

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

February 16, 2021

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 County Museum, Lecture Hall, 3331 Tamiami Trail East, Naples FL 34112, with the following members present:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman: Mr. John DiMarco

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Arthur Dobberstein - Zoom

Mr. James Bennett

Mr. Peter Berry

Mr. Devon Browne

Mr. James Caton

Ms. Sonja Lee Samek - Zoom

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

Ms. Tamarin Kirby, Planning Technician, Collier County Government

Marirka Maldonado, ParaTransit Manager, MV Transit

I. Call to Order

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

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and an in-person quorum established.

III. Approval of Agenda

Requested topics of discussion to add to the agenda:

- a. Update on ridership in ongoing Covid environment.
- b. Status update on paratransit grant funding.

Mr. Bennett entered a motion to approve the February 16, 2021 meeting agenda. Mr. Berry seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion was carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

- a. October 20, 2020 Minutes
- b. November 17, 2020 Minutes
- c. January 19, 2021 Minutes

It was clarified that no formal actions were taken during the noted meeting dates due to lack of an in-person quorum. A vote of acceptance of the documents is now requested due to an in-person Advisory Committee quorum at the February 16, 2021 meeting.

Mr. Bennett entered a motion to approve the October 20, 2020, November 17, 2020, and January 19, 2021 Advisory Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Berry seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The motion was carried.

V. Committee Action

- a. Membership Renewal – Devon Browne

An application for renewal of membership of the Public Transportation Advisory Committee was submitted for consideration by Mr. Devon Browne.

Mr. Caton entered a motion to approve the application for Public Transportation Advisory Committee membership for Mr. Devon Browne. Mr. Berry seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The motion was passed unanimously.

It was noted that there is a vacancy on the Advisory Committee, specific to a representative of the School District. Ms. Samek is pending re-application for this position, or for the submission of an application for membership by a new candidate within the School District.

VI. Reports and Presentations

There were no reports or presentations for discussion.

VII. Member Comments

+ **Florida Development Disabilities Council (FDDC) Grant Update:** Transit Staff received an invitation in August 2020 from the Florida Development Disabilities Council (FDDC) to participate in a 12-month pilot, grant transportation voucher project for \$150,000. The grant has been awarded, with funding originating from the Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of the service is to provide increased transportation options for residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities which are currently not being met through the Collier Area Transit (CAT) paratransit system. The service would allow for same day scheduling of either a taxi or Uber. An agreement has been received from Uber, with details being finalized. The approved agreement is scheduled to be presented to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) at the March 23, 2021 meeting. Following BCC approval, implementation of the program and marketing strategies will be coordinated with Uber. It was noted that the FDDC grant funding was for a one-year pilot program, approved through September 2021, however with the potential for a second year of funding.

It was noted by Mr. Browne that Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) has participated in a similar partnership with Uber and taxi services and inquired whether there has been any information sharing between Collier Transit Staff and PSTA to avoid pitfalls and to enhance the overall service. Mr. DeLeon stated that discussions have been had with Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) Staff, who operate a similar program utilizing a taxi service. The benefit of discussion with PSTA was acknowledged and will be pursued due to PSTA having previously contracted with Uber. Information sharing with Uber is included within the agreement, with the ability for Collier Transit Staff to access ridership information within the Uber application.

5339B Grant: The 5339B competitive grant has been awarded and is moving forward. An update will be brought to the Advisory Committee pending an initial review of the facility, with consideration being given for the use of solar panels and other cost savings measures which tie-into the use of electric buses, as well as coordination with the local electric company. The grant application in its entirety will be presented to the BCC for final approval at the February 23, 2021 meeting.

+**Staff Updates:** Mr. Zachary Karto, Senior Planner, has resigned, with a Senior Planner vacancy currently available.

+**Ridership status update:** January 2021 fixed route ridership was 47,948, down 32% compared to January 2020. Paratransit ridership was also down 38% compared to January 2020, with approximately 6,000 trips. While ridership remains down in comparison to the previous year, a steady increase has slowly been demonstrated across all routes, with higher ridership especially noted in routes traveling from Immokalee and Ave Maria (routes 19 and 28) into Naples. The reduction in ridership allowed for adequate social distancing, circumventing the need for additional buses on most routes, but with additional buses added for social distancing on the 19 and 28 routes.

As a result, ridership increased with the availability of the additional buses on these two routes. On-time performance across all fixed routes is at 86%. The off-season schedule will begin on May 2, 2021.

Mr. Browne inquired as to whether surveys have captured information regarding the use of alternative transportation options utilized during Covid-19 and ways to recapture lost ridership following the availability of vaccines and the decline of the pandemic. It was noted that a Comprehensive Operating Analysis, a short-term evaluation of the route system, is being compiled by Kimley-Horn and recapture of lost ridership can be included within this study. The results of the project will be shared with the Advisory Committee as it becomes available.

The beach service has been implemented and operates on a Thursday through Sunday schedule, utilizing two trolley style buses.

+A new Federal mandate states that transit agencies must require the use of face masks by passengers on the buses, as well as inside and on the exterior of transit facilities.

+ Collier Area Transit (CAT) will celebrate 20 years of service in Collier County with a special celebration which will be held at CAT's headquarters at 8300 Radio Road on February 26, at 10:00 a.m. The event will be publicly advertised, and Transit Advisory Committee members are invited to attend.

+Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to whether further consideration has been given to a potential partnership with the Big Red Bus service, as discussed in the past. Ms. Arnold noted that approval has been received from the Hearing Examiner to allow for a zoning amendment for conditional use of the Radio Road facility in support of this effort. The next step is to draft agreements with three potential participating entities. An update on this topic will be given at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

+The contract for updated software which will be installed on paratransit vehicles is being completed with the vendor, which will be an account-based program that will include a trip request application, as well as the ability to pay for and monitor the trip. The final agreement will be presented to the BCC for approval and execution, with a target implementation date in June 2021.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

IX. Next Meeting Date – March 16, 2021, Collier County Museum

X. Adjournment

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

Public Transit Advisory Committee

John DiMarco, Chairman

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