

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Wednesday, July 14, 2021

10:15 a.m.

Quincy Street Station via Zoom

Committee Members present: Maria Ruiz, Mary Thomas, Anthony Fadale, and Mike Nolting.

Committee Members absent: Nancy Johnson, Deborah Dawkins, Libby Adams, Brian Snodderly, Shelby Fry, and Mark Webb.

TMTA Staff present: Denise Ensley and Josh Bruns.

The meeting was called to order by Denise Ensley at 10:15 a.m. There were no other guests present or public comment offered.

Ms. Ensley stated there was a change in the minutes on page 1, paragraph 3, first sentence the word “are” has been changed to “our”. There were no other corrections to the prior minutes.

Ms. Ensley stated we extended the mask mandate through September 13th as required under the TSA Federal Mandate. Anyone inside any shared area of our facilities, company vehicles or bus shelters must wear a face covering at all times. However, face coverings are no longer required in “fresh air” areas like our parking areas.

Ms. Ensley asked the agency members to help minimize or even prevent boarding issues by speaking with their clients who use a mobility device as to what size our lift platforms and ramps are. This would ensure their mobility device would fit on them. Our bus specifications can be found on our website under the “Accessibility and ADA” tab in “About Metro”.

Ms. Ensley reminded the committee that we have an \$300 Annual fixed route bus pass. This pass allows the passenger unlimited rides for 1 year once the passenger activates the pass in the farebox. Because the annual pass does not start until it has been activated through the farebox, we cannot replace or reissue an annual pass if it has been damaged, lost or stolen. The pass can only be purchased at the Quincy Street Station.

Ms. Ensley stated Topeka Metro will be once again issuing the FREEdom pass to new passengers. New ID’s had been suspended due to COVID-19. Lift eligible passengers who had already received a FREEdom pass prior to the pandemic were able to continue their use of their FREEdom pass without any interruption. The FREEdom pass was designed to encourage the Lift eligible passenger to ride the fixed route for free rather than schedule and pay to ride the Lift service for some or all of their trips in order to allow the passenger to become comfortable utilizing the fixed route. For a passenger to receive a FREEdom pass, they must first be found intermittently eligible for the Lift service. Once eligible, the passenger will need to attend an individualized travel training session, where they would receive their FREEdom pass ID at the end of the training. FREEdom passes expire at the same time as the person’s Lift eligibility.

Anthony Fadale commented he had tried utilizing the fixed route in the past; however, he had a difficult time maneuvering around the curb cuts. The operators were respectful and helpful.

Ms. Ensley presented the June 2021 ridership report. Fixed route ridership remains steady around 40% below compared to 2020 (COVID) and 2019 (Pre-COVID). Lift ridership had a slight increase this month but overall is still down 35% but it’s better than most transit agencies are seeing across the nation. We continue to see an

increase in new Lift applications, however, with the increase of home deliveries, and Tele-Doc services it is hard to determine how much more ridership will increase. We will continue to monitor the situation.

Ms. Ensley announced we have been operating with nine Glaval paratransit buses along with 1 wheelchair accessible van that Capitol City Transportation (CCT) leases from us to provide paratransit service. Although, they have stayed in good shape, Glavals age out after 4 years and they are 2013. We have procured five ARBOC Spirit of Independence cutaways uses. They have the capacity to hold three wheelchairs, are more narrow, and are low-floor, which means they have a ramp not a lift platform. They have an electric winch to assist manual wheelchairs if there is an incline and the passenger is having difficulty boarding the bus. We will be keeping the Glavals along with the new ARBOC's for now. We are also purchasing two smaller paratransit vans with the intent of continuing our agreement with CCT by leasing one van to them and keeping one to use in-house or as a backup for CCT.

Mike Nolting inquired about medical transportation through Topeka Metro. Ms. Ensley explained we do not provide medical transportation in regards to Medicare, Medicaid or out of town transportation. Mr. Fadale suggested contacting Mike Spadafore whose office is at JAAA because he could help coordinate transit rides within the coordinated transit district. Ms. Ensley offered to send Mr. Nolting contact information for Mr. Spadafore.

Mary Thomas asked if our scooters have had any impact on Topeka Metro ridership. Ms. Ensley explained that the scooter program is through the city of Topeka not Topeka Metro. She said it doesn't appear they have impacted ridership. However, they have been an issue at several bus stops blocking accessibility to the sidewalks, bus shelters, and bus loading areas. Staff has been reporting the issues with the local Bird representatives and they have taken care of the issues.

Ms. Ensley discussed various upcoming events at Topeka Metro:

- Kids Ride Free – 5/15 thru 8/15 – *fixed route only*
- Book Mobile – Every Thursday 11:45-1:15
- Board of Directors Meeting 7/19
- Board of Directors Committee Meeting 8/6
- Board of Directors Meeting 8/16
- Labor Day – 9/6 – All Topeka Metro facilities closed.
- Board of Directors Committee Meeting 9/10

Upcoming meetings for 2021 are scheduled as follows at **10:15 a.m. at QSS or via zoom:**

- **Wednesday, September 8th**
- **Wednesday, November 10th**

The meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Manson
Topeka Metro Operations Assistant