



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
www.cityofmadison.com

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

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

5:10 PM

215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Room 303 (Madison Municipal Building)

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Present: 6 -

Tim Gruber; Carl D. DuRocher; William J. Tangney; Jeanne M. Tregoning;
Susan M. De Vos and Mary E. Jacobs

Absent: 1 -

Michael A. Huckaby

Excused: 2 -

Ida W. Nathan and James Cobb

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Tangney moved to accept the minutes of the last meeting as written; Mr. DuRocher seconded. The motion passed with Ms. Brunette-Tregoning abstaining.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public appearances.

4. [12931](#)

Replacement of 3 Paratransit Buses

- a. Replacement Schedule
- b. New Low-Floor Technology
- c. Spare Ratio

Attachments: [Paratran Fleet Replacement 2009.pdf](#)

Ms. Martin said Metro has 19 paratransit buses in the fleet. Starcraft are high floor with lifts. Elf are low floor with ramps, but have to work around wheel wells. They have a rear door, which was experimental for Metro. Some time ago Metro had Orions with a rear door that were also low floor. Those are not made any more. Metro had hoped to use the Elf also as smaller buses for fixed route service. They were ordered with destination signs, etc. Many drivers didn't like the Elfs. Other vehicle types aren't as loud. There were also problems with the back door staying shut. Paratransit buses only have a 5-year useful life. Metro has been soliciting information from drivers about what does

and doesn't work. There have been some demonstrations about new in low floor technology. Metro has been running a very tight spare ratio with vehicles in for service. With this purchase, Metro is hoping it might improve on the spare ratio.

Ms. Gullickson said that Metro has enough money budgeted to replace 3 paratransit buses with 4 buses that are comparable to the Starcrafts. Metro struggles every day to meet the need for buses. Now that there are fewer issues with being off, Metro needs a different spare. If we have 20 paratransit vehicles instead of 19, it will allow a bus in for maintenance without disrupting service. Metro has experienced having drivers sitting around waiting for buses to be ready to get on the road.

Metro would really like feedback from people about the low floor versus the high floor buses. Ms. DeVos said she heard from drivers that it is hard on their knees to climb up onto the lift. Ms. Gullickson said low floor buses are more expensive than the kind of high floor buses Metro would purchase. Mr. Tangney and Ms. Brunette-Tregoning both said they prefer the low floor buses. High floor buses make for a much bumpier ride. Mr. DuRocher said his experience is that high floor buses have a much more rigid suspension. It also depends where you are tied down. He said it is hard to totally separate the driver experience from the passenger experience because they interact. It can be dicey on the ramp on crowded streets. One advantage of low floor buses is that the rear door makes it possible to do drop off/pick up on one-way streets. Problems with the Elfs included mechanical issues and not being popular with drivers.

Ms. Gullickson said there are some low floor buses that have other advantages that Metro is looking at. She is hearing that people prefer low floor buses. Mr. DuRocher did say that it is easier on the schedule to flip out a ramp than to deploy the lift. Ms. Brunette-Tregoning said that in the rainy season it could be problematic with the more driver interactive lifts and lead to more driver time off.

Mr. DuRocher said there are a lot of passengers who have involuntary movements and when they are on a ramp four feet off the ground, a few seconds of pushing the joy stick the wrong way could be disastrous.

Mr. Tangney asked with Badger Bus starting to provide more service whether it would be less necessary to have four buses rather than three. Ms. Gullickson said no. Metro has a contractual agreement with the Union agreeing to keep a certain number of employees in-house. There are 20 drivers in-house. Metro has to protect the jobs that are already at Metro while allowing for subcontracting. The low floor buses are significantly more expensive – as much as \$40,000 to \$50,000 more per bus, which is about double the price of a high floor model. Part of the decision is budgetary. If Metro buys low floor buses, we would have to add more money. Ms. Gullickson said Metro appreciates the Subcommittee's feedback. There is not a niche so far that a low floor paratransit small bus vendor has been able to compete with cutaways. Staff will continue to investigate this and report back to the Subcommittee. Ms. DeVos said even a lift in the back of the vehicle would be better than a lift on the side. Ms. Martin said we can look around and sometimes we can piggyback with someone making a big purchase to get a

better price.

Ms. DeVos said at certain times some routes have very few riders and if diesel costs are an issue, it might make sense to use a vehicle that gets better mileage. It would have to carry a wheelchair and other riders. The idea of the Elf was to have it work in other settings. That didn't work out, but the idea was a good one.

