

## STAFF REPORT

### DEMAND RESPONSE FACILITATION AND OPEN MEETINGS

**AUGUST 12, 2014**

The Transit Board requested Matthew Goodman and John Haila set up a meeting with the ASSET Administrative Team, comprised of Jean Kresse of the United Way of Story County, Deb Schildroth of Story County, and Melissa Mundt, Assistant City Manager, to discuss issues pertaining to HIRTA Demand Response Services. The meeting was held between Transit Board representatives, the CyRide Director, and ASSET Administrative Team on September 12, 2014. The discussion resulted in an agreement to have the ASSET Administrative Team host a facilitated process between impacted agencies/organizations and HIRTA to address concerns around demand response services in Story County and Ames.

The ASSET Administrative Team and CyRide Director developed a charter for the facilitated process and determined a outside facilitator was needed to be a neutral party in the discussions, given there has been significant emotions expressed by a variety of agencies/organizations about the service provisions by HIRTA. ASSET Administrative Team had been working to resolve issues between agencies/organizations with HIRTA for several months without significant success. The CyRide Director has also been involved in resolving concerns pertaining to HIRTA, so it furthered the need for a neutral facilitator to ensure the process was fair to all concerned.

Due to the cost for a facilitator not being included in the ASSET budget, the ASSET Administrative Team decided to request an allocation from the City Council and Story County at their respective meetings on October 28, 2014. The governing bodies authorized \$1,250 a piece for a total \$2,500 for funding the neutral facilitator to conduct a series of four meetings with human service agencies/organizations and HIRTA to identify barriers for assisting the elderly and disabled. **It is important to note, that the ASSET Administrative Team, like City and County staff, routinely conduct meetings to address issues or concerns. These meetings are not authorized by the governing bodies, nor would they be considered a public meeting.**

**Just prior to the first facilitation meeting, which was held on November 19, 2014, the Story County Board of Supervisors received a resident inquiry questioning why the meetings would not open. The Assistant City Manager also sought clarification as to why the meetings could not be open and recommended that they should be open if at all possible. The other participants advised that there were concerns about medical privacy. Additionally, it was suggested personnel matters would be discussed pertaining to HIRTA. Finally, it was noted that meetings were not required to be open, since the meetings were not established by executive order of either governing body.**

The first facilitation was held on November 19, 2014 and included a representative from each of the following organizations:

- Mainstream Living
- Lutheran Services of Iowa
- Heartland Senior Services
- McFarland Clinic

- Arc of Story County
- Foster Grandparents
- Mary Greeley

The first meeting was conducted in a focus group format, moving through a series of questions to ensure that all the issues that these agencies/organizations had with clients services related to HIRTA were shared.

In a response to be involved in the process, a public input component has been added. The method for public input is still being finalized as well as the date(s) for such input, which will occur after the third facilitated meeting of the agencies/organizations and HIRTA. The public input component will allow interested parties to reflect and give feedback to the agencies/organization and HIRTA from a draft report that will be developed by the participating parties as part of the third meeting. The public input component will likely be in late December/early January, but may slide into the first part of January due to scheduling difficulties during this time of the year.

The final report is anticipated to contain action items as well as comments from the public input component. The agencies/organizations and HIRTA will be asked to approve the final draft later in January and commit to the work that is identified in the report. The report will be forwarded to the City Council and Story County Commissioners as well as the Transit Board upon completion.

### **Staff Comments**

There appears to be at least three options for addressing the concerns about this issue:

- 1) The City Council could direct city staff to not attend the remaining meetings, if they are not made open to the public.
- 2) If the other sponsoring parties do not agree to open the meetings, the City Council could make a portional payment for the one meeting already conducted and direct City staff not to attend the remaining meetings.
- 3) The City Council could allow the process to continue with non-public meetings and add a public input component as suggested above to obtain feedback on the work of the agencies and HIRTA. This public input would be solicited after the third meeting and will be done through a variety input methods, including a public meeting and some form of electronic input option.