

Santa Clarita Transit

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting

March 6, 2014

Meeting location: City of Santa Clarita, City Hall, Century Room

Members Present: John Taylor, John Panico, Anna Bettencourt, Kurt Baldwin, Linda Wood, Keith Curry, James Hogan

General Public: Lorraine Lopez, Adrian Aguilar, Jenni Martin, Alfredo Torales, Denise Ware, Lorraine Hernandez, Vicki Sokolik, Lillian Shaw, Ella Clark, Jessica Calder, Russell Case, Pam Hogan, Line Paquin

January Minutes

- John asked to correct the name of the Church to Saint Kateri Church from Blessed Kateri on the January Minutes. (Page 1)

Motion approved for January Minutes

General Public Comments

Ella Clark suggested that MV transportation should hire experienced dispatchers who know the City of Santa Clarita very well. Ella suggested that as part of their training, they should go on ride along.

Ella also commented on the scheduling of their routes for Dial-a-Ride and Access, as an example, she stated that on certain occasions you will go North to Castaic before you arrive in Canyon Country which is East. This is out of the way, it takes a long time and it waste gas. Ella suggested that the scheduling be set up into Quadrants.

Ella also stated that without the riders, MV transportation would not be in business, therefore, the organization should listen to their riders. She asked that they take initiative.

Ella also suggested that AAC Meetings should be posted on the vehicles so that they know more about what's going on.

Vicki Sokolik commented on her experience from November, going to the Metrolink. Vicki stated that they drove all over the valley before dropping her off at her destination causing her to miss her train.

She had to make numerous phone calls to her family and she felt that it was an inconvenience and unnecessary.

She would rather be at her destination on time, then to be picked up on time. The reason for this is because if you're picked up on time, they're often kept on the vehicle for a very long time.

Member Comments

John asked to proceed with the agenda, and that he would comment when Access, Metrolink and MV spoke.

Linda stated that new driver dropped her off at another side of City Hall and that it's dangerous because someone could fall.

Kurt stated that budget cuts have affected the independent living center and as a result some employees were let go.

Kurt stated that 40 people are attending the Para transit Rider Coalition and it's growing. The next meeting was announced to be on March 18th from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. via Google Hangout (Video Conference.)

Jim requested that hold prompt be updated to reflect current meetings.

Old Business

N/A

Adrian introduced Russell Case, director of Fare collections services for Metrolink. He discussed the new PCA policy and the Impact of the change in policy.

Director of Fare collections services for Metrolink, Russell Case

Russell discussed the initiative for the charge for the PCA's; Access pays Metrolink for Ridership over the year. Last year, Access put a cap on their funds to Metrolink which resulted in a loss for Metrolink. The board of directors met; reviewed the ridership and noticed that some there is some abuse of the policy and it is rising. For example, multiple PCA's are boarding with one Access rider, therefore, causing Metrolink to take preventative action.

In June 2013, Metrolink created a program where every PCA would be given an Identification Card. (boarding pass) The ID would state which Access rider they are assigned to, the expiration date, and a photo of the individual. Metrolink charges a one-time fee of \$25 for the card, and the card is renewable. If the member needs multiple ID'S for PCA's that are assigned to them, then it's a \$15 for every additional pass.

In May, 2013 Metrolink started a public outreach, including card drops on the trains and on their website. The information provides where the application may be obtained and any pressing information. The cards are processed within 10 days and are mailed from Downtown Los Angeles.

In March 2014 Metrolink conducted a 30- day "Soft Launch" (not completely enforced) where fare enforcement sheriff's and on board security handed out flyers and communicated that beginning April 7, all PCA's will be required to carry their identification card.

Metrolink will be using Facebook, Twitter and additional 10, 000 card drops on the train in order to create awareness of the change.

Questions and Comments

John asked Russell if when the Metrolink Board of Directors met, if they reviewed public comments.

- Russell responded that they did in fact review public comments.

John asked what is the basis and terms for the funding.

- Russell explained that there is a general Agreement between Access Services and Metrolink that Metrolink will bill Access for the amount of riders that use Access and Transfer to Metrolink per ride.

John asked if other communities are meeting to discuss the new policy change.

- Russell replied that a complete program that is reaching out through Access Services, the Accessibility Advisory Committee in Santa Clarita, Braille Institute, the Junior Blind of America and Easter Seals are conducting meetings throughout the month.

Pam Hogan asked how the ridership was determined

- Russell stated that they are being tabulated by Fare enforcement Sheriff's, the conductor, and most data was obtained from Union Station in Los Angeles. Metrolink security was keeping track of how many Access Riders were getting on and off the train with a PCA. In most cases, the Security would ask the rider for their Access card. This was conducted on random days of the month during peak times. The information suggested that the number of PCA's outweighed the number of actual Access Riders.

