

**San Benito County
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING**

May 16, 2013 3:00 P.M.

FINAL MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Botelho, Director Boch, Director De La Cruz, Director Scattini, and Director Gomez

STAFF PRESENT:

Deputy County Counsel, Shirley Murphy; Executive Director, Lisa Rheinheimer; Transportation Planning Manager, Mary Gilbert; Administrative Services Specialist, Kathy Postigo; Secretary, Monica Gomez

OTHERS PRESENT:

Tony Mercado, MV Transportation Inc.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Botelho called the meeting to order at 3:25 p.m.

A. CERTIFICATE OF POSTING

Upon a motion duly made by Director Gomez, and seconded by Director Scattini, the Directors unanimously acknowledged the Certificate of Posting.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CONSENT AGENDA:

- 1. Approve** LTA Transaction Report (Financial Claims) dated April 2013 – Postigo
- 2. Approve** Local Transportation Authority Draft Meeting Minutes Dated April 18, 2013 – Gomez
- 3. Receive** Jovenes de Antaño Specialized Transportation Services Monthly Service Report for the Month of March 2013 – Jovenes de Antaño
- 4. Receive** County Express Monthly Service Report for the Month of March 2013 – MV Transportation, Inc.

Upon a motion duly made by Director Gomez, and seconded by Director Scattini, the Directors approved Items 1-4 of the Consent Agenda.

REGULAR AGENDA:

- 5. Discuss** Taxi Voucher Program and Provide Direction – Rheinheimer

Ms. Rheinheimer reported that at the August 2012 meeting, there was consensus from the LTA Board to move forward with providing subsidized taxi service. The Board directed staff to proceed with preparing a Request for Qualifications - soliciting proposals for the taxi service. In February, the LTA issued the Request for Qualifications and received two responses from taxi companies.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that there are several items to consider if the LTA desires to implement the taxi service; such as:

- Costs to some passengers will increase: All trips fewer than 3 miles in length will cost the passenger \$2 per ride with a taxi voucher. Trips that are 5 miles or more will cost the passenger an additional \$5-\$7 beyond the cost of \$2 per taxi voucher. Trips between San Juan Bautista and Hollister (approximately 9 miles) will cost the passenger an additional \$16-\$19. Trips currently taken on the Dial-a-Ride service cost \$2 per trip or \$1.25 with a discount for youth, seniors, and people with a disability.
- Likely reduction in MV Transportation staffing: The reduction of hours through MV Transportation will likely result in the layoff of MV Transportation employees who live in Hollister.
- ADA Accessible vehicle is a must for taxi operators: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Local Transportation Authority may not discriminate against any individual based on a disability and is required to provide access to its services for those with a disability. The taxi companies indicated that they either owned an accessible vehicle or that one would be available if LTA contracted with the taxi company.
- Costs to implement new service unknown: Implementation of the program will include costs associated with printing of vouchers, and may require additional LTA staff time for the sale and reconciliation of vouchers.

Chair Botelho stated that the advantage with using a taxi service is they are available at all hours of the day. However, he stated that staff should have proposed to all taxi companies a reimbursement of \$8 for all rides generated through what is currently the Dial-A-Ride service. This way nobody is out of pocket because the taxi company is receiving business that they didn't previously have and the passengers wouldn't have to pay an additional \$6-\$7. Otherwise, it would be much too expensive for the people who are dependent on the service and ridership would decrease.

There was discussion about the cost per trip. Staff explained, on average, it costs the LTA \$16 to provide that trip. The rider pays \$1.25 or \$2.00 per trip and the remaining \$14 is subsidized.

Director De La Cruz stated that two constituents approached him with concerns about the taxi service. He mentioned that one happened to be a driver for the current service and the other a concerned citizen. He encouraged them to attend the meeting and voice their concerns. However, he was not able to persuade them to attend. One concern was the potential increased risks of having a taxi pick up children from school as opposed to the Dial-A-Ride service which picks up more than one child at a time.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that the taxi voucher program would not exclude multiple people from getting into a taxi, whether they are school aged or not. The City of Hollister's Taxi Ordinance requires them to complete a fairly extensive process to get licensed, which includes a criminal background check and DUI testing. Ms. Rheinheimer added that she did not believe there is an increased risk for children, but possibly the perception of an increased risk.

Director Scattini expressed concern over contracting with taxi companies because they are in and out of business leaving clients to rely on another transportation services.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that the taxi company would be required to provide a 30 day notice to LTA if they were to decide to close.

Director Boch stated that he did not want to call it "discriminatory", but it would not be beneficial to use the taxi for San Juan Bautista residents because clients would have to pay \$36 for one round trip.

