

Transit Plus Advisory Council September 15, 2020 Minutes

PLACE: Avaya teleconference

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

ABSENT: Marcia Perkins (Chair), Annie Johnson, Jeanette Williams

GUESTS: Danita Jackson and Nilima Mehra – TPAC Applicants; Kevin Meyer – Transit Plus Client; Nick Arizola – American United, Morgen McClelland - First Transit; Tracy Harrington – National Express; Fran Musci and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes from the July 21, 2020 meeting was approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: no report

Membership Committee: Grace Graves reported that there are currently three vacancies on the Council. Grace recommended that applicants Danita Jackson and Nilima Mehra be approved for membership. The Council voted and both were unanimously approved.

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported that he attended a town hall meeting for the upcoming Milwaukee County budget. It was a good meeting and he learned a lot. There were no proposed cuts or fare increases for MCTS. Other County departments will see cuts.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

MCTS Remodeling: Fran Musci reported that a contractor has been hired for lobby reconstruction and the project will be starting next month. It will take two months and then afterward the Transit Plus office will be remodeled. The MCTS Administration Building will not open again until the first of the year at the earliest due to COVID-19 and the construction project.

NEW BUSINESS:

MCTS Budget: Fran Musci reported that the MCTS budget has been submitted to the County Executive. There were no fare increases and no cuts for fixed route and paratransit. A \$40 million budget shortfall is expected for 2021. The public can still weigh in and give their opinions on the budget by logging on to [BalancingAct.com](https://www.balancingact.com) or by calling the County Executive's office. The County Executive has until October 1st to submit his budget to the County Board. Budget hearings are held after that. The budget will be finalized in mid-November.

2020 Census: Fran Musci reported that the census is nearing a close. If you have not participated it is very important to do so as this is a basis for the funding of Milwaukee County services. Participation can be done by phone or online. Call 1-844-330-2020 or go to my2020census.gov. Sometimes there may be follow up calls from the Census Bureau. There is an October deadline. Help Milwaukee County get counted.

Transit Plus and TPAC Logos: Fran Musci reported that these logos are being updated. The new Transit Plus logo will incorporate the MCTS bus logo so that our program's image will align more with MCTS fixed route bus service and will appear less like a medical transportation service. The proposed TPAC logo is also more in line with the new MCTS logo. A circle emblem similar to the one used by MCTS but with Transit Plus Advisory Council around the circle and an image of a paratransit vehicle next to it. Laurel Henschel and Grace Graves stated that they prefer the image of the vehicle with a side facing view. The MCTS website is also getting updated along with the updated logos.

Milwaukee County Mobility Manager Position: Fran Musci reported that the Milwaukee County Department on Aging has submitted a 5310 grant to help people navigate and use the best options among the various transportation services such as Department on Aging, MTM, Go Pass, and Transit Plus.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Fran Musci reported that the Mobility Management team has been busy. They are getting many referrals for travel training. They are providing virtual presentations and participating in virtual conferences. Chris Fox is on the bus today filming a video. They have been giving notebooks to bus drivers to help them communicate with riders. They are still promoting AIRA. Bus ridership is down 33% from 2019. ADA training was held for 9 new bus drivers recently.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: Nick Arizola reported that taxi rides have been steady. There were 3,048 Transit Plus rides provided in August. There were 1,214 rides provided as of September 14th. American United is actively trying to recruit more drivers and have added two new staff members to their call center.

Transit Express: Tracy Harrington reported that Transit Express is still experiencing a below 50% decrease in ridership. All drivers have been asked to return but some have retired or declined. They will be starting a training class in a couple weeks. It is not easy to hire right now. This may be fear based. Transit Express is using many different precautions. They are using a new cleaning solution which is more effective against COVID-19. It is better smelling, does not have to be wiped off, and does not stain. Their staff have been wearing masks and they have paper masks for riders who need them. They also give hand sanitizer and gloves to drivers.

First Transit: Morgen McClelland reported that First Transit is also using similar precautions. However more people are slaking off outside of work and getting exposed at home. First Transit is taking temperatures and telling people to stay home if they are not feeling well. First Transit is down to 50% volume in service. They have fewer drivers now. It may be different in winter. They appreciate everyone's patience. They are trying to maintain social distancing when they can. They pick up people from various locations and take them to places such as

group homes where social distancing is challenging. People need to maintain caution. They have had 6 or 7 drivers exposed but not all have gone on to develop symptoms.

TRANSIT PLUS: Fran Musci reported that 17,592 van rides were provided in July. On-time is at 98%. Year to date ridership is down 50% from 2019. There were 3,435 taxi rides provided in July. Taxi service is down 66% from last year. Fran advised that the Milwaukee County Department on Aging will be providing transportation to get an ID, to get registered to vote or to get to a polling location. This is transportation is available for Milwaukee County residents who are 60 years and older and who are ambulatory. Notice of two days is needed to get a ride.

DISCUSSION:

Nilima Mehra suggested signing up for an introduction to Zoom USA for a future TPAC meeting. She explained that Zoom does not charge if it is not used for more than 45 minutes, 1 time per month. This allows both phone and computer access. She also thanked the providers for all they were doing and said she liked that they were using gloves and thought riders should use them as well.

Laurel Henschel commented that gloves need to be changed all the time.

Fran Musci explained that MCTS does not have a corporate subscription to zoom. She also mentioned that not everyone has a computer or the ability to mute themselves. Fran stated that she could provide the video log in for Avaya Spaces.

David Buck was wondering how the COVID problem may affect the ability to secure drivers and rides. Morgen McClelland explained that COVID is an issue for hiring and is going to be a problem for a while. Carriers will have to work harder. However, everyone is less mobile and engaged in activities right now. Less places are open. Tracy Harrington explained that COVID has changed the way we do business and interact with one another right now. Ridership is not going to rebound anytime soon.

It was mentioned that there are still reservation phone messages which suggest that clients should only take essential trips. Fran stated that she will check on this and have messages updated.

ADJOURNMENT