

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

November 17, 2020

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 via hybrid video/teleconference/in-person at the Collier Area Transit Office, 8300 Radio Road, Naples FL 34104, with the following members present:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Arthur Dobberstein - Zoom

Mr. James Bennett - Zoom

Mr. Peter Berry – In person

Mr. Devon Browne - Zoom

Mr. James Caton – In person

Ms. Sonja Lee Samek - Zoom

Absent:

Chairman: Mr. John DiMarco

ALSO PRESENT:

Ms. Michelle Edwards-Arnold, Director, Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement

Mr. Omar DeLeon, Public Transit Manager, Collier Area Transit

Mr. Zachary Karto, Senior Planner, Collier Area Transit

Marirka Maldonado, ParaTransit Manager, MV Transit

Ms. Brandy Otero, Associate Project Manager, Collier County

Ms. Elisabeth Schuck, Senior Associate, Tindale Oliver

I. Call to Order

Mr. Dobberstein called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and a quorum established.

III. Approval of Agenda

A vote on approval of the meeting agenda could not be done due to a lack of an in-person quorum.

IV. Approval of Minutes – October 20, 2020

A vote on approval of the October 20, 2020 meeting minutes could not be done due to a lack of an in-person quorum.

V. Committee Action

a. Transit Impact Analysis Study: Collier County and Collier Area Transit (CAT), in partnership with the Collier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) initiated a Transit Impact Analysis Study to determine how Transit can best be integrated into the Development Review process to mitigate impacts on the transit system from development projects. The current development process requires CAT to reactively respond to impacts of development on transit infrastructure and service; in many instances, necessitating accommodation of the demand the development project places on the transit system, without the financial resources to help mitigate the costs. The appropriateness of developer contribution to the Transit infrastructure for a new development project was also studied.

The study process considered two tracts, technical analysis and review of data information, demographics, development patterns, comparison in operations with select peer transit systems, as well as an in-depth study of the current Development Review process. Secondly, engagement with Agency Staff, working closely with the Project Advisory team, including MPO staff, CAT staff, and Collier County Transportation and Growth Management staff, as well as senior County leadership.

The key findings of demographics and Transit reflect a high annual average growth rate in Collier County, with growth shifting eastward. Seasonal peak ridership averages 10% higher than non-peak, with increasing operating costs per rider, which is consistent with state and national trends.

The key findings of Peer Review among five comparable peers reveal that CAT has the lowest passenger trips and trips per revenue mile, the second lowest revenue hours per capita/operating expense per capita, and the second highest trip length. Substantial service sector economy is seen; high journey to work mode share despite relatively low overall ridership.

The key findings of review of the Development Review process reveal no formal system to consider development impacts to the transit system and no transit related mitigation required of developers. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a defined set of strategies aimed at maximizing traveler choices. Development is often scaled back to avoid TDM requirements and some TDM strategies may be chosen based on cost or ease of implementation, not necessarily effectiveness. Modification of inconsistent regulatory language and policies on TDM implementation, monitoring, and evaluation is necessary.

There are many limitations within the County in terms of density and challenges to provide transit in specific areas, as well as in funding of operations. The County is currently not eligible for funding of operations via a sales tax, with a focus then on general funds for increasing revenue for the Transit system. Developer funded mitigation is a short-term solution, requiring eventual necessity of a new revenue source.

One potential approach studied was transit site access improvements. There is currently no requirement for site-related transit infrastructure, as there is for sidewalks, bike lanes, and pathways. The establishment of transit site access regulations is recommended, proportional to the scale of development, apply to development along existing/planned transit routes, consistent with the scale and design of typical CAT facilities and which are similar to other site access requirements. Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to whether accommodations in routing would add time to the route. It was noted that an “in lieu of” payment option has been suggested if the addition of transit infrastructure directly on the site being developed is impractical, with mutual agreement that the bus stop may be located in close proximity. Early discussions with developers are key to incorporation of improvements during site development.

Longer-term strategies were studied which would modify some areas into more transit oriented development areas, with area specific redevelopment goals, districts and corridors, and modification of the development review process accordingly.

