

Camden County Workforce Investment Board Camden City Initiatives Meeting

November 8, 2007

MINUTES

Attendees

Gregg DeBaere
Anthony Lingo
Glenn Baker
Angel Osario
Hilary Colbert
Linda Winfield
Sue Brennan
Jacob Gordon

Staff

Melody Dickinson, The Widing Group
Robin Widing, The Widing Group
Donna Johnston, WIB
Fr. Joseph Messina, WIB

I. Welcome

Ms. Linda Winfield, Chair of the Camden City Initiatives Committee, welcomed Committee members to the meeting. Father Joseph Messina opened the meeting with a prayer.

II. Update on Transportation

Donna Johnston, Transportation Planning Manager, updated the Committee on the status of the transportation project, reviewing the 3rd Quarter Report, which was submitted on October 31st. The project is running on schedule, and the Concept of Operations (a sort of engineering-based strategic plan) has been successfully developed.

Camden County is fortunate to have a lot of momentum in its favor for this project. NJ Transit has recently shifted its focus from rail to bus/bus lines, which supports the work being done. In addition, the WIB can pull from the intelligent transportation systems (ITS) regional architecture that was developed by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission as it builds the model for the TMCC.

To assist the Committee in familiarizing itself with the transportation jargon related to this project, a glossary of terms will be emailed to everyone for use as a reference.

III. Camden City Surveys and Focus Groups

In order to ensure that Camden City's interests are fully represented in the development of the Travel Management Coordination Center (TMCC), the Camden City Initiatives Committee originally formed a Focus Group Task Group to conduct focus groups with Camden City residents and staff at community groups and agencies. After an initial meeting in August, the Task Group decided on conducting a general survey of Camden City organizations before proceeding with the focus groups.

Surveys

Based on sessions of the Committee's Focus Group Task Group, a survey on transportation needs was developed and mailed to 649 organizations, 329 of which are located in Camden City. A total of 36 organizations responded. Concerns, which were detailed on a 1-page handout, included better coordination, cost of transit passes, routes and route schedules, bilingual assistance and youth transportation.

The Committee agreed that although the response to the survey was poor, the results received do confirm what is anecdotally known about transportation in Camden City and are most likely representative of the concerns that surface from a larger response. After debating whether to follow-up with organizations to increase the survey response, the Committee agreed to proceed with other means for gathering information, as detailed below.

Focus Groups

A list of potential organizations for conducting focus groups with was circulated with the goal of prioritizing what organizations should be identified for conducting focus groups. The initial goal was to conduct consumer-based focus groups with 10-12 customers of each agency, as well as separate focus groups with agency staff. More technical focus groups will occur with case managers including the Board of Social Services and hospitals at a later time.

It is key to target a range of organizations that serve different populations, including youth (in-school and out of school), bilingual/Hispanic, job placement/training/education, child care, senior centers, community development, and community and neighborhood based organizations.

After discussing the coordination and logistics of the focus groups, it was agreed that focus groups will be conducted with agency staff as planned; however, the best method for working with consumers is to conduct a quick survey. A revised consumer survey will be prepared.

Additional Data Gathering

In addition to collecting data through focus groups, a number of other suggestions surfaced for reaching a larger segment of the population.

- **Survey to Camden City Employees:** Many Camden City employees use public transportation. Their input could be vital to getting a better grasp from the consumer perspective on how they want to access transportation.
- **Street Survey:** A condensed survey could be conducted outside City Hall and at bus stops, in particular outside of Fairview Main Street where there are four stops.
- **Coordinate with CBOs' Existing Efforts:** It surfaced that many agencies and organizations are conducting and have already conducted surveys of their constituents needs. In particular, CPAC and the DCCBs are preparing to conduct surveys in the near future and are open to adding a couple of questions around transportation. It may also be useful to outreach to additional organizations, as they may have valuable information from conducting their own surveys.
- **NJ DOT/NJ Transit Complaints:** There is a number for customers to call with complaints about public transportation. NJ DOT/NJ Transit will be contacted regarding complaints that they have received about transportation services in Camden.

IV. Faith-Based Foundation Collaborative

The WIB has been convening a small team of leaders in the faith-based community to brainstorm for how faith-based organizations can participate in the TMCC. This group is presently working to develop a Faith-Based Foundation Collaborative that will be able to receive tax-deductible donations and special funding. A draft concept paper that fleshes out this idea was distributed to the Committee.

The most persistent issue is how organizations can participate. Originally, it was thought that all FBOs would be required to participate at the same level; however, it is emerging that organizations will be able to participate at varying levels. Churches have expressed that they are not in the transportation business. Simply, they would just like to help their constituents. The Committee will be kept up to date as planning progresses.

V. Communication with Camden City Leadership

The importance of communicating with Camden City leadership on the project was stressed. A meeting will be arranged for Jack Gallagher and Linda Winfield to brief the Mayor and Ted Davis (COO of Camden City).

VI. Next Steps

Due to the short timeframes for the transportation project, our next meeting is being scheduled for two weeks from now. The meeting will be held in the WIB's conference room on Tuesday, November 27th at 11:30 am.