

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

July 17, 2018

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Public Transit Advisory Committee in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 3:00 P.M. in REGULAR SESSION at Administrative Building “F”, Suite 501, Collier County Government Complex Naples, Florida with the following members present:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman: Mr. John DiMarco
Vice Chairman: Mr. John Jenkins
Mr. Arthur Dobberstein
Mr. Harold Weeks
Mr. Richard Duggan

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Kerru Dera (Unexcused)

ALSO PRESENT:

Ms. Michelle Arnold, Director, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement
Mr. Omar DeLeon, Senior Planner, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement
Mr. Matt Liveringhouse, Transit Manager, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement
Mr. Barry Bland, General Manager, MTM, Inc.
Ms. Maylin Hernandez, Mobility Manager, MTM, Inc.

I. Call to Order

Chairman DiMarco called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.

III. Approval of Agenda

+The paratransit application process was requested to be added as an agenda topic under Reports and Presentations.

+Clarification/discussion regarding contracted paratransit buses was requested to be added under Member Comments.

Mr. Jenkins entered a motion to approve the July 17, 2018 meeting agenda, with changes as noted. Mr. DiMarco seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

a. May 30, 2018 minutes

Clarification: Reports and Presentations - c. Paratransit approval process, page 7: Mr. Jenkins' statement that a 10-day pass should be given to applicants for transportation use during the assessment/application period was meant to apply only to situations deemed as emergencies.

Mr. Jenkins entered a motion to approve the May 30, 2018 meeting minutes, with the noted correction. Mr. DiMarco seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

V. Committee Action

a. FY17 Minor TDP Update - Mr. DeLeon

The Transit Development Plan is updated yearly, as required for eligibility for the State Block Grant and is submitted to FDOT in September. Noted updates to the document include:

+Decline in ridership: Reference was made to several studies conducted by the American Public Transit Association (APTA), as well as locally by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), which focused upon the national decline in ridership. Identified reasons for the decline in ridership includes the increased availability of automobiles for the lower quintile, market change, i.e., dispersion of passengers further from transit for economic reasons, fuel pricing, land development encouraging single occupancy vehicles, and the competitiveness of Transportation Network Companies (TNC). A survey was distributed to county residents via social media and utility bill mailers, with 457 respondents. Responses included a lack of convenience in using public transit, as well as a desire for increased frequency. Of note, the study period encompassed October 2016 through September 2017; however, this feedback has been used as part of route modifications in FY18 and will be used for future planning.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to possible reasons for the increase in ridership on route 20/Pine Ridge. Mr. DeLeon replied that as there was a decrease in ridership on route 26, which also services Pine Ridge, perhaps a shift in ridership has occurred, leading to the increased ridership on route 20. Mr. Jenkins inquired as to whether FY2018 results are available, however Mr. DeLeon stated that these numbers are reviewed at fiscal year end. Ridership is reviewed monthly, with no notable increases to date, despite the increase in fuel costs since 2016.

Mr. DiMarco inquired as to whether the student summer pass program has been tracked. **Mr. DeLeon stated that a report could be generated of this program to assess the number of passes purchased and subsequent usage.**

Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to when the recently adopted fare changes would be implemented. Mr. DeLeon stated that the fare changes which resulted from the Fare Study completed in FY2018 were presented to the Board of County Commissioners and approved and will go into effect October 1. The eligibility requirements for the reduced fares have already gone into effect, which also now includes students of all ages.

The TDP Minor Update report also included route information for the beach trolley for FY2017; the route has since been modified for FY2018.

Capital improvements for FY2017 included the design of 35 ADA bus stops, with completion of construction accomplished in FY2018. Fifteen bus shelters were completed in FY 2018, with 2 additional bus shelters pending completion. Bus stop improvements and construction of some bus stop shelters involving 30+ sites in Immokalee are pending, with the project presently in the procurement phase. **Mr. Dobberstein requested a brief photo collage of the proposed sites and planned changes, for review by committee members.**

Mr. Jenkins noted an absence of mention within the report regarding the possible expansion of the bus terminal at Davis to accommodate other transports. Mr. DeLeon stated the report reflects only accomplishments of the prior year and does not include this information.

