

**MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE AC TRANSIT
ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)
DECEMBER 13, 2022**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL and Introduction of Members and Guests

AAC members present:

Janet Abelson (1:20)	Kiran Agarwal
Erika Bruhns, Vice Chair	Chonita Chew
Pamela Fadem	Shawn Fong
David Fritz	Melissa Getz
Sandra Johnson, Chair	Daveed Mandell
Jim Robson	Tanya Washington
Barbara Williams	

AAC members absent:

None

Staff:

Tammy Kylo, Administrative Coordinator
Kim Ridgeway, Senior Program Specialist
Mallory Nestor-Brush, Accessible Services Manager
Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development and Planning
Richard Oslund, Director of Management and Budget
Cecil Blandon, Director of Maintenance
Beverly Greene, Executive Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Communications
Claudia Burgos, Director of Legislative Affairs and Community Relations

Guests:

Director Peeples, Board of Directors
Director Shaw, Board of Directors
Director Syed, Board of Directors
Ciara Lovelace, TheCIL

Director Sarah Syed introduced herself to the Committee and gave some background on her work and advocacy in transit.

3. ORDER OF AGENDA

The order of agenda was approved.

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Mandell/Getz approved the November 8, 2022, AAC meeting minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

AYES – 12: Abelson, Bruhns, Chew, Fadem, Fong, Fritz, Getz, Johnson, Mandell, Robson, Washington, Williams

ABSTENTIONS – 1: Agarwal

ABSENT – 0

5. REGULAR UPDATES

5.A. Service Planning and COVID-19 Safety Update

Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development and Planning, reported that, the District is currently operating at about 88% of pre pandemic levels. The December service changes focused on service reliability, making all Owl route frequencies consistent, so that transferring and traveling along the Owl network is as easy as possible. Service reliability will also be the focus of the March 2023 service changes, which will improve schedules that work, not only for the customer, but also for Bus Operators' needs, like proper break times and running times, so they can do their jobs well.

The Service Planning Department is also working on a New Network Plan, which will consist of developing a whole new service network that responds to the community, riders, as well as Bus Operators. The project will be a multi-year effort with the kickoff in January 2023. The AAC is one of the key stakeholders of the project and Planning will be asking for input from the group throughout the process. The implementation of the New Network is August 2024.

5.B. District Financial Update and Funding

Richard Oslund, Director of Management and Budgets, reported that in June 2022 the Board adopted an Operating budget for FY 2023 of \$547 million, which includes funds to increase bus service to 100% of pre pandemic levels. Due to Operator recruiting difficulties caused by a tight labor market, the District expects to only be able to maintain service levels at 88% in FY 22-23.

Farebox revenues are at \$28.8 million (50% of pre-pandemic) but showing growth each month. Regular subsidies revenues are at \$443.5 million, and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act funding is \$61.5 million. Labor expenses are budgeted at 391.9 million and non-labor is at \$155.1 million. Emergency funding has allowed the District to continue to provide services to riders at reduced levels, which has been balanced so far with Federal Funding and reduced service.

The District is likely facing significant deficits once Federal ARP Act funds run out, and a projected recession could make matters worse. An imbalance between revenues and expenses caused by slower revenue growth and a continued rise in expenses could also add to this problem. FY23 and FY24 are expected to have a balanced budget; but with expected deficits totaling \$114 million over the following 3 years.

Pam Fadem asked, given the reality of a tight labor market, not enough bus drivers, and ridership not back to pre-pandemic levels, has AC Transit tried to increase ridership? Beverly Greene, Executive Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Communications, responded that the District is continuing to promote service and encourage people to ride. AC Transit is also working with MTC on a regional promotion to get people to come back to public transportation.

Committee members also asked why managers and administrative staff don't drive buses to help get more service on the road. Members also asked how many people ride each line, and can they be counted the same as flex service. Director Peebles responded that each bus has an automatic passenger counter (APCs) that shows boarding and alighting's, which are accurate.

5.C. Update on Security Barriers

Cecil Blandon, Director of Maintenance, gave an update on bus operator security barriers. All new buses purchased are equipped with the new barrier. The security barrier closes around the operator compartment, with a slight opening toward the front of the barrier. The operator has the option to slide the panel on the barrier and control how open or closed the panel will be. The barrier, which protects the operator, is not intrusive in any way, nor does it impede on the fare box, the entrance or the aisle; nor does it block the ability to communicate with passengers.

