

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
July 20, 2021 Minutes**

PLACE: Microsoft Teams Meeting

PRESENT: James Bahneman (Chair), Arlene Washington (Vice-Chair), Gerald Balezentis, David Buck, Grace Graves, Laurel Henschel, Danita Jackson, Nilima Mehra, Marcia Perkins, Mae Wingo

ABSENT: Danita Jackson, Annie Johnson, Jeanette Williams

GUESTS: Kevin Meyers – guest, Jonathan Liegeios – American United; Morgan Mc Clelland - First Transit; Tracy Harrington – Transit Express; David Locher – Milwaukee County Transit System, Chris Fox and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the June 15, 2021 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: no report.

Membership Committee: no report.

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported that the MCTS lobby construction is now complete. Tickets, fare cards and passes can now be purchased in person in the lobby. MCTS is increasing capacity on the bus. The new COVID Delta variant is creating problems. The Federal mask mandate is continuing until September 13, 2021. David urged everyone to get vaccinated so that we can meet in person

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Paratransit Customer Satisfaction Survey: Chris Fox reported that the Paratransit Customer Satisfaction survey is complete. We received 150 responses; 70 online and 80 by phone. We will be getting the results soon. Prize pack winners have been drawn and notified.

NEW BUSINESS:

MILWAUKEE COUNTY AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER: Karen Bachman the Manager of the Disability Resource Center explained that Milwaukee County has both an Aging Resource Center and a Disability Resource Center. Milwaukee County will be integrating services of the ARC and the DRC in January 2022. Every county in the State has ADRC services. The new Milwaukee County combined ADRC Center will be at the Coggs

Center effective January 1, 2022. Milwaukee County will be sending the contract proposal for the integrated ADRC to the State in September. The goal of the combined service is for there to be no wrong door. Karen stated that she is interested in hearing from people to find out what can be done to improve service and make it easier to access. Jim Bahneman stated that this will be better for communication. David Buck asked Karen if she would be willing to speak at a meeting of the local chapter of the National Federation of the Blind, Vision Forward and the Center For Deaf Blind Persons. She was very interested in doing so.

MCTS BUS RAPID TRANSIT: David Locher from MCTS Transportation Department reported that the Bus Rapid Transit is now in construction. It is hoped that people can begin riding the BRT next fall. The BRT is light rail without the rails. It will have dedicated bus lanes in Milwaukee, transit signal priority, raised level boarding, off-board fare collection, and Quantum self-securement. There will be no premium fares for the BRT. There will be a ramp in front and extra wide doors in the back of the bus. The BRT will use eleven electric NOVA buses from Canada. The goal of the BRT is to improve frequency and reliability. It will be a faster ride in traffic and there will be less time spent at bus stops. It will have an east-west route similar to the Gold Line. It will travel from Wisconsin Avenue near the Lakefront west to Hawley Road, then further west on Bluemound to 95th Street, then to the Milwaukee County Regional Medical Center, then to 92nd Street and Connell, and finally to Watertown Plank Road Park and Ride lot. The BRT will differ from the Gold Line in that it will not go to UWM or to Brookfield Square. The BRT will connect to the Route 30 at the Lakefront. The Route 30 will have increased frequency. MCTS is working hard with Waukesha Metro to have Waukesha Metro come into Milwaukee and stop at Connell. There will be 33 different bus stop stations that will have bus shelters with sleek designs, braille signage, and detectable warning fields. The cost of the BRT is \$55 million. \$40.9 million is from a Federal grant, \$11.7 million is from Milwaukee County. The operations budget is expected to be cost neutral, State willing. Gerald Balezentis commented that he thought the BRT was a waste of money and that he would rather see fares reduced. David explained that the money came from a \$6 Billion Federal infrastructure pool and was only earmarked for transportation projects such as BRT or light rail. Kevin Meyers asked what will happen with Aria if Waukesha Metro replaces the Waukesha County portion of the Gold Line. Chris Fox stated he would look into that.

