

**MARTIN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)
LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD FOR THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED
(LCB/TD) PUBLIC HEARING**

**Monday, August 23, 2010 - 6:00 P.M.
Martin County Administration Building
Commission Chambers, 1st Floor
2401 SE Monterey Road
Stuart, FL 34996
(772) 419-4081**

1. CALL TO ORDER – 6:00 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL

Members in Attendance:

Werner Bols, Vice-Chairman
Suzanne Desposati
Ellen Higinbotham
Cindy Barnes
Krista McGovern
Jody Ianuzzi
Phyl Weaver
Angela Van Etten

Excused Members

Mayor Michael Mortell, Chairman
John Haddox

Members Not In Attendance:

Hylan Bryan
Jaclyn Meli (FDOT)

Staff in Attendance:

Beth Beltran, MPO Administrator
Claudette Mahan, MPO Associate Planner
Lisandra Bonet, MPO Administrative Specialist II

A quorum was present for this meeting.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Ms. Ellen Higinbotham moved to approve the Agenda. Seconded by Ms. Krista McGovern. Motion carried unanimously.

4. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Annual Public Hearing

MEMO: temp11LCBTDa02.01

Vice-Chair Bols proceeded to call, one by one, those members of the public who filled out a

“Request to Speak” form.

✚ Kristie Breithaupt – 28 SW Hideaway Place, Stuart, FL
Ms. Breithaupt said, “I wanted to address the transportation system. One of the attractions for so many retirees to Martin County is the wonderful program for seniors, but there is a growing problem as to how seniors would get to these places...there is not a good taxi service system. You can hire a private driver service if you have the funds, but most seniors do not have \$30 or \$40 dollars a day just to pay for transportation. It forces the elderly to continue to drive, when their skills are diminishing, no offense. I have to say that it makes me a little nervous when the elderly neighbor above my mother drags her oxygen tank downstairs and gets behind the wheel and starts to drive; or when I pull up to a stop light and I look next to me and the elderly gentleman is wearing blackout glasses because he just came from the eye doctor and his pupils are dilated. They should not have to rely on themselves just to drive around to the places where they need to go to. I was able to convince my eighty-three year old mother to move down here with me and retire her car keys because there were so many activities available, and the Coach [Community Coach from the Council on Aging of Martin County (COA)] was available. As of the first of the year, the budget was cut, and so were the rides. They [COA] were booked for two weeks in advance, but they were still workable. I could call first thing at 7:30am and hope to be the first five people to call, and I could get a ride two weeks in advance, but morning rides were impossible. I could drop my mother off on my way to work and be confident that she could have a safe ride home. This allowed her three activities a week. She could go to the church and participate in the senior bible study; she could go to the Log Cabin Senior Center twice a week for the chair-exercise program, and stay for lunch. Not only is the exercise necessary for their minds and their health but the elderly need to socialize. The lunch program provides a perfect opportunity for this. As I understand it, the Log Cabin is funded with County grants, and I believe the Meals-on-Wheels [program] is, to some degree, as well. Yet, there is a 20% to 25 % drop in attendance because there is no way for the elderly to get there due to lack of transportation. As of July 1st there is another budget cut, and we have not been able to get, maybe, three rides a month...There are service for the medical, they come first, and now the Coach is moving towards the set stops [referring to fixed routes]. Well, for my mother that stop is a mile away, it is useless. I realize this is an easy program to cut out when you need budget cuts; it is like when the school cuts out art activities or after school activities. But I am asking to reconsider and realize the value of this service to the senior population. Thank you very much.”

Vice-Chair Bols requested that Boards Members would take their notes and hold their comments until after the public participation.

✚ Carolyn Medvedick – 573 Northwest Cherry Oak Way, Jensen Beach, FL
Ms. Medvedick stated that, “I am here because; I understand that they [referring to COA] need funding, they don’t want their funding stopped, but I need those trips. I have to go to the doctors, I have to get groceries, and I also have to get my prescription. They [COA] have been kind enough to make preparations and go by bus and they took me there. I am nervous. The thing is that we need that transportation, all of us that are in this situation.”

Vice-Chair Bols responded, “I wish I could tell you that we have the money in our pockets that we can fund this with, but it doesn’t work that way. Thank you for your comments. These

comments would be distributed around our full Board and passed on. Hopefully something can improve, but we need the comments first.”

🗣️ Lillian Fattorusso – 8039 SE Eagle Avenue, Hobe Sound, FL

Ms. Fattorusso said, “I am on dialysis and without the transportation I would have no way to get there. My husband is disabled and I do not feel safe driving. I choose not to drive because I do not want to hurt myself or hurt anybody else. So I need the transportation to get back and forth to the dialysis and the doctors.”

Vice-Chair Bols asked if she was receiving transportation to dialysis. Ms. Fattorusso replied, “I do, but if they cut it out...I don’t know what would happen to me”.