Transportation Demand Management strategies were explored, which are ways developers can have exception to concurrency in specific areas, with the goal to shift from single occupant vehicle trips to alternative modes, shifting trips out of the peak travel periods to reduce congestion. Post-Covid, higher telework levels will likely continue. Best practices findings applicable to Collier County revealed that TDM programs can be more challenging in the suburban settings than higher density urban areas. Commuter benefit transit programs, such as personal transit pass systems are often deeply discounted and generate increased ridership; however, do not generate additional revenue for the transit system. Parking pricing and supply limitations were seen to increase TDM effectiveness in the suburban context, however this concept would be more applicable to employees required to pay for employer parking in Collier County, where the majority of parking is free and other strategies would likely be pursued. More robust programs will require greater staffing resources in management and administration. Evaluation and monitoring of programs would be necessary to gauge effectiveness over time.

Recommendations resulting from the study include looking at implementing transit site access requirements and refreshing the TDM program and strategies which currently exist. Draft regulatory language was provided which requires various types of infrastructure for development projects located on existing routes or planned routes in the ten-year Transit Development Plan or the first five years of the Long Range Transportation Plan. The noted requirements per the type of infrastructure were based on the size of the development in terms of traffic generation. All construction would remain consistent with CAT guidelines, the scale of the development, and ADA accessible.

Additionally, adjustment of the TDM strategies in the Growth Management Plan and the Land Development Code is recommended, with creation of a tiered approach of existing strategies, so that developers would be required to choose complementary strategies from each tier, as opposed to choosing cheaper or easier options. Strategies for newer technologies such as electric vehicles, charging stations, and preferential parking were given, as well as a recommendation that park and ride spaces be provided as an option for transit riders, including within a development if the site can support it. Language has been provided which requires any development on an existing or planned transit route to include at least one transit related strategy, as well as adding additional support for bicycle facilities, on-site storage, and amenities if the development project is located near pathways or bicycle lanes. Language also includes enhanced reporting and monitoring requirements, as well as provided streamlined language between the Growth Management Plan and the Land Development Code.

A recommendation was made by Mr. Caton for flexibility within the TDP to adjust the larger strategy in response to developer choices.

Regarding impact fees, Collier County currently has a roadway impact fee, which does not include Transit, bicycle traffic, sidewalks, etc., and has not moved to a multimodal impact fee.

Next steps include presentation of recommendations to the CAC, TAC, and MPO Board in December 2020. Draft language will ultimately be reviewed by the County Attorney, who will finalize regulatory language prior to presentation to the Board of County Commissioners.

Consensus in support of study recommendations was received from all PTAC members in attendance.

b. 5310, 5311, 5339 Grant Applications: The 5310, 5311, and 5339 are competitive grant applications which are submitted annually to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and which identify specific projects associated with each grant. The grants are specific to rural areas. 5310 and 5311 have local match requirements, utilizing either State funds, a combination of State and local funding, or just local funds. The final submission date is December 14, 2020.

5310: Funds are being requested for the purchase of three paratransit vehicles and associated technology. The vehicles are approximately \$83K each, utilizing FDOT contract pricing, with 3 wheelchair capacity. All vehicles in the fleet are purchased with grant funds, with need evaluated on a yearly basis. 5310 funding is specific to paratransit.

5311: This grant is being requested for operational expenditures associated with providing service to rural areas, including Immokalee, Golden Gate Estates, as well as other outlying areas of Collier County.

5339: Funds are being requested for improvements to nine bus stops in rural locations, including adding bus shelters, benches, trash cans, bike racks, and ADA compliance.

While there is ongoing discussion with LeeTran regarding funding of regional routes, there is currently no pursuit of grant funding in partnership with surrounding counties. Exploration of regional/partnership grants to test new transportation technologies and modalities is a viable option for consideration.

Consensus in support of the submission of grant applications as presented was received from all PTAC members in attendance.

VI. Reports and Presentations

There were no additional reports and presentations.

VII. Member Comments

+It was noted by Ms. Arnold that an amendment change to the by-laws to adjust the number of in-person quorum from 4 to 3 is under consideration, and will be discussed with the County Attorney. Any new information related to this item will be discussed at the next meeting.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no comments from members of the public.

IX. Next Meeting Date – December 15, 2020

X. Adjournment

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

Public Transit Advisory Committee

Arthur Dobberstein, Vice-Chairman

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