

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
February 21, 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, Jim Bahneman – Vice-Chair, David Buck, Laurel Henschel, Nilima Mehra, Arlene Washington, Mae Wingo

ABSENT: Gerald Balezentis, Annie Johnson, Marica Perkins,

GUESTS: Kevin Fortune; Kevin Meyers; Donna Brown-Martin - Milwaukee County Department of Transportation; Jerome Harleaux - First Transit; Fran Musci, Paula Schultz, and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Approval of the January 17, 2023 postponed to the March 21, 2023 meeting of TPAC due to members being delayed access to the meeting because of a change in the conference code ID.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: no report

Membership Committee: no report

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported that the mask mandate ended as of Friday, February 17, 2023.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Summer Break: The Council voted to take a summer break in August.

Van Contract Transition: Fran Musci reported that Transit Plus has been working with First Transit to transition service. Weekly meetings are being held to transition the computer software and there are every other week meetings to talk about staffing, vehicles, etc. With the transition First Transit will be increasing customer service staff and installing a new phone system. We are currently working with both vendors to improve phone access right now. The wording in the new contract is different and there will be stiffer penalties. For example, the new contract expects that 95% of calls will be answered by a live agent in 2 to 3 minutes. Phone reports must be provided. The new van contract starts November 1, 2023.

NEW BUSINESS:

TPAC and Paratransit Taxi Task Force: Donna Brown-Martin, Director of MCDOT explained that MCDOT and MCTS are responsible for staffing a task force to find a way to keep taxi service ongoing. The American United contract expires at the end of May. MCDOT has reached out to the FTA to request that they work with the community to find an alternative solution. We are planning to proceed with a 120-day extension of the taxi contract. That will provide time to set up the task force and get people to the table to find a solution to the ending of the current taxi contract. Donna advised that she has meet with Shakita LaGrant and Marietta Luster of Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of Health and Human Services is open to taking on the taxi contract. The FTA has certain rules for drug testing and for wheelchair accessible vehicles. The FTA will not allow us to continue the taxi program as is. We are looking at a different approach to the taxi service that would not have to meet FTA requirements by moving it out of MCTS to another group. Milwaukee County already provides paratransit van service. MCDOT has requested a 20% increase in 8521 and 8520 funding from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. It is not clear what we will get. It depends on the legislature. The County Board mandated a Paratransit Taxi Task Force and they named a number of groups that should be included on the Task Force. All current members of TPAC are invited to be on the Task Force and Donna would like to know who from TPAC would like to participate in the Task Force. Members of the Task Force will be appointed by Donna Brown-Martin. We hope to have the Task Force start in March. There will be a face-to-face location, a virtual meeting option, and live streaming of the meetings. Donna will report back to the County Board quarterly. TPAC will be made aware of the upcoming dates. TPAC is the original Committee representing the transit community. Nilima Mehra asked Ms. Brown-Martin if the new taxi program will serve persons with wheelchairs and scooters. Donna replied that they are exploring this with the Department of Health and Human Services. We will have to see what options are available. Taxi service is primarily utilized by visually impaired clients. Right now, taxi users can pay cash, but this may not be an option moving forward with a new taxi service. There may be changes in how fares are collected. We need to keep the service within a certain price range. A new taxi service will have narrower parameters.

March 2023 MCTS Route Changes: Paula Schultz reported that MCTS March 2023 route changes will take place on March 5, 2023. There a not a lot of changes. With the Route 52 to Oak Creek/South Milwaukee the end piece will be serviced by the Route 15 instead. The Route 52 will go as far south as College Avenue and then will turn east to South Lake Drive to Kelley Senior Center. The Route 15 will go to Columbia Avenue three blocks south of Drexel. The Route 60 will no longer turn around at National Avenue. All Route 60s will do the full route with a 20-minute frequency. The Route 12 and the Blue Line construction is finished, and the detours are over. The Route 35 detour at Loomis will continue until June.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Paula Schultz reported that the new fare collection system on the bus does not affect the van. An app does not have to be used; a reduced fare card can be used as well. Three virtual community outreach meetings are coming up. Transit Plus bus riders can use their Transit Plus card on the bus Until September 30, 2023. However they are encouraged to transition to a Reduced Fare card sooner to get the benefit of fare capping at \$2.00 per day. The prevents the need to ask for a one-day pass on the bus. Go Pass riders will be rolled into the Reduced Fare program and will also receive the \$2.00 per day fare capping benefit.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: not present.

Transit Express: not present.

First Transit: Jerome Harleaux reported that First Transit is preparing for transition to take over the contract in November. They are working on their phone system because it is dropping calls. They are also working on their driver count. There are 5 drivers in training this week. Thirty-six new vans will be coming in the next few months. The new vans can seat up to 12 passengers as they have seats that flip up.

TRANSIT PLUS REPORT: Fran Musci reported that 28,689 van rides were provided in January. This is up about 6,000 from 2022 but is about 8,000 down from the January pre-COVID. Ridership is coming back. The Service Infraction program sent out a second round of warning letters. March will be the first month of suspensions for riders who fail to cancel. We need to keep the service efficient. Rides must be canceled with 2 hours' notice.

OPEN DISCUSSION: Arlene Washington wanted to know if the new van lifts will have safety belts. She also mentioned that the van arrived early for her trips on Sunday. Jay of First Transit advised Arlene that if the van arrives early, she does not need to leave early. Arlene also wanted to know if Transit Plus vans go to Waukesha. Fran explained that the MCTS Gold line currently goes to Brookfield Square so vans also go to Brookfield Square. When the BRT starts however, the Gold Line will be going away, and Waukesha's Route 1 will travel to the Milwaukee County Medical Complex. When that happens, Waukesha Metro paratransit will serve areas of Milwaukee County, and Transit Plus vans will continue to go to Brookfield Square for a limited period, at least a year. Transit Plus eligible clients can apply for eligibility with Waukesha Metro paratransit and could use their services to go from the Medical Complex all the way to the city of Waukesha.

ADJOURNMENT