

Minutes
PCC Executive Committee Meeting
December 8, 2021

PCC Executive Committee Members Present: Fred Lein, PCC Chair; Bob Planthold, PCC Vice Chair; Marty Smith, PCC Secretary; Roland Wong, PC&O Chair; Cheryl Damico; Jacy Cohen; Jessica Felix; Mara Math; Mary McLain; Olivia Santiago

PCC Members and Guests: Ronald Goldman, Angela Bibb Merritt, Lucas Tobin, Joan Kwansa, Alex Madrid; Maria Lombardo; Michelle Beaulieu; Lucas Tobin

PCC Executive Committee Member Excused: Susan Kitazawa

SF Paratransit Staff: Marc Soto; Kent Hinton; Cheryl Hac; Kevin McDonald; Justin Leong; Carol Osorio; Matthew Teixeira; Catherine Callahan

SFMTA: Annette Williams; Jonathan Cheng; Maddy Ruvolo

Fred Lein, PCC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

Read and Approve Agenda

Fred Lein, PCC Chair, read the agenda. The agenda were motioned/seconded/approved.

Approve Minutes of October 6th meeting

The minutes were motioned/seconded/approved.

Comments from the Chair

Fred Levin asked for clarification regarding the member and PCC officer elections. Jonathan Cheng clarified that all existing members had their term extended for another year. As for the officer elections, that will occur at the January 2022 meeting.

Presentation on Prop K Reauthorization

Michelle Beaulieu gave a presentation on the status of the Prop K sales tax reauthorization. She explained that while the Prop K sales tax mostly capital projects, a percentage of these funds are dedicated for Paratransit operations. Among the capital projects funded include accessible pedestrian signals, BART accessibility improvements, and vehicle replacement. The SFCTA is working to bring a new 30-year extension of sales tax to fund new projects. There has been a focus on equity and robust community outreach, including presentations, online surveys, and one-on-one interviews. To goal is to maintain funding while increasing funds for select projects including those around pedestrian safety; an advisory committee was also included to help shape the overall recommendation plan. The plan continues to maintain paratransit funding levels, which has historically been 40% of overall paratransit budget. The new proposed projects that would be funded by a future reauthorization of the Prop K sales tax include new accessibility improvements to facilities, systemwide improvements to increase service and reduce crowding, provide safe and smoother streets, and neighborhood-based planning with funds for implementing projects.

Bob Planthold wanted to know if there is a fixed percentage for Paratransit through State Transit Assistance funds and whether there more dedicated funds from new federal stimulus programs to increase funding for projects. Michelle Beaulieu answered that while there are funds available, the federal government is working on guidelines as to how the funds can be spent. Alex Madrid asked how the Prop K funds are spent for paratransit operations. Michelle responded that the funding dedicated for paratransit helps pay for the operations; Annette Williams clarified that it helps pay for all program cost associated with providing SF Paratransit, including the SF Access, taxi, Group Van operations, and administration. Angela Bibb Merritt would like to discuss the restoration of Muni service, including the 21 Hayes route. Annette clarified that this meeting is specifically for Paratransit related items but will connect her with the SFMTA service planners.

Golden Gate Park Safety Presentation

Maddy Ruvolo gave a presentation on the Golden Gate Park Access and Safety Program and also introduced Lucas Tobin from the Department of Parks and Recreation. This program is a series of projects that will help to determine the future of the currently closed streets, like JFK Drive. JFK Drive was identified in the Vision Zero plan as a high injury corridor, with over 100 injury collisions in the five years preceding 2020. Feedback from other disability groups include the fact that some people use their cars as their mobility device, a greater need for better wayfinding, including the location for paratransit pick up/drop off, the lack of cars make them feel safer, that the current Golden Gate Park shuttle is not reliable or user friendly, many low income, disabled people are concerned about paying for parking and that there are difficulties finding parking near attractions, and implied that previous approaches may have ableist.

