

San Francisco Paratransit Coordinating Council

c/o Muni

1 South Van Ness, 7th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103

ph: 415.701.4485

fax: 415.701.4728

TTY: 415.701.4730

Minutes

PCC Executive Committee Meeting

April 16, 2014

1 South Van Ness Avenue, 6th Floor, Candlestick/Corona Conference Room

PCC Executive Committee Members Present: Cheryl Damico, PCC Chair, John Lazar, Vice Chair, Marty Smith, PC&O Chair; Adrienne Humphrey; Aisha Jackson; Christian Got; Fred Lein; Jacy Cohen; Jeanne Lynch; Jean Marie Green; Kaye Griffin; Laurie Graham; Linda Murley; Rodney Lee; Ruach Graffis; Sue Cauthen; Wanee Ratanasanguan

PCC Members and Guests: Lurilla Harris; Alice Young McMillian; John Murphy; Phil McGarth; Michael Kwok; Sam Alicia Duke; Denise Jacques; Mary Dell Allen

PCC Executive Committee Member Excused: Jane Redmond, PCC Secretary; Kaye Griffin; Kevin Lee; Olivia Santiago; Pam Martinez; Roland Wong

SF Paratransit Staff: John Sanderson; Marie Marchese; Roxana Lara

SFMTA: Jonathan Cheng; Neal Patel; Alicia John Baptiste

Cheryl Damico, PCC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

Read and Approve Agenda

John Lazar, PCC Vice Chair, read the agenda. Jonathan Cheng requested that the agenda be amended to include a new item, "A Discussion on the Transportation Measures," as well as allow for the drivers to present some concerns they have. He also proposed that item #6, "SF Paratransit Eligibility Process Review" be delayed to the next meeting. The agenda was motioned/seconded/passed as amended.

Approve Minutes of March 12 meeting

The minutes were motioned/seconded/approved.

Comments from the Chair

Cheryl Damico commented that there are many happenings that are currently occurring.

Discussion on Transportation Measures

Alicia John Baptiste, Chief of Staff to Ed Reiskin, presented on two proposed transportation related ballot measures that will be on the ballot this November. She first thanked the committee for their work in addressing transportation issues facing seniors and persons with disabilities. Alicia gave a quick overview about the state of the existing transportation system. She mentioned that about half of all city roads are in need of repair and that there are infrastructure and capital improvement projects that are necessary to improve Muni service as well as provide greater safety for pedestrian and bicyclists. Over a year ago, the mayor convened a taskforce, Transportation 2030, which was comprised of 45 individuals, to look at the existing

transportation system and come up with solutions to fix it within the next 15 years. This committee determined that 10 billion dollars was needed to fix the transportation system. Of this 10 billion dollars, it is anticipated that there will be four billion dollars in funds that will come in from existing sources, leaving a remaining six billion dollars deficit that will need to be funded through various revenue streams. As a result, the mayor called for two measures to go before the voters to help fund this deficit. One measure is a 500 million dollar transportation bond and the second is an increase in the local vehicle state license fee from 0.65% to 2%. These two measures are anticipated to generate 1.5 billion dollars over the next 15 years. This funding will go towards filling and repaving streets, purchasing and expanding low-floor Muni vehicles, increasing the number of Key stations, building protected bikeways, and installing curb ramps. Outreach is currently beginning to the public. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors is anticipated to vote on these ballot measures in the summer and if they are approved, these measures will go before the voters in November.

Marty Smith mentioned that as taxis are regulated by the SFMTA; he would like to see some funds directed towards helping these companies subsidize the higher cost of maintenance for ramp taxis. Alicia John Baptiste replied that although there are no current plans in the existing budget to help provide a subsidy, the repaving of the roads and filling of potholes will help lower the cost of maintenance for vehicles. John Lazar would like to see this reevaluated as the taxi industry invests money into purchasing new vehicles in order to provide exceptional service to the public. In addition, he mentioned that due to the dramatic growth of various rideshare programs, many taxi drivers are choosing to leave this industry and not purchase a taxi medallion.

Update on Proposed Paratransit Fare Increases

Jonathan Cheng gave an update on the proposed fare increases for paratransit service. In the previous meeting, it was mentioned that the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year will increase the cost of a trip on our van and taxi service. The proposed cost for a ride on the SF Access van service will increase from the current \$2.00 to \$2.25 for each SF Access one way trip. In addition, the value for one unit of paratransit taxi debit card value will increase from the current \$5.00 for \$30.00 worth of taxi services to \$5.50 for \$30.00 worth of taxi services. This proposal was voted upon at yesterday's SFMTA Board of Directors meeting and was passed. The next steps are to introduce the proposed budget to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to vote upon. This vote is anticipated to happen during the summer. If these proposed fare increases are approved, they will be implemented on September 1, 2014. In addition, the proposal to give free monthly passes to seniors passed. It will be implemented pending a SFMTA financial review in January 2015.

Ruach Graffis asked if the free monthly passes for seniors are separate from the paratransit fares. Jonathan Cheng affirmed this statement. Jeanne Lynch said that at the SFMTA Board of Directors meeting, there were thousands of postcards from supporters of the free fares for seniors. Rodney Lee asked what SFMTA defines as "senior." Jonathan answered that it is anyone who is 65 years old or older. Lurilla Harris wanted more details as to how the free fares for seniors program would work. Jonathan said that there were no details released as to how the passes would be given but that if there was any new information, there will be an update at the next PCC meeting.

Van Gogh Presentation

Marie Marchese gave a presentation about the Van Gogh program. The program started in September 2013 to provide transportation to groups of individuals to social and cultural events in San Francisco. Trips must be organized prior to their reservation with details regarding the pickup and drop off location. Recent trips have been to dance performances, museums, church events, and public meetings. All participants must either be 65 years old or older, a holder of the RTC ID card, SF Paratransit eligible, or Shop-a-Round eligible. Fares for the service is currently \$2.00 one way and will increase to \$2.25 one way, scheduled for September 1, 2014. Since its inception, 22 different agencies have signed up to participate and 47 routes have been completed. In March alone, there have been 12 trips provided to 112 passengers.

Jacy Cohen added that the ARC uses the program once a week as part of their after-hours isolation reduction program called Friends Like Me. This shuttle has given an opportunity for individuals to partake in services offered by the ARC but do not transportation available to them, particularly to return home. Denise Jacques asked where these groups meet to get picked up and dropped off. Marie Marchese clarified that groups using this service get picked up and dropped off at the same location. However, there are instances, such as the Friends Like Me program at the ARC, where individuals are dropped off at their residencies due to the late end time of the event.

Shop-a-Round Update

Roxana Lara gave an update on the Shop-a-Round program. The program began as a shuttle to connect seniors and persons with disabilities to grocery stores in targeted neighborhoods. Since then, it has expanded citywide. Currently there over slightly over 1,000 registered clients who have taken over 8,500 trips. The areas with the highest number of rides are Parkmerced, Tenderloin, Lower Nob Hill, Bayview, and OMI. On average, this program completes an average of 10 routes each week. In August 2013, there was a survey that was mailed to all Shop-a-Round van riders, asking for feedback about the service. Among the findings include riders wanting afternoon trips, new stores on the schedule, and shorter ride time. In the upcoming months, there will be a focus on expanded outreach as well as increasing trips in the Sunset, Outer Richmond, Twin Peaks, West Portal, and Marina areas.

Lurilla Harris asked whether or not the service goes to Goodwill store. Roxana Lara reiterated that Shop-a-Round will only go to stores that sell groceries. Sue Cauthen wondered how one can sign up for the program. Roxana replied that she has several applications with her and that interested individuals can sign up and turn in the form today.

Implementation of Changes to Ramp Taxi Incentive Program

Jonathan Cheng gave an update to the implementation of the new ramp taxi incentive program. There are three new SF Paratransit incentives that San Francisco ramp taxi drivers can earn: a \$10 per trip credit for each paratransit wheelchair trip completed on a ramp taxi; also for each wheelchair transport in a ramp taxi, a driver can earn a \$10 credit towards the down payment of a medallion (if they complete more than 10 paratransit wheelchair trips in a month); and an airport short pass for every two paratransit wheelchair pickups completed in the outlying neighborhoods of San Francisco (identified in a predetermined zone which includes Treasure Island). In addition, staff is collecting copies of ramp taxi training certificates of drivers before directing the broker to issue the \$10 per trip incentive payment. SFMTA has been sponsoring ramp taxi

training courses until June 30. These trainings are aimed at attracting interested new drivers as well as allow existing ramp taxi drivers to update their training certificate without charge to drivers.

Marty Smith asked whether drivers who receive this airport short pass have to pay to go through the garage. Fred Lein mentioned that those with the airport short pass through the CNG program still have to pay a fee. Denise Jacques asked why non ramp taxi drivers are eligible for the incentive program. Jonathan Cheng replied that this incentive program is targeted at encouraging ramp taxi drivers to complete more wheelchair pickups as we have heard often from wheelchair users that there are great difficulties in obtaining a ramp taxi. John Sanderson added that if she is refused service that she should call the complaint into the SF Paratransit office.

MV Drivers Discussion

Aisha Jackson requested time to bring up some issues that MV drivers face while driving in the city. She brought up two questions; which restricted left and right turn lane can SF Paratransit vehicles use to legally turn as well as how SFMTA tickets SF Paratransit vehicles. Knowing these answers will help out with on time performance and safety. John Sanderson answered that SF Paratransit can turn at all restricted signs except for signs that say "Except MUNI." He added that SFMTA ticketing policy varies but that it is safer for drivers to actively load and unload passengers from the vehicle while stopped than leaving the vehicle to enter a building or lobby to search for a passenger. Christian Got mentioned for On Lok vehicles faces the same issues. They have been recommending that drivers use safety cones to encourage greater safety and to maintain eye contact with the vehicle. Ruach Graffis recommended that the PCC encourage the legislature to include paratransit vehicles to a section of the vehicle code that allows for certain vehicles that need to make frequent stops to conduct business. Cheryl Damico also read a letter from Olivia Santiago. This letter asked that at the next PCC meeting that there be an agenda item to discuss the relationship between management and driver to improve their relations and working environment.

PC&O Taxi/Ramp Taxi Subcommittee Meeting

Jacy Cohen read the following report:

1. Election of Group Van Subcommittee Vice-Chair

Jacy Cohen was nominated and re-elected by acclimation.

2. Discussion of proposed Paratransit fare increase

Kate Toran said Paratransit van fares are proposed to increase with MUNI fares to \$2.25 on or around July 1, 2014, and Paratransit taxi are proposed to increase from \$5.00 per \$30 worth of taxi value to \$5.50 per \$30 worth of value. The fare increase proposal includes Group Van service fares. Stepping Stone expressed that this increase would be an extreme hardship for their centers as they have experienced a 10% cut in their rate from MediCare over the past three years.

The Group Subcommittee made a motion asking for the PCC Executive committee to support keeping the fares at \$2.00 per one-way trip for ADHC centers or providing a subsidy for the incremental cost of the increase, until such time as the ADHCs have stable finances. This motion passed uncontested.

3. Service Quality Discussion

a. Group Van Operators

- MV- John Murphy said that MV is in the process of analyzing Group Van routes in terms of performance as many routes have gone below the minimum of 7 passengers per route. They will be meeting with centers to discuss any changes made, before the changes are implemented.
- Baymed- Sam Portnoy said that Baymed overall has not had a lot of complaints. He said that their income has dropped dramatically due to many cancellations that occur on their routes. Due to these cancellations he said they are also not getting the 7 passenger minimum consistently.

A suggestion was made by Marc Soto that the best thing to help both the providers and the centers may be to have the Broker routing and scheduling trips in a centralized manner. The broker would then assign the trips to the providers. Both group van providers present (MV and BayMed) were supportive of this concept.

b. Group Van agencies

- Stepping Stone-Nicole Clause of Stepping Stone reported for the four Stepping Stone agencies. She said the main issue for Mabini is communication. Benny of Golden Gate said he has been having issues with mingling. Nicole of Presentation said she actually likes the mingling because ride times have decreased. Roxie of Mission Creek said she wants to see the new routes adjustments once they are created by Baymed. Nicole said that she did not realize how important the 7 people in the bus were and she will forward this along to her colleagues at Stepping Stone.
- The ARC- Jacy Cohen said that their Bay street center has experienced more late trips since a new driver was placed on their route. Jacy said the issue at Howard Street is that vans have been arriving early when no staff is present to receive the clients.

4. SF Paratransit Broker's Report

John Sanderson said the IVR system is now called the TripInfo Line. For group van, SF Paratransit is going to be rolling out phone calls to homes alerting ATR families when the van is estimated to arrive at their destination.

Overall system wide Group Van on-time performance has been in the steady lower 90% range. There are currently 5 minivans on order to replace the ones that MV has currently in their Access fleet, and 35 new Ford Cutaways are also being ordered to replace the current 700 series fleet.

Self Help for the Elderly will be taking over operating Group Van Service for their ADHC. We are hoping the transition will occur as soon as possible.

The next Group Van PC&O meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 9, at the SF Paratransit Broker's 1st floor conference room from 10:30-12:30pm.

Jonathan Cheng asked the committee to approve the motion to support keeping the fares at \$2.00 per one-way trip for ADHC centers or to look at providing a subsidy for the incremental cost of the increase, until such time as the ADHCs have stable finances. This motion passed

Paratransit Broker Report

John Sanderson reported as follow:

- **SF Access Service Quality Report:**
On-time performance is currently at the mid to high 70's. MV Transportation is currently retraining dispatchers as well as adding new vehicles in order to improve the on time performance rate.
- **SF Access "TripInfo" Line Implementation:**
Copies of the brochures for the new "TripInfo" line were mailed out to all active clients. This system is fully implemented and while there were some bugs in the beginning, they have been fixed and the system is helping provide riders with more real time information regarding their trip.
- **New SF Paratransit Phone System:**
There is a new phone system that has been installed in the beginning of March and is currently working at the SF Paratransit office. This system is providing better reporting data for SF Paratransit.
- **Group Van Scheduling Reforms:**
During this meeting, centralized scheduling was suggested in order to help improve on time performance as well as reduce ride times. There will be no changes to the dispatchers or drivers. The goal is to run the program more efficiently so that vehicles are operating at full capacity.

Cheryl Damico asked if this will help with substitute drivers. John replied that it may not as it usually takes a couple of trips on the same routes for drivers to be familiar. Jacy Cohen wondered if the service providers will serve the same agencies they currently do if centralized dispatching is implemented. John answered that it may occur as they are trying to go back to the original catchment areas. Jacy thinks the proposed Peer Escort program may help should there be riders on the same vehicle being transported to different agencies. She added that seniors and persons with disabilities will be trained to be escorts and be paid for their work.
- **SF Paratransit Internet Service Provider**
The previous internet provider for all communications at SF Paratransit went out of business and the new service provider is currently in operation. This internet provider is responsible for communicating with our service providers, the SF Paratransit office, SF Paratransit debit card system, and the TripInfo system.
- **Vehicle Naming Project**
With the five new vehicles entering the fleet, there was a proposal to rename three of them after past PCC members: Stu Smith, Joseph Flanagan, and Laurie Hodas. This motion was passed by the PCC.

Denise Jacques asked how the contract for SF Access was issued. John Sanderson replied that the contract for SF Access was done through an open procurement process with companies

bidding and providing proposals for service. A committee evaluates the proposals and rewarded to the company with the best proposal. Jacy Cohen added that she has been through several procurement processes and that to her, it is a very public process with a city attorney present and members of the community. Denise then raised the question as to who should she contact should she be threatened by fellow passengers while riding the vehicle. John said that she should contact the SF Paratransit office to report such incidents. Denise also mentioned that due to a computer failure, all reservations had to be manually entered. However, her trip was not entered and she did not receive a ride for her scheduled trip. John stated that due to a computer failure, they could not make reservations all day Monday and that though the problem was fixed, they were playing catch up on Tuesday.

Sue Cauthen mentioned that on time performance has not improved and that while she has filed numerous complaints, she has not seen better service. John Murphy agreed that on time performance is not at the level where they would like it to be. To improve on time performance, MV Transportation has leased an additional 12 vehicles to help transport ambulatory riders. In the near future, there will be an additional five vehicles that will be added to the fleet. Self Help for the Elderly will also be taking over some of MV Transportation group van routes, freeing up some more vehicles. This will hopefully increase the on time performance rate to 85 percent but still falling short of the standard of a 93 percent on time performance. In addition, they are training two new classes of drivers who will hopefully be able to start transporting riders soon. As to the complaints about dispatchers, he agreed that they are not performing to the standard that is expected of them. He also added that due to the scheduling, many drivers are driving throughout the city whereas it would be more efficient if they are able to stay in one area. Ruach Graffis suggested that clients come to the trainings.

Lurilla Harris stated that she does not have a cell phone but is receiving calls about her trip when she is not home. In addition, some of her medical appointments are not being listed as such and mentioned that scheduler have told her that it is easier to schedule trips if the caller announces the cross street while making their reservation.

Jacy Cohen expressed her concerns that drivers are making complaints to passengers about the work environment too often. While she sympathizes with the issues they face, she does not believe that it the right forum to express their opinions. Ruach Graffis added that drivers should be sensitive to the passengers and recognize that there are some riders who are more receptive to hearing their grievances than others.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

**The next PCC meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 28, 2014
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at 1 South Van Ness, 6th Floor, Candlestick/Corona Conference
Room.**