



Meeting Minutes - Approved ADA TRANSIT SUBCOMMITTEE TO THE TRANSIT AND PARKING COMM

Monday, May 18, 2009

5:10 PM 215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, Room 303 (Madison
Municipal Building)

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Staff: Crystal Martin, Jim Drengson, Ann Schroeder, Ann Gullickson

Guest: Connie McCabe

Present: 7 -

Chris Schmidt; Jeanne M. Tregoning; Susan M. De Vos; Mary E. Jacobs;
Ida W. Nathan; Carl D. DuRocher and William J. Tangney

Excused: 1 -

Michael A. Huckaby

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. DuRocher moved approval of the April minutes as written; Mr. Tangney seconded. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. DeVos thanked Mr. DuRocher for his service on the Subcommittee. This could be his last meeting depending on what happens at the Common Council meeting tomorrow night regarding his Transit and Parking Commission appointment.

Ms. Martin invited Ms. McCabe to the meeting. She has been giving feedback about paratransit services, and Ms. Martin promised to invite her during discussions about contracting standards. Ms. McCabe has used fixed route and commends those drivers, especially for their winter work. A couple of years ago, she started using paratransit and hasn't had as successful an experience.

4. [14757](#)

Maintenance Manager - James Drengson

Metro is looking at low floor paratransit buses, Spirit of Mobility, to replace the Elfs. There hasn't been a final decision, but Mr. Drengson passed out information about what is being considered. Other buses are cutaways that are rear wheel drive converted to be front wheel drive, which caused a lot of

problems. Hopefully this conventional GM chassis with rear wheel drive will solve some of those. There are seats over the wheel wells.

Ms. DeVos said for a long time she has been thinking about smaller vehicles. She wondered how many more seats there would be in these vehicles if they had two fewer spots for wheelchairs. Mr. Drengson said if you use this arrangement, there are 17 seats. There are fold up seats in three wheelchair positions. Ms. DeVos asked about how these compare to the hybrids regarding fuel efficiency. It would be better because they are a smaller bus. Mr. Drengson said he did not have more information about this, but he could get it.

Mr. Drengson demonstrated the new type of restraint. It is self-tensioned; it doesn't have to be cranked in order to be locked. It also has a line that shows the restraint is in place. Mr. Tangney wondered if there were enough areas of attachment in the floor to deal with different sizes of wheelchairs so that a chair isn't restrained in a way that the chair would move during an accident. Mr. Drengson said in the newer vehicles, there are channels so that the wheelchairs can be tied down in a safer way. Metro needs input from the riders and drivers to see if there should be more areas of restraint for tie downs. Ms. DeVos said other feedback about paratransit has focused on how bumpy rides are. Mr. Drengson said Metro had added air bags under the suspension to try to improve the ride. Perhaps those need to be adjusted. The bus being considered has air suspension. Mr. Drengson said we hope to get this bus for a demonstration in June.

Ms. Nathan asked if the roof of the Spirit of Mobility is curved in the same way as Transit Solutions vans. In those vans, in the first seat you are forced to sit very close to the wall because of the curve. If you hit a bump, you hit your head. Mr. Drengson said he doesn't know for sure; it appears very boxy. Ms. Martin said she would check on Transit Solutions' vans. Ms. Nathan said you also have to lower your head to get into the door or you'll bump your head. Mr. DuRocher asked if she goes in on the lift. She does.

Metro is considering primarily the 26' vehicle. Mr. Tangney said he thinks Metro would rather have more room for wheelchairs than all the seating. Mr. Tangney wondered if the 21' would be sufficient because it appears there would be room for 4 wheelchairs. If there were no seats in the right rear, you could have a second ramp. That gives you greater flexibility about the order in which you pick up and drop off people. It could make dispatching easier. Mr. Drengson said that is a possibility. Ms. Brunette-Tregoning said with a 23-passenger vehicle, she would be concerned about travel time for riders. Mr. Drengson said with that vehicle, there would be 8 seats and 4 or 5 tie downs for our needs. We would not want that 23-passenger configuration. Ms. Martin said Metro has been trying to make the interior seating flexible so that we can modify seating with flip seats to accommodate whatever passenger load we have. Ms. Nathan said if you have a 12-passenger vehicle, that could add waiting time. Currently, she factors in 25 minutes wait time. Ms. Martin said in the scheduling process, the computer parameters are set up for a 20-minute window for pick up. The on-board time is not supposed to be over 60 minutes. If it were impossible to make 12 pick-ups, the schedule wouldn't be made that way. Ms. Nathan said if it is unlikely to pick up that many people, why have a van that can accommodate that. Ms. Martin said sometimes there are group

picks up from one group location to another group location. That number of people can be picked up and dropped off due to the shared locations. Mr. Drengson said Metro needs a vehicle about that big to get four wheelchairs in with tie downs. Ms. DeVos asked why the number four was chosen. Ms. Martin said we have some group homes with four people who leave at the same time and all use mobility devices. Ms. Brunette-Tregoning asked why not have two 21' and two 26' vehicles. Mr. Drengson said a 21' vehicle is not that large. The Starcrafts that Metro has right now are 25', so these are comparable to what Metro has now. The new ones will be low floor, which have a little less space. Mr. DuRocher said compare this to a mainline bus, which is 40'.

