

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

October 20, 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
Mr. James Caton
Ms. Sonja Lee Samek

ALSO PRESENT:

Ms. Michelle Edwards-Arnold, Director, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement
Mr. Bill Gramer, Jacobs Engineering Group
Mr. Omar DeLeon, Public Transit Manager, Collier Area Transit
Mr. Zachary Karto, Senior Planner, Collier Area Transit
Ms. Felicia Kirby, Jacobs Engineering Group
Ms. Josephine Medina, Senior Planner, MPO, Collier County
Mr. Braian Morales, General Manager, MV Transportation, Inc.
Ms. Brandy Otero, Associate Project Manager, Collier County
Ms. Elena Ortiz-Rosado, Events, Sales & Marketing Coordinator, Collier Area Transit
Mr. Javier Ortiz-Velez, Jacobs Engineering Group

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 requested that an update of the Transit Development Plan be added as an agenda item for discussion. This topic will be added as item VI (b) Status of the TDP.

Mr. Dobberstein entered a motion to approve the agenda, with the noted addition. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The motion was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes – September 15, 2020

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

V. Committee Action

a. Final Park & Ride Study Report – Mr. Javier Ortiz-Velez

Mr. Ortiz addressed PTAC to review the final Park-and-Ride study report. Jacobs Engineering Group provided consulting services to the Collier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and to Collier Area Transit (CAT) for identification and development of a standardized methodology for locating, operating, and maintaining possible Park-and-Ride sites within Collier County. There is an approximate 2% population growth in Collier County, which results in traffic congestion on its arterial network. Park-and-Ride locations may help alleviate some of the congestion by providing areas where commuters may park their vehicles and utilize public transit to urbanized areas. A previous Park-and-Ride study was conducted for Collier County in 2005, the results of which indicated there were favorable conditions and locations where these sites could be successful.

32 sites were evaluated in the current study, which included 12 locations studied in 2005. A standardized methodology for locating, evaluating, and pursuing Park-and-Ride sites within Collier County was identified. Sites were identified and evaluated based on proximity to existing and planned Transit routes, commuter patterns and major employment locations, deficient roads, regional interconnectivity, tourist destinations, and educational facilities. Feedback from the public was solicited via an online survey, as well as stakeholder input, including the Chamber of Commerce, major employers, and other County agencies, all of which assisted in the identification of ultimate destinations throughout the County when using a Park-and-Ride, including Marco Island, Immokalee, and Everglades City. Criteria to evaluate the success of a site included various factors, such as visibility, transit linkage, location, access, and cost to develop the site.

10 of the 32 sites evaluated were identified as priority locations. The priority locations include both proposed partnerships with private organizations and newly developed lots, providing signage for existing spaces on shared-use lots such as the Government Campus, Coastland Center Mall, Freedom Square, Physicians Regional Hospital-Pine Ridge, New VA Hospital, and Railhead. Proposed new lots would be located at Creekside, with connection with LeeTran, Immokalee Health Department, Beach parking overflow lots at Pine Ridge Road and Vanderbilt Beach Road, as well as the Radio Road Transfer Station lot. Next steps for existing lots and spaces includes updating websites and maps, promotion of existing lots, installation of guide signs off main arterials, as well as replacement of existing signs. Partnerships with private organizations to utilize existing lots and parking spaces would be pursued. Funding would need to be identified and established, including grant applications to support the acquisition of property for the development of new lots, conceptual site plans, design and permitting. Service may then be established via CAT route, vanpool, express bus, or MOD, with promotion to the public of these services.

Mr. Browne inquired as to the results of any follow up of the effectiveness/benefit of the Park-and-Ride locations which had been built following the 2005 study. Mr. Ortiz stated that the sites were reviewed with respect to how they were being used within the conditions of 2020, however no official tracking of use has been established. It was noted that promotion to the public has been suboptimal and the sites have not been used to capacity, but these issues would be taken into consideration if the County decided to move forward with this program. Mr. DeLeon clarified that several of the sites are comprised of a few parking spots at County libraries and are not standalone, dedicated lots. As such, greater visibility to the community of the dual purpose of the parking spots at these locations is needed. The parking lot of several of the locations is adjacent to a bus stop.

