

**Santa Clarita Transit
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting
March 1, 2012**

Meeting location: Santa Clarita City Hall, Century Room

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

Others Present: Adrian Aguilar, Alfredo Torales, Denise Ware, Jeremy Wise,

Approval of Minutes: Kurt Baldwin

Meeting called to order at 9:11am

General Public Comments: Ms. Pierce commented how there was an elderly lady at the post office off of Whites Canyon and she was complaining about her legs hurting. She didn't know how long she had been waiting and told her she had called DAR for her ride home but they told her she had to wait because there was no driver available for her. But that was not true because the driver that had picked up Ms. Pierce had already notified someone at the Senior Center. Ms. Pierce thinks that when the messages get to customer service, they don't relay the messages to dispatch. There is no reason why a lady in so much pain should have to wait so long for someone to come pick her up.

Member Comments: John commented that last Monday he had a support group with the Visually Impaired off of Bouquet Canyon. I take the transit going to the meeting then I have Access take me home but on Monday I had Access show up at 8:00 to take me to work and Denise knew about it. She confirmed she did. Denise confirmed it will not be a "no show" to him.

Also (speaking to Adrian) the DAR screen at the Senior Center is not working and they can not get it to work. There is a disconnection somewhere. Denise and Adrian gave him suggestions on how to reconnect it. If that does not work then to call Denise or Adrian in the morning and they will walk you thru it.

Kurt then had several comments:

1. First he started off with advising everyone that to his surprise he was reappointed to the Community Advisory Chambers. Everyone congratulated him. He is glad to be representing this area. They had their first meeting for the *Para Transit Riders Coalition* on Friday before last and they had decided it was something they should start back up. The first meeting to develop their ideas for last fall and also decided they were going to work on three issues.

- a.) Share Ride Times
- b.) Non-negotiating times
- c.) Convince the system that they need to have substantial input from the riders before they make a policy or changes.

Those are the three things we will concentrate on. They had a good turn out of five agencies and about twenty riders. He wants to invite everyone to the next meeting in Van Nuys on May 11th from 1-3pm. He will also be inviting Transportation Deputy and the new Contract Manger for Access services to be there. Pretty confident they will be there. If anyone is interested he will send out more information.

Linda commented next beginning with when she met Bob Keller the mayor at a function last Saturday at the Hyatt Hotel. She was discussing with him about the fees she has to pay on DAR, she said to him "\$2 here and \$5 there makes me want to stop from doing things". She was telling him how she thinks it's not fair. He gave her his card with his phone number and told her to call him, which she did and left a message. She also went to City Hall to talk to him but he wasn't there. He told her he would help her. He told her a few times at the function. Hopefully he will call her back to resolve her issue.

Rachel was asked for any comments and she said she had a few issues with the Tap card. She has not received it yet but her dad received his a few days ago and her temporary card already expired so not sure what she is going to do until she receives her new Tap card. Adrian advised her and the rest of the committee that they were all mailed out last week and she should receive hers any day now.

Then there is the issue where sometimes the fare boxes are not working on the buses. It's really weird because when you tap the card the fare box will read "*valid*" but yet it's not taking the ride off the card. It's not the card because when it's used on a different bus, it works just fine. Adrian asked her exactly what the fare box was saying when she was tapping the card and she said in the mornings it will take the ride but in the afternoon it is saying "*pass valid*" and if you try to tap it again it will say "*pass back*". Adrian told her it was because she tapped it twice and it is a safety function of the system so it does not charge the rider twice. He told her if it reads "pass back" it means it already took the ride and its not going to take it again and that's a good thing.

Rachel last issue or like she said "it's not really an issue, it's more of an annoyance" with the Bus Finder located at several bus stops. She said when you push the button, (that helps you locate the next bus time) it will tell you to refer to the timetable or on a cloudy or raining day it will have about a three minute delay. Adrian replied to her concern by explaining how this system is designed to give you information within the thirty minute window. If there is no bus scheduled within the next thirty minutes, then it will read "*refer to timetable*". Rachel said they tested it out; on a regular sunny day it will work perfectly fine but if it's raining or cloudy and they push the TIN there is a delay. Adrian informed her that they can look into it. Adrian was asked if there is a procedure for when they are not working, do they or drivers need to call in and let us know and Adrian replied and said that the drives really wouldn't know unless someone told them. Adrian explained that all units maintained on a regular basis. This includes a system check, cleaning, and replacing the batteries every six months. Typically what they have seen is the batteries will only last nine months. The schedules was created to replace the batteries before they go bad but sometimes we don't get there so if you happen to run across a unit that is not working please feel free to give us a call.

New Business: Keith mentioned that he feels they should bring on a couple new members. Adrian commented to that by saying how this was actually something he had planned on bringing up in next meeting but since it was brought up now then he would like to inform everyone that they do have a couple of open spots. Adrian mentioned the Hart District and that there was a woman by the name of Heidi that use to work there but was transferred and the person that was in charge of replacing her has never shown up. Adrian has not been able to reach her and she has not returned any emails or phone calls so he mentioned that they can either try to find someone else from the district that is willing to participate or we can look into some other agency as a potential member. Keith mentioned someone by the name of Judy that Adrian was familiar with and he said he can try to contact her and see if she can participate. Adrian said that would be great and how it's always important to have someone from the school district there to help them get some insight from them.

John mentioned how he noticed that the Adult Day Care was also not present in today's meeting and that he had questions for them. He began to comment on the problem he has when they go down there, it's taking forever to get out. With the new director there, it seems as if we are waiting an average of fifteen to twenty minutes before we can leave. Adrian said there is a new philosophy on what there staff is willing to assist with in terms to getting passengers ready and helping them board but that we they are trying to come to some agreement in terms of what type of assistance and what time they open there doors and whether or not there staff will come out or not. Adrian advised everyone that Nancy is the director and she has been there for over a year but there staff is all new, within the last three months. Adrian did advise that this is something they are working on.

Old Business: James has a question for Adrian in regards to what Adrian mentioned in the there last meeting about the Fare Increase and the Age Group. What is the status on this? Adrian commented first on the age group and that as of now nothing has been done yet. They have not touched this issue at all, not since they had the group discussion in the last meeting. In regards to the fare increase, Adrian said that they are looking into making some adjustments to there fares but that they are still looking at some numbers and seeing what those adjustments will be. As he mentioned in the last meeting, the plan is not to change the cash fare or the one way fare but it will be on the cost of the monthly pass for our local service and our commuters. Our cash fare and our Paratransit will remain the same. They are looking into an increase of about \$32 but nothing has been finalized yet. Adrian wants everyone to know about this now and make everyone aware so that when it's finalized it won't be a total surprise.

Access/ DAR Passenger wanted to discuss when she calls in to make a ride; usually with the newer people working that they are extreme reluctant in negotiating the ride times. They seem to just want to set you in stone and don't want to look for another time to change it. Denise began to comment on what she was saying then she was asked to please explain what exactly they were talking about. Denise explained that when a passengers calls in to request a time, they will look at an hour to forty five minutes on each side and she said how they were pushing for internal, more hard core negotiations so that if it is a five minutes or a twenty minutes difference, then they don't keep on

changing the times. Denise mentioned how they are also trying to shorten the call time because it makes for better routing when you take the negotiating time versus a rider saying “*I don’t want that time*”. So they are more firm when telling them that is the time available.

Keith then asked if when she talks about the “*Negotiated Time*”, if she means it’s the time the computer will spit back at the rider and that’s the “*Negotiated Time*”. Denise confirmed he was right.

Rachel then commented on her recent issue that was on the day of her groups Valentines Day dance. She said a number of riders were going (Access/DAR) to this dance. The dance was over at about 9pm but that DAR wanted to start picking everyone up at 830pm and she said that when you have a social event like this one, you don’t want to leave early. A lot of people ended up canceling their rides and having to find another way home because there was just no way to get anyone to get them to come after 9pm. Denise and a few others started to comment on her issue by asking her a few more questions. Denise final answer was that she needs to be aware of this and to please contact her or Susie if this happens again.

Ms. Pierce then asked a question from another passenger attending the meeting; she asked if the rumor was true about drivers being late and that they don’t care when they are arriving late to pick someone up because the city eventually still gets paid.

Adrian’s reply was to her was that there is a fine when drivers arrive late to pick up or drop off a rider and that there are standards that MV must meet each month and that is what they call their “on time performances standard”. If they don’t meet their “on time performances standard” then they will be assessed a fine but if they exceed them the City will pay MV incentives. But overall their goal is to provide good service.