Ms. Brunette-Tregoning asked what happens to the retired buses. Metro sells them at auction and gets some money from that. Mr. Tangney asked if the new lower cost in gas affects what Metro can do in purchasing. Ms. Gullickson said it does not because Metro is locked into a fuel price until the end of 2009. It's such a huge piece in the budget, not being subject to such volatility was important compared to getting the rock bottom prices. Ms. DeVos said it might end up being a very good decision. Mr. DuRocher said the first operating budget was prepared using \$3.75 per gallon; it was locked in at a less expensive rate.

Mr. DuRocher wondered if the fuel contractor would be willing to lock in longer for a lower price. Ms. Gullickson said when they locked in a price, it was based on the future prices that day, and Metro had only one hour to decide. The vendor had to be able to buy the fuel that day. In any City contract, there is some sort of termination clause. But since the contractor already bought the fuel futures, if Metro were to back out, we would not be able to work with the few vendors who are able to supply the kind of fuel that we need. If we were to extend, they would be buying futures again.

5. [12932](#)

Paratransit Service Provider Transitions - January 2009

Mick Howen and Jason Finske, Operations Managers from Badger Bus Lines, attended the meeting. Badger Bus will be assuming a larger role in Metro service. Metro went through the options process with its contractors, and First Transit was priced outside of the budget. The service providers Metro will be working with were competitive. This gives Badger Bus an opportunity to expand their van service. Metro has increased the number of ambulatory trips with Transit Solutions. They are having some time on board issues, but Metro is running reports with them so they can deal with those issues. Also Metro has increased productivity with direct service after resolving some personnel issues. Coming up shortly, Badger Bus will provide night and weekend service.

Mr. Howe said that Badger Bus has acquired all the equipment they need for the increased service they will be providing. They will start training very soon for new employees. They feel confident they will be able to continue the quality of service they had been up until now.

Ms. Martin said that Metro has provided start and end times for routes for the January. Ms. Martin asked about their preparation for the start of night and weekend service. Mr. Howe said their preparation is whatever it takes. They are well staffed, and the Operations Managers plan to be available for the first few weeks.

Mr. Tangney asked if new Badger Bus drivers receive sensitivity training. Mr. Howe said they do, and they also have periodic training. Some of it is needs based and provides a chance to educate all staff. They are also participating in the taxi licensing process with the City of Madison.

Mr. DuRocher asked if there was a dispatcher at base. That is a contractual requirement. The transition happens at 3:00 AM on Jan 1st. Mr. DuRocher asked whether during the transition period Metro would have directly operated vehicles out nights and weekends. Ms. Martin said that Metro has not scheduled those vehicles, but should we need to put those vehicles into overtime we can. However, Ms. Martin has been working with Badger Bus to make cover contingencies. Badger Bus Lines did take over the Long-Term Assignment (LTA) program, and that transition went very well.

Ms. Jacobs asked what type of vehicles Badger Bus is using. They are using vans similar to LTA vehicles. Ms. Jacobs said she is concerned about issues she is having with another vendor with loading too many passengers so that it takes too long and leads to late service and behavioral problems. Ms. Martin said that scheduling would be done through Trapeze. If there is an issue, Badger Bus sends out another driver or van first. Their first concern is customer service rather than the bottom line. Mr. Howe said that they take great pride in their on time numbers. They talk to every driver on a monthly basis about their on time performance. He said they feel they do a good job. Ms. Brunette-Tregoning said that she concurred that her Badger Bus rides are on time. Mr. Howe encouraged people to call him if necessary; customer service is very important to them.

Ms. Brunette-Tregoning said in the beginning new buses are wonderful. As they get older, they are a lot bumpier. It also depends on the driver. Some go too fast, and that makes for a bumpy ride. Mr. Howe said that is good feedback to have. Ms. Brunette-Tregoning asked how many new vehicles Badger Bus is getting for the increased service. Mr. Howe said that because of the length of the agreement, they were not able to buy all new vehicles, but they bought the very best low mileage vehicles they could. They have a low percentage of downtime with their fleet. The entire fleet consists of lift vehicles, except the campus route, which is a minivan with a ramp. Their vehicles accommodate 3 people who use wheelchairs and 6 ambulatory passengers with a hydraulic lift and a manual backup. Ms. Jacobs asked if then there would be 9 people per vehicle. Ms. Martin said not more often than happens now. It will be similar service to the current provider. Mr. Howe said he is sure that the current provider is doing a wonderful job. His goal is to do better, whatever that means.

Ms. DeVos asked if the main drawback of the accessible taxi type vehicle is the size and capacity because it sounded superior in terms of the ride. Often, a vehicle that has a capacity for 3 wheelchairs might only have one, so it could be good to go with the better quality vehicle. Ms. Martin said she would try to get the capacity information from Trapeze. The accessible taxis are \$96,000 or \$100,000 to get three vehicles modified and some training.

