



CHAMPAIGN COUNTY  
REGIONAL PLANNING  
COMMISSION

## Champaign County Rural Transit Advisory Group (RTAG)

**Date:** Wednesday, November 10, 2021  
**Time:** 3:00 p.m.  
**Place:** Via Zoom  
**Chair:** Nathan Montgomery  
**Members Present:** Aaron Esry, Mary Sleeth, Twanna Nickens, Rovee Fabi, Rachel Voss  
**Members Absent:** Lori Larson  
**Staff Present:** Rita Morocoima-Black, Mimi Hutchinson, Debbie Peterik  
**Others Present:** Evan Alvarez

### MEETING MINUTES

Subject to Review and Approval

I. Call to Order

Mr. Montgomery called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

**The roll was taken by Voice Roll Call and a quorum was declared present.**

**Roll Call:**

Nathan Montgomery	Present
Aaron Esry	Absent
Lori Larson	Absent
Mary Sleeth	Present
Rovee Fabi	Present
Tawanna Nickens	Present
Rachel Voss	Present

III. Audience Participation

None

IV. Approval of Agenda

**Ms. Nickens made a motion to approve the agenda as drafted. Ms. Sleeth seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

Nathan Montgomery	Yes
Aaron Esry	Absent

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Lori Larson	Absent
Mary Sleeth	Yes
Rovee Fabi	Yes
Tawanna Nickens	Yes
Rachel Voss	Yes

**Upon vote, the motion unanimously carried.**

V. Approval of Minutes

**Ms. Fabi made a motion to approve the RTAG minutes from the October 1, 2021 meeting. Ms. Nickens seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

Nathan Montgomery	Yes
Aaron Esry	Absent
Lori Larson	Absent
Mary Sleeth	Yes
Rovee Fabi	Yes
Tawanna Nickens	Yes
Rachel Voss	Yes

**Upon vote, the motion unanimously carried.**

VI. New Business

A. Presentation and Approval of C-CARTS FY21 Annual Report

Following are some highlights Ms. Hutchinson provided:

- C-CARTS offers demand response service and fixed route service. Demand response service is when you call, and you are taken where you want to go. Fixed route is like a typical MTD bus where the bus goes on the same route every day.
- There was a slight drop in medical trips.
- There was a boost in personal trips.
- There was a substantial reduction in shopping trips.
- Social trips have been zero since the pandemic began.
- There was a slight reduction in employment trips.
- The boost in education is still high because for FY 20 it was just 8 trips out of the entire year.
- There was a reduction in senior trips.

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- There was a slight increase in lift use.
- There are more fixed route trips than demand response trips. There was a significant decrease in demand response trips from 2020, but we also had a big increase in the fixed route trips which accounted for our overall increase in ridership since 2020. We had a nine percent increase in overall ridership from 2020 to 2021, mostly due to big increases in the fixed route usage, which we do not collect detailed information on..
- There was a reduction in trip denials.
- There was a five percent increase in registered riders. We do not track lapsed riders (people who registered and then stopped riding.)
- Ms. Morocoima-Black commented that overall, in the whole United States, transit ridership decreased, but we had a nine percent increase in ridership, which is significant because we are one of the few transit systems in the whole United States with an increase in ridership. Our assumption is that this increase was basically in the Rantoul area and was due to going fare-free in the Village of Rantoul. Being a community with a low socio-economic level and having a high demand of trips to work, people took advantage of using transit to go to work. We had to provide a second van to take people to work to keep the social distancing, and even with that, both vehicles were full all the time during the trips that we were making in Rantoul. If we provide fare-free service, people are willing to use public transportation in those areas where the socio-economic level is low, and people need to go to work. They will use the service.

Mr. Montgomery commented that when you see the reduction in demand response trips, we are looking at trip denials because of it. When you see trip denials are down, overall, that is significant. Mr. Alvarez commented that all the factories stayed open. Huge hiring pushes were going on and it was fare-free.

Discussion continued the types of grant funding sources and process.

#### B. Presentation and Approval of C-CARTS FY22 Quarter One Report

Following are some highlights Ms. Hutchinson provided.

- A comparison between Quarter One (July-September) of FY 22 with Quarter Four of FY 21 was presented.

