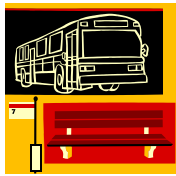




The Liaison

Without a private vehicle, how do you get around in Drum Country?



“Getting from place to place without a personal vehicle can be challenging for local residents as well as for military personnel and their families, particularly with the rising cost of food, gasoline and other necessities,” commented FDRLO board chair Elizabeth C. Fipps. “We want to determine the need for and potential options for expanded mobility within the wider Fort Drum community.”



That’s why the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization (FDRLO) has officially launched its Transit Needs Assessment and Analysis study. The study will examine the varied forms and patterns of the region’s current public transportation services, assess areas of additional need, and mindful of state and regional budget constraints identify potential and appropriate cost-effective ways to improve public transportation services in the Tri-County region as deemed necessary. The project will focus on existing systems in the tri-county area with special emphasis on communities within a 30-mile radius of Fort Drum’s North Gate on US 11.



“The question is simple,” observes Carl McLaughlin, Executive Director of FDRLO. “How can we make this area accessible to its own residents? The rural nature of our counties makes the answer much more complex. Our intention is to examine opportunities to match resources with needs, develop a mobility program and coordinate access to the wheels already on the road each day.”

FDRLO recently selected Nelson\Nygaard, a nationally recognized consultant based in New York that specializes in rural transit and military base-oriented transportation services, to conduct key project tasks under supervision of FDRLO’s Transportation Working Group. The Nelson\Nygaard team will review and evaluate existing and potential fixed and non-fixed (on call) route transportation services, determine any current latent demand, anticipate future public transit needs, and evaluate near term and long term public transit and transportation alternative options that efficiently meet the needs of Fort Drum and surrounding area communities.

In early June, Nelson\Nygaard will hold five focus group meetings with consumers, agencies and service providers to gather opinions and ideas from the public. Sessions are planned in each of the three counties and with Soldiers and families both on and off post.

An on-line transportation needs survey is also planned to gather information on the need for service. The survey and other study information will be posted on FDRLO’s website, www.fdrlo.org, as they are available.



Which road do I take?" (Alice)

"Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know," Alice answered.

"Then, said the cat, it doesn't matter."

"If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." (Cheshire Cat)

To some people, the future is much like this conversation between Alice and the Cheshire Cat.

Not for the FDRLO. Earlier this year, FDRLO Chair, Beth Fipps, appointed a committee to lead the organization through a Strategic Planning effort. In April, the group released its Request for Proposals for a consultant to assist in guiding the FDRLO board of directors and general membership through the strategic planning process.

The RFP listed eight specific strategic planning objectives.

"Responses to the RFP are due in mid-May," reports Carl McLaughlin, FDRLO's Executive Director. "Allowing time for committee review of the responses, interviews with bidders and approval by the board, we expect to begin working with the consultant over the summer months. Facilitated forums and focus groups are anticipated to be held in September."

Members interested in participating in this process should contact Dr. John Deans, chair of the Strategic Planning Committee.

1. Facilitate a process to assess the Army's future and its implications for the mission of Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division – Light Infantry and within the context of that assessment, to "maintain and gain" force structure compatible with current Post operations.
2. Determine FDRLO's anticipated role in retaining Fort Drum's mission as an Army power projection platform, enhancing Fort Drum's stature within the Army as a recognized "Northeast Joint Training Center of Excellence", and providing continuity as the communication network that facilitates collaboration between Fort Drum and the surrounding communities.
3. Identify priority issues requiring FDRLO attention.
4. Develop strategies to address those issues.
5. Develop strategies for better promotion of what Fort Drum and the "Drum Country" community can offer to soldiers, civilian residents, and businesses, ensuring the "reality" fits the marketing of Drum Country as the "warmest place you'll ever live."
6. Promote the value of being a defense community regionally to the civilian community, to business and to elected officials at the state and national levels.
7. Recommend corporate structural changes, including staff and governance, if needed, to help the organization more effectively implement those strategies.
8. Develop a plan for the long term viability of the organization including membership and financing.

ITEMS FOR YOUR CALENDAR:



Saturday, May 21st – 10 AM

Armed Forces Day Parade Washington Street, Watertown

Thursday, June 2nd – 3 PM

FDRLO Annual Meeting / Election of 6 Directors JCC Room 6-002