6. [12933](#)

Duplication of Services to Common Destinations - Update

Ms. Martin said she and Karen Darcy met with Suzanne Hanson from 901 Post Road, which houses MARC South, Retirement and Activities Center and Responsive Employment. She also met with Linda Bronson, Director of Opportunities, Inc., which recently bought Valley Packaging. They are talking about maintaining activities but transitioning in new staff. They are interested in negotiating trip time and wanted to fast track starting this before the 1st of the year. Doug Hunt thought that would be a good idea. They had set a December 1st start date. It didn't start as smoothly as we might have hoped what with vacations and snow and getting information together. At Opportunities, Inc. there is a little frustration at the 3:30 PM departure time. They opted for starting early at 8:00 AM. They are considering a 2:00 PM departure from their facility. The facilities that opted for the 2:00 PM departure have worked out well. Ms. DeVos wondered if everyone chooses 2:00 PM, whether that would be problematic. Ms. Martin said that time of day really slow for Metro, so it's a good time. Any problems that have come up are being worked out.

Ms. Martin also met with Debbie Webb and Kevin Klein from MARC East and West. They will start negotiated times in January. They have given Metro all of their information with a couple of exceptions. Everyone has been positive. Ms. Martin said she hadn't calculated any improvement in productivity yet, but consistency had been good and MARC South and Opportunities, Inc. drop offs can get picked up by same vehicle because they are so close.

7. [10785](#)

Reports - Non-Action Items

- a. Transit & Parking Commission
- b. Commission on People with Disabilities
- c. Contracted Service Oversight Subcommittee
- d. Dane County Specialized Transportation Committee
- e. Long Range Metro Transit Planning Ad Hoc Committee
- f. Other Community Meetings
- g. Staff Report - On-going Projects

a. Transit & Parking Commission – Mr. DuRocher said that staff had prepared a lot of scenarios about the types of fare schemes that could be adopted and all the changes there would be to the different fare media. He looked at the impact it would have on paratransit. At this point, no change was adopted. One scenario showed peak and non-peak rates of \$3.50. There is a lot of optimism that no increase will occur based on things like ridership continuing to increase even though gas prices are going down. Ms. DeVos pointed out that having jobs also impacts ridership. The TPC expects and hopes to continue to have more ridership, which will provide more revenue even without increased fares. There was a debate about how much ridership falls when fares are increased. There was some feeling that Metro's elasticity model underestimated the loss of ridership when raising fares because of falling gas prices. All agreed that increased ridership is necessary for a healthy transit system. The TPC decided that if Metro doesn't spend money for security, the contingency fund and marketing, maybe the budget will get by without a fare increase. If not, they might have a drop off in ridership and six months later have to cut service. He has not heard from anyone disappointed in the decision except for the Mayor's office. They want to support good public transportation as well but came to a different conclusion about how to do that.

What the TPC wants to do is expand service and expand Metro and we don't get there by decreasing ridership.

b. Commission on People with Disabilities – Mr. Tangney was asked to be a sort of Ambassador-at-Large to be able to go to various meetings on short notice to talk about accessibility. The Commission is pushing for accessibility for single family homes and duplexes. Multiple dwellings down to a three unit building will be adaptable including a first floor bathroom and entrance that is visitable. They are now trying to get the building industry to do this all the time from the beginning. They are getting close to the end of the Allied Drive accessibility issues and will be turning its focus on Truax Field. Their next major goal is being ready for an emergency response disaster program. The system is set up, but the people who need to know about it may not know. Public officials (firefighters, EMTs, etc.) need to know about people who would need help evacuating in a crisis – for example a person who is paralyzed needing to get down stairs. That is a county wide program. They are disseminating information to the public so relevant facts can get to 911 centers. They are trying for better communication.

c. Contracted Service Oversight Subcommittee – All of the contracting partners have adopted their local budgets including contingency fund money.

d. Dane County Specialized Transportation Committee – There will be a meeting on 12/11/08.

e. Other Community Meetings – No other community meetings.

f. Staff Report – On-Going Projects – No other reports.

8. [08706](#) Other Transit Related Announcements - Non-Action Items

No other items.

[12934](#) Attachments: Performance Indicators - August and September 2008

Attachments: [Para Indicators Aug08.pdf](#)
[Para Indicators Sept08.pdf](#)

9. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Tangney moved adjournment; Ms. Jacobs seconded. The motion passed by voice vote/other. The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 PM.