



**COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES  
MINUTES  
Thursday, March 18, 2021  
5:30 PM**

*VIRTUAL MEETING  
GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT, 951-826-5427*

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

*“The mission of the Commission on Disabilities is to promote greater awareness of, respect for, and the total participation of individuals with disabilities into all aspects of life.”*

State law restricts the Commission on Disabilities from taking action on an item unless it has been included on an agenda and posted at least 72 hours in advance of a meeting or unless the matter falls within one of the narrow exceptions. Consequently, any item not listed on this agenda will normally have to be delayed until the item can be made part of a posted agenda.

CALL TO ORDER: 5:33 pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ABSENT: Antonia Quezada, Don Coon, Kimberly Lopez

Also, in attendance was Analyst Jessica Spiking, Deputy General Services Director Shari Call, and Transit Manager Ronald Profeta.

1. **Public Comment Period** - This is the portion of the meeting specifically set aside to invite your comments regarding any matter within the Commission’s jurisdiction. Individual audience participation is limited to 3 minutes.

There were no public comments.

PRESENTATIONS

2. Presentation from Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, Special Transportation Division about updated transportation services for seniors and residents with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ronald Profeta is the Transit Manager for the Special Transportation Program. This program was established in 1975 and works under an agreement with Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) to operate

a Paratransit Service within the City of Riverside Limits. The services are provided to the Disabled Community and to Seniors over the age of 60 that live in the city of Riverside.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, there has been an 85% reduction in over-all service demand. Transportation services for the Seniors and the Disabled Community is vital to their daily lives and the Federal Government recognized this and provided \$6.6 million in CARES Act Funding to support the operations. During the Pandemic, Special Transportation continued to provide services.

Safety precautions are taken very seriously because a majority of the people using the service are at the high-risk end of the spectrum for the virus. All the drivers are issued hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and sprays, disposable gloves, N-95 respirators, surgical masks, and face shields which are to be worn at all times when providing transportation services. The sanitation and disinfecting efforts for all the buses has increased and the drivers are required to disinfect high touch surfaces after every scheduled drop off and before every scheduled pick up. At the end of the service day, the buses are sprayed with hospital grade disinfectant spray using an electrostatic disinfecting sprayer. All passengers are required to wear face coverings while being transported. Certain seats on the bus have been blocked off in order to maintain proper social distancing in the 16 passenger buses. The schedules of the Transportation staff have been staggered so there is not a large congregation of people at the beginning and end of each shift. The office staff are responsible for disinfecting their workstations as well as the general office spaces within the building. Breaks and lunches are taken at their workstations or at the new outdoor break area that has been created outside the transit offices.

During COVID-19, the number of passengers drastically decreased and went from 120,858 to 19,486 passengers. The average number of rides per day has also decreased within the past year, going from 400-500 rides per day to 50-80 rides per day. Service was provided to 14,584 seniors and 4,902 people with disabilities. During this time, the top three destinations have been medical facilities, grocery stores and dialysis facilities.

There are some major changes occurring in Special Transportation. One of the most immediate changes is a rebranding of the operation. Instead of being called Special Transportation, it is being rebranded as Riverside Connect and the buses are being re-wrapped to reflect this change which is expected to be completed by May 2021. Another change is the full launch of the electronic fare collection system which will give the people that utilize this service the ability to pay for their fares electronically and more importantly, they will be able to schedule their rides electronically online or through an app. One convenient feature of the fare system being electronic is the ability for a loved one to log in to their family member's account and ensure that there are funds available for them to receive the services.

Commissioner Nelson asked if they expect an increase in passengers since the City of Riverside is now in the Red Tier. Transit Manager Profeta stated that there should be a slight increase, but a majority of the passengers are people who attend the various workshops that the Inland Regional Center conducts throughout the City, and the workshops have been closed and remain closed. He believes that once these open again there will be an increase in service demands.

Commissioner Lewis complimented the changes that have been made during the COVID-19 pandemic and she really likes the re-branding. She also stated that the electronic fare collection system that is being implemented is an excellent idea. She asked if passengers will still be able to

pay if they are not able to use the electronic system and Transit Manager Profeta stated that yes, they will still be able to use the current form of payment. He mentioned that the city of Riverside's Seniors Centers have computer labs and they will be offering training classes that teach individuals how to go online and how to navigate the new electronic fare system.

Commissioner Krick asked if the new (9 passenger) vans have finally arrived, and Transit Manager Profeta confirmed that they have, and they are testing them out. The hope for the future is to be able to provide an on-demand service where the passenger does not have to reserve the ride two days in advance. Passengers will be able to use the online service or call and have a ride within 15-20 minutes and these new vans will be utilized for this particular service. Commissioner Krick asked what the capacity of the larger vans is. Transit Manager Profeta responded that they have a maximum capacity of 16 passengers; however, with the COVID-19 regulations and the reduction of riders, they have not reached full capacity in quite some time. Commissioner Krick asked if there was a maximum number of wheelchair accessible spaces per bus and Transit Manager Profeta stated that the bus can accommodate two wheelchairs per bus and there are a total of 35 buses in the fleet. The smaller 9 passenger vans have a wheelchair lift and can hold one wheelchair.