The report includes objectives and initiatives, as well as current status. Note was made of the success and pace of the construction of additional bus shelters. Mr. Dobberstein inquired about coordination with the county to include stop shelter designs during roadway construction. Mr. DeLeon stated that if the project budget allows and there is enough space, Transit is able to coordinate with FDOT, such as with sidewalk projects presently underway in Golden Gate City.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to what could be done to improve bicycle storage on the buses. Ms. Arnold stated that 3 position bike racks are available, however must be purchased and installed after market.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to the funding sources used to support new initiatives, such as smart phone applications. Ms. Arnold stated that grant dollars are the primary source of funding for these new programs.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to the current status of bus service to county parks, as well as whether bus service is planned for the new regional park presently being constructed off of Oil Well Road/951. Ms. Arnold replied that service is provided to most of the major parks throughout the county. Consultants working on the new regional park design have been made aware of the need for bus service/access and a planning meeting is pending in this regard. While funding may be made available to construct the access to the facility once it is completed, operational funding remains necessary to pay for the additional revenue hours. Mr. Dobberstein suggested diverting service from Immokalee Road to Oil Well Road, or vice-versa, to allow easier access to the new park; however, Ms. Arnold noted the cost associated with deviations to the existing route.

Mr. Jenkins noted a lack of funding was the reasoning for non-accomplishment of certain initiatives and inquired as to whether this was referent to a lack of grant funding, staffing, or other? Ms. Arnold noted a lack of staff resources to accomplish many of the listed initiatives, with insufficient operating funds being another significant reason. Mr. Dobberstein suggested the use of lower cost measures to encourage ridership, such as booths and brochures, such as at the Department of Motor Vehicles; however, Ms. Arnold stated that public education remained an issue and would require appropriate staffing and time. Mr. Dobberstein suggested that the Seminole Casino would be an ideal opportunity to create a working partnership with Public Transit, i.e., for the employer to subsidize bus passes for their employees. Mr. DeLeon was in agreement, however cited a lack of response from Seminole Casino management in this regard. Ms. Arnold noted there presently is bus service to the casino for Immokalee residents; however, none is available from the Naples area. Mr. DiMarco inquired as to whether there would be a twice daily bus route to the casino. Mr. DeLeon pointed out that the route 19 bus presently makes six runs a day to the casino; however, no evening service is provided.

Mr. Dobberstein encouraged active participation in working with county and city planners for the inclusion of transit funding opportunities. Mr. DeLeon referenced participation with the Golden Gate Walkability Study, to ensure accessibility for pedestrians, and that transit stops and sidewalk improvements are considered during the prioritization process. Ms. Arnold noted that some developers are including pedestrian accessibility in their design as an added feature for residents. Ms. Arnold noted the desire for impact or other fees associated with development to potentially be applied toward funding future routes, and these efforts will continue to be pursued.

Mr. Dobberstein expressed his concern at the use of performance measures and the potential discontinuation of services following revisions to low performing services which still do not yield satisfactory improvements. Ms. Arnold stated that the TDP Major will soon be reviewed and this practice will be re-reviewed at that time.

Mr. Dobberstein requested clarification with regard to bus replacement plans, as the current cycle appears to be under the recommended replacement cycle. Mr. DeLeon pointed out that dependent upon the route, the mileage requirement may be met prior to the years of use requirement. Mr. Liveringhouse stated that the FDOT recently changed the requirement for paratransit bus replacement to 175K miles and 5 years use for the medium size buses and 500K miles and 4 years for fixed route buses. It was noted that three buses are being retained due to the projected shortage of buses following increased route frequency changes. Clarification to this process will be done when the Annual Report is updated.

Mr. Dobberstein requested clarification with regard to grant submission and the verbiage within the document which states that grants are submitted “as required.” Mr. DeLeon stated that some grants are recurring and submitted annually, and some are optional competitive grants. Ms. Arnold stated that prior to grant submission, permission must first be obtained and a match identified.

Mr. Jenkins questioned the lack of development of a formalized strategy, or of an identified qualified individual, to work towards the development of partnerships between public transit and local businesses. Ms. Arnold stated that a lack of resources has prevented the pursuit of this project.

