TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD

MINUTES FOR AUGUST 22, 2024

A meeting of the Indian River County (IRC) Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB) was held at 10:17 AM on Thursday, August 22, 2024, in the County Administration Building "B", Room B1-501, 1800 27th Street, Vero Beach, Florida.

Note: Audio and video recordings of the meeting can be found at https://www.ircgov.com/Boards/TDLCB/2024.htm.

Present were: Chairman **Deryl Loar,** Commissioner, District 3, Vice Chairman **William Lundy Parden**, Disabled Representative; **Jennifer Idlette**, Public Education Representative, **Bob McPartlan**, Florida Department of Children and Families (FDCF) Representative; **Modeline Acreus,** Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Representative; **Cartier Murrill,** Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (FAHCA) Representative; **Laura Koursaris**, Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (FDVR) Representative; **Wendy Grow,** Florida Association for Community Action (FACA) / Economic Opportunities Council (EOC) Representative; and **Dr. Harry Hurst**, Citizen Advocate Representative;

Absent were: **Dalia Dillon,** Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast Representative; **Melissa Arndt,** Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Representative, **Jennifer Sideregts**, Career Source Resource Center Representative; **Milory Senat**, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) Representative and **Danica David**, Citizen's Advocate.

Present were IRC staff: **Brian Freeman**, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Staff Director; **Mark Vietze,** MPO GIS Planner; **Patti Johnson**, MPO Staff Assistant and **Kim Moirano,** Recording Secretary. Also present were **Karen Deigl**, Executive Director, Senior Resource Association.

THREE VACANCIES: Children at Risk and Senior Community Representatives. Medical Community Representative.

Call to Order

Chairman Deryl Loar called the TDLCB meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Chairman Loar stated that he had information from staff that they were going to change the order of the meeting. Mr. Brian Freeman stated that there are three new Gillig buses that have all been delivered in the last two weeks. They're manufactured out in California, and they were driven across the country. They had brought one of the buses to be seen by the Board. Ms. Karen Deigl stated that this particular bus will be one of the last diesel buses that they'll purchase from this manufacturer. They're going to be doing low fuel ignition in the future.

Jennifer Idlette arrived at 10:07 a.m.

Chairman Loar stated as an overview, the new bus has 12 cameras. It has an automatic trip counter with some type of facial recognition. Ms. Deigl stated the buses will be on Routes 2 and 4. Mr. Freeman stated there are 14 routes and we already have 6 Gillig low floor buses either like that one or the smaller size but some of those are at the end of their useful life and so it was time to start replacing those. We first started running that size, like, a heavy-duty bus in 2013. The differences with those versus the other vehicles you see is that the useful life is much longer in terms of miles and years. Those are 12 years, 500,000-mile vehicles where the other ones are either 5- or 7-year vehicles that are like 150,000 or 200,000 miles. They're built to be used heavily for a long time. Mr. Freeman stated there were three Gilligs in the initial delivery in 2013 so the three that were just acquired are going to replace the oldest buses. Ms. Deigl stated the Gilligs last the longest. She brought one down from Gainesville which Gainesville Transit System used and parked and it had 900,000 miles on it, and she used it for several years after that for training purposes. They keep going as long as you're maintaining them. Ms. Deigl stated the reason they went to the larger buses in the first place is because of the overloads. What was happening especially on Route 2 which was their heaviest ridership they were having to put two buses on. So, more frequency so by going to the bigger bus they could stay within their parameters of their spoken wheel type of an hour round trip headway and not have to put two buses on it. Mr. Freeman stated the reason which type of vehicle to put on which route, the number one criterion in determining that is the ridership and the ability to have a larger bus like that on a route. They would never be able to put something like that in Sebastian because they wouldn't be able to make the turns on the roads. Mr. Mark Vietze stated they have ten vehicles over ten years old but half of them are Community Coach.

Approval of Minutes of the May 23, 2024, Regular Meeting – *Action Required*

Chairman Loar asked if there were any additions or corrections to the TDLCB Meeting Minutes of May 23, 2024.

ON MOTION by Dr. Harry Hurst, SECONDED by Mr. Bob McPartlan, the Board voted unanimously (9-0) to approve the May 23, 2024, minutes as presented.

Planning Status Report – *No Action Required*

Mr. Brian Freeman stated that the MPO has a draft of the final report for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Master Plan Update and that's available on the MPO website. While the bicyclists tend to attract a lot of attention. We're also looking at this for kind of a list of sidewalk needs in the community and a lot of times these sidewalks also serve where we have Go Line bus stops. This is how the whole transportation system is kind of interconnected. If there is any area that you might be aware of that you need to address and haven't already addressed or just want to take a look at what's in the plan, he encouraged you to do so. The Board will be bringing the final version of the Plan to the MPO Board in October.

