

Transit Advisory Board

Thursday, April 11, 2019

Alvarado Transit Center – 2nd Floor

100 1st St. SW

Albuquerque, NM 87102

**Members Present**

Brendan Miller, Chair, (walked); Nancy JonesFrancis, (walked); Harris Balkin, (car); Patricia Salisbury, (bus); Steve Pilon, (bus/walked); Israel Chavez, (car); Rachel Hertzman, (Car); Orville Pratt, (bus); David Kesner (car); Kimberly Andujo, (bus); William Moore, (walked)

**Members Absent**

Warren Smith

**Staff Members Present**

Bernie Toon, Transit Director, (car); Rita Chavez, Executive Assistant, (car)

**Visitors Present**

Matthew Torrez, Transit Security; Gullermina Osoria; Beatriz Valencia; Barbara Peterson, APS Board Member; Evelyn Bonilla; Thomas Baca; Larry Hiviojos; Maria Molina; Patricio Trujillo; Celia Yapita; Omar Torres; Tessa Snyder; Rodney Bowe; Makhpiya Black Elk; Raul Chavira; Pat Davis, City Councilman; Jacob Olaguir; Luis Colanga; Jesus Campos; Erik Aparicio; Isaiah Vehtagg; Bonnie Lee Murphy; Homer Hubbell; Alexis Romero and Antonio Maestas

**Call to Order**

Brendan Miller, Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05pm.

**Approval of Agenda**

Brendan Miller, Chair, asked for a Motion to approve the April 11, 2019 agenda as presented. Steve Pilon requested that a piece of new business be added regarding service on fixed routes. Nancy JonesFrancis made a motion to accept the agenda with the amendment. Harris Balkin 2nd the Motion. Motion approved unanimously, 11-0 by Transit Advisory Board (TAB) Members.

**Approval of Minutes**

Brendan Miller, Chair asked for a Motion to delay approval of the January 10, 2019 and February 14, 2019 minutes as presented in order to review and make corrections as needed. Nancy JonesFrancis made a motion to accept the delay. Harris Balkin 2nd the Motion. Nancy JonesFrancis made a motion to accept the March 14, 2019 minutes as presented. Steve Pilon 2nd the Motion. Both Motions approved unanimously, 11-0 by TAB.

**Public Comment** – Reminder there is a 2 minute limit on Public Comments and due to the size of the group we will not take questions until after each person has spoken.

**Barbara Peterson, APS Board Member**. Barbara is representing the UNM area and the southeast heights, which includes the International District. Barbara would like to speak in favor for “Free” bus passes for APS students. APS struggles with meeting the transportation needs of students. For instance, Highland High School is a hub for many refugee students. APS has a great program to meet the needs of these students, which is a diverse population and they are geographically spread out. That is why transportation is such a real issue because students come from all over to go to school.

**Public Comment (cont.)**

**Barbara Peterson, APS Board Member.**

The need for students to receive bus passes are to be able to get to school on time, job interviews, work, Dr. appointments and even social activities. This is a real issue with people who have very limited resources, it would be insurmountable to get these people passes who don’t have financial resources. This could be a great opportunity for APS to collaborate with the Transit Department to offer “free” bus passes, this would be incredibility beneficial to APS students and the community at large.

**Celia Yapita, Catholic Charities**. Celia works with the refugee population from Albuquerque and they have after school programs and summer programs in which they get grant funding for. The need is to get students and their families to and from these programs. There are so many barriers that these people face and they need support. I am here to support “free” bus passes for these kids. Catholic Charities also works with many other organizations who are need as well.

**Patricio Trujillo, International District for Healthier Communities Coalition.** Patricio presented numbers that shows there are 33,500 families who are on TANF and 13% of those children are in extreme poverty. The cost for a student to ride the bus is .35cents per ride one-way, .70 cents for a round trip which totals $235 per year per student for 7-days. We are in support with APS, Catholic Charities and Together for Brothers to receive “free” bus passes for students and/or families that are in extreme poverty.

**Raul Chavira, APS Student**. Raul was born and raised in the International District. Raul has been a bus rider for the last 5-years. It does cost him $290 per year to ride the bus. He has brother who also uses public transportation, which doubles the cost per year. Raul has to ride two buses to get to school, which increases his cost to ride the bus. This is a lot of money for him as his monthly income is $1000 and he has to pay rent, buy food, clothes and everything else. Raul does not have parents living with him and his brother. His parents have resorted to drug use and one parent is in prison and the other is on the street, so he and his brother are on their own. It is a struggle for him and his bother to pay over $500 a year to use the public transit system. If he could receive “free” bus pass this would help him and his brother out a lot. Raul also belongs to Together for Brothers who often have provided them with bus passes for school and even social activities. He would like to advocate for “free” bus passes.

**Matthew Torrez, Transit Enforcement Officer**. Matthew stated the public is at great risk for riding the bus. Transit Enforcement is understaffed and undertrained. They cannot respond to knife fights on the bus or to down and outs adequately because the vehicles have over 300,000 miles. There are only two mobile units covering the entire City of Albuquerque and the main corridor, Central. There are two officers in mobile units, there are four officers total for the City of Albuquerque. Officers have been in knife fights, have been shot at, have had guns pulled on them, they have been hit with bottles, rocks, bricks, pipes and bats. The officers do not wear body armor and they do not have the authority to make arrests, they can only detain offenders until APD arrives at the scene. When APD arrives at the scene there is not much APD can do because the offenses did not happen in their presence. The offender can only be charged with a misdemeanor, battery or let go, which in turn they get right back on a bus. Who rides the #66 bus after 9pm? Why? There are officers who refuse to ride the #66 bus up and down central by themselves because they are afraid for their safety. Matthew begs the TAB members to help them help the community.

**Guillermina Osoria, International District for Healthier Communities Coalition**. Guillermina has lived in a number of cities, Atlanta, Florida and New York where she has used the public transit system and states that Albuquerque has a wonderful transit system and is very affordable for the citizens as compared to the other cities she mentioned. The buses are in need of repair and cleaning and the bus drivers are overworked. More staff is needed on the #66 bus after 9am as the officer said. As a woman, she rides the bus alone late at night and she has concerns for her safety.

**Public Comment (cont.)**

**Thomas Baca, Together for Brothers**. Thomas is a west side resident. Thomas would like to see more buses in the Westgate area. As of now, he is only aware that #54 comes and goes every 30 to 45 minutes. It is hard for him to use this bus because it is not always efficient and at times does not have the money to pay for the fare. Together for Brothers has helped him at various times to get a bus pass. The “free” bus passes help young men of color get to school, get to job interviews and various other needs. Thomas is in support of “Free” bus passes.

**Mahdi Hossani, Together for Brothers**. This citizen is from Afghanistan and grew up in Turkey, he has been in Albuquerque for the past 4-years. Two years ago he was in high school and did not have transportation, so he rode two buses to school every day, which took him 1-hour to get to school. He lived in the Del Norte District but he attended Highland High School because of the diverse refugee population. During those 2-years he was tardy and had a lot of absences due to the bus schedule. Now he has friends who live in the International District who are facing the same issues with school tardiness and absences due to transportation. If they had bus passes it would be more likely that they could get to school on time and not have extensive absences. Please help us student get “Free” bus passes.

**Rodney Bowe, University of New Mexico and Together for Brothers**. Help our Students! Do the right thing and help this community by providing “Free” bus passes. The students are trying to get to work, school and are trying to stay out of challenges that they face not only in the International District but in our City as a whole. Bus passes would provide them a way to have transportation to get them to work and school. These young people are trying to do the right thing. Please help them by getting “Free” bus passes.

**Jake Olaguir, Together for Brothers**. He is here in support of “Free” bus passes for students. Mr. Olaguir considers himself a resourceful person as he lives in the Westgate Area and goes to school at Albuquerque High. He takes classes at CNM in order to get a “Free” bus pass as a student.

**Bonnie Murphy, Community and Education Advocate**. She is excited to hear that Together for Brothers are trying to get support to provide “Free” bus passes. This group has a lot of young people who are trying to be involved in our community and be involved in their civic duties. I hope you can support “Free” bus passes.

**Homer Hubble, Mentor of Students and citizen**. Mr. Hubble has lived in Albuquerque since 2010 and has been actively involved in mentoring students at the University of New Mexico. Mr. Hubble is looking at this whole thing as an overall wellness package for the City of Albuquerque. The University of New Mexico students have the opportunity receive a “Free” bus pass. So, this would be really helpful for those students who need to go to school and work. This would be one small step to get one giant step for these young men.

