Appendix K: LRTP Public Meeting Summary
A public meeting was held on Tuesday, June 20, 2017, to receive comments on North Central’s 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Amy Kessler opened the meeting at 9:00AM to discuss the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan and solicit public comments received to date.

The Long Range Transportation Plan provides the RPO with trends and issues that the region is seeing from a transportation standpoint. We are seeing an aging population, a loss of demographics, an aging infrastructure, lots of structurally bridges, and demand for access and public transit. The LRTP identifies short, mid and long term transportation policies to try and address some of these trends. The LRTP also has revenue projections that is fiscally constrained based on reasonable expectations of funding between now and 2045.

One of the major issues we consistently hear and have identified through our Human Service – Transportation Coordination Plan is access to transportation being a challenge whether it’s for workforce or human service agencies.

Chris stated that accessible public transportation is an important part of OVR.

We are never going to close the entire gap of transportation access. There is going to be a group of people what will not use public transportation. There is going to be a group of people that may not be able to use other forms of transportation from accessibility alone. How do we marry the two together where we can try to close that gap as best as possible?

We are also doing a Veterans’ Transportation Study for Jefferson County as a pilot that will we will be looking to better serve the veteran community, whether it is getting to the clinic in DuBois or Pittsburgh, Altoona or Erie.

Chris was at a LINK meeting last week where the gentleman from Veterans’ Affairs was there and he mentioned this upcoming study.
Chris stated that one of the things that is missing in general is the genuine understanding of why we don’t have the public transportation services that people expect. With so many people coming in from other areas, they don’t understand why we don’t have it. Public awareness is a critical piece.

We don’t have taxi services so how do you explain that to people who come in from areas that do have these services.

On the other side, when people from our area go to places where they do have public transportation they don’t use it because they are not familiar with it.

Amy asked what kind of recommendations should we be looking at for public transportation and access to transportation?

Chris thinks keeping it on the table and talking about it all the time will help. As well, include people with physical limitations who rely heavily on Health Ride, ATA and DuFAST.

Amy stated that ATA and DuFAST are merging as of July 1. ATA is taking over the entire service area and DuFAST will cease to exist. We have not heard of any route changes in the DuBois area but that may or may not happen based on what the transit agencies come out with. DuFAST just went through the process of changing their routes to what they thought would make them better. It is assumed that ATA will assess this after the first year and go from there.

People say there is an access to transportation issue. When you ask some people where they live, they didn’t realize a bus went right by their house, but it may not be on the time schedule that they need it. Or they feel it’s for older people. This is where education needs to come in.

One of the newer things at OVR with their pre-employment transition services is travel training. That is going to be one of their focuses in the coming years in helping people, who can’t drive, understand how to navigate without driving. Utilizing the bus service is something OVR is hoping to support more and get people to understand and accept it.

Amy asked if Chris thought this group would consider ride-sharing using Uber, Lift, etc.?

Chris thought they would consider it. This is one of the directions OVR is going and why she wanted to come to the meeting today to get a feel of where things are going so she can make better choices.

Amy said we are partnering with some people to bring in a ride-sharing group that we hope to pilot.

This was recommended in our Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan and it is a recommendation in the Long Range Plan as well.

Chris stated part of it is way-laying people’s understanding of why they expect it to be free and on their schedule, and part of the challenge is helping them understand that the cost of using public transportation is still going to be cheaper than owning a car.

Chris stated that part of the culture around here is not trusting, if you call it a dispatcher people will know what that is. Don’t use new terms that the older people won’t understand.
Chris likened it to Health Ride from Cambria County. Once in a while they would send a car up here to take someone to Pittsburgh and it has grown and you see Health Ride vehicles everywhere. OVR uses them for staff and customers. It is expensive but the more options the better.

If you can narrow it down to what is right and legal and legitimate and educate people about it, we will all benefit in all the social services, all the employers, etc.

