

Handilift Advisory Committee

Memorandum

(approved in Lieu of March Meeting Minutes)

March 16th, 2020

In an effort to slow the infection rate of the COVID-19 virus the Chair cancelled the regularly scheduled meeting for March 18th, 2020, and reached out via phone or text to the Committee Members for up-to-date feedback on paratransit performance and outstanding issues.

The following memorandum conveys a summary of feedback by the committee and documents current outstanding issues regarding JTRAN ADA Compliance.

Ms. Lee Cole noted that there are many new drivers which are learning about the city and finding directions to locations. She commented that service overall is improving. There is better response to next-day service requests, more efficient grouping of passengers going in the same direction, and flexibility regarding minor changes in drop-off locations. She attributes the changes to Mr. Demario Height's leadership.

Mr. Herbert Humphrey said that the paratransit system is working "better overall" but noted two Fridays (March 6th and March 13th) in which he was left off the schedule and had to find another way to work.

Vice-Chairperson Ollie Lester indicated that she is using JTRAN paratransit to get to work in the mornings and that things for her have been going "really-really well". She attributes the improvement to having the same driver that knows the route well. However, she did complain that once she was told by one of the dispatchers (Tammy) that she couldn't schedule a doctor's appointment at 7:45am because that was "Ride to work time." Ms. Lester said she reported this to Mr. Height during the March 4th ADA Council Meeting. Obviously, restricting trips by purpose is not permissible under ADA.

Mr. Alfred Cotton said in a phone call that he was just returning to work after a long illness, but that he heard no complaints from his colleagues at LC Industries and that the service was working well in the past couple of days.

Mr. Raphael Byrd (also at LC Industries) confirmed that the service is "going VERY WELL with the changes they've made"; meaning, they have a consistent driver in the morning and evening that knows the most efficient route and that everyone is getting to work on time. Mr. Byrd rides the bus with Mr. Cotton and Mr. Alfred Brown and said they are all complimentary of the recent service.

ADA Coordinator, Herbert Humphrey, spoke with the Human Resources Manager for MS Industries for the Blind and she indicated that there were no transportation problems for their employees that use JTRAN Paratransit (i.e. no late arrivals to work or late pick-ups from work). Also, there were no complaints from the employees reported to Human Resources.

Mr. Bunch said he is using Handilift only for the ADA and Paratransit meetings but has no complaints, stating, "they've been treating me well."

The chair could not get through to Mr. Willie Cook as his phone is temporarily disconnected.

Ms. Jean McKinney said she is not riding JTRAN paratransit lately but gave a glowing report of South Central Community Action Agency's service. She has been using them for most of her trips and finds their service exemplary. However, when asked how much she was charged, she said she was paying \$20-30 for out-of-town (e.g., from Jackson to Madison) trips. The chair encouraged her to call Marian Bouldin (Transportation Director at SCCAA) to be added to their ADA transportation program through MDOT. She said she would.

Former ADA Coordinator Sam Gleese said he is typically relying on family and church friends for trips, but said he has not heard any recent complaints from his friends that ride JTRAN paratransit.

Dr. LaShawna Fant said that the issue she had with riding in too-small a van without seat belts has been satisfactorily resolved. She rides the system to the MS School for the Blind and has had on-time and reliable service as of late.

Mr. Mick Hintz, in text communications, stated that "the Handilift service itself has been working very well lately." "Mr. Height is a God-Send." However, Mr. Hintz continues to be critical of inaccurate information on the website, such as mis-defining the paratransit service area as within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of the fixed route, when the City's actual policy is to provide service anywhere within the city limits. Also vital to Mr. Hintz is the lack of valid paratransit performance data, because it determines the extent of JTRAN's compliance with the Consent Decree (and ADA). **Even though the consensus of the Committee Members (at least right now) is that things are improving, the chairperson is concerned that we may not be a representative sample of the overall paratransit ridership. So, the only way to verify compliance is to have system-wide data that can be trusted.**

In an email communication, Ms. Jordan Rae Hillman (Director of Planning and Development) wrote that the plan is to replace the Route-Match scheduling software which the city deems is a major cause of the problem, and to purchase mobile tablets so that bus operators can automatically uplink pick-up/drop-off times/locations in real-time. Obviously, that will not happen before the September deadline (when the most

recent extension of the Consent Decree ends). It will probably be necessary to extend the Decree one more year to ensure successful compliance.

The next meeting of the JTRAN Paratransit (“Handilift”) Advisory Committee is scheduled for May 20th, 2020.

These notes were written by Committee Chair Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D. And approved in Lieu of March Meeting Minutes at the May 20, 2020 meeting.