🗣️ Nan B. Scott – 1225 NW 21st Street, Stuart, FL

Ms. Scott asked if she could read her message. Vice-Chair Bols assented. Ms. Scott proceeded, “I speak to you from the perspective of Martin County homeowner, voter, taxpayer and resident who rides the Community Coach gratefully when I can get aboard. The bus services in Martin County are laboring under a flawed system that has become burdensome and too complex. Why must I call a Missouri operator who asks for my name, age, address, telephone, destination, their [destination] address, name, telephone, plus personal questions about my health condition *before* I am permitted to be transferred to Community Coach to make an appointment to ride the bus, which I have paid for? This is time consuming and invasive. What has MTM to do with how Community Coach operates, and my personal information? Why does Martin County elect to give a very expensive contract to an out-of-state bus company designed to serve a small portion of the population when a well-equipped well-staffed experienced bus line was already in place? Community Coach is forced to limit riders to very few requests in transportation because they cannot afford to pay for the drivers. Where does that leave a greater number of potential passengers in Martin County needing to get to work, shop, to see their grandchildren, visit restaurants, museums, theaters, parks...? Even tourism would benefit going to the beaches and sightseeing. Transportation feeds the economy. I do not question medical appointments for the needy. I am one who needs bus services although fortunately I am not needy. Should this be at the expense of all residents of Martin County? We need a viable bus service for *all* the people. Support the Community Coach and keep it rolling because it will answer *all* of our needs. Thank you.” The public present applauded Ms. Scott.

🗣️ Brenda Butler – 1000 SE Letha Circle, Stuart, FL

Ms. Butler came in her wheelchair. She stated, “I am here to tell you about a conversation that I had with Ron Marovich [former MTM Program Manager] just about a year ago today. He called me at my home four or five days after a back-to-back meeting of MTM. Now, I have been very curious and very unhappy with MTM since, actually, before they got to town, and I started going on the internet and there was so much negativity on the internet that there had to be fire because there was too much smoke. All over the months, I got very curious. Eventually I called the Attorney General of the State of Missouri, and I requested certain information about a Medicaid fraud settlement agreement that MTM signed off on with the Attorney General in Missouri, their home State. Now, while I was talking to Ron, well into the conversation, I mentioned that I was very concerned about the Medicaid fraud agreement that MTM signed off on in 2005. He sigh-pause and he,

because very extremely angry, he became very defensive talking about this Medicaid fraud thing. He asked me if I believed everything that I read. Now, I worked with attorneys for many many years, that's why I knew to call the source, to call Missouri Attorney General to get information.

Now, I have been treated very badly at times by MTM, and like the woman that spoke just before me, I mean, it is almost impossible sometimes to even get a ride with Coach, and I have called also two weeks in advance. Look, I have to call South Carolina, South Carolina has to call Missouri if it is a medical, Missouri has to call Stuart, and then that all has to work backwards before I can get a ride for medical. Now, to get a ride on Coach, it is pretty much the same thing. It can take five to ten minutes just in South Carolina, and they ask you the same questions, personal information, so forth and so on, just as the woman before me has already explained. I do not have any way to go. I have no relatives. I was a TD rider [Transportation Disadvantaged rider] and that's gone. I have to ride paratransit because I am in a wheel chair, I cannot get in the sun, I get sun poisoning. If it's raining I could not go where the bus is running, I cannot get my wheelchair wet. So, I have to be picked up door-to-door. I have been riding with Coach for ten years, and all and all they use to run I think eight hundred people a week. Occasionally there was a problem like in all businesses, but there were always very kind people, they are still very kind people. They are like my extended family, and they go out of their way to help people, particularly people that are disabled. I love each and every one of my drivers and everybody that works with Coach. I will continue to ride with them, as long as I can, but unfortunately, I am no longer eligible for Transportation Disadvantaged, so I'm not going to be able to ride probably for another month or so, I can't afford it. But this has become such a problem and I am so upset. I am appalled that MTM was brought in from out-of-state when three years prior to them giving their spiel about how great they are and patting themselves on the back, they have just settled on Medicaid fraud. What's going on? Why are these people here? They treat us like dirt, believe me. They abandon us; they never go back and pick people up. That is sad, and you have no way to get home. If they ever abandon me, I am going to call the police and tell them, "I've been abandoned would they please take me home". My last trip last week to the doctor, I had to call them twice. They were an hour and twenty minutes late picking me up, and the woman who called for me in the doctor's office, she had to call South Carolina, South Carolina had to call Missouri, Missouri had to call Stuart, then it had to work its way back. She was on the phone for ten minutes, and told that they will be there by quarter to twelve. At twelve o'clock no one was there. She had to call again, and they said that they should be there in ten minutes. So you see, you can always get a hold of South Carolina when they are late picking you up or when they are going to abandon you...They did show up and I got home by twelve thirty. This happens too with medical trips, they are late taking you to a medical trip. I understand that things like that are a breach of contract, especially if they never come and get you. I know one woman for instance, that her daughter took her to the doctor, they were thirty minutes late showing up to pick her up, and that was Acadiana; a forty-passenger bus hauling a huge stainless steel luggage compartment, like what you get at the airport because their main enterprise is taking people to and from the airport...When I rode on those big buses there were no seatbelts, there was a way in and one way out and that was on the lift. If there was an accident I'll be trapped on that bus. I don't know if they are still running those buses. The woman waited and waited to have her return trip with her twelve-year old and she tried to call South Carolina but could not get a hold of them. A couple of hours later the doctor comes out and says, "You mean they haven't come to

