

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

**PLACE:** Microsoft Teams Meeting

**PRESENT:** Arlene Washington - Vice-Chair, Gerald Balezentis, David Buck, Grace Graves, Laurel Henschel, Danita Jackson, Marcia Perkins

**ABSENT:** Jim Bahneman, Annie Johnson, Nilima Mehra, Jeanette Williams, Mae Wingo

**GUESTS:** Kevin Meyers – Guest; Nick Arizola and Denise Jones – American United; Morgan Mc Clelland - First Transit; Tracy Harrington – 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 February 15, 2022 meeting were approved.

**COMMITTEES:**

**Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee:** no report.

**Membership Committee:** no report

**Public Relations Committee:** David Buck reported that the federal mask mandate has been extended. Everyone must keep wearing masks on the van. The Flex Ride pilot program has started. It is being funded by a grant. David also announced that Marcia Perkins has been appointed to the Governor' Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. Marcia explained that she was chosen from among 50 candidates and that her term on the Board is for three years. Her first Zoom meeting will be on March 23, 2022. Disability Advocacy Day will be discussed. The Board meets for two days the last Wednesday and Thursday each month. Marcia will be bringing their policy ideas back to Milwaukee.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Transit Plus Office Remodeling Project:** Fran Musci reported that the project was started on February 21, 2022 and is continuing to be underway. The drywalling and painting should be finished by the end of March or beginning of April. We are looking forward to moving back in mid-April.

**Vendor Staffing Mitigation Strategies:** Fran reported that the vendor mitigation strategies were put in place March 1, 2022. It has been a smooth transition and we have not gotten much feedback from clients about the changes. We hope it gives the vendors some breathing room. The Transit Plus No Show policy is still to be implemented. There will be a learning curve.

**Federal Mask Mandate:** Fran Musci reported that the mask mandate has been extended to April 18, 2022.

**Van Service RFP:** Fran Musci reported that the RFP is still being crafted.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

**FTA Triennial Review:** Scheduled for June 2-16, 2022

**MCTS Freeway Flyer Service:** Fran Musci reported that MCTS Freeway Flyer service is suspended until further notice. MCTS is still short of drivers and needs to focus on its core service. This will be evaluated later. The 143 Ozaukee County service is still operational as this is paid for by Ozaukee County.

**In Person Eligibility Assessments:** Fran Musci reported that a plan is being made to go back to in-person assessments in late spring or early summer. This will be for both new clients and renewals. In person TPAC meeting may also be held in late spring or early summer.

**Transit Plus Drop Off Procedure:** Fran Musci advised that a question of “How early is too early to be dropped off for an appointment?” has been asked. What should riders expect when they get dropped off prior to their appointment or if a building is not yet open. Fran advised that the federal guideline is for a drop off no more than 30 minutes before an appointment. Riders should attempt to schedule their rides in a way to avoid arriving before a building is open. Drivers cannot wait because they have other riders on their schedule. If there would be a safety concern for a rider, drivers will either keep the rider on the van and make a later attempt to drop off at the destination or arrange for the rider to return to their point of origin.

**MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT:** Paula Schultz reported that the team has been busy providing Freedom on Wheels presentations. New driver sensitivity training will be given next week. We hope to shoot the video soon. Senate Bill 929 is proposing a grant for training of commercial drivers effective 12/21/2024. 50% of tuition or \$3,000 would be paid for CDL training. \$500.00 would be paid for CDL drivers employed for 1 year.

## **CARRIER REPORTS:**

**American United:** Nick Arizola reported that American United brought on new drivers last month. It has been a challenge to get drivers in the door. They need more drivers to reduce wait times.

**Transit Express:** Tracy Harrington reported that Transit Express has been doing a hiring push. They are offering an increased starting wage. They have loyal employees, but they have been short staffed. They will be happy to have additional staff. They do however have stringent requirements for hiring.

**First Transit:** Morgan McClelland reported that First Transit is staffed in a way that they can cover their routes. They are trying to hire ahead of the curve of increased ridership. As

weather improves there will be more riders. They are currently at 60-70% of pre-COVID ridership levels. They are trying to get ahead with hiring and are doing well. First Transit has been experiencing high call volume from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. People are hanging up and calling back. Please try to plan to call an extra day ahead or call later in the day.

**TRANSIT PLUS:** Fran Musci reported that we are testing and preparing to install the Service Infractions module to go live next month with the reinstatement of the No-show policy. We will be ready to go soon. Van ridership is still below pre-COVID levels. Taxi ridership is also down. The document management project is testing electronic form submission. We want to be sure that we are compatible with screen readers. The BRT launch has been delayed due to COVID supply chain issues. Manufacturers are having problems getting parts to build buses. The launch is now scheduled for spring 2023.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Laurel Henschel was interested in knowing why riders needed ID cards. Fran explained that the cards certify eligibility, provide information about who to call for a ride, that they are necessary for taxi travel, they are used for travel on the fixed route bus. Laurel also asked why her son had to renew his eligibility when his condition will not change and will only get worse. Renewing is an inconvenience. Fran explained that the Feds do not want systems to give out permanent eligibility and want us to grant eligibility very strictly. We must walk a fine line. Additionally, we must manage our rolls and avoid having our enrollment bloated with inactive riders. The industry standard for paratransit eligibility is 3 to 5 years. We are looking at ways to have an abbreviated renewal process for unconditional clients. There is a process to appeal eligibility determinations.

Laurel also wanted to know if there will still be a way to attend meetings virtually when the Council begins again to meet in person. She is unable to attend meeting in person. Fran stated she was not sure and will have to explore this. MCTS has an Owl and a conference phone was used in the past.