Presentation on the Newly Extended Operating Hours – *No Action Required*

Mr. Mark Vietze stated that last year we did the 2020-2023 Transit Development Plan Major Update and through that we found out that we're doing a lot of things already but that folks wanted more services specifically to extend weekday operating hours. In the TDP which was done by the Urban Transportation Research, Mr. Roberson came up with a number of items. The first things that we need to do was to increase our weekend spending service. That was planned for FY 2025 and we're getting to that in FY 2024. Increase service span on Saturdays which was planned for FY 2027 and add Saturday service for Route 13 which was also planned for FY 2027. Through a Service Development Grant with FDOT, FDOT gave us $1.2 million dollars over the next three years through 2027 to do this and the Board of County Commissioners was very generous and wrote a check to match at $1.2 to extend additional two hours in the evenings during the work week so Monday through Friday until 9 p.m. and until 7 p.m. on Saturdays as well as running Rt. 13 which is the Vero West corridor which runs from the mall out to the outlet mall. One more thing about this ten-year transit development plan we're not knocking out a lot of the items that it called for ahead of schedule so that we can provide better service to our end customers. So, to summarize new service 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., $1.2 million dollars through FDOT. Service began on May 6th, 2024. Within the 35 days, they saw roughly an additional 8,000 riders in that 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. period but more importantly they saw 42 percent rides between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. This is unusual because a lot of folks don't necessarily want to ride the last bus home and so it allows them to live better lives and mobility. We can slowly see people finding out about the 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. service and starting to pick up on it.

The data for April 2024 showed we had 125,000 riders. In April 2023 it was 100,000 so you're looking at a 20 percent jump. When we break that data down hourly, first is Route 2 is just an absolute work horse. It's carrying a large amount of people. Most of the rest of the routes kind of all look the same except for Route 7. Route 7 runs from the IG Center which is South County up to the mall. The peak is from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. so that could be kids going down for activities or possibly folks coming back from work or going out to the mall. It is concentric circles and the farther concentric circles you are up, the more ridership you have.

With the July data, July as a whole showed there was temporal changes with the seasons. In April we had a lot more visitors. Kids are still in school. In the summer, kids are out of school. They're not going to be riding the Go Line. Up to 116,000 riders from 94,000 the year before for year to date. This data includes 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. You can see temporal trends within the season as well. With this, you can see that folks are still going places but the afternoons there's a lot more variation within the data itself. Again, Route 15 is very similar. It's still a school route. Interestingly, Route 6 which runs from the main transit hub down to the IG Center and Route 12 which serves Sebastian both have significant growth rates in that 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. period. 5 percent and 7 percent of the total daily ridership respectively are in each of those groups. They are on the periphery and what that tells them is that folks are making more trips and then being able to go do things and get back to their more residential areas at the end of service. Now, Route 13 has now exploded since Saturday service has really helped out that route. We can see the regression of that 40 percent bump in the 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. It's not the exact same month but you can see that ridership grow in comparison because July still has lower ridership as a whole. As a whole pretty similar, but then of course we have the additional two hours.

The Board has been very generous to provide funds to run the service. How can we come up with additional funds to do the rest of the things that the TDP has charged us to do, and they looked to Section 5307 funds. Section 5307 funds are a Federal Program through Transit Administration, and it provides roughly $7 billion dollars a year to every major transit system in the country. There's about 800 and it breaks down those $7 billion dollars. They take about 6 percent off the top. We get 9 percent or so. 3.05 percent goes to low income and appropriate marginalized communities and then there's another 3 percent that goes to this program called "STIC" which is Small Transit Intensive Cities. For the first time ever, we finally qualified for it and it's going to have some really cool affects for us and we're hoping to keep on doing it and getting more money. This year our 5307 apportionment was a little bit more than $6 million dollars. In previous years it was somewhere between $2.5 and $3.0 million. With the Small Transit Intensive Cities, basically how it works is each system reports a bunch of data at the end of the year as a performance measure defense. They want to make sure that they're getting value for their money. Then they compare all the systems and if you are preforming better than a large urban area, then you get additional money. Each of these six indicators each one is eligible for an additional $500,000 in funding which is not an insignificant amount of money especially when according to the most recent NTD data they spent roughly a $5 million dollars for the entire year. Mr. Vietze indicated the good news is we picked up an extra million dollars in funding through the STIC program. We picked it up for passenger miles, for vehicle revenue miles that means we're keeping people on buses or we're getting people on buses and there's a large number of them compared to down in Stuart where they might have like four people on the entire bus for the entire hour which we don't do that here. Passenger miles per vehicle revenue hour, folks are riding the bus decent distances and again they're filled. Where we could see some growth and maybe pick up an additional $500,000 if we're lucky might be with where we've extended our hours by 20 percent and so hopefully if the number to beat is 6.79 then we're still going to have 6.39. With these extended hours hopefully, we can hop above that and get an extra $500,000 a year. A lot of this due is the broader strokes, Transit Environment of the United States. Even if everyone else kind of plateaus out and we do a little bit better, we should be in a healthy position. Mr. Freeman emphasized the three key points is (1) with these extended hours that we put into service not only are people using the service during those new hours but we're seeing an increase in the hours that lead up to it. So, it's not like we're cannibalizing the 6 p.m. hour so people can ride at 8 p.m. They're both growing. The second point is this bonus program which is only available to urban areas under 200,000 in population like us that by running a system that has a lot of use and utility and is done efficiently, there's a bonus that we can get an additional funding through doing that. Mr. Vietze stated there's roughly 800 transit agencies across the country. About 390 are small transit agencies. Out of all of them only 58 and 56 received STIC funding for the passenger miles for vehicle rider miles and passenger miles per vehicle venue and hours.

<u>Community Transportation Coordinator Status Report</u> – *No Action Required*

Ms. Karen Deigl, Executive Director, Senior Resource Association presented an overview of the Third Quarter, a copy of which is on file in the Commission Office.

Ms. Deigl stated that their Community Coach Paratransit Complimentary ADA Services ridership is up 15 percent 12,733, an increase of 5 percent from last year at this time. That is basically due to funding. When we talked about the hours of operation for the Go Line, that also affected the Community Coach as well, so the hours are increased for both systems. The Community Coach ridership year to date is 32,145.

Same day ridership is kind of an area that they have really put a push on in the last year or so. They do have new software called Echo Lane Mobile Applications. So, people can download the app and be able to book Community Coach trips the day of. Right now about 11 percent of all of their trips are booked by this app and they're are same day. The on-time performance stands at 92.33 which is an increase compared to last year. The Applications that we've received in the last quarter is 122 of which 105 were approved. That's an 86 percent approval rate and year to date we have unduplicated 3,018 passengers using our system. Overall, there was 15,745 total phone calls that came in that their customer care agents took. Again, for Go Line the wait time was 24 seconds and our Advantage Ride Program and that's the program for the developmentally disabled tripping they received 587 of those calls and they were at 22 seconds. They do have a new phone system that they just put in place a couple of months ago. This next quarter you're going to see those numbers go down even. On the same site it had manager's meeting yesterday and our manager customer care agents they were talking about the fact that the new phone system has made such an improvement. There isn't the roll over of phone calls anymore. The phone calls coming in go directly to the customer care agents' line. That number will actually decrease hopefully in the next report.

The Advantage Ride Program for the Developmentally Disabled trips were at 47,136. This is a 31 percent increase compared to last year. Again, that has to do with funding. Whatever dollars we get that's what we can use for trips, and we use every penny. There is a major concern for this program. The funding that we have been receiving for IDD riders it was through the Innovative Service Development Grant that we were able to apply for 40 years continuing and that funding stops as of June 2025. Ms. Deigl is working with the State, with the Florida Developmentally Disabled Counsel. They just put together a paper together to send out to representatives and they're going to go after some sustainable funding for this program because it's necessary as proven in the last number of years. They're looking at Florida Department of Transportation. They're looking at the Governors' Office who actually have an allocation specifically for funding not just for Senior Resource Association, but this is a funding source for the State of Florida because the program itself should be duplicated as a new set of individuals. The type of program that it is to deliver services for individuals who are developmentally disabled to work to education and others but mostly to work and to work in education. It runs 24/7. They do use other vendors to provide the service and each of the drivers have to be trained. Anybody that's tripping individuals have to be trained very specifically to be able to do this program. They've proven that it is very successful. They cross county lines so this program that they're running they're operating it in four counties, Okeechobee, Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River County. A lot of the trips they're providing cross over and so their TD Program can't do that because when they trip, they only trip in Indian River as does St. Lucie, as does Martin. That's an important fact of this because a lot of the programs might operate in St. Lucie County, so we have to move people from Indian River, Martin or Okeechobee into St. Lucie vice versa. They're hoping that they'll get some movement on that. The County has individuals that they use. Florida Public Transportation Association who they are a member of they have a lobbyist as a State and are able to try to move things forward through that. A lot of the larger transit systems have their own. They are just not large enough to have their own. So, they rely on the County.

With the Go Line overview, the quarterly ridership is just over 350,000 trips, a 13 percent increase and a lot of that is due to the hours. Their on-time performance states that they're doing pretty good.

They're 95 percent on time. She is really on top of staff about making sure that they're not running hot because we don't want to leave anybody behind. Their ridership comparison shows that on Route 2 you can see that it's the one that generates the most trips. Probably because of the fact that of the stops that are on that route you have the Walmart, the Target, the courthouse, those are really heavy ridership trip generators.

Ridership geographic breakdown that's basically static that we report each month. Nothing has changed too much. Their Saturday ridership started August 3rd. They're running an average of about 1,000 more trips each Saturday because of the extended hours.

Ms. Deigl was thrilled to announce that they are in construction mode. They selected a new contractor; Bill Wright & Associates and they have started the four bus shelters on 27th Avenue. They did dig and the dig filled with water. So, they're kind of on hold for a little bit. It's going forward. She expected the 15 shelters that they have been waiting to have for the last three years will happen within the next six months.

Currently they have advertising on their Go Line and Community Coach buses. They have a third party that is selling the advertising. Of recent within the last Legislative session, there were a change to how they are operating with the advertising. In the Legislation it stated there was a bill that was past. It stated that they would not be able to expend any state dollars for purchase of advertising on buses. That was not what the Governor's Office was looking for and so of recent it was pushed down from the Governor's Office to FDOT that they will no longer be able to advertise on any buses that are paid by the bus itself is purchased with State dollars. That affects all of their Community Coach buses, their Go Line. The way they purchase the Go Line buses is through federal dollars, but their Community Coach is purchased through State dollars so any advertising as of July 1st. There cannot be any new contracts written for advertising on buses that are purchased with State dollars. You will still continue to see advertising on those buses for some time because whatever the contract prior to July 1st whenever that contract can run out you will see advertising on them but there will not be any new advertising written. Unfortunately, those dollars are used for match dollars for things. They purchased things that they cannot use Federal dollars or State dollars to purchase. Advertising companies are having conversations at the State level as well about this and it's going to be written in their contracts. It's not in the Legislation. It will be a contract between FDOT and the transit systems. Mr. Freeman stated that the value of the advertising revenue is that we can add it to the local dollars to use. It increases their local match that they use to draw down the state grants and federal grants. The State dollars only pay for ten percent of the vehicle.

Road calls they had four road calls which was a decrease of 43 percent from the year previous. Total complaints were down by 2. Total complaints of 13. Even though there's 13, 1 complaint every 27,927 passengers. There were 13 complaints, and 11 individuals were the ones that complained.

Review of Progress Report and Reimbursement Invoice #4 for the 2023/24 Planning Grant
– *No Action Required*

Mr. Brian Freeman stated that this is not an action item because it was the fourth and final invoice for the last State Fiscal year and they had to submit the invoice back in July so they could get it submitted on time. This is for reimbursement to the County for servicing this Board and the TD Program in general.

Review of the Actual Expenditures Report for FY 2023/24 – *Action Required*

Mr. Freeman stated that this is probably the shortest report that they have to do every year and its due next month. They're required to report to the State Commission two numbers. One is the amount of local funds that were used to support the TD System and that was $40,820.77 and those funds were used to match the Trip & Equipment Grant which has a 10 percent match requirement. The other number they have report is the number of trips that were provided with that amount and that amount is $11,743. That comprises everything that we have to report through the Actual Expenditure Report.

ON MOTION by Mr. Bob McPartland, SECONDED by Ms. Wendy Grow, the Board voted unanimously (12-0) to move the Consideration of the Actual Expenditures Report FY 2023/24.

<u>Assign Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) Evaluation Subcommittee</u> - *Action Required*

Mr. Brian Freeman stated that they're looking for some volunteers. This is something that we do four out of every five years which is an evaluation of the Senior Resource Association which is the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC). On the Staff Memo, they have kind of a draft schedule where they're looking to have four or five volunteers to serve on the subcommittee. That subcommittee will stay after the November meeting. The meeting will probably take about an hour right after the regular meeting next month. They'll go over the evaluation form at that November meeting and then they'll present it to the entire TDLCB in February and then to the MPO Board in the Spring of next year. Dr. Harry Hurst, Wendy Grow and Laura Koursaris volunteered.

<u>Other New Business</u> – *No Action Required*

Chairman Loar stated that Brian's birthday is Saturday, and he shares it with his wife. Chairman thanked everyone for being at the meeting. He stated on Friday morning he saw a student getting off a Go Line at Sebastian River High School at 6:30 a.m. in the morning. Sometimes we forget that our students are using those buses as well.

<u>Adjournment</u>

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

The next meeting of the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board will be held on **November 21, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.**