

San Francisco Paratransit Coordinating Council

c/o Muni

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Minutes

PCC Executive Committee Meeting

March 12, 2014

**1 South Van Ness Avenue, 7th Floor, Union Square Conference Room
San Francisco**

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; Kevin Lee; Laurie Graham; Roland Wong; Rodney Lee; Ruach Graffis; Sandra Fancher; Sue Cauthen; Wannee Ratanasanguan

PCC Members and Guests: Lurilla Harris; Alice McMillian Annie Young ; John Murphy; Phil McGarth; Catharine Crayne; Kerry Brown; Efren Alarcon; Max Lazar; J. Connolly; Jake Haffner

PCC Executive Committee Member Excused: Jane Redmond, PCC Secretary; Claudia Grubler; Gilda Chico

SF Paratransit Staff: Marc Soto; John Sanderson; Casey Estroga; Gregory Strecker; Marie Marchese

SFMTA: Kate Toran; Jonathan Cheng

Cheryl Damico, PCC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Read and Approve Agenda

Marty Smith, PC&O Chair, read the agenda. The agenda was motioned/seconded/passed.

Approve Minutes of January 22 meeting

The minutes were motioned/seconded/approved.

Comments from the Chair

Cheryl Damico mentioned that this committee has recently lost two members, Stu Smith and Joseph Flanagan. Both members were well-versed in issues concerning seniors and individuals with disabilities and active in various community organizations. Cheryl asked for a moment of silence in memory of the life and work of these two individuals.

Accessible Services Strategic Plan Survey

Sandra Padilla presented on the Accessible Services Strategic Plan survey. The survey is designed to garner feedback so that the information collected may be used to guide the drafting of a strategic plan for the department through 2020. This strategic plan will serve as a guide and timeline to the projects the department will work on in the coming years. In addition to the PCC, several other groups, including the SFCTA Citizen's Advisory Council and the Multimodal Accessibility Advisory Committee are participants in the survey. Once a draft of the Accessible

Services Strategic Plan is complete, it will be presented to the PCC and others for comments. The actual survey was handed out during the meeting and a link to the online survey was announced to those in attendance.

Proposed Paratransit Fare Increases

Kate Toran led the discussion on the proposed fare increases for paratransit service. As part of the SFMTA budget process, there is a proposal to increase the MUNI fixed-route fares, which in turn will increase the cost of a ride on the paratransit system. 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 introduced in the March SFMTA Board of Directors meeting and will be presented again on April 1 with a possible vote scheduled for April 15. If these proposed fare increases are approved, they will be implemented on July 1, 2014. Kate mentioned that there are several other proposed fare increases including increasing the cost of the F-line from \$2.00 to \$6.00.

Marty Smith asked if this increase would change the maximum trip fare amount. Kate Toran replied that it would not as the maximum trip fare amount is tied to the meter rate. This proposed fare increase affects the amount that SF Paratransit clients must pay for each unit of value they add to their taxi debit card. Jeanne Lynch asked to be updated at the next meeting regarding the status of the fare increases. Marc Soto pointed out that the SF Paratransit office has many administrative tasks that must be completed in very short order once the fare increases are approved. Those include service provider contract amendments, updating software, and notifying SF Paratransit clients.

Implementation of Changes to Ramp Taxi Incentive Program

Kate Toran gave an update to the implementation of the new ramp taxi incentive program. As previously mentioned, 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). Currently, staff has informed drivers who have earned an airport short pass for paratransit wheelchair service completed in January 2014 by phone and mail. 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. On a related note, the SFMTA will be sponsoring ramp taxi training courses from March 22 to June 30. To be eligible for these trainings, a driver must have a valid A-card. 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 if there will be a phone number that interested taxi drivers can contact and the frequency these trainings. Kate Toran said that there will be phone number on the flyer. The trainings will be held on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month and possibly other dates. Jeanne Lynch asked where these training would take place. Kate replied that they are held at 555 Shelby St. (Desoto Cab) but that other locations are possible.

Transportation Network Companies Letter

Kate Toran stated that over the past several months, there has been much discussion at the PCC regarding the prevalence and growth of Transportation Network Companies (TNC) and the impacts to the existing taxi industry. She clarified that TNCs provide rides through a smartphone application. With fewer driver requirements than taxi companies, many drivers are electing to work for these TNCs. At the last meeting, the PCC decided to write a letter to CA legislators outlining the concerns of the paratransit community on the impact of TNCs on the taxi industry and concerns about safety. Kate also mentioned that there were several articles concerning the impact of a declining taxi industry on the ability to serve seniors and persons with disabilities who access taxis. One of these articles features Peggy Costner and her experiences obtaining a ramp taxi in light of more taxi drivers choosing to switch over to the TNCs. Kate provided copies of these various news articles if members were interested in reading them. She also commented that there will be a hearing in the Neighborhood Services and Safety Committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors concerning the regulatory status of private transportation networks and their role in meeting the City's transportation goals. Kate introduced Jay and Jake from Lifthero. Lifthero is a TNC service that is aimed at providing seniors with transportation using EMT as drivers. Jay Connolly provided a brief description of the service. Lifthero is intended on providing door-to-door service transportation service for seniors. Through this service, they hope to instill trust in both the customer and their families in providing secured and reliable transportation. He said their model's details are still not entirely clear and they were present to learn and gather knowledge regarding the population they serve.

