

Minutes
PCC Executive Committee Meeting
August 17, 2022

PCC Executive Committee Members Present: Marty Smith, PCC Chair; Jane Redmond, PCC Vice Chair; Cheryl Damico PCC Secretary; Roland Wong, PC&O Chair; Craig Nelson; Jessica Felix; Joan Kwansa; Kevin Lee; Mara Math; Mary McLain; Susan Kitazawa

PCC Members and Guests: Tracey Gamedah; Barry Taranto; Evelyn Engel

PCC Executive Committee Member Excused:

SF Paratransit Staff: Marc Soto; Joe Skelton; Kevin McDonald; Justin Leong; Carol Osorio; Matthew Teixeira; Catherine Callahan

SFMTA: Jonathan Cheng; Erin McAuliff; Forest Barnes

Marty Smith, PCC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

Read and Approve Agenda

Marty Smith read the agenda. The agenda was motioned/seconded/approved.

Approve Minutes of May 11th and June 29th meeting

The minutes were motioned/seconded/approved.

Comments from the Chair

Marty Smith stated that he did not believe that providing the option for taxis to offer upfront pricing will help the drivers. Based on his experience, he believes that it will not bring new business and did not like that SFMTA did not invite drivers to fully vet the idea. He would like a greater emphasis on incentives to bring taxi drivers back into the industry and would like to create a committee to strategize ways to recruit new drivers. Mara Math questioned the advantage of the upfront pricing for taxis.

Jessica Felix mentioned at the August 2022 PC&O taxi that they would like the on-time performance window for taxis to narrow from 30 minutes. Mara Math indicated that she rarely has had to wait a long time for taxis. Marc Soto mentioned that the on-time performance standard for taxis is regulated through city's transportation code

Susan Kitazawa stated that her partner, who is a taxi driver, has not been able to get set up with the automatic payment with the Flywheel app. Marc Soto understood that most drivers are being paid on time when using the Flywheel app. Roland Wong recently found out he could make reservation on Flywheel app but that the reservation isn't sent until 30 minutes before the requested time

SF Paratransit Rider's Guide

Marc Soto introduced Justin Leong to review the updated SF Paratransit Rider's Guide.

Justin Leong introduced the updated SF Paratransit Rider's Guide. Giving a brief history of the project, he indicated that it was first initiated in January 2020, using a consultant, Joey Goldman. The updated SF Paratransit Rider's Guide will combine all the current rider's guide (SF Access, Group Van, and taxi) and include additional information about recent programs, such as mobility management and new technology tools. The cover has new SFMTA logo branding for the SF Paratransit program with an updated photo of a new SF Paratransit vehicle. The sections are color coded according to the services being described. The booklet is more square shaped with updated images and more colorful images to make it more vibrant. Currently, the updated guide is under final review with the intent to make it available to the public by Fall 2022.

Susan Kitazawa would like for more contrast, like blue or forest green on white, to assist those with low vision. Kevin Lee asked when it would be completed. Marc Soto responded in Fall 2022. Roland Wong likes the consolidation of the three current Rider's Guide into one. Both he and Mara Math indicated that they would like to review the content before it is finalized. Jonathan Cheng stated that he will coordinate with Justin Leong and send out the current version to the members of the Paratransit Coordinating Council for their review prior to finalizing it.

PCC Bylaws Review

Forest Barnes led the discussion on the proposed changes to the taxi meter rates.

In leading the discussion, Forest Barnes stated that the last time meter rate increased was in 2011; since then, inflation has since increased 41%. During this time, other jurisdictions have raised their taxi meter fares, either through surcharges, flag drops or a combination of flag drop and time/distance based increases. SFMTA is proposing to increase the flag drop by 65 cents, from \$3.50 to \$4.15 and the time/distance rate by 10 cents, from 55 cents to 65 cents. This represents an 18% increase, which is in line with the proposal from the Taxi Workers' Alliance. With this proposed increase, the average Paratransit trip cost will increase by 58 cents for a rider. A monthly allotment increase will be made available to SF Paratransit riders, upon request. Further outreach to the Multimodal Accessibility Advisory Council, Mayor's Disability Council, and other organizations will be conducted to receive feedback about this proposal. The current plan is to go to the SFMTA Board of Directors for approval in late Fall 2022 with implementation taking as soon as within 30 days of approval.

The Paratransit Coordinating Council was supportive of the proposed taxi meter rate increases. Kevin Lee supports this increase as he believes it will lead to more drivers joining the industry. Forest Barnes understood that there is a need for more drivers to meet demand and that the meter rate increase will increase the take home pay for drivers. Jessica Felix asked if research into what other cities are doing based on recent events or since 2011? Forest responded they researched cities that made changes in the last year.

