

MARIN PARATRANSIT COORDINATING COUNCIL

Monday April 17, 2023, 1:30PM to 3:00PM

MEETING MINUTES

1. Meeting called to order at 1:31 by PCC Chair Patti Mangels.
 - a. In attendance
 - i. PCC Members: Patti Mangels, Terry Scussel, Allan Bortel, Terri Sylvain, Dario Santiago, Jaime Faurot
 - ii. Members of the Public: Suzanne Sadowsky, Lee Kreutzkamp, Tammy Newcomb, Lea K, Lisa Irving, Corey Fancher, Peter Pardini, Kim Petty, Mario Newton, Erick Villalobos, Sara Robinson, Linda Jackson, Maryann Perrine, Elizabeth Clary, Jason Faurot
 - iii. Staff (MCTD + GGBHTD): Kate Burt, Joanna Huitt, Rodolfo Saldana, Robert Betts, Mohamed Osman, Kyle French, Cathleen Sullivan, Jon Gaffney
 - iv. Contractors (Transdev): Cassie Ristine, Deborah Marshall, Claudia Tamayo, Raymundo Vidaure
2. Review of Agenda
 - a. All present have reviewed agenda, no updates needed.
3. Review of Meeting Minutes for February 2023
 - a. All present have reviewed. Motion to approve made by Terry Scussel, seconded by Patti Mangels.
4. Open Time for Public Expression
 - a. Lisa Irving extended appreciation to Marin Access' paratransit drivers who have worked during the driver shortage. Ms. Irving said it is now the norm for Marin Access to pick-up riders after their estimated 30-minute window, which she has documentation of. She explained that Marin Access ridership is currently 50 percent of what it was before the COVID-19 pandemic. While she thinks it is good that Marin Access staff are working to hire more drivers, she is concerned about driver retention. She said it is a great goal to aim for 100 percent ridership recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff need to hire 50 drivers, which she said she does not believe is realistic right now.
 - b. Peter Pardini seconded Ms. Irving's concern about pick-up windows. He added that he thinks the scheduling system is outrageous, as drivers are getting

bombarded with passengers. Mr. Pardini referenced two experiences he had with Marin Access. He explained how once he was late to a medical appointment in San Rafael. Another time, he tried to catch a bus in San Francisco to go to Sacramento. He ended up having to take an Uber or a Lyft, because of paratransit delays. Mr. Pardini emphasized that scheduling is a big issue that needs to be addressed.

- c. Ms. Irving told Jon Gaffney that she would like to know who his supervisor is.
- d. Ms. Gaffney responded that he is working on a correspondence, which he will send to Ms. Irving.
- e. Ms. Irving replied that Mr. Gaffney's supervisor's name is public information.
- f. Mr. Gaffney said his supervisor's name is Ron Downing.
- g. Lee Kreutzkampf stated that she has been a rider of Whistlestop since the 1960s. She explained that she uses the service for transportation between meetings, medical appointments, and visits with family. She said she thinks Marin Transit Connect is abominable, as she has been stood up many times and has been late to medical appointments. As a result, she has had to see doctors via Zoom or even not at all. She said she has also been late for church three or more times in the past three months. She stated that she communicates with the schedulers regarding what time she needs to be at her destination. She hopes more drivers will be available. She asked what staff will do to make sure she gets to church and medical appointments, in the meantime.
- h. Patti Mangels explained she is having same problems as many riders. She suggested riders must be patient with Transdev as they work on hiring drivers. She added that riders should schedule rides a little sooner than when they need them. Ms. Mangels noted that she schedules her rides an hour or two before she needs to be there, as that makes it easier on the drivers who are trying their best.
- i. Terry Scussel said that he disagrees with Ms. Mangel's idea, as the responsibility of on-time rides should be on Transdev.
- j. Ms. Irving expressed that riders are not getting service they are paying for.
- k. Ms. Kreutzkampf recalled that on a recent Sunday, she needed to get to church by 9:45 AM, and she arrived at 9:30 AM.
- l. Ms. Mangels determined that they should proceed with the topic in a private conversation, as they must continue to the next agenda item.

