



Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB) Meeting

Marion County Growth Services Training Room
2710 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470
December 7, 2023
10:00 AM

MINUTES

Members Present:

Michelle Stone
Jeffrey Askew (*arrived at 10:20am*)
Emilio Santiago
Susan Hanley
Carlos Colon
Jeannette Estes
Andrea Melvin
Tiffany Mckenzie
Keith Fair
Angela Juaristic (*arrived at 10:18aam*)
Elizabeth Alacci

Members Not Present:

Lauren Debick
Tracey Sapp
Iris Pozo
Anissa Pieriboni
Steven Neal

Others Present:

Rob Balmes, TPO
Shakayla Irby, TPO
Sara Brown, TPO
Clayton Murch, Marion Senior Services

Herman Schultz, Marion Senior Services
Joseph Bartolomeo, Marion Senior Services
Michael Kavanagh
Antonia Vasquez

Item 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairwoman Stone called the meeting to order at 10:04am. Secretary Shakayla Irby called the roll and a quorum was present.

Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Keith Fair led the board members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 3. Proof of Publication

Secretary Shakayla Irby stated that the meeting had been published November 30, 2023 online on the TPO website and Facebook and Twitter pages, the City of Ocala, Belleview, and Dunnellon websites. The meeting was also published to the November 30, 2023 edition of the Ocala Star Banner.

Item 4A. Presentation by the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)

A representative from NCMM was unable to attend, and no presentation was given.

Item 5A. Grievance Procedures

TPO staff regularly reviewed and/or amended the TDLCB Grievance Procedures to assure that all elements of the Grievance Procedures are in alignment with Florida statues, regulations and codes.

Notable changes to the Grievance Procedures included the addition of addresses for both Marion Senior Services and the Ocala Marion TPO for submitting written complaints.

Mr. Colon motioned to approve the Grievance Procedures as presented.

Ms. Melvin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5B. Board Elections, Vice-Chair

Per the TDLCB Bylaws, a Vice-Chair shall be elected at the last regular meeting of the calendar year. The Officer may be elected by a majority of the present voting members. The term shall be for one full calendar year. However, the Vice-chairperson may serve more than one term.

The current Vice-Chair:
Andrea Melvin, Center for Independent Living

Chairwoman Stone asked for volunteers for the Vice-Chair position of the TDLCB, but there were no takers.

Ms. Melvin expressed her willingness to continue serving in her role as Vice-Chair.

Ms. Estes motioned to keep Ms. Andrea Melvin as Vice-Chair, Mr. Fair seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5C. Board Elections, Grievance Subcommittee (5 members needed)

The Grievance Procedures serve to guide the TDLCB in satisfying any concerns or issues by any person(s) with regard to the services provided by Marion Transit in its role as the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC).

As part of the Grievance procedures a Grievance Subcommittee had been formed with volunteers from the TDLCB Board members to oversee and resolve any complaints and/or issues that may arise. The Grievance Subcommittee's current members included:

- Jeffrey Askew
- Steven Neal
- Keith Fair
- Anissa Pieriboni
- Vacant

Mr. Balmes said that the TPO were seeking to fill the vacant spot on the subcommittee to have five members if a situation arises where there was a conflict with the CTC. Although no such situation had occurred, it was necessary to have the committee in place.

Mr. Carlos Colon volunteered to fill the vacant seat on the Grievance Subcommittee.

Ms. Melvin motioned to add Mr. Carlos Colon to the Grievance Subcommittee.
Ms. Mckenzie seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 5D. Meeting Schedule for 2024

Mr. Fair motioned to approve the meeting schedule for 2024, Mr. Colon seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 6. Consent Agenda

Ms. Melvin motioned to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Mckenzie seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 7A. Volunteers for CTC Evaluation

Mr. Balmes mentioned that the TPO conducts an annual evaluation of CTC, consisting of two parts: a phone survey and a ride-along component. Further details on how to conduct both components would be provided to volunteers. A sign-up sheet was circulated in the room for members interested in participating.

Chairwoman Stone noted that none of the questions asked during the phone survey or the ride-along were intrusive.

Mr. Colon mentioned that the questions were general inquiries about the service. He also expressed his willingness to volunteer for the ride-along, emphasizing the opportunity it provided for him to conduct necessary inspections and ask questions to the riders.

