

## Paratransit Advisory Committee

October 9, 2024

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 1:00 PM.

Introductions were made.

### Committee Members in Attendance

Annie Ascher, Extra Member Consumer – Virginia Beach

Paul Atkinson Jr., Portsmouth Provider (Zoom)

Troy Bowser, Chair, Newport News Consumer (Zoom)

Wanda Boykin, Chesapeake Consumer

Alicia Griffin, Vice-Chair, Newport News Consumer

Mary Mathena, Virginia Beach Consumer (Zoom)

Joann Mancuso, Chesapeake Provider (Zoom)

Sherry Moltamore-Mallory, Norfolk Provider (Zoom)

Jeff Raliski, HRTPO (Zoom)

Renè Rogers, Norfolk Consumer

Janice Taylor, Virginia Beach Provider

Catherine Tyler-Northan, Hampton Consumer (Zoom)

Thomas Vann, Norfolk Consumer

*Note: Mr. Tyrell Mullen, Ms. Courtney Stovall, and Mr. Thomas Bryan were unable to attend this meeting*

### HRT Staff in Attendance

Barry Bland, Paratransit Service Contract Administrator

Amy Braziel, Director of Contracted Services and Operational Analytics

Malik Greene, Administrative Coordinator

Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer

John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist

Vince Ruggiero, Manager of Tech Infrastructure (Zoom)

Alex Touzov, Sr. Director of Technology Services (Zoom)

### Non-Voting Members & Additional Support

Grant Holsinger, Easton Coach Company (Zoom)

Denise Johnson, TRAC Chair

Ina Kreps

Michael Ortiz, Easton Coach Company

Darren Pettis, Easton Coach Company

### Others in Attendance

Linda Carroll (Zoom)  
Ernest Docs (Zoom)  
Rebecca Essig  
Cydney Martin (Zoom)  
Michelle Martin (Zoom)  
Terrance Mobley  
Gregory Walker, TNC  
Latasha Walker, TNC

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 14, 2024 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the August 2024 meeting minutes, with Ms. Janice Taylor's corrections, was made by Ms. Catherine Tyler-Northan and properly seconded by Ms. Alicia Griffin. A roll call vote resulted as follows:

Ayes: Ms. Alicia Griffin, Ms. Tyler-Northan, Ms. Annie Ascher, and Ms. Mary Mathena.

Nays: None

Abstain: None

### Public Comment

Mr. Ernest Docs voiced a concern with pick-up times being changed. Mr. Docs also mentioned there being an issue with a shortage of drivers.

Mr. Michael Ortiz informed Mr. Docs that Easton currently has the highest number of drivers that the paratransit service has had in a long time.

**Action Item: Mr. Ortiz will call Mr. Docs to receive any other feedback and/or questions.**

Ms. Rebecca Essig stated that incredible strides have been made on routing going to the base. Ms. Essig mentioned how they generally get the same drivers, and shared difficulties new drivers take

those routes. Ms. Essig gave commendations to the regular base drivers. Ms. Essig also gave commendation to Easton Coach Company for getting them picked up and brought to work on time.

Mr. Ortiz thanked Ms. Essig for the commendation and stated that he will share it with the base drivers.

Mr. Bowser gave thanks to HRT and Easton Coach Company.

Ms. Tyler-Northan gave commendation to the Call Center, specifically Angelina, Paris, and Kimberly. Ms. Tyler-Northan stated that they really work with riders to help them get the ride times they desire.

Mr. Darren Pettis gave appreciation for the positive feedback and will ensure that the compliments will be relayed to those Call Center representatives.

Mr. Terrance Mobley stated that he used to be a dialysis patient and inquired if there could be a flag that lets drivers know which riders are dialysis patients. Mr. Mobley stated that there are times that they are unable to get to the ride right away. Mr. Mobley stated that when booking rides online or through the app, if a change is made to the date, the time will go away and vice versa. Mr. Mobley stated that this can be confusing and thinks that it should be investigated.

Mr. Ortiz stated that unfortunately Mr. Mobley's inquiry cannot be distinguished by rider. Mr. Ortiz stated that drivers will try to wait and said that the providers have been good at informing drivers how long before riders will be done with their appointment. Mr. Ortiz indicated that as more drivers are added to the platform, more space can be created for wait times to be adjusted for dialysis patients.

**Action Item: Mr. Ortiz will sit with Mr. Mobley after the meeting and go through booking on the web portal.**

Mr. Docs expressed that he has been having issues with the several people being picked up in Chryslers when it can only fit one wheelchair.

Mr. Ortiz explained that sometimes a driver will be assigned to a bigger bus, and then there can possibly be mechanical issues, which will result in a driver being moved to a smaller bus. Mr. Ortiz stated that the system only calculates the bigger bus and said they are working with VIA to see if a bus can be live changed in the system.

Mr. Docs stated that the dispatcher had an attitude and refused to send him another bus which resulted in him being two hours late. Mr. Docs expressed that he was put down as a late cancellation even though he was sent a vehicle that wasn't large enough.

**Action Item: Mr. Ortiz will investigate this situation and follow up with Mr. Docs.**

Mr. Gregory Walker stated that he is a TNC driver and questioned what can be done when they are trying to get a dialysis rider to their appointment and other rides get put in front of them, which makes the dialysis rider late.

Mr. Ortiz stated that they must look at every individual rider as a rider not distinguished by whether they are hearing impaired, visually impaired, on dialysis, etc. Mr. Ortiz mentioned that this is not intended to sound malicious, but this is public shared transportation and sometimes riders that are excessively late must be moved which unfortunately pushes other riders back.

Mr. Bowser stated that add-ons happen to all riders being that this is a shared ride service. Mr. Bowser mentioned being a little more open minded and trying to do the best to make it comfortable for everybody.

Ms. Sherry Moltamore-Mallory gave commendation stating that Norfolk Public Schools has seen tremendous improvement when it comes to arriving on time and pick-ups/drop-offs in the correct location.

Mr. Ortiz thanked Ms. Moltamore-Mallory and stated that Easton Coach Company's primary focus when taking over was identifying spots that needed improvement.

#### Chairman's Report – Mr. Troy Bowser

Mr. Bowser mentioned that he received a complaint about a rider that got left in Portsmouth at church for a couple of hours and had to finance a cab to get home. Mr. Bowser mentioned that the cab that picked her up was available for Paratransit. Mr. Bowser also mentioned him getting reports of lifts not operating correctly.

#### HRT Presentations and Updates

Ms. Noelle Pinkard presented the HRT Draft 2025 Legislative Agenda as enclosed in the appendix of these minutes.

There was discussion regarding Microtransit.

#### Easton Coach Company Updates

Mr. Ortiz and Mr. Pettis reported on Easton Coach Company's updates as enclosed in the appendix of these minutes.

Ms. Tyler-Northan gave commendation for taking reservationists out in the vehicle so they can experience what riders and drivers are dealing with. Ms. Tyler-Northan stated that it is very helpful and gives them a feel for what goes on.

Ms. Taylor gave appreciation for the Call Center being local and gave commendation to Felicia and Angelina. Ms. Taylor questioned what contributes to long wait times.

Mr. Pettis stated that they've noticed it on days where there are call outs. Mr. Pettis stated that this was a brand-new process starting out and knew there would be growing pains, but they are now in a position to take the Call Center to the next level.

Ms. Taylor informed Mr. Pettis that several committee members are trainers and are willing to provide any help if needed.

Mr. Bowser expressed a concern with the IVR (Interactive Voice Recognition) replacing jobs.

Mr. Pettis stated that it will not replace anybody and mentioned that the way they staffed the call center was with the IVR in mind. Mr. Pettis explained that they are good where they are and how the IVR will enhance the service.

Mr. Walker questioned if there was a plan for the TNC drivers when Easton Coach Company gets fully staffed.

Mr. Pettis explained that TNC drivers will continue to be used and that supplementing service and driver shortages are issues that are never going to go away. Mr. Pettis declared that the majority of Paratransit Agencies across the country realize that having a partnership for overflow work is the most beneficial thing for riders.

Mr. Walker questioned if TNC drivers were going to be fired due to a decrease of hours.

Mr. Ortiz disclosed that TNC drivers' hours have decreased because the focus is to now put TNC drivers where they are needed the most.

There was discussion about pick-up/drop-off times being changed.

Mr. Mobley inquired if anything is being done for driver morale. Mr. Mobley also wanted to know if drivers have been to the Call Center to see what the reservationist do because he has spoken to drivers who have been very frustrated with the Call Center and thinks it may be helpful.

Mr. Ortiz stated that drivers have always wanted to feel and look apart of the team and they now have everyone wearing a uniform that says Easton Coach Company. Mr. Ortiz also mentioned celebrating driver victories, as well as expressing opportunities for improvement in one on ones.

Mr. Ortiz stated that since July 1, all new drivers have spent a day in the depot with dispatchers.

Mr. Pettis informed the committee that there will be renovations done to the building, including a nice big breakroom which will also help boost morale.

Mr. Pettis explained that driver frustration may come from dispatch and stated that the drivers deal with dispatch every day, not the call center. Mr. Pettis mentioned that all new drivers do get to interact with the Call Center due to the training room being located there.

There was discussion regarding the pre-authorization feature being added for everyone booking a ride using a credit card. This will ensure that the riders are using a valid credit card to pay for their ride.

### Subcommittee Reports

Ms. Taylor gave thanks for all of the strides being made. Ms. Taylor echoed Mr. Bowser mentioning a rider being left at church. Ms. Taylor stated that there is a concern with work attire with TNC drivers and no signage on vehicles. Ms. Taylor explained how those are things that lower the level of professionalism and there can be concerns getting into the car. Ms. Taylor questioned if TNC drivers receive accountability from Easton even though they are contracted under VIA.

Mr. Ortiz stated that he did forward that work attire concern to VIA the day he was notified and said to continue to send in issues as they arise. Mr. Ortiz declared that he has talked extensively with VIA regarding quality-of-service expectations.

Ms. Taylor stated that overall, she has gotten a lot of positive feedback.

Ms. Mathena explained that she has been getting recurring rides for several months and stated that she has very few problems with her trips. Ms. Mathena also stated that she has been traveling with hardware and said the drivers have been good at making her rides less stressful. Ms. Mathena expressed one issue with her having to tell the driver the name of the place she was going because the driver was only provided the address. Ms. Mathena stated that when she books rides, she gives the address and the name of the place.

Mr. Ortiz stated that most places are listed as just the address, but notes can be put with the name of the place for the drivers.

Ms. Mathena expressed that she always gives that information, but the drivers are telling her that it's not there.

**Action Item: Mr. Ortiz did not see any notes on the rides and will call Ms. Mathena after the meeting.**

Ms. Joann Mancuso gave commendation to the Call Center, specifically Kimberly. Ms. Mancuso also addressed her client's recurring rides getting cancelled and having to be rebooked which caused a hassle. Ms. Mancuso also echoed TNC drivers not having signage.

Ms. Griffin expressed a situation where she had to pay for a cab to get home from church. Ms. Griffin stated that she was calling every thirty minutes, and her pick-up time kept being changed. Ms. Griffin stated that the cab that got her was a driver for paratransit, and he questioned why they didn't call him to get her. Ms. Griffin said she paid fifty dollars for the cab ride. Ms. Griffin alleged that nobody ever called her back.

**Action Item: Mr. Ortiz will call Ms. Griffin following the meeting to discuss.**

Ms. Taylor stated that she would like to receive a call as well.

**Action Item: Mr. Ortiz will call Ms. Taylor following the meeting.**

There was discussion regarding the drivers.

### Policy

There were no new policy updates provided.

### Membership

Ms. Amy Braziel stated that there are currently two Portsmouth Consumer positions open and one Extra Member position open.

### Training – Ms. Wanda Boykin

There were no new training updates provided.

### Outreach – Ms. Janice Taylor

Ms. Taylor stated there was a Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) meeting that she will pass information out for. Ms. Taylor mentioned Ms. Braziel doing a presentation at the RTAP meeting. Ms. Braziel explained that her presentation was an update about HRT's Base Express service.

### Paratransit Operations and Certifications Report

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

Mr. Bland opened the floor up for any volunteers that want to serve on the appeal panel.

### New Business

Ms. Braziel informed the committee that there are currently eighty-six riders that have a debt with HRT for nonpayment. Ms. Braziel explained that these are riders that have used their debit or credit cards to book rides, and because a preauthorization was not done, those cards did not have sufficient funds when they were charged. Ms. Braziel stated that letters will be sent out and they will be moved to cash only as well as being put on a ninety-day suspension from using their card. Ms. Braziel asserted that if the debt is not cleared and they continue with this habit, they will be suspended from the service.

Mr. Bowser declared that he does not condone anybody getting over on the system or riding for free. Mr. Bowser gave his support for whatever needs to be put in place to stop fraudulent behavior.

Ms. Ascher questioned why she doesn't receive any receipts when taking rides.

**Action Item: Mr. Pettis will investigate Ms. Ascher's issue with not receiving receipts and get back to her.**

There was discussion regarding the Appeal Committee and volunteers.

#### Annual Nominations and Elections of Committee Chair & Vice-Chair

Ms. Taylor announced her email so votes can be sent to her. Ms. Taylor also mentioned using Ms. Braziel's email as well.

Ms. Braziel announced her email.

Ms. Taylor will call Ms. Mathena, Ms. Tyler-Northan, and Ms. Griffin to get their vote.

Ms. Braziel stated that the expectation for anyone that does not have a visual impairment is to email their vote.

Ms. Griffin will be acting on Mr. Bowser's behalf.

There was discussion regarding nominations and the process.

Ms. Taylor stated that she will give an election report at the next meeting.

Ms. Ascher informed everybody of the challenges endured during the Nominating Committee process.

Ms. Taylor announced the nominees for Chair and introductions were made.

Ms. Taylor stated that there are open slots for write-ins.

Ms. Taylor passed out ballots and verified who will submit via email.

Ms. Taylor opened the floor for nominations.

Ms. Taylor announced the nominees for Vice-Chair and introductions were made.

Ms. Mathena stated that Ms. Taylor does not have to call her because she sent in an email for her vote.

Ms. Taylor passed out ballots and verified who will submit via email.

Ms. Braziel and Ms. Taylor counted the votes.

Ms. Taylor announced Ms. Alicia Griffin was selected as the Paratransit Advisory Committee Chair and Ms. Annie Ascher was selected as Vice-Chair.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:33 PM.



The next Paratransit Advisory Committee Meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, in the Hampton Board Room located at 3400 Victoria Blvd, Hampton, VA.

Submitted by Malik Greene, Paratransit Administrative Coordinator

DRAFT

Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads

**DRAFT**

2025 Legislative Agenda

Public transportation is a driver of economic prosperity and well-being across Hampton Roads. Hampton Roads' ability to thrive depends significantly on a well-performing transportation system, including robust and reliable public transportation. It is vital to numerous regional priorities, including supporting Hampton Roads military communities and enhancing quality of life for service members and their families and attracting and retaining a diverse workforce.

Residents throughout the region deserve access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation options. Transit connects communities and businesses across the region, and improves access to all the region offers, from jobs, healthcare, and retail destinations to recreation, education, and workforce training opportunities. Each service improvement across our multimodal system produces new connections, greater reliability, and more convenient trips.

The Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads (TDCHR) has outlined the following legislative and public policy priorities, with the goal to maximize opportunities to advance HRT's vision and mission.

Federal Priorities

- The TDCHR supports the IIJA funding levels for public transportation formula and discretionary funds and will pursue all appropriate federal discretionary grant opportunities. As Congress begins consideration of the next multi-year surface transportation bill, HRT will advocate for retaining the gains in funding achieved in IIJA for all transit programs, including Section 5339 bus programs.
- The TDCHR also supports the continuation of congressionally directed spending programs through annual appropriations as a valuable source of needed funding for HRT capital projects and an effective way for our Congressional delegation to directly support our regional multi-modal infrastructure and services.
- The TDCHR will advocate for full funding of the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program – an important source of funding for major fixed guideway capital projects – as HRT pursues expanded service to provide broader regional benefits, including extension of The Tide light rail system and other high-capacity transit programs in the region.
- The TDCHR will advocate for policies and funding to support continued advancements in the use of transformational technologies, including non-diesel technologies, upgrades to trip planning and fare systems, real-time travel information systems, demand-response service and other innovations.

## State Priorities

- The TDCHR supports policies to create predictable, adequate, and equitable funding across varying transit modes and regions throughout the Commonwealth. Sustainable funding is critical for reliable transit services that reduce customer exposure to service cuts and fare increases.
- The TDCHR supports the review and revision of statewide performance-based funding policies in order to avoid negative and disparate consequences to transit customers and systems and recognize varying social equity needs.

DRAFT



OCT 2024  
Paratransit Advisory Committee



Presented by:  
Michael Ortiz, GM



Monthly recap:

August saw the start of what was to come with Easton Coach. We took some learning lessons from the past and implemented a plan to not go backwards. Finishing Aug strong we went into arguably our busiest month of the year and held true to our word to provide top notch service. September saw us breaking our single day ride record 4 times in the same month (all over 1500).

And although we still have, and will always have room to grow, we look forward to the challenge of being better each day.

Category	August 2024	September 2024
Total Trips	29,994	31,088
On-Time Performance	90%	93%
On-Time Drop Off	91%	96%
Average Trip Length	26 minutes	26 minutes



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### Safety

### Training

- Starting enforcing Lytx for coaching
- Mandatory Monthly Safety Briefs
- Training Depot Staff
- Aim to reduce preventable accidents

- Total team training optimization and customer service
- Working with call center to assist riders in real time
- Developing a “Rule Book” for everyone to understand all policy and procedures



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**Total vehicles: 114**

**Total in service: 108 (98 HRT / 10 Rentals)**

**Total at 3<sup>rd</sup> Party: 6**

**Total in repair at depot:**

SAFE



# Call Center Updates