

**Working Group to Identify Lake County Paratransit Lead Agency**

**November 21, 2019**

**500 West Winchester Road, Libertyville, IL Room 2220**

**1:30pm**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Working Group Members Present:** Steve Carlson, Lake County Board; Jessica Hector-Hsu, RTA (Advisory Member); Kathleen O'Connor, Libertyville Township (Working Group Vice-Chair); Shane Schneider, Lake County (Alternate); Linda Soto, Lake County Director on the Pace Board (Working Group Chair); Bethany Williams, Lake County Partners

**Working Group Members Absent:** Mayor Leon Rockingham, Jr., City of North Chicago; Terry Wilke, Lake County Board

**Other Attendees:** Sally Ann Williams, Pace; Kisha Hearn, Pace; Gary Scott, Pace; Dominic Strezo, Lake County Community Development; Eric Tellez, Lake County Community Development; Emily Gelber-Maturo, Lake County Health Department; Georgeann Duberstein, Village of Hainesville; Shirleyann Russell, Dimensions HHC; Emily Karry, LCDOT

**1. Welcome, introductions & approval of minutes**

Linda Soto called the meeting to order at 1:43pm. Working Group members and members of the audience provided self-introductions. Ms. Soto noted that at the last meeting the group did not have a quorum. She stated that she had reached out to County Board Chair Hart and recommended that the County designate Alternate Working Group members to ensure the group meets quorum. County Board Member Ann Maine and County Director of Transportation Shane Schneider were appointed as Alternates to the Working Group at the November County Board meeting.

With a motion from Steve Carlson and a second from Bethany Williams, on a unanimous voice vote the minutes of the July 30, 2019 meeting and the meeting summary of the October 22, 2019 meeting were approved.

**2. Review of updated working group mission statement**

*Mission Statement: "The goal of this working group is to reach consensus on the most appropriate lead agency to advance paratransit coordination and service improvements in Lake County, Illinois and aid in developing a transition plan."*

Ms. Soto read the mission statement and asked if there was a motion for approval. With a motion from Kathleen O'Connor and a second from Ms. B. Williams, on a voice vote the updated mission statement was approved unanimously.

### **3. Pace presentation and group discussion**

Sally Ann Williams gave a brief introduction of herself as the Division Manager for Pace Paratransit Services throughout the 6-County Chicago region. Ms. S. Williams informed the group that a large part of her responsibility at Pace includes assisting local agencies with paratransit coordination projects.

Ms. S. Williams provided the same presentation that she gave at the October 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting titled Overview – Regional Paratransit Coordination Projects. The intent was to present information on how service could possibly be expanded in Lake County and how the coordinated services in other areas of the region evolved and structured themselves. Pace looked at the first four phases of potential service expansion in Lake County recommended in the Lake County Paratransit Market Study. The first recommended phase was to incorporate Vernon Township and the Village of Vernon Hills into the Central Lake service area. Phase 2 would be to expand further to include Waukegan Township, the City of Lake Forest and the City of North Chicago. Phase 3 would expand into Warren Township and Phase 4 would be to complete coordination and amalgamate the Ride Lake County Central and West programs and service areas together.

In order to look at expanding service, Pace ran some projections for implementing these first four phases. Pace anticipates expanding through the initial four phases would have a total operating cost of approximately \$2.3M and approximately \$850,000 of additional funding would be needed. The projections and cost estimates were broken down by phase, should the service partners and sponsors decide they want to move forward with expansion.

Ms. B. Williams asked a clarifying question about the costs and existing services and existing funding. Ms. S. Williams stated that the costs to expand assume that the existing Pace subsidy and local funds going into existing services would be reallocated to the expanded coordinated service. If a municipality or township with an existing service did not want to fold their service into the coordinated service and did not want to direct their resources to the coordinated service, and if the coordination group still wanted to cover that area with coordinated service, then additional funding would need to be found to make up the difference (on top of the \$850,000).

