

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
September 19, 2023 Minutes**

PLACE: Milwaukee County Transit System Administration Building, 1942 N. 17th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Large Conference Room & via Microsoft Teams Meeting

PRESENT: Grace Graves - Chair, Jim Bahneman – Vice-Chair, Gerald Balezentis, David Buck, Laurel Henschel, Marcia Perkins, Mae Wingo

ABSENT: Annie Johnson, Arlene Washington

GUESTS: Kevin Meyers -guest; Latisha Scott – Transit Express; Brian Kading – Transdev; Paul Sanfelippo – American United; Fran Musci, Paula Schultz and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the July 18, 2023 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: Mae Wingo reported that three commendations are currently being reviewed and one of these will be selected at the next meeting for the award.

Membership Committee: no report

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported that MCDOT recently met with Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee regarding transit security. There is a new strain of COVID. Updated vaccines are coming out. David urged everyone to get vaccinated in order to avoid masks in the future.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Paratransit Taxi Task Force: Fran Musci reported that the Paratransit Taxi Task Force met on August 31st. The taxi contract ends on September 28th. A letter was sent in August to all taxi riders. Transit Plus has reached out to the 70 heaviest taxi users to help them identify alternative travel options. Transit Plus vans are still available. Most of these taxi riders said they will find other transportation options, some said they will use the vans. The Paratransit Taxi Task Force will continue to meet to identify same day ride alternatives. It is still in question as what the program would look like, whether it will be a safety net or a separate ride program, and if it will be administered by transit or OATS as different rules would apply. Fran thanked Paul Sanfelippo for his many years of service to Transit Plus and the residents of Milwaukee County that he continues to do daily. It is hoped that we can work together in the future. Grace Graves stated that TPAC echoes that sentiment. Paul stated that they have overcome challenges in the past and will in the future as well.

Van Contract Transition: Fran Musci reported that Transdev is having a job fair on September 21st. A lot has happened since we last met in July. Transit Plus moved a second wave of riders to Transdev on August 14th and this overwhelmed them. Severe service lapses occurred due to a shortage of drivers. There were many late rides, excessively long rides and missed appointments for riders. On-time dropped to 64% but is now up to 80% on-time. We are working with Transdev to stabilize its service. Transdev may try to shift some rides to Transit Express if possible. Transdev has added 5 drivers in the last week. They have brought in corporate resources to hire and train. They are committed to hiring and training staff. Fox 6 aired a story about the need for drivers. There are more than 100 people signed up for the upcoming job fair. Coaching is being provided to drivers, reservationists, and dispatchers on etiquette. Drivers are also being re-coached on the expectation for door-to-door service. Transdev has added another person after 4:30 p.m. to help dispatch answer the phones until 7:30 p.m. Transit Plus has moved some clients back to Transit Express. Transit Plus is watching lead and lag measures and watching afternoon group pick-ups. Transit Plus is also sending a letter and ticket to those who have pickup later than 1 hour, missed appointments and ride duration violations. The current van contract ends on October 31, 2023. There will not be another wave of Transit Express clients moving to Transdev in October. Transit Express is currently providing 300 rides per day to their remaining riders. Transdev needs 30 more drivers, which is a lot. The RFP for the new contract called for 108 drivers and Transdev is currently at 78. There is a long way to go. Transdev is hiring and training constantly. Paratransit drivers in Milwaukee must have a PPVL from the City of Milwaukee which can take 2 to 6 weeks to obtain. Drivers also need to have a Wisconsin driver's license. New drivers have a learning curve and may not know their way around the entire county. The map in Transit Plus's scheduling software is from 2012 and is missing many new streets. We are looking to upgrade the map after November 1st.

Transdev Phone Service Update: Brian Kading reported that Transdev recently installed a new phone system. When Transdev experienced service issues their phones were overwhelmed with the volume of calls for reservations, where's my ride calls, and complaints. Transdev has added an additional person after reservations closes to log into the dispatch queue and help with where's my ride calls. This extra person is taking 25 to 30 calls during this period. This extra staffing will continue for the next two weeks and may be made permanent. There were also some issues with dispatcher not being properly logged into their phones. In the morning and at night when a dispatcher is checking drivers out or on the radio, if a call is not answered the phone system is logging that dispatcher out. If the next person in the dispatch queue also does not answer they too get logged out, and on and on. The phone rings 6 times before the calls then go to the next person. This can be increased to 12 rings. Jim Bahneman stated that he likes the phone queue system. Gerald Balezentis stated he thinks the queue system is terrible and that he does not like the music he is hearing while on hold and would prefer smooth jazz music. Fran explained that on days when we have had service issues callers want to complain about their service and this makes everyone wait longer. Having enough drivers is the key.

