

Bucks County Department of Workforce and Economic Development

Workforce Development Board Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: December 20, 2022, 9:00 a.m.

Location: Virtual – Microsoft Teams

In Attendance

Board of Directors: Jim Horan, Erin Lukoss, Anita Diggs, Ted Dorand, Doug Edwards, Dr. Mark Hoffman, Chris LaBonge, Jon Mercer, Jessica Peiffer, Dominic Roberto, Dr. Benjamin Rusiloski, Sara Tsivikis, Yolonda Udvardy, Marybeth Williams

Bucks County WED Staff: Billie Barnes, Alice Colyar, Brian Cummings, Michael Gilmore, Brittney Jones, Dianna Krall, Andrea Walls

Guests: Danielle Bodner, G. Jay Francis, Andre Hardy, Susan Herring, Ellen Langas, Stephen Maund, Dan Nemiroff, Robert Pisko, Kristen Stewart

Next Meeting: March 28, 2023, 9:00 a.m.

Location: Virtual

Agenda Discussion

I. **Welcome & Call to Order**, Jim Horan

Jim Horan, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and greeted attendees. Dianna Krall announced that a quorum was present.

II. **Meeting Minutes**, Jim Horan

Mr. Horan directed board members to review the meeting minutes from September 28, 2022. Mr. Horan requested a motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 28, 2022.

Action/Vote: Ted Dorand made the motion. Marybeth William seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

III. **SEPTA Bucks County Update**, Dan Nemiroff, Manager of Planning Programs, SEPTA

Dan Nemiroff presented information about the SEPTA Bus Revolution in development.

This initiative is a blank slate redesign of SEPTA's fixed-route bus network.

SEPTA Forward emphasizes a more fully integrated network. SEPTA has never looked at its network comprehensively before. Its transfer penalty was eliminated in 2020. Between 2013 and 2019, ridership dropped 13%, but operating costs went up 10% while service got slower and less reliable. Post-COVID ridership is down 30-40%.

Project Approach:

- 2021 – State of the System, Choices, and Trade-Offs
- 2022 – Opportunities for Improvement, Scenarios and Options, Draft Recommendations
- 2023 – Final Recommendations, Begin Implementation

Public hearings will be held March-May 2023. A revised draft will be released in March 2023. Revisions will be presented in late May. The project will be phased in over several years.

SEPTA's Draft Bus Network: Strategic Approach

- More frequent bus service and more consistent schedules
- Straighter, more direct bus routes
- Better connections so people can get further, faster
- Focusing resources on higher ridership routes in higher-demand areas
- On-demand service in some lower-demand areas

Changes in Bucks County (Bensalem, Bristol, and Newtown)

- 30 Max service from City Loop to Bristol (604)
- 30 Max service between Neshaminy Mall & Trenton (602)
- 60 Max service between Neshaminy Mall through Bensalem (542)
- 60 Max service from Newtown to Neshaminy Mall
- On-Demand Zones 681 and 682 replace lower ridership services in Bensalem, Croydon, Levittown

Changes in Bucks County (Doylestown/Warminster)

- 60 Max service from Olney Transportation Center to Doylestown (699)
- 60 Max service from Warminster to Olney Transportation Center (799)
- 30 Max service from Southampton to Fern Rock Transportation Center (701)
- On-Demand Zones 785 replace Route 132 around Telford

What is Microtransit?

- Zone-based on-demand service
- Point-to-point trips
- Technology-enabled (app-based) or call center option
- SEPTA vehicles and operators
- Transit fares

How does Microtransit work?

- Passenger books and pays for their trip
- Computer program assigns trip to vehicle and schedules trip
- Computer lets rider know when vehicle will arrive and confirms pick-up location
- Rider walks or rolls to pick-up location
- Rider gets picked up by transit vehicle (van or small bus). Other riders may be on board.
- Rider gets dropped off at location. Trip is complete.

Where does Microtransit work?

- Most successful when implemented in mixed neighborhoods and low-density areas
 - Residents per acre at 15 or less
 - Jobs per acre at 10 or less
- Becomes a less competitive service in moderate- to high-density areas with mixed land uses and greater demand/need for fixed-route transit service.
- Replace low productivity fixed routes, 4-7 passengers per revenue hour.

How is it different?

