

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING

July 16, 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:

Chairman: Mr. John DiMarco
Vice-Chairman: Mr. John Jenkins
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, Public Transit Manager
Mr. Braian Morales, General Manager, MV Transportation, Inc.
Ms. Brandy Otero, Associate Project Manager
Ms. Maria Pizarro, Community Relations Specialist

I. Call to Order

Mr. DiMarco 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

Mr. Donnenfeld entered a motion to approve the July 16, 2019 meeting agenda. Mr. Jenkins seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

a. April 16, 2019

Mr. Donnenfeld entered a motion to approve the April 16, 2019 meeting minutes. Mr. Jenkins seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

V. Committee Action

a. Endorsement of the Transit Development Plan Annual Update

Mr. DeLeon presented the Transit Development Plan (TDP) annual update/progress report to the Advisory Committee. The creation of a Transit Development Plan is required by the Florida Department of Transportation for State Block Grant funding and is a 10-year strategic plan. The TDP identifies projects and priorities, estimated costs and revenues, and must be consistent with the Long Range Transit Plan. A major update to the TDP is done every 5 years; however, annual progress reports are generated, which detail performance measures against stated goals and objectives of the TDP. The annual progress report is required to include the past year's accomplishments, an analysis of discrepancies, revisions to the implementation program for the coming year, a revised financial plan, added recommendations for the new 10th year, and a revised list of projects or services needed to meet goals and objectives.

As a service overview, Mr. DeLeon noted that the Transit service is managed and operated by Collier County, with 19 routes running from 3:45 a.m. to 8:50 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and limited service on Sunday, with an average 90-minute headway. Mr. Donnenfeld noted the 90-minute headway, which was felt to be excessive and possibly a deterrent to ridership, and a result of budget limitations.

A decline in ridership has continued, with possible reasons for the statewide decline identified as being due to the types of services currently available, service levels, availability and flexibility of ride-share companies, reduced gas prices, and an increase in personal vehicle use.

Mr. DeLeon noted that FY18 began in September 2017 and ended in October 2018. During this time, routes 22 and 23 were modified, with consideration of public feedback; no longer providing reverse routing, but with Route 23 providing service to the west side of Immokalee and Route 22 to the Eastern portion of Immokalee.

Route 24 was adjusted in order to service Regal Acres; a change which was incorporated following a request made by that community. Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to whether a bus stop has been constructed in that area; Mr. DeLeon stated that a site development plan would first be necessary. A reallocation of time was also done, reducing revenue hours from routes 20, 25, and 26, and increasing service to routes 11 and 12 in order to accommodate high ridership during peak hours.

Mr. Donnenfeld inquired if Transit Advisory Committee opposition to the proposed \$23M parking garage in Sea Gate could possibly result in the redirection of a portion of that funding to the Transit Division, who could in turn provide a park-and-ride service to the beach in that area. Ms. Arnold noted that various sources of revenue fund County projects and stated that the proposed garage would increase beach access for the larger community outside of the Sea Gate area. Further, Transit is being considered within the scope of the project, allowing for adequate turnaround and access to the beach at that location.

Mr. DeLeon highlighted capital improvements which were done at the Radio Road facility, including the addition of a drop box to the Money Room, installation of security cameras, as well as the redesign and construction of administrative office space. Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to the status of the Immokalee Transfer Station as a capital project. Mr. DeLeon noted that only completed FY18 projects were being highlighted within the TDP update and that the Immokalee Transfer Station is slated for completion in 2023 with funding from the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant. Mr. Dobberstein pointed out the significant legwork which had been done to initiate the Immokalee Transfer Station project and suggested that this large accomplishment be included within the scope of the FY18 update. Mr. DeLeon concurred and will verify the initiation date of the project for possible inclusion into the list of Transit Division accomplishments for FY18.

Further accomplishments include the construction of 13 bus shelters and 17 ADA accessible bus stops. ADA bus stops include an additional 2 to 3 feet of sidewalk space to accommodate a boarding and alighting pad, allowing individuals utilizing mobility devices to safely wait for the bus, as well as accommodating wheelchair ramp deployment. In addition to these features, the shelters also include solar lighting, benches, bike racks, and trash cans. Mr. DiMarco inquired as to provisions for a wheelchair to be parked next to the bench under the cover of the bus shelter. Mr. DeLeon confirmed that this is a design requirement and all existing bus shelters have space allocated under the roof for a wheelchair.

