Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee

Minutes

October 21, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am in Port Authority's Neal H. Holmes Board Room at 345 Sixth Avenue, Fifth Floor, Pittsburgh, with the following in attendance:

Roll Call

Via WebEx Board Committee Members	Board Members and Solicitor
John Tague Jr., Chairman	Gerald Delon
Jessica Walls-Lavelle	Jennifer Liptak
Ann Ogoreuc	Representative Lori Mizgorski
	Michelle Zmijanac

Opening Remarks

Mr. Tague, Committee Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance.

Approval of Minutes from the September 16, 2021, Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Tague asked Committee members if there were any corrections to the minutes. There were none and members approved the minutes.

Transit Oriented Communities Five-Year Program Trends and Findings (Moira Egler)

Builds upon the work of the TOD guidelines to get a current picture of TOD in Allegheny County after five years of a formal program. Reflect on successes and opportunities for improvement. Inform goals moving forward with data analysis
And a partner survey.

1. TOD Goals and principles
    - Accessibility
    - Sustainability
    - Affordable Housing
    - Public Health
    - Mode Priority

TOD brings changes in housing, demographics and in areas where little TOD activity occurred, there was little change. However, where development has occurred, evidence of displacement and decreasing housing affordability was significant. Positive changes occurred as well, like an increase in the number of jobs and general population. In order to live up to the principles, goals, and values we have set for ourselves as an agency, we must find a way to encourage more equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD).

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Key findings by Topic Area
Demographics: Population increases in East Liberty, Downtown and decrease in Black population in most East Busway station areas, notable increases in Swissvale & Roslyn

Employment: Most drastic changes were along East Busway, North Shore (LRT), and Station Square (LRT). Housing – increase in total # of units was in East Liberty, Downtown station areas.

Housing: Increase in total number of units was in East Liberty, Downtown station areas. Both median rent and home value increased in all geographies. Increase in housing cost burdened renters in all geographies. Ridership, commute pattern changes along East Busway and Downtown.

Recommendations for policies and goals
- TOD zoning
- Parking
- Finance Mechanisms
- Infrastructure Investments
- Affordable Housing Policy
- Encourage Employment Based TOD
- Sustainability

Customer Service and Safety in the ACCESS System (Darcy Cleaver and Emily Gwash)

Mr. Huffaker discussed that the over-all presentation is a follow-on the customer service presentation for the overall fixed routes service that we provided last month. Also wanted to let you know how the customer service functions with ACCESS program and give a little report on our safety compliance. I would like to introduce Emily Gwash, Director of Compliance for Access and she would like to walk us though this presentation.

Ms. Gwash would like to talk about two things that really sets ACCESS a part in terms of quality, scope of service and a safety program that they particularly have had a sizeable impact on our safety compliance. Our customer service has four full-time call center employees, one part-time person and one open position. Due to the pandemic our staff was working remotely, as of current everyone is working in the office. Our company also have voice over IP technology, very helpful during the pandemic. Currently our call center is handling 8500 calls per month which is actually equivalent with pre-pandemic call levels.

In terms of questions, the ones they get the most are what the service is, how do I sign up and we are sending out applications and helping getting people onto the program.

The second question is how I deposit funds into our electronic fare payment system, which is called an e(electronic) purse.

We work with over 100 different sponsoring agencies, and we like to think of those agencies as customers as well. We want to be responsive to them particular needs and requirements of their program, that we are providing service for. A good example of this is The Area Agency on Aging, who sponsor our program called older persons transportation. We provide service for that, and they have a lot of different trip types, where they go to different places, they have different fares and different requirements for those type of trips. So, our call center staff is really integral in working not only with the agency but with the riders that are using that hub so that everyone understands the requirements.

Now I would like to talk about some of the customer service activities that we manage and are not considered traditional but what people automatically think of when they hear customer service. The first is incident reporting and follow-up; all of our staff and drivers are trained to report different kinds of incidents that occur with our riders. They could in certain situations request rides to the levels of potentially being dangerous for our riders, so there are times we work with other agencies including protective services, to get riders to the distance that they need.

All drivers have an on-board tablet, sort of like an IPAD and there is a function called condition where they can record up to four minutes of auto and explain to us an incident or concern, they have for our riders, so we have those details. Examples could be an issue with hygiene, maybe there is a safety or accessibility issue at somebody's home and sometimes riders express concern about their living situations to the drivers.

We also offer mobility management from our call-center where instead of people needing to go out and figure out what transportation funding their eligible for and get you signed up.

Reasonable Modification is really important to Access, of course it is part of the ADA, something that we always done. If there is ACCESS policy or procedure a rule that prevents somebody from using this service effectively due to their disability, we take a look at that request on a case-by-case basis, can we figure out if we can make a change so this person can use this system. An example that is common, is we typically assist up or down four steps, so some people request assistance with additional steps, and we take a look at those situations and make an assessment.

We also really want people of disabilities to use fixed route system when they can, so we can offer transit trip planning, we help them plan their entire trip including the assessable path of travel to and from their bus stops. We have staff that can ride along with them if they want someone to go with them on their first fixed route trip.

One question we get often is how I deposit money on-line, so, we have been experimenting with video instruction on our website where it walks you through exactly what you need to do and provides screen shots instruction. So, we are hoping to expand that to other customer service questions that we get frequently.

We really try to find solutions for everybody to use this service, very personalized we work with you on any question you have and try to find a way for you to be on ACCESS. An example of this is our hand-to-hand service goes beyond our typical door to door service. If somebody needs assistance to the door and they can't be left alone, we make sure that somebody is there to greet them and there is a responsible individual that their handed off to. This is a way for people to still use the service independently and this is really important.

Going to talk about some of the ways that we keep the ACCESS system safe. The very first step is screening our drivers, we want to make sure we have appropriate candidates. Once they are screened and hired, they go through the training curriculum that we developed. Which is, very specific to the way that ACCESS operates. Not only preparing drivers with standard operating procedures that go along with paratransit but also preparing them for the unexpected things that may not be happening with every trip but here and there, things definitely pop up.

Our service provider safety managers are really important they are conducting regular and follow-up monitoring of all of our drivers. There also helping us make those assessments of locations where it might not be a safe pick up or drop-off, we need to plan so we can get someone in and out of their house so, their going on location to help us with those plans. All of our providers have agencies safety plans as required by the Federal Transit Administration. So, our service providers use that to assess their performance to mitigate risk, but it also allows us at the ACCESS main office to ensure that providers are meeting standards that are set for the entire system. We conduct maintenance audits, U. S. DOT compliance audits, training audits, drug and alcohol audits, just to name a few. I did just briefly talk about follow-up and regular monitoring that our service provider safety manager's conduct but, I want to speak about that for a little bit more, it is something we developed to really target safety

compliance and standardized follow-up for all of our system and all of our service providers.

Two things to understand about driver monitoring, the first is what do we consider monitoring? Monitoring is when someone who's qualified to do so observes a driver, it could be a person, or it could be via our on-board video. The second part is what is the program? The program is what prescribes those monitoring requirements and then it provides documentation and tracks completion, without those it would not get done. When I say it prescribes monitoring, were primarily talking about monitoring that follows some kind of event and that event probably required corrective action. So, examples could be a complaint that we received, or it could be a safety event, that's sometimes called an accident, or something that was observed. The meat of this program is pretty intuitive, it uses a color scale that everybody is pretty familiar with. Red indicates that we are dealing with pretty serious and when we are dealing with something serious the monitoring requirements are more, something more needs done when it is red. An example would be our hand-to-hand procedure, if a driver failed to ensure a rider was not handed off to a responsible person, that would be very serious and would end up in a red category. The safety manager would be monitoring that driver for up to six months. They're going to be sure that corrective action is effective and if something is wrong their going to be checking in with that driver and make sure they understand corrective action. Our in-house software Infinity which keeps track of drivers and issues. With a really easy to use Microsoft program that keeps tracks of dates and keeps tracks of driver names and what people need to do to complete monitoring. Using that really clears the scale with color but also gives us and providers visual of performance. They can see what colors are popping up for certain drivers and make assessments about performance. The question is, does this program achieve what is set out to do? We are happy to say the answer is yes, we seen a decrease in total reportable safety events to the NTD, this would be safety events on a more serious level. We exceeded our system's 2020 Annual Safety Performance Target and although this program is reactionary where following up to some kind of event. It also means there is just more monitoring happening in our system. It provides an opportunity for safety managers to check-in to see maybe a habit that the drivers picked up and address it before it becomes some kind of event. Like I mentioned, we are able to recognize patterns in performance especially using that color scale, it sets a standard, everybody understands it. We see an increase in customer satisfaction with driver assistance in courtesy in our monthly surveys. We actually recently taking the structure of this program and applied it to cost center monitoring.

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Questions from Board Members and Others

1. Mr. Tague asked Ms. Egler if we also look at affordability and accessibility, is that part of it? Are we tracking any of that?
    a) Ms. Egler replied, yes, we looked at variables like the sidewalk network and how within these walk sheds sidewalks surround our stations. One of the infrastructure investments is to anticipate TOD investment by providing infrastructure on our sidewalk conditions.

2. Mr. Tague asked in regard to employment, do we have any indication on what you are talking about types of jobs and what the salaries are?
    a) Ms. Egler replied, yes, we did do that analysis, we used census data to get an idea of what kind of typical goal wages in the walk shed. I don't have the information in front of me, but I could point you to the final report and will be on the website.

3. Mr. Tague asked how are we handling policies and procedures through COVID, like testing or required shots?
    a) Ms. Gwash replied in terms of testing we follow all the CDC guidelines, if any driver gets tested positive for COVID we deep clean the vehicle, if we get alerted the rider tested positive, we pull the vehicle from service. We would like everyone to be vaccinated, that is our goal.

4. Mr. Tague asked are we at full capacity.
    a) Ms. Gwash answered yes there are no capacity restraints on the van, there probably not full of 14 people at this point just because ridership is not yet returned pre-pandemic levels but there are no restraints at a certain time.

5. Mr. Tague asked what are the driver levels?
    a) Ms. Gwash replied there not where they were and not were we would like them to be, providers are working really hard to hire people, certainly a challenge like it is elsewhere. Yesterday I heard that we made seven new drivers badges so that's a good sign. We are working in the right direction.

6. Mr. Tague asked about reporting incidents and could you explain that a little further.
    a) Ms. Gwash answered if it is something that requires immediate attention somebody needs help right away or we need to call someone immediately, the driver is going to be alerting the dispatcher via radio, letting them know they have an issue or calling them on their cell phone to prevent anyone over hearing it. Or if the driver can report it after they dropped somebody off, have a concern, their tablet has a recording option.