Transit Plus ID Card Mailing: Fran Musci reported that Transit Plus is in the process of mailing everyone a new ID card. We had a problem with the printer and the date on cards was not correct. The cards are now being reprinted. The new cards are just an ID card, they are not for use on the fixed route bus. The new WisGo card is needed to ride on the bus. Current Transdev riders will get a card right away. Riders transitioning to Transdev on November 1st will get their cards later.

NEW BUSINESS:

Draft of Revised Transit Plus Riders Guide & Carry-On Policy: Fran asked the Council if they had any comments or changes on the Rider's Guide draft that they received. Lisa Walters read the carry-on policy to the Council. There were no changes proposed by the Council. Gerald Balezentis was concerned about how many bags could be carried onto the van and if a case of water was allowable. Fran advised that the policy allows for 2 bags that can be carried onto the van in one trip. Water can be one of the items if it can be carried on in one trip.

TPAC No Show Brochure: Lisa Walters explained that TPAC's "Don't Be a No Show" brochure which also contained information about TPAC had been sent out along with taxi no-show letters. Transit Plus already includes the program's No-show Policy with the letters that are sent to riders for cancellation infractions on the van. As there will no longer be a need to send out taxi no-show letters, this would be a good time for TPAC to consider updating their brochure. David Buck indicated that he would like to use the brochure as a tool to promote interest in TPAC and to try and attract new members. The Council decided to change the tri-folded brochure to a two-sided card that would eliminate the no-show information and only provide information about TPAC. TPAC members could share these cards with advocacy groups and persons who may have an interest in attending TPAC meeting or joining the Council. Fran Musci mentioned that Transit Plus did not hold any cancellations in August against any riders. Gerald Balezentis wanted to know how much notice is needed for a cancellation. Fran advised that rides should be cancelled 2 hours in advance.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Paula Schultz reported that September 30th is the last day to use a Transit Plus card on the bus. After the 30th the new WisGo card will be needed on the bus. If anyone needs a WisGo card they should call Paula. However, if you want to ride the bus with a PCA you will also need to have your Transit Plus ID card to show the driver your PCA designation. Cheryl Orgas at Able has provided us with brailled vinyl stickers to use on the ticket vending machines on the BRT platforms. These may only last a short time due to our weather. MCTS will be hosting Milwaukee County's Senior Leadership Group tomorrow. Tomorrow will be the first of a 3-day program.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: Paul Sanfelippo stated that he appreciated the comments and that he won't be a stranger. He is the third generation to work on the contract with Milwaukee County. He is getting adjusted and has laid off some staff members and suggested they contact Transdev. American United has the largest group of PPVL licenses. He is willing to help Transdev if there is a possibility of partnership.

Transit Express: Latisha Scott reported that she is encouraging staff to apply to Transdev before the end of October. Transit Express has drivers that want to stay with them to the end. Latisha stated that she has been with Transit Express for 14 years but is looking to advance in paratransit.

First Transit/Transdev: Brian Kading reported that Transdev will be holding a job fair this

Thursday from 11:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. There will be corporate human resource people to assist with the fair. So far 200 people have signed up for the fair. Typically, 25 to 30 people actually show up. Transdev hopes to make job offers to 10 to 15 people who would still need to pass a drug test and background check. Some behind the wheel trainers will be coming in with vehicles from other locations. They have full corporate support to get to the level needed. There will also be two 4-hour job fairs on September 26th & September 27th. There are 6 people in training now and it is hoped that they will be out by the end of next week. There are other positions coming for a new Safety Manager and a Safety and Human Resource Clerk. New Transdev driver uniforms are being issued which includes a red polo shirt option. 90% of the orders were for polo shirts. Transdev will be enforcing its uniform policy. Mae Wingo inquired if the drivers will still be wearing yellow vests. Brian advised that the yellow vest will still be required.

TRANSIT PLUS: Fran Musci reported that 28,733 rides were provided in July and 31,522 rides were provided in August. August had the second highest ridership month since 2020. Connect 1 will continue to be free into 2024. The County Board passed the additional sales tax. We are waiting to hear how that can be used to fund transit. There will be no fare increase.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Laurel Henschel reported that a driver told her that they feel like they are being talked to and treated like children. She also suggested that drivers should be trained in the operation of platform lifts. Some drivers will ride up on the lift with her son, others won't.

ADJOURNMENT