5. New Business

a. General Updates

- i. Staff reported on upcoming fare changes, which were approved by Marin Transit's Board of Directors. Staff reported on Marin Transit's upcoming fixed route service changes. Staff acknowledged recent community outreach efforts, and welcomed suggestions on how Travel Navigators and other staff can best do community outreach. Staff announced they will have a booth at the upcoming Marin Senior Fair. Staff reported that they are currently updating the Advisory Committee webpage, which will soon contain past meeting minutes and more.
- ii. Terry Scussel asked if riders are charged or refunded if their trip is late.
- iii. Joanna Huitt answered that if a trip is late, the customer service center's manager decides if the rider gets a free fare on a future paratransit trip.
- iv. Ms. Scussel said that does not seem to be a logical approach based on what he has heard, and he suggested there should be a penalty for late trips.
- v. Ms. Huitt responded that staff keep track of performance metrics and have policies in place. Staff are currently doing research with other agencies, to investigate policies. Currently, refunds are up to customer service center managers.
- vi. Lisa Irving reported that riders have been told they cannot get refunds. She explained that riders have fought for it, though she believes they should not have to.
- vii. Ms. Huitt said she will make sure the customer service team has more clarity. She encouraged Ms. Irving to reach out to a manager.
- viii. Ms. Irving shared that she thinks Ms. Huitt is silencing her concerns. She added that staff should post the reimbursement policy.
- ix. Ms. Huitt responded that she would work with Marin Transit's Operations team and their regional partners to determine the next steps.
- x. Ms. Irving said that Disability Rights CA would be able to obtain the refund policy.
- xi. Mr. Scussel explained that the PCC should have some say, as they are hearing a lot of complaints. He suggested there should be some sort of pressure or penalty to help resolve the scheduling issues. He additionally

suggested that the mobility programs could be supplemented by additional drivers from other agencies. He noted that for riders, scheduling is a significant issue, as medical appointments can have penalties, which results in the riders suffering a penalty while no one else does.

- xii. Robert Betts replied that at that day's meeting, staff will be proposing actions to increase reliability. Staff have also already taken some actions, some of which have worked. He added that fixed route riders are having similar problems with cancelled service and driver shortages. Recently, staff asked the Marin Transit Board of Directors to make significant changes which will address the fixed route issues, and in May staff will take an item to the Board which will address Marin Access' services.
- xiii. Ms. Irving said she has been late to medical appointments and job interviews. She stated that staff are minimizing rider issues.
- xiv. Ms. Scussel explained he would like to hear more about what is going on and why. He noted that at his nonprofit they have increased wages. He said he wants to know if Marin Access staff are dramatically doing the right thing.

b. Marin Access Staffing Update

- i. Staff reported that Marin Access staff are taking action in hiring additional drivers. Recently, driver wages increased from \$18.50 to \$21.50 per hour. Staff reported that they have heard other companies are offering higher wages such as \$26 per hour. Staff clarified that the companies offering higher wages also have stricter requirements for their drivers, such as commercial licenses. Staff reported on the professional experience of new Human Resources staff. Staff explained that hiring has been stagnant, and Marin Access is currently operating at 50 percent. Marin Access just hired more drivers, so while they are currently operating with 25 drivers, they will be at 32 shortly. Staff are seeing a difference due to the increased hourly rate and other employment efforts. Riders should expect to see increased service quality in the next few months.
- ii. Terry Scussel asked how long drivers are trained for.
- iii. Cassie Ristine responded that drives are trained for four to five weeks.
- iv. Mr. Scussel asked what the driver's license requirements are for drivers.

