

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

June 16, 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 via hybrid video/teleconference/in-person at the Collier Area Transit Office, 8300 Radio Road, Naples FL 34104, with the following members present:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Chairman: Mr. John DiMarco

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Arthur Dobberstein

Mr. James Bennett

Mr. Peter Berry

Mr. Devon Browne

Mr. James Caton

Ms. Sonja Lee Samek

ALSO PRESENT:

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

Mr. Omar DeLeon, Public Transit Manager, Collier Area Transit

Mr. Zachary Karto, Senior Planner, Collier Area Transit

Ms. Tamara Kirby, Planner, MV Transportation, Inc.

Ms. Elena Ortiz-Rosado, Events, Sales, and Marketing Coordinator, Collier Area Transit

I. Call to Order

Mr. Dobberstein 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

Requested amendments to the Agenda:

- a. Add discussion of operational impacts related to Covid-19 (Reports).
- b. Add discussion of Bus and Bus Facilities Grant Application status (Reports).

Mr. Berry entered a motion to approve the June 16, 2020 meeting agenda, with the noted changes. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

a. May 19, 2020

Mr. Berry entered a motion to approve the May 19, 2020 meeting minutes. Ms. Samek seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

V. Committee Action

a. 5307 and 5339 Program of Projects – Mr. DeLeon

Section 5307: The Public Transit and NBHD Enhancement (PTNE) Division is awarded yearly Federal Grant funding for management of the Collier Area Transit (CAT) system, to be used for operational assistance and transit capital projects. Funding is made available via the Urbanized Area Formula Program (as defined by the Federal Transit Administration). As Collier County is located within the Bonita Springs/Naples Census Urbanized Area, a portion of Section 5307 funding is awarded to Lee County. The total apportionment amount of \$3,246,895.00 was announced in April 2019 by the FTA, with Collier County receiving \$2,882,918 of Grant funding and Bonita Springs/Lee County receiving the balance of \$363,977.

The proposed 5307 FY20-21 Program of Projects includes apportionments for shelter rehab, security (driver protection barriers for fixed route buses), ADA Paratransit services, preventative maintenance warranties (current technology systems), replacement vehicles (4 fixed route buses), technology (replacement of computer aided dispatch and automated vehicle located system), and administrative costs (staffing), totaling \$2,882,918.

Section 5339: This program provides capital assistance for new and replacement buses, related equipment, and facilities. Funds are apportioned and distributed directly to a qualified designated recipient within Urbanized areas (populations of 200K+). The estimated amount to be allocated to the Bonita Springs/Naples Urbanized area is \$382,670, with Collier County the designated recipient.

The proposed 5339 FY20-21 Program of Projects includes the purchase of automated passenger counters, ADA enunciators, and onboard information media, totaling \$382,670.

CARES ACT: The CARES ACT provides an opportunity to allocate operating funds to the CAT service at 100% Federal share, rather than 50/50 match funding, due to the current pandemic climate. This funding may be used for fueling, operating costs, and administrative costs.

\$8M was allocated to CAT through the CARES ACT, which will be budgeted for use over three years. The proposed Program of Projects for this funding includes for ADA Paratransit operational costs, driver protection barriers, one bus replacement, fleet preventative maintenance, fuel, bus operations, technology (computer aided dispatch, vehicle locating system and farebox upgrade/replacement).

Mr. Dobberstein requested clarification as to whether local funding match is required. Mr. DeLeon clarified that no local match is required, however, Transit Development Credits, which are State funds, are used for some capital expenses. Mr. Dobberstein requested a definition of TOMS, related to operating assistance. Mr. DeLeon clarified that TOMS pertains to administrative costs associated with operations.

Ms. Arnold noted that the Program of Projects is publicly noticed for 30 days to inform the public of the proposed expenditures. The POP, public comments, as well as the endorsement by the PTAC is then brought before the Board of County Commissioners for review and approval. Ms. Arnold stated that projects were chosen which qualified for 100% State grant funding, rather than projects which would require 50% local match funding.

Mr. Bennett inquired as to whether COVID-19 related sanitization costs were included in the proposed use of operating expenses. Mr. DeLeon confirmed that these costs are included in the operating budget; costs related to PPE, and sanitization/cleaning performed in response to the coronavirus. Further, cleaning has been enhanced at both transfer facilities, which bears the greatest pedestrian traffic. The County has contracted for cleaning of these facilities, which will be paid for via CARES ACT funding. No additional cleaning has been implemented at the 500+ bus shelters countywide, however the contract with MV Transportation, Inc. has recently been amended to pay for additional services, such as enhanced shelter cleaning, if deemed necessary.

Mr. Caton requested clarification of the funds budgeted for new buses and whether any discount is realized with the sale of the retired buses. Mr. DeLeon noted that new buses are purchased at standardized State contract pricing. The buses which are replaced are either retained as a spare, or if determined to have served its standard useful life (10-12 years/100K miles), may be sold at auction. If proceeds of the sale of a bus sale is greater than \$5K, funds are returned into the County system. Sale proceeds of less than \$5K are applied to the general operating fund.

Mr. Caton inquired as to whether there has been any change in liability and/or healthcare insurance for drivers in response to COVID-19. Mr. DeLeon noted that rates remain the same since insurance is a contracted service.

