

Houma – Thibodaux
Metropolitan Planning Organization
Regional Transit Committee
(CHSTP)

South Central Planning and Development Commission Office
5058 West Main Street, Gray, LA 70359
985-851-2900

M E E T I N G M I N U T E S

Regional Transit Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday, July 23rd, 10:00 AM

Meeting Location: SCPDC’s Pelican Room, Gray, LA.

In Attendance

Committee:	<u>Assumption ARC</u> Sarah Olivo	<u>St. James Parish</u> Melvin Moses
	<u>Assumption COA</u> Shirley Jones	<u>Arc of St. Mary</u> Cheryl Doiron
	<u>Lafourche ARC</u> Edna Foret	<u>St. Mary CAA</u> Tishoma Loston
	<u>Lafourche COA</u> Charlene Rodriguez	<u>Terrebonne ARC</u> Trudy Bergeron Rodger Shelton
	<u>SED #1</u> Mona Danos	<u>Terrebonne COA</u> Randy Manning <u>Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government Transit</u> Wendell Voisin
Other Attendees:	Karen Harris, LADOTD Becky Prejeant, Reentry Program – Goodwill Hester Serrano, Reentry Program – Probation and Parole Crystal Chiasson, Louisiana Workforce Commission Marilyn Schwartz, Terrebonne Adult Education Jonathan Lester, Southeast Trans	
Staff:	Martha Cazaubon, SCPDC Pat Gordon, SCPDC Josh Manning, SCPDC	

M. Cazaubon welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Agenda Item # 1

Introductions

Introductions took place.

Agenda Item # 2

Adoption of the April 23, 2019 Meeting Minutes

After a brief review of the minutes, ***it was motioned by C. Rodriguez, seconded by W. Voisin to approve the Regional Transit Committee Meeting Minutes of April 23, 2019. There being no objections, motion passed.***

Agenda Item #3 – Local Reentry Program and Other Workforce Development Initiatives

Rebecca Prejeant of Goodwill Industries explained the Louisiana Prisoner Re-Entry Incentive Program. The program is now making its way to the South Central area as part of the Tier II group. The savings the State receives on releasing eligible prisoners will be reinvested in programs to help individuals through the re-entry program. Eligible candidates will be transferred to the new South East Central Region Re-Entry Center, housed within the new Lafourche Sheriff's Detention facility. Individuals will be assessed there and receive a re-entry incentive package including services and training. Once they are released, community involvement will be very important. In the South Central Region, transportation is one of the top barriers for released individuals. Many candidates won't be able to drive due to license revocation. May need a job to pay off fines and get reinstated with DMV and thus rely on other forms of transportation. The re-entry program pushes public transportation as an option. However, they know services are limited in the South Central Region, especially in Lafourche Parish. There will be some incentives and assistance to help people get started on transitioning and this may include bus passes, assistance with other forms of transportation like Uber/Lyft, taxi services, etc. R. Prejeant said they recognize there are big gaps in particular for after hours, which also creates limits on employment opportunities. To live a life toward success, we need to remove barriers that hinder success, whether it involves continuing with education or obtaining jobs. R. Prejeant said they are in the middle of writing for grant funds. The Louisiana program focusses on developing collaborative efforts to assist people overcome these limitations and barriers. She wants to hear from others as to what is out there and what can they do as a community. The State has always had a re-entry program, but this new effort is a whole new spin on things and will involve a lot more case management and community involvement.

Hester Serrano of Probation and Patrol said the Tier I program in the larger cities like New Orleans is already up and running. Tier II implementation is now here and covers all of the South Central Region but St. Mary and does include Ascension. They are already starting to see reinvestment of funds. A grant for Tier II services is available with a deadline of July 26th. Funds will help with make progress and fund programs to help reduce recidivism. The South East Central Region Re-entry Center is now up and running and they are getting ready to start screening candidates for re-entry. Eventually the facility will offer job training and services before individuals are released.