- v. Ms. Ristine responded that Marin Access drivers are only required to have a regular driver's license.
- vi. Mr. Scussel asked if Marin Access drivers need to be able to drive B-level vehicles.
- vii. Ms. Ristine answered that they do not.
- viii. Allan Bortel asked what the driver benefits are.
 - ix. Ms. Ristine listed the employment benefits for Marin Access drivers.
 - x. Mr. Bortel asked if there is a cash equivalent available for drivers.
 - xi. Ms. Ristine said they offer one-third or more, in addition to a sign-on bonus.
 - xii. Lee Kreutzkamp asked how long each driver's shift is.
- xiii. Deborah Marshall answered that each shift is eight hours, and overtime is offered.
- xiv. Ms. Ristine added that many drivers are working overtime currently, which has taken a toll, however there will be eight or nine more drivers available to work soon.
- xv. Lisa Irving asked about driver turn-over rates.
- xvi. Ms. Ristine responded that she does not know about the turn-over rates for drivers.
- xvii. Ms. Irving requested that staff bring turn-over data to the next meeting.
- xviii. Dario Santiago asked if the drivers are unionized.
 - xix. Ms. Ristine confirmed the drivers are unionized.
 - xx. Mr. Santiago asked when the driver wage increase went into effect.
 - xxi. Ms. Ristine answered the wage increase happened in February 2023.
 - xxii. Mr. Santiago asked if there is a referral bonus for drivers.
 - xxiii. Ms. Ristine responded that there is a \$1,000 referral bonus.
 - xxiv. Ms. Irving asked if the rider referral credit for referring drivers is \$50.
 - xxv. Ms. Ristine confirmed the rider referral credit is \$50.
 - xxvi. Claudia Tamayo clarified a \$25 credit is given to Marin Access passengers who refer an applicant for the Marin Access driver role. If they refer someone who is selected for hiring, the passenger will receive a \$100 credit.
- xxvii. Ms. Irving asked if drivers who refer other drivers get \$1,000.

- xxviii. Ms. Ristine explained that new drivers receive a sign-on bonus of \$5,000 when they start.
- xxix. Ms. Irving asked if the \$5,000 is given in increments.
- xxx. Ms. Ristine explained the distribution increments of the sign-on bonus.
- xxxi. Ms. Kreutzkamp asked if Transdev's parent company on the east coast knows what is occurring in their west coast branch.
- xxxii. Ms. Ristine clarified that Transdev's headquarters are in Chicago, Illinois.
- xxxiii. Joanna Huitt added that here is a local office in San Rafael.
- xxxiv. Ms. Kreutzkamp noted that a closer office may be able to be more cognizant of what is occurring locally.
- xxxv. Ms. Ristine explained that the corporate office is in Chicago, whereas she works in San Rafael with Ms. Marshall and Ms. Tamayo.
- xxxvi. Ms. Irving said that she assumes Transdev will be starting a contract with Michael's Transportation, who runs school buses and special education transportation, because Michael's Transportation has wheelchair lifts on their vehicles. She asked what Transdev and Michael's Transportation's relationship will look like.
- xxxvii. Ms. Ristine responded that Jhashe Holloway would be able to talk about that, however she was not at the meeting.
- xxxviii. Ms. Marshall added that the contract is a work in progress, and nothing has been signed.
- xxxix. Ms. Irving asked what the timeline of the contract is.
 - xl. Ms. Marshall answered that she is unsure of the timeline.
 - xli. Ms. Huitt explained that the goal of Transdev's relationship with Michael's Transportation is to add more drivers to their service.
 - xlii. Ms. Ristine noted that there has been a recent influx of new drivers, so Transdev may not need to work with Michael's Transportation. In the next month, Transdev hopes to be staffed with 32 drivers.
 - xliii. Mr. Scussel expressed his concerns about how high-need hours for school bus drivers employed by Michael's Transportation might restrict the number of drivers available for Marin Access.
 - xliv. Robert Betts explained that Michael's Transportation has their own training program, and they employ their drivers to many different agencies. Their drivers are not only school bus drivers. It is a near-term

solution that Transdev pursued independently. Staff are currently reviewing the contract to make sure it is the right fit.

- xliv. Mr. Scussel reiterated Mr. Betts' statement that the drivers provided by Michael's Transportation will not be school bus drivers.
 - xlvi. Ms. Ristine said that Transdev ideally would like to be able to hire enough divers so that they do not have to work with Michael's Transportation.
 - xlvii. Peter Pardini asked what Transdev staff are doing to address trip scheduling issues, aside from hiring more drivers. He noted that it seems like there is a communication issue amongst staff.
 - xlviii. Ms. Ristine asked if Mr. Pardini was referring to late trips.
 - xliv. Mr. Pardini confirmed he was referring to late trips.
 - l. Ms. Ristine explained that the number of late trips has to do with the current lack of drivers, which staff hope to see an improvement on in the next few months.
 - li. Ms. Irving expressed concerns regarding Marin Access' scheduling software's lack of ability to account for traffic and weather conditions. Ms. Irving described how once she was told an estimated arrival time that she knew was unrealistic, however the staff member she was talking to insisted that the software was correct.
 - lii. Ms. Huitt responded that staff would address scheduling software in an upcoming agenda item.
- c. In Person Meetings
- i. Staff reported that the PCC is subject to the Brown Act. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a State of Emergency order in affect, which expired on February 28, 2023. After February 28, the PCC could either comply with Assembly Bill 2449 (AB 2449) or the Brown Act. Staff believe AB 2449 is complicated and limiting. At the last PCC meeting there was a robust discussion on which meeting format they should pursue. It was recommended that the PCC resumes in-person meetings. Meetings will be broadcasted for members of the public and non-voting PCC members via Zoom. Voting members must attend in-person. Per the recommendation at the last meeting, voting items will be concentrated to February, June, and October meetings. If a voting item cannot be put on the agenda during one of those months, advance notice of the in-person

participation request will be provided. Staff will encourage all in-person attendees to wear a face covering while in attendance. Staff are monitoring regional efforts around in-person participation to explore alternative options.

- ii. Jaime Faurot said that she would like to participate in-person at the next PCC meeting. She added that she will attend the current meeting in-person momentarily.

d. Marin Access Program Update

- i. Staff reported that they are familiar with the challenges riders are facing. Staff have developed a draft proposal with potential program changes, which they are looking for feedback on. Staff reviewed Marin Access' suite of programs, comparing the mandated programs to discretionary ones, and specifying which programs require an application process.
- ii. Lisa Irving asked if the program formerly known as Carepool was for those who are above the age of 65.
- iii. Joanna Hutt answered that Carepool is offered by Vivalon, and she is unsure of the requirements.
- iv. Ms. Irving suggested that Carepool recently adjusted their eligibility requirements, and now it is a less accessible option.
- v. Ms. Huitt responded that while Marin Access' Travel Navigator team can refer riders to other programs such as Carepool, they are unable to control unaffiliated programs, however she will pass along the concern.
- vi. Ms. Irving stated that Marin County residents are limited in reliable transportation options and are becoming further isolated and restricted. Mr. Irving added that Marin Villages cannot transport guide dogs.
- vii. Ms. Huitt thanked Ms. Irving for clarifying.
- viii. Peter Pardini asked if there was anyone at the meeting who worked at Vivalon.
- ix. Ms. Huitt suggested Eric Villalobos could speak regarding Vivalon.
- x. Mr. Villalobos confirmed that Vivalon recently raised the age of qualification for Carepool. He stated staff are trying their best to meet the needs of riders and will connect those who do not qualify with Marin Access and Transdev.
- xi. Lee Kreutzkamp asked if the Carepool program is still functioning.

- xii. Mr. Villalobos confirmed the Carepool program is still functioning. In the program, volunteer drivers pick up riders for medical appointments and grocery shopping.
- xiii. Ms. Kreutzkamp asked if the program is currently in effect,
- xiv. Mr. Villalobos confirmed it is.
- xv. Ms. Irving commended the program and added that she is disappointed it is one less option for her as a disabled person. She expressed that she has been promised hope, but she still must live her life. She still needs to get to appointments and interviews, and she said she thinks the situation is highly problematic.
- xvi. Ms. Kreutzkamp said she has been using Vivalon's services for a while, in addition to other mobility services. She asked why Lisa cannot qualify for some programs.
- xvii. Ms. Irving clarified that she is not over the age of 65. While paratransit is mandatory, all other programs are supplemental.
- xviii. Ms. Huitt offered to follow up with Ms. Kreutzkamp later that day over the phone.
- xix. Ms. Kreutzkamp accepted Ms. Huitt's offer.
- xx. Staff reported on Marin Access' average monthly ridership trends for Fiscal Years 2019 and 2023. Staff reported that ridership has not returned to pre-COVID-19 levels, which is likely due to riders' health concerns and reduced in-person programming.
- xxi. Ms. Irving suggested staff should factor in passengers reducing usage due to a lack of service reliability, and riders finding other ways to travel.
- xxii. Mr. Scussel added that a reduction of bus services may contribute to less paratransit hours.
- xxiii. Mr. Betts clarified that fixed route service has not been cut since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- xxiv. Staff reported on Marin Access' key challenges.
- xxv. Mr. Irving expressed concern regarding Marin Access spending \$84 per passenger per trip. She said she understands the need for fiscal responsibility, however making sure all vehicles are accessible will cost even more money. She suggested staff could incorporate a shared ride