Ms. Arnold summarized the discussion by saying that creation of the TDP Major is forthcoming and the many ideas discussed may be incorporated in the creation of the plan, as well as ideas for implementation.

A workshop dedicated to Transit issues is planned with the Board of County Commissioners on November 6, 2018 and Advisory Committee members were encouraged to attend.

Ms. Arnold stated that an endorsement by the Advisory Committee of the FY17 TDP Minor document was being sought prior to presentation to the Board of County Commissioners for their approval, and then ultimately submitted to the FDOT.

Mr. Jenkins entered a motion to endorse the FY17 TDP Minor update as submitted. Mr. Weeks seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

VI. Reports and Presentations

a. Quarterly Report - Mr. Liveringhouse

Mr. Liveringhouse stated that Mr. Barry Bland, MTM General Manager, has been maintaining statistics useful in determining trends. The documents shown were base level information, primarily involving paratransit operations, with fixed route and additional categories of information pending.

+Passengers and Trips Performed: Trips performed were decreasing into May due to seasonal effect, however with the busiest March and April in history. Attendance categorization procedures have been modified for greater accuracy.

+Cancellations and No Shows: This trended with the number of trips made; fairly low in April, with a spike in the eighth week of the quarter, then decreasing into May.

+Cancellations and No Shows by Percentage: Cancellations and no shows were close to industry norms, with an aggregate cancellation/no show rate of approximately 15%-18% nationally and the local rate at 12%. The no show rate is at 4%, resulting in significant cost in resources. The system documents all trips made, noting all cancellations; late cancel, cancel at door, no show, etc. A no show discipline policy is in place, with the ability to suspend access, however is limited. Drivers are now required to remain at a location for 5 minutes, with dispatchers noting call-ins for no shows.

Mr. DiMarco requested clarification as to the definition of no show. Mr. Liveringhouse noted a pickup window of up to 30 minutes in which the vehicle may arrive after the appointed time. When the vehicle arrives within this pickup window, they may wait 5 minutes for the rider to show. A rider may call in to either be placed on will call status or may reschedule for 20-30 minutes later. Disciplinary measures are enforced following a specific number of no shows, but also taking into account the reason for the no shows. As an example, Mr. Liveringhouse noted 100 no shows during the last week in the service, with a revenue loss to the provider of \$27-\$28 per trip, as well as other passengers left waiting for their trip due to overbooking. Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to whether a rider may utilize a text or app to cancel their appointment. Routematch does offer this option, with a phone app and web portal, however this is not offered as a module for the service through the county Transit division. Mr. DiMarco discussed Prime Ride through the Lee County Passport program, which offers bus service after regular service hours, but at a higher rate. It was discussed that the higher rate after regular service hours is allowable because the service exceeds what is required per ADA guidelines. Mr. Liveringhouse noted that the county may exceed ADA minimum requirements, but at a significant cost. Many options are being considered for future implementation.

+No Show, Late, and Unscheduled Index: It was pointed out that the number of late trips would presumptively be reduced in correlation with a reduction in no shows. Further, 8% of trips are left unscheduled to account for now shows and cancellations that occur during the day.

+Late and Unscheduled Trips: Quantifying the total for each week, an average of 60 to 80 trips were late, going as high as 100 late trips. A recent contract modification allows for the assessment of a penalty of \$50 for trips that are late in excess of 15 minutes, in order to incentivize the provider to maintain appropriate service levels.

+Productivity: This pertains to the number of passengers per revenue hour, with a goal of 2 passengers per hour, although providers document trips per hour.

+On Time Performance by Appointment: There has been a significant improvement in on time performance, presently in the 90th percentile, up from the 80th percentile last fall.

+Driver Rule 14-90 Hour Violations: Florida Statute stipulates that drivers may only drive up to 12 hours in a day. The number of drivers in violation of this rule in a week has dropped by more than half, with MV increasing staff in the last 3 to 4 months. Mr. Jenkins inquired as to whether liability insurance is maintained for drivers who may exceed their daily driving hours limit. Mr. Liveringhouse pointed out that any such liability lies with the vendor and not the county. Previous driver shortages were addressed by MV at the beginning of the year, who increased starting wage of pay, with a resultant increase in applicants. Twelve weeks of driving and training are necessary in order for a driver to fully acclimate to the position and achieve optimum proficiency.

