

**1 Welcome**

Kathy Stefani welcomed everyone to the meeting, saying that, in the interest of time, we would not go around the Webex screen and introduce ourselves. Rather, she asked that attendees put their names and affiliations in the Chat. Additionally, commenting that it seems there's finally "a light at the end of the [pandemic] tunnel", Kathy asked people to describe via Chat "what they see".

**ALLIANCE ATTENDEES**

Bagwell, Richard, *Northern Area Multi-Services Center*  
Beer, Jennifer, *Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce*  
Blaker, Rick, *Greene County Transportation*  
Book, Amber, *Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank*  
Braden-Evans, Debra, *Allegheny County DHS*  
Davis, Amber, *Alliance for Nonprofit Resources*  
Ericson, Jeff, *RubyRide*  
Gombita, Sheila, *Freedom Transit*  
Johnson, Shanika, *Port Authority of Allegheny County*  
Jones, Nancy, *North Hills Community Outreach*  
Manion, Lynn, *Airport Corridor Transportation Authority*  
Mixa, Nathan, *SPC Summer Intern (Active Transportation)*  
Nelson, Carol, *Office of Vocational Rehabilitation*  
Rainey, Mavis, *Oakland Transportation Management Authority*  
Sandvig, Chris, *Mobilify*  
Skillings-Phillips, Deborah, *Port Authority of Allegheny County*  
Tague, John, *Port Authority of Allegheny County (Board Member)*  
Wiens, Laura, *Pittsburghers for Public Transit*  
Wonder, Dan, *North Hills Community Outreach*  
Brandon Mahler, *Heritage Community Initiatives*

**SPC STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

Beaver, Kim  
Chaney, Leann  
Craig, Ronda  
Hickton, Anthony  
Klevan, Tom  
Stefani, Kathy  
Totten, Dave  
Valdes, Vincent  
Waple, Andy

**2 Slow and Steady**

Kathy Stefani began the meeting with a reference to the old proverb, "Slow and steady wins the race." She commented that, given the pandemic, it might seem to many of us that time has been standing still and not much has gotten done. However, as for progress made over the past year on various aspects of our region's Coordinated Transportation Plan (CTP), which was developed following 18-plus months of demanding work by the Alliance, Kathy reassured those in attendance that there has indeed been forward movement on seven of the 24 strategies included in the plan and indicated updates pertaining to those particular strategies would take up the bulk of today's agenda.

### 3 Brief Refresher

To get started, Kathy Stefani provided the group with a quick refresher about the CTP's four focus areas and the transportation standard that established the framework for facilitating greater overall mobility in southwestern Pennsylvania.

#### a Four Areas of Focus

The areas of focus are: 1) Support a Multimodal Network; 2) Bring About Seamless Travel; 3) Ensure Mobility in All Settings; and 4) Make Transportation Equitable. Using these as a guide, the Alliance set out to:

*Formulate feasible strategies that can bring the region closer to attaining its goal of a **multimodal transportation network** that can **facilitate seamless travel** within and across **all sizes of communities**, so that **everyone has sufficient access** to healthcare, education, jobs, quality nutrition, and social activities.*

#### b New Transportation Standard

To ensure everyone in attendance was on the same page for the subsequent discussion, Kathy briefly reminded the group about the three components of the Alliance-defined transportation standard.

**Embracing Change:** *There's a shift occurring in the way people think about and understand mobility.*

**Greater Access:** *Newer mobility services are defined by the use of data and technology to streamline the dispatching and tracking of trips and the user experience in terms of trip-planning, fare payment, and ease of travel.*

**Smarter Service Delivery:** *Ideally, all shared mobility modes – fixed route, demand-response, vanpools, carpools, ride-hailing, biking, etc. - can be coordinated in such a way that they complement rather than compete with each other.*

### 4 Progress Made Despite the Pandemic

Beginning with the Transportation Standard framework, specially-recruited SPC staff and others shared the progress that's been made relative to seven strategies (*in orange font*) found in the Coordinated Transportation Plan. Here's what was heard (*with what I consider the quintessential takeaways shown in orange font and shaded*):

