

Paratransit Advisory Committee

October 11, 2023

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

A quorum was attained and Committee Chair, Mr. Troy Bowser called the meeting to order at 12:59 PM.

Introductions were made.

Committee Members in Attendance

Annie Ascher, Extra Member Consumer - Virginia Beach (Zoom)

Troy Bowser, Chair, Newport News Consumer

Wanda Boykin, Chesapeake Consumer

Meltonie Brooks, Virginia Beach Consumer (Zoom)

Alicia Griffin, Vice-Chair, Newport News Consumer (Zoom)

Patricia Harvey, Newport News Provider (Zoom)

Saundra Hunter, Portsmouth Consumer (Zoom)

Joann Mancuso, Virginia Beach Consumer (Zoom)

Mary Mathena, Virginia Beach Consumer (Zoom)

Tyrell Mullen, Extra Member Consumer - Hampton

Jeff Raliski, HRTPO, Ex-Officio Position (Zoom)

Renè Rogers, Norfolk Consumer

Courtney Stovall, Hampton Provider

Travis Webb, Norfolk Provider (Zoom)

HRT Staff in Attendance

Tammara Askew, Administrative Support Technician

Amy Braziel, Director of Contracted Services and Operational Analytics

Malik Greene, Administrative Coordinator

Monica Hatcher, HR Program Support Specialist (Zoom)

Keith Johnson, Paratransit Service Contract Administrator

Christina Malcolm, Human Resources Compliance Manager (Zoom)

Others in Attendance

Paul Atkinson Jr., Eggleston (Zoom)

Darlene Boggs, Representing John Skinner III

Trevor Hunter, zTrip (Zoom)

Denise Johnson, TRAC Chair

Ina Kreps

Michael Ortiz, VIA

Mary Pharris, VIA (Zoom)

Javier Rodriguez, VIA (Zoom)

Teslyn Savage, Beacon House (Zoom)
Janice Taylor (Zoom)
Brian Trickler
Catherine Tyler-Northam (Zoom)
Thomas Vann (Zoom)

The October Paratransit Committee meeting package was distributed electronically to committee members in advance of the meeting. The meeting package consisted of:

- Agenda
- Committee Roster
- Minutes from the Previous Meeting
- Paratransit Advisory Committee Guidelines
- Paratransit Operations & Certifications Reports

Approval of August 9, 2023 Minutes

Ms. Janice Taylor will submit corrections to the meeting minutes at a future date. A motion was made to approve the August 2023 meeting minutes with Ms. Taylor's corrections by Mr. Bowser and properly seconded by Ms. Annie Ascher.

Public Comment

Ms. Darlene Boggs stated that there have been issues with her son, Mr. John Skinner III's rides over the past two years. Ms. Boggs expressed that since their home is outside of the service area, Mr. Skinner must wait at a Planet Fitness for pickup. Ms. Boggs says that her son is also left waiting after his job closes. Ms. Boggs stated that her son has seizures, and she is very concerned for her son's safety due to his rides being hours late. Ms. Boggs explained that she is put on hold for a half an hour due to her number being recognized. Ms. Boggs said she expressed her displeasure with rides being late and a customer service representative started laughing. Ms. Boggs inquired about what will happen if riders are injured due to rides being late.

Mr. Michael Ortiz mentioned that he is familiar with what's been going on with Mr. Skinner's rides. Mr. Ortiz stated that the backup plan is to always get an individual ride to another bus or Coastal Ride (zTrip). Mr. Ortiz also stated that there is a team visiting from the VIA office in New York looking into algorithms and ways to speed up the maintenance program to get more buses back on the road. Mr. Ortiz also mentioned the team working on a massive driver campaign. Mr. Ortiz emphasized the importance of a safe experience. Mr. Ortiz assured that a rider will never be stranded.

Ms. Boggs questioned how the service area is determined.

Mr. Keith Johnson explained that the ADA requirement is that the service area must be three-quarters of a mile outside of a fixed bus route. Mr. Johnson stated that this is the minimum requirement that the Commission chose.

Mr. Brian Trickler suggested that going to the Monthly Commission Meetings would be a good idea to make severe concerns and issues aware.

Mr. Paul Atkinson Jr. conveyed the importance of sharing the issues that riders are facing to prevent catastrophes that could possibly occur.

Ms. Sandra Hunter agreed with what Ms. Boggs stated and says that the same problems are always being presented every meeting. Ms. Sandra Hunter questioned VIA's reliability to people with disabilities.

Mr. Johnson explained that VIA is well below contract parameters and said that a new contract is going out for bid early next year.

Ms. Joann Mancuso stated that she is scheduling a meeting with Chesapeake City Council members to explain issues with her clients and the service area.

There was discussion about a series of HRT Town Hall meetings about expanding transportation in Chesapeake soon.

Mr. Thomas Vann addressed issues with the app being a blind receiver of services. Mr. Vann stated that the app was updated within the past month, but the tabs and functionality are gone. Mr. Vann proclaimed that this update is unsatisfactory. Mr. Vann also suggested an idea of riders having a picture on the app for driver recognition.

Mr. Johnson stated that a representative from VIA will reach out to Mr. Vann regarding the app issues. Mr. Johnson explained that posting pictures may possibly be a privacy issue and must be discussed with the legal department.

Ms. Teslyn Savage expressed a concern with rides from Beacon House being delayed by two to three hours and mentioned that there hasn't been any clear communication on how they can support.

Chairman's Report – Mr. Troy Bowser

Mr. Bowser stated that he attended the Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads Commission meeting which was held in August. Mr. Bowser stated that there was a public comment about VIA and its inability to keep drivers. Mr. Bowser also said that there were complaints about how VIA has no union for their drivers. Mr. Bowser explained that he has received concerns about passengers riding in vehicles with carbon monoxide. Mr. Bowser questioned how often the fleet gets inspected for carbon monoxide, if this situation has ever been brought to attention, and if anything was done. Mr. Bowser expressed that there are still complaints of late rides and being told that the only available ride isn't available until hours later. Mr. Bowser mentioned riders submitting complaints and not getting a follow up or a delay on receiving a follow up.

Mr. Ortiz addressed the carbon monoxide concerns and assured that that bus has been tested as well as the rest of the fleet, which happens every night. Mr. Ortiz declared that no bus has ever tested positive for carbon monoxide to date.

Mr. Johnson emphasized the importance of contacting him directly for serious safety concerns.

VIA Updates

Mr. Ortiz reported on VIA updates as enclosed in the appendix of these minutes.

Ms. Wanda Boykin inquired about the next driver training.

Action Item: Mr. Ortiz will get back to Ms. Boykin with that information.

There was discussion about the number of mechanics needed to be sufficient.

There was also discussion about the number of vehicles in the fleet.

Subcommittee Reports

Service Quality – Ms. Janice Taylor

Ms. Taylor voiced concerns about the drivers. Ms. Taylor mentioned attending forums for tabling events and inquired about any hiring dates or HRT marketing materials. Ms. Taylor mentioned one forum on October 19th. Ms. Taylor also stated that the American Heart Association/Stroke Association will be having a heart walk on November 4th and November 11th.

Ms. Taylor inquired if there is a maximum age limit to apply for Paratransit service.

Mr. Johnson stated that there is no age limit to apply for Paratransit service.

Ms. Taylor gave a commendation to VIA because she received a text about her ride being late and she appreciated that it gave her the option to decide if she wanted to keep the ride.

Ms. Savage voiced concerns about drivers never receiving the notes that are given when booking rides.

Action Item: Mr. Keith Johnson requested Ms. Savage to send him the ride information for investigation.

There was discussion about the communication from zTrip to the riders.

Ms. Taylor inquired if there was a system failure within the past week.

Mr. Johnson stated there was an AWS (Amazon Web Services) outage on October 3rd.

Ms. Taylor voiced concerns regarding long wait times when calling reservations.

Mr. Travis Webb voiced concerns from one of his participants regarding late rides and accessible vehicles.

Mr. Bowser stated that VIA has five accessible vehicles coming next week.

Mr. Johnson explained that if a wheelchair doesn't fit, the rider's profile would need to be adjusted accordingly.

Mr. Tyrell Mullen described how he always gets a different eta each time he calls to check on his rides in the mornings.

Mr. Bowser said that sometimes the eta may vary due to traffic or a change of driver.

There was discussion about drivers calling riders if they are going to be late.

There was also discussion about HRT-VIA signs showing on TNC vehicles.

Ms. Hunter voiced concerns with being aboard a ride and the driver waiting long for one rider and making other stops after her treatment.

There was discussion about the GPS and routing.

Ms. Catherine Tyler-Northam questioned why an add-on gets dropped off before a rider who was already on board.

Mr. Ortiz explained that drivers get pulled off their route to accommodate ad-hoc riders due to constraints in the ride plan and drivers calling out. Mr. Ortiz stated that these rides are already running late.

Ms. Ascher inquired why her and three other riders that live at the same complex don't get the same driver/ride.

Mr. Johnson suggested booking their rides under one profile.

Policy – Ms. Courtney Stovall

There were no new policy updates provided.

Membership – Mr. Tyrell Mullen

There were no new membership updates provided.

Mr. Johnson stated that Mr. Vann is interested in filling the open Norfolk Consumer position.

Mr. Bowser inquired if Ms. Tyler-Northam is interested in a Hampton Consumer position.

Ms. Tyler-Northam expressed interest.

Training – Ms. Wanda Boykin

There were no new training updates provided.

Outreach – Ms. Janice Taylor

Ms. Taylor stated that she will send out the information for the heart walk previously mentioned.

Ms. Taylor reported that her and Ms. Denise Johnson attended the Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) on August 31, 2023. Ms. Taylor said that there was a presentation to connect with HRT to provide more coverage through Microtransit.

Paratransit Operations and Certifications Report

Mr. Johnson reported on Paratransit Operations and Certifications as enclosed in the meeting package.

Mr. Johnson stated that violation/sanction letters have not been sent out recently due to service quality.

Mr. Johnson assured that there will be no third quarter suspensions.

Old Business

Mr. Johnson addressed Ms. Mary Mathena's and Ms. Roger's inquiries about issues with their rides.

New Business

Mr. Johnson stated that Election Day will be free fare day.

Mr. Bowser adjourned the meeting at 2:58 PM.

The next Paratransit Advisory Committee Meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at 3400 Victoria Blvd., Hampton, VA 23661, Second Floor Boardroom.

Submitted by Malik Greene, Paratransit Administrative Coordinator



Follow up from the PAC



- **Intro**
- **Service Review- Michael Ortiz**
- **Driver / Training Updates- Michael Ortiz**





	Trips completed	Pickup/Dropoff On-Time Performance	Average trip duration	Avg. Trips per hour per vehicle
Aug + Sep	~63k	87%/92%	~ 26 mins	1.28
June + July	~62k	90%/93%	~ 24 mins	1.25

Areas we are focusing on:

- Driver Availability and Driver Hiring
 - Driver demand is a nationwide shortage (2)
- Vehicle repairs
 - 70/99 on the road (5 Myle added)
 - Working around the clock to repair and maintenance our fleet
- Adding more vehicles to our fleet
 - Added 5 Myle vehicles to assist in WAV demand / Another 5 from Myle on the way!
 - HRT working to find and secure new vehicles to replace older vehicles in our fleet.

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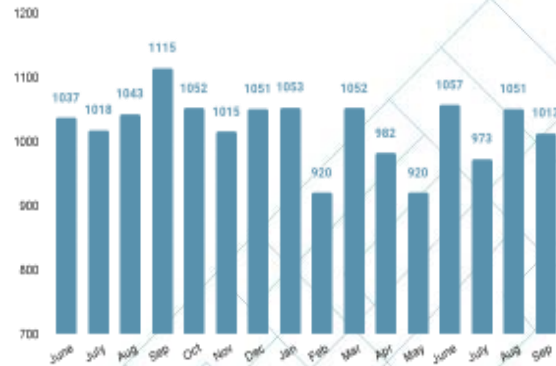
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• Total trips

- Aug - 32, 595 | Sep - 30,409
- June - 31,727 | July - 30,175
- Apr - 29,585 | May - 28,540

Average completed rides per day



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Issues with the app



- Over the past week we have had a few riders state that they are not happy with the newest version of the rider app . Specifically that in the new version some of the accessibility functions are missing and riders are not able to hear an ETA or know the drivers name.
 - We are looking into this to see if the version needs to get rolled back or just some adjustments need to be made for better ease of use.
 - We are looking into a workshop to conduct a focus group to go over some of the functions, likes, and dislikes of the app.
 - More on this coming soon.

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Driver Training / Driver Acquisition/Vehicles



- Driver hiring campaign
 - Launched an impactful driver hiring campaign, resulting in the successful onboarding of 4 highly skilled and qualified driver
- Vehicles
 - Total SS - 79
 - Total NS - 20
 - Maintenance/Compliance
 - Enhancing Safety and Compliance: the Via Transportation team is actively assessing vehicle availability , implementing and enhance the Vehicle Preventive Maintenance (PM) program, and improving maintenance tracking systems . Focus on ensuring driver and rider safety level also ensuring compliance with state regulations and standards .

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Thank you!

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