

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
July 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, Jim Bahneman – Vice-Chair, Gerald Balazentis, David Buck, Laurel Henschel, Arlene Washington, Mae Wingo

ABSENT: Annie Johnson, Nilima Mehra, Marcia Perkins

GUESTS: Kevin Meyers -guest; Latisha Scott – Transit Express; Brian Kading – First Transit/Transdev; Paul Sanfelippo – American United; Fran Musci, Chris Fox, Paula Schultz and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the June 20, 2023 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: no report

Membership Committee: no report

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported that there was a meeting of the Paratransit Taxi Task Force on Jun 15, 2023. He stated he was happy with the new Connect 1. Paula Schultz asked him to help with the Connect 1 ticket machine issue. The County Board votes on the County sales tax on July 27, 2023. It is vital that the sales tax passes. If not, many needed services will be gone including buses and vans.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Paratransit Taxi Task Force: Fran Musci reported that the next meeting of the Paratransit Taxi Task Force is scheduled for August 1, 2023 from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at Independence First. There will be a Zoom link to the meeting. The agenda will be forthcoming. Milwaukee County Department of Transportation and Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services prepared a report for the Milwaukee County Board Transportation Committee's July meeting, but this meeting was canceled. The report will be presented at the Committee's September meeting. MCTS is preparing a communication to taxi riders that the taxi contract is ending and that options are being explored on how to use the remaining funds equitably to help paratransit riders transition.

Gerald Balazentis mentioned that ERAS for persons over 60 years of age might be an alternative for some taxi riders. ERAS has volunteer drivers that give rides, there are no fares, but donations are accepted. The OATS program may also be an option for some people.

Van Contract Transition: Fran Musci stated that we are getting closer to the November 1st final transition. The phone issues appear to have been resolved. We have been working to stabilize service since the first wave of June 12th and preparing to move the next wave of riders to Transdev on August 14th. The line will be moved from Hampton Avenue to Silver Spring Drive. Subscriptions are getting moved. Transit Plus meets weekly with Brian Kading and with Transdev's computer support staff.

Transit Plus Customer Satisfaction Survey: Fran Musci thanked everyone who participated. We met our target of 250 responses as we received 255 surveys back. Three names were pulled and awarded prize packs. We have the raw survey data, but the data needs to be cleaned up. There were no glaring bad comments. Overall comments were mostly positive. We are looking forward to digging into the details.

Transit Plus ID Card Mailing: Fran Musci reported that Transit Plus is in the process of mailing new ID cards to all Transit Plus clients. Transdev riders will get their cards right away. The remaining Transit Express riders will get their cards when they transition to Transdev on November 1, 2023. These cards are simply ID cards, they cannot be used on the bus. The new WisGo card is needed to ride the bus.

Save the Bus Campaign: Fran Musci advised that Milwaukee County Transit is facing a fiscal shortfall and subsequent service cuts in the next year or two. Additionally, the State of Wisconsin cut a significant amount of money from transit and moved transit from the Transportation Fund to the General Fund. There is a potential for a .4% County sales tax that can be used to fund transit. The County Board is voting on this on July 27, 2023. Please reach out to your County Supervisor to say why transit is important to you. If there are bus cuts, there will also be paratransit cuts. Paratransit service is only federally mandated to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile around any fixed bus route. Conditional Eligibility may need to be enforced. We don't know what is on the horizon. Please talk to your elected officials. Perhaps TPAC would like to take this on with a letter.

NEW BUSINESS:

Second Wave of Van Rider Transfer: The second wave of riders who live north of Hampton and south of Silver Spring Drive will be moved to Transdev on August 14, 2023. We will contact these clients with a letter. Subscriptions will be re-established with Transdev. Some pick-up times may need to be adjusted. There will be 400 people moved with this wave, 500 were moved with the last wave.

