

**Champaign County  
 Rural Transit Advisory Group (RTAG)  
 Minutes**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**PLACE:** John Dimit Room, 1776 E. Washington Street, Urbana, IL 61802

**Vice-Chair:** Michelle Ramage (\*RTAG Voting +Proxy Voting)

Attendee	Organization
*Stan James	Champaign County Board
*Michelle Ramage	Rantoul City School District #137
+Andrea Young	Parkland College
*Chris Bruns	The Pavilion
*Elaine Palencia	Champaign County Developmental Disabilities Board
Rita Morocoima-Black	Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, PCD Director
Eileen Sierra-Brown	Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, HSTP Coordinator
Amy Marchant	CRIS Rural Mass Transit District
Kathy Cooksey	CRIS Rural Mass Transit District
Becky DeGeorge	PACE Inc.

*Agenda*

I. **Call to Order** – Ms. Ramage called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. **Roll Call** – Ms. Brown called the roll. A quorum was established.

III. **Audience Participation**

A. **PACE Inc. – Becky DeGeorge**

Ms. DeGeorge, a representative of both the ridership and PACE Inc. {the independent living center} described what it is like in a rural area when you cannot drive as a person who is blind. As a native to Chicago and former University of Illinois student, she gave an account of her own history of using public transportation in California and now as a resident of Rantoul. That how the long distances between towns can have an isolating effect on persons with disabilities, which results in even a greater need for rural public transportation in Central Illinois. When she started to work for PACE in January, she could take CRIS into work in the morning. However, when she got off from work at 5pm, Ms. DeGeorge would have to take a taxi back home each day, as CRIS's Champaign County operating hours do not run late enough to accommodate her trip home. The cost of taking a taxi home to Rantoul ran about \$125 a week. The stress of finding transportation options alone can be very frustrating. Luckily she was able to pay a local person from Rantoul to get her home each day at a lower cost than the taxi. While this is a lower cost

option than a taxi, ride sharing limits her choices of when she leaves work and/or if after work she wants to run errands etc. Therefore, it is a big independent living and privacy issue as well as an economic impact on people's lives.

The group went around the table and introduced themselves as well as stated the organization and/or representation they were. Ms. DeGeorge asked if there were any questions. Mr. James asked how she came to move to Rantoul, if it was related to Generations of Hope – a program that pulls people from around the country to move to Rantoul; and he asked about the specifics of her work related transportation. Ms. DeGeorge responded that she had known about Generations of Hope for years and as an adoptive mother of two (with grownup children) and that it was the right time for her to make the move for the Rantoul based program. She works five days a week until 5pm from the Urbana PACE office. Mr. James agreed about the need for rural transportation but noted there are funding limitations considering the service is still fairly new in addressing the transportation gap in Champaign County.

In regards to Ms. DeGeorge leaving work at 5pm, Ms. Brown inquired what time the last bus returns to Rantoul from Champaign-Urbana. Ms. Marchant responded that the buses have to be back in the CRIS Urbana facility off of University Avenue by 5pm; therefore, the last bus from Champaign-Urbana going to Rantoul leaves at 3:45pm.

Ms. DeGeorge described the people who she has met through using CRIS transportation services later into the evening. Ms. Marchant responded that CRIS would ideally like to serve until 9pm at night, but to meet this need, need to find funding to expand service to the whole county and if the demand for later service to operate. Ms. DeGeorge agreed that many times more services come down to funding availability. She also noted that it is ironic that the more people can work – the better quality of life that goes toward the funding, and results in a more active and healthy life. Mr. James agreed regarding the importance of quality of life that transportation can provide.

Ms. Ramage thanked Ms. DeGeorge for coming today and for sharing the point of view of riders and noted how important it is to see that side of the ridership.

**IV. Agenda Approval** – The agenda was approved (Motion James, Second Palencia, Unanimous).

**V. Approval of Minutes**

*A. Meeting of November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012* – Prior to the meeting, Ms. Ramage pointed out a motion error for approving the meeting schedule. The minutes were approved as corrected (Motion James, Second Ramage, Unanimous).

**VI. Unfinished Business**

*A. Rural MTD Annexation (Non-Taxing) – Letter & Resolution*

Referring to the minutes from November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Ms. Black described how at the last meeting RTAG agreed to annex Champaign County into the CRIS Rural MTD (also referred to as the Rural Vermilion County MTD) and for RPC to draft a resolution with a recommendation letter from the RTAG chair to the Champaign County board. In mid-December 2012, the department that oversees the rural transportation funding (Illinois Department of Transportation-Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation, i.e. "DPIT") contacted Champaign County about concerns

regarding the current FY13 operating grant agreement as well as concerns over the intergovernmental agreement submitted by RPC back in July 2012.