Roland Wong requested a copy of the presentation. Forest Barnes indicated that it will be provided. He also encouraged people to attend the taxi outreach meeting next Thursday and Jonathan Cheng will send the meeting link to members. Jane Redmond asked if there will be another Taxi Task force. Forest Barnes replied that he will bring this up to the Taxi team.

Jessica Felix asked if the monthly allotment increase would be made available to Paratransit riders. Jonathan Cheng indicated that it would be made available upon request.

PC&O Group Van Subcommittee Report

Mary McLain read the following report:

- **Service Quality Update**

Mary McLain reported out for Transdev's operating division. They focus on currently is recruiting and employment, they have hired a new dispatch manager Nichelle Williams. The continue working on recruiting drivers at this time. There have been some increases in demand on SF Access but it varies day to day.

- **SF Paratransit Broker's Report**

Joe Skelton reported there was an 18.9% increase in ridership from Feb to March In March/April/May they did around 12,500 trips on SFA. On-time performance (OTP) has been between 97.87% and 98.46% There were 8 complaints in March, 12 in April and 18 in May. Joe compared these numbers to the complaint count in 2019, and it showed there was a 47% decrease in complaints which is comparable with the ridership decrease percentage. Joe is continuing interviews for a Customer Service position that is open.

Marc reported out on the new IT vendor, Think Connected who started on June 1, 2022. One of the first things the new contractor will address is the Trapeze 21 environment. They will also be working with Transdev on the final step of the FirstNet Tablet deployment.

The next PC&O SF Access Subcommittee Meeting date is September 1, 2022

PC&O Group Van Subcommittee Report

Roland Wong read the following report:

- **SF Paratransit Status Update**

Joe Skelton reported on March's statistics.

- Group Van provided just over 588 trips, with a 23.2% increase over March.
- Group Van On Time Performance was 88% on time for June
- No Complaints for Group Van in June.

- **Group Van Service Reintroduction Task Force**

Mary McLain's team are working on Group Van requests. She advised that they received requests from two centers. Three agencies advised they had covid exposures and Mary's team is communicating directly with those agencies. Continuing to keep good communication with all the centers.

- **Agency Status Reports**

- Self-Help's ADS (Adult Day Services) branch advised they were averaging 45-49 participants per day and that van and driver management are being transferred to nutrition department.
- Self-Help's DAS (Department of Disability and Aging Services) branch advised it was working on the transition of the ADS branches van and driver management. They advised vehicles are running normally without any mechanical issues and there were few vehicles out of service due to catalytic converter theft and will back in service as soon as possible.
- SteppingStone Presentation advised that they changed to a five-hour program by combining morning and afternoon shifts. Advised they continue to monitor clients for covid exposures.
- On Lok advised that they are only having one small class and did open a garden café and have case management visits by appointment only.
- Russian American Center reopened their dining room and has some clients returning for meal programs. They have submitted a schedule request and are awaiting service to start.

The next PC&O Group Van Subcommittee Meeting date is October 12, 2022

Roland Wong also announced that Jacy Cohen has resigned as Vice Chair of the PC&O Group Van subcommittee and thanked her for her service.

PC&O Taxi/Ramp Taxi Subcommittee Report

Jessica Felix read the following report:

- The meeting began at 10:30 am. Minutes from 5/2/2022 were approved after a correction to the spelling of Susan Kitazawa's name on page 2 and clarification that Barry Taranto made the comment at the end of the same paragraph related to the App issues. The agenda for 08/03/2022 was read and approved.
- **Comments from the Chair**
Jessica said she thinks the next month will be interesting as upfront pricing, and the Uber connection, begins to roll out. She is excited that YoTaxi is close to approval. Once available to all ramp drivers, all ramp drivers will be accessible via one dispatch tool. The SFO Bypass has changed to limited short passes and she likes it and she thanked SFMTA for that change.
- **SF Paratransit Broker Report**
Joe Skelton reported June incentives were paid to the Cab Companies. Taxi OTP, based on surveys of 3 riders randomly selected, in June dropped to 89% and July was mid 90%. We received 14 complaints between May and July. Jessica asked for clarification of "on time" for taxis. The broker office clarified - taxi arrives within 30 minutes of being requested. Joe continued by stating that the tip amount for taxi rides is increasing to 15% effective 9/1/2022 with a maximum of \$4.00. He also mentioned additional \$100 to be paid to any ramp driver who meets the numbers to qualify for the SFO short passes.
- **Rider Service Quality Issues**

Kevin Lee mentioned that he rode with a driver who does mostly “medical transport” and said he doesn’t get any tip from our rides. Annette clarified that SFPT has nothing to do with Yellow Cab’s outside contracts and drivers who do SFPT rides get paid like all other drivers. Joan Kwanza asked about who was going to receive our notice on the tip increase and Marc answered any rider who has used the taxi service at least one time in the last 12 months. Cheryl said that on a recent Monday she had an appointment, tried 12 ramp drivers directly, no available driver. She tried Serra Yellow, but dispatch didn't know they had a contract with SFPT. She was able to get a ride with the help of Jessica via YoTaxi. Susan said the driver shortage, and Flywheel delayed payments to drivers, are both factors in taxi availability. Jane Redmond added that she cannot get a taxi for her hospital appointments and the situation is critical. She suggested the PCC form a committee to work on driver recruitment. Marc supported the idea and added that the committee should include members of the industry. He also said he would bring Philip Cranna into the discussion to help answer questions. Jane said that UCSF general medicine told her they are starting their own paratransit service because they cannot get their patients to them. Jane also volunteers at SFGH and has been getting many complaints about no area where people can get into transportation.

