

WCCTAC
West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes, 30 July 2010

Members Present: Janet Abelson (El Cerrito); Ed Balico (Hercules); Tom Butt (Richmond); Genoveva Calloway (San Pablo); John Gioia (Contra Costa County); Tom Hansen (WestCAT); Joel Keller (BART); Jeff Ritterman (Richmond); Roy Swearingen (Pinole), Vice-Chair; Maria Viramontes (Richmond), Chair; Joe Wallace (AC Transit).

Staff Present: Christina Atienza, Valerie Jenkins, Joanna Pallock, John Rudolph, Linda Young; Michael Rodriquez, Legal Counsel; Bradley Ward, Treasurer.

Location: San Pablo Council Chambers, 13831 San Pablo Avenue, San Pablo, CA 94806

1. **Call to Order and Self-Introductions.** *Chair Maria Viramontes* called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.
2. **Public Comment.** Provided under Item #14.

CONSENT CALENDAR

ACTION: *Director Balico* moved to approve all items on the Consent Calendar, seconded by *Director Gioia*; and passed unanimously.

3. **Minutes and Summary of July 30, 2010 Board meeting.**
4. **Summary of Sept 9, 2010 TAC Meeting.**
5. **Staff Report for Aug-Sept 2010.**
6. **Update on Vehicle Registration Fee Ballot Measure.**
7. **Update on SB 375 Implementation.**
8. **Pittsburg's Withdrawal from East County's Transportation Mitigation Fee Program.**
9. **CCTA office relocation.**
10. **Update on Bay Area Express Lane (aka HOT) Network.**
11. **Student Bus Pass Program: Update on Status of Transition to Clipper.**
12. **Personnel Policies: Proposed Amendments (Resolution 10-04).**
13. **Approval of Measure J Program 20b FY 2010-11 Claims.**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

14. **Study Session: West County Transportation for Seniors and People with Disabilities.**

ACTION: *Director Abelson* moved to authorize a study funded out of something other than Measure J paratransit funds, possibly Measure J Sub-regional Transportation Needs funds, to determine the needs of the senior and disabled population for paratransit; seconded by *Director Butt*; and passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION: *Chair Viramontes* noted that the study session had been put together by the Paratransit Working Group and technical staff. *Ms. Christina Atienza* introduced members of Paratransit Working Group.

Ms. Atienza provided an overview of ADA and non-ADA paratransit service providers and eligible recipients in West County. ADA paratransit service is required by federal law for eligible residents who live within three-quarters of a mile of a fixed route bus or rail service. In West County, ADA providers are WestCAT and the East Bay Paratransit Consortium (EBPC), which represents BART and AC Transit. ADA providers connect through transfers with other ADA providers in areas adjacent to West County, such as Alameda and Marin counties. While ADA service is, in effect, an unfunded federal mandate, ADA operators, like transit operators, have access to a wide spectrum of grants, but little flexibility in their use, and the grants are disappearing as state and federal budgets face shortfalls.

Chair Viramontes reflected that with tightening transit budgets and the loss of fixed route transit lines, accompanying ADA service is lost as well.

Ms. Atienza said that non-ADA paratransit service, funded at the discretion of municipalities and districts, is provided by WestCAT and the cities of El Cerrito, Richmond, and San Pablo. Non-ADA service operators have access to fewer grant opportunities, but generally greater flexibility in how to use the funding available. Eligibility requirements for ADA and non-ADA service are different. Measure J funding accounts for 12% of funding for West County paratransit providers, a nominal portion for ADA providers, but a much larger portion for the non-ADA operators. *Ms. Atienza* noted the difference between the sales tax subsidies for paratransit service in Alameda and Contra Costa.

Ms. Atienza reviewed figures indicating the number of seniors and persons with disabilities, based on the 2000 Census, in West County communities.

Director Gioia suggested that the county and social service agencies be included in planning for paratransit; and that trips for elderly and disabled persons often include trips to health care providers, so that hospitals, such as Doctors Hospital, and other facilities should be included too.

Director Butt suggested that paratransit issues may not present the most urgent transportation problem to be addressed by this committee; rather, transit-dependent working people with children in day care may present a more challenging scenario to address with scarce resources.

Director Abelson said that in her mind the main discussion item is about Measure J paratransit funding, not about other scenarios.

Ms. Atienza said that staff seeks guidance in programming Measure J funds for paratransit, and that the committee's purview extends beyond Measure J to address issues of transportation generally in West County.

