

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

January 19, 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 - Zoom

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Arthur Dobberstein - Zoom

Mr. James Bennett - Zoom

Mr. Peter Berry – Zoom

Mr. Devon Browne - Zoom

Mr. James Caton – Zoom

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 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, November 17, 2020

A vote on approval of the October 20, 2020 and November 17, 2020 meeting minutes could not be done due to a lack of an in-person quorum.

V. Committee Action

VI. Reports and Presentations

a. Beach Bus Service

The beach bus service is in operation, following the same route as the previous year, however the service will begin in February 2021 and run one month later in the season. Service was cut short in 2020 due to the onset of the pandemic. The vehicle used for beach service is changing as well, utilizing one of two recently purchased trolleys, which arrived in October 2020. These vehicles were a grant funded purchase.

It was noted that the operators have been training on the new trolley for several weeks, and the vehicle tested on a corridor route. The trolleys may be used for normal route work; however, the intent is to utilize them for beach service and on Marco Island. The trolleys are equipped with the same technology as the regular fleet buses and are fully handicap accessible. Mr. Dobberstein questioned the practicality of the trolleys if only used for limited purposes. Ms. Arnold stated that the seating capacity is the same as regular fleet buses, minus two seats, and does have fixed windows. The major difference is in the appearance of the interior, with wooden seats and leather straps for use by standing passengers.

It was noted that for FY 20, the service ran for one week in December 2019 through February 2020, with a steady increase in ridership, but with discontinuation of the service in March due to Covid-19. Advertisement of the beach bus service is done on the Public Transit website, Facebook and Instagram, the Collier County website, and the bus schedule. Radio and digital marketing have been utilized in the past as well. Mr. Browne inquired as to other marketing efforts done to capture tourists who may not be regular users, for instance at the airport. A previous partnership with the Naples Daily News was noted by Mr. DeLeon, which utilized geofencing for mobile advertisement, as well as in the 239 calendar section. Optimization with Google search has been utilized in the past as well.

Mr. Berry suggested working with the Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) to boost ridership. Ms. Arnold noted having received financial support for advertising from the CVB in the past and stated contact could be made in this regard.

b. FDDC Grant Update

The Public Transit & Neighborhood Enhancement (PTNE) 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. Any individuals currently utilizing the paratransit service may participate in the program.

Eligible individual's information will be provided to Uber for incorporation into their system. The fare is \$4.00, with the \$16.00 balance paid with grant funds. Any fees exceeding \$20.00 would be the responsibility of the rider. The cost of the trip will be determined by the provider. Uber drivers participating in the program will be required to complete appropriate training. An email marketing blast is planned for all paratransit users, print fliers to be provided to onboard paratransit users, as well as posted on the Public Transit website.

Discussions with Uber are underway to finalize an agreement, however, Uber currently does not provide wheelchair access vehicle service, which is the last component necessary to finalize the agreement. Uber is considering utilizing a local subcontractor to provide this service. The final agreement will ultimately be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for approval.

Funding is scheduled to end in September 2021, with an opportunity to continue the program for a second year.

VII. Member Comments

+Mr. Bennett remarked upon the inability to establish an in-house quorum due to the hybrid attendance options, including zoom and telephone participation, and inquired as to whether the time spent meeting in this manner remained valuable. Ms. Arnold noted the benefit of information sharing, however stressed the importance of maintaining an in-person quorum to vote on committee actions, particularly for the February 2021 meeting, when several committee member applications are up for renewal. The Governor did not renew the order which permitted a virtual quorum. Mr. Caton recommended contacting members individually to discern preference or ability to attend in-person, given the current pandemic environment.

Mr. Dobberstein inquired whether the Governor's office has been contacted about the ramifications of non-renewal of the virtual quorum order, or whether state or county officials have made a determination as to whether the inability to establish a virtual quorum is having a negative impact on grass roots government. It was noted by Ms. Arnold that the County Manager's office has contacted the Governor's office, however there was no intent for modification to the order at that time. Ms. Arnold will contact the County Manager's office again in this regard and noted the ability to share information with the Board of County Commissioners to show active Advisory Committee participation. Individual committee members each stated their ability and willingness to attend the February 2021 Advisory Committee meeting, provided social distancing measures were followed and were not excluded due to quarantine.

+Mr. Dobberstein inquired as to current ridership numbers during the ongoing pandemic. Ms. Arnold clarified that ridership has remained lower than normal, however noted no compliance issues with mask and social distancing requirements. Mr. Karto stated that ridership has plateaued at a 30% reduction in ridership.

VIII. Public Comments


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

IX. Next Meeting Date – February 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 2-16-21 as presented ___ or as amended ___.