

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

**ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Committee Meeting

**9:00 a.m.**

**Thursday, March 2, 2023**

**Carl Boyer Room, City Hall**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman, John Panico called to order the meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee at 9:10 a.m.

**MEMBERS & GENERAL PUBLIC PRESENT**

John Panico, Chairman

Arcy Torres, MV Transportation

Keith Curry, Vice Chair

Michelle Rush, MV Transportation

Adrian Aguilar, City of Santa Clarita

David Tamariz, MV Transportation

Grace Ferguson, City of Santa Clarita

Faustino Salvador, Access Services

Kathleen Herrera, City of Santa Clarita

Brian Lopez, Access Services

Toshia Griffin, Member of the Public

Debbie Jones, Member of the Public

Billy Jean Curry, Member of the Public

Manel Pushparajah, Member of the Public

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA & MINUTES**

John discusses the January meeting minutes and notes a correction to members and general public in attendance. Keith Curry indicates that we do not meet a quorum therefore can not approve the previous meeting minutes. Keith Curry notes that the meeting has not met a quorum, and discusses the process of bringing Ms. Griffin onboard as a member in order to meet a quorum. Adrian Aguilar indicates that Ms. Griffin will need to complete her application process to join the board and appointed by the director of Economic Development, Tom Cole.

## **MEMBER COMMENTS**

John Panico makes a comment on the Metrolink “train tracker” that had information on train updates. A train was late, and the tracker did not indicate 60 (sixty) minutes late which caused him to be confused as to whether or not the train was 6 (six) minutes late or 60 (sixty) minutes late. John did put in a message to Metrolink to advise them of the issue.

Keith Curry offers a kudos from Tommy Ward at the Senior Center, as well as from other members at the Senior Center. They have enjoyed the Access and DAR services and the drivers who have provided the services have been great

After discussing this process, John and Keith agree to proceed with agency updates.

## **AGENCY UPDATES**

### **Grace Ferguson, City of Santa Clarita**

Grace shares that the new and updated DAR literature will be delivered to us soon and shares with Keith that once we have the brochures, we will be dropping off a large quantity at the Senior Center.

*Keith responds that he has let staff at the Senior Center know that they would be coming soon. Keith also shares that there is a large senior population in Santa Clarita that would like to take advantage of the transportation services within the City.*

Grace continues with an update regarding the Vista Canyon Metrolink is almost at completion, and completing punch lists for this week. The City will be planning a large ribbon cutting event in July, for which she will send out invitations to the group.

*Keith indicates that he was to the understanding that the ribbon cutting was going to be held in April, but it has changed?*

Grace confirms that due to scheduling changes that the ribbon cutting will be held in July.

*Keith indicates that he would like an invitation to be sent to Jim Hogan and Pam.*

Grace indicates that she will share that. She also shares that she is working on the next two phases of the bus stop improvement project that will update QR codes and signage at approx. 700 bus stops. The next phase will replace broken and damaged furniture for approx. 30 bus stops. Grace concludes her updates.

*John asks about the grading and construction happening in Vista Canyon, and wants to know if that is the senior housing.*

*Adrian states that the current construction is residential. The senior housing has been approved by Council, however the commencement of construction for the senior housing in Vista Canyon is determined by the contractor.*

*Keith asks about route development for the Vista Canyon area, as DAR and Access can get through the area, but what about mass transit.*

*Grace indicates that we are awaiting the construction of the bridge expansion in order to be able to begin routing to that area with local buses. She states that we are about year out from the bridge expansion project. She indicates that Access, DAR and GO! services are currently available in the area.*

*Adrian indicates that there will be an update and expansion of the Transit Development Plan, which will include a plan to have a consultant evaluate new development areas like Vista Canyon, Five Knolls, FivePoint, Tesoro, Skyline and Fair Oaks, and provide recommendations to expand service to these areas. Anticipates that this process will require 12-18 months, and will include a large amount of community outreach.*

*Keith asks about doing a seminar at the Senior Center to provide agency and transit information, as well as Citywide updates, and requests that Grace contact Kevin MacDonald or Suzanne Nelson at the Senior Center.*

*Adrian indicates that we will definitely reach out. He also points to Michelle Rush who joined him at the Senior Center to provide information, answer questions and enroll members in DAR and Access Services*

### **Adrian Aguilar, City of Santa Clarita**

Adrian provides an update on the approval of the purchase of several new buses at the last City Council meeting. With this approval, Transit will be looking to purchase the first of the Hydrogen fuel cell buses, three new CNG transit buses and two new DAR CNG vehicles. Currently working with the manufacturers to get the contracts signed and will hopefully have those in the next 12 – 14 months. For the Hydrogen product, Transit is currently evaluating proposals for the project from contractors to design and construct the Hydrogen station at the Transit Maintenance Facility. The plan is to take that item to Council at the end of March for approval. If approved, that will bring us to the next phase of the project. We anticipate the design phase to take four months, and hope to begin construction October of this year. Some equipment does have a one-year lead time, and the project timeline is estimated at 14 – 16 months.

