

**Minutes of the SWFRPC Technical Stakeholders Committee**  
**Regional Component of LeeTran VCLI Grant Project**  
**July 25, 2013**

The initial kickoff meeting of the SWFRPC Technical Stakeholders Committee for coordinating the regional component of LeeTran VCLI grant project was held on July 25, 2013 at the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council offices in Fort Myers, Florida.

**Attendees:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Kathryn Sayers, Program Supervisor	Cape Coral Mini Bus
Carmen Monroy, Director	FDOT Southwest Area Office - District One
Ann Arnall, Director	Lee County Human Services
Ron Gogoi	Lee County MPO
John Ebling, Director	Lee Veterans Affairs Services
Steve Myers, Director	LeeTran
Paul Goyette, Deputy Director	LeeTran Fixed Route Division
Joann Haley, Manager	LeeTran Marketing
Jill Brown	LeeTran Passport Service
Peter Gajdis, Deputy Director	LeeTran Passport Service
Wayne Gaither	LeeTran Planning Department
Jose Toledo, Veterans Representative	Southwest Florida Works
Linda Hafner, Director	United Way 211
Margaret Wuerstle, Exec. Director	SWFRPC
Jennifer Pellechio	SWFRPC
Rebekah Harp	SWFRPC
Heather Stein	SWFRPC
Rob Ross, Intern	SWFRPC

**Agenda Item #1: Welcome and Introductions**

Meeting called to order by Jennifer Pellechio at 2:00 pm; attendees introduced themselves.

**Agenda Item #2: Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative Presentation, Mr. Wayne Gaither**

Mr. Gaither presented a slide show on the LeeTran Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative.

The grant initiative involves the purchase of equipment to connect veterans to information to the services that are provided for veterans in Lee County.

The part of the grant that the SWFRPC is responsible for is determining where and how LeeTran will make the connections between the information and the veterans.

Three components of grant project:

1. Fund the initial deployment of informational kiosks at key transit locations, providing increased access to Lee County's 211 Network and expanding access to transportation options. The kiosks, deployed at transfer centers throughout Lee County, will provide information on fixed route schedules and other transportation options; the kiosks could also be programmed to provide information targeted at Veterans.
2. SWFRPC. The regional planning council will coordinate and analyze transportation access issues for veterans and their families. This initiative recognizes the need to make access available to Veterans and their families that reside in rural communities, and who travel to Lee County for services at regional VA facilities.
3. Finally, the proposal seeks capital funding for implementation of an automated vehicle location system (AVL) for the transit system's 65 buses. The AVL system will deploy signs indicating bus arrival times, and will be located at transit hubs, including regional facilities such as the new VA medical facility bus stop.

RPC role:

- Collect information that will assist in determining locations for Phase 1 and Phase 2 project components - deployment of signage - expanding informational network throughout Lee County - placement of kiosks, etc.
- Determine what kind of information needs to be gathered
- Disseminate information to veteran population served by LeeTran
- Transportation needs of veterans – to access Veterans Services
  - 68,000 veterans in Lee County alone
- Cape Coral VA outpatient clinic is the largest VA outpatient clinic in the country. There are other “storefront” clinics in Collier and Charlotte counties; they fall under the auspices of the Cape Coral clinic. If needs can't be met at the local clinics, patients will be sent to Cape Coral; if needs can't be met at Cape Coral clinic, patient will be sent to Bay Pines Medical Center in St. Petersburg.
- Veterans from outside of Lee County – how to get into Lee County, then how to use LeeTran to get to the desired veterans services.
- Part of funding will be used to purchase Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) devices for all LeeTran buses, which enable LeeTran to track vehicles, and make information available to transit public, including veterans. E.g., where and when to enter the transit system to get to the desired destination.
- Identify specific locations of interest that veterans may be interested in, e.g. new regional outpatient clinic in Cape Coral.
- The grant is for a little over \$1.3 million; regional plan component is \$50,000. The regional component is intended to connect the equipment LeeTran is hoping to buy (i.e., the AVL systems and kiosks), and the information LeeTran will gather from the equipment, and get the information out to the population that needs it - veterans and other members of the public who use the LeeTran system.
- Kiosks are capable of making transportation information from LeeTran's transportation partners available to persons using kiosks.
- Grant awarded in October 2012; regional contract finalized last month; hope to have project completed by late 2014.

**Agenda Item #3: Planning Assistance for Regional Coordination, Ms. Margaret Wuerstle  
(23:40)**

When working on the grant, and evaluating regional role, one of the planning components identified was determining which veterans are not using VA services, why they aren't using services, and how we could get them to services.

- Will use nontraditional outreach to veterans to research this issue.
- Identify barriers and issues that will help to make necessary connections
- Identify gaps in transportation system
- Determine how to get people from one county to another - transfer people from one transportation system to another - and get them to their destination.

Project Manager for LeeTran:

LeeTran wants to build a project that meets the veterans' needs, not just the county's needs.

- Lee County's VTCLI grant is somewhat unique, due to the combination of kiosk hardware and software with dispatch system (ADL devices and software).
- Cost and scope:
  - \$1.3 million
  - Plan to equip all buses with ADL
  - Kiosks – number and locations - not sure yet – waiting to see results of regional study; likely locations include Cape Coral VA Center, Malls, Rosa Parks Terminal
  - Possibility: locate kiosks in human service or veterans offices in other counties (Lee probably can't fund); can also access data through the web, so may not need kiosks.

The hard work of this project is the planning component – identifying the need –where is the need, how do we bring the needed components together.

Project Manager has a needs assessment and lots of other information he can send to council.

Ms. Wuerstle: Where are the best places to find veterans who need to be hooked into services, talk to them, do surveys – VFWs, American Legion posts, etc.?

Response: Those are good places to disseminate information, but not for conducting surveys.

The veterans who need assistance – who should be surveyed – are not currently going to VA or VSOs; they don't need it. The veterans in need can't get out of their homes – trailer parks, condos, wherever they live.

What about access to homeless veterans?

- Bob James Triage Center on Ortez: have 20 beds designated for homeless vets; there will always be some there you can interview periodically
- FGCU – did a study on homeless in the county that referenced veterans
- There is an Elks Lodge off Bayshore in North Ft Myers that brings in homeless every Tuesday – feeds them, etc.

How do you access homeless vets and determine what their needs are? E.g., whether they use services; if they don't, why not (don't think they need services, aren't entitled to services, etc.)

Smart phone apps – could be a piece of the work.

**Agenda Item #4: Next Steps**

1. Gather information.
2. Mapping – to use as a visual aid, to show what is there, where gaps are
3. Analyze data: determine needs, barriers, gaps
4. Potential solutions – what can be done with this grant, what can be done by other counties, agencies, organizations

Which information should be on kiosks?

- Rank agencies for possible inclusion on kiosks: mandatory, good, don't need
  - Local CTCs, e.g. GoodWheels
  - Etc.

**a. Technical Stakeholder Committee**

Asked for volunteers from attendees to serve on Technical Stakeholder Committee; attendees were asked to forward names of other people who have relevant knowledge and expertise in transportation, and veterans affairs.

SWFRPC Project Portal – will get portal up and running to facilitate work of committee

**b. Meeting Schedules**

Frequency of meetings discussed - every other month agreed to; SWFRPC will send out a Doodle poll to get consensus on dates.

**Agenda Item #5: Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm