



Minutes for Meeting Book – DECEMBER 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BI-MONTHLY MEETING
12/09/2024 | 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
Zoom

Attendees: Justin Barton-Caplin, Jonathan Davis, Jeremy Whiting, Kitty Toll, Nick Lange, Judy Nommick, Sarah Braese, Hannah Ancel, Doug Morton

Guests: Caleb Grant, Michael Moore, Ross Macdonald, Steven Falbel

Clerk: Krystina Forkey

Call to Order

Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin

- The meeting was called to order at 9:02am by Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin.

Public Comment

- There were no public comments at this time.

Modifications to the Agenda

Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin

- The following changes to the agenda were proposed:
 - Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin suggested finalizing the performance evaluation and salary changes in the executive session.
 - Caleb Grant suggested discussing litigation updates in the executive session.

Introductions

Caleb Grant

- Stephan Falbel - Steadman Hill.
- Ross Macdonald - VTrans.

Approval of Board Meeting Minutes

Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin

[Approval]

[Minutes for Meeting Book - October 2024 Board of Directors](#)

- Judy Nommick motioned to approve. Nick Lange seconded. All were in favor.
- October 2024 meeting minutes were approved at 9:05am.



Discussion: Written Committee Reports and Updates

- **VTRANS**

Jeremy Whiting

[December 2024 VTrans Written Report to RCT](#)

- It was announced that Ross Macdonald and Jeremy Whiting would be available after the meeting in case anyone had any questions regarding Steven Falbel's presentation on the GMT Rural Study.
- Jeremy Whiting will be meeting with Dan [Last Name?] to discuss mid-year amendments and will work with RCT to adjust funding and to address any changes that need to be made.
- The statewide safety plan will be out for review soon.
 - RCT will be asked to incorporate this into their safety plan, or to adopt the statewide safety plan with region-specific modifications.
- Jeremy Whiting will be presenting the Route Performance Report in January and will highlight RCT's data and performance.
- The Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan going out for review.
 - The importance to the FTA to keep spare ratios at 20% or lower was highlighted.
 - RCT will most likely need to apply for competitive funds to address fleet conditions and needs.
- MTI Grant awards have been finalized and rewarded.
 - RCT's request to operate additional services was denied. (Extending the MicroTransit into Barton)
 - Need to have a plan to obtain funds to sustain the new services into the future.
 - Kitty Toll wondered about the funds that were not approved and asked if those funds were still available if plans were made, or if this was a lost opportunity for RCT.
 - Ross MacDonald explained that the funds were no longer available, and that there was "just short of \$3Million that was spread out among other agencies". He also explained that there's still about \$1Million for future applicants, stating "We did receive additional requests but were unable to identify plans on how to sustain those requests moving forward. It is not justifiable to start up [new] services and then just cut them due to no funding."
- **Finance/ Finance Committee**

Mike Moore October Dashboard.pdf

 - October was a "pretty normal" month.



- RCT has a loss of \$54,000 for the month.
- Loss for the year is \$114,000. This is better than it was last year, there is some expected loss annually. The bulk of the loss is from Medicaid, which is currently at \$74,000.00.
- Have purchased the 4 vehicles that we plan on for the year. This “calms things down on [finance] side because buying vehicles is hard on cash, but looks good on the books.”
- According to Michael Moore: “We’re in good shape right now.”
- Caleb Grant added the following context based on losses last year: The loss of CODS (community organization districts and schools) has been addressed. This was a loss in RCT’s control, and we have worked with our partner agencies to increase the hourly rate to ensure we’re breaking even.
 - RCT will give CODS a rate at the beginning of the year - some contracts had not been adjusted as needed to reflect inflation.
- Caleb Grant also explained that Medicaid losses are a two-part formula:
 - 1) There has been an increase in miles as well as types of trips. Trends from last year of more mobility device needs, which determines the type of vehicles we can use (more wheelchair vans, which can’t be done by volunteer) as well as general milage.
 - Projections for this year were \$15.5million, and the distribution of funds is based on percentage of cost. If cost goes up, distributions to RCT
 - Dialysis analysis is also significant in hours/mileage. A closure of dialysis in Newport/St. Albans (we’re transporting to St. Albans) and if that happens we have to go further.
 - 2) Increases of cost percentages of colleagues in the Medicaid formula. goes down. We’re prepared for that and a little bit ahead of last year’s schedule. RCT will perform mid-year adjustments to ensure Medicaid funding is still taken care of,
- RCT has had a good amount of sponsorship money this year. Caleb Grant and Liliias Ide have worked with the state to get partnerships.