- program, which may be a long process, but presently there is a lack of financial responsibility when cheaper alternatives are not being utilized.
- xxvi. Ms. Huitt responded that staff are always investigating alternatives, which will be presented on in future slides.
 - xxvii. Staff reported on actions that Marin Access is taking regarding addressing staffing challenges and traffic challenges. Staff reported on how they are focusing on obligations related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Staff stated that their efforts are not producing the results they would like to see, so staff have been assessing their current suite of programs. Staff reported on the draft proposal for Marin Access' suite of programs. The goal of the proposal is to refocus resources. Staff provided an overview of the actions of the proposal. Staff reported on the proposed changes for paratransit and Novato Dial-A-Ride.
 - xxviii. Ms. Kreutzkamp commented that Catch-A-Ride is expensive.
 - xxix. Suzanne Sadowsky asked about the frequency and ridership for rural Dial-A-Ride. She asked how far the program goes in the San Geronimo Valley.
 - xxx. Ms. Huitt referred to the Point Reyes and Dillon Beach Dial-A-Ride programs, and noted they have similar ridership levels.
 - xxxi. Ms. Sadowsky asked if staff anticipate any changes with those programs.
 - xxxii. Ms. Huitt answered that staff are primarily only rebranding those programs.
 - xxxiii. Ms. Sadowsky noted there are 2,000 residents in the San Geronimo Valley, which makes the current programs seem limited.
 - xxxiv. Allan Bortel stated that he has heard that Novato Dial-A-Ride is a popular program, and he is wondering why Marin Access will no longer serve the general public with that program.
 - xxxv. Ms. Huitt acknowledged that Novato Dial-A-Ride is popular with the general public. She explained that staff have worked to understand the needs of riders and will work with them. The general public has other transportation options, and staff want to focus on Marin Access riders.
 - xxxvi. Ms. Irving asked how Dial-A-Ride is sustainable when it serves four to six riders.
 - xxxvii. Mr. Huitt responded that rural Dial-A-Ride programs are a lifeline service to offer people more affordable grocery shopping.

- xxxviii. Ms. Irving asked how the program is sustainable with so few riders.
- xxxix. Mr. Bortel answered that it is an infrequent program.
 - xl. Cathleen Sullivan echoed Mr. Bortel's answer.
 - xli. Ms. Irving asked if there are only six seats in the rural Dial-A-Ride vehicles. She said she thinks the numbers do not make sense.
 - xlii. Ms. Huitt responded that their current demand is six riders, and staff will investigate demand as they rebrand.
 - xliii. Ms. Irving asked if Catch-A-Ride is the Marin Access program in which riders pay four dollars for the first two to three miles, after which point riders pay the standard taxi fare.
 - xliv. Ms. Huitt affirmed Ms. Irving's inquiry.
 - xlv. Ms. Irving added that taxis are expensive, and Marin Access is serving riders who are low-income.
 - xlvi. Staff reported on the fare structure of the Catch-A-Ride program and reviewed voucher types.
 - xlvii. Patti Mangels asked when the \$15 or \$20 fare will be paid. She asked if the taxi companies will know when riders have vouchers.
 - xlviii. Ms. Huitt answered that paper vouchers will be handed to the taxi driver, and the dispatchers will provide riders with estimates.
 - xliv. Ms. Mangels asked how frequently vouchers will be distributed.
 - l. Joanna responded that vouchers will be distributed quarterly.
 - li. Ms. Irving asked for an example of how a rider may use a voucher with North Bay Taxi and Uber.
 - lii. Ms. Huitt explained the voucher process from the perspective of all parties, both in the paper and digital format, for both vendors.
 - liii. Ms. Irving asked if the Uber platform enables riders to schedule either ahead or on-demand. She asked if it is more expensive to schedule ahead.
 - liv. Ms. Huitt replied that riders can schedule either ahead or on-demand.
 - lv. Ms. Irving suggested it may be more expensive for riders to schedule ahead.
 - lvi. Ms. Huitt said vouchers will work for three different programs in the Uber app, none of which have additional costs, although she will investigate it to confirm that.

