

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

September 15, 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 PRESENT:

Chairman: Mr. John DiMarco
Vice-Chairman: Mr. Arthur Dobberstein
Mr. James Bennett
Mr. Peter Berry
Mr. Devon Browne
Ms. Sonja Lee Samek

ABSENT:

Mr. James Caton

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. Tamarin Kirby, Planner, MV Transportation, Inc.
Ms. Josephine Medina, Planner, MV Transportation, Inc.
Mr. Braian Morales, General Manager, MV Transportation, Inc.

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 suggested consideration of discussion of the Adoption of Committee By-laws (Item V. b.) prior to the Election of Chair and Vice Chair (Item V. a.), as currently reflected on the agenda. The benefit was noted of having a clear understanding of the mission and scope of the By-laws prior to consideration of the commitment of an Officer position on the Advisory Committee. Ms. Arnold clarified that the By-laws draft contains a large scope of information and would require discussion by the full Committee, after which the draft may be revised or accepted. Following this clarification, Mr. Dobberstein withdrew his suggestion for a change in the order of the agenda.

Mr. Berry entered a motion to approve the September 15, 2020 meeting agenda. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes – July 21, 2020

Mr. Dobberstein noted a commitment in the July 21, 2020 minutes from Staff to disseminate a list of the 12 previously identified, potential Park-n-Ride locations and inquired if the list had been distributed. Mr. DeLeon confirmed having done so shortly after the July meeting.

Mr. Berry entered a motion to approve the July 21, 2020 meeting minutes. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

V. Committee Action

a. Election of Chair and Vice Chairperson

In accordance with Ordinance No. 2016-07, the Members of the Public Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) shall elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson on an annual basis from amongst its members, provided a quorum has been established.

Chair Nominations:

Mr. Bennett nominated Mr. DiMarco for the Chair position. There were no additional nominations.

Mr. Bennett entered a motion to nominate Mr. DiMarco for the Chair position. Mr. Berry seconded the motion. All members in attendance were in favor. The motion was passed unanimously.

Vice-Chairperson Nominations:

Mr. DiMarco nominated Mr. Dobberstein for the Vice-Chairperson position. There were no additional nominations.

Mr. DiMarco entered a motion to nominate Mr. Dobberstein for the Vice-Chairperson position. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. All members in attendance were in favor. The motion was passed unanimously.

b. Adoption of Committee By-Laws

Ordinance #2016-07, which converted the Public Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) from an Ad Hoc Committee to a permanent Advisory Board, was approved by the Collier County Board of Commissioners (BCC). The ordinance identifies functions, powers, and duties of the committee, as well as establishes the terms of the office and general rules of procedures. The adoption of By-laws is a requirement of the Ordinance for the scope and transaction of business. Staff has drafted a set of By-laws which is now presented to PTAC for review and approval; effective following an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the quorum, and with final approval by the BCC. Ms. Arnold noted the ability for modifications to the draft document.

Mr. Dobberstein expressed concern that “mass transit services”, as stated in **Article II, Jurisdiction**, was a limited definition of PTAC responsibilities based upon the broad range of issues historically discussed and explored by PTAC. Ms. Arnold clarified that “mass transit services” is taken directly from the governing Ordinance, and meant as a general term for transportation and is non-limiting; an open-ended term to discuss all components of transit service which may be part of a transit solution for Collier County. The intent was to be all-encompassing, not limited to fixed route service, but also to include other modes of transit, such as paratransit, vanpools, ride-sharing, etc. Mr. Bennett suggested that this language allowed for broader discussion and exploration related to the general movement of people and that specific itemization would be limiting. Following discussion and clarification of intent, committee members agreed to retain the language as written.