Mr. Carlson asked a clarifying question about the amount of funding local governments are putting into these services. Ms. S. Williams responded that the Local Share column reflects what local governments are contributing to these services currently.

Ms. Soto expressed a concern as to if a municipality or township did not want to be a part of the coordinated service and wanted to keep their own service, while there was a coordinated service overlapping the service area. Ms. S. Williams responded that it is very difficult for the consumer

when there are layers upon layers of services. Pace would encourage standardization of services and fares for the rider.

Mr. Carlson asked how there could be a county-wide service if townships or municipalities opted out of participating. Ms. O'Connor responded that is one of the challenges the region is struggling with and why we are where we are currently. Ms. Soto added that the Lead Agency would have to come up with a plan to demonstrate to agencies why they should want to be a part of the coordinated service to help them see the benefits of coordinated service.

Ms. S. Williams also added that this sort of scenario also has happened in other areas of the region where services began to coordinate and consolidate. Some agencies opted not to participate at first but saw the benefits of coordination and joined the coordinated service later.

Mr. Schneider asked a clarifying question about the costs and the funds that Pace and the locals were contributing to the existing services and whether the expansion cost model assumes these contributions are flat. Ms. S. Williams responded that the expanded service costs assume the same level of funding as is currently being provided to those services.

Mr. Schneider also asked Pace to discuss how the other coordinated services in the region are funded. Ms. S. Williams responded that funding varies among the services. For Ride DuPage, DuPage County has a Health and Human Services department (Ride DuPage is through Community Services), which is different than any other county. Ms. S. Williams stated that DuPage provides funding from Community Services for their clients, they started out funding \$1M, but they are now funding about \$780k (per year). DuPage Community Services provides 100% reimbursement to Pace for the costs of trips for their clients. Pace is responsible for the operations. Pace contracts for service, contracts for the call center, handles the billing, provides service oversight and manages the database and technology. DuPage has various funding partners and consortiums consisting of municipalities and townships that also fund the service. Pace continues to provide historic subsidies to the DuPage service. Mr. Schneider asked a question as to how they determined how much each partner pays. Ms. Soto responded that the group was getting ahead of the presentation and that would be addressed further in the presentation.

Ms. S. Williams outlined the current coordination projects throughout the region: Ride DuPage, Ride in Kane, MCRide, Will Ride, and Ride Lake County. She noted that all of them are a little different and that each project has different goals and is locally driven. Ms. S. Williams noted that DuPage and Kane have similar approaches to shared cost of the coordinated service. DuPage's approach was the service was a coordinated project, no one is standing alone, everyone joined into the project and coordinated, standardized, and all partners share in the good and the bad of the project. DuPage includes contracted taxi services and Ms. S. Williams noted that Ride DuPage is 24-7, 365 service. Ms. S. Williams noted that taxi services at times can be more cost efficient to provide some trips rather than a larger vehicle such as a paratransit bus. Some clients of the DuPage service could use taxi services, some could not, therefore some trips cost more than others to provide. The Ride DuPage group decided that they were not going to parcel out the cost of providing the trip based on

type of trip to the specific agencies. They came up with a cost allocation formula per trip based on mileage and number of trips to allocate all costs among all partners. Based on miles and based on trips, they would determine the percentage of cost for each partner each month. Pace uses Trapeze software which is customized to include multiple funding sources and agencies. Pace uses the Trapeze software database to track the number of trips for each sponsor agency. The database allocation is used to perform the cost allocation each month. Ride in Kane uses a very similar approach as they were the next project to coordinate. Mr. Schneider asked if a county or township overlap with a municipality, which agency pays for the trip. Ms. S. Williams responded that they decide among themselves which agency owns that client registration and is responsible for the trip costs. She noted that is decided at the local level when the client registers for service and then Pace tracks all of that client's trips under that funding source. McHenry is a little different, they do a per capita type of cost allocation for sponsors. Pace provides data to McHenry and then McHenry allocates the cost among the partners/sponsors. For the various services in Lake County it is different, most are allocated per trip.

