



Riders' Advisory and Accessibility Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 8, 2021

ATTENDEES: Bruce Babcock, Jeff Boles, Suzanne Burnham, Tom Clavel (TCAT), Roderick Cort, Jenn Jennings (TCAT), Dwight Mengel, Patty Poist (TCAT), Roger Segelken, Ed Swayze, Carlene (Jett) Swick, Denise Thompson (TCAT Board of Directors), Scot Vanderpool (TCAT), Theodora Weatherby, Julie Weaver, Kristen Wells (Gadabout), Matt Yarrow (TCAT)

APOLOGIES: None

MEETING HANDOUTS: None

Meeting called to order by Patty Poist at 4:34 pm

Minutes: Regarding last page; last two paragraphs beginning "Larry Roberts recommended...": Jeff Boles asked if TCAT has internally discussed TCAT stopping between designated stops as a reasonable accommodation. Patty Poist responded that bus drivers do try to not drop people off where there are temporary obstacles (like snow). There is a balance between making reasonable accommodations and disrupting the flow and timing of routes in "designated stops only" zones. TCAT makes decisions on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes it is not possible to make accommodations and, in those cases, TCAT provides complementary paratransit, operated by Gadabout.

Minutes approved.

GM Report / January system report – Scot Vanderpool

Ridership decreased 82.5% from last year, due to COVID. However, from October 2020 to February 2021, there was a 12% increase in ridership. There are really no indicators to tell us where our ridership is heading right now. Cornell ridership is slightly up right now while non-Cornell ridership is holding steady.

Top 5 performing routes for November 2020 – January 2021: 30, 15, 81, 14, 10

Operations:

Missed trips: There was only one missed trip in January, which was due to poor road conditions.

Maintenance: PM's are at 100%. There were 13 road calls in December 2020, and 14 road calls in January 2021. 6 of our 2011 Orions are receiving mid-life overhauls. This includes work on engines, transmissions, and will extend the life of these buses and allow them to be in good working order for the next 6-7 years. There were 6 collisions in January as compared to 4 in January 2020. 5 were preventable but they were all minor.

Contact tracing: there have been 13 press releases regarding COVID exposures. When TCAT is notified of an exposure, hours of video footage are reviewed to determine if there were exposures, what time, and on which routes. If the person was on the bus for less than 10 minutes, no press release is issued. TCAT has done research on 21 cases since August 2020.

HR: TCAT now has ~~77~~ 76 full time bus operators, down from 83 last year. TCAT has not replaced these operators due to decrease in ridership and service. TCAT currently has a total of 135 employees.

Annual retention rate for 2020 is 97%.

At the request of the county, TCAT provided service for seniors to vaccination sites. A couple weeks ago 98 Titus Towers residents were transported to the vaccination site at the Mall. This past week TCAT transported around 50 seniors from Juniper Manor, Cayuga Meadows, Conifer Village, and Ellis Hollow Apartments. Scot added that Gadabout has also been instrumental in getting folks to vaccination sites, including McGraw House and others who may not have transportation to vaccination sites.

Gadabout and TCAT are offering free rides to the vaccination clinics, regardless of age or disability. People without transportation can call 211 or call Gadabout directly.

Dwight Mengel reported that Tompkins County is working with the Get There Call Center, which currently serves the 5 counties to the south of Tompkins. They have agreed to handle arrangements for people to go to Binghamton and Syracuse for vaccinations. If someone gets stranded at one of those sites, they will provide a guaranteed ride program to get people home.

The plan has come together well and there will be a surge of vaccinations within the next 16 weeks. Suzanne Burnham asked if there were ways to help get the word out. Dwight responded that The County Health department will be putting out a press release and launching a website shortly. People who need transportation should begin by calling 211. The TC Health department will be sending out information, and TCAT will disseminate the information when it is received.

Group Emails & Privacy Concerns

Recently there was an email among members of this committee that named a specific TCAT driver who tested positive for COVID, along with his wife. Kristen cautioned against publicly naming specific people, especially when health is concerned, as this is a violation of that person's privacy

and HIPAA laws. Kristen recommended that if there is a complaint about a particular driver, they should only be named privately to Patty or Scot, not in emails or meeting with all committee members.

