



# **RURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION**

Meeting Minutes - October 14th, 2024  
Board of Directors Bi-Monthly Meeting  
Zoom Meeting



In Attendance: Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin, Jeremy Whiting, Sarah Braese, Alec Jones, Judy Nommick, Hannah Ancel, Justin Davis, Kitty Toll

Guests: Caleb Grant, Michael Moore

Clerk: Krystina Forkey

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 9:04am by Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin

Public Comment:

- There were no public comments at this time.

Modifications to the Agenda:

- Caleb Grant proposed that the second half of the meeting should go into executive session to have a “contractual discussion”.

Introductions:

- There were no new individuals, no need for introductions today.

Approval of Board Meeting Minutes: [08.12.2024 - Board of Directors Bi-Monthly Meeting Minutes.PDF](#)

- Sarah Braese motioned to approve the minutes from August, 2024.
  - Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin seconded.
  - All were in favor
- August 2024 minutes have been approved.

Discussion: Written Committee Reports and Updates:

- VTrans: Jeremy Whiting [VTrans Written Report to RCT 10.24](#)
  - Budget Pressure is being felt throughout the state, so VTrans cannot approve things that cannot be sustained at this time.
    - MTI Grant was not awarded to RCT for the 2024 year.
      - Caleb Grant provided more context: the legislature’s last session decided that instead of investing further into public transportation from VTrans perspective, they would expand funding for mobility/accessibility grants. The threshold was raised from \$50,000 to \$1.5 Million which made transit agencies able to apply for this.
      - RCT applied for the expansion of RCT rides into Island Pond, Newport Center and Barton. RCT did not receive that due to the fear that it would not be a success/be sustainable beyond grant funding. Instead of expanding the service, we were requested to study the impact of RCT expanding. Caleb Grant declined this because the studies have already been performed.
      - Caleb Grant spoke with Steven and Ross from VTrans into expanding a different study: the impact of housing from the distance to service providers and working on revising the MTI Grant into studying the impact of expanding services into the impact of transportation to housing. His theory is that by studying the expansion of MicroTransit



as an economic tool into the housing crisis it may impact and even lower the impact of the housing crisis. It would look into the economic analysis of investing into public transportation to expand access to affordable housing rather than contributing to building new units - making existing units available to access public transportation opens up the opportunity for low-income individuals to access local businesses that aren't on a "main route", which would improve the economic state of local and small businesses as well.

- Awards for the MTI Grant 2025 will go out this month.
- Every three (3) years VTrans completes a State Management review.
  - This is year 3 for RCT. Our documents are due in 30 days.
    - The analysis is completed on-site, the data is brought back to VTrans and strengths/weaknesses/threats are analyzed then. A presentation will be made and shared with the board in an upcoming board meeting.
- A big "thank you" goes out to Sandy [Thorpe - RCT Operations Vans Manager] for being eager and willing to test the tablets and get them on the road to get the data on how to improve data collection and services.
- Finance/Finance Committee: Michael Moore [August Dashboard](#)
  - August was "pretty typical".
    - Lost \$54,000 for the month - not a concern early on in the fiscal year.
    - Michael Moore has had discussions with Caleb Grant and has had to shift gears some with last year's procurement.
      - With the re-brand trying to spend it all like VTrans requested.
    - Currently a "little change" to go into RCT's frugal mode - knowing there's limited funds RCT isn't in the expansion-type mode and are now trying to do the "best we can with what we have."
    - Caleb Grant has asked the management team that any spending is either focused on reducing costs or expanding revenue while trying to maintain services
      - Primary tool for reducing costs: Volunteer services.
      - Primary tool for expanding revenue: More sponsorship.
      - The impacts will be "felt the most" in non-vehicle areas - "do we absolutely need it right now?" and in non-capital investments.
    - RCT is consistently the lowest-cost option, informed by a series of decisions of physical space. "We rent a 1-room building so we can make sure we're offering more rides."
      - Transit agencies in the state that have had routes that are below acceptable levels of performance for "like a decade" maintain them because they can, while RCT focuses on high levels of performance. "When the funds are distributed, I hope they recognize the choices that we've made. Oftentimes, when things get hard, the state likes to go with the easiest options and will call upon the agencies that



are willing to make the hard decisions first.”