Laurie Graham asked if payment would be out of pocket for customers or if there is any kind of subsidy. Jay Connolly said that currently it is private pay and that the company is providing some voluntary transportation services to a group home. Sue Cauthen asked how much they charge per ride. Jay replied there is currently no rate and that they are in the middle of conducting a pilot service. Jake Haffner added that as they are currently in the initial stages of this new service, and they are engaging the community to figure out what the right price should be for seniors. Jean Marie Green wondered if there will be an extra cost should a rider choose hand to hand delivery. Jay answered that there they are not sure yet if there will be an extra cost. Lurilla Harris inquired as to the structure of payment. Jay said that they are currently conducting a pilot service with a senior housing facility and will charge them at the end of the month. Currently, their idea is to have a credit card payment via smartphone and to charge an hourly rate; however, the current hourly rate has not been determined.

Rodney Lee suggested that there be extensive background checks on potential drivers. Jay replied that they will be going beyond the current regulations concerning background checks with TNCs. Ruach Graffis wondered if potential drivers will undergo a Department of Justice background check just like potential taxi drivers. Jake answered that they would. Jean Marie Green asked if all drivers will be paramedics. Jay answered that although not all drivers will be paramedics, most would have some form of medical training.

Laurie Graham wondered how much training drivers will undergo. Jay replied that they are currently developing the training program. Kerry Brown asked if they will be offering a stair assist program. Jake said that they could not commit to it, as they are currently assessing their resources and are trying to manage expectations. Cheryl Damico added that taxi training includes information regarding the ADA and sensitivity training.

Marty Smith inquired if there will be an insurance policy of up to one million dollars as well as worker compensation. Jay said they will have an insurance policy of one million dollars. They also intend to have drivers work as independent contractors. Marty added that although current taxi drivers are independent contractors, they comply with the City's requirement for workers' compensation insurance. He also questioned as to whether these vehicles will operate under a commercial plate. Jay answered that they do not foresee that happening as they intend to operate as a TNC. Laurie Graham mentioned that it currently costs \$700/month to get the necessary insurance coverage to operate a taxi and questioned how they intent to convince any potential driver to attain the same level of insurance. Ruach Graffis would like to see the insurance policy made public once it is available. John Lazar recommended that they get commercial insurance in order to protect their drivers and company against any accidents that may occur.

Kate Toran asked if there are any intentions of purchasing or operating wheelchair accessible vehicles. Jay would like to include wheelchair accessible vehicles in the future. Kate commented that there is much concern with the committee as the growth of TNC has negatively impact the existing taxi industry, particularly ramp taxi service, and there is a need to fill this service gap. Marc Soto would like an update from Lifthero after they complete their pilot and have a more finalized model in place.

PC&O Taxi/Ramp Taxi Subcommittee Meeting

Fred Lein read the following report:

1. Comments from the Chair

Vice Chair Fred Lein and other members of the PCC remembered Stu Smith. He will be truly missed for his efforts in the community.

2. SFMTA Taxi/Ramp reforms – Update

Kate Toran of SFMTA mentioned the new incentives in the Ramp Taxi Program. There will be 3 main incentives:

- 1) \$10 per wheelchair pick-up that is verified in the Paratransit program.
- 2) \$10 credit toward a medallion with a maximum of \$12,500 when they complete at least 10 wheelchair pick-ups within a month.
- 3) Short pass at the airport. Every 2 wheelchair pickups performed in the outlining areas, ramp drivers will receive a short pass to the front of the taxi line at the airport.

3. Service Quality issues

Many members voiced their concerns about the accessibility of ramp taxis. With the new incentives, this would hope to improve service for the wheelchair community.

4. SF Paratransit Broker Report

John Sanderson of SFPT/Veolia mentioned the new incentive for ramp medallion drivers and how the Broker and SFMTA are working together on how to pay out the incentives to the drivers. He also mentioned the enforcement program of the ramp medallion. In December 2013, there were 30 ramp medallions out of 100 that were in compliance of the old rules of the

program. With hope of the new rules, this would hope to resolve the issues the industry is experiencing with ramp taxis.

The next PC&O Taxi/Ramp Taxi subcommittee meeting is May 7, 2014

John Lazar would like to thank Kate Toran and the staff at SFMTA and SF Paratransit for their work in creating and implementing the new ramp taxi incentives. Kate Toran stated that she hopes to see improvements in wheelchair service and would like to hear feedback from the community.

PC&O SF Access Subcommittee Meeting

Marty Smith read the following report:

1. Service Quality Discussion

The PCC Members in attendance said MV is not dependable. In addition many were upset because of the amount of time it takes to get ahold of dispatch for “where’s my ride” assistance.

2. MV Transportation Service Provider Report

MV Transportation acknowledged the decrease in on-time performance. In order to correct these issues, they have hired 30 new drivers. In addition, they are in the process of re-training all their dispatchers on the Trapeze scheduling system, in addition to hiring 2 more dispatchers soon. MV said they are in the process of interviewing for a New Operations Manager, and they recently had a driver’s appreciation day.

3. SF Paratransit Broker’s Report

John Sanderson said the SF Access on-time performance for February had fallen below 80%. The new TripInfo line is up and running and has had a positive impact. In addition, the broker is in the process of transferring Self Help ADHC routes currently operated by MV over to Self Help to free up some SFMTA buses for peak times on SF Access.

The next SF Access PC&O meeting is June 4th, 2014.

Paratransit Broker Report

John Sanderson and Marc Soto reported as follow:

- **SF Access Service Quality Report:**
On-time performance for February finished below 80 percent and current OTP for service for March is at the same level. However, complaints have not increased significantly.
- **SF Access “TripInfo” Line Implementation:**
Copies of the brochures for the new “TripInfo” line are available for members to view at the next PCC meeting. These brochures will be mailed to all active SF Access riders. This brochure will contain information as well as provide an opportunity for riders with a standing order to subscribe to this service. SF Paratransit has been working with our SF Access service provider in registering new riders and sort out the phone numbers.
- **New SF Paratransit Phone System:**

There is a new phone system that has been installed at the SF Paratransit office. The old system was 14 years old and has been retired. Staff is adjusting to the new system and is positive about its improved capabilities. There are still specific details that are being addressed and staff thanks the public for their patience. Staff also asked members to notify them if they experience an irregularity with the new phone system.

- **Group Van Scheduling Reforms:**

Scheduling of group van service has been a challenge for months due to performance, specifically on-board ride times, being longer than desired and loss of efficiencies on some routes. This has been under careful review and discussion for some months. There are riders from all over San Francisco that must be picked up before heading out to the designated center. This has made it impossible to have efficient van routes while maintaining the state mandated ride times standard. Possible solutions presented and discussed include sharing routes between centers or having vehicles make a “double pass,” which means that they would pick up a group of individuals and drop them off and then make another trip to pick up individuals who live closer to a center. Changes are coming up and all parties will be notified.

Self Help for the Elderly will become an SFMTA SF Paratransit group van provider as they have more 5310-funded vehicles available. They will be handling trips to their center in the Richmond District. It is anticipated that by allowing SH to perform the SH routes currently performed by MV, this will free up vehicles for MV Transportation during the peak times.

- **SF Paratransit Internet Service Provider**

The current internet provider for all communications at SF Paratransit is currently going out of business. This internet provider is responsible for communicating with our service providers, the SF Paratransit office, SF Paratransit debit card system, and the TripInfo system. The SF Paratransit office is in the process of moving to a new internet provider and plans currently call for a cutover this Saturday after a few issues are addressed.

Ruach Graffis mentioned that a driver tried to call the MV Transportation office and failed so they tried to contact the road supervisor but was unable due to the road supervisor not having a Nextel radio. John Murphy stated that there was an occurrence on Sunday and that the driver’s phone was not working but assured everyone that all their Road Supervisors have working Nextel radios. Aisha Jackson added that the Nextel phones for road supervisors are just now currently being replaced. Catharine Crayne mentioned that they are hiring two new dispatchers to handle the call volumes. Kevin Lee said that many people do not have cell phones and cannot make the 6pm deadline to make a trip reservation. He suggested that they be extended hours because riders calling just before 6 pm get cut off after 6 pm. Catharine replied that all calls made before 6pm will be answered. Kaye Griffin asked if all the phone numbers for the SF Paratransit office staff would be changing. Marc Soto replied that numbers would not change.

Roland Wong would like to commend MV Transportation for their reliable service for the past three months and mentioned that on several recent occasions, they were able to accommodate changes in his appointments. He commented also that the TripInfo message is sometimes difficult to understand due to the timing of the words.

Marc Soto thanked Jacy Cohen and Tom Rickert for their attendance at a recent UCSF Medical School conference regarding transportation for persons with developmental disabilities. Marc mentioned that there were over 300 medical professionals at the conference and that SF Paratransit and SFMTA were well represented.

Public Comments

Lurilla Harris would like to commend MV Transportation for picking her up on time on a day where she made seven trip reservations. However, there are days where she has also missed doctor's appointments due to late pickups. She also mentioned that the new public telephone at the Paratransit office was hard to read compared to the older phone. Marc said they would look into that. Ruach Graffis mentioned that at last week's San Francisco Board of Supervisor Neighborhood Services and Safety meeting that there were many disability advocates and taxi drivers who commented on the role of TNCs and its impact on the taxi industry. Cheryl Damico added that there were more taxi drivers than disability advocates and would like to see more in the future.

Announcements

Kate Toran read a letter from Jane Bolig in reflection of Stu Smith.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

**The next PCC meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 16, 2014
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at 1 South Van Ness, 6th Floor, Candlestick/Corona Conference
Room.**