

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
March 16, 2021 Minutes**

PLACE: Microsoft Teams Meeting

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

ABSENT: Annie Johnson, Nilima Mehra, Jeanette Williams

GUESTS: Robert Jenkins and Kevin Meyers – Transit Plus clients; Jonathan Liegeios and Nick Arizola – American United; Morgen McClelland - First Transit; Fran Musci, Chris Fox, Jo Douville, and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the February 16, 2021 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: no report.

Membership Committee: no report.

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported on March 22nd persons aged 16 to 60 will become eligible to receive a COVID vaccine. Bus and van drivers are currently eligible for vaccines. FEMA will begin dispensing vaccines to the Wisconsin Center this week which will allow City of Milwaukee staff to dispense vaccines in other areas of the City. David urged everyone to keep wearing masks. David announced that he is a Board Member on the National Federation for the Blind's Milwaukee Chapter.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Lobby Remodeling: Fran Musci reported that the project is almost finished and should be completed by the end of the month. The Transit Plus office will be remodeled next. Milwaukee County Transit System's Administration building remains closed. The building may reopen later this year as more people become vaccinated.

NEW BUSINESS:

Federal Mask Mandate: Fran reported that President Biden signed an Executive Order in January that mandates that anyone using public transportation must wear a mask. There is new FTA & CDC guidance on who is exempt. The very narrow sub-set of exempt people includes those individuals who do not have the cognitive ability to wear a mask, those who do not have the physical ability to take a mask on or off, or those who do not have the language ability to

wear a mask. Everyone is expected to wear a mask. Post cards have been mailed out to those clients who ride with regularity to notify them of the mask requirement. Those riders who may be seeking an exemption from mask wearing should reach out to the Transit Plus office for pre-certification. Transit Plus may request additional information from a physician in order to make an appropriate exemption decision. If someone is given an exemption they will be sent a letter and a "NMR" note will be added to their Trapeze file. The driver will be able to see the "NMR" notation for client on their tablet.

Electronic Application Process: Fran Musci reported that she is working with a vendor to allow clients and medical providers to be able to complete applications on-line. The goal is to move away from paper, but there will still be a paper process available. Paper files will be scanned into electronic files. There will also still be in-person assessments in the future. The question was asked if it would be a good idea to have a paper back-up in the event of a system shutdown or to prevent hackers. Fran explained that paper files are also a security concern and that MCTS IT Department has firewalls in place and will also have nightly back up functions to preserve records.

Comments on Driver Tablets: Fran advised that riders should give any special pick up and/or drop off requests to Reservations. Drivers should check their tablets for comments. Morgen McClelland explained that drivers should check their tablets but sometimes they make mistakes. Fran also stated that tablets are less than ideal for comments and are not as straightforward as one would desire.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Chris Fox reported that they have been busy. They provided virtual presentations to St. Rita Square, Jefferson Court, MATC OT students, Oak Creek High School, MPS School to Work Program, and Independence First. They have also participated in three MCTS Next public meetings. More MCTS Next presentations are coming in June and September. They are trying to identify riders who may be affected by MCTS Next route changes. New driver training was provided to a class of 15 drivers. There will be another driver training class next month. The team presented training materials to National Association of Travel Instructors including information on AIRA. They have been working with Gaenslen School's farebox project along with the robotics class from Pewaukee High School. The farebox is a live practice tool. Students can try using the farebox with cash or a smart card. The travel trainers have been vaccinated and are starting to do in-person training as referrals come in. Please reach out to the Mobility Management team if you are interested in travel training.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: Jonathan Liegeios reported that American United has put more shields in vehicles. They have also added 5 or 6 more drivers. Taxi drivers were included in Milwaukee County's vaccination program. American United is taking people to vaccinations sites.

Transit Express: no report

First Transit: Morgen McClelland reported that First Transit is struggling a bit now with drivers. They are behind on hiring. They have 48 drivers but would like to have 55 to 58 drivers. They are always running ads but very few applicants are qualified and training is rigorous. Drivers are working longer shifts. They have had a problem getting people licensed with the City of

Milwaukee. They have 11 to 12 people waiting for PPVL licenses now. It has recently taken as much as 6 weeks when it used to take 2 weeks. New driver candidates are not willing to wait 6 weeks for licensing. Fran is helping with this. On-time is down to 94-95% but they are still meeting contractual requirements. If they can get ahead with drivers they will be in better shape. More vaccinations would also help. Drivers and their family members are still getting COVID.

TRANSIT PLUS: Fran Musci explained that the City of Milwaukee office that handles PPVLs lost staff in the fall and are still short-handed. This Office does all licensing for the City. They are attempting to get caught up and are working on weekends. They are moving in the right direction and have now reduced the processing time to 2 weeks. They are recruiting more staff. The new hires will be taking care of PPVL's. They used to allow license applications to be dropped off but now they are asking for everything to be sent electronically.

Fran also reported that ridership in February was 50% of pre-COVID levels. Transit Plus application submissions are increasing. We are processing them as quickly as possible. MCTS bus operators, Transit Plus staff, and others who work with clients are eligible for vaccines. The new NOVA battery operated buses will be used on the new BRT line. Kudos to Mobility Management for coordinating the farebox project to help kids in the classroom.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Danita Jackson explained that she usually brings her own alcohol wipes, but she had a driver recently who she wanted to compliment who went above and beyond and sanitized her seat before and after she used it.

David Buck also complained that on March 7th a driver drove off before he was buckled in. David stated that this happened on his trip going to Grace Lutheran Church.

Robert Jenkins also reported that he had some past issues with getting picked up in rear at Whitefish Bay High.

ADJOURNMENT