

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

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)

Minutes of the Committee Meeting

9:00 a.m.

Thursday, November 7, 2024

Carl Boyer Room, City Hall

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	Karen Manke, Vice Chair
Arcy Torres, MV Transportation	Michelle Rush, MV Transportation
David Tamariz, MV Transportation	Adam Reyes, MV Transportation
Jacob Ortiz, MV Transportation	Adrian Aguilar, City of Santa Clarita
Grace Ferguson, City of Santa Clarita	Kathleen Herrera, City of Santa Clarita
Alicia Posada, Access Services	Toshia Griffin, Member of Public
Manel Pushparajah, Member of Public	

APPROVAL OF AGENDA & MINUTES

John Panico calls the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

MEMBER COMMENTS

John Panico

John mentions he feels everything has been looking good, on time, and liking the new technology available to patrons.

Toshia Griffin

Toshia asks Jacob about his new position. She asks what he sees and thinks he can improve?

Jacob responds that the main goal is to get the patrons to their destination comfortably and safely.

AGENCY UPDATES

Grace Ferguson, City of Santa Clarita

Grace gives an update on the Holiday Light Tour happening December 15-17. She explains that the proceeds and/or donations will be given to a nonprofit called The Battle Buddy Foundation.

She also gives an update on the shuttles that will be added to Light Up on Main Street event and the various routes that will be detoured to give passengers the chance to get closer to the event.

Grace also provides numbers for October:

- Access- 2,976 rides; 35 No Shows
- Dial-A-Ride- 7,175 trips; 136 No Shows.

There is also an update on the Electric Vehicle (EV) charger that will be installed at the Transit Maintenance Facility (TMF) which would be completed within one to two weeks.

John asks if it is only one charger.

Grace informs him that it is only one, which will be placed on the TMF property, that will be utilized only by City staff for the electric vehicle in the City's fleet.

John also asks the foundation involved with the Holiday Light Tour. He asks if it is a non-profit.

Grace explains that it is a non-profit the City is partnering with this year. She also explains that the foundation assists disabled combat veterans.

Toshia asks Grace the start date for the shuttles for Light Up on Main Street.

Grace explains that it will begin Saturday November 16th starting at 3:30 pm.

Adrian Aguilar, City of Santa Clarita

Adrian talks more into depth about the EV Charger that will be installed at the TMF. He also gives an update on the electric van that was purchased for the GO! service. He explains that currently the electric van has had to be charged at some of the public locations in the City. The electric van is currently in service and it will be getting a wrap to look similar to the rest of the GO! fleet. The van is currently giving four hours of service before having to charge it. The purpose of the van is for it to be used as a test to collect data on the technology, how trips should be scheduled, and how vehicle deployment will be managed. This data will be used to see how an electric vehicle can be incorporated into the regular operation.

Adrian also gives an update on the new transit vehicles that are scheduled to be delivered. He mentioned that James, MV Transportation Maintenance Manager, went out to the factory to inspect the vehicles. Minor issues were found and are being worked on but vehicles will be delivered within a week. After they are delivered it will take a few weeks for them to be prepared and inspected for service. It is hoped they will be in service by early December.

John asks which service they will be placed in and which factory are they from.

Adrian stated that they will be placed in the local service. He also informs him the factory they are from is Gillig which is in the Bay area.

Adrian also gives an update on the Transit Development Plan. A final draft of the report has been received. The goal is to have final report by the end of the year. Once it is finalized Transit will start working with City Management and the Council to start implementing recommendations in the new fiscal year after July 1, 2025.

Adrian updates that the Council approved and awarded the contract for the Bus Stop Improvement Project. This project is managed by Grace and focuses on improving bus stops and replacing bus stop furniture. Some of the furniture items have been ordered. With an eighteen-week delivery estimate, the project will begin once all furniture items have been delivered.

The last update Adrian gives is on the item that will be going to Council to award a contract for three additional hydrogen powered buses for the local service. If the item is approved by Council, it is estimated that the buses should be onsite at the end of 2025. In addition, the hydrogen station is progressing. Design plans of 90% have been received for the improvements to the TMF garage area. The plans are currently going through a Hazmat Review to identify any potential safety issues. As of now the project is still on track for construction to begin in the summer and the station operating by October or November of 2025.

John asks if Gillig would be the one to contract with for the hydrogen buses.

Adrian explains that the hydrogen buses are made by NewFlyer located in Alabama.

John also asks for an update on the TDP.

Adrian shares that one of the recommendations is to expand the GO! service. The TDP is calling for a doubling of the service that is currently being operated. A draft of a financial plan is underway to be able to analyze the cost. Adrian mentions that it might not be possible to double the GO! service but it will definitely be expanded. Adrian also mentions that another recommendation to the TDP was the introduction of new routes centered around the Senior Center, Fair Oaks, and areas where there is little to no service. With this, Transit is looking to simplify some of the existing routes. The idea is to combine various routes that overlap.

John asks if Santa Clarita Transit will be affected by the funding that was approved for the Rail Projects.

Adrian explains that Metrolink has several projects that are in place. One of the projects includes the expansion of the rail tracks between Santa Clarita and the San Fernando Valley. These improvements will allow train speeds to increase. The design for the expansion of the Antelope Valley line has been completed which will add a secondary track from Newhall to Lancaster. The plan is to reduce the two-hour travel time from Lancaster to Los Angeles to approximately an hour and a half. Although 20 million dollars has been allocated to the project, more funding is still needed. The estimated cost for this project is about 400 million dollars and 200 million more of funding is needed. This project might need to be condensed if additional funding from the state is not received.

Karen states she recalls a comment she wanted to make earlier. She mentioned an issue she had while on a trip. She asked why drivers tend to lift the ramp while riders are still on? She also mentioned that she feels operators are in a hurry but should at least wait for the riders to be completely off of the ramp.

Michelle informs her the matter will be looked into as soon as Karen is able to provide trip information.

John welcomes Manel and asks if she has any comments.

Manel mentioned that while at physical therapy, she overheard someone mention they were late due to their Access bus not showing up. She hopes if this occurs again, to obtain more information to be able to bring it up during the meeting in the future. She stated that so far, she is grateful for the service.

John mentions to Adrian he heard Metrolink announced changes to the lines occurring around the Ventura area. John asks how the changes at Vista Canyon are going?

Adrian responds that they implemented an hourly service the prior month which has had a positive impact on ridership. Adrian also mentions there has been a shift in promoting it as a daily commute to everyday travel.

Alicia Posada, Access Services

Alicia starts by sharing that the Santa Clarita region met 10 of the 12 key performances in October:

- On time performance was at 92.2%
- Excessively late trips were at 0.07%
- Average initial hold times at 91.7%
- For Fiscal Year 2025 (July-present) on time performance is at 93.3%

She also mentions there were no denials for Access but failed to meet calls on hold greater than five minutes due to not being fully staffed at the time. They are now fully staffed and hope for a better outcome.

Alicia shares that there are nine new Access stand signs added to Dodger Stadium. The Dodger Organization wanted to develop their own design to fit the stadium. With input of the Senior Safety Inspector a sign was created.

Lastly, she shared that Access conducted a training presentation that simulated an active shooter event. The objective was to focus on readiness, operation, and flexibility. A total of 12 Access staff members participated.

Karen mentioned there is a reoccurring issue with passengers who unbuckle their seatbelts before paratransit makes a full stop. She shared an experience she had with a gentleman while on a trip. Karen states that the gentlemen on board did not understand he had to stay seated with his seatbelt on while the bus was in motion and as a result the gentleman nearly fell on Karen. Fortunately, Karen was able to catch the rider. Karen wants to know what can be done to have riders understand they are to wear their seatbelts while the bus is in motion to avoid from riders getting hurt.