- 5311 Grant funding is gone - RCT has transitioned the Newport Shuttle route into a CMACK structure to work within that.
- Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin asked if Caleb thought it may be time to put the age of the fleet and agency onto the dashboard so that reviews don't get too far behind?
  - Caleb Grant answered: “Those two data-points exist in the 10-year fleet plan, but maybe they should be updated on an annual basis. It may be committee-level work to look at the fleet/plant age.”
    - It is important for the board to understand that the goalpost is moving: 5-year life for vehicles is now 7 years.
- Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin suggested that the management team look into cost-saving measures. Other boards managements have brought that question to other members of their staff and it created “rich conversations” within the organization.
  - Caleb Grant: “RCT is really good at suffering through cost reduction, there's more strategic answers than what we're doing now. Gaining efficiencies in how we dispatch might help improve things. Right now health and auto insurance as well as increased fuel costs tends to be the biggest inflection point for cost drivers.”
- Executive Director Report: Caleb Grant [Executive Director Report 10.2024](#)
  - A big compliment to Michael [Moore]: VPTA just finalized the variance report. Each year the agency asks for budgetary reports for the past 1-2 years, and reaffirms quarterly, then adjusts payments on actuals vs. projections. For every cycle [Caleb Grant has] been here since Michael started, RCT has been the closest [to their projected budget].
    - 2024 variance was \$4,000, while other agencies are facing “hundreds of thousands of dollars.”
  - The transition to Micro Transit RCT Rides Orleans from the shuttle was discussed as well as RCT Rides in Lamoille County. In both areas, RCT is servicing twice as many people per week and lowering the cost point of the transportation.
    - Receiving “great feedback” that now people can get more of their immediate needs met.
      - Orleans:
        - Highlander Shuttle - 52 boardings per day.
        - RCT Rides - 100+ boardings per day.
      - Lamoille:
        - Peak boarding was 40-50 per day.
        - Currently - 200+ boardings per day.
    - Now that the service is doing so well, “people seem to love it,” and the demand has increased to the point where it can actually be difficult to schedule all the needs of the riders. The new question and focus here is, how do we address that moving forward?
    - Nick [Lange] commented: “This is a meaningful change from one type of



route to another. When we're talking about planning and evaluating risks, how does what we're seeing match with what we estimated? Is there any insight into whether we're tracking expectations or not?"

- Caleb [Grant] responded: "Newport is interesting because we had a report that looked into the transition and have good predictive data that looks into how we're changing does compare. The analyses of the Highlander and the Jay-Lyn shuttle was that the "fixed route is working well," and that the Highlander was successful enough it didn't need to transition into a Micro Transit route. We made the transition because we were going from 50/50 [funding] to 80/20 [funding] so it made more sense."
  - [RCT has] found the Micro Transit Orleans has been better utilized by individuals and "much more of a success than expected." The data [shows] that prediction and usage was far beyond what initial VPTA analysis suggested."
  - "Fixed routes benefit those within the route - Micro Transit allows more access to small businesses. Investing in public transportation and Micro Transit in this state is an investment into small business in this state. It is difficult for small businesses to invest in building on fixed routes, but thanks for Micro Transit, they can still operate from home and off of the route and can still benefit from those individuals who do require access to public transportation. VPTA predicted that RCT would need 3 vehicles to maintain the same level of service as the shuttles, but our ridesharing is more efficient than what was predicted. Based off of the most recent Highlander performance, we have doubled our service opportunities."
- Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin asked if RCT is able to track the purpose of the trips for individuals utilizing the Micro Transit and if there was any way to see the areas of growth in terms of the services provided by the service?
  - Caleb Grant answered that trip purposes are asked of individuals using the app to schedule services, but it is optional and not everyone chooses to answer, and it isn't asked when scheduling over the phone. [Caleb feels] comfortable inferring the data from the address locations and the analysis [he has] found most valuable is running address reports.
  - Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin asked, "Assuming this continues to be a successful model, are there strategies to think about how best to capture Medicaid dollars for people who are utilizing the service for medical trips?"
    - Caleb Grant explained that we don't "free-book" Medicaid on the Micro Transit because there needs to be more competitive availability, but that if there is an opening some Medicaid trips do get placed on the Micro Transit. The