get you?" She says, "No". Guess how she got home? The doctor took her and her granddaughter home. That is certainly a breach of contract, that was very sad, and that happens all the time. They literally, verbally mistreat people. One friend said that they called her at ten o'clock at night, because she was going I guess to Port St. Lucie or someplace else, and the man said, "Have you got a disease I can catch?" ...What kind of people are these that MTM is sending out to pick us up? They have such a limited number of people that can ride with Coach, that's why we can't get rides. I hope that you all consider going on the internet...contacting the Attorney General and you know that is just the beginning of their problems. You know you lie by omission; that was certainly a lie by omission when they applied for the job. That is not the only thing they've done. But, I tell you what, ...there's got to be an attorney among you somewhere [referring to the Board Members], and you can get that information and you can get other information no matter how small it seems on the internet. If you see it more than once, you have to take it apart like I did. Then you have to contact the sources and then you have to tell me why they are in this State and why they are in this County. Because our transportation is going to hell in a hand basket since they got here. Thank you so much".

Vice-Chair Bols stated that notes of the comments have been taken and the presentations are being recorded. The Board would be looking for a dialog in commence from either Staff and/or MTM; wherever there seems to be a question or a problem area, so issues can get all cleared up.

👉 Cheryl Lenartiene – 259 SE Kitching Court, Stuart, Fl
Ms. Lenartiene said, "I have been a Martin County residence for the past nine and a half years. I always come up here and every single year I have positive comments, and this year is no exception. Unfortunately, I do have some negative comments as well which is where I have to start. I really have to come and "third" what Nan and Brenda said. I'm just going to give you a personal illustration of what happened to me. About four weeks after my positive comments about what a great job MTM was doing, last year at this time at the same hearing, I received a letter in the mail with two days notice stating that they were no longer able to serve me and that I would need to contact Community Coach. So I called MTM; explained that I was a working taxpaying professional that rely on the service to get to and from work, which to my understanding, was one of the higher priorities in the Transportation Disadvantaged tier; and asked what they could do for me. The lady just basically said that there was nothing they could do for me, that I just needed to go, and get public transportation, and I'd be fine. I called Coach, and they cannot accommodate me. I said [to MTM], "I'm really stuck here what can you do for me?; [the response]"Well Ma'm there is nothing to accommodate, all you have to do is get up, walk down the street, and take the bus, it's not a big deal". I replied, "Ma'm the Community Coach is door-to-door there is something to accommodate" We went back and forth like this and she finally said "Ma'm you are not listening to me, the Community Coach is public transportation, you just get up and walk out the door and you go to the bus stop and you take a bus". She kept repeating that I was not listening, so unfortunately I finally lost my temper and I said, "You know what, I'm blind, I think what I'm going to do is go downstairs, get in my car, try to drive to work and when I get in an accident I'll call you and you all can take me to the hospital..." I hanged up the phone. I ended up talking to a supervisor who claimed this was a County decision. I don't know one way or another, but what I will say is that with a conduct like that, and from the other stories that you are hearing, I would strongly urge you...I think that you guys [referring to the Board Members] made the best decision


that you could at the time, I mean, MTM really promised these roses and that's not what we are seeing...but I would love to see the CTC made local again; because the Community Coach very graciously, under the public transportation funding, picked up the slack with MTM, as far as I was concerned. They [COA] have taken me to and from work daily. Everyone, every single member of their staff, whether office workers or drivers, have been kind, and courteous, and professional. I cannot commend them enough for their great job. So, I would like to hope that we can bring the CTC back to Martin County, where it's local and where people really know what's going on. Thank you." The public applauded Ms. Lenartiene.