John Taylor stated that honest Access riders are being penalized for others actions.

- Russell commented that the data suggested that riders are abusing the system; therefore, the policy had to be implemented. Russell also commented that the original intent of the program was to charge every Access rider 50% off the stated fare. However, the board of directors opted to charge a one-time fee of \$25 per PCA which is significantly less cost to the Access Rider annually.

Jim Hogan commented that in some cases there may be a "one-time" situation where he may use a family member as a PCA; he feels that it should not be required for him to have to pay the \$25 fee, therefore, he would rather pay the reduced fare.

Pam Hogan stated that some riders have multiple PCA's that are assigned to them, and that it ends up costing more to register them, then it would just to charge individually per ride.

Kurt Baldwin stated that he disagreed with the cap made by Access Services, because there is no way for them to quantify the ridership which is why other agencies turned to the TAP Card system, however, Metrolink did not.

Kurt Baldwin also stated that he went to a public hearing meeting in the Antelope Valley, Quantify fraud; he said that they told him that they didn't have anything to quantify the fraud, however, that it was a perception of fraud.

Kurt Baldwin also commented that he feels that Transit services don't understand what PCA's do for riders with disabilities. Not only do they make sure that a client doesn't get lost using public transportation, or talk to a potential stranger, but the PCA is mostly utilized so that riders/clients may be able to use the restroom, eat, or assist them at their employer or school. Kurt feels that Metrolink should have quantified the fraud, and then presented a policy.

Kurt Baldwin continued to speak about how the majority of PCA's are paid by a program called in-home supportive services. This program is a poverty level program, also paid by Medical. This program is only offered to those who are within this poverty level. The PCA's usually only work Part-time at a minimum wage income.

Kurt Baldwin feels that riders with disabilities will not be able to pay the fee, therefore, will not ride the train into Santa Clarita. He feels that it may be legal; however, they've set up a barrier for people with disabilities, and he feels that it's being discriminatory.

Line also commented that it's an issue, because she has multiple PCA's and that it's not fair.

Jim Hogan asked why if the Access card is good for 3 years, why isn't the PCA Card good for 3 years? Jim also feels that he agrees with the issues regarding the fraud, however, he feels that there is no way to quantify it and that Metrolink is doing it as a way to make money.

She has a suggestion that instead of registering the PCA, that the rider, or the client with the disability would hold the card and be in responsible for carrying the PCA card on Metrolink.

Lillian Shaw asked why there is an additional pass or card to ride the Metrolink that has to be purchased, when the Access card states whether or not the rider needs a PCA. If the rider already qualifies to have a PCA, there is no need to have an additional pass, or fee for the PCA.

Jim Hogan and Pam Hogan stated that they will no longer ride the Metrolink

Ella Clark reiterated Russell's comments, stating that there are people who simply abuse the system and that unfortunately, others are penalized for their actions. Ella feels that since the room has a consensus on the policy, that the information should be gathered and given to Russell so that he can take it back to the Board of Directors for Metrolink.

John Taylor stated that he has 30 people in his visually impaired program, and that not one of them has committed fraud on the Metrolink.

- Russell concluded by stating that the comments made at the meeting will not and have not been taken lightly. Metrolink is committed to making the transition properly and fair to all those affected by the change in policy. Russell also stated that the notes from the meeting will be presented with the board of directors at Metrolink.

Keith Curry stated that there is approximately \$147, 000 disabled riders in the Los Angeles County, therefore, each rider will have to pay \$25 per PCA, which will be an estimated \$2.5 million dollars a year, and a possible \$1.5 million for the additional PCA's. Ultimately, there is an estimated total of \$4 million dollars annually in revenue for the Metrolink Service. Keith also commented that he hopes that the decision to charge the riders has not been driven by revenue services, because the disabled riders are going to be penalized.

Kurt Baldwin explained that because most of these riders are paid by Medical, therefore, their income is limited and they won't be able to pay the \$25.00 fee, neither does the PCA. Also, there is a possible liability issue, because riders will opt to ride without their PCA.

Jim Hogan asked if there were any ADA Lawyers at the Meeting

- Russell stated that he didn't think that the policy needed to be reviewed by ADA.

NEW BUSINESS

Adrian presented the On Time Performance percentages for Dial-A-Ride and Access for January and February 2014

January 90.6%

February 90.5%

Local & commuter On Time performance Percentages

Dec 87.8%

January 89.4%

Ridership also increased in January.

Adrian presented the statistics from the phone reports.

