

Seth Boyd, called the meeting to order at 10:01am. Those in attendance and constituting a quorum were as follows:

Board Members:

Sue Fillion
Randy Capitani
Dan Thoemke
Seth Boyd
Brenden McNamara
Jason Rasmussen

Members of the Public: None

Staff Present:

Randy Schoonmaker, CEO, SEVT
Christine Howe, General Manager, SEVT
Keith Johnson, Finance Manager, SEVT

Invited Guests:

Jeremy Whiting, VTrans
Ross MacDonald, VTrans

Public Input: None

Amendments to the Agenda: None

Review of the April 16, 2024, Meeting Minutes: No changes

Vote on Updated Drug & Alcohol Policy: Christine explained that during the FTA audit it was noted our Drug and Alcohol Policy had some outdated language. For example, the FTA changed the regulation in 2023 to include oral swabs for testing, and although it is not yet in practice, it is still regulation. Many of the language changes are due to regulations. A summary was presented for the changes. The policy language for past offenses was also brought in line with the DOT question of two years prior. Seth asked Randy to send the policy to the Board members for review and place in BoardEffect to review. Ross noted that Christine was wonderful to work with and summarized mainly similar findings throughout the state. The most findings are policies needed updating, random times spread out more. Sue asked for clarification on alcohol safety sensitive duties. **Motion 1: Randy C motioned to accept the revised Drug and Alcohol Policy, Brendan seconded.** Randy C asked how often testing occurs, and what happens if there is a failure. Christine explained that we are sent a list of random tests for employees quarterly, and rules are followed to test within that quarter. If anyone fails, SEVT has a no tolerance policy so they would be released immediately.. Ross explained that the zero-tolerance policy is most effective, what VTrans likes to see and used by most providers in the state. Jason asked if drug addiction is a disability and therefore if we have a driver that has addiction issues do we have any issues with legal challenging. Randy S. explained that this is federal law and there has not been a challenge. Ross explained that sometimes with a disability you are not able to perform certain jobs, but the federal policy stands. Dan asked if we release an employee for failed test, does the financial burden lie on SEVT? No there is no SEVT financial burden, however SEVT is required to supply SAP and referral information for the person to use on their own. **Motion Passed: 6-0**

Vote on EEO policy: Christine explained the Equal Employment Opportunity policy needed updating. Christine explained this is a large amount of data collection and thanked VTrans for the help to utilize Steadman Hill consultation to help with the data collection. It was noted that when the Board reviews this policy, they will see a spreadsheet with many categories that do not pertain to SEVT. To summarize, SEVT met or exceeded goals based on applicants over the last six years.

Motion 2: Sue Fillion motioned to approve the updated policy; Dan seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

VTrans update: Ross noted they are continuing through the grant processes. Ross thanked Randy S for presenting at the O&D summit on microtransit. Ross will have more updated information at the meeting next week.

Ridership Review: Christine reviewed ridership, noting the Red and White lines and Route 53 have record ridership even compared to pre-pandemic which is great to see. This is due to housing along these routes. The Bellows Falls fixed route is up 18%. The Demand Response van and bus routes are up 17% and volunteers are down 21% which brings the overall Rockingham location to a 9% increase. The Wilmington-West Dover route is still off by 22% and has been down since last summer with the bad weather. The hope is a good summer this year for that route to rebound. Overall Wilmington is down 10% and total SEVT is down 1%.

Randy S presented the microtransit programs and compared Windsor and Brattleboro. Both towns have similar day of week ridership levels, but Brattleboro is more focused on employment rides, versus shopping in Windsor.

Randy S presented winter ridership for the Wilmington routes per a Board request. It was explained that there is so much change in the property rentals that the ridership has been affected. Changes in where the employees are housed has affected the Wilmington-West Dover route which has dropped 56% from 2019. The summer activity is so much less in recent years. Randy C asked if there are things we can and should be doing to stimulate ridership. Randy S said obviously we can do more marketing, but the summer ridership was based on Snow Lake Lodge travelers that are not there now and the employees are housed there walk to work. Seth noted that summer travelers are different too as they will go further and use their cars, not just up and down Route 100.

Randy S presented a breakdown of the Wilmington-Brattleboro route stop by stop. The data shows we are down 56% of school riders, as well as individual riders that are non-school are also off 35%. Seth asked Ross if this type of ridership is common across the state. Ross said we are seeing ridership fluctuations across the state, mostly with commuter ridership. Ross also noted that all the other information such as the Route 100 demographics changes that fluctuate across the state. The Route Performance Report that the state puts out will be good to review and Ross thinks that report will show more similarities than differences.

Randy S presented the Wilmington-Bennington route which relies on the Grace Christian School riders. This route had the second run eliminated based on this data, and next week is the first week that will be in effect. Seth noted that we are still early in the summer season and hoping things will pick up.

Medicaid and O&D issues: Randy S presented the summary for Medicaid and O&D issues. He explained the huge Medicaid demand is forcing some O&D cancellations based on priority. He noted that we are once again pushing the community driver program and increasing the volunteer pool. The community driver recruitment plan was presented. We have two company cars that have been taken over by drivers using company sedans. Wilmington drivers are doing demand response rides on this side of the service territory. We need more cars to do more trips with employees as opposed to volunteers which are hard to manage and can call out daily.

Vote on additional used vehicles purchase: Randy S asked for consideration from the Board to use capital savings money to purchase used sedans to cover these additional trips. The capital cost could possibly affect next year's vehicle purchase based on capital match. Jason asked if this affects the budget. Randy S. explained it would be mostly Medicaid and be reimbursed via expenses. Ross said that VTrans has offered capital funds for sedans for over a year and is thankful that Randy S is moving in this direction. Ross just submitted the grant agreement to Contract Admin, but we could have inserted these funds if discussed prior. Ross offered capital awards to help if other sedans are needed after these used vehicles throughout FY25. Ross thanked SEVT again for moving in this direction. Sue noted that the trip numbers are astounding and asked if there are other funds to compensate for these trips. Randy S. explained the legislature has been very supportive in giving more funding to DVHA for the funding of these trips. Randy S. said we should be breaking even at the end of the fiscal year for these trips, thanks to the additional money. Keith noted that DVHA covers operational expenses, but they do not cover capital. When it comes to vehicles the support is from VTrans. Randy C asked if these two used vehicles are expanding or replacing the older two vans. Randy S said these are expansion vehicles. **Motion #4 Randy C motioned to use the procurement policy to buy two used cars up to \$15,000 each from our capital savings account and Dan seconded, passed 6-0.**

Keene Overview: Randy S presented an overview on Keene NH's public transit service. It is currently being run by a health care organization. The organization wants out of the transportation service. Keene did a feasibility study for microtransit as well. New Hampshire spends much less on public transit than Vermont. More local funding is needed in Keene. Randy S asked for the Board to vote on whether SEVT should continue to attend meetings. If an RFP is issued, there would be another request to the Board prior to putting on a proposal. Randy C thinks it should be pursued for no other reason than to eventually establish a Keene to Brattleboro connection. Sue feels that if you can offer guidance and if you have the capacity for it we should. Ross said there is only a benefit to have Randy S's expertise at the table. Ross said VTrans used to receive \$24,000 for the Hinsdale cross border transportation. It is less now, so VTrans is already paying more for that service so that would be discussed if a Keene to Brattleboro were to ever be established. Ross expressed concerns with SEVT and the demand response service levels and capacity to serve all those trips currently. Ross said he would be remiss if he didn't mention he would like to see a fix it first for SEVT with the demand response service. Ross said New Hampshire has more federal dollars but spends far less of those dollars on public transit, therefore the local towns in New Hampshire are expected to fund more. **Motion 3: Randy C motioned to allow Randy S to continue discussions with Keene, Sue Fillion seconded motion passed 6-0.**

Executive Session if Necessary: None

Motion to adjourn by Randy C, adjourned at 11:22 AM