

**ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

September 18, 2015

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT
ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT MEETING**

The Estuary Transit District Transit Advisory Committee held a meeting on September 18, 2015 at 10:00 p.m. at Vista Vocational and Life Skills Center, Madison, Connecticut.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Forbis called the meeting to order at 10:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Committee members in attendance included: John Forbis and Amy Mullen, VISTA Vocational

ETD Staff: Joe Comerford and Christina Denison

Guests: Wendy Larson, Town of Madison Social Services Coordinator; Zack Posner, Member, VISTA Vocational; Tracy Siegelau, Member, VISTA Vocational; Kelly Stoyak, Day Program Instructor, VISTA Vocational; and Leslie Strasser, Member, VISTA Vocational

Absent: Jamie Bohli, ETD; Courtney Burks, Westbrook Senior Center; Jean Mathon; Peter Mezzetti; Judy Potter; and Mary Seidner, Lymes' Youth Service Bureau

Lack of quorum was noted. The decision was made to proceed; no official actions taken due to lack of quorum.

PLEDGE

John Forbis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTION TO VISTA VOCATIONAL AND LIFE SKILLS CENTER

Amy Mullen gave an overview of the Vista Vocational program which currently provides support services to over 210 individuals with varied neurological disabilities from around the country. These individuals currently live along the shoreline between Old Saybrook and Branford. VISTA's goal is to help its members live independently and work

successfully in the community. Amy noted that 9TT plays an important role in their program by helping its students attain these goals.

She introduced the three VISTA members in attendance: Zack Posner, Tracy Siegelaub and Leslie Strasser. These individuals were there as representatives of VISTA's Student Advisory Committee to voice their concerns and those of the other Vista students and members regarding public transportation (for specific concerns, see COMMENT SECTION). They sought out feedback from the student body before attending. Amy reported more students and members would have liked to have attended the meeting, but daily responsibilities and schedules prohibited them from doing so.

Route 81 Update

Joe reported that the District has been working with RivCog on a federal CMAQ (Congestion, Mitigation, Air Quality) Grant which would provide funding for the Rt. 81 project for 3 years and is waiting to hear about the outcome.

Wendy Larson reported that many of her clients have difficulty getting to Middletown. Joe noted that the District receives many phone calls from Madison, especially North Madison, requesting service.

He noted that the Governor's transportation bill calls for a 25% increase in bus service. Joe will speak with RivCog and the S. Central Cog about working on a transportation plan for Rt. 79 and Rt. 81. Wendy will provide Joe with data regarding client requests and will also speak with candidates for First Selectman in Madison to muster support.

CENTERS PORTAL

Joe reported that the District recently purchased a Centers Portal Scheduling Software which allows groups, such as schools and VISTA, to go on-line to manage client trips, thus reducing ETD staff requirements. Groups can now book and cancel rides on their own, as well as view client utilization.

Amy reported that all VISTA counselors have been notified of the new feature. Feedback has been very positive. However, she noted that many students still like to call-in to schedule rides as they are comfortable with that procedure.

SENIOR FARE CARDS

Joe reported that the District recently implemented a senior fare program which allows area residents 60 or over to travel on a donation only basis. Off-route and Dial-A-Ride trips require pre-registration which can be done by phone. Trips on a route only require a 9 Town Transit Senior Fare Card, which can be obtained at District offices by bringing a government issued photo ID with your date of birth.

OLD SAYBROOK TRANSIT STATION

Joe reported that the parking lot is almost done and will incorporate a transit area including covered bus stops. In the future, the District hopes to re-align the routes in order to better coordinate transfers.

MARKETING SUGGESTIONS

John Forbis asked for suggestions as to how the District may best reach people. Joe noted that the District currently advertises in local Events magazines and has a Facebook page which has approximately 500 likes. The District's website generates about 1,500 hit per month. The District is investigating a mobile application. Joe is also seeking permission from the State to put up more bus signs along designated routes.

COMMENTS

Leslie Strasser is concerned that the buses do not have seatbelts. She and Tracy SiegelauB also expressed concerns about having to stand when the buses are full.

Zack Posner also noted that the buses are overcrowded at times and expressed his concern over the number of off-routes which cause the buses to run late.

Kelly Stoyak noted that many of VISTA's programs and classes end at 3:00p.m. This causes the 3:00 p.m. bus leaving the Madison Gazebo to be extremely crowded. At times riders are turned away.

Joe responded to each of the concerns.

He noted that seatbelts are not required and are not required to be worn on buses.

Joe noted that the District is well aware of the overcrowding issue. He reported that the District will be receiving several new buses within the next month. The District is also seeking funding from DOT to purchase larger "city" buses. Overcrowding may still be an issue on these larger buses. He noted that the front seats are reserved for riders with disabilities and suggested that if a rider feels uncomfortable with standing, he should speak with the driver who will ask any non-disabled passenger seated in the front seats to move. Amy Mullen stressed the importance of VISTA members advocating for themselves.

Joe asked Amy Mullen to keep track of the number of riders turned away and to report this information to ETD. This information will help in making a case for larger buses to DOT.

In response to concerns about the number of off-routes causing riders to be late, Joe reported that due to the lack of ADA Paratransit in the area, the District must under

federal regulations, provide off-route service. Joe is pushing DOT for funding for para-transit service.

Joe made suggestions how passengers can help speed the process of boarding quicker.

DISCUSSION OF ITEMS FOR OCTOBER 16, 2015 BOARD MEETING

None

ADJOURNMENT

John Forbis thanked Amy Mullen for hosting the meeting.

On a motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christina Denison
Administrative Secretary

John Forbis
Chairman