#### a Embracing Change: *Mobility Spectrum*, Vincent Valdes

- **Foster a mobile hierarchy that directly acknowledges the shift occurring in the way people think about and understand mobility.**

*A regionally-defined 'mobility spectrum' that can be used to help guide future transportation development efforts.*

SPC's CEO, Vincent Valdes, started off by saying, "Access is equity." Then he asked how we can go about making people's lives easier, noting that many areas in the region are food deserts, education deserts, lack broadband connectivity, and so on. His next question was, "How do we **depoliticize the concept of mobility**?" From his perspective, Vincent thinks we need to **talk about mobility in terms of a "spectrum" rather than a hierarchy**. People value convenience and safety, among many other things. And, yes, driving a personal vehicle satisfies one's mobility instantly – but we need to consider the impact of high SOV utilization on society. Vincent thinks we should be striving to **create an "optimal network", one that can satisfy all mobility needs**.

Before we can optimize our transportation network, we must optimize our mission – stating what it is we're trying to achieve. With the "new world that is upon us" as a result of the pandemic, perhaps we should follow the lead of the band, The Clash, and ask, "What are we going to do now?" **Mobility is about community-building** – with an offering of many different options (i.e. driving, transit, ride-sharing, ride-hailing, biking, walking, etc.) that can fulfill a person's need in real-time.

At this point, attendee Carol Nelson chimed in with the question, “What is in existence NOW that can enhance the lived experiences of shared ride and human service transportation users?” She indicated that, more often than not, what is presented at forums like the Alliance is “pie in the sky”. As someone with a vision impairment who lives in rural Indiana County, Carol says it’s difficult to get around, whether it’s for work or pleasure.

Vincent thanked Carol for her great question, saying we first need a **vision for a fully coordinated and optimized network**. The challenge is never technology. Rather, it requires a lot of fruitful coordination at all levels of government (federal, state, county, local). He then pointed out the **need for a federal mobility administration**, where laws, regulations, and policies in support of multi-mobility can happen.

Jeff Ericson said that the powers-that-be are often not talking to users and, yet, they should be. Chris Sandvig commented that it takes way too long for large capital transit projects to be completed and it’s incumbent upon us to push the “timelines” on making things better.

b Greater Access: *FMLM & Microtransit*, Lynn Manion/Jeff Ericson

- **Encourage public, private, and non-profit transportation providers to pilot proposed first-mile/last-mile and other microtransit services in underserved communities.**  
*Technical support related to pilot project funding, execution, and performance measurement for entities wanting to implement shared mobility services on a small scale in low-income and transit-deficient communities.*

For this particular CTP strategy, Lynn Manion, Executive Director of the Airport Corridor Transportation Association (ACTA), and Jeff Ericson, founder and CEO of RubyRide, were invited to **share their pandemic-related experiences as they pertained to FMLM and microtransit services and provide perspectives on the future of these types of services, especially as we all contemplate the “next normal”**.

Lynn’s presentation addressed the status of her agency’s RideACTA services at three distinct points in time since March 2020: 1) There We Were (*14 months ago*); 2) Here We Are (*May 5, 2021*); and 3) Where are we going? (*May 6, 2021 and beyond*).

While **monthly ridership on the RideACTA shuttle is finally at 80% of what it was pre-COVID**, it’s taken more than a year to get back to that level. One of the amazing things is, despite the pandemic, ACTA did not eliminate any service. What it did do, however, was: a) Decrease the number of vehicles in service; b) Prepare the shuttles for social distancing; and c) Find ways to deal with a decrease in donations due to the **closure of two large telemarketing companies located in Robinson Town Center, which were the sources of the greatest number of shuttle users**. As for where the RideACTA services go from here, Lynn indicated the need for **enhanced marketing**, the aim of which is to **restore ridership and, ideally, grow the number of riders over time**.