Director De La Cruz asked if it is possible to look into providing the taxi service in a zone based area. Clients would be able to use the Dial-A-Ride service on any areas beyond the zone based area. This would also help MV Transportation with having to reduce staff.

Director Gomez made the following recommendation: 1) Staff should look into getting the taxi companies to extend the distance allowed per voucher, and 2) vouchers should not be limited to 1 voucher per ride.

Chair Botelho opened Public Comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Maggie Bilich
San Juan Bautista, CA

Ms. Bilich stated that the LTA needs a new scheduling system, not a taxi service. She mentioned that she had to go, via Jovenes de Antaño (JDA), to Valley Medical Center. She had to wait 8 hours at Valley Medical Center for a 45 minute appointment because JDA had to take another client to Stanford. She mentioned that she doesn't believe taxi companies perform the same type of background checks that the current transportation agencies perform. She reiterated that the "taxi" is not the way to go.

Eva Dalton
HOPE Client

Ms. Dalton stated that she uses County Express to get to and from work. It would be too expensive for her to use the taxi service, as it would cost practically her entire check. Ms. Dalton also mentioned that the County Express drivers are familiar with the HOPE Services clients and the clients are comfortable with them as well. She also stated that many HOPE clients may not be knowledgeable and could be taken advantage of. She recommended that the Board not change the existing Dial-A-Ride services.

Rob Bernosky

Mr. Bernosky stated that he is a big believer in private enterprise and believes that in a lot of cases private enterprise can do a better job than government can on a lot of things. He stated that most people are concerned about the level of service. He stated that there is nothing like being able to have taxi companies in partnership with the government program to provide more sources of transportation for the people in this county. He stated that it is important to allow more people to come in and do business and competing with the government is never good for that. Mr. Bernosky also commented that we need to stop subsidizing for people who can afford transportation and devote more to those who cannot afford it. He recommended that the Board allow private enterprise to help out so that everyone is much better served. Lastly, he mentioned that background checks can be enforced and effective.

Monica Quiroz Rivera

Ms. Quiroz Rivera stated that what people were failing to recognize was that they are outsourcing jobs. She commended the County Express drivers go above and beyond to provide the best service to their passengers. She asked the Board to take time to consider their choices because the decision that they make will affect many people, especially the ones who are on a fixed income and cannot afford to use the taxi.

**Elizabeth Arrizon
Hollister Taxi**

Ms. Arrizon stated that she is willing to work with staff on working something out with opening up the routes and extending the number of vouchers that are purchased for a trip to San Juan Bautista. She stated that she is willing to purchase vehicles to accommodate ADA clients. She noted that taxi companies have gone out of business in town because additional taxi companies have been allowed to provide service in town making it harder to compete. She mentioned that she would be more than willing to provide the same type of excellent service that Dial-A-Ride provides, with the added benefit of being available 24 hours a day.

Director Boch asked Ms. Arrizon if Hollister Taxi service would consider providing a ride for someone from San Juan Bautista to Hollister for a total of \$10 (using the \$2 voucher plus \$8 reimbursement from LTA).

Ms. Arrizon stated that she would consider providing the service for \$10, with the exception that one taxi company is the only provider. Otherwise, her company would not make a profit.

Chair Botelho closed Public Comment.

Director De La Cruz inquired if it was possible to contract with the taxi company during the hours that Dial-A-Ride service is not available, between the hours of 6 pm to 6 am. This may be a benefit for everyone because jobs would not be outsourced and transportation would be available at all times.

Ms. Rheinheimer stated that is a possibility; however, it would be an additional cost to the agency to have to reimburse the \$8 per ride. Ms. Rheinheimer stated that she would need to know the demand for the service in order to provide an exact cost to the agency.

Director Gomez agreed with Director De La Cruz's idea of contracting with the taxi company to provide service during the hours that Dial-A-Ride is not available. He also suggested looking at the option of providing both services and letting the consumer choose which service they want to use. Lastly, he recommended looking into the possibility of using multiple vouchers per ride to allow the consumer to travel further distances.

Director Boch recommended negotiating with taxi companies to extend the same Hollister service to San Juan Bautista residents.

Chair Botelho stated that MV Transportation has provided great services. He stated that he would also like to see the private sector have the opportunity to succeed as well. He concurred with fellow Directors on the idea that the Dial-A-Ride service should be available for those who rely and meet the criteria of youth, senior, and/or disabled.

Chair Botelho appointed Director Gomez and Director Boch to work with staff on analyzing the different taxi and Dial-a-Ride service ideas and recommendations and report back to the Board at a late date.

Upon a motion made by Director De La Cruz, and seconded by Director Scattini, the Directors unanimously voted to adjourn the LTA meeting.

ADJOURN TO LTA MEETING JUNE 20, 2013.