Article IV, Election of Officers, Section 1 of the draft states the “Nomination of Chair and Vice-Chair shall be made from the floor at the annual organization meeting in February of each year, and the election shall be held immediately thereafter.” Ms. Arnold questioned if the assignment of an election date was useful or whether flexibility should be considered, noting the possibility of a lack of a quorum, no meeting due to lack of discussion topics, or even a pandemic. Mr. Bennett noted that commitment to a date would be necessary if it were reflected in the By-laws. In view of the election of new officers at the current meeting, Mr. Bennett questioned whether a re-election would be necessary in February if the By-laws draft were approved as written. Ms. Arnold clarified that a re-election would be necessary in February, to be held annually thereafter. Mr. Berry suggested that the election for Chair and Vice-Chair be held in the first quarter of each year, allowing for flexibility.

Mr. Berry entered a motion to approve the Public Transit Advisory Committee By-Laws draft, with modification of Article IV, Election of Officers, Section 1 to state, “Nomination of Chair and Vice-Chair shall be made from the floor at the annual organization meeting within the first quarter of each year, and the election shall be held immediately thereafter.” Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The motion was carried.

c. Review and Approve Final Draft Transit Development Plan (TDP) 2021-2030

The final draft Transit Development Plan (TDP) 2021-2030 was shared with PTAC members. The TDP is the ten-year vision for transit, with a major update performed every 5 years, as well as yearly review and adjustments, as necessary. Creation of the plan is a collaborative process between multiple agencies, entities, municipalities, and the public. The TDP is comprised of various components, including public outreach, goals, objectives and initiatives, recommended network changes, and the financial component which reflects when the recommended changes might be accomplished. Public outreach efforts included 1090 onboard surveys, multiple meetings, 268 online surveys, as well as various stakeholder interviews.

Recommended network changes include the elimination of excessive loops, creating more direct and bidirectional routing, adding and enhancing service along key corridors, enhanced service to transit hubs at activity centers, saving service hours to improve frequency, and tailored mobility on demand for various areas. The goal was to increase transit coverage throughout the county, attempting to develop a better grid-like system for main fixed route buses to move riders quickly and more efficiently. Localized needs were studied, with frequency added to the 121 route with a loop in the a.m. and p.m., improved frequency on the 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 24 routes, and with service hours expanded until 10:00 p.m. on some routes.

Mobility innovations included models and simulations of fixed routes in specific areas, including Everglades City, which resulted in study of a partnership with Enterprise Rent-A-Car to potentially offer vanpool service to this area. A trolley service was added to Marco Island, allowing an additional transit option for both locals and tourists, as well as adding a mobility on demand service encompassing the entire island. The 21 circulator on the island was replaced by a smaller express route from the Naples Government Center, stopping at Walmart on Collier Boulevard/US41, and traveling on to Marco Island, providing quicker access from the western portion of the county to Marco Island. Downtown Naples and the Bayshore area were studied for the use of quiet, ecofriendly electric shuttles as an autonomous circulator, due to high tourist traffic and parking challenges in these areas.

Challenges include:

+The proposal of non-traditional transit modes which are difficult to test and model for demand, and which require alternative funding sources to implement.

- +Cross-jurisdictional cooperation which is necessary between Lee and Hendry Counties, and various other municipalities, as well as promotion of the need to be proactive with local businesses and leaders.
- +Overcoming the hurdle of an auto-centric transportation network which is not transit friendly.
- +Incorporation of rapidly changing technology, such as the autonomous shuttle, into the transit landscape.

Endorsement of the TDP draft was being sought of the Transit Advisory Committee, prior to final presentation to the Board of County Commissioners at the October 13, 2020 meeting.

Mr. DiMarco inquired when the electric shuttle service might be implemented. Mr. DeLeon noted that some concepts are conceptual and are included in the plan for implementation once a funding source is identified; for instance, via grant application or potential public/private partnership. For example, discussions are ongoing with the Bayshore CRA regarding a potential partnership for an electric shuttle service in that area. Forecast tables within the TDP document identify the potential timeframe for implementation of projects, as well as estimated operating expenditures and capital costs associated with the proposed project. Unfunded projects are not assigned within any specific timeframe. It was clarified that conceptual projects would not be funded with existing transit operating funds, either fixed route or paratransit. The TDP identifies a ranking of service improvements; 40% by public feedback, as well as available funding for each proposed improvement. It was noted that the public survey is included as part of the TDP document. Mr. Browne suggested providing a general implementation timeframe in response to public requests for service enhancements.

