

RTCC Meeting Notes

11-10-22

Attendees:

Misty Hendon (HOTCOG)
Russell Devorsky (HOTCOG)
Rep Pledger (HOTCOG)
Gary Luft (HOTCOG)
Debbie King (Executive Director Meals on Wheels for Falls and Hill counties)
Heather Travers (McLennan County)
Julie Talbert (HOT Workforce Board, Childcare Services Program)
Judge Cindy Vanlandingham (Bosque County)
Alisha Alvarez (TxDOT)
Mukesh Kumar (Waco Metropolitan Planning)
Jana Svacina-Waldrop (Waco Transit)
Carey Amthor (MHMR)

This meeting is now being recorded

Call to order @ 11:06 am

This meeting was posted in accordance with Chapter 551, Texas Government Code, as amended, known as the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Rep: One of the first things we'll be doing is setting up a meeting between us and Waco Transit to discuss a coordinated fare system. During the previous meeting back in February, KFH group presented their proposal for the new RTCP and it was accepted. If you need a copy, please let us know.

One thing in the plan was a rebranding of sorts for the 5 outlining counties, we're calling it Blue Transit. We're changing out the white bus to a blue bus and response has been fantastic just from doing that one thing. We have new cards to hand out. We are talking about bringing in from the 5 outlining counties to McLennan County. The cards and signs will be coming in Spanish at a later date.

Next month we'll try to have a meeting to look for a new chairperson, assistant chairperson, and putting our 3 committees together that are listed in the bylaws for the RTCP. One is budget, planning, and one more. Once we get those, get people on those, get this up and start rolling and see what we can come up with some things that will work for us. One issue is we make a plan and then don't know where the money is coming from. We have to put something together to get that set up.

We're currently working on getting Blue Transit set up and working strictly in Falls County. You can hand the cards out wherever you want to. People like them so far. Comments or questions?

Carey: Where does phone ring to?

Rep: Rings to Frances or Rachel. If they can't get them on the phone, tell them to leave a message. We need phone # and name as we get a lot of callers that don't leave that information. We're also getting a lot of Google phone calls and when you try to return the phone call, if they don't have internet connection then it doesn't work and so they think we're not calling them back.

Gary: Can we hear more about the pilot program?

Rep: We're working on setting up a microtransit system in Falls County. Marlin is the base and we go 20 minutes outside of Marlin for direct access to trips so they don't have to call 2 days in advance to book a trip. Kind of like Uber but it'll be by bus instead of car.

Gary: Is our plan to work out the kinks here and take it where?

Rep: Yes, and then we'll head to Hill County where we have our drivers established. Right now our drivers are coming through total placement. Finding someone to work in the rural county is difficult. We're still looking for a driver to work M-W-F in Bosque.

Carey: How many drivers would you need?

Rep: Bosque County we could use two more drivers. Falls County we're running 3 drivers full time and we're probably going to have to hire another. Hill County we have 3 full time and 2 part time.

Alisha: Are we just doing the blue buses for microtransit or will we be rebranding the entire fleet.

Rep: We're rebranding the entire fleet. This suggestion came from Ken Hosen because our plain white bus with red lettering blended in. Many in Marlin have asked who we are and when did we start doing the transportation, not realizing we'd always been there.

Q: What is the difference in the dark blue counties on the map?

Rep: The dark blue counties are local and the light blue counties are long distance. All of these counties go into McLennan County, but McLennan is not our service area. We can pick you up and take you out, but we can't operate within the county.

Russell: Dark blue is our region and the light blue counties are where they can be taken to.

Carey: Do we have numbers for how the program is working in Falls County?

Rep: Falls County trips for Oct 2021 had 165 rides. For Oct 2022 we had 667 rides. Includes our normal MHMR clients but also adding school and working riders.

Julie: I've had clients come in talking about the blue bus.

Russell: It's because usually every nursing home and church have white buses so the blue really stands out.

Carey: Wife does guardianship for state and has clients, and they talk about blue bus in Marlin.

Rep: We're pushing on a daily basis to get people in all 12 seats and not just one rider at a time. There are two buses that come in the morning and then one mid-morning and they're getting close to being loaded. We still take people to Temple Scott & White.

Mukesh: Have we been working with the same software as Waco Transit?

Rep: No, we're using Shah scheduling software. He's developing microtransit software, so we don't have to go spend several thousand dollars with someone else then have it not work with what we already used Shah software. For us, Shah is a fantastic system to use. We're not big enough to use the more expensive programs.

Jana: Do we know what software we want to use for the fare system?

Rep: We do not have anything in mind. We're open to anything WTS suggests.

Q: If we want to reopen a new senior center in Marlin, can we pick up there and take them places.

Rep: Yes – a lot of trips in the past were like that. We need to get back to taking people to senior centers, etc, to help battle isolation the elderly go through.

Russell: Microtransit will help with getting them out there. They might schedule for one day but then don't feel up to it and have to keep rescheduling. Now they can just call when they're ready and don't have to worry about advance notice. Human contact is critical.

Gary: Can a nursing home call and get trip scheduled for a larger group.

Rep: Yes, if they schedule that in advance.

Q: How are we communicating with people to educate them on this service?

Rep: That's part of our rebranding process. Marlin/Falls County is our test and then start spreading out.

Russell: Blue branding has worked well and has potential to work.

Jana: Are we still using the same vehicles?

Rep: We were trying to order the same vehicles as we used in the past, but Forrest River shut down and went electric and couldn't get them. We happened to discover Creative Bus Sales had some stock buses, we didn't get lot of options with them, but we were able to get the blue color scheme.

Jana: Are we going to replace our entire fleet? Will we wrap or paint our existing fleet?

Rep: We are already working to add wraps. They won't be exactly the same but will be close. We don't want to spend money painting the older buses that are past their life expectancy.

Russell: Wouldn't make sense with life of vehicle.

Rep: We're waiting on TxDOT to release funding so we can get new buses.

Alisha: Because Kari is in Austin, we really need to have an option for them to attend virtually.

Rep: Yes, we will make sure that happens.

End of meeting 11:35 am.