



Waupaca County Economic Development Corp.

June 29, 2022

\$3.2 Million Workforce Innovation Grant awarded to Waupaca for Workforce Transportation

New London – Governor Tony Evers presented Jeff Mikorski, Executive Director of the Waupaca County Economic Development Corporation (WCEDC) with a \$3.2 million Workforce Innovation Grant to implement a workforce transportation pilot program. The WCEDC, with the support of the County and Waupaca municipalities, submitted the round 2 Workforce Innovation Grant application. The application was supported with the transportation expertise from community organizations such as Lutheran Social Services (Make the Ride Happen), the New London, Waupaca, and Clintonville Chambers of commerce, Feonix Mobility Rising, the New London Thadecare CHAT team, East Central Regional Planning Commission, and the UWM Extension office. In addition, corporate partners Tyson Foods, Waupaca Foundry, Walker Forge, Kolbe & Kolbe Windows helped support the State application.

“I know we had a great project and a great network of partners, but I was concerned when I heard that there were 191 applications submitted State-wide in round 2 for the grant,” commented Mikorski.

With the grant awarded, the WCEDC and community partners will begin establishing a Mobility-As-A-Service model transportation program, which works with existing transportation resources, in addition to establishing a new resource (a micro-transit system) in the County to provide nearly 66, 000 rides over the first three years covered by the grant. The program will provide 24/7 dispatching through phone, mobile, and web applications, to cover all shifts of employment. It will also cover the need for employees to drop-off and pick-up children at daycare going to and coming from work. “So much good will come from this grant. It will not only benefit current workers but future generations too,” stated Carrie Kreps Wegenast, Chaplain Services/ Human Resources for Tyson Foods.

In this post-Covid-19 economy there are many workers that do not have affordable or dependable transportation, lack a car, or driver’s license. Transportation has been seen to be a barrier to getting and retaining employees for our businesses and industries. One local employer identified that 33% of newly hired employee terminations and 19% of overall workforce terminations were due to a lack of transportation.

“This project will provide a new option for affordable workforce transportation in Waupaca County where currently there is no mass transit and little ride share or taxi service options for employees,” said Mikorski.

