

**Transit Plus Advisory Council  
September 20, 2022 Minutes**

**PLACE:** Microsoft Teams Meeting

**PRESENT:** Jim Bahneman - Chair, Gerald Balezentis, David Buck, Grace Graves, Laurel Henschel, Nilima Mehra, Mae Wingo

**ABSENT:** Annie Johnson, Marcia Perkins, Arlene Washington, Jeanette Williams

**GUESTS:** Kevin Meyers; Morgan Mc Clelland - First Transit; Tracy Harrington – Transit Express; Fran Musci, Paula Schultz, and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

**CALL TO ORDER:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes of the July 19, 2022 meeting were approved. There is a correction, Danita Jackson did not attend the July meeting.

**COMMITTEES:**

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

**Membership Committee:** no report.

**Public Relations Committee:** David Buck reported that COVID is at a moderate level in the County and expected to get lowered. A new vaccine will be coming out. David stated that he saw a story on television about a bus driver who saved a puppy. He hoped everyone enjoyed State Fair

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Milwaukee County Mask Mandate:** Fran Musci reported that masks are still required on buses and vans until the County Executive lifts the requirement. Laurel Henschel asked that everyone remember that some people are exempted from wearing masks. Fran stated that if a driver has a question they should check with dispatch.

**Service Infractions – No Show Policy:** Fran Musci reported that the program implementation is 90% completed, but the unfinished 10% is a critical software issue. We are working with the software vendor to resolve the problem. When resolved we can start suspending instead of only warning. There are people who habitually do not cancel. Eventually people will get suspended. We are not allowed to suspend people permanently.

**Van RFP:** Fran advised that bid on the van contract need to be received by September 9<sup>th</sup>. The contract is for 7 years. When bids are in a 5-person panel with evaluate and score them. The panel members are Fran Musci and Lisa Walters from Transit Plus, John Rogers and Mike Bonk from Milwaukee County and Brian Kading from Milwaukee County Transit System. It is

hoped that the contract can be awarded by the end of the year. The new contract for van service in Milwaukee County begins November 1, 2023 and ends October 31, 2030.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

**2023 Milwaukee County Budget:** Fran Musci advised that the budget is currently in the hands of the County Executive and will be released on October 1<sup>st</sup>. The County has asked Milwaukee County Transit to cut an additional \$2 million. This will be done by reducing bus frequency, not filling vacant positions, and not renewing the taxi program contract when it expires in May of 2023. Some public information session will be held on the budget. There is a shortfall projected for 2023, but in 2025 a large fiscal cliff is expected. Fran further explained that the American United contract that expires on May 31, 2022 was a 3 year contract. A future taxi contract would need to have requirements that our current provider cannot meet. Taxis would need to be wheelchair accessible and there would need to be a requirement for drug testing of drivers. Restructuring the program provide wheelchair accessible taxis as required by the FTA would be very costly when Milwaukee County has a budget shortfall. Therefore, the program is recommended to be discontinued. There will be no new taxi contract after this contract expires in May. The Transit Plus taxi program is current existence is designed for metered taxi service and currently rides need to be dispatched to vehicle with meters.

**In-Person Meetings:** Fran Musci reported that the MCTS Administration Building Conference room is not available in October. November 15, 2022 is the first day that an in-person could be held.

**MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT:** Paula Schultz reported that they will be going out to the Kinnikinic Station and the Fond du Lac Station for two days each to refresh drivers on wheelchair securement. Travel training and bus presentations will continue to take place through the end of November. Door Open Milwaukee is coming up this Saturday at MCTS' Fleet Maintenance Building from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Paula will be demonstrating securement. David Buck added that on all over Milwaukee on Saturday and Sunday many other tours are available at places like City Hall, Grace Lutheran Church, etc. Tours are free and a lot can be learned from them. He urged everyone to take advantage of the opportunity.

## **CARRIER REPORTS:**

**American United:** not present

**Transit Express:** Tracy Harrington stated that she did not have a lot to say. Transit Express has 7 drivers in training. They continue to hire but people continue to leave even though they are paying competitive wages and benefits. They will just keep trying.

**First Transit:** Morgen McClelland reported that First Transit is holding on in the current pervasive hiring challenge. They are fully staffed. Ridership is rebounding. They are hiring on an ongoing basis and are holding a driver class every other week to keep up.

**TRANSIT PLUS:** Fran Musci reported that ridership is coming back. In August, 30,250 van

rides were provided. This is 82% of pre-COVID. There were also 2,685 taxi rides taken. This is a little over 50% of pre-COVID ridership. A lot of rides were lost during COVID. MCTS is moving to an account-based fare collection system. Riders will be able to use smart phones, smart watches, fare cards, credit cards. These devices will be scanned to a validator on the bus. MCTS is working on the transition to go live in the Spring of 2023. There will be a gradual roll out in Spring 2023, and a full roll out with the start of the BRT. Transit Plus is planning on keeping the Transit Plus ID card. Client will get a different card for fixed route bus use. A lot of information will be coming out. Transit Plus will be targeting communications about the new bus fare system to Transit Plus clients who use the bus.

## **OPEN DISCUSSION:**

Kevin Meyers inquired if the new van contract will have 1 or 2 van providers. Fran advised that the RFP requested a single provider.

Jim Bahnemann had a question about the 30-minute window and the 5-minute wait for riders. He was advised that the ADA allows for a pickup window and that a 30-minute window and 5-minute wait in general is the industry standard. Morgen McClelland also explained that there are many reasons for the 30-minute arrival standard for the driver, i.e., traffic, number of people on the bus, traveling across town, etc. Riders however are in a home, building or familiar place and that it doesn't generally take that long to get to the door, hence the 5-minute window. Wait time is not productive. Drivers often wait more than 5 to 10 minutes looking for and trying to call someone. If there were 5 people on the van and every pickup took more than 5 minutes for the rider to board, the service will not be timely. The effect is cumulative on riders and then riders also get longer ride durations.

Nilima Mehra commented that riders need to respect one another. Everyone needs transportation that is on-time. Drivers and other riders on the bus cannot just wait and wait and wait.

## **ADJOURN**