

New North Transportation Alliance (NNTA)
 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
 Wednesday, September 9, 2020
 USF Center for Urban Transportation Research

Attendance

Julie Bond	NNTA/CUTR
Christine Epps	NNTA/CUTR
David Green	TBARTA
Sara Hendricks	NNTA/CUTR
Chaddy Hanwisai	USF Facilities Management
Rebecca Hessinger	Hillsborough County Economic Development
Arlinda Karuli	Enterprise Rideshare
Katina Kavouklis	Florida Dept of Transportation
Eric Larson	Tampa Innovation Alliance
Kesha Lindo	TBARTA
Nina Mabileau	City of Tampa
Nicole McCleary	HART
Ivan Maldonado	HART
Rich Piccininni	USF Facilities Management
Cyndi Raskin Schmitt	TBARTA
Dan Rodriguez	HART
Mark Sharpe	Tampa Innovation Alliance
Phil Winters	NNTA/CUTR
Fred Zerla	University Square Civic Association and THAN
Rob Zimprich	UACDC

Welcome/Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. by Sara Hendricks who welcomed members and visitors. The meeting was held by videoconference. Instruction was given on how to participate in the meeting. The video recording will be posted on the NNTA website. The chairperson, Raymond Mensah is not available due to a meeting conflict. Ms. Hendricks reported that NNTA has received funding from Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to continue NNTA and gave a brief outline of the NNTA mission. Ms. Hendricks indicated the theme of this meeting will be how transportation providers are adjusting to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a round of self-introductions.

Approval of Minutes

There was a motion by Eric Larson and seconded by Cyndi Raskin to approve minutes from the NNTA meeting held on November 13, 2019 with no changes.

Commute Tampa Bay

Presenter: Kesha Lindo, Account Executive, Hillsborough County, TBARTA

Last year, TBARTA rebranded their commuter services program to be *Commute Tampa Bay*, and launched a new app that makes it easier for commuters to find carpool partners. Ms. Lindo shared details about the app features, changes to the Emergency Ride Home program, and how Commute Tampa Bay has served their customers during the pandemic.

Ms. Lindo shared information about the commuter services program, Commute Tampa Bay, which helps support alternative commuter transportation – A Better Way to Commute. Commute Tampa Bay works with employers and employees to help them find alternatives to solo driving. This promotes cleaner air by reducing emissions, reduces the amount of traffic, commuting costs, stress and improves productivity at work. Employers can also use it as a hiring and retention tool and it helps lower payroll taxes if employers offer a Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit on a pre-tax basis to employees.

Ms. Lindo shared that there is a new app, Agile Mile, that can help commuters find a ride match for a vanpool or carpool. The app shows money savings and can accumulate points for alternate ways of commuting. The user can get discounts at stores and restaurants with points earned from using alternate ways of commuting. There is also a drawing for gift cards. There is an emergency ride home (ERH) reimbursement through the app, with up to 6 ERH per year for sickness or family emergency. The user may use Uber and be reimbursed up to \$100 per trip.

Commute Tampa Bay promotes free ride matching for carpools. Employers can choose to subsidize the cost of the carpool.

Vanpooling is one of the most popular offerings. TBARTA contributes \$400 per month and employers can subsidize up to \$270 per month per employee to cover the cost. Some employers may offer preferential parking to carpool/vanpool and TBARTA will provide a parking sign for free.

Commute Tampa Bay also supports flex time, compressed work week, alternative work schedules, telecommuting, and job sharing. Employers may also subsidize up to \$270 per month for employees using the HART bus. There is also a bike pool match. Bike racks and showers at work are encouraged.

One NNTA board member noted that ERH is a great service and it is free.

Another board member asked about the number of people who are still commuting during the pandemic. Have the numbers gone down? Ms. Cyndi Raskin stated that yes, overall commuting is down. However, there are many vanpools still in operation, using safe practices. Commute Tampa Bay can also offer help to a company to get set up with teleworking. They have partnered with FDOT and other commuter agencies to create a teleworking webinar series. Commute Tampa Bay continues to support those who are commuting.

Commute with Enterprise

Presenter: Arlinda Karuli, Account Executive

Commute with Enterprise in partnership with TBARTA, was serving 166 vanpools, as of July 2020. This is down from a high of 176 vanpools in April 2020. While some vanpools have suspended their operations, most of them remain intact. This is a testament to the importance of the vanpool service, as well as the motivation of vanpool riders to adapt to keep their vanpools in operation. Ms. Karuli described how Commute with Enterprise is serving its vanpool customers.

Ms. Karuli described the role of Commute with Enterprise as the vanpool provider for TBARTA. She described how the vanpool is designed to help employees who work at the same location or area to get to work by meeting at a central location and using the Enterprise vehicle to get to work. The advantages include a reduction in stress level, use of a late model vehicle with all the features, month to month flexibility, insurance, maintenance, roadside assistance, included. This provides a cost savings to the riders.

TBARTA pays \$400 per month and each employee qualifies for \$270 per month toward vanpool from his or her employer, based upon IRS Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefits, which makes it essentially free for employees.

Ms. Karuli indicated the number of vanpools in the area have reduced from 178 to 165 vehicles, during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are seeing most people are now coming back to work and while there was some decline in occupancy, it is starting to come back.

As an active response during the pandemic, Commute with Enterprise began the following measures: cleaning vehicles regularly, communication about safety, waived 30-day termination notice, offered larger vehicles to the vanpool for social distancing, empty seat subsidy, and idle vanpool if necessary if there was an exposure to COVID. The "Complete Clean Pledge" is an internal sanitization on 20 touch spots in the vehicle prior to delivery. Enterprise also provides a clean kit and instructions to riders and encourages them to clean the vehicle.

The NNTA board members expressed that they were Impressed with flexibility of vanpool program, especially since many customers are essential workers at hospitals. Ms. Karuli stated that hospital workers are also encouraged to bring a change of clothing to keep others safe.

Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART)

Nicole McCleary, Senior Project Planner

Ivan Maldonado, Director of Bus Operations

Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) has been working with emergency management, the County health department, FDOT, Federal Transit Administration and CUTR to determine the best way to protect transit customers during COVID. HART has implemented ways to disinfect the buses, has distributed 15,000 masks for operators and customers, and tested operators and administrators for COVID-19. Since the county-wide order for mandatory face coverings, HART has enforced the use of

masks on buses and street cars. HART has also added signage at bus stops for masks and spacing on buses. There are also signs in buses and facilities about social distancing and masks. HART disinfects buses every day and advises operators how to stay safe. HART operates high occupancy buses at a 15 minute or 30-minute frequency. If the bus is crowded, another bus is deployed to allow for appropriate social distancing. The focus is on protecting operators and customers. If a customer will not comply with mask or distancing requirements, the operator will not confront the customer, but will call in to a supervisor. City and County allows for exceptions for anyone who cannot wear face coverings due to health.

Ridership is down from 35,000 to 19,000 people transported per day on fixed route since COVID-19. There are service, route and schedule changes that will take effect to address fiscal responsibility and service to the community. The presentation slides detail the routes that will be affected.

HART is currently conducting public outreach to get feedback from the public. HART has been using virtual meetings, website, meetings, comments, and calling to connect with the public. In October there will be a public hearing. In November, the recommended changes will be presented to the Board and if approved, the changes will be implemented in January 2021.

Announcements

There were no updates from members.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

The next NNTA meeting will be held in November 2020, date to be determined.