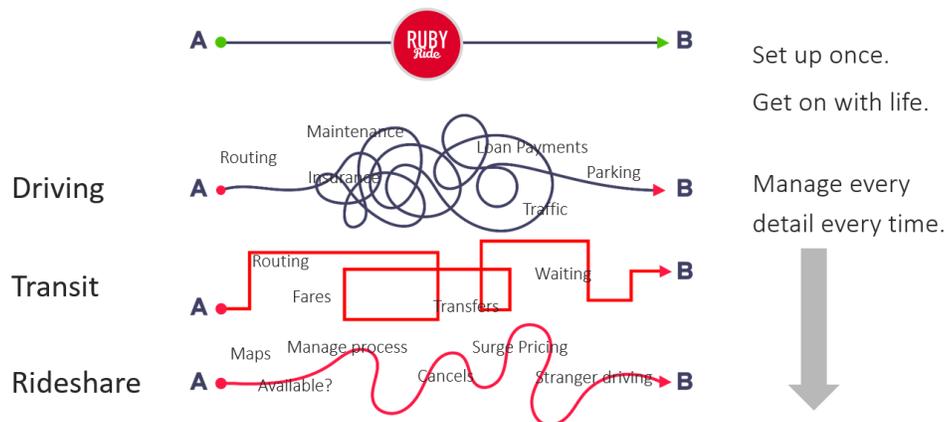
Jeff began his presentation, laying out for the group what has really stood out for him over the past year:

- **Place Matters**
- **On-Site Workers Even More Pressured**
- **Smartphone More Central to Everything**

Making a comparison between remote workers (many due to the pandemic) who typically have cars, but use them less than ever and essential workers who, more often than not, do not have cars and yet need them more than ever, one of Jeff’s slides included two messages – each at opposite ends of the spectrum. For **remote workers**, the message might be, **“Best of times. Simpler, better life.”** For **essential workers**, the message could be, **“Worst of times. More productive.”**

Jeff then went on to describe the Village Model concept, especially for microtransit services like RubyRide. Jeff noted that **most travel starts and ends in the same area, with the rest of travel split between adjacent areas and cross-town trips**. Also noted was the fact that the **majority of long trips are taken by a small number of people**. That being the case, Jeff stressed that short trips provided using something like the Village Model have a low tolerance for management overhead.

Sharing the following graphic, Jeff depicted the **differences between driving, transit, and rideshare**, and indicated, going forward, RubyRide will strive to solve the complexity of travel through: **User-Centered Solutions, Better Efficiency Tools, and Simple Trip-Making**.



c Smarter Service Delivery: *Services & Data Coordination*, Kathy Stefani

- Conduct a **regionwide summit to discuss greater coordination of transit services and the utilization of data to optimize inter-county fixed route and on-demand, shared-ride services**. *Coordination of the region's transit services, resulting in the integration of services across multiple agencies, enhanced access for the riding public, and smarter utilization of individual agency resources.*

Kathy Stefani provided an overview of a project she took on during the pandemic, which was titled, **"Analysis of On-Demand Human Service Transportation in Southwestern Pennsylvania - Is It Time for a Fully Integrated, Single-Tier Public Transportation System in Our Region?"**. Her impetus for this initiative were comments made by Carol Tyson, the Government Affairs Liaison for the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), at the National Shared Mobility Summit held in Chicago in 2019. As a panelist at one of the sessions, Ms. Tyson pointed out that, **"By design, HST often segregates certain populations of public transportation users from everyone else, essentially creating a two-tiered system."** She then went on to say...while it's true that shared ride programs can represent a lifeline for many seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income individuals, it's also true that freedom of movement for HST consumers is often hampered by the system's shortcomings - in particular, the disparate rules and regulations among the different service providers.

Continuously hearing about the complexities of HST, **SPC wanted to better understand the many different aspects of HST trips**. So, for each provider in our region, Kathy Stefani studied their service areas, operating costs, sources of funding, trip subsidies and co-pays, service hours, and passenger statistics, taking a comparative look at the data collected from the region's service providers over a 12-year period (FY2007-2008 through FY2018-2019) and annually compiled by PennDOT.

