

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

PRIVATE PROVIDER'S TASK FORCE

Meeting Date: November 18, 2004
Meeting Location: CATS, 300 W. Adams St., Chicago
Call To Order: 10:12 a.m.

Attendance:

Karin Allen	UIC/UTC
Phil Beckham III	Beckham Transit
Mary Kay Christopher	CTA
Robert Hann	Continental Airport Express
Jim Hickey	303/Flash Cab
Tom Kenter	ATC
Paul Losos	Sunrise Transit
Shamus Misek	UIC/UTC
Maureen Moroney	Medicar Ltd.
Dr. Anthony Pagano	MTA
Phil Paige	Paige Bus
Dean Pietro	VPSI
Lorraine Snorden	Pace Bus
Jock Hardy	CATS
Bill Kiley	CATS

Approval of Minutes:

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Paige at 10:12 am. Introductions were made. Minutes from prior meetings were made available for review.

Pace Update

Ms. Lorraine Snorden of Pace presented their 20/20 plan, including the North Shore restructuring plan that will be used as a template for future restructures in the Fox Valley and south and southwest Cook County areas. While some services were cut, they were restructured with heavy public involvement and apparent public acceptance. Of the four routes cut, two are now shared routes with the CTA and two were folded into existing service. Pace will be extending service from Evanston to O'Hare and is developing an arterial route on Golf Road. Service will be available from Evanston through Des Plaines to Woodfield Mall, and eventually to Elgin.

Pace is planning new equipment purchases as money is available. March 2005 is the date planned for most new service routes. Pace is also working with Metra to develop new service in industrial areas on Oakton.

Pace is pleased with the design, which was accomplished with heavy public involvement. All efforts were made to accommodate the public where possible. Pace feels the public was on board with the plan.

Using this North Shore template, Pace will do public involvement for the Fox Valley and southwest DuPage. Service could take one of three avenues:

- 1) Feeder routes to Metra, status quo.
- 2) Park-n-ride lots with express bus to Metra stations, or park-n-ride lots in areas such as malls, theaters, churches, etc.
- 3) Community-based midday routes from malls, churches, theaters, etc., creating transit centers for communities. This project is still being studied.

Pace needs Private Provider help with Emergency Ride Home (ERH) programs, as well as community-based services. School buses are not an option, mainly due to available legroom. However, school bus companies with vans or smaller buses might be an option.

Pace's next initiative will be south and southwest Cook, as well as Will County service. Bids will be ready shortly, with service changes planned to be in place over the next 15 months.

Dr. Pagano stated that ERH programs are not inherently profitable, but are vital to good service. He stated that Pace should look to vendors to buy a block of time or a retainer of sorts as lawyers might do to insure service. Mr. Paige said the school bus industry, with vans, could in fact sell blocks of time. School bus companies are pressed for time twice a day, morning and afternoon, but have inventory available all other hours of the day. Dr. Pagano pointed out that large amounts of paperwork would be a deterrent, but a contract of sorts would be needed as paying on a per-ride basis would not be attractive to vendors.

Pace uses CATS' Council of Mayors for an advisory council and is impressed with New Jersey's community-based programs that use 30-foot or less buses, vans, hotel-type vans and taxis.

Pace again asked what the Private Providers needed as far as a contract. Can they buy a block of time; can they share in Privates' full business?

CTA Update

Mary Kay Christopher, general manager of service planning for CTA, addressed the group. CTA's funding has been discussed in detail over the past few months.

Ms. Christopher stated the CTA began some \$71 million in the red this year, but has managed to cut that number to \$55 million. They have looked at contracting out some services and do recognize what Private Providers can offer. They do not look at Private Providers as a “cost savings,” but as providers who can offer more flexibility. CTA contracted out Para-transit service, which created a negative atmosphere with the union, as the most senior members bid on Para-transit routes. Afterwards, through arbitration, the union won contract verbiage that bans contract services. Some engine work is allowed to go outside and the most recent contract to go out was landscaping. The contract language is very strong and does not look like it will change in the near future, even with the budget crunch.

Dr. Pagano asked if Dial-A-Ride could be considered a new project and thus not be considered as under union contract regulations. It appears this may be the case. However, contract verbiage states that services being handled by CTA cannot be contracted out and there are few areas in CTA’s area not being serviced by CTA.

Ms. Christopher added that service cuts could be an opportunity for Privates, pointing out that many high schools will be affected by cuts. Also, Midway/Jefferson Ave. will have some areas that will be more than a mile from CTA routes.

Mr. Paige thanked Ms. Christopher for her input and the task force asked to keep the lines of communication between CTA and Private Providers open.

Marketing through CATS

Jock Hardy, director of communications for CATS, addressed the group with ideas on marketing through CATS. Different brochures were presented to the group to show what CATS uses in their public outreach programs with various chambers and localities. The Council of Mayors was also discussed as a group to discuss service abilities of the Privates. Mr. Hardy pointed out that brochures and flyer-type materials can be produced by CATS at no cost to the individual members.

Emergency Ride Home/UIC/UTC

Shamus Misek and Karin Allen from UIC’s Urban Transportation Center brought the group up to date on progress on ERH programs for Northeastern Illinois. EPA notes best work places offering other than SOV lanes and including ERH programs. Chicago has no such program and UIC/UTC has volunteered to champion the process. Currently there are 22 active members on the task force, ranging from local merchants, government employees, and representatives of elected officials. Meetings have been held in suburban locations, as this will be primarily a suburban program.

UIC/UTC has studied a number of cities and ways to pay for the program. There are as many different answers as there are plans in place, ranging from 1 to 16 to unlimited numbers of rides guaranteed, to employee co-pays, to employer funded, to city taxes to CMAQ funding. The task force is working to present three or so workable programs to CATS in January '05 for possible implementation or further review.

A pre-tax credit is available to employers/employees who use rapid transit as a means of transportation to and from work but need an ERH program to continue.

Regional Transportation Plan

Robert Hann, a member of the Private Provider's Task Force, also serves as a member of the RTP Committee. He explained the need for Privates to be more vocal with their needs on task forces such as this, and the need for more participation by our group. Hann has found that without representation Privates can be forgotten by the public agencies serving on task forces and committees.

International Conference on Privatization in Transportation

Dr. Pagano readdressed his goal to sponsor a program following a successful 1999 international gathering of transportation experts. Monies have been allocated for this program and verbal commitment by IDOT has been given to retain a consultant. Bill Kiley of CATS has met with consultants and filled out necessary paperwork. However, the state budget has not allowed us to allocate funds for the project at this time. Further discussions will take place.

Possible Maintenance Program

Bill Kiley of CATS posed the question of a possible bundling program to group different Private Providers on vehicle maintenance. The local maintenance providers took this step with parts vendors several years ago. The thought was to offer a small number of good service shops more business for a more effective cost structure. Feelings were mixed on whether to proceed. Some of the Privates have minority contracts and some have long-term relationships. However, if there is continued interest Kiley will contact vendors for discussion.

Adjournment: 11:20 a.m.

Next Meeting: It was agreed to meet again at a date to be determined in February.

Minutes Submitted By: Bill Kiley