

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 19, 2019

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Public Transit Advisory Committee in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 3:00 P.M. in REGULAR SESSION at Administrative Building "F", Third Floor, Collier County Government Complex Naples, Florida with the following members present:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. John DiMarco - Chairman
Mr. John Jenkins - Vice-Chairman
Mr. James Caton
Mr. Arthur Dobberstein
Mr. Cliff Donenfeld
Mr. Harold Weeks

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ms. Sonja Lee Samek - Excused

ALSO PRESENT:

Ms. Michelle Arnold, Director, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement
Mr. Omar DeLeon, Senior Planner, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement

I. Call to Order

Chairman DiMarco called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.

III. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Weeks entered a motion to approve the March 19, 2019 meeting agenda. Mr. Jenkins seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

a. February 19, 2019

Mr. Jenkins entered a motion to approve the February 19, 2019 meeting minutes. Mr. Weeks seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

V. Committee Action

a. New Membership Application Review

Applications for renewal of Advisory Committee membership had been submitted by Mr. DiMarco and Mr. Dobberstein. A third individual withdrew their application for consideration of Committee membership.

Mr. Jenkins entered a motion to accept the applications for renewal of membership of the Public Transit Advisory Committee for Mr. John DiMarco and Mr. Arthur Dobberstein, for a term of three years. Mr. Donenfeld seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

VI. Reports and Presentations

a. Presentation regarding Eagle Scout Program – Mr. Barry Zell, Boy Scouts of America

Mr. Zell addressed the Advisory Committee on behalf of the Eagle Scout Board of Review to discuss a potential partnership between the Public Transportation Division and the Boy Scouts of America organization. Mr. Zell explained that young men who have risen through the ranks of the Boy Scouts and are prepared to address the Eagle Scout Board of Review must design and construct a project for a non-profit organization, be given appropriate approval, and raise necessary funding. Mr. Zell requested consideration of an Eagle Scout project to construct bus shelters along the CAT routes. Mr. Zell stated this project would not require taxpayer funding, as fundraising for the project would be done by the participating Scouts. Possible sources of funding mentioned included local businesses, law firms, wealth management firms, etc. Mr. Zell noted that approval of the project must first be rendered by the Transit Advisory Committee, prior to presentation to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC).

Mr. Zell noted that Collier County is a not-for-profit entity and that the bus shelter project would be viewed as a public service.

Ms. Arnold stated that Transit would benefit from the Scouts securing funding for the purchase of materials for the construction of the bus shelters, while the Scouts would benefit from the learning process involved in fundraising, working with engineers, permitting, and actual construction of the shelters. Mr. Zell noted that Scouts involved in a project which requires permitting must be actively involved in the permit acquisition process in order to be given approval by Scout Leaders. Further, all plans and specifications for construction of the shelters must also be followed.

Mr. Caton inquired as to whether Transit had ever entered into a similar partnership with the Scouts in the past. Ms. Arnold stated that an inquiry had been made in the past by an individual Scout to construct a bus shelter near his school, however the individual was unable to follow up on the project at that time. Transit has been involved with the Scouts in other types of projects in the past; for example, an individual who pursued replacement of a damaged flag pole within the Golden Gate MSTU district, securing funding, and working in an apprentice role with a contractor in permitting, design and landscaping of a replacement flag pole on Golden Gate Parkway.

Mr. Caton and Mr. Jenkins both expressed concern for possible liability issues associated with faulty construction of the structures. Ms. Arnold stated that the Scouts would be required to work with a licensed contractor who would oversee the construction and ensure that all local and State building requirements were met. The structures would also be inspected by the County upon completion. Mr. Zell stated that Scouts were required to have adult supervision throughout the process and would not work through the project on their own.

Mr. Dobberstein remarked upon the benefits to Transit of the Scouts working with local businesses during the fundraising process and inquired whether purchased advertising would be on the busses or on the shelters. Mr. Zell stated that the initial thought was for advertising to appear on the bus shelters, however this is currently prohibited by the BCC. Mr. Dobberstein pointed out the positive aspects of the Scouts' display of enthusiasm for CAT, as well as recognition of the importance of Transit within the community and stated this may assist in bolstering a change in the current advertising restrictions. Ms. Arnold stated that an Ordinance Amendment would be required to be presented to the BCC to allow advertising in a way other than currently permitted, which is planned to be presented at the June 2019 BCC meeting.

Mr. Weeks inquired as to the number of shelters expected to be constructed and the length of time anticipated for completion of the program. Mr. Zell stated that each shelter would likely require several Scouts working together due to the expense and scope of the project. Mr. Zell was uncertain as to how long the project would take, however stated the project must be completed prior to the Scouts' 18th birthday, after which they would "age out" of eligibility for Eagle Scout status.

