

**From:** Kester, Tony <kester@aging.sc.gov>  
**To:** Vanessa Widemanvwideman@uppersavannah.com  
**Date:** 5/21/2014 9:20:38 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: 111B Transportation Concerns

---

Vanessa, I am out of the office this week. Point to point should more accurately reflect the cost of providing transportation. The reality is Title IIIB dollars will be consumed with assessments.

Let me check my schedule regarding the meeting and I will let you know next week.

Tony

**From:** Vanessa Wideman [vwideman@uppersavannah.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 21, 2014 9:23 AM  
**To:** Kester, Tony  
**Cc:** Patricia Hartung; Sam Leaman  
**Subject:** FW: Urgent: 111B Transportation Concerns

Tony,

I wanted to share this email about IIIB transportation with you. This email comes from Kathy Dublin of Piedmont Agency on Aging—a provider who is financially stable and is good at analyzing program costs. You will read that she sees SERIOUS IMPACT coming to her transportation program with the expected changes to the IIIB program.

I met with her on Monday and we discussed her concerns about Point-to-Point and the reduction in units and funding that it will mean for her agency. Obviously there was not resolution to her challenges from our discussion Monday as Point-to-Point and Senior Trip elimination are policies put into place by the SUA. I respect Kathy's input and concerns—she is a valuable member of our Aging Network, and she is not one to offer knee-jerk reactions. That being said, her concerns lead me to have serious concerns about these new policies and their impact on the other transportation providers in my region.

Kathy has just emailed me this morning asking if I can come to her June 3<sup>rd</sup> Board meeting to participate in further discussions regarding these transportation changes. She states "We'll be laying out all the analysis we have about projected losses and impact. After talking about it more on the staff this week, we all agree that it will really be impossible for us to stay in the transportation business after June 30<sup>th</sup>. That will be my recommendation at the meeting based on what I know right now."

Tony, this is quite serious for my region. Piedmont covers two of my six counties and we are only about 6 weeks away from July 1. I wanted to keep you in the loop with the ramifications these transportation changes are making in my region. If you have any ideas or suggestions, I welcome them. If you would like to come and participate in the June 3 board meeting at Piedmont, I would welcome your input there as well. I most definitely will be at their June Board meeting.

I will certainly need State technical assistance as my region moves forward with the likely possibility of two counties in my region having no transportation provider as of July 1!

Vanessa

---

**From:** Kathy Dublin [mailto:kdublin@piedmontaoa.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, May 16, 2014 3:26 PM  
**To:** Vanessa Wideman  
**Cc:** edhanvey@piedmontaoa.com; 'Kathy Watterson'; 'Kim Harrison'; 'Tracey Marcengill'

Vanessa,

We spoke informally during the Area Agency's recent visit about my concern for the impact of state changes on transportation services next fiscal year. I've spent some time since that visit looking more closely at the impact of:

- transitioning from a "passenger mileage" reimbursement to a "point to point" reimbursement.
- no longer being able to use 111B dollars to provide recreational/educational trips for seniors.

I believe you would agree that Piedmont Agency on Aging has a track record for adapting and making the best of changing policies. I'm extremely concerned, however, that the changes coming for transportation in just a few weeks will have much more serious implications for our ability to provide transportation in Greenwood & Abbeville County.

#### Point to Point Reimbursement

I've taken our current senior transportation logs and looked at a sampling of clients who travel to/from our congregate meal sites to compare the current "passenger mileage" reimbursement to what we can expect to receive with "point to point" reimbursement.

The difference was much more significant and serious than I first thought. In that sampling, we saw a potential reduction of 160% in units once the "point to point" reimbursement system is in place July 1<sup>st</sup>. With it, of course, will be the same reduction in federal & state funding.

That's the kind of difference that could realistically put us out of the transportation business altogether.

As you know – the senior transportation program goes hand in hand with our congregate meal program. If its cost prohibitive to provide transportation, there will be a direct consequence for our congregate meal program as well.

#### Waste or Reality?

A "numbers" person might look at this difference in reimbursements and assume programs like ours have just been "milking" federal and state dollars.

In reality, we both know that this is a rural service area. We've established fixed routes throughout Abbeville and Greenwood Counties and provide rides to seniors that require us to cover a wide span of area and miles to reach our current client base. The "point to point" reimbursement system doesn't provide support and doesn't consider the real time cost of traveling *between* our individual stops in the rural area we serve. The mileage we incur traveling between stops in the areas we serve represents a large portion of our miles.

If it's true that the state expects and desires for us to reach all areas of our counties, the move to "point to point" will actually be a deterrent to reaching these areas.

#### Senior Trips for Recreation/Education

The state's decision not to allow programs like ours to use 111B dollars for senior trips after June 30<sup>th</sup> will also impact our transportation program.

The impact will be twofold.

First, while the state doesn't consider recreational trips to be "essential" transportation, we see evidence that they do improve the quality of life for those that do not have the opportunity to travel outside of Abbeville & Greenwood on their own.

The population of people we serve in our 111B trip program are primarily minority, low-income seniors. We've seen firsthand the benefits of these trips for seniors with limited transportation. The agency has transported seniors to the beach that have never seen the ocean during their lifetime. We've transported seniors to the mountains in the fall and to museums in Charlotte & Atlanta. I believe the seniors who use this program would tell you their life is improved because of their ability to travel.

It's been suggested that we can still provide the trips on a private pay basis. Yes, we can – but those on a fixed or low income won't be able to afford the full cost of the trips.

Second, there is a unit impact.

Piedmont AOA offers senior recreational trips with 111B dollars only after all other "essential" transportation is provided. Recreational trips have never been offered instead of or in lieu of "essential" transportation, such as medical appointments, dialysis treatment, the grocery store and local shopping. We have historically been able to serve all of our 111B units because we can schedule and offer senior recreational trips.

We'll see a reduction of units with the elimination of these trips. That reduction strictly could be as many as 50,000 - 70,000 units a year. Those are critical dollars for our transportation program and essential to making the operation of this service affordable.

#### Solutions

Honestly, I feel like the state is cutting our legs out from under us and making it even harder to stay in business.

Finding a solution to these concerns is essential as we plan for July 1<sup>st</sup>. Unless the AAA can intervene and provide solutions or suggestions, we face the very real possibility of eliminating transportation service at Piedmont AOA altogether for FY 2015.

The financial implications are so serious, I hope you'll be willing to meet with us and discuss our situation at your earliest convenience.

You've always been a support to us, Vanessa --- and these concerns are some of the most serious I've ever encountered with the Area Agency on Aging.

I know that the changes were not initiated at the Area Agency level, but we have to come to you for solutions.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thanks so much for your time.

Kathy Dublin