

DRAFT
WASHINGTON COUNTY
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING
CareerForce - Woodbury
Woodbury, Minnesota
December 18, 2019

Members Present

Christine Dressel	Christopher Eng	Heather Felderman
Jordan Fry	Cindy Larson	Monica Ramirez
Lori Tapani		Tom Yuska

Action Team Members

Stan Karwoski	Michelle Kemper	Ann Lindquist
	Sarah Shanley	

CareerForce Staff Present

Tina Dudzinski	Rachel O'Connell	Karen Ritter
Rick Roy		Sheng Xiong

Guests

Sheila Holbrook-White, Washington County
Tara Gearing, J.L. Schwieters Construction
Liz Jennings, DEED
Lee Okerstrom, DEED
Jared Smith, Tree Trust

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair – Christine Dressel

Chair Christine Dressel called the meeting to order. It was determined there was a Quorum of business members present. A Motion was made to approve the minutes from September 19, 2019, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved. A Motion was made to approve the agenda, it was seconded and the Motion was approved.

2. Welcome and Introductions

WDB Members, Action Team Members, and Partners introduced themselves.

3. County Transportation Update – Sheila Holbrook-White

Sheila Holbrook-White presented at the Washington County Workforce Development Board (WDB) meeting in March about where people live, seek work and the public transit options for them. Since then, workgroups have been formed. The Access to Employment Workgroup, which includes WDB members, focused on two of the strategies – expanding community circulators and a subsidized ride hailing pilot.

Community Circulators: Cottage Grove did a survey and found there was a need to connect residents to their community, not necessarily to employers. A community circulator now operates every Tuesday from 10:00 – 3:00 picking up and dropping off people up at residential and senior living facilities and homes within a half mile of the route. The bus stops at medical offices, coffee shops and other locations such as CUB, Hy-Vee, Target and Walmart. The ridership on circulators in other communities has also picked up. <https://dartsconnects.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Cottage-Grove-Schedule-Nov-2019.pdf>

Subsidized ride hailing pilot: It is a challenge for people with disabilities to get to work. Metro Mobility has long wait times and very limited evening and weekend service. Lyft was chosen for a ride hailing service because they use background checks and have higher insurance requirements. For the pilot, they worked with RISE, Inc. to identify their clients who are using state waived dollars and needed transportation to work. The four people who participated report working 10-12 hours more a week, have more flexible schedules and shifts, and have more independence in their lives. They are trying to break down accounts so waived services are used for work and people can purchase their own rides for grocery shopping and other errands.

Expanded Transit Link: They are working with Transit Link and Fairview Lakes Medical Center on an access-to-care pilot. Transit Link is the only option for transportation in that area and they often have to cancel trips because of the lack of drivers. People were missing important appointments with their doctors. Fairview Lakes agreed to aggregate appointments for Forest Lake patients on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 10:30 and 1:30. Transit Link agreed to operate two vehicles and cross the border to Chisago County. This pilot has resulted in fewer missed appointments and admissions.

Create a One Stop for Information and Referral: There is a proposal with the Minnesota Department of Transportation for a one stop transportation resource that can be accessed by phone, e-mail, online or text.

The Metropolitan Council is charged with updating the Twin Cities Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan. This plan identifies the transit needs for older adults, people with disabilities, and low income families. The projects identified under strategies and actions makes them eligible for federal grants. The public comment period on the draft of the plan is open and yesterday the County Board provided a letter to the Metropolitan Council identifying major gaps in the plan. There was no discussion on the challenges low income people have accessing transportation to get to employment. The County Board provided three strategies to address this and identified other major gaps.

Rick Roy continued by saying employment needs to be addressed to help people rise above their challenges. He encouraged the WDB Board to submit a letter to the Metropolitan Council. Chris Eng made a Motion the Washington County Workforce Development Board submit a letter of support to consider employment as part of their planning efforts and to encouraged employers on the WDB to submit a letter on their own. The Motion was seconded and approved.

Questions and Comments:

Chris Dressel: What do employers need to do to expand the focus to other groups who may need transportation? Sheila Holbrook-White responded the primary focus is on older adults, people with disabilities and low income; however, federal requirements do not exclude working with other groups.

Stan Karwoski answered there is not enough money for immediate help. The Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit will help other groups and will be operational by 2024. We are willing to spend County money but need help from state and federal funding as well.

Chris Dressel: Would having more people in the labor market increase the tax base? Stan Karwoski replied more people paying in will grow our economy. Better equity, skills and transportation are part of a multi-pronged approach.

Chris Eng: How do we keep existing employers in our county so they don't relocate to find talent? Fed Ex was going to expand in Washington County but went to Dakota County because they had a regular bus route so employees could get to work. We are expecting a shortfall of 300,000 workers in Minnesota in the next 5 years. Sheila Holbrook-White responded she is happy to sit down with any employer and discuss transportation options.

Jordan Fry commented he worked for Fed Ex on the night shift for \$12 an hour with no benefits handling packages and it was hard work. Employers also need to offer something to keep talent.

4. Minnesota Youth Program Update and Contract – Rick Roy

To learn more about what school districts are doing with the population eligible for the Youth Program, a meeting was held with school districts and community based organizations. What they learned is the schools struggle with connecting with employers. Putting partnerships together outside their own school district is also difficult. Another issue is how to get parents to be open to other opportunities for their kids.

After examining how to use program money differently, the contract with Tree Trust was cancelled, but they are looking at doing something different with them this summer.

Tree Trust: Jared Smith, Tree Trust, is the new Executive Director and has been with the organization for 26 years. Jared said the needs of employers have changed and career pathways are an important piece of youth training and development. They have over 50 employer partners throughout the metro and know there is a need for skilled trades in construction, landscaping and green jobs which provide a living wage. They have an internship program where youth work for Tree Trust one summer and the following summer do an internship program with an employer in tree care, a high demand occupation. Tree Trust is a nonprofit but also has a contracting arm providing market services to businesses and residents as a revenue source.

Stan Karwoski commented one reason the contract was cancelled for now is to migrate towards developing skills to have a career. Jared agreed saying they are motivating the younger generation to see what opportunities are available and engaging underrepresented communities and women in the trades.

A Motion was made to cancel the Tree Trust contract, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.

5. Action Team Work Plan Reports

Career Pathways Action Team – Karen Ritter: Karen Ritter reported the group is learning more about what the East Metro Healthcare Industry and Leadership group is doing. The group will be attending our January 15th Career Pathways meeting. Rachel Perez led the conversation on how healthcare wages for entry level work are not keeping up and how to develop a talent pipeline. Great Rivers is providing English as a Second Language (ESL) on-site at Intech and Andersen's. The P2P training program will focus on manufacturing this year and starts in February, with classes in April.

CareerForce Action Team – Cindy Larson: The Team is doing outreach for the Resource Fair by gathering information from surveys and targeted groups on what their needs are and reaching out to service providers. The fair will be at the R. H. Stafford library in Woodbury in May.

Youth Development Action Team – Sheng Xiong: The state monitored the Youth Program last week and they will get a report. They are working with the CareerForce Action Team on the upcoming Youth Career Fair in January.

Oversight Action Team – Rick Roy: The Team discussed the open seats in labor and business. The WDB roster was submitted to the state for recertification of the Board. The Department of Labor will do a monitor visit in March to review official documents such as the Memorandum of Understanding. The Local, State, and Regional plans will be updated this spring. The State Plan will look at how to add green jobs to address climate change. Minnesota has been recognized for our efforts on equity issues on our State Plan.

6. Motion to Adjourn – Christine Dressel

A Motion was made to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.