

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
February 15, 2022 Minutes**

PLACE: Microsoft Teams Meeting

PRESENT: James Bahneman - Chair; Arlene Washington - Vice-Chair, David Buck, Grace Graves, Laurel Henschel, Danita Jackson, Annie Johnson, Marcia Perkins, Jeanette Williams, Mae Wingo

ABSENT: Gerald Balezentis, Nilima Mehra

GUESTS: Kevin Meyers – guest; Denise Jones – American United; Morgan Mc Clelland, Jerome Harleaux and Vickie Gray - First Transit; Tracy Harrington – Transit Express, Fran Musci, Chris Fox, Paula Schultz, and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the January 18, 2022 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: no report.

Membership Committee: no report

Public Relations Committee: David Buck stated that he was still deciding when to hold future Committee meetings. David also advised that the annual Wisconsin Disability Rights annual event to meet with legislators will be held virtually in March. If anyone would like to participate contact Life Navigators. Many topics that relate to disability rights will be covered. There is still a federal mask mandate in place until March 18, 2022. The City of Milwaukee's mask mandate is in place until March 1, 2022. The Flex Ride program is a separate service which can be utilized by phone app and can be accessed from five bus stops.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Transit Plus Office Remodeling Project: Fran Musci reported that the demolition of the Transit Plus office will be starting on February 21, 2022. The remodeling project is expected to take 6 weeks. The tentative date for move in is March 31, 2022. It is not known when the Administration building will reopen to the public.

Vendor Staffing Mitigation Strategies: Fran reported that the letter explaining the mitigation strategy changes was sent out and should be received by now. We are working on internal processes such as reports, phone messages, etc. to implement the changes.

BRT Service Update: Fran Musci reported that work is ongoing on the east-west BRT from

downtown to Watertown Plank Road. The BRT will change some bus routes such as the Gold Line. We are working out an agreement with Waukesha to bring Waukesha's Route 1 to the Milwaukee County Regional Medical Center. We are not sure how it will be worked out to continue to serve clients along Bluemound Road to Brookfield Square as well as how we can best serve the old Gold Line residents in Elm Grove so that they can get into Milwaukee. We want things to be seamless for riders. Kevin Meyers asked if AIRA will be available in the Waukesha Route 1 area. Fran stated she will ask Waukesha Metro about that.

NEW BUSINESS:

SEWRPC Flex Ride Service: Chris Fox reported that the Flex Ride service started on February 1, 2022. It is a pilot program that will be running until October 2022. It has been implemented by SEWRPC using five MCTS bus stops on the northwest side of Milwaukee to get riders to employers in Menomonee Falls and Butler. The five stops include the Woodman's/Sam's Club on N. 124th Street, Silver Spring Road and Lover's Lane at the Hampton Inn, the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, Midtown Center, and Sherman Phoenix on 36th & Fond du Lac. It is an on-demand service utilizing vans and cars. Accessible vehicles are available upon request. The service can be accessed by using an app or by calling with a cell phone. The rides from the stops at Woodman's and Lover's Lane are free, and the cost of the ride from the other locations is \$1.50. The service is being operated by Via a nationwide company that also provides paratransit service in Green Bay. The number to call is 414-667-7433 or go to flexridemke.com. Riders must be 18 years or older and be looking for a job or have a job in these Waukesha County areas. We will be keeping an eye on the ridership of this program.

Van Service RFP: Fran Musci reported that she is actively working on preparing the Request for Proposal for Transit Plus van service. The current contract ends October 31, 2023. There are federal requirements for open bidding. Proposals are submitted then they go through an evaluation scoring process. It is hoped that the RFP can be put out in July 2022 so that the new service can start on November 1, 2023. If there are any major changes we will need time to adjust. Are there any things that TPAC would like to see included in the new contract? Annie Johnson stated she would like to have vehicles with better shocks for a less bumpy ride.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Paula Schultz reported that she is going on a field trip tomorrow to determine where to place a bench at the BRT platform at 76th & Bluemound. ADA sensitivity training will be held next week. There will be a presentation at Clinton Rose Senior Center in March, after that there will be a full schedule of presentations throughout the spring.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: Denise Jones reported that American United has brought on 9 new drivers last month. This is the most drivers they have had since December of 2019. There is 50% success with new drivers. Weather has been good. They are working with management to improve service.

Transit Express: Tracy Harrington reported that unfortunately they are still struggling to

retain and hire drivers. Drivers are being injured by other reckless drivers on the road. They have 7 drivers out with injuries and illness which hurts when they are already short staffed. Service issues such as late and full vans are not the fault of drivers, and the drivers need to be treated kindly. It is harder to keep people if they are being treated poorly. They are trying to hire but the hiring environment is still difficult. Annie Johnson stated that abusive riders should be tracked and sanctioned. Laurel Henschel was interested in knowing what kind of accidents have occurred. Tracy advised a van was struck from behind and a driver was also hit outside of their van. A car hit the van, then the van hit the driver who was walking near the van.

First Transit: Morgan McClelland reported that unruly behavior on the road is increasing. High speed incidents occur, and passengers then run away. Van drivers want to avoid collisions. First Transit is still struggling with driver counts but hope to keep hiring. They have about 70 drivers including subcontractor drivers. They have had some decent classrooms and have 5 to 6 drivers in training now. New drivers have a learning curve, be patient with them. We are managing to keep pace and want to continue to hire ahead of the curve. Ridership is up, especially with warmer weather. Rides are longer than preferable and there have been long waits for will call rides.

TRANSIT PLUS: Fran Musci reported that we are still waiting to hear from the FTA Triennial Review Team about their follow-up questions and the dates for the review. We are still testing Service Infraction software to be able to go live. The computer system is being upgraded tonight. On-line application forms are being created and tested as part of the document management project. Let people know that forms will be able to be submitted on-line soon. We are moving away from email application submissions but will continue to accept paper forms. Kevin Meyer asked if the on-line form submission process has been tested for screen reading with WCAG standards, Apple voice over systems, Zoom text, etc. Fran advised that there were 22,214 van rides provided in January 2022. This is at 70% of pre-COVID levels. Taxi ridership is down. There were 1,289 taxi rides in January 2022. We will be meeting with American United this week to discuss program performance and next steps.

ADJOURNMENT