expectation from the state is to utilize Micro Transit for other programs [such as the Older and Disabled (O&D) Program] rather than Medicaid.

- RCT has experienced pushback with an idea to expand Micro Transit into Barton.
  - RCT performs 12,000 trips per year into Barton - Hoping to find an efficient service for those members and to study the direct impact that service has on the community.
  - “When you give people that choice, there is an increase in ridership.”
    - For example: The O&D Program [Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging portion] decreased their ride amounts allotted, but expanded their trip reasonings. [Previously individuals had unlimited medical trips and two shopping/personal trips per month. They transitioned to 6 trips per month but the individual could choose to use any of those 6 as medical or personal/shopping trips.] This caused an increase in ridership as more people utilized their trips, and more than what was predicted was spent from that funding source.
- Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin wondered if, assuming RCT gets to move forward with all the Micro Transit plans we’re hoping to, would there be a way to build a case with DVHA to include into their documents (that based on the claim that X number of rides on Micro Transit are providing medical trips) adding funding to overall public transportation instead of just Medicaid only.
  - Caleb Grant suggested that conversation would be very important to have with medical facilities. Using their healthcare business model, a case could be made for investment into Micro Transit because it would support their business as well by helping with utilizing services, expansion of facility hours and appropriate appointment times.
- The electrification process is moving forward. The final report should be in by November. The hope is to deliver on aspirational and practical investments.

#### Procurement Policy - Approval of Updated Procurement Policy: [2024 RCT Procurement Policy](#)

- A procurement consultant was brought in at the beginning of last year’s grant cycle. She was able to get RCT through all procurements for last year, pending updating procurement policies to bring in to line with RCT policies.
- The procurement policies today are consistent with VPTA and GMTs procurement policies, which is standard agency basises.
- There were some “big” changes:
  - Eliminate emergency purchases - if we can stay consistent with the policies, there shouldn’t be any needs for “emergencies”.
  - Notes need to be added for large purchases
  - Added advertising requirements
  - Leadership members would look over RCT requests.
- Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin made a motion to approve the procurement policy.
  - Kitty Toll approved. Alec Jones seconded.
  - All were in favor, the motion was approved.



Community Calendar: [RCT BOD Committees and Calendar](#)

- Attached is a proposal for each committee and proposed board and committee calendar that goes into 2026.
  - Since Caleb Grant is flexible for meetings, he thought it was easier to propose something in outline versus opening it up for discussion.
  - Caleb Grant wanted people to be aware of the direction the committees are going to gauge committee interest as these would come the focal points for members.
- It was suggested that since we do have the calendar dates for the committees and have people in each one, it would be best to meet in November as outlined.
- The basic theory behind the calendar is to maintain the bimonthly board meetings for 2 hours, but then hold committee meetings on the alternating months for one hour, keeping the same day/time reserved each meeting month.
- It was determined that the board will discuss the outline a bit more at the next meeting, but that if there is any urgent committee work to be done then maybe those members would want to try to meet before the next meeting. Alec Jones agreed saying that he “would like to get things moving, rather than wait longer.”

Executive Session:

- It was determined that there was a need to move into Executive Session to discuss contracts.
- Judy Nommick moved the motion. Alec Jones seconded. All approved.
  - The Board moved into Executive Session at 10:05am.
  - Caleb Grant and Michael Moore joined the Executive Session.
  - Krystina Forkey left the meeting.

Next Board of Directors Meeting: December 2024.

Meeting Adjourned:

Submitted by: Krystina Forkey