Mr. DuRocher asked if this purchase would be 80% federally and 20% locally funded. Ms. Gullickson said this would be 100% federal due to stimulus funds. Low floor buses are about 20% more expensive than high floor buses. When Metro got stimulus funding, we decided to use some of it to upgrade to low floor buses. We will be ordering four buses. Their expected life is 7 to 10 years. The other buses were 4 to 5 years, and we were getting 5 years out of them. Metro thinks these will function better than a high floor bus. Two years from now, we have a replacement of 16 high floor buses. This will allow us to test if we like these enough to budget the extra money for low floors in that replacement. Ms. Gullickson said a fixed route diesel bus costs \$300,000 to \$330,000 for a 12-year bus.

Mr. Tangney asked if the driver can operate the ramp and doors from the inside and the outside. Mr. Drengson did not know. Ms. Martin said there are two set ups – one manual and one automatic, but the automatic activation is very slow. Mr. Tangney said his experience as a driver is that it was miserable to have to have a door open for a long period of time and having air conditioning or heat escape. Mr. Drengson said often there is a button to push from the outside to control the door. Ms. Nathan said she feels more comfortable if the driver is outside near her to hold an elbow or help. Mr. Tangney said he is not talking about where the driver is, but just that he can close the door from inside or outside, for example if he is assisting a door-to-door passenger. Mr. Drengson said Metro is also asking for an auxiliary heater. Ms. Nathan wondered if any of this has been presented to the drivers. She hears from drivers that they feel nobody asks them or listens to their ideas about buses. She thought it would also be good to send surveys to riders. Mr. Drengson said Metro does get driver input. Ms. Martin said drivers do give us good feedback, such as about the seatbelts. Ms. Nathan said for the slippery seats, it would be good to have an armrest to hold onto.

Mr. DuRocher said two things he's heard about the Elfs (low floor buses) – the level of the seating and the level of the driver's seat. Drivers had problems climbing up if they are shorter. He has also heard that driver seats are very stiff and uncomfortable. Mr. Drengson said they have specifically requested air seats, similar to those on fixed route buses. Mr. DuRocher said he wondered about the rear door as well. Mr. Drengson said it might be an option that is available, but it might not work with our other options. Ms. Martin said there were challenges with the rear doors in the Elfs, such as passengers trying to exit without the driver's knowledge. Mr. DuRocher said it's worth thinking about the benefits, being able to load and unload with more flexibility. Ms. Martin said we still consider a rear door each time we purchase paratransit buses. We feel lucky to again have the opportunity to try low floor buses

because it's such a benefit to have a low floor with a ramp rather than a lift.

Mr. Tangney asked that this group be notified when the sample bus is available so they can view it too. Mr. Dregson said he could arrange that.

5. [14758](#)

Paratransit Contract Standards - Performance Standards

Attachments: [Paratransit Contracting Standards - Performance Standardspdf](#)

Ms. Martin that we have in the past talked about performance standards regarding road calls, level of service, passenger comfort and safety. We've had some experience now with those standards. We can review them and perhaps make modifications to them. One big issue is missed trips. If the driver is over an hour late, that is a missed trip. We used 60 minutes as a time when plans could no longer be salvaged. Ms. DeVos said she has experienced in the past where she would call after 20 or 30 minutes only to find that her ride had not been assigned. It appears to her that those situations still happen. Ms. Martin said many days, all rides can be assigned. But if weather is bad or a vehicle breaks down, it can be difficult to maintain a schedule and rides must be unscheduled and re-assigned. Some paratransit operations leave almost 5% of their trips unscheduled for the day of service. Ms. Nathan described a situation where she called multiple times and was told there would be a long wait. When she finally got picked up, the driver told her he had been assigned her ride 15 minutes before. Why couldn't someone have been given her ride earlier? Mr. Tangney said perhaps there could be a good map of common locations, such as Hilldale, with codes for entrances so everyone could be on the same page.

