MINUTES

Coulee Region Transportation Study

"Innovative Solutions for the 21st Century"
Planning and Environment Linkages
WisDOT Project ID 1630-08-00
La Crosse County, WI

Transit Focus Group Meeting #1

June 30, 2015
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Black River Beach Neighborhood Center
1433 Rose Street
La Crosse, WI 54603
Cottonwood Room

Attendees:

- **WisDOT:** Andrew Winga, Steve Vetsch, Steve Flottmeyer,
- **SEH:** Darren Fortney, Nate Day, Marty Falk

- **Member Attendance**

Contact Name	Time Attended
Andrea Benco	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Bridget Brown	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Ryan Cornett	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Jackie Eastwood	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Brian Fukuda	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Scott McCullough (for Victor Hill)	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Kathy Knoble-Iverson	Not Present
Mike Mader	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Casey Meehan	Not Present
Sandy Sechrest	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Cathy Van Maren	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Matt Weiske	Not Present
Jimmy Westland	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Pat Wilson	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

I. Welcome and introductions

II. Presentation

a. Andrew Winga gave a brief presentation that included an introduction to the study and existing transit conditions.

III. Input exercise

a. Nate Day facilitated the asset identification portion of the dot exercise, where group members wrote comments on transit asset comment forms and placed asset dots on a map to point out locations for each comment. Focus Group members then had the opportunity to share identified assets with the group. Assets shared at the meeting include:

- Transit center – building itself – weather protections – heated – transfers – ATM – vending – restrooms.
- UW-L – free student pass (90% of students don't know they paid for it).
- Coordinated transfers – if one bus is late, they hold the transfer to bus.
- Disabled users are well accommodated by MTU – Riverfront specifically.
- Supportive drivers/staff (safe ride programs).
- La Crescent/Caledonia service – 4 lane connection to the La Crosse community.
- MTU Works (program).
    - La Crosse County offers a discounted MTU pass/plan.
- Good service times compared to most small city services.
- Bikes on buses – service.
- UW-L retirees – discounted pass.
- Shared Ride – Onalaska/Holmen/West Salem – free transfer (one direction).
- SMRT-Bus.
    - Good first step to a regional transit system.
    - Service to the county buildings.
    - Service to the college campus.
    - Takes bikes.
- Route to the mall for university students
- Losey Boulevard is good route – consistent.
- All routes go downtown.
- Student passes – for high school students.

b. Darren Fortney facilitated the deficiency identification portion of the dot exercise, where group members wrote comments on transit deficiency comment forms, described potential solutions, and placed deficiency dots on a map to point out locations for each comment. Focus Group members then had the opportunity to share identified deficiencies and strategies with the group. Deficiencies and strategies shared at the meeting include:

- MTU – limited hours on weekends and holidays
- Express Bus/BRT to Onalaska/West Salem in conjunction with a park & ride facility.
- MTU – limited hours (late service to Viterbo, La Crosse Center, Theatre, etc.)
- Shared Ride – service ends at 7:40
- More shelters/maintained shelters – winters.
- ITS – where is the bus reporting? Phone apps? LED lighting on board at shelters?
    - This should be at each site – not everyone has a smart phone.

- Shelter design project – involving all educational institutions – building the winner shelter.
- All points go through down town – too long to get to the mall.
- Poor options for commuters from outside communities – BRT, SMRT Bus, Ride Share.
- Better promotion and marketing.
- Crosswalk by Pizza King – too many people get dropped off on one side and need to cross to Riverfront.
    - Some will ride a whole extra route rather than cross South Avenue.
- Better locations of bus stops in relation to crosswalks.
- Shared Ride – lots of bad things:
    - Long transfer times.
    - Mischarging.
    - Rates vary
    - Restrictive schedule.
    - Scheduling a ride is inconsistent.
- Bike paths around UW campus – system is poor.
- Quick route from La Crosse, Onalaska, West Salem – with conjunctive park & rides at the major cities/stops.
- Ways to keep buses on schedule.
    - Preemptive status.
    - HOV lanes.
- SMRT Bus – need a map or varieties of options for pick-up/drop off locations.
- Transit center – can only be utilized by MTU.
- Wi-Fi on buses.
- 1/2/3/5/7 day passes – available for tourists.
- No service to the Amtrak station.
- Inadequate service to the airport.
- Even with the discounted passes – not many people are taking advantage of this.
    - Better marketing.
    - Deeper discounts.
    - Employer benefits.
- Safe ride to La Crescent/Caledonia – at bar time.
- Cleaner buses - cloth seats on buses – rainy days, free Mondays.
- Ride quality – pavement conditions.
- Circulator – hopefully successful – and marketing for more/similar options.
- Bus to Myrick – sidewalks too.
- RTA – Regional Transit Authority (La Crosse, Holmen, Onalaska, West Salem).

- Jefferson Lines – more than once a day service to Madison/Minneapolis – two trips a day.
- Bus stops at all community centers, neighborhood centers, public buildings & places, etc.
- Event marketing – free ride to and from within a two hour before/after restriction.
- Special event park & ride.
- Urban transportation for people with disabilities (external communities).
- One more bus at the La Crosse end would make the turns 20 minute turns, then could work in La Crosse until 5:00pm and still get service back to Onalaska.

IV. Next meetings

a. Group members were reminded of the date/time for the next Focus Group Meeting, which was also printed on their agendas.

V. Questions

Q: Are there any transit riders here as members of the group, or is it just representatives from organizations? I invited additional transit riders from Onalaska that were unable to make it.

A: WisDOT is happy to take comments from anyone who was unable to make it and provide them meeting information. (A number of transit riders identified themselves at the meeting).

Q: For the dot exercise, are we focusing on transit related issues?

A: Yes, that is the intent, but it is ok to include other comments that are related to transit or just transportation in the region.

Q: Have you studied who is traveling where and when within the region? Have you studied how many vehicles have just one occupant?

A: WisDOT has conducted an origin/destination study using bluetooth censors. The technology is good and cost-effective, but there are gaps in the data too. WisDOT is aware that there are a large number of single-occupant vehicles on the roads in the region.