

## 1) Welcome

The Alliance Program Manager, Kathy Stefani, welcomed all those in attendance.

### Attendees:

- Summer Aston, *Outreach Coordinator*, Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA)
- Richard Bagwell, *Manager – Fleet and Facilities*, Northern Area Multi-Service Center (NAMSC)
- Kim Beaver, *Grants Manager*, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
- Alan Blahovec, *Executive Director*, Westmoreland County Transit Authority
- Rick Blaker, *Transportation Program Director*, Greene County Transportation
- Amber Book, *Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank*
- Debra Braden, *Transportation Coordinator*, Allegheny County DHS Area Agency on Aging
- Leann Chaney, *Active Transportation Planner*, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
- Faith Collins, *Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)*
- Ronda Craig, *Ridesharing Specialist*, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
- Dan Debone, *Senior Government Affairs Administrator*, Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC)
- Sheila Gombita, *Executive Director*, Washington County Transportation Authority (Freedom Transit)
- Anthony Hickton, *Ridesharing Program Manager*, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
- Tom Klevan, *Multimodal Planning Manager*, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
- Lynn Manion, *Executive Director*, Airport Corridor Transportation Management Association (ACTA)
- Richard Morris, *Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh*
- Rachel Nesbitt, *Senior Manager of Programs*, Alliance for Nonprofit Resources (ANR)
- Ann Ogoreuc, *Manager, Transportation Initiatives*, Allegheny County Economic Development (ACED)
- Lynn Pukylo, *Director, Transition*, Lifesteps, Inc.
- Liz Palhaus, *City of Pittsburgh - DOMI*
- Mavis Rainey, *Executive Director*, Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA)
- Connie Ruffalo, *Nursing Home Transition Coordinator*, Transitional Paths to Independent Living
- Chris Sandvig, *Executive Director*, Mobilify SW PA
- Deborah Skillings, *Community Outreach*, Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC)
- Kathy Stefani, *Program Manager/Transportation Planner*, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
- Lauren Suprano, *Wesley Family Services*
- John Tague, Jr., *Principal*, JT Disability Consulting Services LLC
- David Totten, *Transportation/Transit Planner*, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
- Vincent Valdes, *Executive Director/CEO*, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
- Sara Walfoort, *Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)*
- Dan Wonder, *North Hills Community Outreach (NHCO)*
- Dave Yargeas
- Melanie Young, *Transportation Manager*, Heritage Community Initiatives (HCI)
- Aniqua Zahra, *Planning Analyst*, Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC)
- Maureen Zang, *Team Lead, Community Supports & Services*, Wesley Family Services
- Libby

### 2) Meet Vincent Valdes

Before getting the agenda fully underway, K. Stefani introduced Vincent Valdes, SPC's new President and CEO, and asked him to share his vision for SPC and the important role it will continue to play in our region (COVID or NO COVID).

After providing the Alliance with some background information on himself, Vincent expressed his enthusiasm about leading SPC and its work toward making a difference in people's lives and providing equitable access to the fruits of our society for everybody. He then went on to describe SPC as the aggregator of conversations pertaining to the advancement of our region through the many different forums, committees, and programs we conduct and are responsible for. He envisions SPC as the regional lightning rod, where we identify needs and then address those needs via good planning and effective implementation. Vincent emphasized SPC's approach toward ensuring our different endeavors are not done in a vacuum, but rather as individual components of an integrated network of services. He envisions the ten-county Southwestern Pennsylvania region as becoming a national showcase for all things transportation.

John Tague asked Vincent to touch on the issue of funding if he could, to which he responded saying, regardless of what administration comes in, we are going to see "hard times" ahead. He also indicated we'll see a greater emphasis being placed on competitive grant programs and that he anticipates SPC competing for that discretionary funding where it makes sense. While SPC needs to get good at capturing resources, regardless of funding program, Vincent understands our success will depend on us having a strong regional vision.

### 3) Um...What Just Happened?

Next, K. Stefani asked anyone in the room who felt compelled to share to describe the ways in which the Pandemic has impacted them, their work, and their life. She said think of it as "therapy" amongst friends.

Mavis Rainey talked about her unexpected use of ZOOM as a virtual meeting platform, her "all of 5-minutes" commute, OTMA applying for PCP funding, and the possibility of losing the agency's office space if her landlord goes through with selling the building it's in.