Commissioner Nelson made a comment regarding the COVID-19 vaccines. Any community members that are part of the In Home Supportive Services Program or are care providers have priority for vaccines and has instructed that all Regional Centers provide help with vaccine scheduling. Transit Manager Profeta stated that any rides to get vaccinated within the city of Riverside are free of charge.

Chair Alexander asked if the vaccines were available to the transportation employees. Ron stated that per the State regulations, as of March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, transit drivers qualify for the vaccine and have started scheduling appointments. Chair Alexander also made a comment about the response if an employee were to test positive for COVID-19. Transit Manager Profeta responded that the department was very progressive with their robust COVID-19 response plan. Working with the City's Safety Officer and the EOC team, a plan was developed to respond to all COVID-19 situations, and it has been very effective.

Chair Alexander asked how the rebranding of the transportation services is going to be advertised. Transit Manager Profeta stated that they partnered with the City's marketing team and discussed ideas such as ad inserts in publications and video testimonials that will run on the City's public TV networks. Also, once in-person community events resume, they will be there to inform residents about the services provided.

## DISCUSSION AND ACTION CALENDAR

*This portion of the Commission on Disabilities Agenda is for all matters where staff and public participation is anticipated. Individual audience participation is limited to 3 minutes.*

3. Approve minutes for the meeting of January 21, 2021

Motion to approve – Commissioner Nelson

Second – Commissioner Aleman

All in favor

4. Commissioner D. Coon's absence from meeting on January 21, 2021 with prior notice – excused/unexcused.

Commissioner Aleman made motion to designate the absence as excused  
Second – Commissioner Nelson  
All in favor

5. Commissioner A. Quezada's absence from January 21, 2021 meeting with no prior notice – excused/unexcused.

Commissioner Aleman made motion to designate the absence as unexcused  
Second – Commissioner Krick  
Commissioner Lewis abstained.  
All in favor

Staff member Jessica Spiking explained the City Clerk's office is aware of Commissioner Quezada's unexcused absences and she is waiting for direction from them.

## COMMUNICATIONS

6. Update on Brochures

Chair Alexander was not able to meet with Commissioner Nelson. Commissioner Nelson stated that he will make some edits and changes to the existing brochure and they will be discussed during the next meeting. Staff member Jessica Spiking sent the most recent brochure to Chair Alexander and Commissioner Nelson.

7. Update on Public Outreach to publicize the Commission

Staff member Jessica Spiking explained that on the City of Riverside's website, the Commission on Disabilities page states that the meetings occur on the third Thursday of every month and there is also a link to the current agenda as well as a link to watch the live meeting.

Commissioner Lewis asked if there is a way to know how many people are viewing the meeting. Staff member Jessica stated that she was not sure however, she would find out and will have an update at the next meeting. Commissioner Lewis thought that the public had to sign in to view the meeting and Jessica explained that the public can watch the meeting by going to the site where the agendas are posted and clicking the "video" link. The meetings are also broadcast on a few TV channels which will be discussed at the next meeting.

Commissioner Aleman asked what the Commissioners can do as far as reaching out to the public and asking what their concerns are and informing them about the Commission on Disabilities through different forums/social media.

Commissioner Nelson stated that prior to COVID-19 the Commission on Disabilities would join Special Transportation at the community meetings that City Council would put on and he

suggested that it would be good to go out with them and hand out brochures when they begin promoting the re-branding to Riverside Connect.

Commissioner Lewis stated that people need to have a reason to attend a meeting and she feels it is important to invite the community to share their needs and concerns. For example, what they would like to see at these meetings and how can the Commission help them. She stated that she would like this to be an action item.

8. Updates on conferences, seminars, and regional meetings attended by Commissioners.

Commissioner Lewis shared that she attended the Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee Meeting and stated that it was a great meeting. She feels they would be a good resource for the Commission when it comes to reaching out to the community for feedback.

Chair Alexander mentioned that he would be participating virtually in the Hands and Voices - Parent Conversations for parents of deaf or hard of hearing tweens and teens on March 28, 2021.

9. Items for future consideration as requested by Commission Members

Commissioner Lewis heard about informational meetings on housing which is a big issue for people with disabilities and she would like some of the Commissioners to attend some of the meetings in order to make sure that affordable housing concerns are addressed. Commissioner Lewis will send the details to Staff member Jessica Spiking when she has all the information.

Commissioner Krick made a comment regarding the homeless housing and he asked whether they will be going for quality over quantity. His question is are they going to try and house the highest amount of people or are they going to build quality houses for just a small group? Commissioner Lewis will send Staff member Jessica Spiking the information that she has regarding this.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:47 pm

Motion to adjourn – Commissioner Nelson

Second – Commissioner Perkins

All in favor

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be Thursday, April 15, 2021 Virtually, 5:30 pm.