

Developmental Disabilities Committee/SCAT Work Group

Meeting Summary

November 17, 2008

Present: Sarah Blanchard, Sarasota County Area Transit
Beverly Kent, Sarasota County Area Transit
Bill Little, Health and Human Services
Chip Taylor, Health and Human Services
Pauline Tracy, Health and Human Services
Susan Magers, Sarasota School Board Parent Liaison
Ryan Stoyles, Community Haven
Mary Ann Zyla-Smith, Easter Seals of Southwest Florida

Facilitator: Paula Dumas

Beverly Kent provided the following information:

- SCAT Plus makes up 10% of SCAT's total services but consumes 30% of the total budget;
- Medicaid Waiver currently provides between \$500,000 to \$600,000 in funding to SCAT each year, while the County provides \$4.2 million;
- agencies are being encouraged to take advantage of grant opportunities available to non-profits to assist with the transportation of their clients;
- at a recent DOT workshop to encourage more participation in a coordinated transportation system, only one agency was represented—Community Haven;
- SCAT looked at best practices in neighboring counties and found that in Manatee County, non-profit agencies provide more of their clients' transportation needs than does MCAT;
- the Sarasota Board of County Commissioners routinely challenges cost differences among counties for similar services;
- SCAT has to work with certain restrictions such as union requirements, an aging population which has increased the demand for services, and complying with a provision by the Transportation Disadvantaged Commission that the dedicated subscription service not exceed 50% of their services; and
- funding was not the reason behind SCAT's change in the subscription fare policy. In order to sustain the premium service, there is a need to focus on finding efficiencies as well as ways for the non-profits to participate more in a coordinated transportation system.

The suggestion was made to review the eligibility of riders of the subscription fare system to determine whether some of the current riders may be able to use the fixed route system, which is less costly.

Ryan Stoyles provided the perspective from the non-profit agencies:

- agencies do not receive the same level of Med-Waiver funding as SCAT to provide transportation services;
- SCAT gets paid based on the trip whereas non-profits receive a flat rate;
- agencies pay retail fuel prices, whereas SCAT receives a negotiated lower fuel cost and is not charged sales tax (although non-profits can receive a refund on sales tax paid by submitting appropriate paperwork);
- insurance for the agencies is much higher than for the County, which is self-insured; and
- Community Haven currently provides transportation for any daytime trips for their clients;

SCAT would like for the non-profit agencies to work towards providing the transportation for their clients during the day, which would significantly reduce the number of subscription fare trips. SCAT can also provide bus training for any riders who would like to use the fixed route system. Each agency should have a transportation plan which includes multiple strategies.

The following was agreed to by the group:

1. SCAT should remain as the community coordinator of transportation;
2. Community Haven should be used as a transportation model for non-profit agencies;
3. eligibility of the current riders needs to be re-examined;
4. SCAT and the non-profit agencies should all look for efficiencies; and,
5. transportation grant opportunities should be pursued.

Additional agencies to include in future conversations include:

- Loveland Center
- Senior Friendship Centers
- United Cerebral Palsy
- Suncoast Center for Independent Living (SCIL)
- Coastal Behavioral Healthcare
- First Step of Sarasota
- J.H. Floyd
- The Pines of Sarasota

Discussion continued regarding how the Human Services Council (HSAC) could encourage agencies to participate in a coordinated transportation system. The

suggestion was made that during their application process, extra points could be given to agencies which do participate in such as system.