TPAC MEETING TIMES: Lisa Walters explained that since TPAC's meetings have gone virtual, they have been scheduled for one hour from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. She also advised that Fran Musci is no longer available after 3:00 p.m. Fran is interested in knowing if TPAC would want to schedule their meetings earlier or if the Council wants to continue to meet at the same times knowing that after 3:00 p.m. she is not available. Laurel Henschel pointed out that when in-person meetings were held in the past, the TPAC Committees met between 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. Members did not always arrive punctually for the Committee meeting time and sometimes more time was needed for Committee business. Jim Bahneman commented that there has been little to no time for public input with the virtual meetings and that he would not like to see the Committee meeting time reduced to a half hour. Marcia Perkins explained that she is now attending TPAC meetings during her lunch break from work. She only has 45 minutes to an hour to attend the meeting. She suggested a that a possible adjustment might be for the Committees to meet from 1:00 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. and that the public meeting begin at 1:45 p.m. and run to 3:00 p.m. The Council did not want to make a decisions about changing the meeting time, but wanted to continue the discussion at the next meeting. Lisa Walters also advised that there a green light has not yet been given for in person meetings in the MCTS Administration Building.

CAPACITY RESTRICTIONS LIFTED ON MCTS BUSES: Lisa Walters reported that capacity

restrictions have been lifted on the bus and on paratransit vehicles as well.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: The team recently conducted a Freedom on Wheels public outreach presentation at the Dominican Center. They are getting requests for travel training especially in areas with route changes from Phase 3 of MCTS Next. A mailing will go out to Transit Plus clients and community partners along changing routes with Phase 3. Last week we had an ADA Training class of 18. Securement refresher training is going on at the stations. Half of the driver have received a refresher so far.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: Jonathan Liegeios reported that American United has been busy. They are conducting ADA Sensitivity Training. They are trying to bring on more drivers to improve fleet size. Nilima Mehra mentioned that she has been experiencing wait times of 1 to 1½ hours when it is dark and stores are closing. This is very frustrating for her because she is losing time. Jonathan acknowledged that American United has been struggling with nights and weekends, especially around 8:00 and 9:00 p.m. Kevin Meyers also reported that he had experienced long wait times over the last couple of weeks and has had to cancel his American United order and call Uber instead. Jonathan explained that Uber drivers do not need a medallion which is one of the barriers that exists for American United. They are fighting to get laws changed.

Transit Express: Tracy Harrington reported that they are doing fairly well on hiring right now. Currently they are conducting a training class of 5 and are planning on starting another training class on August 3rd for 3. They hope to maintain hiring. Transit Express is located 2 blocks from the Deer District and during the play offs car windows were broken in their parking lot and catalytic convertors were stolen.

First Transit: Morgan McClelland reported that hiring has gotten easier and training classes have been larger, so they are rebuilding their driver numbers. They will have 5 or 6 people in the next class. First Transit is seeing a resurgence in ridership. They are at 60% to 67% of pre-COVID ridership. They need more drivers to cover evening activities as more people are out and about now.

TRANSIT PLUS: Chris Fox reported that our files for the Document Management project are safely in Arizona and scanning will begin shortly. We are hoping to start the construction on the Transit Plus office remodel by early fall. The lobby of the MCTS Administration Building is now open for fare transactions. There were 23,201 van trips provided in June 2021. Ridership continues to trend up. It is now at 65% of pre-COVID levels. There were 2,201 taxi trips provided in June 2021, this is about 43% of 2019 levels. Phase 3 of MCTS Next will be implemented on August 29, 2021. We are working with State Fair and Summerfest to coordinate paratransit operations to these events.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Laurel Henshel reported that there had been a rain storm on a recent afternoon and her son

got quite wet getting in and out of the van. She can't change him if he is wet. She asked if she gave the driver an umbrella could the driver hold it over him? She was also interested in knowing if umbrellas could be supplied on the vans for drivers to use.

ADJOURNMENT