- **Executive Director**



Caleb Grant

Executive Director Report 12:24.docx

- Caleb Grant highlighted sections of past reports and discussed a sponsorship program that was launched: Buses for Better Program.
 - Buses for Better: a unique opportunity for organizations to support transportations, support the environment and help get people to businesses. This is a sponsorship opportunity for businesses to promote, raise awareness for a cause(s) of their choice by using our RCT buses as rolling advertisements.(Skida is already a sponsor as well as the VT State Parks). This is for profit organizations, non-profit organizations and government entities providing essential programs.
 - There will be applications for businesses to be a part of the program. Caleb Grant feels strongly about not monetizing the needs of the lower-economic individuals, stating “this is a great opportunity to help without calling attention to individuals.”
- Rural Edge reached out to Caleb to try to work out transportation before signing on new properties. Greensboro conversation was uncomfortable but led to an important second conversation of transportation being necessary in the development of housing.
- Starting next week, RCT is expanding Jay-Lyn services into Saturdays.
 - Important steps into the transit plan are being planned by NECKA. They secured \$20,000 for transportation funding and immediately called to see how to utilize/transfer funds.
 - This will be operating only during Winter months, which is critical for NECKA because the unhoused populations need to get to the shelter during the winter.
 - Thank you to NECKA for their partnership & providing transportation funding.
 - Jay-Lyn analysis of where drop offs were: we were taking a lot of people to the laundromat in Lyndonville and extended the route to Mobile home park ¼ mile down the road and negotiated being able to turn around there. Operator of Mobile Home park witnessed the value of RCT rides to his community, he made a generous contribution to RCT services as well.
- Caleb recognized his role in failure to secure an MTI grant, he misunderstood what legislature was looking for. But it makes sense not to fund and then take away services, so he will continue to work on getting that secured next year.
- Working with Ross MacDonald and VT dept of health - we've secured a \$20,000 grant to provide transportation to the Barton meal site, which helps provide food security and helps expand with our strategic plan.

RURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION

PHONE 802.748.8170 ADDRESS 1677 Industrial Pkwy, Lyndonville, VT 05851



- In January we'll be providing transportation to the food shelf and the meal site in Barton.
- Stephen: because of Caleb's presence in the community it's actually happening (housing developers talking to transportation providers to secure transportation before building).

GMT Rural Follow-up

- Caleb Grant visited multiple times with GMT and stated that "real learning starts when the competitive spirit ceases". In regards to funding allocations, it is easy to look at the transportation services in VT and say "they're getting this and we're not". However, the best way to look at the importance of each service in VT is by looking at the reports and the needs of the communities and [which agency] is the best match to meet those needs.
 - The priorities [Caleb Grant] has recognized are to seek the opportunities for what is good for the organizations, not their current staffing. Do what is right for the agencies and *then* get the right staff in to implement those needs, based off:
 - How transportation authorities can best serve their communities.
 - What is good for the long-term health of the organization?
 - Operational cost environments.
- Stephen Falbel has been working with RCT for about 12 years, and has been working with GMT/CCTA since 2001. According to Stephen, it is important to think of the historical context when we think of the future. He stated: "We can talk about the RCT relevant aspects afterwards - It is most important to highlight what to do with the union. The union has put out a letter, based on a short conversation with Caleb, then decided it'd be irreparable harm to have RCT take over."
 - Legislation has put into the last transportation law to "evaluate alternative options of delivering cost-effective services."
 - GMT operating services cost vs benefit have been analyzed and compared to alternative providers. GMT had been struggling, and VTrans wanted to help figure out how to improve them.
 - VTrans has approved some urban-service reductions and will be looking at more extensive ones over the coming months. They looked at long-term fiscal sustainability & looked at new ways revenue could be produced.
 - Fiscal cliff: not everyone is going bankrupt but the future does look uncertain in the urban and rural areas. GMT costs grew quickly between



2012(peaked and then dropped) - 2023, revenue grew more slowly which created overreliance on federal funding.

- Increases FY12 - FY24:
 - Total Operations: 65%
 - Federal funding
 - State funding:
 - Local Funding:
 - Fares:
- VTRANS:
 - There are two competing pressures:
 - The inability to sustain increased funding needed due to inflation
 - The community and legislative desires to address mobility-social needs in Vermont's rural areas.
 - The rising costs affect all of VTs transit providers
 - Continuous growth in revenue is needed to maintain existing services & address needs for additional service
- There are two different methods used to estimate operating costs for rural operations involving GMT, RCT, TVT & SSTA:
 - 1) service-based estimate (calculated rate per vehicle hour to operate based on 14 components)
 - A staffing-based estimate (asked Exec Directors at TVT, RCT & SSTA to estimate their staffing costs if they were to take over service in GMT's rural regions).
 - GMT has the highest cost per trip for Medicaid services among all rural providers. Having other agencies provide medicaid transportation in Washington and Franklin counties at a lower cost will benefit all VPTA members/providers.
 - It has been recommended for GMT to transfer all of their rural services to other rural providers in the state:
 - Washington County to TVT
 - Mountain Rd Shuttle seasonal to RCT
 - Fall 2025
 - Franklin County (other than commuter routes) to RCT
 - Operate some demand response service in FY26



- Kitty Toll asked: When all the transportation services in VT are looked at, are the wages, impacts of unionization, healthcare and insurance costs looked at only - or are the pushing of costs looked at individually by the organizations?
 - It was answered that no, it was not broken down by individual organization needs because an organizational assessment is done separately (and one will be done for RCT soon).
- Kitty Toll then asked: Are there any areas where we could all do things together - such as, could all the organizations purchase insurance together?
 - [Ross Macdonald answered that could be looked into. It is a little difficult to compare each organization individually, but VTrans could look into hourly and direct rates where the finances are allocated. It may be a viable approach into current studies.
- Doug Morton asked: If RCT was to take those recommendations, what would the overall staffing requirements be, and how does taking the outside services benefit the residents of the NorthEast Kingdom that we're currently providing services to, if at all?
 - Stephen Falbel responded: Caleb Grant has given a detailed list for staffing requirements for Washington County, and Franklin County would be a similar structure that is currently used by GMT. Some of this is still up for discussion
 - In terms of benefitting the NEK: There has been conversations on how often RCT vehicles are already going to St. Albans. If RCT took over the areas, we'd be continuous with the contingent strategies.
 - If costs decrease because RCT is more efficient, that means there is more funding available for RCT to provide support for NEK individuals as they are served now.
 - Ross MacDonald added: Generally, what we see as good for the state system is good for the service providers. Improving state services does help with the transit services provided around the state.
 - Expanding this service and staff really allows RCT to do what TVT was able to do when they merged with stagecoach: it allows better planning for staffing changes and needs.
 - Caleb Grant followed up on Stephen Falbel's comments on staffing: The Franklin County all comes with current structures that are very



similar to Orleans and Lamoille Counties in terms of a resident dispatcher, drivers and a trainer.

- The Stowe Seasonal route is different. The value it gives to NEK and RCT financial portfolio is extremely unbalanced. Being able to bring on seasonal service brings on diversification we haven't had otherwise. It's out of our realm because we lack diversification in services, the lack of staffing would have to be addressed to stay in balance but we've been able to hold on to administrative positions so we can build on management staff as needed.
- Justin [Tin] Barton-Caplin added: RCT headquarters is still in Lyndonville, so if we expanded headquarters we're able to expand jobs within the NEK. Vermont has to have a statewide contract with Medicaid, if RCT takes up more of the statewide map RCT's voice gets stronger.
 - Caleb Grant: GMT is sucking the air out of the rooms right now, Medicaid is going up but reimbursement is going down because GMT's portion is going up so rapidly. Complacency is not an option because the zero-sum game of disbursement is dropping.
- Nick Lange asked: to what extent are more explicit statements possible about the basis for the recommendations? Can the local/state legislature use more clear cut language to explain their intentions that are already laid out to remove the responsibility on RCT when they've already been laid out?
- Main focus is on how to provide the best services at the lowest cost/most efficient manner.
 - Caleb Grant provided the following two-part answer:
 - 1) Medicaid allocation formula: In the last VPTA meeting, funding was approved to study this again. Some of the underlying assumptions of providers being trusted to seek efficiencies were disproved by GMT rural study. Some providers aren't operating as low cost as they can, so that study will be going forward. In Medicaid there's an opportunity to look into funding formula/allocation.
 - 2) RCT possibly unionizing doesn't mean we'd absorb the same financial template (IF we did unionize).
- Nick Lange said in tying recommendations to potentially negative circumstances: [He is] curious how much can be determined in advance



so that any ill-will that may be associated may be called out ahead of time to avoid frictions later on.

Letter to GMT Board of Commissioners

*The letter will likely also be submitted as an attachment to the Legislative report.

- GM Clark has made the following request:
 - "The GMT Board of Commissioners has tentatively scheduled a board retreat on January 7, 2025. One action item from the retreat will be voting for a recommendation regarding the rural transfers. My task is making sure the board has everything they feel they would need to make a decision at the meeting. To facilitate the decision making, I'm hoping that each of you would be willing to issue a 1 or 2 pager on the issue. For Adam, Caleb, and Jim, this would be the broad strokes of how you would implement service. For Ross, it would be VTrans recommendation to GMT that encapsulates the benefits of transfer. These documents will help the board consider the potential impact on employees and service. For example: We've heard from Jim assurances about employee positions and pay that have helped alleviate some board concerns."

- Motion to co-sign letter to GMT Board of Commissioners
 - Caleb Grant stated: I don't think we owe the board of commissioners anything other than our enthusiastic support to provide support where needed.
 - Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin moved a motion to co-sign the letter as presented by Caleb Grant. Nick Lange seconded. All were in favor. The motion was approved.

- Franklin County Motion in support of RCT expanding service area to Franklin County pending due diligence, adequate support from VTRANS, and agreeable terms from GMT.
- Grand Isle County Motion in support of RCT expanding service area to Grand Isle County pending due diligence, adequate support from VTRANS, and agreeable terms from GMT.
- Stowe Seasonal Service Motion in support of RCT adding Stowe Seasonal Service pending due diligence, adequate support from VTRANS, and agreeable terms from GMT.
 - Justin (Tin) Barton-Caplin entered motion to support Franklin County, Grand Isle County and Stowe Seasonal Service. Judy Nommick motioned to approve: Sarah Braese seconded. All were in favor. The motion was approved.

Budget



Attached to the December Board Meeting email.

- There are more changes expected with the midyear, they will be brought to the board as they are presented.
- Kitty Toll motioned to approve the 2025 budget. Judy Nommick seconded. All were in favor. The budget was approved at 10:55am.

Pending Litigation Updates

- Discussed in Executive Session

Executive Session

Determination of Need for Executive Session per 1 VSA 313(a)(1)* Executive Session if Need is Determined*

- It was determined that there was a need to move to Executive Session for litigation.
 - Nick Lange motioned to move into the session; Judy Nommick seconded. All were in favor. The group moved into Executive session with Caleb Grant at 10:55am.
- Hannah Ancel motioned to approve the Caleb Grant's (Executive Director) performance evaluation effective August 12, 2023, Judy Nommick seconded. Unanimous approval.
- Kitty Toll motioned to adjust the Caleb Grant's (Executive Director) salary to \$155,000 annually retroactive to the first full payperiod date after Caleb's anniversary date of Sept 12, Jonathan Davis seconded. Unanimous approval
- Judy Nommick motioned at 11:04 am to exit Executive Session, Nick Lange seconded. Unanimous approval.
- Jonathan Davis motioned to adjourn at 11:07 a.m.