

JTRAN Paratransit Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – DRAFT November 15, 2023

Due to a scheduling conflict this meeting was held at the Jackson City Hall Council Chambers (201 South President Street, Jackson, MS) but was also via ZOOM (Hybrid). Attendees included:

1. Ms. Ollie Beaton (Paratransit Committee Vice-Chair, Ward 3)
2. Mr. Hank Beaton (Paratransit Rider)
3. Ms. Lee Cole (ADA Advisory Council Chair)
4. Ms. Pam Dollar (MSCCD)
5. Ms. Leslie Barnes (MV Transportation, Inc. – Regional General Manager)
6. Mr. Jimmy Linehan (MV Transportation, Inc. – Staff Recruiting)
7. Mr. Robert Hatchett (MV Transportation, Inc. – Senior Vice President)
8. Mr. Jason Bunch (Ward 6)
9. Ms. Gwen Byrd (JTRAN Paratransit Rider)
10. Ms. Adeline Williams (JTRAN Paratransit Rider)
11. Ms. Claretha Cranford (JTRAN Paratransit Rider)
12. Dr. Scott Crawford (JTRAN Paratransit Committee Chair, Ward 7)
13. Atty. David Knight (US Department of Justice)
14. Atty. Hunter Robertson (Disability Rights Mississippi)
15. Mr. Herbert Humphrey (City of Jackson ADA Coordinator)
16. Ms. Patti Monahan (FTA Consultant)
17. Ms. Comma McDuffey (City of Jackson Transit Services)
18. Ms. Cynthia Rasco (Transdev/JTRAN General Manager)
19. Mr. Radford Shearrill (Transdev/JTRAN Assistant General Manager)
20. Mr. Joe Spicer (Mississippi Industries for the Blind)
21. Mr. Desmeon Thomas (Ward 2, LIFE of Mississippi)
22. Ms. Barbara Hadnott (JTRAN Paratransit Rider)
23. Ms. Janice Williams (MDOT Public Transit Division)
24. Mr. Ralphael Byrd (Paratransit Rider)
25. Ms. Heather Bowser (Addie McBryde Rehab Center for the Blind)
26. Ms. Christine Welch (City of Jackson Transit Services – JTRAN ADA Coordinator)
27. Ms. Marilyn Guice (City of Jackson Transit Services)
28. Mr. Mike Duke (Mississippi Public Broadcasting – JTRAN Paratransit Rider)
29. Ms. Janet Thomas (JTRAN Paratransit Rider)
30. Ms. Chloe Dotson (Director of Planning and Development, City of Jackson)
31. Mr. Eugene Stewart (Jackson Municipal Airport Authority)

I. Call to Order

Dr. Scott Crawford called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. Members and guests introduced themselves.

II. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Crawford sent out the minutes for September 20, 2023 in advance but summarized the minutes for attendees. After that, Jason Bunch motioned to adopt the minutes as written, and Ms. Beaton seconded. The minutes were adopted by unanimous consent.

III. Updates/Presentations

Ms. Christine Welch – Announced that there was a bidding process conducted in September and that the new provider of Public Transit for the City of Jackson, beginning in January 2024, will be MV Transportation, Inc. This came as a surprise to the Committee as we were not aware of the bidding process.

Ms. Cole asked several questions that would be best answered by MV Transportation, so Mr. Robert Hatchett came to the front and introduced himself. He is Senior Vice President of Business Development, and gave a brief history of MV transportation, which started in 1975 as a provider of paratransit services (15 years before the passage of the ADA). Mr. Hatchett added that he is committed to serving people with disabilities because he is the parent of an adult son living with Down Syndrome.

Ms. Cole expressed the committee's disappointment that we were just now finding out about the RFP and new contractor and wondered aloud why we were not told about or included in the process. Ms. Welch did not respond. Ms. Cole went on to say she hopes the transition goes as smoothly as possible. Mr. Hatchett responded that he hopes to keep as much consistency of staff and personnel as possible. This should minimize any disruptions.