+Complaints, Incidents, and Accidents: Complaints have decreased significantly from week one. Vendors are now required to fully document early trips and late trips, and data is being significantly reviewed to determine causes and remedies. The excellent safety record and lack of “at fault” accidents were highlighted.

A brief conversation was had with regard to the current paratransit fees, which are structured to be fair for all riders.

b. Paratransit Application Process - Mr. Barry Bland, MTM, May Lin, Mobility Manager

It was explained that applications for assessment of paratransit use eligibility may be obtained via mail, online, fax, as well as at local centers, such as the Lighthouse of Collier or the Jewish Community Center. Once the application is completed and submitted, the applicant is called to schedule an in-person assessment. Appointments for assessments may be scheduled as soon as for the next day. If an application is incomplete, the applicant is called and notified as to what additional information needs to be submitted. If the applicant does not answer the call, a voicemail is left, with up to 6 phone call attempts made at differing times and days, with calls logged on the applicant’s cover page. The application consists of multiple pages, covering general information, accessibility issues, income information, and medical information which is completed by the applicant’s physician. At the time of interview, all application information is reviewed and entered into the Routematch database. Assessment is also made at that time of physical and cognitive abilities.

At this point, the application process is complete, and a review is conducted by the Mobility Manager and the County Transit Manager. As per ADA guidelines, a determination letter is sent during the subsequent 21 days. As an example, in the month of June, the application process averaged 11-12 days from the completed application to the mailing of the determination letter. 36 applications were received in the past 17 days, with 29 complete applications and 7 incomplete applications, and with 28 interviews conducted.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to whether information may be electronically transmitted via text or email to save time. Information is presently able to be emailed to applicants if so desired. Mr. Dobberstein stated that hospital case managers, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, and home healthcare workers should be given appropriate education on the process, as they often initiate this process on behalf of their patients. Ms. Arnold confirmed that education is being done but remains an ongoing process.

Mr. Jenkins inquired as to the length of the time of the interview and assessment, as well as what the subsequent 21-day review process timeline consists of. It was clarified that a meeting is held every two weeks between the Mobility Manager and the Transit Manager to review all completed applications. Most delays may be attributed to a delay in receipt of information from an applicant.

Medical transport companies versus true public transit use scenarios were discussed. Ms. Arnold reinforced the benefit of appropriately trained hospital staff initiating the patient transportation application process on their behalf. Mr. Jenkins recommended that applications approved by the Mobility Manager be emailed to the Transit Manager, rather than waiting to discuss hard copies every two weeks, in the interest of saving time. Ms. Arnold stated that the present system allows for an auditing checks and balance system and does not add to the overall processing time. Mr. Weeks inquired as to the length of time an applicant must wait to reapply following a denial. Ms. Arnold stated there is no waiting period to reapply; however, if an applicant chooses to appeal a denial, this process may take up to 60 days. Mr. DiMarco expressed his complete satisfaction with the interview and assessment process, based upon his own experiences.

VII. Member Comments

Mr. Dobberstein requested clarification regarding the use of non-county owned buses, noting the present fleet of 27 fixed route buses and 27 paratransit buses owned by the county, as well as 8 privately owned vehicles. Mr. Liveringhouse replied that historically, the servicer would provide all of the vehicles; however, over time, the county began providing the vehicles in the interest of continuity of service. The county assumes the capital assets, overhead, offices, and garage and parking facilities. Having its' choice of providers for the service assists with growth; i.e., a private agency may purchase a bus within a week, while grant processes may take up to a year for a county purchased bus. It was clarified that Cat Connect are county owned vehicles bearing the new wrap design.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired about the new paratransit buses which have a different look to them than the others in service. It was clarified that these are Ford transit vehicles and there is a plan to purchase 4-5 more in the next cycle. These vehicles are less expensive, have 30% better fuel economy, are easier to work on, and have greater interior capacity to better accommodate passengers with assistive devices.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no comments made by members of the public.

IX. Next Meeting Date – August 21, 2018

X. Adjournment

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was adjourned by order of the Chair.

Public Transit Advisory Committee

John DiMarco, Chairman

These minutes approved by the Board/Committee on _____ as presented _____ or as amended _____.