Chris Sandvig (PCRG) said things have been challenging for him, especially given the value in face-to-face interaction and how communicating via a computer screen makes his work feel more distant and less relevant. Even though virtual meetings can result in a higher attendance and, in some respects, might prove to be more equitable, he thinks much gets lost in the translation.

Dan Wonders from North Hills Community Outreach (NHCO) spoke about the agency shutting down for 2 ½ months and, although the office is now back up and running, NHCO staff have the option of working from home a few days a week. In terms of the question, "Does it seem real?", Dan said it all depends on how NHCO can benefit those that it serves. The agency is still trying to figure out how to fill the 'divide'.

Tom Klevan made the point that this unanticipated growth in telework has shined a light on the fact that there are trips that we really don't need to make as often as we do. Is a work trip one such trip? Still, it's important to recognize that there are many trips that people DO need to make and, through this pandemic, we have come to realize that it's not just the trips that we personally take to get by (i.e. groceries, medicines, etc.); but, more importantly, it's the trips taken by essential workers (grocery store clerks, health care receptionists, nurses, janitors, etc.) that are critical to entire communities.

With the therapy session ended, Kathy moved onto the next agenda item, Mobility Connections and Coordination.

### 4) Mobility Connections and Coordination

Having asked Leann Chaney and Dave Totten to inform the Alliance about two important SPC efforts, Kathy first invited Leann to share her screen and present on what's been happening in the area of Active Transportation.

#### Active Transportation, Leann Chaney

Defining active transportation as that which is human-powered (including electric-assist modes as well) with an emphasis on biking, walking, and transit, Leann stressed the importance of active transportation in terms of it complementing and influencing other travel modes. As a member of SPC's Multimodal Planning Group, Leann promotes various active transportation funding opportunities and provides technical assistance to counties, municipalities, trail groups, and others. She works with PennDOT Connects, DCED, DCNR, trail organizations, and biking advocacy groups in support of adequate pedestrian and biking infrastructure, along with the development of Complete Streets policies. Leann will also assist municipalities wanting to apply for a Bicycle Friendly Community and/or Walking Friendly Community designation.

Active Transportation resources available through SPC include:

- Regional Active Transportation Plan
- County-by-County Active Transportation Profiles
- Active Transportation Resource Center (ATRC)
- Mapping – Biking/Walking Trails and Amenities
- Sidewalk Inventory for SW PA
- Bicycle Routes - Level-of-Comfort Assessment

Leann has also conducted bike counts at 23 sites, the data from which can be found on SPC's public Tableau dashboard. To learn more about the regional efforts around active transportation, SPC holds Active Transportation forums on a quarterly basis.

At the end of Leann's presentation, Kathy Stefani tied SPC's active transportation efforts to the following component of the regional Coordinated Transportation Plan:

#### ❖ **SUPPORT MULTIMODAL TRAVEL** (one of the four components of the CTP framework)

*Creating strong partnerships between the various mode providers will help to ensure everyone 'has a say' in the types of infrastructure we need to support multimodal travel and how we can practically and fairly use our streets, sidewalks, and curb space.*

#### SmartMoves Connections, David Totten

Dave began his SMC presentation by saying "we're in the home stretch" – valuable input has been gathered from a project Steering Committee, Stakeholder Group, public survey, transit operators, and others; multimodal hubs and corridors have been identified; connectivity across the region has been studied; and simulations have been created. The project is now in the synthesis stage – putting together all that's been discovered and deciding how best to apply what's been learned to real-world projects. Based on the project team's look at national Best Practices and the region's Existing Conditions, there are numerous strategies that, if implemented, could greatly enhance public accessibility in SW PA:

- Multimodal hubs
- Modernized infrastructure
- TOD implementation
- Transit corridors
- Free fare programs
- Multi-agency coordination
- Fare-sharing between transit agencies

Different research project components included:

- Study of transit supportive land uses
- Development of a multimodal hub typology
- Identification and categorization of land clusters (Urban Footprint)
- Measuring the movements of people (Streetlight)
- Identification of best routes between corridors (Corridor Criticality)
- Decisions about multimodal hub features and amenities

Dave indicated a final report will be part of the Deliverables package and is expected to be completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>. Other potential products could include: Project Story Map; online Resource Center (similar to ATRC); Quick Reference Guide; and/or How-To Presentations.

