



**Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB) Meeting**

Marion County Growth Services Training Room  
2710 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470

March 9, 2023

10:00 AM

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:**

Michelle Stone  
Jeffrey Askew  
Glorybee Perez  
Susan Hanley (*arrived at 10:07am*)  
Carlos Colon  
Elizabeth Watson  
Andrea Melvin  
Anissa Pieriboni (*arrived at 10:08am*)  
Steven Neal (*alternate Ji Li attended*)  
Keith Fair

**Members Not Present:**

Lauren Debick  
Tracey Sapp  
Iris Pozo  
Jeff Aboumrad  
Ronald Graham

**Others Present:**

Rob Balmes, TPO  
Shakayla Irby, TPO  
Elizabeth Mitchell, TPO  
Major Forrest McIntyre, Salvation Army

Clayton Murch, Marion Senior Services  
Karen Williams, Marion Senior Services  
Herman Schulz, Marion Senior Services

### **Item 1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chairwoman Michelle 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**

Chairwoman Stone led the board members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Item 3. Proof of Publication**

Secretary Shakayla Irby stated that the meeting had been published March 2, 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 March 2, 2023 edition of the Ocala Star Banner.

### **Item 4a. Major Forrest McIntyre – Salvation Army**

Major Forrest McIntyre with the Salvation Army presented to the board on the services that the Salvation Army provided.

Some of the key services of the Salvation Army were as follows:

- The Center of Hope- Trained staff that provide case management, clothing vouchers, ID cards, and other necessary assistance.
- Community Feeding- The Center of Hope provided two meals a day to thousands of homeless and low-income people every year.
- Family Thrift Store- Donations of goods, gently used items from caring people in Marion County enable the Salvation Army Family Thrift Store to provide household goods and clothing to those in need.
- Senior Housing- The Evangeline Booth Apartment complex has 64 apartments for low-income seniors. The housing is subsidized by HUD and thus adheres to all regulations.
- Emergency Shelter- The Salvation Army offer a 42-bed men's dorm, a 20-bed female dorm, and transitional housing for six family rooms.
- Holiday Programs- The Ocala Corps provides holiday meals at Thanksgiving and Christmas to those who would otherwise go without.
- Corrections Program- The ministry of the Salvation Army extends to prisoners and parolees. The Salvation Army operates Marion County's Misdemeanor Probation Dept., working with Marion County courts to assist clients in fulfilling their court-ordered obligations.

*A Salvation Army brochure was provided to the board. The brochure is attached to pages 8-9 of this set of minutes for reference.*

### **Item 5a. Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) Evaluation**

Ms. Liz Mitchell presented to the TDLCB and said that the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged designated a Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for each county/service area. The CTC was responsible for coordinating and/or providing transportation services to individuals who are transportation disadvantaged.

Citizens were considered "transportation disadvantaged" due to age, income, or a disability, unable to drive, or do not have access to other transportation options.

Access was provided to medical appointments, employment, educational and other life sustaining services, including, groceries, shopping, meals, and social events, to those who are eligible.

In accordance with Florida Statutes, Chapter 427, and the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged the Marion County Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) evaluation had been conducted annually by members of the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB) with assistance from the Ocala Marion Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) as the Designated Official Planning Agency (DOPA). The TDLCB evaluates the CTC to ensure quality of service is being provided in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

This is accomplished through:

- audits
- series of interviews
- quality checks
- rider call surveys
- ride-along for observation

The evaluation encompassed management, operations, service, safety, vehicle maintenance, drivers and training, performance standards, grievance/complaint procedures, and quality assurance, utilizing the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged CTC Evaluation Workbook.

Ms. Mitchell said that the TPO found that all the required policies and procedures, contracts and contract management, grievance/complaint procedures, performance, quality and safety standards were in place and being adhered to. All vehicles were on a maintenance schedule and in good working order. The drivers are trained with continual training updates. There is a zero-tolerance substance abuse policy enforced complete with pre-employment drug and alcohol background checks. The riders speak highly of the overall system and feel that they are being provided a quality service.

The TPO had a few recommendations as well as commendations as a result of the evaluation.

**Recommendations:** The pertinent phone numbers on each bus continued to be too small. Due to the fact that service is geared for the disadvantaged, many were unable to get up close to view

the Ombudsman and complaint phone numbers. The numbers needed to be larger and centralized so that those seated on opposite sides of the isle were still able to see the numbers. Also, for distance viewing from the back of the bus, and the wheelchair riders that were secured in the very back.

**Commendations:** Marion Transit continued to make the changes required to maintain happy riders. Last year the TPO recommended a sealed drop box for comments so that riders could provide input on an ongoing basis. This led to an additional day being added to the Blue line in Dunnellon. The comments were unanimous that the riders wanted Friday added to the Blue Line.

The TPO commended Marion Transit for readily and eagerly making the necessary changes requested by their riders.