**Makhpiya Black Elk, Native American Community Academy**. Mr. Black Elk was born and raised in Albuquerque and grew up in the North Valley. He is here in support of the “Free” bus passes. He is a bus rider even though he has a car. Very often he helps people by picking them up from appointments, school and work because they can’t make it there on time or they don’t have the money for bus fare. The accessibility to buses is sometimes difficult especially at night after 9pm if you’re going to the south valley, as there are no buses after 9pm. Supporting young people to have access to a bus isn’t just for school, it’s for healthcare appointments, for jobs and lots of different things. Not everyone has access to a car, even if they do it is better for the environment if we don’t drive.

**Larry Hinojos, Board Member for Together for Brothers and an Educator**. He has worked with young people for a very long time and wants to be here tonight to support these young men. The bus passes also give these young people freedom, freedom to do fun things in the community. He is fortunate to have a vehicle to help get these young people around. He is in support of “Free” bus passes for students.

**Public Comment (cont.)**

**Beatriz Valencia, APS**. Beatriz has worked for the schools for years and she has mid-school students who do not want to take the bus because they don’t feel safe. So, we need to come together for these reasons. We need “Free” bus passes so the students can have accessibility to school and jobs and at the same time we need to make it safer for them. Transit security does need more officers and more resources. If you have a good experience when you are in mid-school or high school when you are on a bus, you will want to use the bus when you’re an adult.

**Evelyn Bonilla, UNM and (Inaudible).** Ms. Bonilla is here to advocate for Forward Thinking to provide “Free” bus passes. These young men and women are trying to make the right choices to be at school on time, to be at school activities, to get to work, to college and many other places. She was very lucky to have the benefit of a “Free” bus pass as a UNM student. Ms. Bonilla did ride the route 66 bus and luckily she was safe. She does understand the safety challenges that the officer was talking about. Ms. Bonilla now uses the route 11 bus to get to her job at UNM. Ms. Bonilla believes this forward thinking, wellness, is helping youth get to school on time. One of the biggest challenges for these students is getting to school on time. The most common reason is because they do not have transportation. “Free” bus passes would be a great benefit to all of our community.

**Isaiah Ventura, Together for Brothers**. Isaiah lives in the International District. After riding the bus for 2-years there is a need for a universal bus pass. It gets very expensive and it does add up. Sometimes he’d like to go to the movies, go hang out with friends or go the mall and does not have the cash for it because you are waiting for a check or something.

**Omar Torrez, Together for Brothers**. Omar provided a letter than he handed out to the TAB members. The letter has 3 specific asks. Together for Brother’s staff works with kids that need bus passes day after day. They believe that these young men really deserve to be at the decision table to become engaged in the community. The 3 asks are as follows:

1. Together for Brothers would like 50 student monthly bus passes to distribute each month.
2. Together for Brothers and other community partners would like to collaborate with the Transit Department in order to plan and distribute the free summer youth passes.
3. Our long term ask is for the Transit Department and the City of Albuquerque to work across departments and with APS to allow all young people free public transportation. The students would gain access through their school ID and ideally connect them to other free resources at the city such as libraries, museums, pools and transit. The dream is to follow models already active in places like Denver, CO; Mesa, AZ; Portland, OR and Santa Fe, NM.

The job the TAB does is very important because they are trying to make the bus more accessible and safe for riders. We want the same thing, we’d like for people to create a culture where young people can get on the bus see other young people make friendships and go out and explore the city. The “ask” is that the TAB members take this letter into consideration. This letter was signed by 144 people who represent the community, riders, students and community organizations.

**Jesus Campos, Together for Brothers**. He would like to advocate for a “Free” universal bus pass. He has friends who live in the International District and can’t go hang out with them because he does not have money to ride the bus. The people who benefit from riding the bus would benefit from a “Free” universal bus pass.

**TAB Board Member Comments/Questions**

**Brendan Miller, Chair for TAB.** Brendan thanked the public for attending the meeting and all the comments that were shared. Brendan stated that the TAB members are in full support of “Free” bus passes for high school students. As, a UNM/CNM student himself he relied on the “Free” bus passes as he did not own a vehicle while in school. The TAB members understand that there is a lack of service, especially in the two southern quadrants of the city. This is a top priority for the Transit Board to make the service more equitable to other parts of the city. As for the “Free” passes for APS students, we do know that UNM and CNM do contribute funding for the passes. APS would likely need to contribute funding as well if they would like to be part of the program.

