

**Santa Clarita Transit
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting
November 3, 2011**

Meeting location: Santa Clarita City Hall, Century Room

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

Others Present: Adrian Aguilar, Alfredo Torales, Thomas Drozt, Joshua Robinson (filling in for Denise),

Approval of Minutes:
Ken Schwartz

Meeting called to order at 9:11am

Member Comments: Kirk introduced a new volunteer Eric Garcia, his new counter partner in helping to restart the PAR Transit Riders Collation in LA Country. Kirk said their intent is to put pressure on the people that hold the strings in writing the business plans and to improve the accessibility of Access Service and making it more usable, and don't want to harm the agency. They have seen a decline in the service since the late 90's per the rider numbers report. Every five years there is a business plan, the ridership goes down. Therefore they want to improve the usability of the service and put some political pressure. If anyone is interested please tell Kirk and he will add you to his email list.

Linda Wood commented on the Transfer system. It's not fair and thinks they are trying to make extra money on the Transfer system. She stated it's hard to go to another valley when sometimes she's not sure where she's going and gets lost. She doesn't like it now and never has liked it and doesn't believe in the Transfer Business. She would rather be picked up at her house and be taken to her destination. This system she says is not improving and it should be. Linda went on to say that its ridiculous to go to Sylmar when she lives here and she would rather get picked up from her house. It's not fair when she lives here not out there. Linda said this service should be improved because she can not take the metro link. She gets very confused on it. Ken advised that he would be more than glad to spend a day with her and show her how to use the metro link. Kirk said there are also highly trained professionals called Mobility Specialists trained to do that. Ken said they have Ngan McQuire that is contracted thru Access to do that job.

Jim Hogan added to Linda and said she was well spoken after ten years of knowing her. He said he understands that it's not simply when you have disability to ride independently. He said it is complicated and others including the board of directors don't understand that.

Jim went on and said that now that they are on that subject of Transfer, he has requested numerous times from Access, about a year ago and now more over the last six months starting with Garcia, Jeffery, and now Alfredo on what are the correct procedures or guidelines when

requesting a pick up when flying in from out of town. Jim said everyone has different rules but wants to know what is correct because he doesn't like to call in when his plane arrives and doesn't have an extra \$500 to spend on adjusting his arrival time. He would like to call it in a day before to get picked up. So he has 2 questions:

#1 – what if he is out of town and calls in the day before for a pick up, what are the guidelines regardless of what time his flight comes in?

#2 – How can he get a van instead of a sedan with other passengers to pick him up? He has his dog and the dog is not trained to go on the seats.

Access did tell him that 65% of the time he will get a van but then Jim stated to Access that no 100% of the time he does not get a van. Jim said something needs to be done because taking a good look at this and taking what Linda said in consideration, it is not easy to travel and trying to get home.

John Taylor agreed with everything that has been said so far and thanked Linda for her input on the transfer system. He agrees with her that it is a waste of time and that he personally does not use it and does not know how many people do use it but he does want to know why its \$6 dollars? Its \$6 dollars based on what? Joshua Robinson replied saying that Access considers it a premium service and there is no fixed route between Santa Clarita Valley and Basin and they are mandated to provide a service between every bus line. John said he personally does not use the service because for \$12 dollars he is better off with a taxi when he's going to the valley. He also takes the metro link to Sylmar then takes the Access bus there and it only cost him \$2.80. John also thinks the Transfer is not fair. He said people should be picked up at home and be taken anywhere they want and not have to wait 3hrs to go to Sylmar.

Keith Curry commented that they have been addressing this issue for the last ten years and want to know what the block or the hindrance on why they can not get door to door pick up from the valley to Santa Clarita?

Ken Schwartz said there is no door to door service anymore. There is no fixed route going into the San Fernando Valley. Keith Curry said "what can we do to rectify the situation, what can we as a board do to rectify the situation"?

Joshua Robinson said we have to get Santa Clarita or Metro to provide a local fixed route from the Santa Clarita to the Valley. Joshua said the way they do it is to look at the basic fixed route and every transit system in the whole county then they add a buffer about 3 quarters of a mile on our service area. It is also not connected with Santa Clarita and the valley. There is gap and because of that gap, we are not required to pick up anyone between that gap so what we have done is provide a premium service where you can transfer in Sylmar for those that chose to do that and pay that premium price. Keith Curry asked "how many people use it"?

Adrian Aguilar said they are in the process of updating there service right now. They are planning on hiring a consultant to help update the development plan but won't be onboard until maybe the end of February 2012. And as soon as that person is onboard then Adrian Aguilar will have them come out to a meeting.

Ken Schwartz has two more issues. The first is that he would like to add some recommendations. There are two employees that have been excellent and go above and beyond. He would like them to be recognized starting with Michelle (not sure of her last name). Also for Adrian Aguilar and Jessica and Stephanie that are always there for them. Jessica won excellence award last month. On the second issue, he would like to request more seats on the vans that way. He said that on the third Wednesday of last month on the 3pm bus there were more riders than seats. Someone had apparently overbooked too many people for that ride so he suggested they get a volunteer and attach the wheelchair and secure it on properly that way no veteran gets left behind and they can take the whole load. Well he said the driver got in trouble for doing that. The driver used a mobility device as an extra seat. Adrian Aguilar stated that bottom-line here is that the chairs are expensive and the driver was disciplined because they didn't know if someone was stealing them. He didn't call it in to dispatch either. The driver's heart was in the right place but no one in the VA knew and they assumed someone was stealing their property. Also they were overbooked because a passenger brought along an extra passenger and didn't advise dispatch.

