



February 25, 2015

To: Fox Cities Transit Commission

From: Deborah Wetter
General Manager

Subject: Neenah Industrial Park Employment Transportation Project

In September 2014, Bobbi Miller from the Workforce Development Board, Inc. approached Valley Transit staff with an issue that had been brought to her attention by several manufacturers in the Neenah Industrial Park. The closest bus service to the industrial park is approximately one mile away and to get to Menasha Corp's worksite from the nearest bus stop requires people to walk down a frontage road with no sidewalk and only about a one foot shoulder. The manufacturers were hoping that Valley Transit could assist them in finding options to the long and potentially unsafe walk to their sites.

We have met four times with the group including Chris Haese from the City of Neenah. The three manufacturers, Menasha Corp., Plexus and Neenah Foundry have provided us with information on their shift times, zip codes for their employees and what they would like the service to accomplish. Valley Transit staff came up with a proposed shuttle route which the group reviewed and accepted. We presented them with the annual cost for the service if Valley Transit were to operate it and also did some research on possible costs if the service were provided by contract with a private sector provider administered by Valley Transit. At the last meeting, Valley Transit agreed to put out an RFP to private sector contractors to determine what the annual cost of the service would be if provided by the private sector.

It appears that at least some of the manufacturers are willing to contribute to the local share costs. The City of Neenah has been part of the discussion but hasn't yet committed to help fund the service. Valley Transit staff researched 256 possible federal grants that covered some aspect of employment transportation, but was unable to find one that was available. In addition, staff talked to several possible local funding partners about assisting with the funding for the first year while we determined if the service would be used by the employees and would solve some of the manufacturers' issues. We also looked into carpooling/vanpooling options but the problem was that many of the employees that need transportation are temporaries and move around

among manufacturers and shifts. That makes it difficult for carpool/vanpools to succeed.

Currently, a number of the employees are using the Connector to get to work. The Connector is an expensive alternative for both the employee and for Valley Transit and its funding partners and it appears that finding an alternative where more people could use the service at the same time would be more efficient and would be more likely to attract additional riders to transit.

The three companies have put out surveys to their employees to determine the level of interest in using the shuttle service should it be put in place.

Once we have the results of the RFP, we will sit down with the manufacturers and determine if they are willing to help financially support the program for a year while we determine if there is enough ridership to warrant making this service part of the Valley Transit system. Before the service is actually put in place, we will come back to the Transit Commission with a recommendation about whether to proceed, what the cost of the service will be, what we expect to see in terms of ridership and what the service performance would need to be for the service to become part of the system. The Transit Commission will make the final decision about whether we move forward with the project.