

**Acton-Boxborough United Way  
Community Forum: Transportation Issues**

*January 20, 2005*

Notes

- We are here to address transportation issues of the vulnerable populations in our community.
- Introduction of everyone attending. There were representatives from all sorts of groups however with the common need of public transportation.
- Julie McKinley talked about efforts in other towns in the surrounding area and how they are approaching their transportation needs, the most notable is in Lexington – LEXpress - which includes several routes that connect with the MBTA, and have very low fares. They also have the FISH program.
- The FISH program existed in Acton at one time, however due to liability issues the program eventually ended.
- Liability is a major issue, especially because of how expensive it is.
- The success of Lexington is attributed to the fact that they have a whole web of transportation; the responsibility is divided among several agencies.
- In towns where there are more elderly people the services are more available and less expensive consequently.
- Right now in Acton there are two vans. One is called the Road Runner (run by the Lowell Regional Transit Authority) and the other is run by the Acton COA. The ACOA van is very effectively run and it tries to meet its demand to its highest capacity. The van is equipped for wheelchairs.
- The Road Runner however has recently cut two days off its schedule (Mondays and Fridays) due to lack of demand.
- Right now the budget for the ACOA van is at stake depending on whether or not the Override passes.
- Another major issue is the lack of a transportation solution to the South Acton Train Station. It's an issue for the people of the rail as well since their customer load declines significantly once the parking lot is full.
- Ideally the needs of everyone in the community in terms of transportation could be met, and solved.
- Right now there's no actual momentum regarding the issue.
- 6-7 years ago a group of citizens got together to think about Transportation issues due to the new housing developments on Route 2.
- Transportation Committee gives ideas to selectmen as to how parking issue could be solved. They have a very talented group of people within this committee.
- In other towns such as Lunenburg, the towns are being more aggressive in order to get the funding for transportation.
- Groups need to work together and join forces regarding transportation in order for it to be successful.
- The location of Acton is awkward because it is part of both the MBTA system and the Lowell Regional Transit Authority, but on the fringes of both and thus it doesn't really get benefits from either.

- The RIDE, (an MBTA program) has been set-up in other towns but is not feasible in Acton due to budgetary reasons.
- Groups such as Restoration Project have a van they use in the morning and late afternoon, but could make it available during the day for other purposes.
- In Acton there's one taxi license and it only works half-time, there's another one in Boxborough, however these two licenses don't contribute significantly towards the solution especially because of how expensive they are.
- FISH seems to be a practical, effective approach, as well as the web idea of Lexington.
- How to get people into the train station is an issue; the entire Fitchburg corridor is working to address that issue.
- At AB we need to find a middle ground between what we have now and the model of Lexington's transportation system.
- Mass Executive Transportation committee for Non-profit Organizations funds projects for transportation, if several non-profits join forces there are better odds of getting funding.
- The CASE vans used by the schools could be a practical option for people who need transportation when the schools are not using these vans.
- Getting businesses involved and come up with a community challenge theme would be a great way to get the funding.
- A group should be assembled that has the time and resources to devise solutions.
- Part of the issue right now is that people aren't aware of what is available and what the needs are, except those that are directly connected.
- Getting auto dealers to donate vans or give us special rates is another option.
- ABUW encourages brainstorming through the chat room available at [www.abuw.org](http://www.abuw.org)
- We need to incite civic behavior in our business community.
- We have a very generous community and it would be a great source for donations.
- In order to reach businesses, we need to help them make the connection as to why it would benefit them.
- We can assess our needs through agencies and institutions.
- ABUW is encouraged to continue to use its privileges as a member of the Chamber of Commerce.
- If anyone is interested in participating in the Solutions Committee they should e-mail Sandy saying so.

***Action items:***

- A qualitative list of needs in terms of transportation
- We need to gather statistics to back up our requests for donations.
- Town meetings are a good place to survey people and assess the needs of the community.
- We also need to survey target groups as a key factor of the assessment.