Ms. Martin said the performance standards are used to try to prevent these things from happening in the future. Staff is suggesting that the definition of a missed trip be changed from a pick up that is 60 minutes or more late to that the passenger is dropped off after their requested appointment time. Ms. DeVos asked how effective it is to use sanctions of 1%. Ms. Martin said it depends on how much work a contractor is doing for Metro. Ms. DeVos wondered if it would be better to exact a specific amount of money or whether money is even the best penalty.

Ms. Jacobs asked when Transit Solutions is having a problem picking up a passenger (and the ride is not part of the Long Term Assignment program), whether that ride should be reassigned. Ms. Martin said she would follow up on that situation.

Mr. Tangney moved to table item #6 until the next meeting.

Ms. McCabe said she is concerned about Badger Cab and Transit Solutions. Some people with mild disabilities have to ride in the back of a cab. There are three seats in the back, and the center seat is difficult if not impossible for people who are elderly or with some disabilities such as multiple sclerosis to get into that center seat. Perhaps there should not be three people in the back seats. Ms. McCabe complained to the cab companies and is treated better now. Badger Cab has addressed all of her issues, but she is concerned about

other passengers. Transit Solutions spends a lot of time on customer service – talking to the customer and letting the customer talk. The cab drivers don't want to talk, which is ok as long as they have seatbelts, and the drivers drive safely. Drivers can't keep the schedule if they have three passengers in different parts of the city. There appear to be scheduling problems with some contractors, such as Transit Solutions. Ms. McCabe wants everyone to have the good service she now receives.

Ms. DeVos said apparently Trapeze is still not working – it makes a schedule by drawing a straight line from point A to point B and doesn't take into account how long the trip truly will take. Ms. Martin said Trapeze uses a more complex algorithm than just the straight line, but some contractors do their own scheduling; they don't use Metro's software.

Ms. Martin asked members what they think about changing the definition of a missed trip from a 60 minute late pick up to being dropped off after appointment time. Ms. Jacobs said the new definition is realistic. The scheduling rules say use 45 minutes for travel time, and add in the 20 minutes window and that is almost 60 minutes. Alder Schmidt asked if in changing the definition to arrival time there is a danger of encouraging drivers to drive recklessly. Ms. Martin said it doesn't manifest at the driver level on a per ride basis. It is a percentage of the overall business, which encourages dispatchers and managers to manage their business. The drivers get compensated the same either way. Alder Schmidt said perhaps the managers would encourage drivers to keep up no matter what. Ms. Martin said most businesses have pretty stringent insurance requirements.

6. [14760](#)

Metro Transit Management Performance Audit - 2009

Attachments: [Madison Metro MPA Exec Summary 04 09.pdf](#)

Ms. Martin said she just wanted to bring the report to this meeting and make it available. It has a lot of information and we can discuss it in chunks at future meetings. Ms. Nathan asked why Metro gets money from Fitchburg, but only goes to the City Hall and nowhere else. Mr. DuRocher explained that Metro service extends beyond the city limits based on contracts with those municipalities. The number of hours of service Metro provides in another municipality is a negotiated number of hours for which that municipality pays the local share. Right now, Fitchburg is at a higher level of service than they had been, but that is nothing that Metro can unilaterally decide. There is enthusiasm in Fitchburg to extend service; Metro meets with them every two months. Also, Metro provides complimentary paratransit service within three-quarters of a mile for areas in which there is fixed route service, except for commuter routes.

7. [14761](#)

Revenue Impact of Paratransit Peak Fares - Old Business

The committee requested that staff get some information about what a single, revenue neutral fare would look like. Ms. Martin apologized that she wasn't able to bring that back today due to timing of the meeting and planned

absences. She suggested that the committee, even without that information, could make a motion. Mr. Tangney moved to refer to the TPC that they request a proposal for a single (rather than peak and off-peak) paratransit fare that has a revenue neutral impact on the budget for 2010, and which would include a specific fare. Ms. Jacobs seconded. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

Mr. DuRocher had hoped that we could put something into effect prior to 2010. Ms. Martin said that if there were an avenue to do that, she would try to work on it. Ms. DeVos said there are service changes scheduled to go into effect in August; perhaps the new paratransit fare could go into effect at the same time.

8. [10785](#)

Reports

- a. Transit & Parking Commission
- b. Commission on People with Disabilities
- c. Contracted Service Oversight Subcommittee
- d. Dane County Specialized Transportation Committee
- e. Other Community Meetings

Reports were tabled until the next meeting.

9. [08706](#)

Other Transit Related Announcements

There were no other announcements.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Tangney moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. DuRocher. The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 PM.

[14762](#)

Attachment: Paratransit Performance Indicators - March 2009

Attachments: [Para Indicators March09.pdf](#)