Ms. S. Williams explained that most of the other services in the collar counties combined their standalone service with various coordinated projects and partners. They generally have an advisory committee that coordinates the stakeholders and sponsors and that advisory committee typically has bylaws that govern their committee. The advisory committees may also have subcommittees that work under the advisory committee. For example, they may have an operations subcommittee made up of sponsors who have clients that use the service.

Ms. S. Williams further explained that sponsors are agencies that participate in the advisory committee but also purchase service for their area. Sponsors drive the service eligibility and keep up with registrations and issues that their constituencies might have with the service. A sponsor can be a township or a municipality buying service from the coordinated project. Emily Karry noted that sponsors can be any agency, including non-profits, that contribute funding to the cost of trips, such as the Association for Individual Development (AID) in Kane County. Ms. S. Williams responded that AID does purchase service for clients using Ride in Kane and that any agency purchasing service is considered a sponsor. Ms. Soto noted that Catholic Charities, Veterans Services could be sponsors.

Ms. B. Williams asked if there were different eligibility requirements per sponsor. Ms. S. Williams responded that in general there is different eligibility as different programs have certain eligibility criteria based on funding. In general eligibility is standardized, but you can also have individual additional eligibility criteria. For example, for Ride DuPage the Health Department is one of the sponsors. To be eligible for a trip sponsored by the Health Department, you must be a Health Department client and taking the trip for a Health Department purpose. Ms. Soto asked if Ride DuPage had access to additional funding due to the Health Department involvement. Ms. S. Williams responded that she wasn't sure but that they try to access as much funding as is possible from various sources for the service. She also noted that one of the reasons why computerization of the trip information is important to track data related to funding sources and to be able to report out for grants. Ms. O'Connor noted that the rider doesn't need to know who is sponsoring their ride, and that the funding and sponsors information is behind the scenes. Ms. S. Williams noted that Pace

maintains one client file for each client and the client may have multiple funding sources connected to them. Depending on the type of trip they are taking that will determine which funding source is used for the trip. Jessica Hector-Hsu noted that the appropriate funding source connected to each client is determined when they register. She explained that is a bit of a challenge for the RTA regionally as in some places such as in Lake and McHenry counties, anyone can register and use the service who is eligible based on age and disability, and they don't need to worry about who they register with. But in other areas of the region someone new coming into the system may be confused about how they enter in and who they register with. Ms. Hector-Hsu noted that it is challenging from a public information perspective of the RTA because it is difficult to wrangle all of the information across the region. She noted that the RTA and Pace keep trying to find a way to provide all of this information, but it is difficult to communicate to people what services they may be eligible for. Once they are registered it is easy and they don't need to think about how the funding works in the background, but the part about registration is little bit challenging. Ms. S. Williams noted that new riders should inquire through their local township or municipality to get information on what is available to them. Ms. O'Connor asked if it was less complicated when you don't have both not for profits and government agencies being sponsors in the system or does that matter. Ms. Hector-Hsu responded that she didn't think that matters, but it was more about how you structure the service and the criteria for how you want to operate and how you structure the way that people participate in the program and how you shield the customer from all of the things you need to work at from the back end. She noted that technology has advanced and can really help with this.

Ms. S. Williams noted that when there is some standardization of services across the region it is certainly easier to communicate to people and to maintain information. She mentioned that for clients it is easier to have 1 number to call no matter where you are and no matter where you want to go.

