



Paratransit Advisory Committee
October 14, 2020
Meeting held virtually via Zoom
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Committee Chair, Paul Atkinson Jr. called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm and introductions were made.

Committee Members in Attendance

Denice Wilkins – Consumer, Hampton
Paul Atkinson, Jr. – Provider, Chesapeake
Alicia Griffin – Consumer, Newport News
Janice Taylor – Consumer, Virginia Beach
Tommy Hewitt – Norfolk Consumer
Travis Webb – Consumer, Norfolk
Catherine Tyler-Northan – Provider, Newport News
Brian Tricker – Provider, Virginia Beach
Mary Mathena – Consumer, Virginia Beach
Delores Haywood – Consumer, Portsmouth
Sandra Hunter – Consumer, Portsmouth

Others in Attendance

Keith Johnson – HRT
Brad Hunter – TDCHR Commissioner
Ina Kreps – Former Committee Chair, Portsmouth Consumer
Jeff Raliski-HRTPO
Amy Braziel – HRT
Cheryl Watson -HRT
Shelia Gullede – HRT
Danielle Burton – HRT
Sheran Taylor – HRT
Marie Arnt – HRT
Shanti Mullen – HRT
Nikki Walker – HRT
Trevor Hunter – Coastal Ride
Yannis Simaiakis- VIA
Gabrielle McCaig- VIA
Jason Arvanites– VIA
Kenia Ozoria – VIA
Ryan Sullivan – Via
Jonathan Hofmann – Via
Parker Fernandez – Via
Joann Mancuso – Eggleston services



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Approval of Minutes

- The approval of the February minutes will be held until corrections are submitted by Janice Taylor to be included later.

Public Comment

- No Public Comment

Chairman's Report

- Paul Atkinson stated in the past eight months since the last PAC meeting he has communicated with PAC members, paratransit clients, HRT and Via employees. In response to the pandemic, April, June, and August meetings have been cancelled. Paratransit Fare collection was halted for weeks, additional cleaning procedures were implemented, social distancing, face covering, and other guidelines were put into practice on vehicles and at HRT facilities, we will continue a safe path moving forward. Several successes in technology and training, real time metrics for average wait time, average wait time for new booking and on time performance have been added to the HRT website.
- Members of the PAC participated in the rider app data test group, the rider app is now available and virtual training is available on HRT website. Several training with via staff has taken place with support and participation with the Mr. & Mrs. Prost, the Endependence Center, and Eggleston's Traumatic Brain Injury Services Program. If PAC members would like to assist with future training dealing with rider experience, contact Mr. Paul Atkinson Jr. with Eggleston Services. Since the last PAC meeting with VIA February of 2020, several service quality issues were apparent, which included lack of step stools, no shows, cancellations, scheduling issues, on time performance issues, driver insensitivity, non-adherence to safety protocols, excessive call hold times, erroneous automated notifications, difficulty reaching supervisors by phone, Military base inaccessibility service qualify was imperative issue. Inconvenient ride times, Mr. Atkinson and VIA discussed at the previous PAC meeting in addition service quality was an imperative issue at the last PAC meeting. Commissioner Parnell's time expired and we welcome Commissioner Brad Hunter as the replacement liaison representing the PAC committee and looking forward to working for the better.
- The Pandemic has devastated communities since the last meeting in February there were several service qualities issues. Mr. Atkinson sees this as an opportunity to address the current state and the concerns with working together for the betterment of paratransit service in Hampton roads.
- Mr. Johnson stated, the that the terms of chair and vice chair had expired however, Mr. Atkinson and Ms. Gurley have agreed to stay on for a second term or until the meetings can be reconvened due to the pandemic. PAC members Janice Taylor agreed to continue until the members can vote on the second term and continue leadership until June, Mary Mathena concurs.

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. Atkinson offered anyone at the meeting to give an opportunity to express their concerns,



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- Janice Taylor stated there were several issues, one is the dialect of the call center representative and asks for patience from clients and call center representatives. One incident her mother was left in the hot sun for two hours, and the driver was at the wrong location due to lack of clarity that was not provided by the call center to the driver.
- Mary Mathena pointed out that sometimes when she is going to a shopping center there is an address which she provides detail description and the driver does not have the information on their manifest and they are looking for her at one location that when there are multiple entrances, there are no clarification of building names and suites.
- Travis Webb stated when VIA launched there were several issues, the service did improve but shortly went back to the same problems, another problem is that they are not calling or texting clients as they used to. Mr. Johnson addressed that the drivers should call before no showing a client. Mr. Atkinson asked if there was an option for voice mail or text messages. Ryan Sullivan added you can determine if you get voice mail or text message. There is no option determined that will give you the option to choose one or the other.
- Janice Taylor stated a client was taken to a similar address that was the same but taken to the wrong city.
- Cathern Tyler Northern added that there are people that are tired of complaining because nothing is being addressed or changed. Some clients are being charged no shows if the driver is arriving before the determined window and has been given no shows and leaving before the client's window begins. Ms. Northern suggested a local contact call center for issues in order to be addressed in a quicker response.
- Joan Mancuso stated one of the issues is with the cab company that cannot seem to find their location and literally stand in front of VA Beach Blvd and flag them down. When talking to driver that is where they state their GPS is sending them. The other issue people are given a window and the drivers are arriving before the window begins. Some of the drivers are good at leaving and coming back, but the concern is that the clients will just get on the vans and arrive at the location too early and what if there is no one there to speak for them.
- Travis Webb added, as he uses paratransit and talked to many riders and they are telling him about the complaints but not reporting the complaints. Travis encourages them to report so the problem can be addressed.
- Ms. Janice Taylor added that some of the complaints are that no one can reach dispatch and it is a call center and we should be able to reach someone immediately and not told they can address the situation in 24 to 48 hours. Also due to the pandemic people cannot wait in a doctor's office because some working on being more flexible and the fact that we cannot wait in waiting area due to the restriction of a certain amount of people allowed in an area such as a doctor's office. Ms. Northern added that some people are forced to leave dialysis treatment when the ride arrives before the scheduled time. Mr. Johnson added that clients are not required to leave their treatment and reintegrated that clients do not have to leave before treatment time ends.



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- Trevor Hunter with stated from the cab company their training includes that the directions are implemented. The directions are important, one of the training contains a directional training process for example some directions are associated with the particular city. If a client states they are at a location with a direction such as E W south and North, the representative is trained to question the direction of the address to make sure it is going to the correct address.
- Mary Mathena, stated she knows about the directions, if you are making a reservation you need to tell them they are going to a particular address and make sure you give the correct city. Mary added that she is given a particular window and the window has changed between the time she gets her scheduled time it has changed by the time the driver arrives at her location. Ryan addressed the drivers are unable to mark someone a no show until the driver has waited the allotted time within the window.
- Mary stated the driver was given a different window than the one the driver has. Catherine Tyler Northern added that has happened to her also where the driver arrived before the window and the driver stated she had to leave, the driver did come back after Ms. Northern told her to leave if she had to leave. Ms. Northern added it is an inconvenience when they make you rush. Ryan Sullivan stated they needed to address this issue with retraining of the drivers and the call center.
- Deloris Haywood gave a statement about two incidents where she had to go to another city before going home, making her late getting home and causing her family to worry. Another incident where a passenger wanted to go home making Ms. Haywood was late by them taking the other passenger home due to her missing her appointment.
- Janice Taylor wanted a questioned answered about how it will be addressed when people have to sit in the doctor's office and the doctor will not allow a certain a mouth of people due to COVID. Mr. Johnson states the negotiation system allows an hour before or an hour later. He stated we cannot determine how many people are allowed in the Dr. Office.
- Mr. Webb asked about the November 3rd elections, Mr. Johnson stated the will be no fares on the November 3rd for election, service will be operated as usual.
- Mr. Johnson stated membership are only 2 positions for consumer in Chesapeake and one extra from any city.
- Mr. Johnson read the reports on the Call Center, Operations and Certifications as enclosed in the meeting package.
- **Via Service Update**
- Gabrielle McCaig introduced the VIA team to address the concerns of the committee
- Yannis Simiakakis, discussed overseeing the safety aspect and rider safety guidelines related to the COVID pandemic.
- Jason Arvanites discussed operation support and call center changes that have been and will be implemented.
- Ryan Sullivan discussed the ridership and changes since the Pandemic.
- Gabrielle summed up and finished the presentation with an update on the rider app.



Old Business

Janice Taylor stated that she was the chair for the outreach committee. In review of the previous recording 02.12.20 at 1:21:11 states Janice Taylor subcommittee Outreach chair joined by Ms. Mary Mathena, Mr. Bowser, Ms. Gurley, Ms. Griffin, Ms. Haywood, and Ms. Hunter.

New Business

Janice will share new opportunities that will be coming up and will keep everyone informed and can be done virtually and in the public eye.

The next paratransit meeting will be held December 9th, 2020 format will be determined at a later date. Motion to adjourn was made and seconded.

Submitted by
Cheryl Watson
Paratransit Admirative Coordinator