

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

**DATE:** Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**LOCATION:** John Dimit Room (POD 100),  
 1776 E Washington St, Urbana, IL 61802

Attendee	Representation	Organization
Stan James	*County Board	Champaign County Board Liaison
Michelle Ramage	*Education	Rantoul City Schools
#Andy Kulczycki	*People with Low Income(s)	Community Service Center of Northern Champaign County
Elaine Palencia	*People with Disabilities	Champaign County Developmental Disabilities Board
Seamus Reily	*Employment	Parkland College, Institutional Advancement
Mary Sleeth	*Seniors	St. Joseph Resident
Debra Busey	Administrator	Champaign County
Rita Morocoima-Black	Executive Director	Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
Eileen Sierra-Brown	HSTP Coordinator	Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
Amy Marchant	Public Operator Staff	CRIS Rural MTD & CRIS Healthy Aging
Kathy Cooksey	Public Operator Staff	CRIS Rural MTD & CRIS Healthy Aging
April Brown	Public Operator Staff	CRIS Rural MTD & CRIS Healthy Aging

#Chair

\*Voting

- I. **Call to Order** – Mr. Kulczycki called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call** – Ms. Brown called the roll. A quorum was established.
- III. **Audience Participation** – None.
- IV. **Approval of Agenda** – Mr. James motioned to approve the agenda, Mr. Seamus seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.
- V. **Approval of Minutes** –
  - A. **Meeting of August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013** –
 

Mr. James motioned to approve the minutes as amended and described below, Mr. Seamus seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. James noted that his name appeared on Line 13 of the draft minutes; however, Mrs. Brown accidentally left his name off of the attendee list on the first page. Additionally, several grammatical changes were discussed that appeared on the draft minutes. Including a note

that on one page Champaign County should be listed and not just "Champaign" in order to avoid confusing the issue discussed impacting the County and not the City. All of those changes to the draft minutes were noted and would be made before the final minutes are posted online.

**VI. New Business –**

**A. Request to approve Champaign County Rural Transit System Operator Change –**

Mrs. Black provided an update on issues discussed during the last meeting held in late August. During that meeting, the committee recommended meeting with different public transit operators given the barriers discussed. The service and operational changes required by IDOT, which includes the implementation of the PCOM to continue countywide service and meet the mandates to have a PCOM in place to act as a program compliance officer for the Grantee (Champaign County). At the previous TRAG meeting in August, Ms. Marchant recommended discussing changes with Bill Volk, the managing director of CUMTD - since they have the offices, maintenance personnel, and garage space that CRIS has been utilizing and renting at a low cost from CUMTD.

Therefore, RPC and the County held discussions with numerous public transit agencies from the surrounding areas including CUMTD. Mr. Volk indicated he understood the requirements imposed by IDOT. However, he would need to speak with the Chair of the CUMTD Board, before determining how they could assist the County with rural public transit service. Additionally, the County met with Mr. Jung, of Rides Mass Transit District – a rural provider who covers 19 southern counties. When discussing the service and operational changes needed to meet Champaign County's needs, Mr. Jung inquired why the County was meeting with Rides since the logical place would be to go to CUMTD before considering Rides as an operator of the Champaign County Rural Public Transit system. At the same time, Mr. Jung confirmed that Rides MTD would be willing to operate the countywide rural public transit system for Champaign County, if solicited by Champaign County.

Additionally, he noted that if Champaign County decided to go with CUMTD as their pass through operator; then Rides would be willing to assist with the transition, because 1) it would be a new service model that CUMTD does not have experience and 2) Rides' communities in Edgar, Clark, and Cumberland Counties travel to Savoy, Champaign, and Urbana often and a mutual working relationship would be jointly beneficial no matter which operator serves Champaign County's rural area needs.

Ms. Black continued stating that, after receiving Mr. Jung's recommendation the County staff along with the Champaign County Chair (Alan Kurtz) held an informal discussion with CUMTD's managing director (Mr. Volk), the Chair of CUMTD (Don Uchtmann), and the newly named managing director (Mr. Karl Gnadl). During this discussion, given the new requirements (effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014) topics covered included: the role and purpose of the Project Compliance Oversight Management (PCOM) staff as well as budget considerations; other general public transit agency options being considered in the area. Since Champaign County went through the three year ICCT Primer Process, CRIS was approached first. Then, it was discussed the possibility of Piatt County operating the service

for Champaign County. However, they indicated that given their own need to implement a Piatt County PCOM and the facility construction that would be building in the summer, at this time, they would not be able to provide the service for Champaign County. However, in the future they would be open to consider it.

Based on all those discussions with each public transit agency, given that CUMTD is already storing and providing the maintenance for Champaign County's vehicles as well as having the space needed to operate the service - CUMTD was the most logical option to run a countywide rural public transit system on behalf of Champaign if the County Board were to approach CUMTD about operating the service. This would be a similar model to the Public Health District agreement. Currently, CRIS staff is housed by CUMTD in their Urbana offices off of University Avenue. Especially, as they are locally based within Champaign County, unlike the other public transit agencies – there would be fewer barriers to operate and manage the rural public transit service.