At the end of Dave's presentation, Kathy Stefani tied the SmartMoves Connections project to the following component of the regional Coordinated Transportation Plan:

- ❖ **BRINGING ABOUT SEAMLESS TRAVEL** (one of the four components of the CTP framework)  
*There's a paradigm shift taking place in transportation, both service-wise and operationally. And strategically located hubs will enable the integration of services and schedules across multiple providers in the region, creating opportunities for seamless travel.*

### CommutelInfo Strategic Planning Initiative, Kathy Stefani

Kathy first provided historical background about ride-sharing in our region, which began in the 1970s. She then laid out CommutelInfo's primary functions:

- Through extensive public outreach, SPC's CommutelInfo Program informs employers and commuters about the different ride-sharing options that are available in Southwestern Pennsylvania.
- With its ride-matching software system, CommutelInfo helps to facilitate the creation and sustainability of vanpools and carpools for people going to work and school.
- Also, as the recipient of 5307 Federal funding, CommutelInfo manages the distribution of subsidies for the region's vanpools, which keep costs down for the riders.
- When there are changes in EXTERNAL conditions that impact the market for ride-sharing services, the CommutelInfo team makes whatever adjustments are necessary.

Kathy talked about the impacts of COVID-19 on the CommutelInfo Program. Where, in February 2020, CommutelInfo was administering 34 vanpools (346 participants), in November 2020:

- ~90% of the program's pre-COVID vanpoolers are now working from home.
- Only three vans are in operation.
- Each van is operating under capacity.
- Plan is to continue operating these vans at least through December 2020 (after that, it's anyone's guess).

Given the unanticipated "pause" in the program, along with an award of \$2.9 million in CARES Act funding, SPC seized on the opportunity to assess the long-running CommutelInfo Program and strategize about its future. Two planning workshops attended by ten SPC staff persons with different skill sets and expertise were held in September and October. The next step was to take what was learned in both workshops to develop a Strategic Plan. First and foremost, the planning team made it clear what it imagined for this SPC program going forward:

- Better understand people's mobility needs – and not necessarily just for commuters.
- Embrace and support ALL travelers and ALL trip purposes.
- Make sure vanpooling remains a practical ride-sharing option in the region - but with SPC assuming a somewhat different role.

Asked to select from a list of four possibilities (shown below), the group settled on a long-term program GOAL that it believed to be both comprehensive and all-encompassing: **BECOME Mobility Agent for All Trip Purposes.**

The four goals presented to the planning team:

- 1) FACILITATE High-Tech Vanpooling and Carpooling
- 2) ADVANCE Transportation Demand Management
- 3) BECOME Mobility Agent for All Trip Purposes
- 4) IMPLEMENT Complete Trip Planning Services

The Strategic Plan will be comprised of various actions aimed at addressing the questions:

- Why are people traveling?
- Where are people going? (develop a TRIP typology)
- What is the actual demand for the different types of trips?
- Which mobility services provide the most direct access, based not only on trip purpose, but also trip distance?
- What is the level and efficacy of people's mobility? (develop a Mobility Index)

At the end of her CommuteInfo presentation, Kathy tied the initiative to the following component of the regional Coordinated Transportation Plan:

- ❖ **ENSURING MOBILITY IN ALL SETTINGS** (one of the four components of the CTP framework)  
*When it comes to providing public transportation, Pennsylvania's rural and suburban communities are naturally harder to serve than the urbanized areas. By knowing why and where people are going, along with determining trip demand, it's possible to ensure access for everyone everywhere.*

### Complete Trip – ITS4US Deployment Program, Kathy Stefani

Lastly, Kathy shared with the Alliance a Complete Trip concept that SPC submitted to the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) in the hope of receiving project funding to *expand access to transportation for people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals of low income.*

The stated purpose of the proposed project was to:

- *Explore ways residents in the Mon Valley can be better served.*
- *Develop integrated mobility ideas that facilitate complete trips.*
- *Ensure that every segment of a trip, from origin to destination, can be safely and independently executed.*

Requirements for implementation would entail:

- Integration and deployment of emerging technologies.
- Creation of traveler-centric partnerships, business models, and practices.
- Combine different forms of public and private transportation across a multimodal network.
- Coordination of services and schedules among the varied modes.
  - Multimodal hubs
  - Open data sharing
  - Common method of payment
  - Optimized trip and route plans

As with the other three SPC endeavors, Kathy tied the Complete Trip proposal to the following component of the regional Coordinated Transportation Plan:

- ❖ **MAKING TRANSPORTATION EQUITABLE** (one of the four components of the CTP framework)  
*The focus of both transportation engineers and planners must be on moving people rather than moving vehicles. This is the only way our region's mobility network can ever meet people where they are on the "continuum of disability" (i.e. adaptive changes that occur during a person's lifespan).*

### 5) Mobility and the "Next Normal"

Making the comment that, "We cannot let this crisis go to waste", Kathy indicated that, while the pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges, it has also presented opportunities for real change. She then emphasized the direct connection between ACCESS and EQUITY, asking the question, "Since we know that equity leads to a stable society, what can we do to ensure the "next normal" doesn't leave ANYONE behind?"

Presenting four forward-thinking ASSUMPTIONS (not predictions) about the "next normal", Kathy instructed those in attendance to "chime in" and give us "your take" on each envisioned concept and how the Alliance might help to advance it.

#### **ASSUMPTION-1**

##### **Public transit is here to stay, but its service model will change.**

A. Zahra: PAAC knows by what populations and from which areas transit has been most utilized since the start of the pandemic. While many of us have the privilege of working from home, there are many workers whose jobs are essential and, from the different categories of essential workers, there are many people who continue to rely on consistent and reliable transit services. We might want to shift our resources to serve the populations who need transit most and, not just as a way to get to and from work, but also to go about their daily lives.

T. Klevan: One thing we've learned from this pandemic is our need to understand the value of the trips being taken (rationale for developing a Trip Typology); what are they worth in terms of public-supported trip-making? The service model needs to change.

V. Valdes: Adding to what Tom has said, I've had the privilege of listening to the CEO of the Hong Kong Transit Agency; this agency understands that every trip has a role in their GDP; there's both a qualitative and quantitative trip value; people stuck in traffic congestion can have ramifications – economic, societal, and even down to the family unit. I agree that the service model needs to change; we need to challenge ourselves as well as the status quo.

C. Sandvig: In addition to refocusing and changing the traditional transit model, we have to ask, "How are we moving people? What value are we creating?" The world we live in – telecommute or no telecommute – needs to focus not so much on mode specific approaches, but rather getting people where they need to go in the manner that's convenient and based on their preferred choice. And it's ok if a bus or train that is coming past you in the afternoon is almost empty – as a transit advocate, I feel the need to break that paradigm where a transit vehicle with few people on it is "wasteful".

K. Stefani: From the perspectives of the people riding that vehicle, the trip is NOT a waste because it's taking them where they need to go. By giving some serious thought to the assumptions presented here, we have the opportunity to bring about the change we want BEFORE the "next normal" has arrived.

Assumption-1 Considerations:

- Essential workers
- Inequity in people's ability to stop using transit
- Redesign buses and layover facilities?
- App that identifies "crowding"

- Integrate different modes into a singular system (free transfers)
- Seamless transportation network with transit at its center
- Pricing for equitable mobility (fare-free transit)

### ASSUMPTION-2

**Telework will become the norm for many people, leading to changes in travel demand.**

M. Rainey: We see employers now embracing telework, where pre-COVID, that may not have been the case. But there's a cost to people who work from home (internet, computer, home office space, utilities, etc.) and we need to ask employers to contribute to those costs. What do we envision in terms of the magnitude of telework post-COVID? Will it be a combination such as work-from-home 2 days a week and in the office 3 days a week? What will make the most sense?

T. Klevan: Looking at this phenomenon through the "eyes of necessity" tends to make us think of things in a different way. We have to realize the economic cost of a reduction in commercial building leases and the pressure that is likely to be placed on big corporations to maintain the status quo. Many companies are asking themselves, "Do we extend our leases, negotiating a better deal, OR, if we abandon our investments in office space, how will that impact the economy as a whole?" Our economy is all about borrowing money and building stuff, so what happens if we change it? In terms of the level of productivity, it seems to me it doesn't matter if you work in the office or from home – productivity is the same regardless.

C. Sandvig: I tend to agree with that as well. Pre-pandemic, the concept of telework was waning. I personally worry about assumptions such as the one put forth here though – what I've learned from the past year is we have to be flexible; I don't want policies and practices coming out of this crisis to become dogma. Telework can also be inefficient.