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- There was a slight reduction in medical and personal trips.
- There was a slight increase in shopping.
- Social trips remained at zero.
- There was a small increase in employment.
- There was a decrease in education.
- Senior trips decreased slightly.
- Lift use went slightly down.
- There was a slight reduction in total trips.
- There was an increase in trip denials.

Discussion continued on types of trips and how they are categorized.

**Ms. Voss made a motion to approve the C-CARTS FY 21 Annual Report and C-CARTS FY 22 Quarter One Report. Ms. Fabi seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

Nathan Montgomery	Yes
Aaron Esry	Absent
Lori Larson	Absent
Mary Sleeth	Yes
Rovee Fabi	Yes
Tawanna Nickens	Yes
Rachel Voss	Yes

**Upon vote, the motion unanimously carried.**

Ms. Nickens left the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

C. Update on Champaign School District Unit 4 service contract and the Village of Rantoul contract

- A narrative sent to IDOT explaining what the service will look like, so that they can review that C-CARTS is compliant. IDOT will also review the narrative with FTA.
- The main issue with service for a school district is that there are tight regulations around school transportation. You must make sure there are not any other interested parties in the private sector. You must show that you are not doing exclusive transportation.



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Comments on the Village of Rantoul service contract:

- The Rantoul service contract was just renewed for an additional year with MTD Board and the Rantoul Village Board. We renewed for one year as opposed to the traditional two-year term which will give more flexibility to change things as situations evolve.
- The Rantoul service is currently running on a reduced service due to operator shortage.
- Some cuts were made on the afternoon route. We are still serving the whole community and are continuing to make small adjustments as issues come up to make sure that we are protecting all the trips that we were before, just at a slightly lower frequency. We have pro-rated the service hours that the Village is paying for based on that.
- This is on a temporary measure that is going to run hopefully for just a month or two and then we will go up to previous levels based on staffing levels.

D. Update on C-CARTS operator wage increase

- Increase on salaries brought more applicants.
- C-CARTS is starting at \$15.00 an hour. CDL. MTD is hiring drivers with a CDL license at \$17.00 or so.
- The driver shortage is ongoing because of the length of time it takes to get an applicant in, interview them, background check, all applicants are required to get a DOT physical to make sure that they are in no unmanaged conditions that could have an effect on someone's driving.
- Before the rate increase, we had gone almost 6 months without applications coming in. Since the rate increase, applications are starting to come in.
- A new operator will start on Monday and have had interviews this week.

E. Discussion of RTAG members' reappointments

Ms. Morocoima-Black commented that back in August of 2020, the by-laws were revised to extend the terms for all members due to the pandemic. The language in the by-laws states that the terms may be extended until normal conditions resume. Normal conditions will be defined as holding the regularly scheduled quarterly RTAG meeting in person. The last RTAG meeting was held in person in August because the previous HSTP coordinator was leaving, and since Ms. Hutchinson was just starting the position, we felt the meeting should be held in person to meet

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Ms. Hutchinson. At the same time, the conditions were in place for meeting in person, but then in September, the cases started increases, so we went back to Zoom meetings. Questions asked:

- Do we want to continue having meetings online?
- It would be safe to present reappointments in front of the County Board because those terms expired in 2020. It would be best to submit reappointments for all members with the exception of two people, Aaron Esry because he is reappointed by the County directly and Rovee Fabi because she replaced Nancy Greenwalt. When she replaced Nancy, her term was extended.

Mr. Montgomery agreed, but suggested that we should stagger the terms of the members so that not every member's term expires at the same time. Ms. Morocoima-Black commented that the by-laws state that, but COVID changed things.

The possibility was discussed about having people staggering one, two and three years. The members will submit their reappointment applications in time so that the reappointments are put on the January County Board meeting agenda. It was discussed that Rachel Voss would be appointed for two years, Mary Sleeth for one year, Rovee Fabi for one year and Aaron Esry will be one year. Nathan Montgomery will be two or three-year, depending on where Twanna Nickens and Lori Larson will fall. Ms. Morocoima-Black will discuss the terms with County Executive Darlene Kloeppel. Applications for reappointment will need to be completed in December to be put on the January County Board meeting agenda.

VII. Announcements

VIII. Adjournment

**With there being no further business, Ms. Voss motioned, seconded by Ms. Fabi to adjourn the meeting at 3:56 p.m.**

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