

**Transit Plus Advisory Council  
June 20, 2023 Minutes**

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

**PRESENT:** Grace Graves - Chair, Jim Bahneman – Vice-Chair, Gerald Balezentis, David Buck, Laurel Henschel, Marcia Perkins, Arlene Washington, Mae Wingo

**ABSENT:** Annie Johnson, Nilima Mehra

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

**CALL TO ORDER:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes of the May 16, 2023 meeting were approved.

**COMMITTEES:**

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

**Membership Committee:** no report

**Public Relations Committee:** David Buck reported that Paula Schultz did a good job at the BRT Accessibility Open House on Saturday May 20<sup>th</sup>. David mentioned that he had some concerns about the keys on the fare vending machine. The response of the keys needs to be slower because blind users take longer. David stated that he liked the small place under the BRT seats to charge phones. He saw how the Quantum securement system works. He is looking forward to riding the BRT soon. David also mentioned that the Legislature just signed the shared revenue bill. Please let David know if you want to join the PR Committee.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Paratransit Taxi Task Force:** Chris Fox reported that the second Task Force meeting was held on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Elena DeGrado of Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services reviewed their analysis of desired program parameters and the projected cost for these. Cost estimates ranged from \$500,000 to \$1.1 million for just 2 rides per month with a fare of \$10.00. This type of program does not meet the expectations of current taxi riders. The cost of running an ADA accessible program that would meet riders' needs could run as high as \$5 million. Thus MCDOT and DHHS are recommending the discontinuation of service at the end of the current taxi contract on September 28, 2023. The Task Force will explore ways to use any remaining funds from 2023 to assist paratransit riders with the transition. David Buck stated that he approves of this recommendation. ADA van service will still be in place. Mae Wingo asked what if she needs to go to the doctor on a same day basis. Lisa

Walters advised that a request could be made to the van company, but provision of same day service would be at their discretion depending upon available capacity.

**Van Contract Transition:** Kevan Danker introduced Brian Kading who was hired as First Transit/Transdev's new General Manager. Brian came to Transdev from MCTS. Transit Plus is meeting with Transdev regularly to continue transition activities.

**MCTS BRT Launch:** Chris Fox reported that the BRT launched on June 4, 2023. The biggest rider concern is how to make transfers to other buses. Former Gold Line riders are unhappy that they need to transfer to other routes. Service is being evaluated to see if any tweaks can be made. Service will be added to the BRT to get people from the Watertown Plank Road park and ride lot to downtown for Summerfest. There will be no charge to ride the BRT this summer. There will also be free paratransit rides in the BRT  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile corridor this summer.

**Transit Plus Customer Satisfaction Survey:** The deadline to respond to the Transit Plus customer satisfaction survey has been extended to June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The survey can be taken online, or a paper copy can be requested. Please take the survey, you could win a book of tickets.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

**First Wave of Van Rider Transfer:** The first wave of riders who live north of Capitol Drive and south of Hampton Avenue were transferred from Transit Express to First Transit/Transdev on June 12, 2023. This went smoothly. The second wave will happen in August. There will be a third wave later in the fall. Riders will receive notification of a transfer in the mail.

**Transit Plus I.D. Card Mailing:** Chris Fox reported that Transit Plus is currently in the process of cleaning up the addresses on their mailing list. There were many letters returned as undeliverable with our last mailing. We do not want to mail I.D. cards and letters that cannot be delivered.

**Save the Bus Campaign:** Chris Fox urged Council members to reach out to their elected officials on the state level to preserve MCTS service. MCTS is planning to cut 20% of fixed route service in 2025 unless our fiscal cliff is addressed. This could impact paratransit. There is only a mandate for paratransit service to be provided within  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles around a fixed bus route. Currently paratransit service is provided border to border in Milwaukee County.

**Summerfest:** Chris Fox reported that the paratransit pick up and drop off area at Summerfest will be at the Main Gate. Summerfest starts this Thursday, Friday and Saturday and will continue over the following two weekends. MCTS will be running freeway flyers from the Brown Deer Road and College Avenue park and ride lots. The BRT is free and runs from the Watertown Plank Road park and ride lot to Michigan Avenue downtown, about 4 blocks from the north gate.

**MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT:** Paula Schultz reported that Senior Fest at Summerfest will take place on July 6, 2023 from noon to 4:00 p.m. Persons age 60 and up get free admission and a discount food voucher. Paula advised that she passed along David Buck's suggestion to the fare vendor. Paula urged everyone to change over to the Wisgo

card as soon as possible. The deadline is September 30, 2023. Facilities are starting to discontinue loading the old cards. About 96,000 riders have downloaded the UMO app so far. The new system is easier. There have been a lot of requests for travel training. Let us know if you or someone else needs help. ADA sensitivity training will be provided next week for 26 new drivers.

## **CARRIER REPORTS:**

**American United:** Paul Sanfelippo reported that they are excited for summer. American United had a taxi stand during Summerfest in the past, but they are not continuing the stand this year. A lot of training is going on at American United this year. Training is reoccurring. American United received its first electric vehicle. They are working with Wisconsin Clean Cities and WE Energies to be able to pivot their fleet to electric vehicles. Paul advised that he had attended the June 15<sup>th</sup> Taxi Task Force meeting. There is no doubt there is a fiscal constraint and that individual car service is less of a priority than fixed route bus or paratransit service. There are challenges. Things are far from perfect. Many people are still looking for solutions. American United agreed to give an extension of the current taxi program from May to September. Paul asked if any pilot solutions could be found with Transdev. Paratransit has been assisted by taxi since the late 1980's. Paul stated he would like to continue participating in the program for a lot longer.

**Transit Express:** Latisha Scott stated that Transit Express is winding down. There are only four months left for them. Their reservationists are working to point transitioned riders to Transdev. They have one driver in classroom training. They are trying to get everyone to their destination in a safe and timely manner.

**First Transit/Transdev:** Kevan Danker reported that they are getting the bugs out of their new phone system. An upgrade of the radio system is next. More new buses will be arriving soon. They are hiring but it is not easy. They have one reservationist in training. Additional safety staff are also coming on board. Brian Kading is the new permanent General Manager. Brian stated that he was happy to be the new G.M. He has thirty years of experience in passenger transportation. He has spent the last 13½ years with MCTS. Most recently he was the Director of Safety, Security and Training there. He's happy to have the confidence of MCTS.

**TRANSIT PLUS:** Chris Fox thanked Latisha and Transit Express for maintaining service. He also thanked Kevan for his help in the interim and welcomed Brian. April ridership was 18, 948. This is 80% of pre-COVID. Ridership is increasing. The FTA Drug and Alcohol audit has been completed. There were a few findings but overall, it went well, thanks to First Transit/Transdev.

## **OPEN DISCUSSION:**

Grace Graves asked if the new phone system had menu options for reservations, dispatch, cancellations like it used to have. Kevan advised that those menu options are available if 414-817-9861 is called. Grace also mentioned she had experienced long hold times when she was called to check on the location of her van.

Laurel Henschel asked if it could be possible to program a button to find out where the van was.

Arlene Washington was advised that she is not required to leave church ahead of schedule.

Jim Bahneman stated that the new vans are wonderful.

## **ADJOURNMENT**