Generally speaking, the research revealed that **ridership has decreased (in some cases, by almost 50%) while, at the same time, total operating costs have gone up for the majority of service**

**providers**. Additionally, the average Senior Shared Ride Cost Per Trip has increased each year, with some passenger one-way trip costs doubling over 12 years (in FY2018-2019, the range was between \$15.15 and \$28.09 with costs over \$20 per one-way trip for 7 of the 10 providers).

The **data raises the question regarding the sustainability of this traditional HST model**. That being said, Kathy asked the group if it would make sense for our region to consider **combining human service transportation, public transit, and other shared mobility services into a single-tiered system that connect with each other at strategically-placed multimodal hubs**? Given that smarter service delivery is now possible through the utilization of intelligent communication technologies, along with the fact that universal design principles are at least being talked about when planning public transit and other shared mobility options, Carol Tyson was quoted once again - **"We are in a moment of reimagining mobility. Anything is possible**. We need to hold each other and everyone accountable to principles of justice and equity."

d Multimodal: *Multimodal & Multi-Provider Network*, David Totten

- **Advocate for a multimodal and multi-provider network of mobility services, the purpose of which is to provide greater equity in transportation through maximum consumer choice. Achieving multimodality on a regional scale in Southwestern Pennsylvania.**

Next on the agenda, David Totten talked about the **SmartMoves Connections (SMC) project**, saying that, although the report is just about finalized, the "real work" begins NOW with project development. And, given that one of the region's long-term goals is to **provide greater consumer choice through a multimodal and multi-provider network of mobility services**, Dave laid out a few key takeaways from this particular planning effort – a) Cross-Agency Coordination; b) Multimodal Hubs and Amenities; and c) Potential Hub Locations. He said that the questions currently being asked by those who play a role in transportation and land use decisions in SW PA are: **What can be done now? What can be done in the future?**

Pointing to a few Best Practices from across the country, Dave went on to further describe a couple of innovative ideas being deployed: 1) **transit agencies that operate under a single brand**, serving multiple counties (GO Triangle, North Carolina) and 2) several transit agencies who are benefitting from the **utilization of a single fare card** (Bay Area, San Francisco).

As for the **Multimodal Hub concept**, Dave stressed that hubs not only accommodate all modes without discrimination, but they can also **enable multiple agencies to share customers at a single location**.

Mavis Rainey asked if the proposed hub locations are in commercial districts only, to which Dave responded "No. The project actually came up with six types of transit-supportive land uses: Commercial Corridor, Employment Center, Crossroads, District, Major District, and County Seat."

Chris Sandvig wondered how the **SMC findings can address less dense places** like Penn Hills. Dave pointed to the City of McKeesport as a not-so-dense community, located at the end of the Port Authority system, saying that it would be an ideal spot for a multimodal hub. Other transit agencies (i.e. MMVTA and WCTA) could connect their customers to PAAC services at a McKeesport hub.

Finally, Dave shared with the group where SPC plans to go from here:

1. Prioritize and coordinate the recommended Multimodal Corridors
2. Possible field views and meetings with future project sponsors
3. Undertake one or more pilot projects or studies
4. Identify implementation strategies

e Seamless: *Centralized Clearinghouse*, Anthony Hickton

- Establish a centralized clearinghouse that applies technology to trip planning and trip payment processes across a range of service modes in the region.

*A centralized clearinghouse offering trip planning for a variety of mobility options and creating greater opportunities for seamless travel.*

Following Dave, Anthony Hickton shared with the Alliance the connection between the 2020 SPC Planning Initiative titled “*CommutelInfo Reimagined*” and the CTP strategy described above. First, he spoke about the original purpose of this SPC program, which was first launched in the 1970s primarily to help commuters with traditional work schedules get to and from their jobs and help students pursuing a higher education get to and from school. The program facilitated the creation of vanpools and carpools, as well as provided information about public transit, biking, and walking options.