Mr. Caton questioned whether the creation of overflow lots at Pine Ridge and Vanderbilt Beach roads was practical, given the already limited availability of beach parking. It was clarified that these sites were selected to relieve traffic congestion for all commuters, including those that may have a work or entertainment destination, particularly during tourist season, holidays, weekends, etc. It was also noted that the two sites designated for beach parking are not located at the beach, but are off-site. Riders would park their vehicles and then utilize transit to travel on to the beach or their desired destination. Mr. Browne inquired as to the anticipated capacity and target utilization times, season versus off-season at these two locations, and whether alternative uses during non-peak times are being considered. It was clarified that basic capacity and turnaround counts are tracked by the Parks and Recreation Division, which was studied by quarter in order to determine the suggested number of parking spaces needed to serve each location, as well as to adjust for population growth through 2040. Alternative use during non-peak times has been considered, such as parking overflow for the Mercato, other local shopping destinations, or to support other special entertainment or events.

Mr. Browne reiterated the benefit of private/public partnerships with businesses and possibly utilizing a portion of the parking lot on weekends only, which are typically peak days for beachgoers.

Mr. Caton inquired as to incentives for private businesses to assign designated parking as a Park-and-Ride location, which may be taking spots from employees or visitors to the business. Mr. Gramer noted promotion to business owners of possible tax and/or zoning benefits, as well as trip-chaining benefits for riders who may access multiple local businesses. Mr. Caton also suggested potential pop-up Park-and-Ride locations associated with a specific activity, such as a weekend farmer's market or flea market, which would not require zoning, construction, or infrastructure. Mr. Karto concurred and noted that existing parking garages in the City of Naples are an example of locations which would allow riders to park their vehicle and board a shuttle for access to downtown, the Pier, or other areas of local interest. Potential Park-and-Ride locations are evaluated for multiuse potential, including for commuters, tourism, as well as trade access, dependent upon location and target market. Mr. Browne recommended analysis for greatest community impact when considering ranking of the top ten locations.

Mr. Dobberstein noted some complexity in accessing the Pine Ridge Road location, possibly impacting use. Mr. Gramer noted that to offer the most Park-and Ride locations, efficiency, cost of each location, as well as access management were evaluated and scored, and if deemed non-feasible, were not considered further. The limited availability of beach parking in Marco Island, as well as of available land for purchase by the County was acknowledged. Sites outside of Marco Island are being identified to transport riders onto the Island, as well as implementation of a trolley service for residents to utilize on the Island, which will also alleviate beach parking issues. Mr. DiMarco inquired whether fixed bike racks will be available at Park-and Ride locations. It was noted that serving all commuters is the goal, which would include pedestrians, bicyclists, as well as potentially offering charging stations for electric vehicles.

Mr. Dobberstein commented upon the lack of plan development following the 2005 study and encouraged practical usage of the findings of the most recent study. Mr. Berry inquired whether a target date has been identified for the implementation of identified next steps. Mr. Graber stated that the promotion of existing lots via the website, as well as possible placement of guide signs onsite would be short-term, first steps towards functioning, usable park-and-ride locations, which could be used as a model for more park-and-ride locations to follow. It was further noted by Mr. Karto that a manual has been created for use by County staff which details criteria to follow in the evaluation of potential park-and-ride locations. Mr. Dobberstein commented upon the benefit to employers to market this amenity to their employees. Mr. DeLeon also noted the potential for partnerships with commercial developments where Park-and Ride locations may be appropriated as part of the project. Mr. Bennett suggested that a Park-and-Ride located near the Collier-Lee County border would be useful for the many people who travel into the county each day for work.

Mr. DeLeon stated that several potential locations have been identified along the county line corridor, including at Miromar Outlets. Ms. Arnold further stated that partnership with LeeTran is being considered, to share costs associated with the service.

Ms. Arnold summarized by noting Advisory Committee suggestions to assign general target dates for next step items, as well as analysis for greatest community impact when considering ranking of the top ten locations. These suggestions may be incorporated into the Transit Development Plan and/or the manual created for use in planning upcoming Park-and-Ride projects; the evaluation of where sites may be located, as well as a reference tool in discussion with developers.

Mr. DiMarco entered a motion to endorse the final Park-and-Ride Study, with the addition of the assignment of a schedule to identified next step items. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The motion was carried.

b. Florida Developmentally Disadvantaged Council Grant

PTNE staff received an invitation by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council to participate in a 12-month pilot transportation voucher project which utilizes \$150K in grant funding. No matching funds are required. The project is designed to provide additional transportation options for residents with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities by making on-demand service available, in addition to scheduled paratransit rides. The pilot program is underway in both Hillsborough County and the City of Jacksonville, with funding available to support the program in eight additional counties and areas within Florida.