Mr. Dobberstein questioned whether Staff time is allocated appropriately, in consideration of the limited Staff available, and to perhaps focus more time on revenue generating projects, rather than community “feel good” events. Mr. DeLeon noted now having a complete staff, including a Senior Planner, Project Manager, and Marketing Events Coordinator.

Ms. Arnold also pointed out the benefit of community outreach for the purpose of providing education and awareness of Public Transit, which may ultimately assist with ridership.

With regards to conditional use projects, Staff is waiting for the next budget cycle for the ability to fund consulting services, which Ms. Arnold pointed out is more economical as a one-time project, as opposed to attempting to hire Staff for one year. Further, Transit Staff are in discussion with the Florida Department of Transportation Commuter Services, who have an employer outreach program, to combine efforts to share information about the services offered to employers by both organizations.

Ongoing initiatives were discussed and include development of a Passenger Amenities Program, evaluation of routes, development of an Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) plan that will include evaluation criteria for potential and proposed ITS projects (for example, mobile ticketing and Wi-Fi on the buses), preserving and maintaining the existing transit infrastructure (i.e., improving/maintaining facilities, shelter rehabilitation), and providing efficient transit access to major employment centers, development corridors, and other significant activity centers. Mr. DeLeon noted the benefits of greater communication and open dialogue with employers.

Regarding the cost of revenue summary, Mr. Dobberstein requested clarification on the noted shortfall amount of \$634,600, as well as stated that the report should detail the \$300K+ which was being diverted from the 5307 account to fund operational costs, the \$300K+ estimated cost for desired additional services, and the \$1M+ shortfall for the MV Transportation, Inc. contract, for which County funding had been provided. Further, greater detail was suggested regarding deferment of the cost of bus replacement for one year in lieu of maintenance; providing specific budget detail rather than a generalization of the budget. Mr. DeLeon clarified that the noted shortfall was for the time period of September 2017 through October 2018, which was covered by Federal grant funds; the shortfall noted by Mr. Dobberstein referenced FY2020, which will be included in next year's annual report. Ms. Arnold stated that the financial shortfall/budget detail referenced by Mr. Dobberstein could be included under "Revenue Assumptions," which looks ahead to future years. Mr. Dobberstein also pointed out that fare changes had not been included in the presentation, although it is included within the report.

Mr. DeLeon and Ms. Arnold were seeking endorsement of the TDP Annual Update prior to presentation to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) at their August 28, 2019 meeting. Following BCC approval, the TDP Annual Update will be submitted to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

Mr. Donnenfeld expressed concern that endorsement of the report would imply complete agreement with its contents. Ms. Arnold clarified that the report under discussion is more of a status report and allows the State to continue annual funding in the form of State Block Grants.

Further, issues which are of concern and proposed changes will be addressed in the major update to the TDP, which is scheduled to be done in 2020.

Regarding the timeframe for the major update to the TDP for the next fiscal year, Ms. Otero stated that a scope of services is planned to be taken to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Advisory Committees in August 2019 for approval. Following MPO approval of the scope of services, the procurement process will begin in August/September 2019. The MPO is made up of 9 elected officials; all 5 County Commissioners, 2 representatives from the Naples City Council, 1 from Everglades City and 1 from Marco Island. Ms. Otero stated that the Agreement for funding has been received, but with funding required to be put into place at the first two BCC meetings. Ideally, the TDP process will commence in Fall 2019. During that time, the Transit Advisory Committee will provide feedback and suggestions on elements and details of the plan, as well as incorporation of feedback received at Public Workshops to be held during this time as well.

Mr. Donnenfeld entered a motion to endorse the Transit Development Plan Annual Update Report. Mr. Caton seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

b. Committee vote for vacated Vice-Chairman seat

Mr. Donnenfeld entered a motion to amend the agenda, to include an Advisory Committee vote to select a Vice-Chairman for the vacated position. Mr. Caton seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Donnenfeld nominated Mr. Dobberstein as Vice-Chairman of the Public Transit Advisory Committee. Mr. Caton seconded the nomination. All were in favor. Mr. Dobberstein was elected Vice-Chairman by a unanimous Committee vote.

VI. Reports and Presentation

a. 311 presentation

Ms. Maria Pizarro, Community Relations Specialist for Communications and Customer Relations, was on hand to provide the Advisory Committee information on the County 311 program. The 311 program was created by the Federal Communications Commission to relieve overwhelmed 911 centers of non-emergent calls. 311 operates as a single point of access to County Government and provides Collier residents with answers to frequently asked questions, allows the placement of service requests, and provides an opportunity to report issues.