With *CommutelInfo* hit pretty dramatically from the impacts of the pandemic, SPC decided perhaps it was a good time to completely transform this long-standing program. A comprehensive strategic plan, which was completed in December 2020, identified “*BECOME Mobility Agent for All Trip Purposes*” as the program’s new overarching goal. Through the implementation of multiple steps in the Plan, SPC wants to *expand the newly-reimagined program* such that it can holistically tackle SW PA’s mobility needs and *put the region on a path toward seamless travel options and equitable access for all population groups*.

As Mobility Agent, the program will *encompass a growing inventory of strategies*, many of which focus on Transportation Demand Management (TDM). These include:

- *Multimodal hub development*
- *Coordinated public transit services and schedules*
- *Integrated corridor management*
- *Contemporary land use policies*
- *Complete trip facilitation*
- *Telework, e-commerce, and online service delivery (e.g. tele-medicine)*

By *converting the current CommutelInfo program into a real-time information portal for mobility*, SPC will become the go-to entity for learning about existing and future trip-making options in Southwestern Pennsylvania, *accommodating ALL travelers, not just commuters*. Through *CommutelInfo*’s expanded user database, cross-agency service coordination and multimodal trip optimization can more readily occur. Also, *the program will support complete trips*, which go beyond moving from point A to point B; rather, a complete trip entails planning to execution to arriving at one’s destination (and then back again).

Wrapping up, Anthony listed a few “next steps” for this important initiative:

- *Establish a central location for people seeking assistance with “all things transportation”.*
- *License a state-of-the-art online ride-matching platform that can provide shared-ride matches in real-time.*
- *Secure a place at the planning table for regionally-significant land development projects.*
- *Support public- and private-sector policies aimed at advancing transportation equity.*

f All Settings: *Land Use & Transportation*, Kathy Stefani

- Develop a process through which land use and its impact on transportation demand can be better understood.

*Acknowledging the disconnect between land use and transportation in SW PA and addressing spatial barriers by effectively linking land use to transportation and vice versa.*

Referencing the “CommuterInfo Reimagined” initiative once again, Kathy Stefani spoke about yet another strategy in the Alliance’s Coordinated Plan that dovetails with the envisioned CommuterInfo program.

As Anthony just pointed out, *SPC will continue to deploy TDM concepts when creating plans for the future of transportation in this region.* And, in order to “BECOME Mobility Agent for All Trip Purposes” over the next four years, SPC and its Multimodal Transportation Planning Group (which includes CommuterInfo staff) acknowledge that *understanding the “demand” aspect of travel is paramount.* When one studies travel demand, the link between land use and transportation is really what’s being addressed. In other words: WHY does a person travel? WHERE does a person go? WHAT is the demand for different trip purposes?

According to consultant, transit expert, and author, Jarrett Walker, *ACCESS (which we, at SPC, call MOBILITY) is the single most important thing transportation planners should be measuring.* He points out that, rather than measuring just what’s happening in terms of transportation services, it’s even more imperative to know whether or not those services actually get people where they need to go.

*MOBILITY is “the combined impact of land use planning and transportation planning”.*

In fact, in many cases, the most sustainable solutions to providing mobility/accessibility run through land-use decisions.

This particular SPC-led endeavor - *Understanding Travel Demand and Assessing Mobility in SW PA* – asks its in-house planners to *devise ways with which to assess just how effective the transportation network is serving communities and the people who live in them.*

Before moving on to the next agenda item and speaker, Kathy identified some “next steps” for this important initiative:

