

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

January 23, 2020

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 Collier County Museum, Lecture Hall, 3331 Tamiami Trail East, Naples, Florida with the following members present:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman: Mr. John DiMarco

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Arthur Dobberstein

Mr. James Bennett

Mr. James Caton

Ms. Sonja Lee Samek

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Harold Weeks - Excused

ALSO PRESENT:

Ms. Michelle Arnold, Director, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement

Mr. Omar DeLeon, Public Transit Manager, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement

Mr. Zach Karto, Senior Planner, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement

Mr. Braian Morales, General Manager, MV Transportation, Inc.

Ms. Elena Ortiz-Rosado, Events, Sales, and Marketing Coordinator, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement

I. Call to Order

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

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and a quorum established.

III. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Dobberstein entered a motion to approve the January 23, 2020 meeting agenda. Ms. Samek seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

a. December 17, 2019

Ms. Samek entered a motion to approve the December 17, 2019 meeting minutes. Mr. Dobberstein seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

V. Committee Action

a. TDP Technical Working Group Designee – Mr. DeLeon

Mr. DeLeon stated that the process to update the Transit Development Plan (TDP) is underway. The TDP is a planning document with a 10-year horizon, which identifies goals and objectives for the Transit Agency and Collier Area Transit. The TDP is required by the State of Florida in order to continue to receive State Block Grant Funding. The firm of Tindale Oliver has been selected to update the TDP framework in support of the future growth of transit in Collier County. The Public Participation Plan is an important component of the TDP and involves public education about the process; gathering input from users and non-users of the system, as well as dissemination of information to the public and stakeholders. As part of this effort, a Technical Working Group comprised of individuals from a variety of fields will be selected to share technical expertise and provide input into the TDP process. Staff is recommending Mr. James Caton to represent the Public Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) as a member of the TDP Technical Working Group, based on his technical expertise and experience working with smart cities development. Mr. Dobberstein and Mr. DiMarco expressed their support for this recommendation.

Ms. Arnold noted that PTAC members would be notified of future public meetings scheduled in this regard and encouraged participation. The final draft of the TDP document will be shared with the Advisory Committee for review and endorsement, prior to presentation to the Board of County Commissioners.

Mr. Dobberstein entered a motion to endorse the appointment of Mr. James Caton to the Technical Working Group as the representative from the Public Transit Advisory Committee. Mr. DiMarco seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

VI. Reports and Presentation

a. Micro-transit – Mr. Karto, Mr. DeLeon

Mr. Karto addressed PTAC to provide general information regarding the concept of Micro-transit, how it may apply to mobility modes, and how it may be used in Collier Area Transit to assist with increasing access to public transit, boosting coverage, and potentially reaching a new rider market.

Micro-Transit, also known as Flexible Transit, Demand Response Transit, and On-Demand Transit, is a service which provides a bridge between private cars/cabs and public transportation; perhaps best known by companies such as Uber, Lyft and Via.

Many public/private partnerships have been formed across the country, which utilize Micro-Transit vans and are branded with both the public and private agency logos. Mr. Karto outlined various possible scenarios for using Micro-transit; rider pickup and drop off at the requested destination (Uber/Lyft), a “feeder” type service, with driver pickup taking the rider to a public transit bus stop, which would then take the rider to their desired destination, as well as multiple rider pickups and drop offs on the way to the desired destination (Via). It was noted that an algorithm for the route would be utilized by the vendor to efficiently schedule rider pickups and drop offs along the route, also calculating total drive time. Ms. Arnold stated that if a public/private Micro-transit partnership was entered into, the cost per ride would also be negotiated as a part of the agreement.

It was noted by Mr. DiMarco that a recent request for pickup had been cancelled by four ride-share drivers in a row, possibly due to the short length of his requested ride, and inquired if Transit did offer Micro-transit, whether dedicated drivers would be assigned to reliably respond to requests for pickup. Mr. DeLeon clarified that the process would be managed differently if a public/private partnership was entered into, or if a Transit managed program was being utilized.