Assumption-2 Considerations:

- Impact of pandemic on changes in behavior
- Demonstrated proof-of-concept for teleworking
- Your commute will change
- Can live/work just about anywhere (i.e. rural communities)

### ASSUMPTION-3

**Federally-subsidized on-demand, door-to-door ride-hailing trips will replace traditional shared-ride paratransit services for older adults and persons with disabilities.**

K. Stefani: Are there more cost-effective ways of providing paratransit services?

A. Hickton: Communications and the ability to communicate are critical. Technology is critical and there are so many areas where it's lacking. Anyone taking a trip views their trip as important and necessary. How do we ensure a safe and convenient trip for different populations (i.e. ride-hailing trips)? The key is to be "nimble" – i.e. perhaps use smaller vehicles in less dense areas..

K. Stefani: I've seen Alliance members with disabilities experience really long waits for rides home/work after our meetings.

A. Hickton: And now, with social distancing requirements, it's even more difficult.

T. Klevan: Again, it's all about the value proposition – with ride-hailing services, Uber and Lyft, there's a weakness in their model. Many people need help making their trips and the value of this type of labor should not go away. But it's an inherent weakness in the TNC model. A de-valuing of the person driving the vehicle cannot be sustained (saw this in the battle in California yesterday and the greed-mongrels won).

F. Collins: *In my previous job at Travelers Aid, I oversaw both the MATP program and a program for seniors. While not 100% equitable, the TA programs are about restoring dignity to the users. In almost every case, their rides are less expensive than traditional paratransit services.*

Assumption-3 Considerations:

- *Make new mobility options work for everyone (provide choices)*
- *Universal Basic Mobility (broader view in terms of who we serve)*
- *Come up with more cost-effective ways of providing paratransit services*
- *Combination of dedicated vehicles and non-dedicated vehicles*
- *Functional, inviting, and accessible site design*
- *Safety and access for all users*

### **ASSUMPTION-4**

**Environmental concerns will come to the forefront with an emphasis on smart and green transportation, including active routes to everyday destinations.**

J. Tague: *Moving to green energy and electric vehicles, especially in the current political environment, makes one wonder what we can do to move our country forward in terms of the environment and sustainability.*

D. Wonders: *I feel like we've taken a step backward, especially given PAAC's decision to purchase a fleet of diesel buses. When I asked what happened with the push for CNG vehicles, I was told the cost of the CNG infrastructure was too prohibitive.*

J. Tague: *That makes an interesting point. Are electric buses the future?*

T. Klevan: *Dan's characterization is correct and politics are definitely part of it. Policymaking is based on what we value. We are experiencing natural disasters that are linked to environmental issues and we know the earth is going to do what it's going to do. I like the idea of "active routes to everyday destinations" – it brings me to what we heard over and over again during the development of the Coordinated Transportation Plan, which is "all transportation is personal". We all make our own decisions about trip-making and our behavior tied to those decisions are influenced by some understanding of what is happening in our world.*

D. Totten: *While not speaking on behalf of PAAC, I do know that the agency pursues discretionary sources of funding to purchase electric vehicles; sometimes, they're successful and other times, they're not.*

Assumption-4 Considerations:

- *Give our cities back to the people*
- *Reorient our street infrastructure*
- *Confront barriers to biking and walking*
- *Trail use nationwide is up 200%*
- *Move to bio-fuels, electric vehicles, etc.*
- *Environmental maps in GIS (inform development decisions)*
- *People thinking about land use and bringing services closer*

## **6) Adjournment**

Before Kathy Stefani brought the meeting to a close, she pointed out how today's agenda demonstrated the importance and relevance of all that the Alliance does. She then promised "good things to come" out of today's input in terms of future planning. The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 pm with reminders about the December 1<sup>st</sup> Active Transportation Forum and the February 3, 2021 meeting of the Alliance for Transportation Working in Communities.

### **ASSUMPTIONS NOT DISCUSSED @ November 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

#### **ASSUMPTION-5**

Microtransit will be deployed to address mobility needs in underserved communities and to provide first- and last-mile access to main-line transit services in suburban areas.

#### **ASSUMPTION-6**

Multimodal hubs will be located in places where there are clusters of activity and an expressed community desire for this type of facility.

#### **ASSUMPTION-7**

Land use will be treated as an eco-system - rather than a commodity - with jobs and services located close by.

#### **ASSUMPTION-8**

There will be growth in the number of delivery vehicles on the road, increasing competition for street and curb space.