteers ride along with experienced volunteer drivers 4 to 5 times in both the vans and cars. Experienced drivers also give instruction on using the wheelchair lift, using two volunteers. Peggy outlined procedures drivers undertake before beginning their driving for the day. Of note was the Handybar, kept in all vehicles for riders to use to help maneuver out of the vehicle.

Following the presentations, Colonie Senior Service Centers staff provided short rides around an adjacent neighborhood in one of two agency vans. One of the vehicles was purchased using funding from the Federal Transit Administration's 5310 program and included a wheelchair lift, and the other was provided by a foundation and did not include a lift.

4. Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), Jonathan Willoughby, Transit Trainer, CDTA

Currently the system is providing 10 million rides per year, pre-COVID CDTA was providing 15 million. CDTA is growing a platform of mobility services such as Flex On-Demand, Commuter Express, Fixed-Routes, Seasonal Services, and CDPHP Cycle!

The Universal Access program has been active for over 10 years. The newest partner is Stewart's Shops. Other partners include University of Albany, Albany Med, and Albany Airport.

Flex On-Demand Transit has launched in southern Saratoga County. In its pilot phase, it is currently free. The Colonie/Guilderland Flex service fee has been reduced to \$1.50 per ride, with a maximum of \$3.90 per day. The \$3.90 maximum is for the entire transit system, including fixed routes.

A new Gateway Mobility Hub is in development at the BRT Redline stop at Gateway Plaza in downtown Schenectady. Drive, Cycle!, the Redline (and other modes?) will be available at the Hub. The Hub is scheduled for completion in summer 2023.

CDTA's STAR service guarantees a ride if the reservation is made by 4 pm the day before. You can reserve online or by calling. There is a screening process to use STAR; having a disability or impairment is the general qualification. Customers no longer have to call and confirm their ride. STAR can provide a ride to locations within ¾ mile of a fixed route and can get you curb-to-curb with that range. It also operates at the same days and times as the surrounding fixed route.

Future plans for CDTA:

- Expanding into Montgomery County
- Mobility as a Service (MaaS) applications
- Cycle! E-bike pilot
- Vanpool additional opportunities
- Bus lane feasibility study
- DRIVE (carshare) pilot program will launch on Labor Day

5. Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, Kimberly Berg, Program Planner

The New York State DDPC was created by the federal Developmental Disabilities Act and provides no direct services. It provides funding to test new programs to address gaps and unaddressed on-going needs. The agency can't fund proven models, it can only fund unproven models. It provides locally-specific funding to responsive projects. It is primarily a grant-funding agency. Its annual budget is about \$4 million; small but mighty!

The state's 5-year plan identifies areas in which we plan to work to serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their family members and caregivers, and systems change. These are broad areas and staff is always interested to hear about emerging needs and new ideas. Kim outlined a few example projects:

Transit Research and Accessibility Center (TRAC) - developed an app for transit users to record their journey experience and report it back to CDTA, to help improve its service.

Right 2 Ride Project - created an advocacy organization by and for disabled people that makes sure people know their rights and provides advocacy training.

Travel Training Project – the Rural Health Network of South Central New York provided one-on-one coaching, with one disabled person working with one travel trainer.

Please contact Kim with any ideas for projects, and to join the DDPC listserv to hear about new funding opportunities, at Kimberly.Berg@ddpc.ny.gov or 518-486-7505.

6. NYS Department of Transportation, FTA 5310 Program, Tom Vaughan, Public Transit Bureau

5310MobilityApplications@dot.ny.us. Send questions to this email.

Tom discussed the subject program, called the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program. It used to be a program solely for buying vehicles but now includes additional eligible activities. The program is geared toward nonprofit organizations though governmental entities are eligible if they certify that there is no nonprofit providing the service.

The additional eligible project types are mobility management (managing the universe of mobility such as travel training), other capital equipment, and operating assistance.

Vehicles are required to have a lift or ramp and a minimum number of wheelchair spaces. The vehicle must be titled to the grantee. DOT records a lien against the vehicle. A 20% local match is required.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law increases funding by over 87%. There is a separate funding amount for the Albany-Schenectady urban area and the Saratoga Springs urban area, in addition to rural area funding.

There is a 3-year funding cycle. The money must be spent in that time or it lapses. There are currently concerns regarding the supply of buses that is affecting that timeline. Inflation is also impacting the grant because the money doesn't go as far.

An attendee commented that there are limitations to purchasing e-buses, besides the cold winters causing difficulty with starting batteries. It is very difficult to hire mechanics in general, and e-buses require specialized mechanics. Also, the cost of operating an ebus is much higher.

Attendees provided feedback on their experiences with different types of vehicles. Tom discussed the timing of upcoming grant solicitations, noting a vehicle availability issue with the "Lot A" vehicles on the state contract. That is described further below.

The Dodge Caravan was converted by Braun and the only FTA compliant side entry access low-floor minivan available for NYSOGS award 23170. Dodge manufactured the “Carb Certified” Caravan through December of 2019. Braun secured these chassis” for inventory and sale in 2020 and 2021, but has since sold off all units.

Concurrently, domestic content requirements for Buy America, went up from 65 percent in FY18 & FY19 to more than 70 percent in FY20 and beyond. Mix in Covid in 2020 plus supply chain issues, and Braun has put off development and testing of a replacement product for the FTA market. As of this month, Braun is forecasting the Pacifica Touring L will be the replacement chassis for conversion in 2023. They are foreseeing they will have to add additional content to meet Buy America.

Low floor conversion with side entry as specified for LOT A.



Currently, Braun and other manufacturers have developed a rear entry van for the retail market, where they lower the floor between the rear wheels. It is unknown if any brand is FTA compliant, and the lack of egress out of any door other than the rear raises safety concerns. This design will not pass NYSDOT 720 because the wheelchair is housed below the side door level (Chad Smith refers it to like it’s sitting in a bathtub), and therefore cannot be rolled out of an alternate emergency exit.



One final note to consider for planning purposes is the future price. Braun shows several 2020 MY stock (not FTA complaint) on their website listed in excess of \$80,000. Although this is MSRP, the development costs for the FTA market, along with recent PPI adjustments, will result in similar pricing, even for bid vehicles. If you're budgeting for future grants, I'd use \$80-90,000, if not more.