Marilyn Schwartz of the Terrebonne Adult Education Center discussed her program and problems they have with transportation. They partner with the Goodwill Job Center in Houma and the Community Colleges where individuals are co-enrolled in training programs. They served 1,045 students last year and 1,100 the year before. Her students have problems getting to the Bayou Cane campus. The other bid issue is that Fletcher used to hold technical programs at a facility on St. Charles Street in Houma. All of these programs are now held at the Fletcher Thibodaux campus. Anyone in Assumption, Lafourche or Terrebonne has to go to the Thibodaux facility if they want to take welding, CDL and other technical programs. There is regional transit to the main Fletcher Campus. Good Earth does run to Nicholls but not the Thibodaux campus. Transportation issues are a prime concern. M. Schwartz is tasked with serving over 4,000 students because the facility they run in Terrebonne is actually a regional center that also includes Lafourche and Assumption. The Recidivism/Re-entry programs are connected to both the Terrebonne Adult Education and Workforce Commission programs. They serve more than just adults seeking a high school diploma. They also serve people with a high school diploma needing remedial or developmental classes. They need to get people to places for training. The largest age group served is 16 to 18. She gets a lot of teenagers that can't be in traditional classroom due to a variety of issues and a large population of 35 and older who still need diplomas. Some of their clients need to retake school exit exams, obtain missing class credits or other issues keeping them from obtaining their diploma.

M. Cazaubon introduced Crystal Chiasson the new Business Services Representative for the Louisiana Workforce Commission in the South Central Region.

M. Cazaubon mentioned an effort in the Lafayette region to pilot shuttle services to get people to community colleges. W. Voisin met with R. Prejeant and another Goodwill representative to discuss potential bus passes.

A general discussion ensued on issues with transportation to the Thibodaux Campus, which is served by the Thibodaux Loop that Good Earth operates, but the timing of the trip makes it difficult for many. There was also a general discussion about funding shuttle services. K. Harris said that Job Access funds could be used for such a program.

H. Serrano also announced there will be a Lafourche Community Resource Fair on July 24th in Raceland. Another will held in Terrebonne in October.

Agenda Item #4

LA DOTD Updates – Karen Harris

K. Harris said DOTD will hold a 5310/5311 grant application training on August 27 in Baton Rouge and the grant will be due in November. She will be scheduling site visits soon. She reminded all to turn in any capital contracts as soon as possible. The Annual Transit conference will be held in November in New Orleans. K. Harris said the State Travel guidelines have changed and encourage all to take a look at it. Uber and Lyft are now included. She also had a couple of Administrator binders from the Director's meeting if anyone needs one.

Agenda Item # 5

Update of Committee Email List

M. Cazaubon requested Committee Members continue to check and update the contact list for future meetings.

Agenda Item # 6

Update of Vendor's List

M. Cazaubon requested Committee Members review the most current 2019 Vendor's List for additions, deletions, corrections. Please send M. Cazaubon any changes.

Agenda Item # 7

Upcoming Training Programs

There was a discussion about setting up Defensive Driving Training and there is a need to train about 10 people immediately. Mike Watts will provide the training through LA DOTD. A calendar of upcoming trainings offered through DOTD was included in the packet. These are also available in STARS for operators.

Agenda Item # 8

SCPDC Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update – Josh Manning

J. Manning briefed Committee Members on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update. The survey is still online until the end of July. They've had a few public meetings earlier in the process. He asked the committee to please take the survey if you have not already and share it with their clientele. About 800 people have taken the survey so far. He is seeing a lot more participation through the online survey than at the public meetings. The plan covers all modes of transportation including transit. After this effort, there will be agency meetings and then surveys geared toward agencies. Public Outreach initiatives will continue. P. Gordon mentioned they are in the midst of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety Plan for the entire district. They will be looking at transit stops under this effort.

Agenda Item # 9

Southern Rail Commission/Amtrak Update

P. Gordon said he stopped at the Amtrak station in Schriever and met a Burlington employee who gave him much better contacts than we've had before. There is some funding available to make minor improvements to the facility. The Sunset Limited should extend to Mobile by the end of next year and Amtrak wants to eventually extend the line to Jacksonville Florida. P. Gordon said they hope to have an improved station up and running before then.

Agenda Item #10

Ridesharing – TDM Update

M. Cazaubon discussed the DOTD grant for Transportation Demand Management (TDM). They had formed a separate committee but once they realized it had to focus specifically on Ride Sharing interest dropped off. Ride Sharing is about moving people around and getting them where they need to go rather than Capital Improvements. SCPDC thinks it would be better to have it be a part of the public transportation conversation. SCPDC has posted information on its website about the transit services that are available in the region, how to set up carpools and vanpools, and tax incentives that are available for

vanpool programs. With Ride Sharing programs there are usually three other elements, including a Guaranteed Ride Home Program that helps with emergency needs. This might be a taxi ride home for someone who gets sick and needs to leave early. A platform for to help match to vanpools or carpools is also needed. The State has this available in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, but not the SCPDC region yet. She learned the Wayz app now has a carpool feature and will be looking into that. Park and Ride lots are also important and this could also help link people to transit services. Staff have already spoken with a few entities who might be interested in setting aside a few spots for Park and Ride at existing facilities. C. Chiasson said she spoke to the Mayor of Thibodaux about locating some park and ride spots on Hwy. 20.