*John asks about having the Hydrogen fuel bus without the project being complete.*

Adrian indicates that the plan is to coordinate the bus purchase with the progress of the project to avoid a significant gap in time of having the bus vs. project completion. There is also the possibility of bringing in Hydrogen to fuel the bus, should that be an issue.

*John asks Grace about press release updates regarding Transit.*

Grace indicates that John is signed up for alerts and shares where the rest of the attendees can go to sign up to receive those alerts and updates.

*John asks Grace regarding ridership numbers.*

Grace indicates that she will let Arcy update the group on ridership numbers and statistics.

*John passes the floor to Faustino Salvador.*

### **Faustino Salvador, Access Services**

Faustino shares preliminary data, which will be finalized on 3/15. On Time Percentage (OTP) is at 92.8%; calls on hold over five minutes is at 4.4% with 73 second initial hold time. Access committee meeting on February 25, which went very well. Brian Lopez is now joining the Operations team as an Operations Services Monitor, and will be assisting with the Santa Clarita and Southern regions. Shares a resignation that Access received, and will be looking to fill the vacancy.

*John asks Keith if he had anything to address with Faustino.*

*Keith states that he attended the Access Community meeting and was able to get a lot of great information. Keith states that he was submitting his information for re-certification with Access, and he was surprised that he did not have to come in to interview. Why was that?*

Faustino stated that he believes that it is likely due to no change in mobility or information.

*Keith states that's what he has been pushing for to avoid patrons having to come in to interview to recertify when their mobility or circumstance hasn't changed.*

Faustino confirmed that the only reason a patron would need to come in to re-certify would be due to a change in mobility or a change of information for the patron.

*Adrian asks what the standard re-certification period- every three years?*

Faustino states that it does vary, but the maximum is every three years.

*Keith indicates that his has been every year since the pandemic.*

Faustino confirms that due to the pandemic, they had extended it every year.

*John passes the floor to Arcy Torres.*

### **Arcy Torres, MV Transportation**

Arcy provides personnel updates- the call center is currently fully staffed. Currently conducting interviews for a dispatcher position. Currently have 130 active drivers, and are always hiring for

drivers. This number does not include any one out on leave, and there are seven people currently in training. Training department has been very busy.

Arcy states that she does not currently have the OTP metrics for Dial-A-Ride. For Commuter and Local, they have been struggling due to weather impacts on traffic. Thirty percent of their workforce commutes from Lancaster and Palmdale. Many drivers were unable to come in due to weather related issues and road closures. MV was able to meet service Friday, Saturday and Sunday (February 24 – 26). It did hurt the OTP. Extra support, dispatchers, supervisors, CSRs and cover drivers, to assist with meeting service. A normal day will have 3-5 driver call offs, over the weekend there were more than 20.

*Keith asks if Arcy could email the OTP numbers as well as the 'No Show' numbers out to the members for review.*

Arcy clarifies if Keith wants the No Shows for Access and Dial-A-Ride or just Dial-A-Ride

*Keith indicates both, but particularly Dial-A-Ride*

Adrian states that he has those numbers available. For February- 160 No Shows for Dial-A-Ride, 50 No Shows for Access.

*Keith states that he knows that the weather has probably affected those numbers. He is curious if any of those No Shows could be attributed to drivers. He received a few complaints from seniors at the Senior Center that were "No Showed" and they feel it wasn't their fault.*

Adrian states that it is something we can look into it. And OTP for Dial-A-Ride was 92%.

*Faustino asks Keith if he is concerned with Access No Shows?*

Keith states that he is more concerned with Dial-A-Ride because of the high rate of No Shows.

*Faustino provides Keith and the group an explanation of the process for Access drivers to report a no Show.*

Keith states that he is aware of that process. He states that 160 is a high number, and that there was rain for one week in February, meaning that majority of the No Shows had to have taken place over the previous three weeks of the month. After receiving numerous complaints from patron at the Senior Center, he wants to make sure that the No Shows are valid.