✚ Laura Soloperto – 2950 SE Ocean Boulevard, Building 118-3, Stuart, FL
Ms. Soloperto stated, "I am ninety-seven years old. I am having terrible trouble, I have arthritis so bad, I have my left hip surgery twice, and now my right hip has to be done. I have to wear heels sometimes and flats other times. There is nothing I can do; they've given me every medication there is. I want transportation. I have to walk nineteen minutes to the bus stop, at the clubhouse; and now it's further [referring to the bus stop]. I have to walk up my street in a path over a wooden bridge by the clubhouse, across the street and down the road to pick up the bus. I fell twice coming home with the bundle. I cannot do that anymore, I cannot afford to fall, because if I do, I'll break the bones. I cannot do that anymore; all I'm asking is for a ride to the door and back. Thank you."

✚ Rose Marie Wetterman – 2929 SE Ocean Boulevard, Stuart, FL
Ms. Wetterman said, "Minnesota is my native State and I've been here ten years, I love it. I'm glad I've found old Laura [referring to Ms. Laura Soloperto]. I have observed that some seniors need more help with Coach transportation, and I did not realize the magnitude of all the speakers before I'm here. I'm quite horrified at all the extreme problems. I thought, well, people like Laura do need a lot of help, like closer to her, you saw that for yourselves, you don't have to have me tell you (to the Board Members). They have to do something about those who are more handicapped than say, I am, because I do the Coach bus. The thing that saves me is the Coach Shuttle. We cannot say enough about that. It is just miraculous that we have the wonderful drivers and everything; but I'm not going to take you time after hearing the other speakers. I just have a question, if anyone can mail it to me: I am a cancer patient, and survivor and active. I called [MTM] according to all the rules and regulations. I was interested that they said that after I'm on the phone already that we'd call outside state...when I called for medical...they told me that (MTM) is for medical, I must be naive, well I thought they would take me to the Cancer Center, but NO, they said that I had to call Missouri. I had to call Missouri to find out that I was not eligible. I thought, "They don't know what cancer is if it is not medical". So, I would like to get an answer for that one; somebody who has time to write it down. A neighbor told me that maybe I was not eligible for medical transportation for cancer because I did not have Medicaid; so I would like that addressed sometime by mail if I could. If you (to the Board Members) can help the other seniors we'd appreciate it greatly. Thank you".

✚ Connie Carone – 1455 SE Silver Pine, Palm City, FL
Ms. Carone stated, "I live in Palm City. Palm City has never received the treatment the way Hobe Sound and Jensen Beach and Stuart get. Not for years. We've always been second place citizens out in Palm City. It's gotten worst now, it's absolutely gotten worst.

These women are so right on the button with MTM...they really hit good comments about MTM. When they (MTM) started they must've mistaken me for a Medicaid rider and they called me on the intercom and I let them through the gate, we are a gated community out there. The low and behold around the corner comes this beautiful white bridal limousine that would take me into Stuart. I thought that was a little bit ostentatious for me to be driving around in a limousine to go to Stuart. Now, what were they thinking and what would we be paying for it? There are also too many personal questions [when calling to request a ride]. They never have my records on file, and I have been riding the Coach for years. Now, their latest question is what kind of a doctor are we going to see? Well, I just think that's a drastic invasion of privacy. Now, again I propound to Palm City; being second rated. Many of my afternoons, I spend in the Martin Memorial [Hospital] parking lot waiting for the Connector to come down for a Port St. Lucie man who works in Palm City. There we sat, a Palm City resident sits on the bus anywhere for a half an hour to forty-five minutes. Sometimes the air-conditioning wasn't on, and sometimes it is on while the bus is running waiting for the other rider. When the man comes aboard, we bypass where I live and go right to where he works. That is all well and good, we are wonderful neighbors of Port St. Lucie, but what about the people of Palm City that are voters, that pay taxes, and we seem to be treated like second class citizens, it is just not right! So I want you to please consider: one, looking into MTM. If you get rid of them you are way ahead of the game and maybe some of the money that we are paying them could install more of the Community Coach involvement. But we desperately need it. A friend of mine has left the County because they no longer can get rides to doctors and dentists, and even shopping. People do need shopping. There seems to be an objection to that. I know they have something called the freedom [New Freedom grant] riders, whatever they are; but you cannot get a doctor's appointment after four o'clock, so what were you trying to accomplish with that, I don't understand. But anyway, please consider Palm City. We want the same services as Jensen Beach and Hobe Sound, and if you improve theirs please improve ours also. Thank you".

 Mark Tardit – 1600 S. Kanner Highway, Apt. #108, Stuart, FL
Mr. Tardit stated, "I work at Braille International Inc. in Stuart. I haven't ridden MTM in a long time but I heard about this New Freedom program at our meeting of the National Federation for the Blind a week and a half ago. It sounds like it's a good program. I have not used it because in the interim I have been getting rides with a friend of mine on the weekends. I will give it a try at some point. My experience with Community Coach has been very positive. Whether I'm calling to schedule a ride or cancel a ride, or getting a ride. I use it mostly to go to and from work. The drivers that I've had have always been very courteous, being extremely helpful. No more helpful than you need but helpful when you need it. It is a good system. I really hope that there would not be any more funding cuts regarding that any time soon. Otherwise, one of the other things I would say is that, I understand there is a bus that goes to West Palm Beach, and I really think there needs to be more of that service. For those of us who would like to be able to take a bus, well, I have no idea where the bus stops are. If I wanted to take a bus to West Palm Beach I would have to get somebody to drive me. I understand that it only runs a couple of times a day. I wish that there is a way for that to increase...If I want to go to the airport, I have to have somebody drive me because I don't know frankly how to quite access that bus to West Palm.

