

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
April 18, 2023 Minutes**

PLACE: Milwaukee County Transit System Administration Building, 1942 N. 17th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Large Conference Room & via Microsoft Teams Meeting

PRESENT: Grace Graves - Chair, Gerald Balezentis, David Buck, Laurel Henschel, Arlene Washington, Mae Wingo

ABSENT: Jim Bahneman – Vice-Chair, Annie Johnson, Nilima Mehra, Marcia Perkins

GUESTS: Kevin Meyers -guest; Latisha Scott – Transit Express; Morgen McClelland – First Transit/Transdev; Paul Sanfelippo – American United; Jesus Ochoa – MCTS Service Development; Fran Musci, Paula Schultz, and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the March 21, 2023 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: Arlene Washington and Mae Wingo selected a First Transit driver who received a commendation on April 11, 2023 to be recognized.

Membership Committee: David Buck stated that the Council needs to recruit new members to get to 13.

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported that he attended the Paratransit Taxi Task Force meeting that was held on April 3, 2023 at Independence First. Grace Graves attended the Task Force meeting virtually. Marcia Perkins participated in Disability Awareness Day in Madison recently. As of now hospitals are dropping COVID mask mandates. This is okay when COVID is low. It might be a good idea to keep a mask with you just in case.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Paratransit Taxi Task Force: Fran Musci reported that Milwaukee County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) held the first meeting of the Paratransit Taxi Task Force on April 3, 2023 at Independence First. This was hybrid meeting. The meeting had been changed from Teams to Zoom format. Future meetings will be hybrid in Zoom. A set day for meetings is being figured out, hopefully Mondays will be avoided. Donna Brown-Martin of MCDOT asked attendees three questions. What factors for taxi service are most attractive to you. Why do you use paratransit taxi instead of other options. What features of the new service would you like included or improved. A matrix will be put together for the Task Force regarding the taxi features people are asking for compared with what the current service provides. We will also look at what Boston and Denver are doing. We will have to see if we can meet what is being asked for. The next meeting of the Task Force will be in early May. It is hoped an RFP can

be put out at the end of May or early June. Sandy Kellner presented a report to the County Board last week on what has been taking place with the Taxi Task Force. David Buck questioned if we have the money and if we will get more money from the State for taxis. Fran advised that currently we are not sure what will happen. People who are interested in this issue should contact their State Legislators.

Van Contract Transition: Fran Musci reported that Transit Plus is meeting with both van providers. Weekly meetings are being held with First Transit about computers and biweekly meetings on other topics. First Transit is updating their phone system and hope to have it up in a few weeks. We are meeting with Transit Express to be sure that they can continue to hire. Hiring is critical to success. We are discussing a structured transition whereby waves of clients would be moved over earlier to First Transit over the summer. Between 3,000 and 3,200 riders will go to First Transit. When we have more definitive information, we will send out a letter. Ridership us up but everyone is maintaining service.

NEW BUSINESS:

BRT and Associated Route Changes: Jesus Ochoa of the MCTS Service Development Department provided a power point presentation on the route changes that will occur with the introduction of the BRT on June 4, 2023. Additional information about the upcoming changes can be found on our website ridemcts.com.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Paula Schultz reported that in the first quarter of this year, eleven Freedom On Wheels presentations were provided, two ADA driver sensitivity training classes were held, and one resource fair in Franklin was attended. There were 12,959 rides by Transit Plus clients on the bus and 5,678 wheelchair securements on the bus. Waukesha paratransit will begin going to the Medical College with the inception of the BRT. Yesterday Flex Ride started a new service area on the south side going to Franklin. There is also a service area on the north side going to Menomonee Falls and Butler. Flex Ride is an employment ride service. The fare is \$3.00 one way. Riders can get picked up anywhere in the zone for \$3.00, but if riders use a transit hub the fare is free. The fare is also free during late night hours from 11:30 p.m. until 4:30 a.m.

CARRIER REPORTS:

Transit Express: Latisha Scott reported that Transit Express is still hiring but that it was hard to hire when people know that they will closing soon. They have three drivers in classroom training and one in behind the wheel training. They are trying to do their best to cover everything until the contract ends.

First Transit/Transdev: Morgen McClelland reported that First Transit was recently purchased by Transdev which is a large multi-national transportation provider. First Transit had 235 locations around the country and Transdev had 220 locations. Now Transdev has 460 locations across the country. They will have a large presence and economy of scale in national transportation which includes fixed-route, paratransit, shuttles, autonomous vehicles, and scooters. When the new phone system was being wired on Friday, April 7th the phones went down completely. They were able to get a technician in on Saturday who fixed a wire and got the system back up. They are changing to a browser-based phone system with internet access.

There will no longer be phones. They will be using a computer with a headset. They will have a backup system. With the new contract, the seven workstations in reservations will increase to ten or eleven stations. Currently staff numbers are the same, but ridership is up, increasing hold times. They want to have jobs for the Transit Express staff who to come over in the future. They held a driver class last week. They graduated six people from behind the wheel training. A class of four will start behind the wheel next week. First Transit/Transdev will be taking over the Trapeze scheduling system on November 1st. Transit Plus's system will still work after the transition a be a backup for a while.

American United: Paul Sanfelippo apologized for missing some past meetings. He stated he was excited to be back today. He stated he was interested in the info on Flex Ride. American United had bid on the Flex Ride service but their bid came up short. Flex Ride is a nice advancement for Milwaukee. American United is making a lot of internal operational changes. They procured some new vehicles, they are updating their technology and strengthening driver recruitment. They have two separate divisions. TaxiMKE for metered taxi service and American Medtrans for medical transportation service. They are utilizing some American Medtrans drivers to reduce wait times. March ridership was up. Average wait time is 19.2 minutes. American United is initiating a four-phase program. The goal for phase one is to have 10% EV vehicles in 2023, and then increase another 10% every year thereafter. The Milwaukee County government wants to move to EV. Paul remarked that there is a lot looming with the taxi program. He stated that he wants to help figure out a way to make a new taxi program happen and is interested in being an additional resource in the planning process. He has spoken with State and local leaders. He would be willing to reach out to other vendors. He offered to help with an RFP. He will do whatever he can to help. Kevin Meyers asked Paul if American United would be looking to respond to a new taxi RFP. Paul advised they would review it to see if it was within the scope of the work they can handle. Costs are also a consideration. Their company must be profitable and pay competitive wages. They will advocate for as many transit options as possible.

TRANSIT PLUS: Fran Musci reported that 31,610 van rides were provided in March 2023. This was the highest number since before COVID. Ridership is increasing. WisGo cards will be mailed to Transit Plus riders who have used the bus since January of 2021. The cards should be received by the end of this week or the beginning of next. If you want a card, let us know. Two years ago, Transit Plus conducted a Customer Satisfaction Survey. We are doing another survey this year from May 10, 2023 through June 6, 2023. Surveys will be either paper or online. There will be no phone option for the survey this year. Twenty to twenty-five other transit systems are also doing the same survey. There will be 3 prize packs awarded randomly for survey respondents.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

ADJOURNMENT