January 2014

Total Calls into the Call Center: 13, 337

Calls Handled: 11, 425

Calls Abandoned: 1,785

Average Hold Time: 1:13 min

February 2014

Total Calls into the Call Center: 12, 356

Calls Handled: 10, 698

Calls Abandoned: 1, 525

Average Hold Time: 2:03 min

March 1-4, 2014

Total Calls into the Call Center: 1, 606

Calls Handled: 1, 403

Calls Abandoned: 186

Average Hold Time: 1:13 min

Updates:

Adrian gave the group an update in regards to the discussions that were made at the last meeting with Mr. Anthony Franck. Adrian explained that Mr. Franck and Access Services worked together to provide a designated pick up location in his housing complex so that there was no mix up in the future. The location is also visible from his home, therefore, that should eliminate any confusion between the driver and Mr. Franck. Since then, there has been no reported issue.

Additionally, road supervisors have been assigned to supervise the service and be on the road making sure the service is running smoothly.

Adrian also updated the group that the delivery of new Access Vehicles has taken place. They have been inspected and two cut-away vehicles have also been delivered to replace the mini vans. These vehicles will be put into service at the end of the week.

Additionally, eleven new CNG buses have been delivered as well. These buses will retire the last of the diesel powered vehicles in our fleet, in about 2-3 weeks. The vehicles will be a lot easier for passengers with walkers and wheel chairs to board.

Lastly, the City is currently developing the budget next year. Transit is increasing the budget slightly to account for the Dial-A- Ride service, in order to keep up with the anticipated increase in ridership.

On a positive note we're in great shape financially. No plans on reducing the service.

Funds are also available for projects involving the senior center. This way the City of Santa Clarita can continue to work with the Senior Center to administer TAP card sales and the reduced fare program.

The Golden Valley Bridge project is currently working with Cal Trans for their approval for the design elements. May is the anticipated date for the bid to go out for construction of the bridge. This should begin the process to extend service through Golden Valley to Fair Oaks Ranch.

Someone asked if there is any anticipation to raise the fare of the local bus with the expansion of service.

- Adrian responded that there are no plans to increase service as of now.

John also asked how the opening of the McBean Regional Park and Ride was doing

- Adrian said that it's functioning successfully as of January 6th. As of March, there is an approximate 150-170 vehicles parked in the lot.

Adrian also shared of the process of improving Newhall and Sierra Hwy Park and Ride, as of nine months ago it became city property. The improvement process is being done in phases so that there is no disruption to the drivers parked there. Grating and asphalt will be some of the improvements made. The Gas Station adjacent to the park and ride has offered to let the commuter's park in his lot during repairs.

Access - Alfredo Torales

Access is currently in the beginning stages of online reservations.

On February 1st a community meeting took place in Santa Clarita with about 30 people in attendance. This meeting was conducted a little different by hosting it on a Saturday in order to generate more community attendance.

The 2014 Jerry Walker award was given to a driver from Santa Clarita. The Jerry Walker award is the biggest award that is presented by Access to anyone who Ricky Bachan who exemplified excellent service. He will be presented with the award at the Access Annual meeting in a few weeks.

Lorraine Hernandez commented that there is also an operator of the Month award for MV Transportation, and comments and commendations from patrons contribute to the recipient.

John Panico asked Alfredo what the origination is behind the relationship between Access and Metrolink and the ability to quote free fare for those with disabilities.

- Alfredo responded that for years Access would reimburse Metrolink per trip for a passenger, and the PCA was free. It's less money for the services, taxes and to the county for passengers to utilize public transportation. Therefore, the program between the two agencies was supported and the free program was initiated.

Pam asked if he was aware of the cost per trip on Metrolink and Per Access Trip.

- Alfredo responded by stating that generally a Para transit trip cost about \$35. Access would reimburse Metrolink about \$7.50 per trip, per customer, not including the PCA. So that was a cost savings for Access, therefore, patrons were encouraged to use the Metrolink for lengthy trips.

Russell commented that it cost more money to the tax payers to support the free fare program. Also, it costs Access Riders more money to use Access Services to get to the Antelope Valley than it would be on the Metrolink.

MV Transportation- Joy Lorraine Hernandez

Joy presented productivity for January and February

Trips:

January: 2,923

February 2, 918

No Shows:

January: 97

February: 72

Cancellations:

January: 792

February: 776

Late Trips:

January: 243

February: 244

On time percentage

January: 91.21%

February: 96.01%

Pam asked how aggressively MV is being in order to decrease the No Show's.

- Adrian responded that they are sending letters to those who do not cancel their appointments. The letter informs the customer the impact that they are having on our system. Also, we're not enforcing suspensions of service to those who have violated the No Show policy more than three times.

John Panico asked Lorraine Lopez about the GM status for MV Transportation.

- Lorraine responded that James Schultzman is no longer the GM for MV transit in Santa Clarita, but has taken a position in Las Vegas. Lorraine will be the GM interim.

Motion to close meeting approved.