- *Start with the region’s current Transportation Network and create a digital representation of the four means of travel: auto, transit, biking, walking.*
- *Pay attention to particular attributes such as auto speeds (LOS), connections between links (nodes), and biking and pedestrian levels of traffic stress (LTS).*
- *Look at the employment data (job locations, income level, job type, and other characteristics) – knowing that jobs are often viewed as a useful proxy for other important destinations and economic centers.*
- *Given that most travel is not for work, ALSO look at a full range of typical non-work destinations.*
- *Develop a Trip Typology, which requires access to better data on locations of various non-work destinations – retail, groceries, healthcare facilities, schools, parks, libraries, and other points of interest or POIs.*
- *Determine the level of demand and perceived value for different types of trips.*
- *Develop a Mobility Motivation Value.*
- *Develop a Mobility Index, which will capture what we actually want out of our transportation system (vs LOS), as well as determine HOW EASILY travelers can reach destinations – in other words, the level and efficacy of people’s mobility in a single community or across the entire ten-county region.*

g Equitable: Broadband Internet, Andy Waple

- *Address broadband internet, smart phone use, and unbanked issues, alleviating these barriers to access for disadvantaged populations.*  
*Ensuring the availability of broadband internet in all ten SW PA counties and making certain the lack of a smart phone and/or credit/debit cards does not create barriers to public transit access.*

SPC's Director of Transportation, Andy Waple, introduced the Alliance to another SPC initiative titled "Southwestern Pennsylvania Connected: Equitable Broadband Access", the RFP of which was released just this morning. He indicated that the issue is not only about the lack of broadband service in different areas around the region, but it's also about that service being affordable. And, for Southwestern Pennsylvania to be truly globally competitive, Andy stated that the unserved and underserved areas of the region must be addressed equitably and systematically. The plan is to conduct the project in two phases where Phase 1 - Connectivity Implementation Program - intends to accomplish the following: 1) **Convene** a broad coalition of stakeholders to guide development of process; 2) **Develop** a data-driven approach to equitably and systematically address unserved and underserved areas of the region; 3) **Pursue** funding for high-speed connectivity programs and projects; 4) **Recommend** a governance structure to assist the region with implementing the program into the future; and 5) **Work** in partnership with Carnegie Mellon University, Allies for Children and a broad coalition of stakeholders.

SPC is hoping to have a preferred firm(s) under contract by July 1<sup>st</sup>, with plans to wrap up Phase 1 by the end of the year. Two key tasks – 1) Existing Conditions Analysis and 2) Develop Connectivity Index and Connectivity Opportunity Areas – are already underway. Public engagement, the development of goals, strategies, and measures of effectiveness will lead to the creation of a Project Implementation Roadmap and, ideally, recommendations for a future governance structure.

The role for SPC and its partners, at least at this point in time, is to proactively assist the region with developing and prioritizing a pipeline of connectivity projects and initiatives, along with helping to secure funding for implementation.

Phase II – Program Support and Implementation Services - will solicit proposals from engineering firms who are qualified to guide and facilitate the completion of high priority connectivity projects for SW PA.

## 5 Let's Talk

With the presentations wrapping up just a few minutes before noon, Kathy Stefani apologized, saying we'd run out of time for the group discussion. She went on to say that anyone who wanted to could stay in the meeting for 15 minutes or so and share their thoughts.

John Tague posed this question to Andy Waple: "How does the broadband initiative connect with green infrastructure efforts in the region?" While Andy indicated it's probably too early to answer that question, he pointed out that it will depend on both geography and deployment technology.

Carol Nelson asked, "What is available to maximize current modes of transportation in different areas?" For her in Indiana County, her options are Fixed Route Transit and Persons with Disabilities services. Tom Klevan commented that, often times, the problem is not necessarily Transportation, but rather Communication. Kathy Stefani agreed and also referred back to the proverb, "Slow and steady wins the race." This, of course, brought no comfort to any person who stayed in the meeting for those few extra minutes – but the point being made was "we just have to keep swinging at enhancing mobility for everyone."

## 6 Adjournment

The May 5<sup>th</sup> Alliance meeting officially adjourned at 12:05 pm with the "after-meeting" ending at 12:25 pm.

**Upcoming Meetings - Mark Your Calendars!**

- May 6, 2021, TDM Forum, via Webex ([ahickton@spcregion.org](mailto:ahickton@spcregion.org))
- June 1, 2021 – Active Transportation Forum, via Webex ([lchaney@spcregion.org](mailto:lchaney@spcregion.org))
- August 4, 2021 – Alliance for Transportation Working in Communities