

# Northeastern Dutchess transport solution nears finalization

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*Staff Reporter*

HARLEM VALLEY — The Eastern Dutchess Transportation Task Force met on Thursday, May 19, to discuss the Northern Dutchess Transportation Service project as it enters the final stages of formalization.

The transportation service, which will be managed by the North East Community Center (NECC), will cover the towns of Millerton/North East, Amenia/Wassaic, Millbrook/Washington, Dover, Stanford

and Pine Plains.

A one-way fare will be \$3.50 for the general public and \$1 for seniors. Home health aides and other volunteer personal care assistants will ride for free if they are assisting someone on the bus.

This service will fill the gap that was left when the LOOP bus was discontinued in this area more than two years ago.

The program will restore a limited service to northeastern Dutchess County and will have fixed and flexible routes based on specific needs identified in the

community.

Unlike previous transportation services in the area, this project will also allow residents to cross state lines for medical appointments at Sharon Hospital and other Connecticut doctors.

A mobility manager, who will be hired by the beginning of July, will work very closely with the community to plan schedules that are the most efficient and that maximize ridership. He or she will be headquartered

at NECC in Millerton.

NECC was awarded money in 2009 and 2010 from the New Freedom Grant, which funds programs that help Americans with disabilities overcome existing obstacles, such as a lack of transportation. The grant money, along with funds provided by the Foundation for Community Health, the Sisters of Charity and the serviced towns, will cover the costs associated with the transportation services.

Because the grant money and private donations supplement the contributions made by the towns, this service is expected to cost each town roughly half what they paid for past Dial-a-Ride and fixed-route services.

NECC will lease the Dial-a-Ride service to provide the transportation. The buses will be owned by the county and housed in LaGrange. No new buses will be purchased for this service.

Drivers will be under union contract and paid by the county.

The Dial-a-Ride service currently operates in East Fishkill, Fishkill, Hyde Park, Wappinger, Poughkeepsie and the city of Poughkeepsie. That service will not be affected by the new Northern Dutchess Transportation Service.