- Picks up and drops off at front door or nearby intersection
- Trips must begin/end within a defined Microtransit zone.
- Service can be booked the same day the trip is taken.
- Anyone can ride.
- Service is wheelchair accessible.
- A passenger will sometimes ride with another passenger.
- Goal response time = 30 minutes.

An updated SEPTA Virtual Open Houses and Community Conversations list is available at www.septabusrevolution.com.

Mr. Nemiroff welcomed questions. Billie Barnes asked why ridership was down. Mr. Nemiroff responded that rideshare companies like Lyft and Uber contributed to lost ridership. According to customer success surveys, SEPTA is a complex system that can be hard for people to use. The goal is to make the system easier to navigate. Regional travel is also down, as is traffic. Reasons include fear of COVID, working from home, and ways to get to different places. SEPTA is mindful of these changes.

Alice Colyar asked if SEPTA will be hiring new drivers. Mr. Nemiroff responded yes and that SEPTA intends to create job descriptions. SEPTA will hire accordingly after figuring out needs and procurement for new vehicles as the process evolves.

Jon Mercer asked if SEPTA plans to acquire vehicles through a third party, such as New Jersey Transit did with Via. Mr. Nemiroff responded no because of SEPTA's strong union partnership. Microtransit will run out of Bucks and Montgomery counties.

Brian Cummings asked about the structuring of the Blue Area Zone. Mr. Nemiroff responded that technical aspects will reconvene in January 2023. Overall, zones are fluid. SEPTA approaches expansion carefully, fully considering operational challenges and not expanding immediately. SEPTA is able to reconfigure Microtransit.

IV. NouSoma Communications and Outreach, Billie Barnes

Ms. Barnes summarized the Request for Proposals process WED launched in February 2022 for a media services provider to create a comprehensive multimedia outreach campaign for PA CareerLink® (PA CL) services. This campaign is funded by the PA Department of Labor & Industry through Statewide WIOA Activities. A Board Review Committee analyzed all six proposals received and unanimously selected NouSoma Communications as the successful bidder on March 21. The county awarded a contract to NouSoma in April 2022. Ms. Barnes introduced Ellen Langas, President and Founder of NouSoma Communications.

V. Outreach Updates, Ellen Langas

Ms. Langas greeted all and introduced her colleague, Kristen Stewart. She described the wonderful collaboration and rewarding work that has resulted from this campaign, which comprises six projects. Ms. Langas stated that NouSoma created a video montage of several videos to play for the Board. Videos are posted on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@pacareerlinkbuckscounty6273>.

Ms. Stewart presented an overview of all projects.

Deliverables include:

- Videos
- Content reorganization and website refresh
- Consistent and clear local messaging for all platforms
- Collateral templates and social media graphic refresh
- Grand opening publicity
- Resources toolkit for staff and partners, employers
- Further publicity/advertising

Refreshed PACL presence on buckscounty.gov – www.buckscounty.gov/pacareerlink.

NouSoma identified three different audiences: Job seekers, Employers, and Youth. Each audience is directed to subpages with content related to getting started, training opportunities, assessments, services, and programs. Messaging is tailored to each audience.

NouSoma created customizable, branded templates for social media and print consistent with messaging and feel. These materials allow PACL to streamline the process of getting info out and serving customer needs faster.

NouSoma sent a press release to local media outlets as a preview of the PACL's Grand Opening in Trevoze in September 2022. Resulting press hits included *Bucks County Courier Times*, *Bucks County Herald*, *Levittown Now*, *Bucks County Today*, and PATCH.

Advertorial included printed ad placement in Times Publishing within 10 Bucks County zones: Doylestown, Fairless Hills, Langhorne, Morrisville, Newtown Gazette, Northampton, New Hope, Lower Southampton, Warwick, and Yardley.

NouSoma submitted the nomination of Ms. Barnes to the [Philadelphia Business Journal \(PBJ\) 's 2022 Women of Distinction](#), published in November. PBJ featured Ms. Barnes on the cover of its special issue and held a celebratory event in Philadelphia for honorees.

A PACL Toolkit for Staff and Partners is in production. It comprises links to all marketing and outreach materials to share with stakeholders, job seekers, and employers.

NouSoma is also preparing a publicity plan to increase general awareness as well as target job seekers and employers. It will include social media-boosted posts, ads, and free outreach from townships and libraries.

