

**Santa Clarita Transit
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting
September 1, 2011**

Meeting location: Santa Clarita City Hall, Century Room

Members Present: John Taylor, James Hogan, Sam Sammons, Ken Schwartz, and Keith Curry

Others Present: Line Paquin, Ginny Carter, Bill Light, Arnold Light, Denise Ware, Adrian Aguilar, Connie Pierson, Efren Lopez, Chuck Zoteway, Laura McKee, George Gamboa, Joan Howell, and Billie Curry

Approval of Minutes:
Ken Schwartz

Chair Report

Ken stated that for years we had a model transportation system for paratransit in Santa Clarita. They used to brag about how well the service was and how people like Adrian Aguilar and Denise Ware made changes to make it work better. Something happened this summer that he doesn't understand but he believes that these are some of the things that are contributing to the problems that we're having right now: MV has a new general manager; another individual was placed in charge of safety and was responsible for the firing of approximately 70 drivers and then was moved into dispatch which is an area that directly affects us; we have natural gas vehicles which don't work well in 100 degree weather and puts a crimp in the summers get-along; and someone is hiring minimum wage drivers which are not showing up for work and is causing an impact on the whole system. He also commented that Access riders are crammed in with DAR riders which have an impact on the amount of time that the Access riders are on the van. Also, the drivers are not trained in using the air conditioning so they mess it up which causes the passengers to have to ride in hot vans.

Ken advised that he was provided with a laundry list of problems from others which included complaints that the routing is not as good as it used to be which is unacceptable; the vans are overcrowded; the rides are often late and out of the window; passengers are now in the van for over one hour each time they ride while in the past this only happened once in a while; and get new Access vans.

General Public Comments

Joan Howell commented about receiving two letters with four no shows on them for not cancelling reservations; advised that the air conditioning in the Access vans are on top and if you sit in the back you don't feel the air and on 100 degree days it's like being in an oven; and mentioned that the seats are bad. She also stated that the wait is getting out of hand for the pick up times; you have to ride on the van for an hour to get anywhere in the valley and she doesn't understand because she thought that the vans were to help seniors get to their doctor's appointments on time; she believes that whoever is doing

dispatching/routes doesn't know what they're doing because they can't get you to the doctor's appointment on time and you have to wait 1-2 hours to be picked up at the doctor's office for your ride home. She said this is senior cruelty.

George Gamboa stated that for the last couple of months there have been problems with Access being late; he mentioned that many of the drivers have no respect for the senior citizens and don't pay attention to make sure that the passengers are buckled in before they drive off. Also, he said that he doesn't want to be picked up late and then have to ride around town for 30 minutes before being taken to his stop. Access needs to shape up or get out.

Ginny Carter stated that her ride was very late so she had to call Customer Service to see who was picking her up and was told by them that they were very busy, overbooked, and the vans were full so they couldn't do anything for her. She was stuck trying to find out how she was going home. She said that this was the second time that they had forgotten to pick her up.

Bill Light would like to know how the calls are routed. He would also like to know how the buses are routed going from one area to another.

Denise Ware explained that computer software is used that does the scheduling, it routes people in the same area that are going in the same direction at the same time. Then it is looked over by a scheduler and then on the day of service by a dispatcher.

Adrian Aguilar explained that they are routed based on the times that are being requested, the pick up location or the area and also the destination.

Arnetha Pierce was inquiring whether there are any orders for new buses because the buses are always running at least 1 - 1 ½ hours behind. Also, she commented that when the reservation line is closed she felt that someone should route the pick ups according to the area so that the buses won't be running behind and wasting gas driving all over town.

Primitira Lim Tiu commented that she tries to adjust herself for her transportation by going at an earlier time so that she is not late to her appointments because she knows that this is public transportation and that many people use it. She explained that these problems cannot be solved if only left up to transportation but that people must also help to solve the problem.

Member Comments:

Ken commented about an incident that occurred when he and a group took a tour with a big charter bus which arrived at the end of the window to pick up the group and the problems that they experienced when the driver had to go in a different direction before taking them to the Senior Center.

John Taylor thanked Adrian and MV for putting in the monitor at the Senior Center. He also stated that the rides have been late. If he takes Access it is better, however, if he takes DAR he knows he's going to be late.

Efren Lopez stated that tardiness is huge. Participants are missing their therapy and some patients are incontinent and have to sit in the bus for an hour. Therapy starts at 9:30 a.m. and they have to keep alternating their times because the buses are late. He also requested that we schedule an in-service for wheel chair marking.

