

Minutes of 4 November 2005 6 PM meeting for the Transportation Focus Group

Attendees: Ian MacDougall, Mike and Marianne Curry, Elena Reed, Lilly Sartin, Antony Takahashi

Note taker: Antony Takahashi

Pre meeting

Prior to the meeting beginning, Ian provided the information that 3 people - Logan Miller, Sarah Pasti, and Juana Rocha – were hired as local coordinators for the planning process and that they would be working with the group in a capacity to be defined.

Ian also brought up the fact that there is a \$2M MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) grant available for the “Broadway Transportation Improvement” which has not been tapped by the city. Evidently it has been out there for a year or two but not acted on. One problem with the funding is that it is too general and does not contain any direction on what “Improvement” means so the question remains if it can be used for landscaping, signage, sidewalks or other improvements. The good news is that the funding requires a study to be done prior to the expenditure of funds and that some of those funds can be used to conduct the study. How much can be used for the study is unknown. More to follow on what to do with the funds.

Meeting

The meeting opened with Ian MacDougall reviewing the focus items which were on the agenda he provided. Most of the items such as selecting a facilitator and selecting a meeting time and location were already done in our previous meeting, so we moved on to discuss the work items related to the questionnaires.

Two questionnaires were provided relating to general visioning topics and one for the specific Transportation Asset Assessment. The general visioning questions were fairly diffuse and although we were asked to evaluate their usage, it was hard to do anything at the meeting except to read the questions and agree to do the “homework” of asking a couple of people in our personal circle of friends about their appropriateness.

The Transportation Assets Assessment was, on the other hand generally more focused and brought up many opinions about the problems of Newburgh public transportation. Lilli and Elena were particularly annoyed by the fact that public transportation was having a big impact on the some people in their lives who needed to get to work and were being underserved. In addition, the taxi companies were criticized for their generally high fares and low levels of cleanliness. There were significant comments made about how the local transportation systems do not link (airport-train, bus-airport...). One recurring topic that came up was the school bus systems and how that was a major component of local transportation.

One important component of transportation discussed was regarding private vehicles and parking in the city. Everyone agreed that they were experiencing parking problems in their neighborhoods; there are more cars than there are places. In addition, there is very little safe and easily identified down town parking that could help the revitalization of Broadway and Liberty Street corridor. It makes little sense to focus exclusively on public transportation if 80% of the city uses cars to get around. We need to address all needs.

After much discussion, it was decided that there were major questions regarding the current system that have not yet been asked, and that this assessment should be used to create this body of knowledge which could be used to make decisions. Ian confirmed that he knew of no specific city-wide database that addressed local transportation systems. The specifics we are interested in are:

- Who takes public transportation? (How many, from which neighborhood...)
- Where are they physically going?
- What is the reason they are going? (Going to work? Going to School? Etc.)
- Who else would take it if it were better and more available?
- What are the priorities for local people? (Is going grocery shopping more important than going to the doctors?)

Once we understand these questions, it should be possible to take the next step of evaluating what we can do.

With regards to the questions in the transportation assets assessment, they generally look appropriate, but the second column on the sheet that listed "Community Assets" was not detailed enough. I asked that the members of the group provide me with a list of the specific resources that currently provide transportation to residents, no matter how small. Examples of this include vans that provide transportation for people who have just been placed in new jobs and vans that bring senior citizens to shopping centers and doctor appointments.

The homework on this questionnaire was that we think about the appropriateness of the questions and, if needed, to develop some additional questions.

Specific "To Dos":

Ian agreed to speak to the MPO, the DOT, and possibly the Dept of Labor to see if they already had information related to the traffic needs in Newburgh.

Elena will check with the school system to find out if there is school bus representative who could voice their concerns.

Next Meeting:

1st Friday of December, 12/2/05 at 6pm, City Hall.