I don't know who is in charge of taxi services or if it even comes under this, but I've seen a decline on that. A few weeks ago I was at my church, after hours, and I think we called three or four taxi companies and they were unable to help us. Finally, the Pastor just gave up in disgust and said, "Well Mark I think I just will run you home, it's easier that way". Those are my comments for what they are worth. Thank you".

Vice-Chair Bols suggested that Staff would provide Mr. Tardit the phone number for the transportation service.

✚ Lois Krom – 1490 S. Kanner Highway, Stuart, FL

Ms. Krom said, "...Since MTM took over the transportation it has gone downhill. They said they could supply the service and they have not lived up to their promise. At first they said all types of trips, and they could not pull that off; then, just medicals, and they couldn't even pull that one off; then they ran out of money at the beginning of the month and turned down a lot of people; people who had to take the shuttle and walk a mile to the doctors and a mile back to get the shuttle. These are elderly people and the temperature is high, but they are left with no other choice. If I were not disabled and need no mobility chair, I would not be able to go anywhere because I can't take a walk to the nearest food store. So the Stuart Shuttle and the Connector are the greatest things that happened to me; I do use them. I'm equipped (referring to her mobility chair) for roadwork; I'm equipped for whatever. But anyhow, without these (the Shuttle and the Connector) I would not be able to go to the doctors, the beach, all my activities, the things that keep me young, keep me alive, things I want to do. I have no one here. I tried MTM; I tried their door-to-door service and they left me stranded six miles from home. It was getting dark, I called them and I said, "Where are you? They said they are having trouble, they don't know who is supposed to pick me up. I'm going to have to wait around until they can figure out what's going on. In the meantime, if it gets dark, I have an hour and half home on my chair. I put my trust in MTM. My battery (from the mobility chair) wasn't fully charged...when I called them back all she said to me was, this is the word she used, "Oh well honey, can't you get a friend to take you home?" I told her, "If I had a friend that could lift a three hundred pound chair and put it in her car I wouldn't be calling you now would I? This is the response I got OK, I've never used them again. As far as door-to-door goes, I would go without first. The Coach has never left me stranded. I can't say enough good about the Coach. I would love to have them back. They are just everything we need, they are good with us, they know how to get us around, they work with us...The transportation now [MTM] takes a few selected people. They subcontracted these different bus companies, and they don't coordinate their trips and nobody knows what they are doing; so therefore, the one doesn't even know they are supposed to pick us up when the other one forgot to fax them or tell them. Therefore, you are stranded. It's not right!

Then, the other thing, this is not a big city. I know they want big-city transportation here, but this is not a big city, this is Stuart, Florida, with mostly the elderly and disabled people. They have no one to depend on but public transportation. This gives us our independence; our quality of life. We deserve this. We want this. It is not right. I understand what they want with transportation in the future; but, should they skip over the people that need it now, to get there? I don't think they should. Thank you for listening to me." Her speech was applauded.

🗣️ Jeanette Pierci – 4800 S. Federal Highway, Lot 23, Stuart, FL

Ms. Pierci stated, “Almost everybody said the same thing. I just wanted to say the comments that are common to me. I called on June 02nd for a doctor’s appointment to MTM. I was passed around from one to another and finally someone came on the line and said, “I’m sorry we are out of money as of the first of June.” I said but it’s only the second! She said, “Well, I know that but we’ll put you on the list for the seventeenth and we’ll see what happens. So, they put my name down for the seventeenth for a ten o’clock pick up. I was outside my door at ten minutes to ten, I waited until eleven o’clock, and my doctor’s appointment was at eleven fifteen. I called them...after being passed around for a while, they said, “you are not registered”. I said, “You gave me an appointment to be picked up”, she said, “Oh, we called you and said that we are not going to pick you up”. I did not receive a call of that sort. She said, “But we called you”. I responded, “Well, I’m sorry but I had my answering machine on in case I was out of the house or somewhere”. She said “We called you!” and she hanged up on me. So I called Council on Aging and I got a hold of, I cannot think of her name right now, and I said, “Gee, is there anything you can do? She said, “You have to call MTM”. I said, “I understand you are out of money”. She said, “Oh no, we have enough of money, don’t worry about it”. We talked for a few minutes and I told her what happen because I was kind of hot under the collar at that time. She said, “Call them [MTM] again and see what happens”. I said, “No, I’m not going to do that”. So now I ride the Shuttle, but to get to the Shuttle I have to go down US1, from Natalie Estates, to Wal-Mart...I have to ride [on the motorized chair] possibly about a whole block out in the road because there are no sidewalks there now. So, I get down there to Wal-Mart and I get in the Shuttle. To get to my office appointments I get off at the closest stops, wherever that is, then I have to go on my “bike” here to their offices and back. I was charged seventy dollars for not showing up for that doctor’s appointment that they [MTM] didn’t pick me up for, and I don’t think that’s right.