The goal is people having reliable, safe transportation at an affordable cost. The neat potential with ridesharing is it is not a provider coming in and guessing what routes might make sense for who is out there. The charge will be to contact the human service agencies and contact the people on the ground who know what they need and when they need it and schedule the trips around that.

The biggest challenge we have is we have all heard that transportation is an issue but no one has a documented case of this is where this is happening at. We have to figure that out, working with all the social service agencies, to start tracking. It is a matter of how do we document where those gaps are. Are they real or perceived and start tracking them. This is going to be one of the challenges we will have.

These are things we have to get people better educated on as well, whether it is using public transportation or using those simulators at schools that teach people about driving while intoxicated and driving while texting, etc.

Chris was at the Northeast PA Center for Independent Living a few weeks back and they have a driver simulator there. It is a simple concept. There is one at the Hiram Center for OVR so if you haven’t seen driver simulators you can check it out. The device is a glorified iPad. It is the software that is expensive and requires updates. This one isn’t mobile.

A mobile unit would be wonderful around here and Chris spoke to someone from Goodwill about doing some sort of collaboration with a mobile driver simulator.

Amy said PennDOT has one and maybe we can partner with them to try to bring something in as part of that and with the State Police and have a Safety Day.

That education piece is important and if we could do some type of collaborative transportation hands-on actual Touch-a-Truck sort of thing. This maybe something to partner with and bring it to Touch-a-Truck and talk about all of the transportation services and not just the bus, which is a critical part of transportation.

Amy asked Tom to flag in the plan that we evaluate Safety funds to bring in hands-on simulators partnering with the Chambers and their events, i.e. Touch-a-Truck. The Touch-a-Truck is geared towards the younger generation and if we can get them to be behind a fake steering wheel driving, showing them what happens when someone is on a cell phone etc. If we can get the younger generation to understand those consequences before they start driving, then they hopefully won’t talk/text on cell phones when they start to drive.
Another item that was brought up was the street poles with pedestrian signals. The signal buttons are at the right height for someone in a wheelchair, but what the manufacturer doesn’t always take into consideration when designing and installing the pole is the base of the pole. Some don’t allow the wheelchair to get close enough to let the person push the button without leaning out of their chair.

Amy asked Chris if she had other comments besides the accessibility and educational awareness.

Chris said OVR has expertise in accessible transportation and modifications.

Amy stated that this is something we want to make sure that whether it’s Chris or OVR is part of that stakeholder group that we use to try to drive the direction we that we are going. Our money is primarily highway and bridge, so if you have a transportation concern that is highway or bridge, we can work to try to solve it and try to make it happen. If you have a transportation concern about accessible public transit, all we can do is facilitate the conversation but someone else has to take the lead.

Chris mostly came to the meeting to get a feel for where things are going.

Amy stated that if she would start reviewing the Plan starting on Page 64 where the Strategies start, if there are any that don’t make sense or if there is another strategy that needs to be added, make a note and let Amy know.

Chris said the Safety and Security and the Accessibility Mobility are important to her and the objective makes sense. The big part of it is educating people and you have that in here.

Again it is educating people on what it really is available and what the public can do to get involved. If people don’t use public transportation, it can’t expand; and if it doesn’t expand, people won’t use it. And if you don’t use it you don’t get the money to operate it.

Amy said if there are any events that OVR holds that Chris feels would be educational for Amy and/or Tom to attend to have a better understanding of the people you work with, Amy and Tom will make themselves available to attend.

Chris has an OVR public meeting on August 16 from 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM with a do over on August 29 from 3:00 PM to 5:30 PM. There will be call-in capabilities available for this.

Public transportation is a very critical issue in our area and is very misunderstood. People think public transportation means free and that is not the case. It is public equal’s government which equals a tax and if you keep cutting taxes, then at some point services are going to get cut.

It all comes down to the need for public education which is a major issue.

With nothing more to be discussed the meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.