Participation in the program will afford an opportunity to test partnerships with taxis and Transportation Network Companies (TNCs, including Uber and Lyft) and provide a greater level of service to the disabled members of the community. A decision to move forward with the pilot program has been made, with necessary approvals in place to begin. A Work Plan has been created, which identifies goals for the program, as well as the boundaries where the service will be provided. The service will be available 7 days a week, 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. A partnership with Uber has been established to provide this service to the community, currently in discussion for the use of wheelchair accessible vehicles. This may entail partnership with a third contractor, a local taxi company which provides wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV). All eligible passengers currently in the CAT Connect system will be uploaded onto the Uber Central platform, allowing for booking same day service via a smartphone. No additional application will be required to utilize the new program. Transit will have access to Uber Central to run reports and evaluate the data. The trip cost will be \$20, with the initial \$4 paid for by the passenger and \$16 subsidized by the grant. Any cost beyond \$20 will be the responsibility of the passenger. The Agreement is planned to be presented to the Board of County Commissioners at the October 27, 2020 meeting, working thereafter with Uber to finalize the agreement, as well as for wheelchair access vehicles. The program is scheduled to begin in December 2020, running through September 2021, with monthly assessments done.

Finally, the completed pilot program will be evaluated, with a cost comparison with the current CAT Connect service.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired whether drivers will be specially trained in the transport of developmentally disabled passengers, as well as whether passengers may request the service using methods other than online. It was clarified by Mr. DeLeon that specialized training for drivers is a requirement of the grant funding; clarification will be sought regarding methods available for riders to request the service. Mr. Dobberstein inquired whether this program may divert riders from utilizing CAT Connect and whether this will affect revenue. It was noted that feedback from the program in Hillsborough County reflected use of both the on-demand service and the traditional scheduled service, as needed. The program is being offered by CAT as a benefit to the local community by providing greater mobility options. The service will be multi-load; however, it will be clarified whether an additional fee will be required if a guest joins an eligible rider. Mr. Dobberstein noted the possibility for more partnership opportunities with Uber following the use of this program. Mr. DeLeon concurred, stating that Uber now has personnel dedicated to managing Transit contracts. As well, Uber has been utilized as a link to facilitate the movement of people to bus stops or transit stations, utilizing a voucher or credit system.

An update on the program will be provided to PTAC following presentation to the BCC.

VI. Reports and Presentations

a. CAT Performance Measures

Annual CAT performance measures were shared with PTAC. In comparison of FY19 to FY20, a decrease in ridership of 20% was seen. An uptick in ridership was seen at the beginning of the year, November to February 2019, pre-COVID, which significantly impacted ridership beginning in February. Ridership for the past several months has maintained at a 33% decrease from the previous year. No revenue was reported during the months of free service to the community, and lower revenue is noted in August 2020 when fares were reinstated, attributed to the lower ridership. Despite decreased ridership in September, the increase in revenue is attributed to \$58K in passes purchased by a developer for their employees. There has been a slight increase in revenue miles and hours from the year before, attributed to the use of additional vehicles to accommodate social distancing for riders. On-time performance was 90% during the time of suspended fares, which decreased slightly with the reinstatement of fares.

b. Status of the TDP

The draft TDP was released to the public for 30 days for review and comment, however with no feedback received. The TDP is scheduled to be presented to the BCC at the October 27, 2020 meeting.

VII. Member Comments

+Mr. DiMarco requested an update on the potential use of electric shuttles along Bayshore Drive.

Mr. Karto clarified that discussions with the Bayshore CRA are ongoing, currently with two electric shuttles under consideration for use on Bayshore Drive. A public survey is planned to solicit feedback on services of interest in that area. A copy of the survey will be shared with PTAC when released.

+Mr. Dobberstein suggested that a brief, descriptive summary be provided to PTAC of consultants chosen for Transit projects.

+Mr. DiMarco noted that the Advisory Committee members have not been updated on the Government website and requested that this be amended.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no additional comments from members of the public.

IX. Next Meeting Date – November 17, 2020

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____.