Michelle explains that drivers are instructed to pull over until they feel it is unsafe to continue driving. She also explains that riders or the rider's family is contacted to explain the safety precautions to them.

Karen asks if a sign can be placed on the bus for patrons to see.

Michelle states that they definitely can look into better ways to communicate this information to riders.

David comments that they do their best to communicate this information with patrons or reach out to them if needed.

Adrian also comments that posting of additional signage can be looked into.

Toshia mentions that it is important for operators to stand up and pay attention to their riders while boarding. She feels this will make riders feel more confident and safer in case of an accident.

Arcy comments that drivers are required to get out of their seat.

John asks Alicia if there are any community meetings coming up.

Alicia mentions that on community meeting just passed and the next one will be in March.

Arcy Torres, MV Transportation

Arcy starts with mentioning the new driver bid that is taking place December 21 and will come into effective January 4, 2025. No major changes are anticipated. Paratransit will be reevaluated to ensure operators are in proper time slots. There is a notable increase in ridership around 7:00

am-8:00 am. The plan is to shift some drivers to the earlier mornings to accommodate for the ridership increase.

Arcy also mentions that a utility employee is currently being promoted to a driver and there are no other job opening to be filled.

Michelle Rush, MV Transportation

Michelle updates that there are three new Silver Ride drivers in training.

Toshia asks if there will be an option to schedule a trip online.

Michelle informs her it is not an option now but there was a meeting where it was mentioned it may be an option in the future. Michelle also explains there is more accuracy in the way it scheduled over the phone because some patrons may not understand how the scheduling and wait windows work.

Toshia then asks if there is such thing as a “will call” if a rider does not know what time they will be done with an appointment.

Michelle explains that a return will still need to be booked ahead of time and then a “Ready Now” can be provided the day of.

David Tamariz, MV Transportation

David informs Karen to follow up with him once she gathers the concern information. She can call into the Transit City line to formally enter the concern for investigation.

David then gives an update on how calls have increased ever since Silver Ride has joined. Most calls are to ask for arrival times of their vehicles.

David gives an update on how the Call Center is now fully staffed. He shares that he encourages the representatives to ask riders very detailed and open-ended questions to ensure trips are appropriately scheduled.

Karen shares that she was scheduled for a trip on a smaller car and had a very hard time entering the vehicle. It took her various tries to enter the vehicle.

Toshia suggest for her to always ask the driver to push the front seat forward if possible. She also states that the ETA Access line on hold message is too long and by the time she needs to cancel or talk to someone the drivers could already be gone and not wait for her or look for her.

David tells her there is no other line for ETA and that riders do have to listen to the hold messaging.

Alicia said she should not be listening to the message before she speaks to a customer service agent, it should only be on hold while she’s waiting.

Grace states that she has already notified Faustino about this issue in the past and that he is aware but will follow up with him again.

John asks Kathleen if she has anything to add.

Kathleen said everything is going well but she would like to add to Toshia's comments that riders do call and complain that by the time they call and listen to the on hold message the driver has already left so it is a problem.

OLD BUSINESS

John wanted to mention about Jim Hogan's memorial in September and ask if anyone went.

NEW BUSINESS

Toshia wanted to mention that there is a lot of construction in her apartment complex called Valley Oaks, and the drivers are not entering the building as they should, some do and others do not. She would like the drivers to be aware that of the rider is not outside they need to go inside the complex and look for them before they give them a no show.

Michelle states they can do an evaluation on the location to ensure the drivers are picking up where they need to.

Adrian mentions that Access policy does not allow the drivers to enter security gate codes at complexes such as this, the gate needs to remain open at all times or the driver will pick up outside of the gate as they are doing now. The challenge with construction will be if the pick-up location needs to change often because of construction.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

John adjourns the meeting at 10:22 a.m.

FUTURE MEETING

The next meeting is January 2, 9:00 a.m. at City Hall, Carl Boyer