**Brendan Miller,** **Chair for TAB.** Brendan introduced City Counselor Pat Davis who is in attendance.

**Pat Davis, City Counselor.** Mr. Davis thanked everyone for all the comments given. City Council has talked about this in their budget planning for the last 4-years and various components of how this would look. City Council helped fund bus passes for the youth summer programs. In the past, this has dramatically increased ridership during the summer and is a big piece of this component, it shows that making the bus accessible works. City Council is looking into the budget impact for the Transit Department. We understand how this impacts students living in the International District. Next week we are going to have this conversation at the Bernalillo County Government Commission meeting. This is a meeting where the County Commissioners and City Council Members meet to discuss cross jurisdictional issues. Albuquerque Public Schools Board Member, Barbara Peterson is getting some APS people and we are inviting other community members to talk about transit options for students in general. City Council is including this in the budget process and the preliminary numbers show we are not there yet. If the City does provide “Free” bus passes to students it will have to fall within the budget, have City Council support and community support, all the pieces would have to fall into place in order for to happen.

***Steve Pilon, TAB Member –*** Is APS willing to contribute funding proportional to the number of kids who sign up for help with “Free” bus passes?

***Barbara Peterson, APS Board Member*** – Barbara Peterson is not in a position to answer that questions. She does know that APS would like to have a discussion on how they can collaborate with the City.

***Steve Pilon, TAB Member -*** Is there a line item in APS proposed budget for APS to contribute to Albuquerque Transit?

***Barbara Peterson, APS Board Member –*** No, not specifically at this point. APS along with the City see a need and we must get the right people to have discussions about this issue.

***Steve Pilon, TAB Member –*** Who here rides a bike or uses a bike?

***Public –*** Six public attendee’s hands went up

***Steve Pilon, TAB Member –*** Esperanza bike shop has bikes that they will give you for free to use for transportation but you must call them to request a bike.

***Kimberly Andujo, TAB Member*** *–* She had been homeless for over a year and is a west side resident. The service on the west side “sucks”. She is a new board member because she wants to help make change. Young people, if you want something done you need to start applying for boards to help make change. There is an Adopt-a-Stop program where you can adopt a bus stop and help the city keep it up. You can show that you care and want to help make a difference. Start small and do you part to make change. Stop complaining! Start doing! Don’t give up**!**

***Patricia Salisbury, TAB Member –*** Patricia suggested that the TAB Members endorse the Together for Brothers Three (3) “asks” as stated in their letter and to be part of the signatures on the letter.

**Action: Patricia Salisbury made a motion that the Transit Advisory Board endorse the three asks from Together for Brothers on their letter dated April 11, 2019 RE: Transit Equity “Asks”. Israel Chavez 2nd the motion. Motion approved unanimously 11-0.**

**TAB Board Member Comments/Questions (cont.)**

***William Moore, TAB Member*** *– Does APS have an obligation to get a child from where they live to school?*

***Barbara Peterson, APS Board Member*** *– APS has an obligation to transport within district. i.e. If you live within the bounds of Highland High School APS has an obligation to get you to school. For children with special needs and if students go to CEC APS provides transportation on a daily basis as an obligation.*

***Nancy JonesFrancis, TAB Member*** *– This has been an excellent discussion and thank you all for coming.*

*As a reminder, this Board is an Advisory Board, which means we can’t vote on something to help you but we can vote on support for something and then the Transit Department will make the decision as to whether or not to approve something.*

***Harris Balkin, TAB Member –*** *Harris has been on the board for three-years and has never seen so much public support for a cause. He is very concerned about APS request for bus passes. It is important to know that UNM and CNM both support and subsidize out of their budgets to provide bus passes. They are not “Free” to the students. The City Council should be approached to see about allocating more funds toward this so that the APS students who choose to attend schools out of their district can get to school easier. Harris would also like to see increased service on the West Side and South Valley. The Rt. 66 bus has the most service because of its ridership. Hopefully with the coming of ART this will help with the service challenges that are along Central Ave. Please continue to voice your opinions and remember we are an Advisory Board and are not employees of ABQ Ride.*

***Rachel Hertzman, TAB Member –*** *Echo’s the comments of the Board****.*** *Thanked everyone for coming out today to voice your opinions about “Free” bus passes. Taking public transportation is a challenge no matter where you live and it should be safe. Reminder that the Transit Advisory Board operates in an advisory role. Rachel fully supports getting “Free” bus passes to students. Would like encourage the students to continue to make your voices heard and remember there are several other avenues to take to make sure you are heard.*

***Israel Chavez, TAB Member*** *– Echo’s the comments of the Board. We are not an appropriating Board or policy making Board, which means that whatever APS and the City Council do are not within the purview of this Board. We should do what is right for the City and the next generation of riders because that is what this investment means. If we support policies like this, which we now have, it means that more new people will know how to ride the bus. If we teach people and invest in them they will invest in transit. The TAB meetings were moved to 4:00pm in order to allow more young people/students to attend these meetings and to have a voice.*

***Orville Pratt, TAB Member –*** *Echo’s the comments of the Board and is glad to see the crowd make their voices heard.*

***David Kesner, TAB Member*** *- Echo’s the comments of the Board. He now sees the advantage of changing the TAB meeting time to 4pm as there are many young people/students in attendance. He hopes that these people begin to get involved and begin to help move this cause forward. Mr. Kesner is in full support of getting APS students “Free” bus passes.*

**Director’s Report**

Bernie Toon, Transit Director welcomed all the attendees. It is nice to have this kind of crowd to make their opinions known. Last year the City along with the Transit Department were able to provide 1500 young people youth bus passes for the 100 days of summer. The passes are good from May to August. This summer the Transit Department will provide 3000 bus passes to the youth, which is double the amount over last year.

The Transit department has been looking into this issue and would love to have an arrangement with APS to provide bus passes. This is a budget issue for the City and APS, but the Transit Department would love to partner with APS to provide students with passes in a shared cost capacity. The Transit Department’s goal is to increase ridership especially for young students.

**Director’s Report (cont.)**

We are hoping that with the activation of ART it will help to increase the ridership. The Federal government has given us money with the understanding that the ART bus has 7.5 minutes to run the corridor, which means that every 7.5 minutes a bus will come rolling up to a bus stop. The bus and the hardware are ordered and ready to accommodate the Federal Guidelines. Just this week we have begun walking through each ART bus stop makings sure we have all the equipment. When the buses arrive they will go through a 2-week rehearsal, going up and down the Central corridor and will make changes as needed. The bus drivers will receive 16-weeks of driving training in the ART corridor and every bus driver will be trained in the ART corridor. There will be pin curbs (a small medium) installed from Atrisco and goes east for about 3 blocks.

This is to help with people driving in the bus lanes and making left hand turns from the bus lane. This is very dangerous and the data shows this where the pin curb is needed due to accidents and potential accidents.

The recruitment for bus drivers is on-going. We do not have an exact date when the buses will arrive and when the ART buses will run.

The Transit Department will be conducting a comprehensive analysis of the entire department. There are 2800 bus stops in the City and 44 routes. We are beginning to look at ridership, structure and the route system. We will look at which bus stops are needed, which ones can be cancelled, which ones can be added or consolidated. The RFP is in the beginning stages.

**Ridership Report**

Ridership report was given by Bernie Toon and a hand-out of the report was provided.

Fixed ridership is down. This is tracking with what is going on around the country. We believe that with the emergence of UBER and Lyft has posed serious issues with Transit Departments all over the country.

**Unfinished Business**

None

**New Business**

Service on Fixed Ridership - The topic of service on Fixed Ridership will be tabled until next meeting

**Announcements and Correspondence**

Transit Security officer, Matthew Torrez gave his speech again so that Bernie Toon, Transit Director could hear about the safety issues and concerns with security officers and the vehicles. There is a 3rd Party Security Company that employs officers to ride the buses. The officers are not City employees.

**ACTION: The TAB members would like to see some of the statistics with regard to security on the buses.**

**The Transit Department will provide if we have the information available.**

The TAB members would like to see a representative from the Para Transit Board attend the TAB meetings. Rita will contact the Chair to share the request.

How much does a monthly bus pass cost? The monthly Gold pass is $30 for an adult without any handicaps.

**Adjournment**

The TAB meeting was adjourned at 5:35pm by Brendan Miller, Chair.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, May 9, 2019; 4:00 PM at the ATC-2nd Floor**