



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, February 21, 2007
Georgia Infirmary

2:00 p.m.
1900 Abercorn Street

<u>Members</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Karen Blackard	Kicklighter Resource Center	
William K. Broker	Georgia Legal Service	
Wayne Dawson	Savannah-Chatham County	X
	Fair Housing Council	
Jan Elders	Savannah-Chatham Council on	X
	Disability Issues	
Jeff Felser	City of Savannah	X
Yolonda Fontaine	Housing Authority of Savannah	
Brian Frank	Laidlaw/Teleride	X
William Gardner	National Federation of the Blind	
Bob Habas	Living Independence for	
	Everyone, Inc. (LIFE)	
Timamu Hakim	Chatham Area Transit Authority	
Zoe Hardenbrook	GDOT District 5	
Carol Hunt	NAACP-Savannah Branch	
Hunter Hurst	Georgia Infirmary Day Center	
	For Rehabilitation	
McArthur Jarrett	Interested Citizen	X
Tom Lamar	Interested Citizen	X
Brian Leighton	Savannah Council of the Blind	X
Jane Love	Metropolitan Planning Commission	X
Patti Lyons	Senior Citizens Savannah	
	-Chatham Inc.	
Laurie Monroe	Economic Opportunity Authority	
Bill Oakley	Goodwill Industries	X
Greg Schroeder	United Way of the Coastal Empire	
Walt Simmons	Savannah Assn for the Blind	
Clealice Timmons	Coastal Center for Development	
	Services	

Staff Representative Chatham County

<u>Voting Alternates</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Russell Jennette	Chatham Area Transit	x

<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Tyrone Palmer	National Federation of the Blind	x
Larry Green	Yellow Cab of Savannah	x
Jack Lewis	Interested Citizen	x
Jean Iaderosa	Chatham Area Transit	x
Constance Morgan	Metropolitan Planning Commission	x
Marcus Lotson	Metropolitan Planning Commission	x

Call to Order

Chairman McArthur Jarrett called the February 21, 2007 Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation meeting to order. He introduced Mr. Larry Green, of Savannah Yellow Cab and thanked him for attending the meeting to share information on his services and how he can improve those services for persons with disabilities.

I. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Brian Frank moved for approval of the agenda as presented. Ms. Jane Love seconded the motion. The motion carried with none opposed.

II. Action Items

A. Approval of December 6, 2006 Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation Minutes

Ms. Jane Love moved for approval of the December 6, 2006 Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation Minutes. Mr. Brian Frank seconded the motion.

ACAT Action: the motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2006 Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation carried with none opposed.

As additional members entered the room Dr. Jack Lewis requested that time is allotted for self introductions acknowledging everyone in attendance.

Chairman Jarrett asked to break the agenda pattern in order to allow Mr. Green, of the Yellow Cab Company, an opportunity to speak. He gave a brief history surrounding the issues Mr. Green was asked to clarify. He explained that during the course of a convention, there were a number of taxis, from a variety of cab companies, called to the hotel in Garden City and the Savannah Airport, and several of the drivers had refused to carry the guard dogs of the passengers.

Chairman Jarrett stated this was of great concern to this committee. It is a federal regulation that these dogs are allowed to accompany their owners. He said that Mr. Green has been asked to appear here in order to give his account of this record and to make it known if he is aware of this regulation.

Mr. Green stated that he was aware of this regulation and that his company has no problem with the enforcing of this law. He explained the training process for new drivers that highlight transporting those with disabilities. He also said he would be willing to allow an ACAT representative to speak to the taxi drivers to help raise awareness of this issue. Yellow Cab has recently added a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi to its fleet. This will allow a wheelchair user to secure and remain in his or her wheelchair during a trip. Currently this vehicle is making 6-8 trips per day. Mr. Green also explained that an open taxi market, as Savannah has, fails to provide adequate service for consumers needing accessible taxis. It is so easy to enter the taxi business that it is very competitive. The company that makes the effort to provide more accessible taxis increases their own costs and becomes less competitive, compared to other operators who are not exceeding minimum requirements. He is a member of the Wheelchair Accessible

Taxi (WAT) group, which has been working to address this market issue with the City of Savannah. Some other cities limit the number of cab companies in their market through a ratio to the population of the area.

III. Status Reports

A. SAFETEA-LU Interim Plan Updates

Ms. Jane Love gave a brief summary on the interim Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update, which is necessitated by the Federal act called Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). She explained that this update involves changes in the process for future LRTP updates. The tasks that are to be reviewed are 1) the expansion of the list of agencies to be consulted in the planning process; 2) expansion of public involvement plan into a public participation plan; 3) identification of potential conflict between projects in the plan and environmental assets (natural and cultural), as well as potential mitigation activities; and 4) inclusion of any key issues from the Governor's Strategic Highway Safety Plan that are relevant to the MPO. A draft Participation Plan will be before the committee for endorsement in April and a draft of the updated LRTP will be proposed for endorsement in June.

B. Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Transportation Development Plan (TDP)

Ms. Jean Iaderosa presented a PowerPoint presentation of Chatham Area Transit Transportation Development Plan. This was an update of the TDP which looks ahead five years. The TDP will address the following items: 1) public involvement; 2) service analysis; 3) market research; 4) paratransit evaluation; 5) fare policy; 6) technology review; 7) service expansion; 8) downtown transit station; and 9) financial plan. After conducting several drop-in sessions for public input, CAT staff will present a draft TDP to the CAT Board for adoption later this spring.