Mr. Carlson asked about to what extent DuPage County Health Department funds Ride DuPage. Ms. S. Williams responded that they fund transportation services for their clients to get to appointments at 100%. Mr. Carlson mentioned that at the recent Lake County Board of Health meeting they discussed clients missing appointments due to lack of transportation and that there is a cost per appointment that is missed. He noted that it may be possible for the Health Department to potentially be a sponsor in the coordinated service to help ensure their clients are able to make appointments at the Health Department. Mr. Schneider noted that the juvenile center in Lake County is having a similar challenge with missed appointments as the parents don't have transportation to get there and that perhaps the juvenile center could also be a sponsor of the coordinated system. Ms. B. Williams also noted the Federal Work Force Innovation and Opportunity Act also includes that they can sponsor transportation for participants in their federal training program to get to training or to work. They could also possibly become a sponsor for some clients for the initial portion of their training or work. Mr. Carlson mentioned that now we are talking about Work Force Development. Ms. Hector-Hsu mentioned that they are seeing a trend nationally with the idea of social services thinking more holistically about how to help whether it is health, or employment or something else. It also provides the opportunity to look at trends. For example,

dialysis patients need to go to dialysis for treatment quite often and there is a trend toward creating transportation services specifically around those types of trips that mirror the needs of dialysis patients. Ms. Hector-Hsu mentioned that Ride DuPage has some more specialized unique services within their coordinated service umbrella. Ms. Soto noted that later in the meeting the group will be discussing having representatives from these other agencies come to present to the Working Group. Ms. B. Williams asked if there were any models where the private sector/employers sponsor rides such as for workforce transportation? Ms. S. Williams responded that not really, but that DuPage County has a transportation to work program that is robust, and they fund service. Ms. Hector-Hsu noted that there are non-dial-a-ride services in the area that do this such as the Bannockburn pilot program and the TMA shuttles. A group discussion ensued that dial-a-ride services could also potentially be used for workforce development trips as well.

Ms. Soto noted that Pace is updating its strategic plan and Pace is looking at how it provides service in Lake County. She noted that while the strategic plan is in its infancy, the one thing that is known is that there will likely be overlap with future Pace dedicated services and these dial-a-ride services. She also noted that she sees that Pace dedicated service (fixed routes) in Lake County could look differently in the future; some routes may be adjusted and there will likely be more On Demand type of services in place of fixed routes. She noted that she is not promising anything at this point but one of the things being looked at is On Demand services. She asked the group to picture On Demand service circles (areas). She continued that if you make the service area too big it is ineffective, and that people would be on the bus too long. If there are On Demand circles operating next to each other and there are transfer points or stations, people could move from one On Demand service area to another. She noted that there may be an overlap between On Demand service and dial-a-ride service in the future.

Mr. Schneider asked whose role it is to maintain the large database of clients and to assign sponsors for these coordinated services. Ms. S. Williams noted that Pace doesn't assign sponsors, but that Pace maintains the database and technologies. She noted that Pace maintains over 145 different funding sources in the current database. Mr. Schneider summarized that Pace needs someone at the local level to determine what funding source the client should be in and Pace then maintains the database. Ms. S. Williams clarified that the Lead Agency coordinates all of this together, that is part of what the Lead Agency does. The Lead Agency makes sure that the goals and objectives of the project that were set are being met. Mr. Schneider noted this would be a staff responsibility under the Lead Agency.

Ms. O'Connor asked what happens when an entity pulls out of service, and whether that area or those clients are still covered by the coordinated service. Ms. S. Williams responded that is up to the Lead Agency and the service sponsors as to whether clients in that area could be registered to another sponsor and still have transportation or not. Ms. Hector-Hsu mentioned that in Will County there have been several changes in sponsors in their service and sometimes there are holes in the service. Mr. Schneider mentioned that is one of the concerns he has heard - what happens when sponsors decide to leave the service and then which agencies are left covering those costs. The group noted that sometimes political pressure can help keep sponsors in. Ms. Hector-Hsu

mentioned that if there is a Lead Agency that is providing some sort of cross subsidy or incentive that helps keep sponsor agencies in the programs. Group discussion ensued on the Lead Agency potentially requiring people to commit to several years of service and potentially to provide some funding up front as well as discussion of other ideas to keep sponsors incentivized. Ms. Hector-Hsu mentioned that federal 5310 funding encourages coordination. Mr. Schneider asked if 5310 funding was part of the FAST Act and Ms. Hector-Hsu confirmed. Ms. Hector-Hsu noted that the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) of Chicago has been taking a regional look at paratransit and dial-a-ride and that the RTA is encouraging MPC to lobby the federal government to remove some of the strings attached to the 5310 funding.