Patty agreed and said that it would be a good idea for this committee to discuss creating bylaws, protocol, and etiquette guidelines regarding group discussion.

COVID transmission on buses: Roger Segelken asked if there had been any documented cases of COVID transmission on TCAT buses. How does TCAT convince people that it is safe to ride TCAT? Patty Poist responded that there is no way to know exactly, if there has been transmission on TCAT. Scot Vanderpool stated that TCAT is not aware of any cases that were transmitted on a TCAT bus. Matt Yarrow relayed the results of a study done by Sam Schwartz consulting, who found that the probability of COVID spreading on transit is very low. They did not find any instances of COVID spread on public buses.

Patty will post the survey on the TCAT website under the COVID-19 FAQ section. Kristen Wells added that there were no cases of community spread on Gadabout vehicles.

Patty agreed that the most important thing is ensuring the safety of our riders and there is a marketing push to instill confidence in our riders. From the beginning TCAT has taken a number of proactive steps, including state of the art equipment to disinfect buses and installing permanent protective shields to protect both bus operators and riders. Before the shields were up, TCAT waived fares to keep distance between passengers and drivers.

Early on TCAT asked riders to mask up as the #1 safety precaution that can be taken to stop the spread. TCAT posted signs notifying passengers of a state mandate, and later a federal mandate, requiring face masks to be worn while on public transportation. It is best to persuade people to wear masks, rather than trying to force them.

Scot added that each night, every bus is disinfected. All buses now have hand sanitizer for riders to use. There is a 25 passenger limit on buses. Drivers also give out masks to people without them. All TCAT employees fill out a survey and have their temperature taken before reporting to work for the day. If TCAT is notified that there was a COVID positive person on the bus, that driver is immediately taken out of work until they are tested and the results come back. The bus is also immediately taken out of service and disinfected.

The majority of TCAT bus operators have received both doses of the COVID vaccine. Julie Weaver explained how the TC Health Department handles contact tracing. When there is a positive case, the HD conducts contact tracing and asks the person about potential exposures. The HD relays the information to TCAT about when and where the person boarded the bus. TCAT then reviews video footage to verify the information. TCAT does not know the person's name so it is fairly anonymous.

Kristen added that Gadabout does not issue press releases, since they know who is on their buses and when. There have been 4 confirmed cases plus 1 infected driver on Gadabout. None of those cases originated on Gadabout, and none of these cases resulted in the infection of other riders.

TCAT Data Dashboard

TCAT Data Analyst, Tom Clavel has been working on an online data dashboard to display TCAT statistics for the public to explore. The site is live but is not yet public. There are three dashboards: Routes, Ridership, and Fleet.

Tom gave a short tour of the Tableau dashboards. This data will be available at:

<https://tcatbus.com/about/ridership-and-statistics/>

The dashboards are interactive and can display the data in different ways. If you have any ideas of data you would like to see, or suggestions, please let Tom know.

Suzanne praised the level of transparency. Julie would like to see missed trips. Tom responded that he was working on the best way to break out the missed trip information.

TCAT is working on getting 7 battery electric buses on the road. They should be ready by early April. There will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony. All of the buses have not been received yet and TCAT still has to get the buses wrapped, train staff, and have DOT inspections done.

Patty showed the group a promotional video featuring bus operator, Agnes Beck. It can be found on our website, or on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYzptH0mtmA&>

You can also search Youtube for TCATmovesYou. The video is called "Driving a transit bus is about much more than just driving" There are several other videos featuring TCAT staff, board members, and legislators.

Patty will let committee members know when and where the ribbon cutting for the electric bus will take place.

Ed Swayze would like to know what is happening with the new TCAT facility. Scot answered that the project is on hold because TCAT is in a completely different place in March 2021 than we were at the start of March 2020. We do not know what is going to happen with our ridership and we don't know if our 3 main funders will support this project. Our STOA funding is also uncertain. The new facility project will be on hold until the future is a little more certain.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:40 PM



TCAT
Riders' Advisory and Accessibility Committee
4:30 p.m. 6 p.m.
Mon., May 10, 2021
TCAT Large Conference Room

AGENDA

- I. TCAT Staff:
 - General Manager's Report (Scot)
 - Summer service (Matt)
 - TDP (Matt)
- II. Other discussion
- III. Adjournment

Next meeting July 13, 2021