Adrian went on to explain how they calculate late trips and the fines for MV.

Denise did mention that in the month of February there were 8 excessive late trips making it in the month of February 91.68% on time.

Adrian clarified Denise numbers saying that he had a report that he printed yesterday going thru the 28th of February and those numbers were:

Total rides provided 8197 = 7735 on time & 693 late (outside the window). On time percentage rate 91.78%

Late is viewed in two ways:

1. Percentage = Total number of late trips will vary on the total number of trips.
2. Window = any trip that is outside the forty five minutes window regardless of anything else that would happen will also be assessed a penalty.

For example in the month of January there were 5 trips that were over forty five minutes late at \$250 for each = \$1,250 was assessed to MV. On time performances percentage was 92.42% with no incentive pay or disincentive pay.

Adrian said this also applies to Transit and they do look at the peak travel time and they do adjust the travel time on the GPS and the schedule for that. They also have exceptions where they can adjust anything out of ordinary (accidents, detours, snow, etc.) and those

will not count against the over all percentage and they look at the data on a daily basis to see what is valid and what is not valid for an exception.

Adrian then mentioned that they have seen a slight drop in there call volume in January and February compared to last year. In January there were a total of 9,675 total calls come into the call center and in February there were 9,355. We have noticed that a lot of riders are using the online real time information which is a good thing. That is helping with the overall call volume coming down.

Adrian's next update was in regards to the consultant they have chosen for the Transit plan. They have selected someone and are moving ahead with that project the city have signed the contract, and conducted the kick off meeting. We are now in the process of developing a Community Survey & Comprehensive Outreach Plan. We will also be surveying for our fixed route passengers within in the next two to three weeks.

As part of the community survey, a group of people will stand out at different locations (mall, farmers market, bus stops) conducting surveys. The Outreach efforts will also include DAR. They will also be meeting with Stake Holders within the community here in the committee; they are still finalizing that list. We are hoping that we can set it up for the next meeting or the meeting after that and use a portion of the meeting time to interview or use as part of that process. Adrian will keep everyone posted on the upcoming dates and wants to everyone to know who these group of people are in case they do see them out there soon and they are part of there transit development plan. Adrian answered a question about the process and mentioned that the role of the consultant is to take complaints. If they just verbally tell the surveyor, then chances are they will not hear about it.

Adrian last update he wanted to share was on the recent projects they are kicking off which are:

1.) First one is that they are working on selecting a vendor to provide or install monitors inside our local and commuter buses that will provide visual announcements for stop arrival information. An addition to our audios that we have on our transit buses right now, we will now have a visual display that shows the route, what stop is approaching or what is the next stop, as well as a map of whatever stops will be coming up along the route. We plan to have this project wrapped up by the end of the summer. Rachel commented to this by saying that this will really help out at night because she has a difficult time seeing where she at.

Questions were then asked about booking online trips and Adrian said it's still on the radar but functionality would require significant upgrades to our software. John mentioned that he thinks there would be a lot of confusion at first and Denise said people that have gone into this system where they are booking online has been a lot smoother transition though she does not think it will improve the high volume of calls that come into the call center.

Adrian said it is being looked at but it's not a priority right now and as Denise mentioned it will not have a tremendous impact on the system right now.

2.) Next update, Adrian mentioned that on Tuesday's meeting the city council approved the funding and there staff to enter into an assignment agreement with the city of Fresno to purchase 10 buses to replace 10 of our 2000 diesel powered buses with CNG powered local buses. We are moving ahead with this and it will be for our local service. Our plan is to phase out our diesel and we have 21 diesel buses still on our fleet and this will replace about half and the plan is to replace the remaining 11 by next year.

3.) We are also trying to get our Ranger Units replaced as well with newer models and hopefully that will happen by this summer. The units we have now are about seven years old and its taking work to keep them going so its time to get them replaced.

Alfredo Torales was next to discussed issues with Access, he began by advising everyone that over 17,000 Tap cards were mailed out just last week and a lot of people will start to receive them soon.

Next issue for discussion was that on January 31 they had a community meeting in Santa Clarita in the Valencia Library, (flyers were mailed out to attend) and he thought the meeting was pretty positive. They were able to address some concerns such as specific Tap card questions, informed people if they are traveling to another city to contact customer service and they might be able to get some passes, and they also talked about the Community Advisory Meeting. Recently Access also did a telephone customer service survey and its still being finalized but it was very positive. Customers are very happy with the services we are providing. The final survey will be posted on our website when it is finalized.