- lvii. Ms. Kreutzkamp explained that she has a friend who works in the Catch-A-Ride program, and once, she wanted to schedule a ride, but it was \$29 both ways, so she was not able to go.
- lviii. Ms. Huitt replied that she will follow up with Ms. Kreutzkamp after the meeting, to explain Catch-A-Ride's fare structure and eligibility.
- lix. Ms. Kreutzkamp asked if Low Income Fare Assistance (LIFA) eligibility is based on income tax.
- lx. Ms. Huitt answered that LIFA eligibility is based on income and MediCal eligibility.
- lxi. Mr. Bortel asked if Catch-A-Ride riders could bring a guest for free.
- lxii. Ms. Huitt responded that riders could bring a guest for free, and accessible vehicles will be used.
- lxiii. Ms. Irving clarified that service animals are not required to ride in a specific type of vehicle, under ADA.
- lxiv. Ms. Huitt thanked Ms. Irving for the clarification. She added that staff would like to encourage riders to apply for LIFA.
- lxv. Ms. Sadowsky asked what the income threshold is for LIFA eligibility.
- lxvi. Ms. Huitt explained that riders must be eligible for MediCal or qualify under the Elder Economic Index.
- lxvii. Ms. Sadowsky asked if those requirements are different than low-income housing eligibility requirements.
- lxviii. Ms. Huitt said she will follow up with Ms. Sadowsky with more information.
- lxix. Mr. Scussel noted that Marin Access' Volunteer Driver program had not been mentioned yet.
- lxx. Ms. Huitt confirmed there will be no changes to the Volunteer Driver program.
- lxxi. Staff reported on rider outreach and community engagement efforts that had been made, to ensure that riders were informed and able to provide feedback regarding upcoming changes.
- lxxii. Staff reported on the timeline of the implementation of the program recommendations. The recommendations will be implemented on July 1, 2023.

- lxxiii. Mr. Betts reported that the primary goal of the changes is to increase service reliability. He explained that drivers are currently being stretched between programs, so the proposal will focus efforts on paratransit. Some programs will rely on outside providers like Uber and taxicabs, or even additional contractors. The voucher model provides an opportunity for flexibility for eligible riders. Mr. Betts referenced Ms. Kreutzkamp's thoughts on Connect's unreliability and acknowledged that resources are being stretched too far. He said this is the first time that staff have evaluated programs holistically through a financial lens and a rider-focused lens, to respond more accurately to demand.
- lxxiv. Mr. Scussel suggested staff mention in the proposal that the changes will increase reliability and driver availability. He advised that it is a disservice to the proposal to not include that information.
- lxxv. Linda Jackson explained that she is a taxicab user, and there are times when having a back-up taxicab agency available would be helpful. She suggested Marin Access staff should investigate involving one additional taxicab provider as well, to avoid scheduling disappointments.
- lxxvi. Jamie Faurot suggested that Marin Access should consider a partnership with a medical insurance company. Ms. Faurot explained that in the past, she has had difficulties making programs work, and it is important to discuss disparities, such as a lack of long-distance coverage. She offered to follow up with Ms. Huitt on the topic.
- lxxvii. Ms. Huitt said staff will take the idea into consideration.
- lxxviii. Ms. Irving requested that Ms. Huitt summarize Ms. Faurot's suggestion.
- lxxix. Ms. Huitt summarized Ms. Faurot's suggestion. Ms. Huitt announced all further agenda items for that day will be tabled until the next meeting.

6. Next Meeting on June 12, 2023.

- a. Meeting adjourned at 3:01 by PCC Chair Patti Mangels
- b. Motion to adjourn made by Terry Scussel, seconded by Jamie Faurot.