

**Transit Plus Advisory Council
December 21, 2021 Minutes**

PLACE: Microsoft Teams Meeting

PRESENT: David Buck, Grace Graves, Laurel Henschel, Marcia Perkins, Mae Wingo

ABSENT: James Bahneman, Gerald Balezentis, Danita Jackson, Annie Johnson, Nilima Mehra, Arlene Washington, Jeanette Williams

GUESTS: Kevin Meyers – guest, Paul Sanfelippo – American United; Morgan Mc Clelland - First Transit; Fran Musci, Chris Fox, Paula Schultz, and Lisa Walters - Transit Plus

CALL TO ORDER:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the November 16, 2021 meeting were approved.

COMMITTEES:

Driver/Reservationist Recognition Committee: no report.

Membership Committee: no report

Public Relations Committee: David Buck reported that there is a new Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus and it is not yet known how it will affect everyone. The Federal mask mandate is in place until March 18, 2022. More information will be coming out of the White House today. Happy Holidays and looking forward to seeing everyone in 2022.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Transit Plus Office Remodeling Project: Fran Musci reported that the office is cleared out for demolition, but the remodeling has not yet started. No date yet to start. Probably waiting for supplies.

Transit Plus Pick Up and Drop Off Area at Bayshore: Chris Fox reported that the new location is north and east of the old location. It is next to the new Target store. We are still trying to get a bench. David Buck commented that his brother has trouble walking all around the Town Center streets. They have AIRA, but other people may not have this. Chris offered to put them and others in touch with an Orientation Trainer or a Mobility Management Travel Trainer. Grace inquired if this new information about Bayshore is on our website. Fran Musci advised that the streets at Bayshore are not navigable for our big vans so Bayshore Management has directed us to this new location.

NEW BUSINESS:

Vendor Staffing Mitigation Strategies: Fran Musci reported that our vendors continue to have staffing issues that are worsening due to COVID. Transit Plus is investigating options to help the vendors continue to provide service. Some of the options investigated were shrinking the service area to the federally mandated ¾ mile or enforcing conditional eligibility. These options were considered too drastic however. There are 4 other strategies that Transit Plus is proposing to implement to save staff instead. The first modification is to reinstate the No-show Policy to reduce cancellations and change rider behaviors that negatively impact service. The second modification is to increase the pick-up window from 0/25 minutes to 0/30 minutes. This will give the vendors more time to pick up riders and help make drop offs more efficient. The third modification will be to shorten the booking window from 14 to 7 days. Most people (70%) book their rides 3 days ahead. This change still gives people plenty of time to book rides and is expected to reduce cancellations, call volume and call takers. The fourth modification will be to have Reservations open at 8:00 a.m. and close at 4:30 p.m. Paratranist needs to have the same business hours as fixed route. Fixed route offices close for business at 4:30 p.m. This will provide better staffing for the middle of the day. Overall these are not big changes, but they can help give the vendors a little breathing room with their staffing and operations. These are small sacrifices for a greater good. Transit Plus wants to finalize these changes by the end of the year, notify everyone next month, and implement these on March 1st. Grace Graves asked if the NS policy will have more teeth when reinstated. Fran advised that our current No-show Policy meets FTA expectations. The policy cannot be too punitive. We are going to enforce the policy the same as before. David Buck stated that he was happy with that, but wished the policy could have more teeth or that people understood it better. David stated that he likes the 7 day booking window but that his brother may not. It may not be a big deal, once people get used to it.

Federal Mask Mandate: Fran Musci reported that the Federal Mask Mandate has been extended to March 18, 2022. Everyone needs to wear a mask unless your disability prevents you from wearing a mask. There are only a small number of people who are unable to wear a mask.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Paula Schultz reported that as of November 30, 2021 there have been 46,994 year to date ADA boardings. This is up almost 6,000 from last year. In 2021, the Mobility Management Team has provided 69 presentations in the community, 35 travel training sessions and 8 ADA sensitivity classes. The January WAMM meeting will feature Veyo and attendees can ask questions. We will be promoting AIRA in 2022. We also be providing a virtual presentation of our ADA sensitivity training to StarTran in Lincoln, Nebraska.

CARRIER REPORTS:

American United: Paul Sanfelippo reported that American United is also making changes in order to be more successful. They will no longer be taking pre-booked reservations for the general public, but will still allow these for accounts such as Transit Plus. They want to hold down no-shows and track them by phone number. Addresses for repeat offenders will be unable to receive service. American United is also now requiring destinations for orders. Since Thanksgiving they have added 5 full time drivers who work the day shift.

Transit Express: not present

First Transit: Morgan McClelland reported that First Transit is doing a little better on drivers. They need to put more drivers on the road. The holiday month is hard to hire in. On-time is okay. Rides are getting longer. New people can be challenged as to how to get their job done. Reducing the reservation lead time will be helpful with cancellations. No rides will get denied with a shorter window. Grace Graves mentioned that the telephone hold times seem to be longer. Morgan explained that First Transit needs more staff in Reservations and will try to put more people in the Department. Vickie took over for Sonya when she left. They recently hired two reservationists and then lost them to other employers even though wages were raised. People are not available or refusing to work. They usually have 3 to 5 reservationists, and 2 or 3 schedulers on duty at a time. Fran Musci stated that the numbers for Transit Express may even be smaller.

TRANSIT PLUS: Fran Musci reported that Transit Plus is in the process of hiring a new assessor. We are also working on implementing Service Infractions. The document management project is almost complete and new processes are being put into place. Van and taxi ridership was down in November.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Kevin Meyers stated that American United has the ability to send a text or a call if someone has a smart phone and asked if the van service could do something similar with a reminder call to help with cancellations. Fran explained that our current scheduling software could have that capability if another program was added. The cost to purchase an IVR module is \$250,000.00 which is a big capital expense. It would also not be quick fix to implement. Fran stated she would look into it again. Grace Graves asked if a person could do this the night before. Fran explained that adding staff is not easy right now. Morgan explained that you would also be talking about making 600 manual calls the night before. First Transit already spends time every night making calls to drivers to remind them of their shifts. Adding staff effects pricing. Each outbound call also has a cost. Trapeze charges a high fee to integrate IVR systems with their software. Although of value, it is not easy because of the way Trapeze charges. Fran stated that Transit Plus is trying to get rider emails and using an email service as a way of contacting riders. A capital approval would be needed for an IVR and the earliest that could be possible would be 2024. This can't be fixed in the short term. Milwaukee County owns everything and something like this has to go through the budget process. Laurel asked if there would be any grant money available for this. Fran explained that so far we haven't found a grant with an award big enough. Perhaps this could get put into a future RFP for a van provider.

David Buck thanked Laurel Henschel for leading the meeting last month and he wished everyone a safe, happy, joyful Holiday. He also hoped that everyone would be considerate of one another and of the vendors.

Chris Fox reminded everyone that snow is coming and that he would give Lisa Walters a list to share about resources in the community for snow removal.

ADJOURNMENT