C. East President Street Plan

Ms. Jane Love gave a summary on the East President Street Plan. She stated that currently the area has an industrial character but and the City of Savannah, some developers, and other stakeholders are discussing ways to ensure that this area becomes an attractive, gateway for downtown Savannah. The City asked the MPC to contract with consultant, Reynolds, Smith and Hills (RS&H) to accelerate the study of network alternatives for the East President Street area. She explained the aspects of the plan. Three concepts were modeled and Concept 2.0 was selected, as it best handled the expected traffic. The features for this concept were; 1) 6 lane E. President for the short term; 2) curb lanes to have a different type of paving for conversion to parking lanes and bike lanes in the long term 3) extension of Liberty Street with new interchange at Truman Pkwy; 4) extension of General McIntosh to Wheaton/Liberty extension; 5) relocation of intersection of Wheaton and Liberty to align with extension of Gen. McIntosh; 7) pedestrian connection between Trustees Garden and new development; and 8) extension of three streets in the existing grid into new development south of E. President St. She added that due to concerns about the extension of Liberty Street to Truman Pkwy, RS&H identified two other alternatives; 1) one that removes a segment of Liberty St. Between East Broad and General McIntosh extension and 2) one that shifts the Liberty St. extension southward. The City will receive the consultant's final report in a couple of weeks.

D. TIP priorities

Ms. Love gave reminded the Committee that this is the time of year that the MPO reviews and establishes the priorities for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This short-range planning document is updated each year and it identifies priorities for project funding. She explained the current priority hierarchy, i.e. top priority, first priority, and second priority.

IV. Agency Reports (verbal)

A. Laidlaw/Teleride

Mr. Brian Frank presented a handout showing the operational statistics for the Teleride service . He stated that his concern was the cancellation rate. He offered suggestions as to why this may be occurring and stated that staff would be tracking this problem. The CAT Board has approved the purchase of new scheduling software. He added that the CAT Board also has granted approval for a customer service line, which some ACAT members had requested. This line will be answered from 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week, and will be a service complaint line.

Mr. Jarrett expressed concerns regarding the provision of the service line through an answering service. He stated this could have been a paid position for persons with disabilities. He added many consumers do not want to talk to an answering service and Laidlaw probably will not get a good level of detail on the complaints. He stated that he felt this position was not given the consideration requested by those in a consumer leadership role.

Mr. Frank stated cost was a main concern when considering the options. The difference in hiring a full time employee at 40 hours per week, plus benefits, versus an answering service at \$200.00 a month was considered. The answering service will have a three month trial period. In the event the answering service is deemed unsuitable or the response to it is not favorable then changes will be made.

Mr. Bill Oakley said that he is on the CAT Board and explained some of the benefits of the answering service. One benefit is that there is an independent external record of every single call. The service will record the complaint, the name and phone number of the caller and communicate this information to Mr. Frank. Mr. Frank would, under most circumstances, respond to the caller the next morning, at the latest. He would then have a one on one conversation with the

consumer. This is proposed to be done for \$2400.00 a year instead of \$35,000 a year.

Mr. Frank added if there is an escalated call it would be patched through to his cell phone.

Mr. Jarrett stated that, as a blind consumer, he was vehemently opposed to the answering service.

Mr. Frank stated a report on how this service is progressing will be given at the next ACAT meeting. It will also be advertised that this is a complaint line only and how to access help by calling the number or by computer access at laidlawteleride@laidlawtransit.com.

Mr. Frank also reported that two new vehicles will be arriving from Laidlaw.

Mr. Tyrone Palmer questioned accessibility of the Teleride manual into a format that would reach the most people. Audio format should be available. Mr. Frank said that Mr. Palmer is aware that the manual needs to be re-done.

Mr. Tom Lamar moved to review the performance of the answering service after three months and the feasibility beyond. Mr. Oakley seconded.

ACAT Action: the motion to review the performance of the answering service and the future feasibility in three months carried with none opposed

B. Chatham Area Transit

Mr. Jennette reported that a contract has been awarded for the installation of 25 new bus shelters. This will begin in 2-3 weeks. Also, a new website for CAT will be officially launched on March 5, 2007. This website is accessible and the schedules are readable through the

voice synthesizer. A sheet will be provided to assist those in need of operation instruction.

C. Other Agencies

No other agencies presented.

V. Other Business

Mr. Wayne Dawson distributed handouts on the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Survey. He stated that this survey will go out in the next newsletter from Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE). Once this data is collected and analyzed, the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi group will go to City Council and propose changes to the ordinance, the need for which Mr. Green explained previously. ACAT members should encourage people to respond to the surveys, either by phone, email, fax, or mail. The relevant contact information is at the bottom of the sheet.

VI. Public Participation Opportunities

Dr. Jack Lewis raised concerns for persons with disabilities that were transported by Teleride to a destination but were not transported back. He said that this person should have another alternative for getting back home. They should have the right to call a yellow cab and have Teleride pick up the tab. He stated that this hardship should not be placed on these people. Jean Iaderosa felt this was a good suggestion, similar to a voucher program or the Guaranteed Ride Home. She stated that she would take his suggestion to Mr. Carl Palmer.

Dr. Lewis also suggested tactile signs, even just the word "BUS," posted only five feet high instead of higher, to identify bus stops. This will help aid blind consumers identify the stops.

VII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the February 21, 2007 ACAT meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Love
Transportation Planner