

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

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(left to right) Libby Pataki, Bill Nulk, Tina Cornish-Lauria, Vinny Tamagna, Jennifer Mahar, John Pilner, Pat Sheehy, and Kristina Geiger

PUTNAM COUNTY TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE FORMED
Objectives Set for Transportation Task Force

A group tasked with updating and improving Putnam County's transportation system held their organizational meeting on Tuesday, January 29. Led by Chairman Vincent Tamagna, the Putnam County Transportation Task Force (TTF) adopted their charge, "To provide reliable and affordable transportation for the people of Putnam County . . ."

Also serving on the TTF and heading various focus groups are Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza, Commissioner of Health Dr. Allen Beals, Director of the Office for the Aging Patricia Sheehy, Deputy Chairman of the Legislature Anthony DiCarlo, Putnam County Senior Planner John Pilner, Visiting Nurse Services of Putnam County Manager Loretta Molinari, CAREERS for People with Disabilities Executive Director Tina Cornish-Lauria and Putnam County Chambers of Commerce Chairwoman Jennifer Mahar.

Tamagna recapped the first gathering of the group who will meet once a week over the next 16 weeks.

"We discussed our objectives as to how we are going to operate," said Tamagna, a resident of Nelsonville and recently retired member of the County Legislature where he served for 18 years. Tamagna was appointed to his position by County Executive MaryEllen Odell and officially began his new job on January 22nd.

Tamagna explained that the TTF will have sub-committees – one for each of the focus groups. The sub-committees will be charged with gathering pertinent transportation based information pertaining to their specific area of interest. From there, they will formulate recommendations that will be presented to the Putnam County Transportation Advisory Board in June.

"The Advisory Board is the policy making board," said Tamagna. "The Task Force strictly makes recommendations which will go to the Advisory Board who will determine which recommendations we should ultimately move forward on so they can be incorporated into the budget."

Tamagna anticipates there will be “a multi-year phase-in for what we want to do and how we want to do it.”

Members of the Putnam County Transportation Advisory Board include Tamagna, Deputy County Executive Bruce Walker, Commissioner of Planning Anthony Ruggiero, Chairman of the Legislature Richard Othmer, Chairman of the Physical Services Committee of the Legislature Carl Albano, Director of Tourism Libby Pataki, Citizen-at-Large Eric Gross and Putnam County Chambers of Commerce President Bill Nulk.

Tamagna noted that people with special needs have the most representation on the TTF with the presence of Piazza, Cornish-Lauria, Nulk, Molinari and Sheehy.

“We are going to take a look at the total picture of things and we’re going to make sure that there are safety nets for the people who have special needs,” said Tamagna.

Identifying commerce and economic development zones and making sure public transportation is linked to each is another concern for the TTF just as linking tourist attraction sites and events within the county to various forms of public transportation, whether it be rails, trails, bikes, buses or trolleys.

Tamagna said the TTF will look at how it can “redefine and redesign the trolley route and expand it to include other groups such as hikers.” The trolley, an attractive green vehicle, has become an iconic emblem of Tourism in the western Putnam towns and villages.

Connecting eastern Putnam to western Putnam has been a long-running problem and Tamagna said the TTF will search for workable solutions on how the east-west connection can be successfully achieved.

“We need to be able to connect the east to the west using every means of transportation that is available to use, from rails to river, from bus to trolley. We need to be able to connect all of them throughout the county.”

FOUR PHASES OF TTF

Tamagna said the TTF will approach its work in four phases. “The first phase, establishing our Advisory Board and organizing our Task Force, is completed,” said Tamagna. “We are now beginning the second phase which will be to go out and do surveys, interviews, look at how things are working.”

During the third phase, Tamagna said the TTF will look at the surveys and begin formulating recommendations.” The fourth phase includes hearing from the public and incorporating their input into the recommendations that will be presented to the Advisory Board in June of 2013.