Mr. Jenkins was in favor of the project but expressed his concern at the length of time that it may take to receive appropriate project approval by the County, as well as the timeframe for completion of the shelters, stating that the Eagle Board of Review may

have to approve Eagle status based upon contribution to the project if the Scout ages out prior to completion of the project. Mr. Weeks inquired as to how many bus shelters are needed and if approved, when the partnership with the Scouts may commence. Mr. DeLeon stated that bus stops are regularly evaluated and that shelter locations are identified based upon ridership. The shelters are funded by Federal and State Grants and are sometimes designated for specific areas.

In summary, although not an actionable item, each member of the Advisory Committee individually stated their support for the project and for Transit Staff to work with the Boy Scouts of America to move the initiative forward.

b. FY20 Expanded Service Request – Mr. DeLeon

Mr. DeLeon requested feedback from the Advisory Committee regarding the proposed FY2020 budget request for expanded service. CAT will be pursuing operating funds to enhance the service level on multiple routes, with improvements to include extending service hours on multiple routes, as well as increasing frequency during peak times of the routes.

Mr. Dobberstein requested clarification regarding the budget shortfalls which had been discussed with the BCC at a recently held focus group, however now with funds being pursued for expansion of service. Ms. Arnold confirmed that capital funds had to be utilized this year in order to cover operating expenses, however preparations are being done for the FY20 budget, with the number one priority identified as covering the shortfall to avoid the necessity of accessing 5307 capital dollars for operating expenses next year. The second priority is to seek BCC approval for enhancements to routing which are favorable to the public. BCC approval will also be sought at the March 26, 2019 meeting of the single vendor contract, which is a 3-year contract with two renewals, with a commitment to fund the contract through its entirety, addressing the approximately \$1M shortfall in covering the contractor salary for the current fiscal year. Mr. Dobberstein pointed out that enhancing the service may bring in more revenue in the form of more riders, which Mr. DeLeon confirmed has been reflected in the increase in estimated fare recovery.

Mr. DeLeon went through the proposed increase in route frequencies on routes 25, 11, 12, 15, 19, and 28, the extended hours of operation for routes 11, 17, and 27, as well as the Beach bus route for seasonal service on route 29. Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to how these specific routes were chosen for service enhancements. Mr. DeLeon stated that these routes were identified via the Transit Development Plan (TDP), as well as consideration of other factors, including peak times and ridership. Of note, Route 11 along U.S. 41 provides access to a density of commercial destinations and would be picking up riders at both transfer stations; the Government Center and Creekside.

Also of note, route 19, which travels from the City of Immokalee to Naples, will add a morning loop to alleviate issues of crowding on the bus; at times having to turn riders away due to the bus being full. Maximum passenger capacity for the bus is determined by Federal Guidelines, with the driver making the determination that the bus is at capacity

when all passengers are unable to fit behind a designated white line on the bus. Capacity issues are presently being addressed by the increase in frequency on routes, as well as studying alternative seating layouts to safely accommodate more riders. Presently, the largest bus in service is 40 feet long, with 36 seats.

Mr. Caton inquired as to whether prioritization of routes has been done in terms of the funding request, i.e., if the full amount requested is not awarded. Ms. Arnold stated that priorities were ranked beginning with route frequency, followed by extended hours of operation, and finally, route operation. Other additional services were based upon the receipt of grant funding. Mr. Caton pointed out the discrepancy in the report between operating costs and revenue recovery and inquired as to whether this was standard. Mr. DeLeon stated that each route has its own recovery ratio, but an overall 12% system recovery had been estimated, taking into account the potential learning curve for riders to learn the new route changes.

Modification is also proposed for a connection between route 27 and route 19, in response to riders having to ride into Naples to the Government Center transfer station to change busses in order to access North Naples destinations.

Contingent upon grant funding, additional frequency to route 13 is proposed, facilitated by a new bus purchase. Mr. Donenfeld noted the underserved downtown area where many businesses are located, as well as retirement age residents who no longer drive. Mr. DiMarco stated that the 13 and 14 busses make stops at the CVS downtown and inquired if the route may include traveling on 9th street towards the beach. Mr. DeLeon stated these concerns could be evaluated and discussed in future route planning sessions, also taking into account the potential timing impact caused by extending the route. Mr. Jenkins inquired as to the possibility of constructing a bike lock-up park in the downtown area. Mr. DeLeon stated that it would be difficult to do so due to the narrow right of way downtown, however the Naples Pathways Coalition was studying the possibility of a bike rental program, and a potential partnership with Transit may be a future consideration.