Item 7B. Older Driver Safety Awareness Week

Ms. Shakayla Irby mentioned that Older Driver Safety Awareness Week was observed from December 4-8, 2023. During the week, it served as a reminder to family and friends that simply getting older doesn't mean it's time to hang up the keys. Instead, it's an opportunity to evaluate how older individuals drive and ensure they are driving safely, protecting both themselves and others on the road.

Ms. Irby also encouraged everyone to visit the Ocala Marion TPO Facebook and Twitter pages for more information.

Item 7C. Legislative Awareness Day

Mr. Balmes told the board that the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) would be hosting the Transportation Disadvantaged Day at the Florida Capitol in Tallahassee, Florida on Thursday, January 18, 2024. More information and how to register could be found on www.fdot.gov/ctd.

Item 8. Subcommittee's Update

- **Education and Communication Subcommittee**
 - Ms. Melvin provided an update and said a flow chart to help understand the roles of each organization had been sent out to each board member. However, she was not certain if everyone had submitted their information yet.
 - For follow-up, the subcommittee would like Ms. Mitchell to resend the flow chart, indicating those who have already completed their information and those who still need to provide it.
 - The subcommittee was also exploring how to effectively utilize survey results, identifying potential strengths and weaknesses in our marketing strategies. Aiming to determine what types of marketing are effective and what needs improvement. One strategy involved leveraging positive results as testimonials, showcasing successful outcomes to strengthen messaging.

- **Future Infrastructure, Service and Road Expansion Subcommittee**
 - Mr. Askew mentioned that the subcommittee hadn't had the chance to meet formally. However, after the last TDLCB meeting, they briefly convened to discuss various matters, including funding, new roads, road signage, and heavy traffic on the State Road 200 corridor and Marion Oaks.
 - For follow-up, Chairwoman Stone shared that there was communication from the Governor's office regarding the upcoming budget. She requested that Mr. Balmes share this information with TDLCB members as it had been shared with the TPO Board. The Governor acknowledged the need for future road improvements, and at the TPO level, a Congestion Management Process had been completed.
 - Chairwoman Stone also mentioned that during the December 6, 2023 Board of County Commission meeting, a public hearing was held to determine whether the One Cent Sales Tax would be back on the ballot for November 2024. A list of projects funded by the One Cent Sales Tax could be found on www.marionsalestax.org.
 - Chairwoman Stone requested notification of the next subcommittee meeting to attend. Additionally, she extended an offer for Mr. Balmes to join the meetings with the subcommittee, allowing him to share his knowledge.
- **Funding Subcommittee**
 - Mr. Steven Neal was the leader of the Funding Subcommittee was not present at the meeting.
 - Chairwoman Stone emphasized that Marion County would proceed with asking the voters to approve the One Cent Sales Tax, aiming to secure additional funding for roads and congestion management projects within a twenty-year timeframe. The proposed approval period for the One Cent Sales Tax had been extended to twenty years instead of four.
 - Chairwoman Stone noted the legal constraints in discussing the topic extensively, as it had gone to a vote with the Commission and would be on the ballot. While she could not express personal opinions, as the Chair of the TDLCB, she was able to share the public record of what transpired during the Marion County Public Hearing.

Item 9. Comments by TDLCB Members

- Mr. Askew extended warm wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to the board. He also invited the members to tune in to the Marion County Board of County Commission meeting (www.marionfl.org) on December 19, 2023, at 9 am, where the Marion County Chorus, of which he is a part, would be singing Christmas songs.
- Mr. Keith Fair addressed the connection between housing and transportation for the benefit of the board. He emphasized the impact of daily commuters and proposed collaboration among the County, City, Foundations, and Organizations to address challenges. Mr. Fair suggested that constructing affordable workforce housing could be a viable solution, promoting residents to stay within the County, consequently alleviating transportation issues. He emphasized the importance of thinking long-term. Notably, Housing was

committed to creating affordable workforce housing as several large developments were set to break ground soon.

