

City of **SANTA CLARITA**  **TRANSIT**

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Committee Meeting

9:00 a.m.

Thursday, November 4, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman, John Panico called to order the meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS & GENERAL PUBLIC PRESENT

John Panico, Chairman	Jennifer Elhawary, MV Transportation
Keith Curry, Vice Chair	Adrian Aguilar, City of Santa Clarita
Christine Pernodet, MV Transportation	Grace Ferguson, City of Santa Clarita
Ruben Mendoza, MV Transportation	Jim Hogan, Member
Arcy Torres, MV Transportation	Lilian Shaw, Member

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jim Hogan questioned if there were enough people present for quorum and asked if John Taylor would be attending the meeting. Adrian explained he spoke with him and was informed that he is not allowed to attend in person meetings. John Panico stated that there was not enough for quorum but they were still able to proceed with the meeting. Agenda was approved.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Lilian Shaw

Lilian mentioned that she has been going out more and decided to ride the bus after 2 and a ½ years.

John stated that that was great and asked if she rode local transit?

Lilian answered yes and stated that she wasn't scared.

Jim Hogan-

Jim had a question regarding John Taylor and asked if him not being able to attend had to do with employment?

Adrian answered and confirmed it did have to do with employment.

Keith Curry-

Keith shared that he wanted to start soliciting members at the beginning of the new year. He asked if anyone knew of anyone who can be a potential member, to please invite them so that they can get the board back up and running. He also emphasized that he would like to reach out to current members and follow up with them.

AGENCY UPDATES

Adrian Aguilar, City of Santa Clarita

Adrian wanted to share a number of updates with the group. Santa Clarita Transit has started off the transition into Zero- Emission fleet. Some of the first steps in the process has been creating the design and brainstorming the construction of the infrastructure. Also mentioned how a couple of years back, the City had decided to go through with hydrogen fuel cell path. Some of the first steps they took in the previous path was looking for funding, research in technology type to determine what best met the needs of the City. Based on the technology, the range of battery-electric would not work for the City. In order to make battery-electric work, they would have to replace one CNG vehicle with two battery-electric buses. The City issued and RFP for a consultant to finalize and manage the construction of the fueling infrastructure. He mentioned that transit is currently in the evaluation phase and will be going to council on December 12 to award the contract. Hoping to place first order of Zero- Emission buses in Spring of 2022. Delivery time is 12-18 months, expected early 2023.

John Panico asked where the buses are being shipped from? He asked if they are being sent from overseas.

Adrian stated that the New Flyers are being built in Alabama but the company is located in Canada, where they handle the design work. The City has two buses on order for their DAR service, they are cutaway vehicles. They have a couple of transit vehicles and two MCI commuter buses on order. Adrian received notice that the cutaway would be arriving in the following four weeks. The Gillig transit buses are scheduled to go into production March 1 of 2022. The commuter buses will be going into production March 8, which are being produced in North Dakota. They should be on site in early-mid April.

Jim Hogan made a comment of battery life expectancy. He stated that he has a motor home vehicle which now has a battery life that exceeds the actual life expectancy of the Vehicle itself. He asked Adrian if they took the battery life and battery updates into consideration? For example, if a new upgraded battery is produced, will they be exchanging to the newer batteries.

Adrian explained that they have taken that into consideration. At the moment, the longest range that a bus has with a fully charged battery is 220 miles in optimal conditions. Based on the research they have done, they found that buses are really only getting about 60% of what is being advertised for range. Currently, on average the buses are traveling between 200-300 miles a day. This would mean they could not get through a whole day without having to charge the battery. This would leave them with the option of having to swap the buses midday, or they would have to install infrastructure throughout the city to be able to charge the buses throughout the day. Adrian mentioned that they had looked into cost of the construction of these infrastructures in different location and the cost would be between two to four million dollars for each location.

Lilian Shaw asked how long it takes to charge the buses.

Adrian answered that depending on infrastructure and charge output, it can go anywhere from four to six hours for a full charge. The challenge they would face in the future is that charging 54 buses in a 7-hour window would be a tremendous draw. In speaking with Edison, the improvements needed to at the facility to accommodate were significant.

John made a comment about how would one charge or upkeep the charging station as well.

Adrian emphasized that there are many contributing factors that come into play in the case of an emergency with these structures. He stated that these reasons were what influenced their decision in not going with the hydrogen path.

Jim Hogan asked if they have considered keeping the existing buses as backup buses.

Adrian said yes. He stated he knows that the transition will not be overnight. This project is a 18-19-year plan. The plan is to be Zero- Emission by the year 2040.

Jim Hogan commented that he believes that will not happen.

Adrian explained that they have a replacement schedule in place. The way the schedule is setup is that 1/12 of the fleet is replaced every year, so every year 3-4 buses are bought. The plan for the next few years is that half of the bus orders will be Zero- Emission and half will be CNG. When the year 2028 is reached, the plan is for all new purchases will be 100% Zero- Emission buses. This will result in having all Zero- Emission fleet by 2040. Adrian also brought up the DAR Vehicles that are currently on order. He talked about the testing of the new technology on those vehicles, liquid sprain suspension. The goal is to improve the ride on the vehicles and with the new technology they will be able to accomplish that. They plan to ask for feedback once they are in service. The other vehicle being tested in Access is the low floor van which has a ramp in place of a lift. The plan is to add low floor van into the DAR fleet as well. The hope is to create a better experience for riders and shorten boarding time.

Keith Curry stated that he concurs with the vehicles and believes they are more accessible.

Adrian follows with the next update on ridership and states that it has increased for DAR and Access. Transit ridership has improved 60% or more compared to how it was before the pandemic. The plan for the new year is to reach out to the riders and retrieve feedback on the ride experience for these new vehicles.

Keith Curry asked Adrian what the percentages of ridership to the senior center and if those numbers will increase once they open the senior center again.

Adrian answered that before COVID around 20% of trips were going to and from the senior center, now it has decreased. Adrian does believe ridership will increase to the senior center.

Keith Curry mentioned that there are lots of seniors waiting for the full reopening.

Adrian responded that once the senior center reopens, they look into reintroducing fixed route service. He mentions that while there are increases in ridership with most of their services but this is not reflected for the commuter service routes. He believes this might be in result to many people still working remotely. He said he received notice from Metrolink and they intend to restore service that was suspended due to COVID. They intend to restore 4 to 5 trips each day during the week to the Antelope Valley line. Maybe this will generate more ridership to the connecting local transit services. Adrian mentions an update on funding. He states that staff is currently working on two grant applications. One is for an update on the transit development plan. The plan was developed in 2018 and was adopted by Council in 2019 but as a result of COVID many portions of the plan were affected by the pandemic. They hope to hire a consultant to help update the plan. The second grant application that is being worked on is to install new UV Sanitation Systems on the buses and

a HEPA filter system on DAR and Access buses. This system sanitizes the air as it circulates through the buses. There are a few test units installed in some transit vehicles. The hope is to install similar systems on the fleet. The cost is estimated to be between \$400,000 - \$500,000.

Keith Curry asked if every vehicle will be fitted with the new UV system?

Adrian answered yes. He emphasized that DAR and Access fleets will have the HEPA Filters. The commuter and transit buses will have the UV system. Adrian also stated the two grants being worked on are due the following week. In case the grant is not awarded, a backup plan is being worked on. Adrian also mentioned the cost of the first plan, revamping of the transit development, to be \$250,000 to \$350,000. Adrian also shared an update on the completion of the Vista Canyon Transit Center construction. This center is part of the Vista Canton development, which includes homes, retail, and much more. This center is also adjacent to the Metrolink station that is also being constructed.

Grace Ferguson, City of Santa Clarita

Graces starts by giving an update on the technology the new Vista Canyon Metrolink station has to offer.

Keith Curry asks the description of the senior homes.

Adrian Aguilar mentions that the homes are a mix of apartments and condos being built by a private developer. These homes are adjacent to the south side of the Metrolink tracks.

Grace continues to describe the highlights of the station. She talks about the new installation of the electric bike lockers. These bike lockers are accessible through via the Movatic phone application. Some of the other features include: interactive touchscreen Kiosks and planting of plants with recycled water.

Adrian Aguilar adds that the station will be equipped with Wi-Fi for the riders to use. This is also one of the first stations the will have "Purple Pipe" which is the use of recycled water. This water will be used to water the landscape. This water will be generated by the water treatment plant located in Vista Canyon.

Keith Curry asks if the station is open yet and if drop offs are going to be discontinued at the Via Princessa Station?

Adrian Aguilar answers and states that the station is not currently open. This station will take about 18 months for completion of the rail station. He mentions that this week they will be doing track work. Santa Clarita will be offering bus bridge service from Santa Clarita to Lancaster during the weekend construction to facilitate the work that is going on as a part of the station. Adrian adds that there are no plans to close Via Princessa immediately. The plan is to operate both stations for about 6-12 months that way ridership can be monitored. It is predicted that most of the Via Princessa ridership will be shifted to Vista Canyon. There are also plans to for a park site at Via Princessa. On the other side of the tracks there is an open space to build a field. There is a plan to design an underpass under the tracks for there to be access to that area.

Christine Pernodet asks Grace if the Kiosk has the amenity for patrons to buy bus passes?

Grace said that is not an option for the kiosk. The Kiosk is designed to communicate information: bus routes, transit alerts, parks, trails, bus routes, train routes.

Adrian Aguilar adds the benefit if that we have control over the content posted. There is the possibility of adding a bus pass feature in the future.

Jim Hogan asks if the Kiosk is also built for the visibly impaired.

Grace answers yes.

Jim Hogan's worry is that patrons that are visibly impaired will still need some type of guidance in order to use the Kiosk.

Christine Pernodet asks if patrons are able to access rider alerts or service change.

Grace Explains that with the kiosk staff will have the ability to send real-time information from our web browser/desk. So, if there are any changes or updates, the information can be sent to the Kiosks immediately.

Adrian Aguilar added that the transit Twitter feed will be added to the Kiosks as well.

Christine Pernodet ask if there is a plan to add a Kiosk at the McBean Transit Center.

Adrian Aguilar states that the plan is to test the Kiosk at the Vista Canyon Station so in the future they can add Kiosk to the MRTC, Metrolink stations, and any bus stop locations.

Keith Curry asks if the station will be a drop-off location for MV and Access?

Adrian Aguilar confirms it will be a drop-off location. He mentions that there's already a stop at and across the street. There is no commuter service in that area but the plan is to provide commuter service to that area. Adrian then asked if MV can give an update on driver shortages.

Jim Hogan asked to make a compliment before moving. He wanted to compliment on the customer service representative, David Tamariz. He was very pleased with his call and was very impressed in the way David handled the call.

Arcy Torres, MV Transportation

Arcy Torres began by giving an update on the driver shortages and call-offs. She mentioned that back in September MV employees had the benefit of Employee Paid Sick Leave (ESPL). The employees were issued 80 hours and were also able to be used to care for someone in the household who had COVID. Arcy mentioned that she felt that because these hours could be used in any circumstance, the driver were taking advantage of calling-off, especially because no proof was needed. Since September 30, EPSL has ended which has resulted in less call-offs and driver shortages. Another issue was that drivers were better off with stimulus checks and higher paying unemployment. Another factor that has helped decrease the driver issue is that the starting pay was increased from \$15.23 to \$19.00. Currently there are 118 active drivers, this puts MV short of 3 drivers. There are currently 10 drivers in training and recruitment is ongoing. Although there the ESPL has ended and there is a higher pay, there are still some absence issue present. Arcy updates the group on the current positions MV still has not been able to fill: Operations Manager, Customer Service Representative, Dispatcher, and Ambassador. Something that was implemented in September was an Incentive Program. Drivers with good attendance would get placed in a weekly drawing for the month of September where they had the chance to win prizes. Although this did not influence more drivers to attend, it did incentivize the drivers who were commonly known for good attendance.

Keith Curry asked if the position available were posted on a website? Besides the pay increase, what has happened with health care?

Arcy Torres said the available positions are posted on the website. She stated the health care benefits are 100% covered for solely the employee. If there is a dependent added to the healthcare plan, there is a deductible.

Jennifer Elhawary, MV Transportation

Jennifer Elhawary gave an update on the call center. She stated that the call center is still missing one CSR which they are still in the process of searching for. There have been significant improvements in the past couple of months. On time performance has increased for trips. The service overall has improved.

Keith Curry asked when transfer trips to Olive View will be back?

Jennifer answered that due to COVID the hospital is open but only allowing people to have appointments to go there. The MRTC is still being used as the transfer center for Access connections.

Adrian Aguilar commented that what has been done is that a bus has been stationed at the transfer center that can be used as a sitting area or shelter. In addition, they also have the canopies as accommodations.

Keith Curry added that he has heard seniors have been hesitant about riding again.

Jim Hogan asked if security cameras at transit centers?

Adrian Aguilar answered that MRTC does have cameras.

Jim Hogan asked if there are plans to place more cameras? He believes that people can be apprehended more efficiently because of the security cameras.

Adrian Aguilar stated that when a new facility is made, security cameras will be installed. In current facilities, no more security cameras will be added due to funding.

Keith Curry asked if there will be enclosed shelters at the new Vista Canyon Station

Adrian Aguilar stated that there will be area for seating with shade but it is not completely enclosed.

Keith Curry suggested for there to be a more enclosed area in case the commuter services are moved to the Vista Canyon Station.

Adrian Aguilar said that can be something to be considered. Adrian also mentioned an update on Access. He stated that Access has been currently been performing evaluations and approvals of eligibility virtually. Access is planning to restart their in-person evaluations December 1. The evaluations will take place at the Transit Maintenance Facility. They will be performed twice a month as of now. Adrian also mentioned that he had the opportunity to visit with Access and tour their new autonomous vehicle. Access received a grant to build a vehicle that would be used to transport riders. They partnered with various technology firms to install radars and cameras so that it can essentially drive itself. An employee is still required to be present while the vehicle is running to ensure safety.

Keith Curry mentioned that he believes this grant should have been rather used for new Access vans because passengers feel they are not well kept and break down.

Adrian explained that the funding came from a federal grant and cannot be used in any other way. He also explained that one of the challenges the agency has faced are shortages related to COVID. There have been orders for replacement vans that cannot be fulfilled because the manufacture cannot obtain what's needed.

Keith asked if Access receives money?

Adrian explains that they receive it through grants, federal funding, and local revenue.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

No general public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:22 am.

FUTURE MEETING

The next meeting for the Accessibility Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, January 6, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. in the Century Room.