Now, I don’t want to brag but my mother was the first woman to ride on the Coach, I got pictures of her, in 1979. And, in 1979, I was one of the first drivers. We never treated people like that. So, I just hope the Coach comes back again, ‘cause it is good, like it was; and if you have to raise the rates, I’m willing to pay the rate. It’s up to what? Six dollars for ten rides? I’m willing to pay more, it’s worth it, so I don’t have to ride on US1. I can’t get an appointment to go to the South Hospital, I have to go over there on my scooter. I have to ride all the way down to Salerno Road, and down Salerno Road to the Hospital. To get there it takes me a half an hour, and to get back again. I cross a lot of streets, so I don’t think it’s good. That is all I have to say.” Vice-Chair Bols thanked Ms. Pierci for speaking.

🗣️ Margaret Laughlin – 2950 SE Ocean Boulevard #128 – Apt. 6, Stuart, FL

Ms. Laughlin said, “After hearing all those stories I say it is about time to call it quits because I have the same problem as Lauri [referring to Ms. Laura Soloperto]. I am her neighbor and we found that the bus has cut so many stops. At one time, it used to take us, her and me, right to the clubhouse. They’ve eliminated that and leave us on the side street with broken concrete and everything else. You got an umbrella and packages, and they will not take you to the clubhouse. It doesn’t make sense because that driver, it takes him about two minutes to take us there and right to our house, but no, he stops and says that that’s his orders, he has to drop us off there; and it’s just horrible...I got a broken hip...and it’s all broken concrete there [she repeats the same details once more]...They’ve cut off so many stops all over it’s outrageous. So I would like to go to Smithfield, that’s where all


the doctors are. NO, he [referring to the driver] is not allow to go there, so he takes you around to Walgreens. I get off at Walgreens and I got to cross that highway to go into any of the doctors and the dentist. So, I am just hoping that maybe you guys [referring to the Board Members] can do something to help us out, OK, and thank you very much. After hearing all these stories, it's got to come to an end though". Vice-Chair thanked Ms. Laughlin for providing her story.

👤 Ron L. Simmons, Sr. – 4898 SE Salvatori Road, Stuart, FL

Mr. Simmons approached the podium with much difficulty. Mr. Simmons stated, "I know about the good drivers and the courteous drivers at the Coach because my brother-in-law is one of them; and they talk about Pierci all the time [referring to Ms. Jeanette Pierci, who spoke earlier]. I know he is good 'cause he comes to my house and he washes my car sometimes. But I'll tell you about MTM, I like Ride Right – MTM. I do, I like Coach, but I like Ride Right – MTM. It's just a thing with communication. There's got to be some communication, and there is none. I was dropped from MTM one time...and I was wondering why...because I had just come from Palm City Nursing and Rehab after a stroke the day after my birthday, a serious stroke; and they have stopped taking me. They said they didn't have any money. They won't even take me into the Kidney Center in Gainesville because they said they can't take me out of the County because of my Medicaid status Q & B. So, I don't care if it was tricycle transportation, what I'm concerned with is that I'm Medicaid, I need transportation and I can't even get there. I don't think that, you know, I see people sitting up here but I watch body language and I'm going to tell you honestly, that this panel, I don't think is as interested as I would hope them to be in the situation that is going on here. But I can trust when I tell you, sometimes I don't really know if they are going to pick me up from my home or not. Then, I have to wake my neighbor up to take me to dialysis, three days a week four hours a day, right over here. I have to wake my neighbor up to take me, even though they are prepared for it. I have children also. I have responsibilities and I intend to keep my responsibilities, I made a note for that, eleven years. All I'm saying is, if we can, just some kind of communication because we have none. We got people tearing up the van, the transportation, you know, with loading up a wheelchair. I don't think that the driver should be on the wheelchair lift. These are serious infractions, and I called them infractions because I don't want anybody hanging all over me. If something happens, like I got stuck on the bus one day, the air conditioner wasn't on, the van wasn't on, it was fire-hot. They had to bring another van in. John came [referring to Mr. John Fanticola from Community Coach], and got me on another van and they have to manually let me down. Thank God the hydraulics didn't go out.


When dialysis is done; they told me when I first started riding, that dialysis takes priority over a lot of situations...I mean, you know, we are not that special, but we do take priority over some things, this is what they told me. Well, I have to wait, an hour, an hour and a half; and when I call it takes fifteen minutes to get through to somebody out of State, to get through to somebody in-town, and then they call Ride Right; that's another five and a half minutes, seven minutes. So it's taking me a long time. I could've walk to from there to Walgreens, that's as far I can get. I mean, really, this stroke, mass stroke really did it for me. I needed the assistance. I need this assistance. As well as the young lady that was speaking about Jensen and Hobe Sound [referring to Ms. Connie Carone]; I'm in Port Salerno. We need it also but it's hard for me to get it if nobody is communicating it.

I ran two tow companies so I know what it is to say “hey we’ll be right there, don’t worry about it! We got you, we’ll be there in fifteen minutes” ...and thirty minutes later...because of what AAA and Geico and what they’ve told me. So I know what it is. All we need to do is communicate. We’ve got to communicate. Being raised by an educator, I know what that means. Thank you”.

 Kenneth J. Skaggs – 3620 SE Gatehouse Circle #280, Stuart, FL
Mr. Skaggs said, “I’m here to talk about both good and bad of the MTM’s Ride Right service. Now, I’ve been with them roughly about three years. I’ve only used their service recently because the transportation that I use to finally broke down to the point that I could not afford to repair it. The transportation system does work with Ride Right; however, there are times when you have a ride that you scheduled that also you have been canceled off the list and nobody can tell you why you were canceled other than “Well, you were canceled”. So, that’s the only bad part that I have on Ride Right. As far as the Coach and everything else, I don’t use their services, so I can’t comment on them. As far of the good services on Ride Right, they’ve got drivers that seem to care about people, they talk to you, they let you know what’s going on. Like this meeting or something that I didn’t know about. But now that I’ve been to [referring to this Public Hearing], I understand how they work. My benefit is that right now I need the service, and whether funding is being held back or going to be talked about, or whether is going to be dismissed or whatever, I don’t know. I only know I was told come to the meeting, based on funding it was needed for the transportation service. So, I’m here to say, we need the service, whether it will be Coach, whether it will be Ride Right, whether it will be MTM, no matter what it is, the service needs to be provided to all the people who needs it.

Now, I’m also a dialysis patient, three times a week four hours each trip. I’m healthy enough that I can ride a bike there to and from, but it’s five miles one way on a bike. After dialysis, there are time when you don’t feel like walking, let alone getting on a bike. So, the transportation service is beneficial to me. Unlike other people, I don’t have friends that I can call on to say “hey, I need a ride to this”, whether it’s an important ride such as dialysis or not. There are times when you have to have some kind of service to be provided. If the service is taken away and we don’t have anything, then what are we supposed to depend on, I mean, what are we going to do? Start calling people of the County Commissions and say “hey look, we don’t have a ride, can you all pick us up?” I don’t think you all [referring to the Board Members] would appreciate that too much. So, we’d like to keep the service, we’d like to keep it for everybody that’s necessary. And, me, as a dialysis patient, it’s something that I would like to have kept up and everything else. As long as it can continue to be a service that it’s provided for me, which is from my apartment to the door service of dialysis, which is next door also, I’m going to keep using it as long as it’s there. If the funding is taken away and it’s not there, again, like I said, it’s either walking or bicycle, and I don’t feel like doing that all the time... So I thank you very much for your time, I appreciate it.”

Vice-Chair Bols stated that he does not know of any County Commissioner that would not welcome a call, if the public wished to communicate with them.

 Lance H. Brown – 7046 SE Amendment Street, Hobe Sound, FL
Mr. Brown said, “I’ve been waiting a long time for this one. How long do I have?” Vice-Chair Bols responded that he had a maximum of three minutes to share his comments. Mr.

Brown shared his personal background. He addressed the Board Members expressing resentment towards many different issues; none of them were transit-related. Mr. Brown seemed very agitated, and he stormed off the Chambers before his time was up.

✿ Keisha Martin – 8498 SE Begonia Way, Hobe Sound, FL
Ms. Martin stated, “I come to this meeting and it is the first time I’m coming. We need to get stuff right, together. We need the funds, the bus...we need to hire more people for the buses too. Plus, they need to be on time in the morning time...I have to wait four hours until I get off the machine [referring to her dialysis procedures], so you all have to be on time for it. We need to raise the money...We do need Jesus in the midst of this, ‘cause He can fix everything for us. You know, for the handicapped, for people who cannot walk, for people who cannot talk, people who need to be by the doctors on time. But see, I don’t go right on the bus going to the doctors, my Mama takes me, and she works; she’ll be tired and everything. We need some more drivers taking people to the doctors, like Miami, Ft. Pierce, St. Lucie, and stuff like that. We need to get together and help each other, for the transportation. Like I said, we need some more drivers. Thank you”.