Mr. Dobberstein noted the omission within the TDP of other transportation services provided in Collier County, including paratransit, for-hire school bus services, public transit buses which provide a variety of tourist related transit (for instance, to football games), and buses which travel to and from the airport in Lee County. Mr. DeLeon noted this will be taken into consideration for incorporation within the TDP.

Mr. Bennett inquired whether an additional PTAC meeting would be held to discuss further suggestions or changes made to the document prior to submission of the draft to the BCC. Ms. Arnold clarified that the public comment period remains open and substantive comments from the public and PTAC which would change the plan would be included and provided to the BCC in October. The decision to reconvene to further discuss the TDP draft would be at the discretion of PTAC members.

Mr. Bennett entered a motion to endorse the Transit Development Plan draft, with Staff consideration of feedback received from the Public Transit Advisory Committee and the Public during the open comment period. Mr. Browne seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The motion was carried unanimously.

VI. Reports and Presentations

a. Bus & Bus Facility Grant Award

Mr. DeLeon stated the Transit Division had received recent notification from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of approval of the Bus & Bus Facility Grant Award application. The Grant was requested for funding of a \$9M project consisting of renovation of the CAT maintenance facility located at 8300 Radio Road. Funding will also be used for the purchase of two electric buses, four 30' fixed route transit buses, including security cameras, radios, Intelligent Transportation System, and electric charging stations for two electric buses. It was clarified that the 5339 Bus & Bus Facility Grant which was applied for is a competitive grant and is not in replacement of any other funding sources.

b. COVID-19 Update

Committee members were updated on the ongoing activities being performed in response to COVID-19, as well as an update on ridership on paratransit and fixed route service. Buses have been wrapped with TDC recommended guidelines for public education. The graphic design was recently recognized by the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida, with publication in their newsletter. Enhancement of the RideCAT app has been accomplished with the introduction of contactless fares, with the ability to utilize a smartphone for handsfree routing and ticketing. With the reintroduction of fares on August 2, 2020, rear boarding of the bus has been suspended, with operator barriers installed for the protection of both operators and passengers with front door entry. Drivers perform thorough sanitization of each bus after each loop, using chemicals and wipes, and with a thorough cleaning performed of each bus when it is out of service at the end of the day. Operators continue to be provided with personal protective equipment and all riders are required to wear a mask.

Fixed route ridership was down by 60% in April 2020 compared to April 2019. Fixed ridership is currently supporting approximately 40K riders per month, and the number of buses has increased to support the higher ridership. Some routes, particularly from Immokalee to Marco Island had remained full, particularly with rear boarding, due to less available space on the bus. This issue has been alleviated with the reimplemention of front door entry. A second bus was added to some loops for new express routes to accommodate social distancing. Paratransit ridership was down 66% in April 2020 compared to April 2019, now averaging 4K riders monthly.

VII. Member Comments

+Mr. Dobberstein commented upon the quoted price received for the purchase of electric buses, which was less expensive than diesel powered units. Ms. Arnold confirmed the price quoted for electric buses is significantly lower than in the past, possibly due to a more competitive market.

+Mr. Browne inquired as to any employee exposure to COVID-19. Mr. Morales noted no utility personnel with virus positivity; however, there have been some drivers who have tested positive.

+Mr. Bennett inquired whether PTAC reading material could be received sooner than the Friday before each meeting, to allow adequate time for review. Mr. DeLeon stated that efforts will be made to forward documents sooner for member review prior to the next meeting.

+Support was expressed by PTAC members of continued virtual meeting attendance, which allows for time efficiency and easier attendance.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no comments from members of the public.

IX. Next Meeting Date – October 20, 2020 - (Location TBD)

X. Adjournment

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

Public Transit Advisory Committee

John DiMarco, Chairman

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