

MEMORANDUM

To: Project Team

From: Nelson\Nygaard

Date: August 12, 2020

Subject: CCTA ATS PAC Meeting #1 8-10-2020 Draft Notes

Attendees

Policy Advisory Committee

Name	Organization	In attendance
Debora Allen	BART	No
Candace Andersen	Contra Costa Board of Supervisors, District 2	Yes
Charlie Anderson	WestCAT	Yes
Ian Bremner	Developmental Disabilities Council	Yes
Teresa Geringer	Council Member, City of Lafayette	Yes
Nicole Howell	Contra Costa County Ombudsman ED	Yes
Dave Hudson	Council Member, City of San Ramon	Yes
Mike Hursh	AC Transit	Yes
Jeanne Kreig	Tri Delta Transit	Yes
Rick Ramacier	County Connection	Bill Churchill attended
Josh Sullivan	Contra Costa Health Services	Yes
Debbie Toth	Choice in Aging	Yes

Guests

Chelsea Bella	Choice in Aging
Rashida Kamara	County Connection
Joanna Pallock	WCCTAC
Steve Ponte	Tri Delta Transit
Drennen Shelton	MTC

Agenda Item 1: Background of Accessible Transportation Strategic (ATS) Plan

The consultant team gave an overview of the study, including the background and purpose of the ATS Plan; previous pertinent studies and documents that provide the impetus for the study; maps that illustrate current transportation options for people with disabilities, seniors, and veterans; distribution of key medical facilities and dialysis clinics, outreach that has been conducted to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders – including over 1,000 respondents to a survey; and the timeline for the remainder of the study. The goal is to complete the study in the first quarter of 2021.

The committee commented on the need to ensure that recommendations that emerge from this study do not “sit on the shelf”, as had occurred to some extent with previous studies. Following are some of the key inputs provided by members of the Policy Advisory Committee:

- The study should place the rider at the center of the recommendations, rather than designing a system into which riders would need to fit.
- Individuals with maladaptive behavioral challenges have been poorly served by existing transportation programs, so these individuals’ needs should be considered as part of the recommendations.
- It is important to engage end users in the study’s proposed program design. Transportation provision during this COVID period has shown that the system can work without the traditional service barriers with innovative practices and collaboration on the part of the transit providers.
- The map does not include the Kaiser Permanente facility in West County, and there may be others that need to be included.

Agenda Item 2: Outcomes of Outreach

Given the context of conducting outreach during the onset of COVID, very considerable outreach has been accomplished by the consultant team. Prior to the pandemic, a couple of presentations were made to the Developmental Disabilities Council and the Pleasant Hill Commission on Aging. The team has received over a thousand survey responses so far, using a variety of outreach techniques, including flyers distributed to 500 people who receive meal deliveries through Meals on Wheels. Surveys were completed electronically, via paper, and also through calling on the telephone and dictating responses to a member of the consultant team. Surveys were available in English, Spanish and Mandarin.

Two thirds of the respondents were aged 65 and older, and less than a quarter were registered as ADA paratransit eligible. Initial survey responses indicated that the three top modes used were driving, BART, and being driven by family members. Overall respondents were satisfied with the quality of service they received. Primary trip purposes were for medical and groceries. Some of the major concerns expressed by respondents were being able to get service when they needed it, particularly lack of same day service, and issues with schedule adherence. It was noteworthy that a significant number indicated that safety on public transportation was a concern for them.

Another component of the outreach was conducting Zoom focus groups, of which there have been four so far. These include groups associated with the senior centers in San Ramon and El Cerrito, Diablo Valley College disabled students services participants, and Lighthouse for the

Blind clients. These groups have allowed for more in-depth exploration of some of the findings from the survey.

The team has also relied on members of the Technical Advisory Committee to include information on their websites, distribute information to their email lists, and provided information through social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, Nextdoor, and Twitter. Some agencies have also included transportation questions as part of their care calls with clients during this COVID period.

As part of the outreach process, the team ensured that information was gathered for transportation issues both prior to COVID and under current conditions.

In order to increase the representativeness of the survey, which was not intended to be a statistically significant sample, the consultant team analyzed geographic areas from which there had been a relatively low response (when compared to a population measure), and conducted various means of soliciting input from those areas, such as meal delivery distribution, conducting focus groups, and an advisory committee member personally visiting a senior center to provide hard copies of the survey.

Overall, meeting participants commented positively on the level of outreach that has been achieved during this current COVID period (and in contrast to previous study efforts), and CCTA indicated that extensive outreach is particularly important to Caltrans, which is funding this study. At the same time, participants indicated that there are some county residents in remote locations like Discovery Bay or Bethel Island who are unlikely to be reached.

Agenda Item 3: Discuss Challenges and Opportunities

One of the key purposes of this meeting was to discuss potential barriers to coordination, and possible strategies that can be used to overcome these barriers, recognizing that they are not unique to Contra Costa County. The team indicated that the concept of “mobility management” is a key focus in the region. One of the major challenges to coordination is the differences in missions between different stakeholders, such as the transit agencies, planning agencies, and community focused organizations. There is overlap but there are some key differences. There are also multiple regulatory requirements.

An additional challenge is that there is currently no one organization or office or person that is responsible for addressing coordination issues. CCTA and the County don't necessarily have policy authority over operations. They can provide funding opportunities, policy direction, and leadership, but it will be necessary to have a focal point for addressing the dysfunctions of the current system of transportation provision in the county. The consultant read some of the barriers to coordination implementation that have been identified in a national transit research report, including differing service priorities of different agencies, local influence and cost issues, regulatory factors imposed by individual agencies, and lack of stable funding. Another current barrier would be failure to account for the effects of COVID-19. It was stated that the best way to maximize the probability of successful coordination efforts is to fully understand coordination's potential achievements and potential pitfalls.

The committee then had an open discussion about the kinds of issues that have been faced in the past and ways of addressing them in this study. Some of the comments are listed below.

- Organizations do actually have a shared mission, which is that the rider gets to go where they need to go, how they need to get there. A second shared goal is the need to have

bold leadership that is “willing to do the uncomfortable. This is not your traditional fix that we're going to put band aids on pieces of it. This structurally needs to change.”

- We are going to need to “keep thinking outside the box and if there's one thing I've appreciated with COVID, it's something we've all had to do. And we're starting to realize that some of these barriers we have [have] been created artificially and don't need to be there.”
- We have a really excellent group of people here and a lot of good technical resources to draw on. What we need is to focus on specific things and coming up with solutions for them, rather than jumping to the big solution that there may not be buy in.
- Based on recent experience in working with the various operators within Contra Costa County, there has been a very strongly renewed sense of working together, being creative and doing new things.
- My main concern is governmental funding rules and regulations. We've been too focused on meeting minimum regulatory requirements, which don't necessarily meet people's needs.
- I've been working on this in the county for about 20 years and this is the first time we've had this level of engagement, and this diversity of players, so this is groundbreaking.
- As well as the government regulations and the regulatory issues that surround everybody that provides these services, the challenge is the lack of reliable and consistent funding. COVID doesn't help.
- We need to select some top priorities to work on. In the past funding has been an obstacle.
- The focus needs to be on the person. How do we get them where they need to be, when they need to be there, and in the way they need to get there? Regardless of disability, they should be able to have access to safe, reliable transportation.
- We need to have one agency that's responsible and can work with external constituencies within the system, and if there are enough different players and pieces that together, we have a system that's going to meet the needs. “Sew together a quilt that works for everybody who needs to utilize the service.”
- We find ways to fund important things “so recognizing that there isn't an existing funding stream is one thing, but saying we can't do it because there isn't one is that is another argument altogether.”

Closing Comments

The consultant pointed out some themes from the discussion. There seems to be more coordination happening currently than in previous times, partially due to COVID. Various people have also noted that the rider needs to be the starting point. The consultant would like to hear more about what has prevented prior studies from being implemented, whether there were regulatory or funding barriers, or other issues. The consultant would welcome offline conversations about those issues. The consultant will do further research on regulatory issues and if there have been any changes that will affect what is possible.

In Phase Two of Public Engagement we're going to give stakeholders an opportunity to review the recommended scenarios, and we will draw on all the extensive distribution list we've developed. We will have a telephone Town Hall.

Accessible Transportation Strategic Plan
Contra Costa Transportation Authority

We will make the PowerPoint available to everybody and we'll be setting up the next meeting for October. Thank you all so much for your time on this, this was a great discussion and very helpful to staff, and we look forward to meeting next time.