Following all discussion, an endorsement of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307, Section 5339 & CARES ACT Program of Projects was sought.

Mr. Berry entered a motion for endorsement of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307, Section 5339 & CARES ACT Program of Projects, as presented. Mr. DiMarco seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The motion was approved.

VI. Reports and Presentations

a. Update on Transit Development Plant (TDP) Process – Mr. Zachary Karto

Mr. Karto provided an update on the status of the Transit Development Plan process. CAT staff has received Technical Memo 3 from the consultant firm, Tindale-Oliver and Associates, in response to CAT's 2021–2030 TDP. Tech Memo 3 provides analysis and details of various components, including Transit Demand for Collier County, Gap Analysis for CAT, Existing Transit Assessment, and Alternatives Development. Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to whether this assessment includes situational consideration of the coronavirus pandemic. It was noted by Mr. Karto that the report had been compiled based upon 2019 data, prior to the viral pandemic, however the next TDP will include impacts to the service caused by the coronavirus.

The next steps will include public engagement, writing the TDP draft, as well as running modeling and simulations on approved service alternatives. The financial impacts of service alternatives will be discussed in Technical Memo 4.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to why an electric shuttle had been suggested for use in the Bayshore Drive District. Mr. Karto stated that the Bayshore CRA had approached Transit Staff to request assistance in alleviating parking issues in that area. Interest was expressed in a “hop on/hop off” type service which would facilitate parking at a designated location, with shuttle service back and forth to the Bayshore district, for access to the Botanical Gardens, microbrewery, food truck park, and marina. Several vehicles are under consideration for possible use in this capacity.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired about vanpooling, which is mentioned for possible use in the next fiscal year, specifically who would purchase the vans and operate the service. It was noted that Everglades City has approached Transit Staff to ask for service in their area. Multiple options have been considered, including a turnkey vanpool service which is offered by Enterprise Rent-A-Car, potentially to run from Everglades City to the Naples Government Center. The unique service would provide an opportunity for several users within a van pool group to be selected as designated van drivers, with insurance coverage provided by Enterprise. Ridership in the vanpool service, however, would be counted towards CAT ridership.

The vanpool would be a service offered by CAT, but with only the responsibility of paying a portion of the service cost. Mr. Browne inquired as to whether bids would be solicited for this service, as there are several agencies which offer similar shuttle type services. Mr. DeLeon noted that a formal procurement process would be required to be followed, including a written scope of service, solicitation of bids for service, and review of proposals prior to making a final selection.

Mr. Dobberstein requested clarification of the noted Park-and Ride study; when would the results of the study be available, as well as the projected date of availability of this service. Mr. Karto noted the study is currently underway, with several sites already having been selected. Stakeholder meetings are being held to identify potential partnership with privately owned entities which may also be used as Park-n-Ride locations.

b. Monthly update of operational impacts related to Covid-19 – Ms. Kirby

Ridership was noted to be reduced in March, with April producing the lowest ridership at 37,000, however increased in May to 43,000. While an increase in ridership has been noted across all routes, total riders in 2020 is down by approximately 4,000 when compared with the same timeframe in 2019. The top 4 routes remain the same; route 11, north and south on US 41; route 15, the Golden Gate circulator; route 19, from the Government Center to Immokalee; route 12, north and south on Airport Road. Rear entry boarding, fare suspension, dissemination of masks, and passenger utilization of every other seat is felt to have alleviated some public apprehension in returning to utilize the bus service. A decrease in ridership was similarly noted in the Paratransit service, specifically in recreational and social destinations. Dialysis trips were maintained throughout. All trips are now noted to be increasing.

The number of buses were increased to accommodate social distancing guidelines, such as the busier morning route 19 between Immokalee and Naples. Enhanced cleaning of the buses has been maintained throughout. Additional marketing efforts have been done via advertising panels on bus shelters, in the terminals, as well as on the buses to encourage compliance with CDC recommendations. A short public awareness video on health and safety is planned as a joint marketing venture with LeeTran, which will be shown at the Creekside Collier/Lee transfer location. The video will also be shown on social media sites, as well as the County website.

It is unknown whether fare suspension has resulted in new ridership. Fares are planned to be reimplemented in August, which will be a coordinated effort between Lee and Collier Counties. This will coincide with implementation of the new mobile ticketing program in August. The pilot/testing program will begin following the installation of safety barriers for the drivers in response to COVID-19. It was noted that the 5307 CARES ACT funding of \$8M, which was provided by the Federal Government to assist with coverage of lost fares is a 3-year Grant, with the decision to reimplement fares a local decision.

c. Bus and Bus Facilities Grant Application status – Mr. DeLeon

It was noted that no decision has been made as to which agency will be awarded the Grant funding. The announcement date is unknown.

VII. Member Comments

+Mr. DiMarco will be participating in the pilot program to test the Mobile Ticketing Application. A link will be provided to him to install the app for testing of the beta program.

+At Mr. Bennett’s request, it was clarified that the fiscal year for the Transit Division runs from October to September.

+It was noted by Ms. Arnold that the next PTAC meeting will likely be in person, with the meeting location to be determined.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no comments from members of the public.

IX. Next Meeting Date - July 21, 2020

X. Adjournment

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

Public Transit Advisory Committee

Arthur Dobberstein, Vice-Chairman

These minutes approved by the Committee on _____ as presented ___ or as amended___.