Rachel had questions on the Tap card and asked if there was some kind of visual training for the card on how to use it and load it. Adrian advised her about the video that is on the City's website. The only part that has been confusing for them is the Visa part of the Tap card but they don't have to activate the Visa part.

If they do have more questions, concerns, or have accidentally activated the Visa part and want to deactivate it then all they have to do is call customer service and they will help them. Alfredo confirmed that Access will help them if they need it.

Rachel asked if she will still need her "orange" tap card once she receives her "green" access tap card. Adrian said that the orange tap cards that were issued in Santa Clarita were only temporary cards and we did that because we knew that the Access cards were delayed. The temporary orange tap cards have expiration date and will not work after that date.

James Hogan then asked Alfredo about an update on what they discussed at the last meeting regarding adding another time to the transfer. Adrian stepped in and said that Jim actually asked him to do some counts in terms to this because he didn't feel very confident on the numbers they were reporting. What Adrian is doing now is going thru every trip and doing a count of trips that go to Olive View and trips that go to the VA. He is still working on that and will be emailing it out to the rest of the group in the next several days. They have talked about the 1230pm time to an earlier time like 930am or 1030am. PCA issues were then discussed on travel time, cost, and fraud.

Alfredo mentioned that Metrolink wants to start charging Access for PCA. We are reimbursing metolink for every Access trip but not for the PCA.

Adrian had a quick comment going back to what Rachel was saying, is that we do have regular Tap training sessions that are part of the Tap and our outreach. We have an event scheduled at the senior center on March 12 and its part of the Senior Ambassador program we will have someone there to help people get familiar with our fixed route service, how to read a the schedule, and how to plan a trip. We will also have staff there to teach people how Tap works and if needed they can take a photo for their application. We are doing this on a quarterly basis and next one is on March 12.

Denise was next on issues and began with the Call center; she said they have increased the number of call takers by one. Ashley is still there, she is the one that use to do the visually impaired group except her shift was changed. Shifts were changed around and she was assigned new work with the new shift change. Denise also mentioned that they have added another person just for the weekends because they noticed that the hold times on weekends was ugly and were hoping that by improving it has decreased. We also have someone scheduled till 1030pm that's to clean up all the transfer stuff or the last minute calls.

Denise discussed overall on-time performances. January, it was 92.42% and for the month of February was 91.68%. Denise was asked for the Ridership for February and Adrian replied with total number of 8,197 trips. Denise commented saying that ridership was down the in last month of December 2011 and actually went thru the month of January. In February, Access wide it was a killer month where ridership started increasing and we did have an over 500 trip day during the month of February.

Finally Denise said that if she needs to be reached to please blow up her phone or if she is not there they can call Susie. Because she said it's very easy for dispatch to say "there is nothing available" when it only takes 60 seconds to go and find out if something is available. Denise said the schedule is a moving puzzle and the night before once that first van pulls out of the yard in those tires start moving, things begin to change. We need to remember we are picking up people not packages. Our trips start about 4am in the morning and our last trip is booked at about 10pm. Denise was asked about their peak hours and she said between 1:30pm – 2:30pm is when they pick up adult day care and its also when the morning drivers get off and the afternoon drivers start their day. Senior center starts their major pick ups around noon and they go till about 1:30pm. So those are the busy times. Denise also said all trips are as equally important compared to someone waiting six months for a doctor's appointment or someone just going to go visit a friend. So when someone tells Denise you don't understand I've been waiting for this appointment for six months, she wants them to know she does understand however there is another side to this too. Linda Wood said she usually has to book her ride at least two hours prior to get to her doctors appointment on time and Denise said that is about right, they need to prepare with at least two hours prior to get there on time. Denise also mentioned that due to the Access rules, they can not tell you what time to be ready. That is why the girls at the call center say "give me a requested pick up time".

Rachel then said she had a small issue but it was more for her dad. She said where they live there are a lot of DAR pick ups. Not to long ago they requested a pick up and the driver kept bypassing them and when they finally asked another driver, he made them walk further to a different building in there complex and this made her dad really upset because it is really hard for him to walk. Rachel was told her file will be verified on this.

No more comments or concerns from committee.

Meeting Adjourned