Mr. Mercer thanked the NouSoma team for their great work and congratulated Ms. Barnes for landing the Women of Distinction cover. He mentioned the significance of being recognized by a regional publication as Bucks County is part of the Greater Philadelphia area.

Mr. Horan also thanked NouSoma.

VI. Fiscal Updates, Michael Gilmore

Michael Gilmore directed board members to focus on the LWDA PY21 Budget YTD Q5 July to September 2022 FSR. As noted at the bottom of this worksheet, all State provisions are in compliance. WED made adjustments as needed. Programs are in the start-up phase depicted in this timeframe. Delays in processing employer payments occurred but are attributed to county payment systems. WIOA funds are fully expended for Program Year 2021.

As indicated on the LWDA PY22 Budget YTD Q1, WED is on-track for Program Year 2022 WIOA expenditures.

Mr. Gilmore spoke of Indirect Costs billed by the county to WED for building use, maintenance, technology, and other areas. Initially, the budget was derived from the department's first full year as a county office. WED has engaged in discussions about how these areas are calculated and reduce costs as a whole. This action may require additional negotiation.

Mr. Gilmore requested a motion to approve the LWDA PY21 Budget YTD Q5 July to September 2022 FSR.

Action/Vote: Mr. Dorand made the motion. Mr. Mercer seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

VII. Compliance Update, Michael Gilmore

Mr. Gilmore discussed the most recent compliance monitoring with State guidance. With regard to allocations, WED is at an 80% obligation rate – based on a yearly report through June 30. Categories include 89% Adult, 97% Dislocated Worker, and 74% Youth. Though slightly under the obligation rate, the Youth category is up from last year. A new initiative placing onsite Workforce Counselors at Bucks County Community College should help increase WED's obligation rate for In-School and Out-of-School programs.

Ms. Kralle added that monthly check-in meetings with program providers raise awareness of milestones and progress made throughout the year. Drawdown reports are also helpful.

Ms. Kralle spoke about additional items of note in PY21 monitoring reports. Based on monitoring findings, WED added the Stevens Amendment statement to Requests for Proposals. PACL staff members were directed to sign off on Individual Employment Plans during meetings with managers and counselors. An updated contact form, with the PACL's updated phone number, was reviewed with PACL staff for regular use. A recent Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance walkthrough resulted in several recommendations: adding a handicapped-accessible parking space

for vans closer to the PACL's front door, securing a lighter automatic door opener at a staff entrance, and updating the restroom sinks for improved access.

VIII. Public Comment

Mr. Cummings announced the next Economic Development Information Session WEDTalk to be held virtually on January 11, 2023, beginning at 9 a.m. Five presenters will speak for ten minutes about programs and services for local businesses. Presenters include:

- Robert J. Harvie Jr., Board Chair, Bucks County Board of Commissioners (Opening Remarks)
- Paul Bencivengo, President & Chief Operating Officer, Visit Bucks County
- Robert F. Cormack, Executive Director, Bucks County Economic Development Corporation
- Jeff Darwak, Executive Director, Redevelopment Authority of the County of Bucks
- Thomas TJ Lonergan, Deputy Executive Director, Bucks County Industrial Development Authority
- Mark Solas, Sector Partnership Program Manager, PA CareerLink® Bucks County

More information is available online at www.buckscounty.gov/1680/Calendar-of-Events and includes a [registration link](#).

Mr. Mercer inquired about overall WEDTalk attendance. Ms. Krall observed a slight decrease in attendance since June 2021, and Ms. Barnes noticed an average attendance of around 30 participants per session. Andrea Walls added several points based on event metrics. Attendance trends between 30 and 35 participants but increases to approximately 50 to 60 based on featured presenter profiles, especially those with a larger social media presence. She encouraged all to share WEDTalk information with their networks as these offerings are of value to the community at large. The WEDTalk on February 8 will feature Adam Poswolsky, a renowned expert in making human connections in a hybrid workplace.

Mr. Mercer suggested a possible WEDTalk-Founders 30 crossover event and offered to send a meeting invitation to Ms. Walls and Mr. Cummings to discuss in greater detail.

IX. Adjournment, Jim Horan

Mr. Horan thanked all attendees and requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:09 a.m.

Action/Vote: Ms. Williams. Mr. Mercer seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Andrea Walls

Andrea Walls

December 20, 2022