Ms. S. Williams wrapped up her presentation and asked if there were any additional questions. Ms. Karry noted, as she had in the October 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, that the paratransit market study also included a final phase not included in Pace's presentation, that covers expanding the Ride Lake County service to all of Lake County. Pace's presentation covers the initial four phases recommended in the report and Ms. Karry wanted to ensure the intent is known that coverage over the entire county is the eventual long-term recommendation of the study.

Ms. S. Williams offered additional explanation of Pace's role in these coordination projects and she mentioned that Pace is available to assist with implementing whatever service the local area is looking for. Pace provides and maintains the technology, provides reports to be used for analysis and assessment of the projects, procures equipment and buses, contracts with service providers, including taxi services and potentially transportation network companies (TNCs – Ubers and Lyfts). That is Pace's role as the operator. Ms. S. Williams also mentioned Pace's inhouse system to handle any complaints or issues about the services. Pace investigates and gets back to the customer and makes improvements where needed. Ms. O'Connor asked that once a Lead Agency was identified, how long did it take for these other coordinated services to rollout countywide service. Ms. S. Williams responded that it varied among the services, it took DuPage and Kane about 4-5 years.

Ms. Soto asked the group to revisit their discussion of the Lead Agency from last month. She stated that for most of the other coordinated services in the region the lead agency is the county government. DuPage is under human services (community services), Kane is under a partnership of AID (Association for Individual Development, a non-for-profit) with support from Kane County, McHenry is under the DOT, and Will County service is under the County Executive's office. Ms. Soto mentioned that in her opinion the options in Lake County for lead agency would fall under the County (and she noted which department is TBD) or a 501. She summarized that the TMA of Lake Cook is a 501c4 and that their executive director, Mike Walczak, gave a presentation at the October meeting. Ms. Soto summarized that the October TMA presentation discussed how they function with a board and with employers and agency member organizations and how they contract for service with the operator which is Pace. Ms. Soto explained that she felt there were benefits and complications to going the route of a 501 for the lead agency in Lake County.

Ms. O'Connor asked how service in Cook County operates. Ms. Hector-Hsu mentioned that Cook County is not involved in paratransit service as the fixed route service in Cook County is more

robust, and ADA paratransit is more robust. There are some less dense areas in suburban Cook County where dial-a-ride service is provided by a few townships. Ms. S. Williams noted that the only coordinated service they are operating in Cook County is the TRIP program which consists of 5 or 6 townships working together and that the program is specifically for medical trips.

Mr. Carlson mentioned that the County froze their levy this year and he mentioned that the County doesn't have additional resources to allocate to this initiative. He stated that if the County were to do this (only speaking for himself), resources would have to be re-allocated as there will not be new money for this initiative. Mr. Schneider noted this is why he keeps going back to the granular questions. If we have to come up with a staffing model, how many people are we looking at. Mr. Schneider mentioned that he'd like to hear from the other agencies on how they do this and what kind of staff it really takes to operate it. Mr. Carlson asked if the service would pay for itself. Ms. O'Connor mentioned that the service doesn't pay for itself as it is subsidized. Mr. Carlson clarified that he meant the service helps transport people to jobs, which translates into other benefits and it would be nice to extrapolate that data. Mr. Schneider mentioned that performance measures for the future lead agency should be tied to the service to evaluate and determine success. He asked what happens if the countywide coordinated service is rolled out and doesn't perform, ridership goes down, does the agency continue to offer the service?

Ms. S. Williams suggested from her experience that it may be beneficial for the group to lay out what they foresee the responsibilities of the lead agency to be so that they could have a better idea of what the possibilities could be based on those responsibilities. For example, if the lead agency is responsible to apply for grants, would they qualify, etc. Mr. Carlson asked what is the model. Ms. S. Williams responded that the other coordinated services in the region are the models. Ms. Soto mentioned that we will be asking DuPage to come present as well as Kane. Discussion ensued on whether to try to schedule DuPage and Kane presentations together in the same meeting. The consensus was yes and that it would be helpful for the working group to provide a list of questions/topics that they would like addressed in the presentation. Ms. Hector-Hsu mentioned that she would be interested in hearing from McHenry as their funding and operating model is different.

#### **4. Group discussion on information needed by Working Group to reach recommendation**

Ms. Soto noted that the conversation from the Pace presentation evolved into item #4 on the agenda. Ms. Soto asked if Ms. Karry was taking notes on the items that had been discussed. Ms. Karry responded that she had been and summarized that the group would like DuPage and Kane to present at the next meeting, and possibly McHenry after that. Ms. Soto summarized that the group wants to put together a list of questions that they'd like the agencies to cover in their presentations and some of these questions were raised during Pace's presentation. The group discussed additional items they'd like to know about such as how is funding allocated among agencies, how often is it reevaluated, what is the process, how long is the commitment made for. The group is interested in lessons learned, what motivated agencies to participate, have agencies joined, left and came back. Ms. O'Connor stated she would be interested in knowing how these agencies handled competing services in the coordinated service areas. She noted that in Lake County there are multiple services

operating in the same geographic areas that “compete” for services, with various fares and some are free. Ms. S. Williams responded that this situation is unique to Lake County and that in the other collar counties agencies folded their services into the overall coordinated service and that they don’t have competing services operating in the background. Mr. Carlson asked if Lake County was basically last in getting to service coordination. Ms. S. Williams responded that she wouldn’t consider Lake County last. Mr. Carlson noted he’d be interested in seeing a grid of the other coordinated services, who the lead is, how it is funded, how it is broken out, etc. *Note - information on the various collar county coordinated programs was included in the Paratransit Market Study for the Lake County Region in Figure 7-6 (page 7-24), with supplemental information following on pages 7-25 through 7-32. This excerpt of the study was shared via email with the Working Group following the meeting on 12/17/19.* Discussion continued on why coordination is where it is currently at in Lake County and that there has been a hesitation for an agency to take the lead. Ms. Soto asked staff to send an email out to the Working Group summarizing what items and questions they are interested in learning about from the other coordinated systems. Ms. Karry responded that she will send an email to the Working Group with this information and to solicit any other thoughts from the Working Group.

#### **5. Future meeting schedule**

Ms. Soto facilitated the conversation regarding setting meeting dates for 2020. The County Board resolution appointing the Working Group is valid for a term through November 30, 2020. The next meeting of the Working Group is set for January 21, 2020 from 1:30 to 3pm at the Central Permit Facility. The group suggested the additional following meeting dates for 2020 from 1pm to 3pm: March 11<sup>th</sup>, May 13<sup>th</sup>, July 8<sup>th</sup>, September 9<sup>th</sup>, November 18<sup>th</sup>. Staff will attempt to schedule the meetings at the Central Permit Facility or Division of Transportation depending on conference room availability. The 2020 meeting dates will be communicated to all Working Group Members and an item will be on the January 21, 2020 agenda to approve the remaining 2020 meeting dates.

#### **6. Suggested agenda items for the next meeting**

This topic was covered throughout items #3 and #4 of the meeting.

#### **7. Public Comment**

There was no public comment provided by audience members.

#### **8. Adjournment**

With a motion from Mr. Carlson and a second from Mr. Schneider, on a unanimous voice vote the meeting was adjourned at 3:20 pm.