Director Butt expressed dismay that 20% of Richmond residents are disabled, as indicated in a figure; opined that not all seniors face mobility problems; and stated that providing mobility to disabled persons is a real challenge. He observed that Richmond's annual payments for non-

ADA service are steep, and may not be cost-effective, especially compared to taxis; remarked on the need for data concerning costs per trip and the origins and destinations of paratransit users, and WCCTAC's being in a good position to take leadership on those issues; and suggested that an independent agency to provide paratransit services for all of West County may be more efficient than every jurisdiction's provisioning of such service on its own.

Director Abelson observed that taxis are not suited for service to the disabled community: the vehicles are frequently unsafe and improperly fitted for wheelchair users, and the drivers are often untrained and unprofessional.

Director Calloway stated that a needs assessment would be helpful in determining the specific costs per trip, and that a study would support the Board's deliberations in developing potential alternatives. *Director Calloway* suggested that viable models exist, as on a local level some years ago a shuttle provided convenient, reliable, low-cost trips to health care providers.

Director Hansen asked if the working group had specific recommendations.

Ms. Atienza stated that the genesis of this study session was the decommissioning of the paratransit study that was to inform Measure J programming for paratransit, and that there still remained a need to figure out how to program these Measure J funds. *Ms. Atienza* noted that it is clear that the Board is averse to using operating funds to fund such a study. *Ms. Atienza* stated that another Measure J program, 28b, West County Subregional Transportation Needs, had not yet been programmed and that it may be used to fund a paratransit study; but that such use had not yet been vetted with the TAC, which had earlier supported keeping 28b funds in reserve for one or two years to fund two Community Based Transportation Planning projects. She further noted the option of doing a study incrementally, if the initial cost of \$150,000 seems too steep.

Director Wallace asked if the needs assessment done by transit operators could be used as a basis for the study, making it less expensive. *Chair Viramontes* noted that she would prefer for the study to be conducted by a neutral party to maintain objectivity.

Director Ritterman suggested that the 2010 Census might be used at little or no cost to provide information relevant to the objectives, and that the money saved from not doing a paratransit study might be used to purchase software that would enable all paratransit providers better to coordinate their services. He questioned whether there was a need to drill down to details through a study, and what such a study would yield that was not already known.

Chair Viramontes directed the group to a slide in the presentation that listed what the working group did not already know. And suggested that the real question is what in that list can be determined without a study.

Ms. Atienza noted that origins and destinations and trip frequency cannot be obtained from census data, and that the group could assemble the data that is already being collected now, but cautioned that the operators do not have the same definitions nor do they abide by the same standards. She noted that her vision for the study was to determine what the public needs and wants, which cannot be ascertained from available census data, but may be obtained from a survey.

Director Balico indicated concern with the high and disparate operating costs per passenger trip shown in the exhibit; suggested that assistance to taxi operators to bring the taxis into ADA compliance might provide a lower cost per passenger trip, as well as an additional option; and suggested that a number of issues pertaining to the future of paratransit in West County remain to be addressed. He suggested that we should address this issue as a region, and not focus on individual operator needs. He noted his support for a self-audit and needs assessment.

Director Abelson suggested that census data will not provide enough detail about residents and their destinations to be of benefit to paratransit service providers.

Director Butt suggested that a telephone survey may provide useful data at a low cost.

Director Wallace acknowledged that EBPC costs are high, as is customer satisfaction; and that the EBPC provides trips for all disabled persons, including those on stretchers with full-time caregivers, whom the EBPC transports as well; and that the EBPC has a proven record of reliability, whereas taxi service is increasingly uncomfortable, unreliable, and inconvenient.

Mr. Sam Casas, Richmond Paratransit Coordinator, stated that additional eligibility requirements for community-based paratransit service would create another layer of costly bureaucracy; that if the program were not required to pay both rent and mortgage for office space, the agency could provide trips at a lower cost per passenger. He suggested that there may be opportunities to lower costs by looking at each provider's operations.

PUBLIC COMMENT: *Mr. Marvin Dyson*, Richmond resident, said that the Richmond Paratransit program started out offering services to the disabled community in Richmond that were different from ADA services, but that it has evolved now to mirror those services. He further noted that he would be available to help.

Director Abelson stated that continuing attention on the consumer rather than on the service provider should be the primary emphasis in making decisions about Measure J funding.

STANDING ITEMS

15. Correspondence/Other Information – None

16. WCCTAC Board and Staff Comments

- a. *Chair Viramontes* announced that the Board would adjourn until September.
- b. *Ms. Aienza* noted that former Chair Sharon Brown is doing well and sends her regards to everyone.

17. Other Business. None

18. Adjourned until Friday, September 24, 2010 at 8:00 a.m.