Ms. Cole also asked about bus shelters. In particular, the one outside Mississippi Industries for the Blind on West Street. It had broken glass. Ms. Welch explained that there is an ongoing pattern of vandalism of bus shelters around the city. Various committee members expressed their dismay about the problem and how they cannot understand why anyone would do such a thing. The Chairperson added that bus shelters are especially important to power wheelchair users when it rains.

Ms. Welch said that the contractor is starting to put out the new Bus Stop Signs in preparation for the new routes, but the delay means that the new bus routes probably won't come online until Mid-February at the earliest.

IV. Discussion

Ms. Beaton asked about the process of repairing seat belts on the paratransit buses. Mr. Duke has raised this as a concern in previous meetings. She asked if there was a way to make those non-functioning seat belts more obvious so that people who are blind don't have to get back up and move to a new seat.

Mr. Joe Spicer asked why the replacement cost for lost Paratransit ID's is \$50. Ms. Guice and Ms. Welch said that this is what it will cost the City to print a new card including staff time to take a new photo. Several others said they think that is too high a cost. The chairperson added that, "If I ever get mugged, they can have my money, but they **can't** have my ID cards!"

Ms. Gwen Byrd and Ms. Adeline Williams related an incident from this past Monday (Nov. 13th), in which they were expecting a return trip from Fondren, but in a series of phone calls were repeatedly told to wait another 20 minutes. This went on for about two hours. The Committee has identified this as an ongoing problem in which customers are not given accurate information when problems arise. It turned out that the bus had been pulled from service for a maintenance inspection. Several committee members suggested that we would appreciate hearing the truth, even if it is "bad news".

Ms. Claretha Cranford said she was issued a trip denial for a medical appointment on October 23 and had to call her doctor to try to find another date (October 26). The chairperson urged her to call and file a complaint as soon as possible so that this can be investigated. She says she talks to Mr. Humphrey. The Chairperson and Ms. Guice shared the contact information for Ms. McDuffey at 601-960-1100. Ms. Cranford also reported a return trip appointment that was problematic. She asked for a return trip at 4:30pm, but was told that her return trip could only be **after** 5:30. That should have counted as a trip denial and should be reported to the city. She could not recall the exact date, but it was in October.

Ms. Beaton mentioned that she tries to avoid trips to the Jackson Medical Mall and to Wal-Mart on County Line Road (Ridgeland). In a phone conversation after the meeting, Ms. Beaton explained that despite her best efforts to include detailed notes regarding the specific pick-up and drop-off locations at the Medical Mall, that bus operators do not pay attention to the notes and

frequently leave without her, declaring a no show. Ms. Beaton explained that it is typical for them to declare a no-show without even calling which is against standard operating procedure. As a result, whenever Ms. Beaton gets the text message saying her driver is nearby, she preemptively calls JTRAN dispatch to tell them to relay the pick-up location to the driver. Obviously, this is redundant effort, but Ms. Beaton says it is necessary to ensure she isn't left behind and declared a "no show".

The reason Ms. Beaton hesitates to go to Wal-Mart on County Line Road is that there is a pattern of her requesting a return trip home at about 1pm to 1:30pm, but it almost never arrives on time. That leads to a series of frustrating phone calls and promises that her ride is on the way, only it doesn't arrive when dispatch says. Instead, she's resorted to requesting 12pm to 12:30pm return trips which seems to work better. Ms. Beaton said she did in fact report this to Ms. Welch at the City.

VI. Announcements

The Chairperson shared an announcement from Ms. Machelles of TransCon Regional Transportation Group. The next quarterly meeting will be on Friday, December 1st at 10am to 12pm at the Jackson Medical Mall Community Room, 350 West Woodrow Wilson Ave., Jackson, 39213. There will be an "Ugly Christmas Sweater" contest, so wear your Christmas Sweater to win a prize.

The Meeting Adjourned at 2:30pm.

These minutes were recorded by Committee Chair Dr. Scott Crawford.