Cecil also showed photos of the priority seating in all new buses, which are blue, which is different from the other seating in the bus, which is green. This request made by the AAC, makes priority seating easy identifiable.

Tanya Washington asked how the determination was made for the barrier that was selected. Cecil responded that the process of selecting the barriers started in 2019 and several different barriers were installed on buses at all of the divisions for 3 months. This allowed bus operators to drive the buses, and give feedback, which was compiled and reviewed by Operations, Safety and ATU. ATU also did testing that included including mock scenarios before making a final decision. All of the barriers are standard size and actually provide more room than the COVID 19 shields did.

5.D. In Memory of Hale Zukas

Chair Johnson shared information on Hale Zukas life. "Hale was born on May 31, 1943 and passed away, of heart failure on November 22, at the age of 79. He was a lifetime Berkeley resident; he was an advocate for disabled people. He was an American disability rights activist. He was considered the champion of disability rights. May Hale continue to rest in peace. He left us, but many of us have many memories of him, and they will remain with us."

Pam Fadem commented, "Hale was an incredible man. People say he was here from the beginning of the AAC, well way before the AAC Hale was part of the rolling quads at UC Berkeley. Hale was part of establishing the first center of independent living in this state which was here in Berkeley. He worked very closely with a broad range of community members to help this get off the ground and to make sure that it was addressing issues of people with disability across communities. He worked very closely with the Black Panther party members who were addressing issues of poverty and the need for disability services and the black community, which the Panther party was very much a part of. You know he cared about a lot of issues that were broader than disability rights issues. He cared a lot about racism in this world. He cared a lot about what was happening with children. He was an amazing guy and it's a huge loss for us at the AAC. I think, perhaps for people who are newer or didn't have the chance to work with Hale, you might not realize that he spent his professional career working on accessibility and transportation, not just for our county but also for our country. He was very instrumental in Federal legislation as well. I just want to share a funny story. Once, a long time ago people might remember that the center for independent living in Berkeley for a long time was based in a building right on Telegraph Avenue, close to UC Berkeley campus. There was going to

be a big community meeting down there about some accessibility issues in the city, some of us got there early and it was a bright, sunny day, and I found myself sitting outside the center of Independent Living in Berkeley with 3 other people in wheelchairs. I'm also a wheelchair user and we were all kind of lined up against the wall, just soaking in the sun and hanging out waiting for this meeting to start. It was priceless to see the looks on the faces of people as they walk by, and they were thinking what the heck is this line up with people in wheelchairs doing just leaning against the wall and hanging out and it was very funny and very sweet. I will miss him a lot."

Director Peeples commented, "Hale was a friend of mine for about 30 years. When I first met Hale he was chained to the bumper of a Greyhound bus in the old Trans Bay Terminal, because Greyhound buses were not handicapped accessible, and it was great. He got arrested that day as he was arrested many other times, fighting for disability rights. He was a remarkable individual. He was part of the Rolling Quads that sued the region to get an education. Hale graduated with a major in mathematics and a minor in Russian. He got himself a minor in Russian and at UC Berkeley by tapping out words on his board, spelling out Russian words...that's pretty remarkable. Hale was also one of the most exuberant and wildest persons I've ever met. He would speed around on his power chair in ways that scared the hell out of me, and he would actually jump off steps, if there wasn't a ramp, he would just ram his way out there and bounce on down. A remarkable individual, we were blessed with him for 79 years, for about the last 20 years he's been one of my appointees of the AAC and I'm going to miss him."

Chonita Chew commented "I first met Hale in the early to mid-eighties, he was actually responsible for the ramp at Leopold's Records up on Durant. I don't know if that is still there, but I remember him fighting for wider doorways. He came to class one day and had someone speak about walking a mile in their shoes. One of my classmates did a project where he was in a wheelchair for a week, and one of the things that he was trying to do was get through different doorways, and that's how I remember Hale. And then I remember seeing him around the community and then when I started serving on the AAC, I really started learning a lot from him and the Ed Roberts Campus. I want to thank Hale for helping me in this industry and he will definitely be missed."

Jim Robson commented, "I don't think there's much more I can add to what everybody said. I'm just glad to have known Hale over the last 10-15 years and so thankful for the things that he's done, and the things that he's pioneered. Happy to have a chance to work with him. I really liked Hale's sense of humor. Sometimes we got into kind of crazy debates over some semantics and stuff; he could take such an easy and levelheaded take on it. Thanks Hale for all the things you have done for us at the committee and for the public at large."

Mallory Nestor Brush commented "I had the pleasure of knowing Hale for 20 years plus and have the honor to read his board at our meetings, or to read his prepared statements at the Board of Directors or other public meetings. Inevitably, I would have to look over at him, and this is really 99.9% of the time, and saying, Hale! I cannot read that out loud, and his eyes would light up. He gets that little grin on his face. He was such a rascal, and he knew it but he had a wry sense of humor. So intelligent! And image your mobility is contingent upon a pointer, and a roller skate wheel. That is how he got around for his entire life. Incredible! So grateful to his parents, his brother, his sister, who allowed him to grow up independent, to be such a wonderful person embracing all types of causes. I think that the angels are in for it with this guy. He will totally be missed. God speed! And

he was a speedster in that wheelchair! We were so grateful to have his input, his knowledge, his experience and thousands and thousands of people have benefited from Hale's tireless work and advocacy in this industry. God speed Hale."

Janet Abelson commented "I remember when I first met Hale when I joined the AAC. Hale has always been a champion for the things that he believed in, and anytime I heard Hale say something that was the opposite of what I thought, I would kind of readjust my thinking because of what Hale said. He was always very, very thoughtful and put a lot of effort in what he came up with as a final opinion. I will certainly miss Hale. He did a lot to make things better for all of us in this room today. I just like to add my name to the list of people who appreciated Hale."

5.E. Review of Lift/ramp Road Call Report

The Committee reviewed the Road Call report for October 30 – December 3, 2022. There were a total of five (5) road calls, all of which were chargeable. All passed the pre-trip inspection and thus any road call listed occurred in service.

Pam Fadem stated that it's encouraging that all of the road calls are on older buses and that she appreciates the information that shows the ramps are being cycled as part of the pre-trip check list each day.

6. STANDING REPORTS

6.A. Chair's Report

None.

6.B. Board Liaison Report

Chris Peeples, Board of Directors, reported on the following:

- At the next Board meeting, the Board of Directors will have an MTC presentation on the regional coordination of all the agencies.
- The Board continues to be concerned about hiring operators, which is a concern for all transit agencies around the country.

6.C. Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) PAPCO Report

There was no PAPCO meeting this month. The next meeting is Monday, February 27th at 1:00 pm and will be a virtual meeting.

6.D. Service Review Advisory Committee (SRAC) Report

None.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

8. MEMBER/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Melissa Getz stated that she is grateful to be a part of the community where she can make contributions and appreciates being included. She also wished everyone a Happy Holiday Season.
- Pam Fadem gave thanks and recognition to Sandra Johnson for her work as Chair of the AAC. Having been Chair in the past, Pam understands that it takes patience, kindness, concentration and professionalism, which Sandra has exemplified; Sandra is deeply appreciated.
- Mallory Nestor-Brush, Accessible Services Manager recited:

*Let's raise our mugs to holiday cheer.
We've made it through another virtual year.
Our contract has been a square on zoom.
But maybe, just maybe will be in person soon*

On behalf of the AC Transit Board of Directors, Mike Hursh, AC Transit Staff and the Accessible Services Team, we appreciate your commitment and your service to your communities that you serve, and we wish you happy holidays and Happy New Year!

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & NEXT MEETING DATE

The next AAC Meeting will be held Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. This will be a virtual meeting.

Pam Fadem requested an agenda item to answer to David's and Daveed's comments about managers and administrative staff driving buses. Seconded by David Fritz.

Future Agenda Items:

- Accessibility and Safety Issues of BRT Lanes [Requested by Daveed Mandell on March 8, 2022]
- Inaccessible Transfer Points in the Service Area [Requested by Daveed Mandell on March 8, 2022]
- AC Transit Mobile App Inaccessibility [Requested by Daveed Mandell on March 8, 2022]
- Lyft – Wheelchair accessible Vehicle presentation [Requested by David Fritz on July 12, 2022]

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/
Tammy Kylo
Secretary to the Committee