- Ms. Andrea Melvin said the Center for Independent Living of North Central FL would be hosting their 7th Annual Emergency Preparedness Expo for people with disabilities on March 26, 2024 at The College of Central Florida (CF) from 8:30am to 1:00pm. The theme for the year would be After the Disaster, Recovery Plans.

The free event would help with understanding how to be ready for any type of emergency in the community. There would be speakers, vendors and local Emergency Management staff available to provide information, such as shelter accessibility and locations, names of local emergency contacts and creating a disaster preparedness plan and supply kit. There would be lunch provided. The flyer and information on how to register would be shared with the board.

- Ms. Jeannette Estes from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities expressed satisfaction with the budget approved by the Governor and anticipation for the upcoming year, pending Legislative approval. She mentioned the potential for a rate increase to providers due to the rising cost of doing business and living.

Ms. Estes also shared the honor of participating in the Hope Florida Incentive with the First Lady and the Department of Children and Families. This initiative focuses on assisting people with their needs and meeting them where they are. She highlighted the Care Portal, which engages faith-based organizations and Chamber of Commerce Business Partners, connecting them with individuals in need of assistance.

- Ms. Susan Hanley provided a brief update from the Department of Elder Affairs, expressing the challenges they faced since 2020. Statewide, they were grappling with a vacancy rate of over 30% in employees. Ms. Hanley had been covering Lake, Marion, Citrus, Sumter, and Hernando County, and despite the difficulties of operating with a third fewer employees, they were persevering.

Item 10. Comments by TPO Staff

Mr. Balmes gave brief comments saying the TPO was gearing up to initiate the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and were in the process of identifying a steering committee to assist with the plan. The TPO would be actively seeking feedback as progression was made.

Mr. Balmes also introduced new Transportation Planner, Sara Brown.

Item 11. Comments by Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC)

Mr. Murch gave the following comments:

- Marion Transit had achieved 15 days without accidents and 120 days without injuries. The previous accident occurred when a driver failed to yield at a green light without a green

arrow. The first lane allowed the driver in, but the second lane accelerated and collided with the side of the vehicle. Although it was the driver's fault, they had undergone retraining, and were proud to report 15 days accident-free since then.

- Mr. Murch introduced Mr. Joseph Bartolomeo as the replacement for Mr. McKelvy, who retired. With 30 years of experience managing school bus operations in the private sector in Florida, Mr. Bartolomeo had extensive expertise in customer service and addressing driver needs.
- Marion Transit noted a decrease in funding for Trips and Equipment by approximately \$12,000. Despite this reduction, the number of trips increased by 11.3%. While the increase in trips was positive, the financial loss was not sustainable for long-term success. To address this, the organization was considering the need for additional funding or exploring options for approaching the County for increased support. The next step involved reaching out to representatives at the state level to initiate conversations. As Marion County continued to experience growth, the services provided by Marion Transit become increasingly essential, especially with a rising percentage of an aging population. The demographic shift put a strain on existing resources and created a higher demand for services.

Chairwoman Stone emphasized the importance of remembering the points made by Mr. Murch when advocating in Tallahassee. She highlighted that while some communities use Telemedicine for their elder population, the lack of broadband coverage and reliable internet services in rural areas in Marion County is a significant hurdle. Securing funding is essential to ensure the elder population has reliable transportation to their appointments.

Mr. Askew commended Marion Transit, sharing that a veteran residing in Marion Oaks expressed gratitude, stating that without Marion Transit, they would have no means of transportation to doctor appointments or the grocery store, as there was no one else dependable for rides.

Ms. Melvin requested a reminder of the locations for the new Green and Orange Routes.

Mr. Murch explained that the Green Route would cover Forest Corners in the Forest area, while the Orange Route would extend to Reddick and Citra. Marion Transit was proactively reaching out to other areas in need.

Mr. Murch inquired with Mr. Colon about the definitive timeline for implementing the new Census data as far as boundary limits for billing purposes. He mentioned that online information indicated December 2024.

Mr. Colon mentioned that he was not aware of a deadline but requested Mr. Murch to send him the question in the form of an email, and he would follow-up.

Item 10. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Item 11. Adjournment

Chairwoman Stone expressed gratitude to the board for their attendance and extended wishes for a Happy Holiday Season. She reminded everyone that the next meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2024. The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 am.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant