

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
July 19, 2022 Minutes**

PLACE: Microsoft Teams Meeting

PRESENT: Jim Bahneman - Chair, Arlene Washington - Vice-Chair, Gerald Balezentis, David Buck, Grace Graves, Laurel Henschel, Danita Jackson, Mae Wingo

ABSENT: Annie Johnson, Nilima Mehra, Marcia Perkins, Jeanette Williams

GUESTS: Thomas Bertrand – MCTS Schedule and Planning; Morgan Mc Clelland - First Transit; Quentin Averhart – Transit Express; Fran Musci, Chris Fox, Paula Schultz, and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus; Isabel Sanchez – Public Ally

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the June 21, 2022 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: no report.

Membership Committee: James Bahneman announced that Danita Jackson has resigned from the Council.

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported that Milwaukee County's mask mandate is still in effect. The City of Milwaukee currently has a mask advisory. New COVID boosters will be coming out soon.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Milwaukee County Mask Mandate: Fran Musci reported that masks are still required on buses but are not required in the MCTS Administration Building. Mask policies are subject to change depending on community COVID levels.

Service Infractions – No Show Policy: Fran Musci reported that we are currently working on testing the updated version of the Trapeze Service Infraction software. The program should be operational soon. We have been sending out warning letters to those riders who have had violations so it should come as no surprise when suspensions are imposed in the future.

Summerfest: Chris Fox reported that Summerfest 2022 was successful and there was only one issue with a client being taken to the wrong gate. Transit Plus provided 169 rides which was an increase from the 85 rides provided last year. Transit Plus provided 137 rides in 2019. There was no fixed route bus service to Summerfest this year.

NEW BUSINESS:

MCTS Fall 2022 Route Changes: Tom Bertrand of MCTS Schedule and Planning Department explained to the Council the upcoming fixed route changes that will be effective on August 28, 2022. Go to <https://www.ridemcts/routes-schedules/service-changes> for detailed information about the changes. Tom also mentioned that there are dozens of bus stops across the service area that are not ADA compliant. These are being identified so that more stops can be made compliant in the next year. Fran Musci explained that most of these less than ideal bus stops pre-existed the ADA and are grandfathered in under the law. MCTS buses operate in many different municipalities and that we must work with these different municipalities to get changes made. The Transit System doesn't build bus stops, we just use them. When street construction occurs bus stops get fixed and made accessible. Additionally, there are some areas of the County that do not even have sidewalks. Infrastructure takes a long time and lasts a long time. We work with the State, the County, and cities as best we can.

In-Person Meetings: Fran Musci reported that the MCTS Administration Building is now open, but construction will be taking place in August that will block the main entrance to the building. Fran asked the Council if they still wanted to proceed with returning to in-person meetings in September. David Buck motioned to push the return to in-person meetings back to October 18th. The motion seconded and approved. Committees meet in the hour prior to the general meeting. David advised that the PR Committee's first meeting will take place in November.

State Fair: Chris Fox reported that there will be no MCTS shuttles to the Fair this year due to a driver shortage. Transit Plus will be making pick ups and drop offs at a new area this year. The new pick up and drop off location will be south of the old area at Gate 3 on west side of the Expo Center. There will be a tent and a bench available for waiting.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Paula Schultz reported that her team has been super busy. They attended Senior Fest at Summerfest and were able to talk to riders in person. They also visited two senior centers recently, Kelly and West Allis. Paula is working on the grant application. Tomorrow she is attending the WAMM meeting. She will also be attending the upcoming resource fair at Washington Park for the 32nd Anniversary of the ADA from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. They will also be giving three presentations next week, one of these will be in Spanish for the first time. Many travel training requests are being received.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: not present

Transit Express: Quentin Averhart reported that a class of drivers graduated and that they will be starting a class in Waukesha and one in Milwaukee in the next couple weeks. Currently they are having a shortage of vehicles and are bringing some up from Chicago. Reckless driving is in the news all the time. Transit Express did not have any issues with Summerfest and are looking forward to State Fair. They keep trying to hire. They are doing the best they can and are almost fully staffed.

First Transit: Morgen McClelland reported that First Transit is doing well with hiring drivers.

They have 68-70 drivers. They expect to have a class of 8 one week from now. They are cutting back on schedules and bringing driver trainers in for additional training. They need to start slowing down hiring.

TRANSIT PLUS: Fran Musci reported that that ridership is coming back but was flat in June. There were 28,359 van rides provided in June. She stated that it was good to hear that both vendors are well staffed. The van RFP is out on the street and a question period will begin next week.

Fran explained that the Transit Plus taxi program has been in place for a long time. It was initially intended to handle van overflow at a lower cost. It was designed for ambulatory riders and for those riders who use wheelchairs that could independently transfer into the seat of a taxi. Taxi ridership has declined. In 2019, 62,500 taxi trips were provided. In 2021, 24,277 taxi trips were provided at a cost of approximately \$300,000.00. Last year 45% of all taxi rides were taken by 55 individual riders. Taxi drivers are independent contractors. American United is having trouble recruiting independent contractors for their metered taxi service. Wait times have increased and service is not as reliable as it was in the past. No one else in town has the capabilities of American United. There is a structural problem with the design of the taxi program. Transit Plus has received updated guidance that we need to provide wheelchair accessible vehicles for our same day ride program. We also received additional guidance on drug and alcohol testing. When riders can choose between two taxi companies then testing is not required. To fully comply with current FTA expectations, we need to restructure the same-day service contract. The taxi contract expires in May 2023. The options are do nothing different, restructure the program, or discontinue the program. Reissuing the contract as it now stands is not recommended but restructuring the program with the new requirements would be very expensive. The cost of the ride for Transit Plus would increase from \$13.00 to \$40.00-\$45.00 per ride. Taxi service is not ADA required service. It is premium same day ride service that is not mandated by the FTA. If the service was made more accessible, there would be more riders and would be more expensive. I can't recommend this service at \$1 million a year. MCTS is expecting to have a budget deficit of 25 million in 2025. I am recommending the end of the taxi program at the end of the contract. Gerald Balezentis said let vans take the extra riders. He also stated that he has experienced 1 hour waits for time ordered service. The space in the taxi is too tight. He has had better service on the vans. David Buck stated he agreed. He also stated that since COVID companies have had to drop all kinds of things in the current economy. He stated that this makes sense financially.

Fran asked the van vendors to leave the meeting after which the Council members were given an overview of the changes to the van RFP spec.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

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