The 311 Center is fully operated by Collier County Staff. There are three ways to contact the 311 Center; the call center may be accessed by dialing 311 or 239-252-8999 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., through the mobile application (Collier 311, via the Apple Store or Google Play), or the website www.Collier311.org. The mobile application and website offer 24-hour access to report an issue, check the status of a previous request, or search the knowledge base for articles relating to the user's questions.

Following a request made to the 311 Center, the resident will receive notification that a service request has been placed. Residents also have the ability to upload photos or documents with their service requests. The service request is then dispatched to the appropriate Collier County staff in the field. Upon resolution of the issue, the resident is notified, as per their stated preference; via email, voice call, or text that their request is complete.

The 311 program offers a single point of contact for questions, issues, and service requests within Collier County, provides the ability to access accurate/current information, and track service request status. Further, telephone numbers and agency information regarding non-County related inquiries is offered as well, including City of Naples related issues. CAT specific information is accessible via the 311 program, including bus fares, routes, and trip planners. Currently, there is a 3-day average for service request resolution for CAT related issues.

Ms. Pizarro was uncertain as to whether the 311 application is accessible via voice-over text and will provide this information at a later date; however, there presently is a voice announcement for 311 on CAT buses; in English, Spanish, and Creole. Ms. Pizarro stated that route information is the most frequent Transit related request received. Mr. Caton noted the benefit of trend analysis data which may be collected via the 311 program and suggested the possibility of proactive informational alerts added as necessary to the 311 Transit page. Mr. Deleon noted receiving more specific 311 Transit related requests, which are then forwarded to the appropriate individual for resolution.

b. Update on Collier Area Transit Advertising Policy, Standard and Fee Structure

Ms. Arnold stated that the Advertising Policy had been presented to the BCC on July 9, 2019, which included advertising via bus wraps and on the bus shelters; however, the County Attorney rejected advertising on the bus shelters due to potential problems associated with advertising on the right of way. This component of the policy was therefore removed and was not presented to the County Commissioners for consideration.

Bus wrap advertising was proposed for either full wrap, half wrap, and ½ or ¼ of either side of the bus, however concern was expressed by the Board in not being able to manage the content of the advertising. Further, the Board questioned whether the resultant revenue from this form of advertising was of enough value to possibly change the character of the community.

Digital advertising was approved, which includes interior advertising on monitors, both in the transfer stations and inside of the buses. Ms. Arnold noted that this equipment must be purchased prior to implementation, as well as that only the ridership is captured with this form of advertising, and not the traveling public. Mr. Dobberstein reiterated the value of advertising within the paratransit buses for riders who are typically in need of medical related services.

A bench donation program was also approved by the Board, in which a donor may pay for the cost of building a bus stop bench, with a small plaque attached bearing the donor's name. The cost of the bench will vary, based on location and whether site improvements are necessary in order to meet ADA requirements, but may range between \$6K-\$8K per location.

Mr. Weeks noted that advertising on the bus shelters would be an excellent source of revenue and suggested that this option be presented to the BCC again at a later date. Ms. Arnold stated that this could be pursued again during the next budget cycle, illustrating to the Board what the revenues could support in terms of improvements to the system for service enhancement, as opposed to raising revenue equal to the operating budget. The additional revenue will complement the operating budget. Mr. Caton suggested the possibility of a packaged/combined departmental approach to expansion of the County advertising policy; for example, to include parking garages, county vehicles, structures, etc., in addition to bus wraps and bus shelters. Ms. Arnold noted that the County has entered into a contract with an advertising agency that will allow expanded advertising at the future Naples Sports Complex, and also allowing for naming rights on County facilities. For example, a sponsor may pay to have their name on the CAT Transfer Facility.

VII. Member Comments

+Mr. Jenkins announced his resignation as a member of the Public Transit Advisory Committee due to his candidacy for a position as a Collier County Commissioner, District 1. Mr. Jenkins commended Transit Senior Management and Staff for their hard work and dedication to the Division. Mr. Jenkins also expressed his appreciation for having had the opportunity to serve with his fellow committee members.

+Mr. Dobberstein recounted having assisted a nursing home patient who resides at a facility that he volunteers for, by obtaining information regarding a program in which CAT contracts with Paratransit to take nursing home residents on trips. The resident noted having had a good time after utilizing this service. Mr. Dobberstein wished to recognize the positive impact that Transit is having on the community with these types of services, despite budget frustrations.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no comments by members of the public in attendance.

IX. Next Meeting Date – August 20, 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 ___.