Ms. Arnold requested feedback and ultimately endorsement from the Advisory Council on the proposed service enhancements. Mr. Dobberstein stated that sound data collection should clarify necessary service enhancements. Mr. Jenkins was in favor of the proposed service enhancements as a short-term solution, however stated the entire system needed to be reworked. Mr. Donenfeld stated that all improvements to Transit should be aggressively pursued and was in favor of the proposed enhancements.

Mr. Caton inquired as to the flexibility of the proposed service changes, i.e., once funding was received and service enhancements were implemented, could changes be made after a designated period of time, to potentially further improve the service. Ms. Arnold stated that Transit is flexible with route planning and does have the ability to re-evaluate route changes after a minimum of six months' time, allowing for rider education regarding any changes. Several factors are involved with change, including the associated cost, driver assignments, etc.

Mr. Caton noted that while Transit provides a public service and is not a for-profit organization, incoming revenues should be maximized to offset taxpayer investment. Mr. Caton remarked upon the approximate \$103/cost per hour of operation which appears to be in line with similar markets, however inquired as to whether the approximate 12% revenue recovery is thought to be typical or below normal. Mr. DeLeon stated that the goal for Transit agencies had been 20%, however fare recovery is impacted with the decline in ridership. Further, the expansive size of Collier County is a factor, as a greater recovery ratio and lower operating costs would be anticipated in denser populations. The expectation is that the proposed additions in service frequency will result in an increase from the forecasted 12% revenue. Mr. Jenkins stated that the major benefit of Transit is enhancement of quality of life, more so than straight fare recovery. Mr. Caton suggested that this concept be incorporated into the overall story in presentation of the budget. Ms. Arnold stated that feedback from riders along the corridor and at the transfer stations will also be solicited.

c. Route Planning – Omar DeLeon

Potential routing enhancements, as proposed by Advisory Committee member, Mr. John Jenkins, were shared with Committee members. Mr. Jenkins noted making no changes to the existing routes, but proposes a plan which services the entire county, up to 24 hours a day, providing perimeter, zone, and main corridor “heartbeat” coverage in circular routes, as opposed to the current “strand” system. Outlying routes, i.e., Immokalee, Golden Gate, Marco Island, etc., routes may be overlaid over the proposed core system. Mr. DeLeon noted the cost involved with the proposed changes, as well as components which would need to be evaluated, such as transfers and overall efficiency; however, stated that the Transit Development Plan will be updated in 2020, with the Advisory Committee a stakeholder in the planning process.

Mr. Jenkins also proposed entering into an agreement with the Collier Sheriff’s Department and Collier Parks and Recreation Division to create secured bike park facilities at several bus stop locations, which would be security monitored. Suggestions for potential locations include Immokalee/951, Golden Gate Parkway/951, and possibly at Freedom Square. Mr. DiMarco suggested the downtown Naples area as a prime location for a bike park. Mr. Dobberstein noted that the downtown parking garage would be an excellent bike park location and suggested possibly surveying local businesses downtown for feedback on this topic.

Mr. DeLeon agreed that evaluation of alternative opportunities to complement Transit should be considered and will be part of the planning process of the Transit Development Plan.

Mr. Caton inquired as to the methodology employed in designing the current Transit Development Plan of routing and bus stops; whether it was a manual process or if Transit development type software was used. Mr. DeLeon noted that a consultant was utilized, Tindale-Oliver, who used TBEST software for planning and future development, feedback from major stakeholders, as well as the general public regarding transit routes, times, frequency, etc.

VII. Member Comments

- Mr. Jenkins announced his candidacy for District I Commissioner in the November 2020 election. Ms. Arnold stated she would verify whether a candidate may serve on the Advisory Committee.

- Mr. DiMarco stated that more focus should be placed on tourism in increasing ridership.

- Mr. DiMarco suggested working with Lee Transit to possibly extend their connection hours of operation to complement the proposed service enhancements for routes 11 and 12. Mr. Deleon agreed that this could be a point of discussion with Lee Transit as part of a regional look at the Transit Development Plan between Collier and Lee Counties.

VIII. Public Comments

- Mr. Zell suggested a possible reduced bus/bicycle combo fare may be made available to encourage ridership.

IX. Next Meeting Date – April 16, 2019

X. Adjournment

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was adjourned by order of the Chair.

Public Transit Advisory Committee

John DiMarco, Chairman

These minutes approved by the Committee on _____ as presented or as amended.