*Michelle asks if she can touch on the issue- with Access has very strict rules regarding cancelling trips and issuing No Shows, so their trend would be significantly less. As far as Dial-A-Ride trend that they are seeing having some riders book both a GO! ride as well as a Dial-A-Ride and seeing which service arrives first. So, if the GO! ride arrives first, and Dial-A-Ride calls to inquire about the scheduled ride, riders are stating that they are already on the other*

*vehicle for their trip, which is increasing the rates of No shows on the Dial-A-Ride side. They are currently looking at ways to mitigate that issue. As far as trying to avoid No Shows, they have set up many passengers with the automated call out system that will call, text or email to notify the rider of the bus's arrival time. They are also working with dispatch to verify information before approving a No Show, and the driver has to get approval to leave for a No Show.*

Grace states that this week, City staff is looking at No shows and warning letters will be going out for riders with excessive No Shows.

*Keith states that he has been on the board for more than 20 years and he has never seen 160 No Shows, and February is only 28 days. Keith states that he wants to make sure that the letters that are sent out, that they are sympathetic to the senior community and the challenges they face.*

Grace states that they are looking at patrons that have 6 or more No Shows.

*Kevin addresses the double-booking issue and states that if there is a system that can indicate that patrons are trying to book DAR services and GO! services.*

Michelle states that unfortunately, DAR and GO! services operate on two different systems, so the operator will not be aware of any double bookings.

*Adrian addresses Keith regarding the No Show policy, and confirms with Grace that the last time that No Show letters went out was prior to the pandemic. The No Show letters are not meant to intended to punish but more to remind the riders. It is not uncommon for the drivers to wait 6-7 minutes for the rider before leaving. This has a domino effect for the riders that have not been picked up for their trip. That is the reason for going back to the practice of sending out the letters to remind riders. Additionally, the new brochures will be available to remind riders of the No Show policy. The letters are also more focused on the "abusers" of the program.*

Keith states that's all for him.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

John moves on to new business and asks participants if there is any new business.

There is no new business to discuss.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

John moves on to old business, and discusses the state of the board and needing new members.

*Keith asks about Karen Manke.*

David states that he did speak with Karen and her dog recently passed away. She is still interested but is unable to attend today.

*Keith states that we will continue to solicit for other members, and that we have a potential member, Ms. Griffin in attendance today.*

John states that the agenda states that the next meeting will be at City Hall, however, traditionally, the May meeting is held at the Transit Maintenance Facility (TMF).

*Grace states that if he would like to have the meeting there, that she can arrange that.*

John confirms that he would like to hold the May meeting at the TMF.

John moves on to public comment.

### **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS**

John calls on Debbie to provide public comment.

Debbie introduces herself, and provides her background and experience with Access. She states that she is very impressed with the bridge that she is seeing with Access Dial-A-Ride and the drivers. She shares that she is no longer an Access card holder because she had too many negative incidents with Access that may seem small on paper but have a huge impact when she is living her life. She states that she would like to know how the on-time numbers are calculated.

*David states that the information is gathered through the GPS on the vehicles and is validated by the driver.*

Debbie states that it seems that there have been some improvements since she was a rider, as she had several cases where she has had very late arrivals and her disability does not allow her to wait 3 hours for a ride, she needs to be able to get home.

She then asks about the meetings- they are every two months, but where are they held and is there information on the website that she can get regarding the meetings? She had a difficult time finding information for the meetings. She was able to find information for 2022, but no information for 2023.

*Grace states that she will make sure the website is updated with 2023 information.*

Keith confirms with Grace that she will update the website with all upcoming AAC meetings.

*Adrian states that we can put up a calendar for the year.*

Debbie then inquires about GO! services. She was not aware that the City offered the GO! services. She like to know where she could go to get information for the GO! services.

*Grace states that she can go to the transit website to get more information on GO! and also download the TripShot app to her smartphone to utilize the service.*

Adrian provides a brief outline of the GO! service.