Note: back in June when DPIT provided the FY13 grant application – there were no special requirements regarding the existing intergovernmental agreement and/or application. Therefore, the application was submitted by CRIS on behalf of the Champaign County in July and the corresponding resolutions were passed by the county board in August. DPIT took an additional four months to process the FY13 grant application. Ms. Black commented that originally, when IDOT contacted RPC they indicated they would process reimbursements to CRIS while the intergovernmental agreement was reworked by the County to address their new requirements (i.e. receive IDOT concurrence). However, by early January their staff came back with additional, non-specific concerns, and stated that the entire FY13 application and reimbursements were on hold until it was altered again and adopted by the county board. When RPC staff asked for further clarification and/or examples to address these concerns – various responses were provided by various DPIT staff members.

Therefore, Ms. Black, Ms. Brown, and Mr. (Cameron) Moore traveled to DPIT's Chicago office to resolve issues and move forward. During the last Monday's meeting, when asked what the underlying problem was, IDOT-DPIT's deputy director responded that their legal counsel had issued a legal opinion whereby the appropriation for the state funding requires the county (not the operator) to have signature authority, even though Champaign County has the CRIS's CEO as the authorized signature for fiscal requisitions. As a result, payments for transportation services to CRIS are eight months behind. During the meeting, Ms. Black pointed out how it had been over six months since the application was turned in, and that with such a delay could result in temporary stoppage in transportation services in the county. DPIT recognized that the Champaign County was the first grantee to address their concerns, which stemmed from the past templates IDOT use to provide give new grantees (hence there was no working example they could provide to the county). Other grantees would be required to make the same/similar changes as Champaign is making now. As the new requirements were related to state's funding, and in recognition of delayed application process with staffing shortages, DPIT agreed to "priority process in four weeks" the federal portion of the contract and get reimbursement checks moving as fast as possible.

While the possible MTD annexation would not go into effect until FY14 (July 1), the letter and resolution for annexing into the Rural MTD was postponed until the current fiscal year's agreement issues could be resolved. Ms. Black and Ms. Brown met with Ms. Marchant the day before. Ms. Marchant indicated that CRIS could continue service if the federal requisitions were approved.

#### ***B. New Intergovernmental Agreement (Per IDOT) – FY13***

Based on the discussion of the new intergovernmental agreement, the group discussed the importance of CRIS clearly communicating to the county board that rural MTDs typically are non-taxing bodies, as CRIS is in Vermilion County. The next step will be to meet with Deb Busey once the new intergovernmental agreement for FY13 is in place.

## VII. New Business

### A. *CRIS Service Report: FY13, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Prepared by CCRPC (Eileen Sierra-Brown)*

Ms. Brown prepared the quarterly report (green handout) and a new trend chart to compare trips between 2011 and 2012 (see bar charts within the handouts). Highlights of the report were reviewed by the group, which included: 75 newly registered riders that brings total ridership since starting service to 1,014 persons; average trips per day peaked at 74 with a slight dip in December of 57 (likely due to the cold and holidays meant less operating days; and with the exception of December that was significantly colder than last December total trips and average trips per day had increased in 2012.

During the discussion, a correction on the headers for the bar graphs was made (October through December were not mentioned). Ms. Brown indicated she would make those corrections, email that out to the group, and post the presentation online.

### B. *Champaign County Rural Public Fiscal Report (Amy Marchant)*

Ms. Marchant reported for the current fiscal year (FY13), IDOT-DPIT has not reimbursed CRIS for transportation services totaling the \$104,000 of state funds and a \$140,000 federal. However, they are working with their banker, Frist Mid-West, regarding their line of credit close to the top with anticipated revenue to be distributed soon by DPIT (as reported earlier in the meeting). Additionally, Ms. Marchant reported that the audit for the year has just wrapped up. Audit is complete, close to top. Ms. Marchant iterated the importance of moving forward with the MTD as the top priority for expanding the service.

## VIII. Old Business

A. *CCRPC Rural Mobility Transportation Plan & HSTP Update (Eileen Sierra-Brown)* - Due to time restraints, this presentation was postponed until the next meeting.

IX. **Announcements** – None

X. **Audience Participation** – None

XI. **Adjournment** – Meeting was adjourned at 5:02 PM. Next meeting is on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 4:00 PM in the John Dimit Room.

{Since the meeting's adjournment a special meeting was needed to be called regarding changes in transportation funding and services – the special meeting is scheduled for April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 4:00PM in the Jennifer Putnam Room.}