Agenda Item #11

Agency Reports

C. Chiasson, LA Workforce Commission: Has been in this position for about 4 months and represents the entire South Central Region. She is interested in transportation and in the transit grant program because she knows that's a big issue. Her job is to meet with business and industry to see what their needs are, make sure they know about grant programs, help develop training, and she also monitors and provides labor market information.

P. Gordon, SCPDC: Likes the idea of bringing in Workforce Development to help understand how to better get people to training and jobs.

R. Shelton TARC: TARC will be doing some work at the bus garage and asked for direction from DOTD on what they will require. K. Harris said just give her a call and they can discuss.

J. Lester, Southeast Trans: They are a Medicaid brokerage offering rides for Ameritas Health clients. Ameritas just started up a work transportation program and he will help get more information.

M. Schwartz, Terrebonne Adult Education: Starting to enroll for the Fall classes and she can provide brochures and info on what they offer. Would like to put a sign in some buses. Fletcher serves in a similar capacity for Lafourche and Assumption.

M. Moses, St. James Parish: Constant bus breakdown issues and trying to find some good, reliable mechanic shops. They were dealing with dealerships.

R. Prejeant, Goodwill Re-entry Program: Thank you for inviting us because to be successful collaboration will be necessary.

H. Serrano, Probation and Parole Re-entry Program: Has a day program through Geo day reporting program in Thibodaux. They have one 6 passenger van and operate 9:30 to 2:30 Monday through Thursday. This is another program that needs additional transportation services because they cover a large three parish area with just the one van to get people to and from the facility.

S. Jones, Assumption COA: Not one person can make transportation happen, everyone has to work together. Their service area is very rural and problems involve seniors, medical and non-seniors. But the COA can't do it all. They can transport for dialyses but not medical procedures. J. Lester said the problem with procedures is there is so much of an unknown about how long it will last. The COA also has to schedule in advance to be able to make medical trips, which the brokerage requires 48 hours in advance. This makes it difficult to accommodate same day needs. S. Jones said STTARS has made it a lot easier for them to schedule trips.

K. Harris, DOTD: Reminded all to keep in touch, as she will be scheduling site visits.

E. Foret, Lafourche ARC: Just hired a new maintenance manager and will be bringing him to future meetings.

W. Voisin, Good Earth: Received five new buses from statewide contract and these are working beautifully. He is very happy with them. Still perennially short on drivers. Restructuring transit administration set up to save funds. By January they will have \$2 million available to begin rebuilding engines, transmissions, steering, axles, refurbish driver compartments, etc., to meet Transit Asset Management Plan. Hope to get another six years out of the vehicles once refurbished. He asked J. Manning for a timeline on the TIP and UPWP so he can get his program of projects to him as soon as possible.

M. Danos, SED #1: They have a couple of vehicles in shop for AC. They use a shop in Raceland

C. Rodriguez, Lafourche ARC: They use Kenny's, he comes to you and is much cheaper. They schedule 24 hours in advance so they can get routes done by 1 p.m. the day before, but sometimes get filled before the deadline. So the earlier they call for a trip, the better. She asked that we please keep L. Pertuit in your prayers, her mother passed away. She asked to get a survey of pay rates for drivers. They are having trouble keeping drivers and want to know what the average rate pay is in the area for Chauffer's licensed drivers. M. Cazaubon will get an update for the committee.

Agenda Item # 12

Other New Business

M. Cazaubon noted that the State approved legislation allowing transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft and DOTD will be regulating same.

M. Moses asked about CDL driving requirements. Fletcher has a large CDL program and M. Cazaubon will double check with R. Brupbacher of Fletcher. A CDL "B" license is required to operate vehicles that seat 16 passengers and over. A Chauffer's license is required for 15 and under. Also, new training standards will be coming out in early 2020. C. Chiasson said Young Memorial Community College also has a CDL program.

There being no other business to discuss, it was unanimously decided to adjourn the meeting.

The next meeting date is October 22, 2019 at 10:00am.