Mr. Caton inquired whether Via drivers utilize company owned vehicles or personal vehicles. Mr. DeLeon stated that in a public/private partnership, Via does offer the use of company owned vehicles, the driver, and the software. Another possibility is that the public entity may provide the vehicle and driver, and Via would provide the software only. Other companies may offer the alternative of hiring on private drivers to supplement the service, if necessary. Mr. Caton noted the benefit of including options for expansion of the service within a negotiated contract in order to accommodate demand, if necessary. Mr. DeLeon stated that a one-year pilot program would be beneficial in helping to determine benefits, needs, and the potential to continue the program.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to the feasibility of large employers covering the cost of providing the feeder type service to their employees.

Mr. DeLeon noted a general lack of interest in the past on the part of large employers in offering this type of non-business related benefit to their employees.

Mr. Bennett inquired as to whether a Micro-transit service would be competitively bid among potential vendors, with comparisons made to programs operating in similar markets. Mr. DeLeon stated that if a decision was made to move forward with the use of a Micro-transit service, a formal scope would be created, with the project then put out for bids. Ms. Arnold pointed out that significant information-gathering was necessary for preparation of the grant application, prior to solicitation of vendors, and that all due diligence measures would be taken prior to entering into a formal agreement.

Mr. DiMarco inquired as to whether access to the program would be available via an app or telephone. Mr. DiMarco replied that both options would likely be available. Mr. DiMarco further recommended flexibility within the program, such as possibly reduced pricing outside of normal transit working hours, as well as reliably allowing service dogs. Mr. DeLeon pointed out the potential for overlap of the program for paratransit riders as well.

Ms. Arnold noted that the geographic areas currently being considered for potential inclusion into a pilot program include Marco Island, Bayshore, Golden Gate City, Golden Gate Estates, and Naples Park. Everglades City was briefly discussed; however, population density and distance are a challenge. It was noted that the Micro-transit program can be service modified for each geographic area.

b. FY20 Transit Budget – Ms. Arnold

Budget information was shared with PTAC to assist in illustrating the local contribution to the transit budget, FY20 vs. FY19. Grant funding was shown to be reduced in FY20, which were mostly capital expenditures that had reached their expected expiration. Operating funds were shown to have a \$600K+ positive variance FY20-FY19, sourced from contribution from the 001 General Fund, farebox revenue, carryforward, and investment interest. It was noted that reserve funds for contingency had been exhausted FY19. Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to where the \$1M in funding for the new vendor contract was reflected as an expense within the budget. Ms. Arnold noted that this information was not reflected in this document by line item, but that the budget information provided reflected that there are more funds budgeted than have been expended. Ms. Arnold recommended a future presentation to the Advisory Committee by a fiscal professional to better explain budget line items.

VII. Member Comments

+Ms. Arnold welcomed Mr. James Bennett as the newest member of the Public Transit Advisory Committee. Mr. Bennett acknowledged having received an acceptance letter from Collier County and looked forward to getting up to speed with transit issues.

+Mr. DiMarco remarked positively upon the new answering system, which now provides three options on the 252-2777 number.

+Mr. DiMarco reminded Mr. DeLeon of his desire to participate in beta testing the mobile application for use by the visually impaired. Mr. DeLeon confirmed that Mr. DiMarco would be included when the testing phase began.

+Mr. DiMarco remarked positively upon the Christmas day bus service.

+Mr. DiMarco suggested that a link to bus routes be provided on the Public Transit Facebook page. Ms. Rosado-Ortiz stated that she would investigate this option further.

+Mr. Dobberstein remarked positively upon the innovations being considered for the future of Collier public transportation, as well as the participation by technically savvy Advisory Committee members to lend support to these endeavors.

+Mr. Bennett suggested consideration of marketing opportunities via direct mailing to residents.

+Advisory Committee members were in favor of changing future meetings to the museum location.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

IX. Next Meeting Date – February 18, 2020

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 Committee on _____ as presented ___ or as amended___.