In the meantime, there have been some changes to improve accessibility to Golden Gate Park while JFK Drive is closed to vehicular traffic. Among them include 19 new accessible spaces behind the bandshell in the Music Concourse, continuing to allow Paratransit vehicles to enter at the closed roadway through 8th Avenue to access the Music Concourse, free drop off and pick up in underground parking garage, and improvements to the visual maps and text of where accessible parking on website.

As for future improvements, they are contingent on final decision in terms of which streets should remain closed post-COVID. New proposals include revamping the Golden Gate Park shuttle, improvements to parking and passenger loading/unloading, enhancing ADA access on Fulton between 9th and 11th Avenue, setting up taxi stands inside the park, improve signage, installing new bike racks, and permitting dockless bikeshare stations and pedicabs. There has been lots of community engagement, with over 40 public events held, both in-person and online, and surveys conducted. The next steps for this project include presenting it to the SFMTA Board of Directors as an informational item and then the Parks and Recreation Commission and San Francisco Board of Supervisors for action by March 2022.

Fred Lein reiterated the need for taxis to be able to access Music Concourse. Maddy Ruvolo clarified that taxis can enter through 8th Avenue. Bob Planthold would like to make sure any plan that is implemented will ensure an ease of access for taxis when requests are made. Maddy Ruvolo replied that among the new proposals include adding taxi stands and that staff will be working with taxi companies to ensure proper access is provided. Alex Madrid asked if staff did

an in-person walkthrough with people with disabilities to identify some of the current gaps. He would also like for ramp taxis to be stationed at the taxi stands and more accessible sidewalks. Maddy Ruvolo stated that SFMTA and Parks and Rec staff did participate in the in-person walkthroughs with people of disabilities and that participants did talk about difficulties crossing the street when there are bicyclists. She also reiterated that the plan is to work with taxi companies to incentivize ramp taxis in service in Golden Gate Park. Lucas Tobin added that staff have been hearing feedback about areas that need accessibility improvements.

TNC Access for All Update

Annette Williams provided an update on the work of SFMTA staff on the TNC Access for All legislation. Currently, staff is working on Track 4, which is to develop the criteria for TNCs to access the per-trip fee that is currently being collected to fund accessible on-demand transportation. SFMTA staff is requesting the policymakers to consider requested trips as part of the exemption standard being proposed.

PC&O Group Van Subcommittee Report

Jacy Cohen read the following report:

- **SF Paratransit Status Update**

Kent Hinton reported SF Access demand has grown to 60% of pre-pandemic daily trip demand. SFMTA Group Van service is about 20% of its pre-pandemic level while DAAS Group Van service is only at 10% but demand should increase as additional programs resume. Taxi demand is typically 75% of what we saw pre-pandemic. SF Access OTP (on-time performance) slightly dipped in July but is back to 98% in August and September, while Group Van OTP has been 95% in the past two months, and Paratransit Taxi OTP at 91% over the past two months and 90% in July. Kent mentioned they will be pushing out a driver of the year nomination forms after this meeting.

- **Group Van Service Reintroduction Task Force**

Kent commented that everyone on this PC&O call has been participating in or already aware of the meetings, anyone who needs the invite to these meeting should reach out.

- **Agency Status Reports**

- Stepping Stone Presentation reported that they started receiving Group Van service a couple weeks after their opening in July, currently is biggest obstacle they are having is scheduling new riders on their schedule requests. They would like to increase ridership to increase participation at their center.
- Stepping Stone Mabini reported they put a pause on their in-center services due the COVID-19 surge, but now that it has calmed down, they are reaching out to their participants to gauge interest in returning to in person services.
- On Lok reported they remain closed and are offering services thorough Zoom but do not have a projected opening date.
- Russian American Center reported they are very busy but due to the new surge in COVID-19 the clients who planned to use Paratransit to return to the center are backing out. They are in a holding phase currently.

- OMI Senior Center reported they are doing some in-person activities and informed users about paratransit, but most clients are waiting until full services resume.
- Self-Help DAAS reported they provided 320 trips in September which is down from 354 in August. They October trips should be above 300. They are currently training and onboarding a new driver who should start in November. They advised there is a tentative reopening date for the Self-Help's centers of January 3rd, 2022.

The next PC&O Group Van Subcommittee Meeting date is January 12, 2022

PC&O Taxi/Ramp Taxi Subcommittee Report

Roland Wong read the following report:

- T&RT Vice Chair Bruce Oka was not present, PCC Secretary Marty Smith called the meeting to order at 10:36 am. Minutes from August 4, 2021, were approved and the agenda for November 3, 2021, was read and accepted.
- **Comments from the Chair**
Marty brought the topic of up-front pricing for taxis and that drivers overall are not in favor of it. Marc Soto asked if they officially object to the idea. Jessica Felix and Bob Planthold commented that the PCC and drivers should have been more involved prior to approval of the concept.
- **SF Paratransit Broker Report**
Kent Hinton reported Ramp Taxi incentives for July through September ranged around \$11,200 to \$11,790. OTP stayed above 90% since July and was 94.6% in October. Complaints per 1,000 trips were less than 0.6 per 1,000 trips in July and were down to about 0.465 per 1,000 trips in October.

Kent acknowledged the 2021 Taxi Drivers of the Year:

- Erdene-Ochir Lkhagvasuren (Yellow Cab)
- Ibrar Ahmed (Yellow Cab)
- Frank Wade (Flywheel Taxi)
- Saam Aryan, ramp driver (Flywheel Taxi)
- Anwar Batshoun, ramp driver (Flywheel Taxi)
- The Systemwide Driver of the Year was Craig Nelson, ramp driver (Yellow Cab)

The ETC program will continue into next year, SF Paratransit is working with Yellow on their ITE data issues, and on restarting Group Van services to centers as they reopen.

Kent announced that he will be retiring the end of 2021. Marc Soto reported on the success of the annual PCC meeting, and the current focus on SF Access driver recruitment. He added that 22 new SF Access vans were currently in the acceptance process while 6 additional vehicles were delayed due to the computer chip shortage.

- **Rider Service Quality Issues**

Susan Kitazawa suggested the PCC recognize other taxi industry people in the annual awards such as Theo who is dispatcher at Flywheel. Bob Planthold said that he would like to add an agenda item to the next meeting regarding the plastic shields.

Bob asked if the PCC could see dispatch reports related to order acceptance rates by area of the city. He said he could not get a cab from the Southeast area of the city and asked if some incentive could be paid to drivers. Kent replied SF Paratransit only has data on the number of paratransit trips by location.

- **Driver & Cab Company Issues**

Jessica wrote a letter to the SFMTA regarding the plastic shields in taxis being dirty, ineffective, and unnecessary. Joan Kwanza concurred, she made complaint about a driver who claimed they didn't need to wear mask. Susan Kitazawa added while the plastic shields are dirty, they act as a barrier to COVID-19 which is airborne. Shields with big holes or not attached on a side should be fixed. Jessica asked Philip Cranna about the approval of the YoTaxi app. Philip replied Yellow has not provided a third-party accessibility audit which he has requested for a year. Jessica suggested the SFMTA could loan a ramp vehicle to a dispatch service for use only on weekend and nights at very low gate fee. Philip replied the topic could be discussed internally.

The next PC&O Taxi/Ramp Taxi subcommittee meeting date was to be announced.

PC&O SF Access Subcommittee Report

Cheryl Damico read the following report:

- **Service Quality Update**

Mary McLain gave an update for Transdev's operating division, they are rebuilding staff and resources from the diminished demand over the past year. Their efforts are currently focused on hiring good quality staff to help reintroduce Group Van service. Recruiting and training are top priorities at the moment. Staff are investigating late trips and determining the causes to help reduce future incidents.