Ms. Mitchell thanked volunteers that took time out of their work schedules to call TD riders for a quick survey and/or a ride-along.

Volunteers included:

Call Survey: Susan Hanley, Tracey Sapp, Brandon Palermo, Jeffrey Askew

Ride-along: Andrea Melvin and Liz Mitchell

Mr. Clayton Murch made a comment that all pertinent phone numbers had since been made larger.

Mr. Carlos Colon, Transit Project Coordinator with FDOT asked to be added to the list for the next Marion Transit ride-along. Mr. Colon also gave praises to Marion Transit saying that they were on point and doing a great job.

Mr. Colon made a motion to approve the CTC Evaluation. Ms. Melvin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Item 6. Consent Agenda**

Mr. Askew made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Colon seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Item 7a. Next Meeting Workshop Topics**

Ms. Mitchell informed the board that in June there would be a TD Public Workshop in addition to the regularly scheduled meeting. The workshop would be designed to provide an instructional, educational and/or training environment keeping TD at the forefront.

The board engaged in conversation about workshop topic ideas.

The board ultimately decided on the next TD Public Workshop being a facilitated brainstorming type session to discuss identified issues and challenges that each organization and their clients had been facing.

Chairwoman Stone asked TPO staff that the June meeting agenda be very concise so that the workshop could follow.

### **Item 7b. Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Paratransit Service Study**

Mr. Rob Balmes, TPO Director gave a presentation to the board on the TD Paratransit Service Study.

The purpose of the service study would be to conduct a service area analysis to identify areas of the county/community that may be served or better served by Marion Transit- Transportation Disadvantaged, Rural 5311 program. Also, to maximize existing funding and services to meet the community's needs.

Mr. Balmes shared some of the background with the board:

- Critical Need Disadvantaged Population is 23% or 84,900 residents – 9% Trip Growth 2025
- Over 65 is the largest population group in Marion County at 29% or 109,000 residents
- Changes from the 2020 US Census
  - No longer two types of urban areas “Urbanized Area” or “Urban Cluster”
  - Now only “Urban” or “Rural”
  - Impacts to Marion Transit (5311)
  - Study Area – Marion County
    - Small Urban and Rural Areas- excludes large Urban Areas (over 50,000)

The tasks would include:

- 2020 Census Urban Area and Demographic Analysis
  - Identify all targets populations
  - Assess Demand and Needs
- Development of Service Options
  - On-Demand, Zone-Based, etc.

The deliverables included:

- Feedback, Coordination with TDLCB members and Marion Transit
- Complete a Service Analysis Report
- Presentation to TDLCB at the June 8 Meeting

### **7c. 2020 Census Update**

Mr. Balmes gave a brief update on the 2020 Census and said the FDOT Central Office and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) had been coordinating the results of the 2020 Census Urban Areas in Florida, including the geographic boundaries and upcoming TMA designations.

The Ocala Urban Area totaled a population of 182,647 and fell short of the 200,000 threshold to become a TMA.

Mr. Balmes mentioned that an appeal could have been made to the Governor, however FDOT Central office received response from FHWA stating that an MPO could become a TMA but if the population was under 200,000 there would be no access to additional funding. The funding would be the main driving force to become a TMA. Ocala Marion would not have that option because the population was under 200,000.

Also, following the February TPO board meeting the TPO board members had decided not to pursue an appeal to the Governor.

### **Item 8. Comments by TDLCB Members**

Ms. Anissa Pieriboni gave comments that the Florida Center for the Blind was very busy and had doubled clients. Over 11,000 vision screenings had been completed for the Marion County Public Schools and had identified about 15-20% of children that needed correction. Also, huge progress had been made on the expansion of the Florida Center for the Blind facility. In the next several of months the Florida Center for the Blind would be expanding services to not just children but adults as well.

Ms. Carressa Hutchinson with the Central Florida Community Action Agency said that they had been working with the weatherizing of the homes for energy efficiency and providing utility and rental assistance. When Covid happened there was a huge spike with assistance especially in rent and utilities and the spike had since continued. In the past there had been outreaches hosted by the Central Florida Community Action Agency but with Covid still present they were still not having large outreach gatherings and have since increased the number of applications that can be submitted online.

Mr. Ji Li with the SunTran gave a comment that ridership had increased significantly pre-Covid.

### **Item 9. Comments by TPO Staff**

*There were no comments by TPO Staff.*

### **Item 10. Comments by CTC**

Mr. Murch gave the following comments:

- On March 1, 2023 Marion Transit celebrated 100 days incident free.
- 1.95% increase in the number of Marion Transit trips

### **Item 11. Public Comment**

*There was no public comment.*

### **Item 12. Adjournment**

Chairwoman Stone adjourned the meeting at 11:19am.

Respectfully Submitted By:

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Shakayla Irby, TPO Administrative Assistant