New Business: Adrian Aguilar has a few updates starting with a question that was raised last month concerning add on to the Transfer Trips. Adrian said this is not something they do on a regular basis and does not happen frequently. In this case, on that specific day they added on another Transfer Trip because we were trying to service a client due to a vehicle running late and someone was stranded. Adding another vehicle did not have any impact on the travel time with Olive View and the transfers to the VA were on scheduled time. Adrian said this was a judgment call but not a common practice.

Adrian Aguilar next update is on how they have been pushing the TAP card. TAP is now installed in all vehicles. There have been a few events starting with one at the Senior Center to help people get registered with the TAP cards by helping them fill out their applications and get their picture taken. On the first day there were about 80 applicants and on the second day about 95 applicants.

Ken Schwartz thanked Adrian Aguilar for extending the punch ticket deadline. Adrian said they are really trying to wean people off the paper passes and encouraging customers to them convert to the TAP but since the service center is taking them 7-10 business days to process their TAP card applications they have now extended the date on their punch cards to Nov. 15, 2011 and possibly till the end of the month to be on the safe side. Adrian made it clear that paper punch cards will no longer be issued at the Senior Center and any punch cards they have on hand now must be used by May 1, 2012.

Adrian Aguilar last update is on the Ambassador Program. In the last few months we have been trying to involve these groups in as many activities as we can. The members of The Senior Ambassadors go out to these TAP outreach events and assist people with any questions they have regarding the TAP program, help people go through the schedules, and explain the fixed routes. They are there to help answer those questions.

Also details on training events are being worked up right now. These training events are coming up on the first week of December including a Holiday Theme event. If anyone interested or knows anyone that might be interested, please advise Adrian Aguilar.

Adrian Aguilar provided the performance updates for September 2011. There was a big increase in complaints. System wide total of 187 complaints, DAR had 13 compared to 12 from last year and those were primary due to late trips. Where we saw a system wide increase has been in our driving concerns (huge increase in that area) and operator courtesy. This is something we have really been focusing on in the last couple months. As previously discussed, a sensitivity training has been going on yesterday and today and Joshua Robinson was part of that training yesterday. There have been some positive changes in the last couple months that have helped with the driver moral. We are confident that this is getting better, we are just asking for a little patience.

In September, 18,923 calls came into our call center, system wide compared to last year in September 2010 we had 15,337 calls come in. A lot of those calls were questions about our new technology that we are implementing. The primary numbers for October 2011 we had over 19,000 calls come in. Historically the peaks for when these calls are coming in which are in the morning and at about 5-6pm. Joshua Robinson is working with the staff to adjust their hours to make sure we are accommodating this increase. Overall our contact performance for October is at 92% and we are still doing well.

Ken Schwartz asked Adrian Aguilar if the engines on the DAR vehicles will be replaced so that they are more reliable for next summer when the heat starts. Adrian Aguilar said yes and a lot of the issues that they had last summer were not tied to the engines. There are two vehicles left that need engine replacement and they are expected to be done by December or first part of January. We expect this to bring new life to these vehicles for at least the next few years.

Adrian Aguilar explained another issue we had this last summer. It was a recall issue that involved the alternators in the vehicles. It was an electrical short causing the vehicles to shut down in the middle of the route because of the way the alternator was mounted on to the frame. It turned out to be something simple and inexpensive. It was a fifty cent cap that went over the wiring that fixed the issue.

Ken Schwartz then commented on how pleased he is with the policy that is currently in place regarding the AC on the vehicles. Policy states that no vehicle is to leave the lot without a working AC. Adrian added that this has always been there policy except now its being enforced.

Kirk Baldwin provided information about the Adult Day Health Care. It is going away due to state funding. These families will now be in need of our Access services. We will start to see an increase in riders from the senior center.

Alfredo Torales provided an update on the TAP Cards and why they are being delayed. The chip in the TAP cards are manufactured in Thailand and right now Thailand is flooded. So that is the reason for the delay on the TAP cards.

Ken Schwartz added some feedback when activating the TAP cards. Keith Curry also commented and said that when they call in to the TAP Service Center they are asking too many questions. Keith Curry said he was asked various questions including his social security number. He understands the security issue but he thinks some of these questions are unnecessary. He feels that a simply call to activate the card should be enough. Apparently the Service Center is advising TAP Card holders that they can now use it as a debt card. Keith Curry thinks this is also going to be a huge safety issue as well.

Adrian Aguilar advised everyone that the City of Santa Clarita is not using the TAP Cards as a visa / debt card. The TAP card does not need to be activated as a visa / debt card to be able to ride our buses. Our buses still use TAP card or riders can still use cash. Keith Curry went on to add that when calling in to activate the TAP Card, they are using a sales pitch to have them use the TAP Card as a debt card. This needs to be looked into because then it becomes a discredit towards the TAP Cards especially when dealing with disabled or elderly riders.

Alfredo Torales was asked to provide data on the number of transfer trips from Santa Clarita to Olive View. The Daily average from Santa Clarita to Olive View at 7:30 is 4.8 trips; at 12:30pm it's 1.5; and at 3:00pm its .1 trips. The system averages seven (7) transfer trips on a daily basis (charts with daily averages were presented to everyone). Thomas Drozt suggested that since Access is not planning to add an additional trip between 7:30am and 12:30pm, Access consider adjusting the 12:30pm trip to 10:30am. Feedback from the committee was that this might work.

Old Business: There was none.

Meeting Adjourned At 11:06am