*Grace also confirms that she can also call in a request if she does not want to download the app.*

Debbie then shares her last experience waiting for a ride on Access, which was within the last year. She is an active person that lives with a disability, and she has meetings and other daily tasks. She was able to drive herself today because the weather is nice. However, when it's raining or poor weather it makes it more difficult. She scheduled her ride and return ride no issue. On that day there was weather, and on that day a lot of drivers had called out. She has a window to get out for her ride, she was outside waiting for her ride. 30 minutes passed and she went back inside to find out what the issue was. She called Access and was told that there wasn't a driver to pick her up. She understands that when there are a lot of driver call offs, it could be difficult to contact every rider, but this was the last straw. In another incident she was being pick up at Grace Baptist Church. It is a large campus, but she indicated that she was to be picked up at building D. She waited for a prolonged period of time and was not being picked up. When she contacted dispatch, she was told that the driver arrived and waited, tried to call her but she had no missed calls. Dispatch then told her that they could pick up in three hours- she can not wait three hours to be picked up.

Debbie then states that she will give Access another try, as being here today, she believes that many of the issues that she has experienced in the past have been resolved. She has been to these meetings before and making public comment, but did not feel heard or cared about. But she feels that the riders are finally being heard and cared about which is very important. She definitely gives it another try, but she is still concerned with is the route planning. She had an incident where she was again going to Grace Baptist from her home in Canyon Country. Once the driver got to McBean and Decorro, which is very close to the church, the driver told her they had to go to Castaic to pick up another rider. She asked the driver to just drop her off where they were at, that she was so close to the church she could roll up the hill. The driver told her that he couldn't. Because of this, she did not make it to the event because they had to go all the way to Castaic to pick someone up and all the way to Canyon Country to drop someone off. The route planning did not make sense, and she was wondering what the coordination of that looked like.

*John states that should that happen again, she can submit a concern and Grace and the City will investigate it and provide information as to why or how that happened. The communication has gotten better and the planning is getting better.*

Keith states that being on the bus over two hours is not within the current timeline limit for Access, which is that a rider should not be on the bus for more than ninety minutes.

*Michelle states there is a new system and they are trying to optimize the trips for riders. When there are errors or issues within the system, they go into the back end and troubleshoot to try to avoid those types of issues. When at the Senior Center, they were making riders aware of standing orders, that are automatically held for riders. This allows for the rides to be grouped together, and allows for other riders to book their trips and helps with the flow of service. They are working to avoid the long rides, the back and forth rides, and there is improvement on those issues.*

Adrian states it is helpful for us to hear from riders when these incidents occur so that we can immediately investigate the issue and try to resolve it.



Debbie states, yes, what I am hearing is that it would have been helpful for me to make you aware of the issue so that it could be addressed.

*Michelle states that they have also empowered the drivers to reach out to dispatch when routes are looking a little weird and working with the drivers and the dispatchers to reroute or adjust routes when they do have scenarios like what she experienced where it doesn't make sense for her to be taken all the way to Castaic.*

David states that he also has a suggestion when booking a trip and there is a particular building she wants to be picked up from, when she books the trip she can indicate that to avoid any confusion.

Debbie states that she did do that, but she will make sure to note that going forward.

*Michelle states that it does take team work to have the dispatcher communicate special instructions to the driver, since what the dispatcher can see and what the driver sees are not always the same, especially when there are special instructions.*

Keith states to make sure to update your rider information to include current cell phone number so she can request call outs.

*Michelle states that she can be enrolled through her profile to receive automated calls, texts or emails on ride updates.*

Manel begins providing public comment from her experience with Dial-A-Ride. She has several health issues and she does not drive, so she counts on friends to take her places or she uses Dial-A-Ride. She had a very negative experience and spoke with a manager. She was put in the system to receive text message updates. Last week she booked a trip for 9:30 a.m. and needed to be to her destination by 10:00 a.m. Normally she books it at 9:00 a.m., but that time wasn't available. She thought 9:30 a.m. would be ok. She received a text message that stated the bus will be there at 9:57 a.m. The bus did not arrive. She received a text that the bus was arriving, but there was no bus that was showing up. She called dispatch and went outside to look for the bus. Dispatch stated that the bus would be there in two minutes and to wait outside. The bus never showed. She called again, no answer. She kept calling and somebody finally someone answered and said ok the bus will be there to pick you up at 11:00 a.m. When the driver finally arrived, she asked the driver why he was so late and that she was now an hour late. The driver stated that he had just received a message from dispatch to come and pick her up. He then proceeded to pick up five other people and drive all over the valley. She was finally dropped off at her work at 12:00 p.m.- two hours late. Yesterday, the bus came and picked her up. The driver dropped off some people at the Senior Center, which is five minutes away from her work. The driver proceeded to drive all over the valley when she was now late again for work and should not have had to continue on the bus when after the first drop off the driver could have proceeded to drop her off at her work which was very close to his first drop off. She had an experience with a no show where she had to use the restroom and when she came out and inquired about her ride, she was told that the driver had already come and left. She asked what she could do and was told there was no bus to pick her up and she had to rely on her friend to take her to where she needed

to go. In the evening, she was waiting for her ride, and the bus never showed up. When she called to find out when the bus would be there, she was told that because she missed her morning trip, they automatically canceled her evening trip. She had to call GO! to get a ride home. She relies on public transportation and she is grateful for the services but there are issues that need to be resolved.