Vice-Chair Bols asked if there was anyone else that would like to speak. Hearing no further requests from the public, Vice-Chair proceeded to request comments from the Board Members.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Jody Ianuzzi made a motion to move the next LCB-TD meeting up to the beginning of October. Ms. Ianuzzi felt that there are important issues that need to be addressed and that these issues should not wait until the next scheduled meeting, on December 06th.

Vice-Chair Bols asked Staff if this request would be possible. Ms. Beltran responded that Staff could coordinate a meeting and would get back to the Members with alternative dates and times via email.

Vice-Chair Bols asked if the meeting would be only for the discussion of the comments the public had expressed tonight. Ms. Ianuzzi responded that it would involve the discussion of pending items from the regular LCB-TD meeting, and also for the discussion of the public comments of the LCB-TD Public Hearing. Vice-Chair Bols stated that Staff would need additional time to coordinate pending items with the TD Commission, which had come up during the regular meeting.

Ms. Cindy Barnes seconded the motion but requested that the motion be amended so that a new meeting would be held only for the discussion of the Public Hearing comments. Ms. Ianuzzi amended her motions, and Ms. Barnes seconded the amended motion.

Ms. Beltran stated that the date of the new meeting would be determined by taking into consideration the public advertisement of said meeting, as soon as possible thereafter.

There being no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Angela Van Etten commented that she is on the Board as a representative of the Economically Disadvantaged. Ms. Van Etten addressed the public and said that one big factor to consider is the issue of funding. Funding shortages had truly affected transportation, not only in Martin County but throughout the State of Florida. Ms. Van Etten stated that the Board was trying to seek remedy options for the situation. She stated that funding for the Transportation Disadvantaged comes from

Tallahassee. The people who are responsible to bring more money into the system are our State Representatives. Ms. Van Etten said that one thing that could be done is to bring awareness to those who have a driver license, and let them know that when it's time to renew their license there is a Transportation Disadvantaged Fund that they can contribute to. This plea could also be made to the State Representatives to put more money into Transportation Disadvantaged. Ms. Van Etten stated that one of the reason why MTM came in like the knight in shining armor, promising a lot while not being able to deliver it, is because the Transportation Disadvantaged Fund is not big enough to provide all of the priority rides that are needed. Ms. Van Etten said that the LCB-TD Board has been "wrestling" with many of the issues presented by the public this evening. She stated that the Board is aware of many of the problems presented today. The Board is open to ideas for funding improvements, and the sources for that. Ms. Van Etten referred to the gentleman from the public that implied that he could read the Members' body language [Mr. Ron L. Simmons, Sr.], and said that she has been taking notes of the public comments, and to please know that the Board Members do care and are very concerned with all of the issues brought up tonight.

Ms. Van Etten stated that one of the communication issues that exist is that there is some confusion related to the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) change. The CTC switched from the Council on Aging (Community Coach) to MTM. She said that it might not be clear to many that the Council on Aging used to have the contract for both the Transportation Disadvantaged and the Public Transportation. Currently, we have two different organizations providing those services. Ms. Van Etten said that sometimes MTM is taking the hit for things that were not clear. She stated that, "we need to educate ourselves: who is paying for what?, and how and where the money is coming from?, before we start throwing arrows".

Ms. Van Etten informed the public that there is a complaint process in place. She encouraged the public to make use of the complain process to document the various situations experienced by the users, and as a way to expedite remedies, and to implement corrective actions to the problem situations.

Ms. Van Etten said that Community Coach is doing Public Transportation and the Bus Fixed Routes. She said that some of the complaints were related to bus drivers not being able to make drop offs closer to the users' residence. Ms. Van Etten said that one of the reasons Community Coach is doing that is because of its funding source. The funding source is requiring more fixed routes, and that means not as much door-to-door (paratransit) services. Ms. Van Etten stated that the County Commission is encouraging that, and Federal and State funders are requiring it also. There is a solution however, Ms. Van Etten said, for those who expressed that it is very hard to walk to the bus stops, who cannot be on the sun, those who have no sidewalks, those who may be run over because it is not adequate or safe to walk in their neighborhoods. She said that those riders could request door-to-door paratransit service. Ms. Van Etten stated that the fixed routes service is new and all comments brought in this evening are appreciated because it shows that fixed routes might not work for everybody.

6. NEXT MEETING

- October – details TBD, per Motion today.
- December 06, 2010 – Regular LCB-TD meeting (Note: This meeting will be held in the 4th Floor Workshop, Administration Building at 10:00 a.m.)

7. **ADJOURN**

There being no further comments, Ms. Ianuzzi made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Higinbotham. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Recorded and Prepared by:



Lisandra Bonet, Administrative Specialist II



Date

Approved by:



Mayor Michael Mortell, LCB/TD Chairman



Date