- **Broker's Report**

Kent Hinton gave an overview of current service levels, with SF Access is at 63% and Group Van is around 23% of their respective pre-pandemic service levels. Kent reported that they are waiting to hear from the state if ADHC programs need to return to full service at the start of the year. Taxi service continues at 73% of the pre-pandemic service level. On time performance for SF Access was 98.2% in September and just under 97.9% in October and 97.5% in November, a slight downward trend but still very high given the 20 minute on-time window, most peer agencies use a 30-minute window. The SF Access online website in November had a total of 21 different riders use the online portal to book trips. Collectively they made 279 requests through the portal which none were subscription requests.

Kent reported they are tracking no-pay events. Staff have been calling riders who have been marked by the driver for not paying the fare, in November there were 91 occurrences by 68 different riders. There has also been a spike in requests for Star-Assist

service, which is not required under the ADA. The general rule for SF Paratransit is drivers may assist a rider in a wheelchair up or down no more than two steps. If it's more than two steps they can apply for our stair assist program. Stair-Assist requests go through the Brokers office, working with the family or the caregiver to coordinate a site visit. The Safety Manger and the Contract Compliance Monitor then assess the location. After review, a follow up letter is sent to the rider letting the rider confirming if they are enrolled or informing them of the deficiency which they may be able address to continue to review process. Before the pandemic they had eight Stair-Assist routes, currently they are only running two stair-assist routes.

Marc Soto reported on staffing updates for the Brokers office. The finance department has filled the full-time position and continues conducting interviews for a temporary position. There is a new job posting on the Transdev website for a customer service oriented position which includes job aspects from the finance and customer service departments. Marc also announced they have filled the Mobility Management Specialist position and that Kent Hinton will be retiring at the end of the month after 35 years with Transdev. Marc also gave an update on the solicitation of IT services, noting they have a long-term relationship with a local small business enterprise firm which they are in discussions with. Multiple initiatives are underway, including the deployment of advanced security measures, MDM solutions to manage mobile devices, transitioning the tablets on the busses, and acquiring a new phone system solution for the brokers office.

The next PC&O SF Access Subcommittee Meeting date is March 2, 2022.

Paratransit Broker Report

Kent Hinton and Marc Soto reported as follow:

- **Service Level Statistics**
SF Access is operating at about 66 percent of pre-pandemic levels on weekdays; slightly higher on Saturdays due to dialysis service. Paratransit taxis are approximately 75 percent of pre-pandemic levels while Group Van is at around 25 percent. Overall complaints are down.
- **On Time Performance**
On-time performance continued to perform above 90% across all service modes with the exception in November 2021 for taxis, which was 88% on time.
- **Group Van Service**
Staff continues to work group van agencies on scheduling riders for in-person activities. There will be a webinar tomorrow to discuss updates about the in-person participation requirement for CBAS funded services.
- **Broker IT Activities**
Ongoing projects including enhancing cybersecurity, transitioning the communications system to FirstNet, and new PC equipment being procured and installed. Staff is also working to finalize the IT solicitation for a new contract.

- **Miscellaneous Taxi Items**

Staff is working with several taxi companies to address issues. Staff with working with Yellow Cab to address missing GPS data, which is needed to verify trips. In addition, due to compliance issues, Crown Cab/Regents are no longer providing service to Paratransit riders until further notice.

- **SF Paratransit Staffing Update**

A new customer service position is being recruited, replacing a finance position, to help with eligibility and service quality. In addition, a temporary position for finance position is being filled. Interviews for the Director of Operations position are being held.

Cheryl Damico asked if how the new telephone system at Brokers office will work. Marc Soto responded that the functions of the new phone system will be more like those found at a call center and will allow for a better flow of calls. It will also link to the phone system of the operation division. Roland Wong mentioned that he rode a new cab that has a side loader.

Public Comments

Jonathan Cheng congratulated Kent Hinton for his retirement and read a certificate of recognition, on behalf of the PCC. Several PCC members, including Olivia Santiago, Cheryl Damico, Fred Lein, Mara Math, Roland Wong, Jacy Cohen, Annette Williams, Joan Kwansa, and Marc Soto also commended Kent for his work at the SF Paratransit office.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

The next PCC meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 19th from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.