*Adrian states that he would like to get her Dial-A-Ride ID number so that transit can look into those trips and figure out what happened.*

Keith asks for Grace to check Manel's no show record. Grace agrees to do so.

Manel states that she only has the one from that particular instance.

*Keith states that the system has gotten better over the years and we are continuing to work to improve it.*

Tashia begins to provide public comment. She asks Michelle about riders calling to double book- how is that possible when the same service representatives answer the phone calls for all of the programs that we offer?

*Michelle states that the issue is not with double booking Dial-A-Ride and Access, it's with the GO! program. People can't double book with Access and Dial-A-Ride because they both run on the same system. GO! can be booked through the app and anonymously, so that is how people are able to double book using the GO! program and either Access or Dial-A-Ride.*

Tashia asks if there is a way to catch that in the system?

*Michelle states that because GO! is on a different software system, unfortunately, no there isn't. The only way it has been caught before is by having both systems open simultaneously and seeing that the same person has two trips booked.*

Tashia then asks about the different information that dispatchers have compared to the drivers. She asks about the driver's notes- if the information is being put into the driver's notes there shouldn't be an issue. She has left very detailed information when booking a trip, and it has made it easier when getting the driver to a complicated location. If the rider is taking the time to leave the detailed information to help the driver, but the driver is not reading the driver's notes, it results in these kinds of issues.

*Michelle states that there are the driver's notes, but it does depend on where the information is input to the system that will dictate whether or not the driver can see it. If it is a note that is added to your profile, the driver can see it- like a gate code. But if the service representative is putting in notes for that particular trip, the driver will not be able to see it but the dispatcher will.*

Keith states that the driver should be checking his personal notes so that they're covered and the dispatcher can't say they didn't know.

Tashia states that it is on the rider to make sure they are providing as much information as they can to ensure that she will get picked up. She states that she has had instances where she has

been told by service reps or drivers that they don't see a gate code for her home, but she knows that the information is in her profile because David input it for her and confirmed it was available for the driver to see.

*Michelle states that it is also about educating the reps on where to look on certain screens in order for them to be able to see everything that they need for her profile.*

Tashia asks Keith about the loading of the Tap cards for the discounted rides at the Senior Center. She was with Karla from Santa Clarita Transit, and Karla was working with Rita at the Senior Center to get Tashia's discounted ride application taken care of. Karla asked Rita if she could send her the form so that Tashia could complete it and Karla would send it back to her. They were placed on hold for two minutes and Rita stated that she had too much she needed to do and could not send her the form. It is 2023, what is the issue with getting the form on the computer. Karla then asks how they could get this taken care of for Ms. Griffin without her having to go all the way out to the Senior Center. Rita stated that she had to bring her social security letter and ID to the Senior Center. There is no reason she should have to schedule an Access trip to go all the way over to the Senior Center to load \$6.00 on a Tap card.

*Keith provides Tashia with contact information for the Senior Center to speak with them about resolving this issue.*

Manel states that she has also had issues with loading her Tap card at the Senior Center. She knows they only take cash. When she came with a \$50 bill, she was sent all over the Senior Center to try to find change, which they didn't have.

*Keith states in the future she should bring in smaller bills since they are hesitant to take larger bills.*

Tashia addresses Faustino, and asks when is there going to be incentives implemented for the driver's that is focused on their customer service.

*Faustino states that Access does have an incentive program for recognition of the drivers and that the contractor (MV Transportation) also has a recognition program for the drivers.*

Tashia states that in San Fernando area, there was an incident similar to Debbie's church incident. She always leaves very detailed information where they need to pick her up- on the Eaton Street side of the complex. It never fails that they go to the wrong side of the complex.

*Faustino confirms that he will address that issue with the team that schedules Access rides for that area.*

Tashia then tells Arcy that she has applied for a dispatch position. She also states that she likes the GO! service however, you are not guaranteed to get a ride back. She would not recommend Debbie using it unless she has free time and can wait for a return ride.

John makes a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**FUTURE MEETING**

May 4, 2023, Transit Maintenance Facility