

Rural Policy Advisory Commission Infrastructure Subcommittee

October 7, 2016 – 10am

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission,
2 Washington Square – Union Station, Worcester, MA 01604

Draft Minutes

Committee Members Attending:

- Bill Veno,
- Judy Terri,
- Brian Bullock,
- Dave Christopolis,
- Trish Settles

Members of the Public Included:

- Matthew Urban, Selectman from Barre
- Clarence Snyder, Selectman from Brookfield
- Gail Farnsworth French, Quaboag Valley CDC
- Margaret Nartowicz, Town Administrator Rutland
- Janet Pierce, Exec. Dir. CMRPC
- Tyler Wolanin, Aid for Senator Anne Gobi
- Sujatha Mohanakrishnan, Transportation Project Manager CMRPC
- Emma Schnitzer, Aide for Rep Ferguson

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:04.
2. Approval of the August 25 subcommittee minutes: A motion was made by Trish Settles and seconded by Brian Bullock. All voted in favor of accepting the minutes of August 25. Motion passed.
3. Discussion and presentation regarding rural transportation issues. Dave Christopolis shared a presentation.
4. Input from the public

The following are some areas of concern regarding and thoughts to address the challenges of transportation access in rural communities that were voiced by members of the public.

- Transportation in rural communities is difficult for older residents, the disabled, those with lower incomes, and with limited access to personal vehicles or public transportation (which is very limited.)
- Working with the Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) and MassDOT is a very important part of these efforts.

- Communities and regions need a plan that includes Councils on Aging resources, demand management, road diets, parking studies, and lots of volunteers.
 - Rural towns should consider Complete Streets program. This MassDOT program has three (3) parts
 - Policy development
 - Prioritization planning
 - Implementation
 - Rural bridges need attention. The budget included \$50million for the Bridge Fund.
 - Rural Transportation infrastructure has impact on access to health care, medical services and emergency medical service.
 - Debottlenecking (such as Worcester to Sturbridge) is important to providing access to our rural communities by tourists.
 - Ambulance service is also impacted.
 - There have been advanced life support service studies that assess the feasibility of rural towns sharing these services.
 - Because hospitals like Holden Hospital are closing, access to urgent care alternatives is important.
 - Rural transportation is a barrier to access to workforce training.
 - The Quaboag Connector is a creative way to address transportation challenges for the elderly and disabled.
 - The opioid crisis is also creating challenges for access to services. Once someone loses their driver's license, they have difficulties accessing addiction services as well as other opportunities that help them overcome the challenges resulting from opioid abuse.
 - There is also a challenge with a reliance on 3rd party authorization for rider services. The communication process takes too long.
5. Discuss goals of committee as requested by the Undersecretary.
The committee desired more clarity with regard to this task. Members of the committee felt that the Rural Policy Advisory Commission really needs a budget and dedicated staff to be able to be effective. The committee wants to see real change and be able to implement identified action strategies.
 6. Next steps / next meeting date and time. The focus of the next meeting will be agriculture important infrastructure for our rural communities. The next meeting will be November 21, 10am at CMRPC's Union Hall. Trish has reserved the space.
 7. Motion to Adjourn by Trish Settles, Seconded by Bill Veno. All members voted in favor. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:15