Mr. Kulczycki inquired if having CUMTD operates the service would entail the County hiring another staff person to act as a PCOM. Mrs. Black replied that she discussed the issue with IDOT over the phone and recapped for them all the general public operators being considered (CRIS, Piattran, Rides MTD, CUMTD) – after reviewing each option – the logical choice would entail either 1) the County establishing their own rural MTD with CUMTD as the operator for Champaign County (which would require a County staff employee acting as a PCOM); or 2) RPC housing the PCOM staff person (given the January 1<sup>st</sup> deadline) and using the same intergovernmental agreement that they currently have with CRIS, but with CUMTD as the operator on behalf of Champaign County. IDOT's asked if RPC employees were considered to be County employees as well. This was a very surprising question from IDOT, given all the discussions that have occurred over the last year and a half regarding conflicts of interest between the HSTP Coordinator and PCOM responsibilities. Mrs. Black re-stated again that RPC staff members are Champaign County employees too. Based on this response, IDOT-DPIT staff then clarified that a Champaign County employee, other than the HSTP Coordinator could be the PCOM for Champaign County. This means the only requirement is to be a Champaign County employee and RPC can have the PCOM supervise under Mrs. Black – however, Ms. Brown can no longer act as the PCOM. Therefore, the whole group discussed what to do at this point. Some concerns expressed were that starting over with a new operator would be difficult and there is a human component for the current riders using the system.

Mr. James inquired if there was anyone in mind – besides Mrs. Brown that could perform the responsibilities of the PCOM, for example from the highway department and/or within RPC. Mrs. Black replied that there was a planner other than Mrs. Brown that could act as the PCOM. With this new information from IDOT, the county no longer needs to form an MTD with CRIS – it is possible to continue with things as they are, and RPC will take on the work of the PCOM and establishing a transit interest bearing account. Mrs. Ramage inquired if the decision was up to the RTAG or the Champaign County Board. Debra Busey clarified that the decision is ultimately up to the Champaign County Board based on the direction RTAG has advised. Mr. Kulczycki inquired if RPC's Executive Director was okay with taking on the

PCOM responsibilities, and Mrs. Black indicated that RPC was willing to do so. However, there may be some operational issues and concerns that IDOT has with CRIS MTD.

Ms. Marchant then began to describe the issues and concerns IDOT has with their operational structure as a matter of opinion – and even though CRIS’ attorneys had given the same advice to this effect – she has reorganized her board to meet those concerns. Ms. Marchant stated that these issues being debated regarding the same governing board members sitting on both CRIS Healthy Aging and their MTD board was a moot point since October 2013 when CRIS reorganized and the Vermilion County Board reaffirmed their MTD status by approving their new board member for CRIS Rural MTD.

Mr. James inquired if the issue with the service operating until 5pm had been resolved. Ms. Marchant indicated that that issue had also been addressed and they were now operating in both Champaign and Vermilion Counties until 5pm. Mr. Kulczycki sought additional clarification if CRIS was willing to continue to provide the Champaign County service. Ms. Marchant replied that they were willing as long as that was desired by the Champaign County. Mrs. Brown asked if the transit interest bearing account year to year was a problem. Mrs. Cooksey replied that is not an issue. Ms. Brown noted that the PCOM has stronger oversight responsibilities than she currently has in regards to oversight. Ms. Marchant indicated that she is okay with the PCOM oversight responsibilities. Mrs. Black asked if Mrs. Marchant had planned on meeting with Mr. Gnadt (CUMTD). The group continued to discuss how to move forward. Mr. Kulczycki inquired if there were any other issues moving forward that we could anticipate from IDOT. Mrs. Black indicated that they have an email from IDOT-DPIT confirming that the PCOM staff could be housed at and supervised by RPC. However, IDOT can always bring up other concerns that need to be addressed as they are the funding agency receiving the Section 5311 funding. Mr. Seamus and the group discussed the need for expansion of service in the future, given vehicle and fleet issues. Nine more vehicles are anticipated to be delivered. Some rural areas currently do not seem to be aware of the availability of public transit services. Mrs. Black inquired about what happened with the JARC and New Freedom routes. CRIS staff replied they had gone to Chicago a month ago to meet with the IDOT-DPIT Deputy Director and one of the items on their agenda was discussing delivery of vehicles and those JARC/NF routes.

Mrs. Ramage motioned to make the recommendation for CRIS to remain as the lead operator, pending further discussion with IDOT-DPIT, and for RPC to work with the County to name the PCOM staff member, Mr. Seamus seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

- VII. **Announcements** – Ms. Marchant announced that CRIS Rural MTD will be leasing a new office in Danville as the headquarters for their district. The parking facility currently stores the Vermilion County’s vehicles there – but they will be moving into these new offices shortly. New address is 615 E. Forth East Street, Danville.
- VIII. **Audience Participation** – None.
- IX. **Adjournment** – The meeting adjourn.