- **Driver & Cab Company Issues**

Jessica told Philip that the 30-minute OTP window no longer seems appropriate. Marc clarified that the 30-minute window was arrived at by the PCC and it is hard coded into the transportation code. So, although we have had many issues getting a taxi the OTP doesn’t seem to reflect that. Philip said that there has been an increase in the 311 calls about this issue as well. Much discussion on driver recruitment, timely payment of money owed to drivers, and ability to get a taxi. No resolution but it was mostly agreed to create a committee to discuss. Philip said any Flywheel driver who has not been put on the “with lead” system at Flywheel should contact him at SFTaxi@sfmta.com for assistance. Jessica asked about the number of ramp pickups in June and July because the SFO Bypass changed to a limited # of short passes in June. Joe said that June trips were down 15%. July was also down but not as much. There was some discussion about the OTP survey process, what is considered on time, and that the rules may need to be reviewed

- **Public Comment**

Kevin has been working with Jane and Marty in drafting a letter to the PCC regarding several major issues with the taxi industry. Discussion of failure to get service, lack of driver training both on their taxi equipment and the rules, issues with dispatch and inaccurate information, drivers accepting ehail orders but not pickup you up nor cancel the ride, etc. Craig said all of these things are due to the driver shortage and the Uber/Lyft issue. Jessica said no driver training is a serious issue. Barry Taranto said cab companies are increasing driver fees significantly. With the cost of gas as well as and changes to the streets, no turn on red, closed streets, resulting in paralyzing traffic where you cannot get to orders and spend a lot of gas just sitting in traffic. Combined it is making taxi driving barely viable as a business. A ramp driver told Kevin that the taxi companies will find a way to get any additional incentive that is paid to the drivers. There needs to be some enforcement on limitations on fees charged by color schemes.

There was a motion made to request the PCC to form a committee to discuss these various taxi issues and potential solutions. The motion passed and Marty will request the item to be added to the agenda for the August 17th PCC meeting.

- Meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

The next PC&O Taxi/Ramp Taxi subcommittee meeting is scheduled for November 2, 2022.

Jessica Felix proposed that the PCC create a group to provide suggestions for SFMTA and taxi companies to recruit drivers. Barry Taranto stated that from his perspective, the problem with recruiting new drivers is that the taxi companies are raising the lease fees; he would like SFMTA to regulate these lease fees. Cheryl Damico feels that is important to recruit quality taxi drivers

The Paratransit Coordinating Council passed a motion to create an ad-hoc subcommittee to review opportunities to recruit new taxi drivers.

Paratransit Broker Report

Joe Skelton, Mary McLain, and Marc Soto reported as follow:

- **Service Level Statistics**
About 12,500 SF Paratransit trips are performed each month. SF Access is operating at about 70 percent of pre-pandemic levels. Paratransit taxis are approximately 75 percent while Group Van is at around 27 percent of pre-pandemic levels. As agencies resume in-person activities, Group Van service is expected to increase in the upcoming months.
- **On Time Performance**
On-time performance for all modes (SF Access, Group Van, and taxi) exceeded the performance standards.
- **SF Paratransit Tipping Policy Change**
Outreach was conducted to inform SF Paratransit riders about the changes to the tipping policy for Paratransit taxi trips. Emails and postcards were sent to active taxi riders. Notices were posted in the SF Paratransit office. This information was also included in the Muzak on-hold messages for the SF Paratransit office.

Roland Wong asked if SF Access is transporting more than one shared rider on a vehicle. Mary McLain stated that the vehicle capacity has reverted to pre-pandemic standards and that a six foot distance requirement between driver and riders remains but there is no distance requirement between riders.

Public Comments

Kevin Lee stated that he recently took a trip and that the in-taxi equipment did not work and the taxi driver indicated that Yellow said that they do not accept Paratransit. Jessica Felix noticed new ramp vehicles at the airport and asked if all ramp medallion holders were interviewed by the PCC. Barry Taranto would like a new system for the Paratransit debit card payment processing system. Susan Kitazawa would like to have a discussion on how to recruit new members at an

upcoming meeting. Both Evelyn Engel and Craig Nelson wanted to express concerns about the taxi upfront pilot and third party dispatch.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:45 pm.

The next PCC meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 5th from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.