Adrian advised that the agreement between the City and Daycare has been that customers would be dropped off between 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. If the passengers need to arrive prior to 10:00 a.m. then Daycare must notify us (City).

Sam Sammons stated that the vans have to cover a large geographic area and there is no way to get to point A from point B quickly. He believes that they have made substantial improvements over the years and that the riders have some responsibility too.

Ken asked if this committee could work together with the City Council to put more money into the paratransit system and also if there are any grants available.

Adrian advised that all of the money that the City receives for Transit goes into Transit. He explained that grants are very short term, usually for a year or so and when the grant runs out it presents a problem as to how to maintain the service.

Jim Hogan stated that he believes that within the City of Santa Clarita that they are not getting their fair share of funding based on the overall picture. He thinks that a change needs to be made by being more aggressive and going to the City Council. He also commented that the City still has not provided a fixed route to the San Fernando Valley.

Keith Curry stated that Santa Clarita has always been seen as an island, rich island, and that is why there is such a disconnect between the Access services in the valley and Access services in the SCV. We should also not place the burden for poor service only on the drivers.

John made a motion to have a special meeting on the first Thursday in October. Motion was approved.

New Business:

There was none.

Old Business:

Adrian explained to Joan that no show letters are generated by Access because this is only an Access issue, therefore, she must contact them directly.

He commented that the one thing that we must keep in mind is that this is a shared service for public transportation and it needs to serve the greatest number of people as

possible. Door to door service cannot be provided without accommodating other requests. There have been changes in terms of staffing in dispatch and they are in the process of changing the operating procedures in dispatch. He also mentioned that the issues in terms of pay scale, driver assignments and hiring practices are things that are out of the scope of this committee and not something that would be discussed in this type of forum. He mentioned that although the City does not get involved in the hiring and firing practices he did go back to look at why people are being fired and based on his review he found that in all of the cases it was either for driver, policy or safety violations.

He advised Mrs. Pierce that we are working with Access to get two additional vehicles for the Access service, however, at this time he does not know the delivery timeline; and commented that although the range on the CNG vehicles is much less in warm weather than when the weather is cooler, the vehicles are relatively new and he feels the fleet is probably in better shape than any other operator in the region.

He told Mr. Gamboa that we will certainly go back and look into the situation that happened on Saturday and start an investigation.

He commented that he understands Jim's frustration in terms of the budget, Access and getting the fair share, however, our contract with Access is based upon ridership and we have always been given what is needed to provide this service. He explained that our Transit dollars are not generated by property tax but from sales tax. There are three dedicated sales tax measures in LA County: Proposition A which is specifically designated for paratransit and disabled services; Proposition C which is for paratransit and fixed route and Measure R which is basically transportation.

He advised that the installing of the TAP equipment and downloading on the Access fleet took place this weekend, adjustments are being made this week and we hope to have it up and running in a week or so. He mentioned that sometime after November/December the agencies will no longer accept ID cards and you'll have to have a TAP card. Also, overtime we will be phasing out the paper passes and will be strictly using TAP. The Senior Center will be set up as an outlet for selling the TAP card.

He stated that the Beach Bus Program was a huge success and we've exceeded last year's ridership. Also the City Ambassador Program has been very successful. A group of 10 -12 seniors went out to help other seniors and taught them how to use the service. There were also a couple of field trips with 30 participants where the Ambassadors taught the seniors how to ride the bus, use the fare box, plan a trip and use the TAP card. Also, the enunciators and AVL systems are in; we are in the process of installing 20 new bus finders and installing 10 LED signs; we are working with the vendor to develop some software to allow the signs to have text-to-speech function.

He commented on the recent ribbon cutting for the solar panels at TMF which allows the buses to be covered in shade and makes them easier to cool in the summer. The panels also generate 95% – 97% of the power used at the facility. Also, he mentioned that there is a link at our website which shows how the power being generated is being used, the

average use and what it equates to in various forms. We are also in the process of installing a monitor at City Hall that will also show this information.

Denise commented that at the beginning of the month they seemed to be doing fine, they were running 95% on time, but last week they dropped to 77% by the end of week. She advised that this was due to the high heat which caused the need to fuel more frequently and also the record breaking amount of trips which impacts the routing and ride time. Also, she plans on looking at all of the issues seriously including safety because it is a high priority. She also mentioned that the new bids start on Saturday and there will be new drivers on the routes; therefore, they are working hard to make sure that all are trained but call in if there are any issues.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.