First Transit/Transdev Transition: Brian Kading reported that they installed the Genysis phone system and that the company is reputable. Genysis is used in many Transdev locations. Every location has different needs, however. Milwaukee experienced some software programming issues whereby we were unable to pull calls out of the queue. They were originally told that the problem was user error. They have not experienced any further phone issues since last week Tuesday. Brian stated he is actively monitoring the queue and the performance of the system. Currently the average hold time is 3 minutes. They now have a backup system in place to transfer incoming calls to a different source if needed. They usually have 6 reservationists on duty. Laurel Henschel advised that she had been on hold for more than 9 minutes and the phone message was continually repeating and that it was very annoying. Brian explained that many people who call are not fully prepared to make a

reservation and suggested that callers have the phone number and address for their destination available when they call. Brian stated that things are heading in the right direction and running smoothly. Lisa Walters also mentioned that the pickup time established for a ride should be comparable to the same trip by fixed route bus.

Summerfest/State Fair: Chris Fox reported that 2023 Summerfest attendance increased from 2022. Attendance overall has been down since COVID. Summerfest had a nice location for Transit Plus riders this year. The State Fair wants Transit Plus to go back to Gate 4 where we were two years ago. Gate 4 is off 84th & Greenfield. The dates for the State Fair are August 3, 2023, through August 13, 2023. There are no MCTS flyers or shuttles for the State Fair. Use Routes 22 or 18 to get to the Fair.

TPAC Summer Break: The Council will not have a meeting in August. The next TPAC meeting will be on September 20, 2023.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Paula Schultz reported that the Mobility Management Team had a table at Senior Fest at Summerfest. This event was well attended and there was a good crowd. A lot of people came down free on the BRT. Freedom On Wheels and Travel Training are picking up. The next ADA training for new bus operators will be held on August 3, 2023. The class has 17 new drivers in it. The Milwaukee County Office for Persons with Disabilities will be celebrating the 33rd anniversary of the ADA from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on July 26, 2023, at the Clinton Rose Senior Center.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: Paul Sanfelippo stated that he attended the last Paratransit Taxi Task Force and that he would be attending the next meeting on August 1st. He was asked to attend the next County Board Meeting. He is interested in finding a way American United and Transdev could work together. He also will contact Transit Express to see if they may have some gaps that American United could help with. American United remains open to the general public and has app. They give cost estimates for trips. The WisGo app has a place for taxi and ride share. It has national brands such as Uber and Lyft but does not have local brands such as American United or Medtrans on it. Paul would like some help with correcting that omission.

Transit Express: Latisha Scott reported that Transit Express hired one new driver but afterwards will no longer be hiring. Transit Express employees met with Transdev yesterday and had a chance to ask questions and to get to know Transdev. The transition is about 12 weeks away. Latisha stated that she has been with Transit Express for 13 years and that this will make her cry.

First Transit/Transdev: Brian Kading reported that he met with Transit Express staff last night. There were 30 people at the meeting. There were many questions about pay, benefits, seniority, etc. Anyone who is qualified will be offered a job. This includes drivers, office, and maintenance staff. Transdev holds a training class every two weeks. In addition to a new phone system, the radio system is being upgraded to a cellular system and should be installed before the end of September or October. They met with a contractor for the parking lot renovation and that looks to be coming through. They are also planning to remodel the office and expand the

garage to include a drive-through bus wash.

Arlene Washington mentioned that she observed a driver get on their cell phone as a rider was being dropped off. Brian explained that that is a Level 1 infraction subject to termination. Laurel Henschel mentioned that last week's driver call offs were unusually high. Brian advised that this is not indicative of dissatisfaction and that the trend is not continuing. He also stated that driver staff targets account for some call off and vacations. Brian stated that they are trying to get drivers to come in or work longer.

TRANSIT PLUS: Fran Musci reported that ridership in May was 30,971 and that it was 29,741 in June. This is a little bit higher than last year and is 80-85% of pre-COVID. The FTA Drug and Alcohol audit is finishing up and requires some follow-up submissions to be sure we are following the rules correctly.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

ADJOURNMENT