

**TWIN CITY AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY  
Board Meeting**

**November 19, 2024**

**I. Welcome and Opening:**

**1. Call to Order:** The special meeting of the Twin City Area Transportation Authority Board of Directors was held at the Benton Harbor City Hall Building, 200 E. Wall Street, Benton Harbor, MI 49022, on Tuesday, November 19, 2024.

**2. Roll Call of Persons Present:**

Ron Singleton, Chair	Dayrl Jackson, Member
Spencer Nesbitt, Vice Chair	Cora Robinson, Board Secretary

A quorum was established, and Board Chair Ron Singleton called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

**Roll Call of Persons Absent:** Member Virgil Hatcher; joined meeting later.

**3. Approval of Agenda:** Board Vice-Chair Spencer Nesbitt made a motion to approve the agenda, second by Dayrl Jackson, and the Board unanimously approved the agenda. Roll Call: Dayrl Jackson (yes), Spencer Nesbitt (yes), Cora Robinson (yes), Ron Singleton (yes).

**II. New Business:** Deputy Director Tressa Greschak advised that the purpose of the special meeting is to provide a general update, get official permissions on the books so that once a quote is received things will move along even faster.

**a. General Insurance Update:** Still do not have a quote. The insurance broker Interim Director Todd Shurn is working with advised they would give a quote by Thursday.

**b. Working with Surrounding Agencies:** Discussions of contingency services, if necessary, to bridge the gap between not having service on December 1<sup>st</sup> and whenever insurance is actually acquired. Had discussions with Berrien Bus (onboard), Niles Dart (onboard), and First Student for limited services. Deputy Director seeks Board approval of proceeding with a plan of using contingency services for hopefully a couple weeks.

The Board discussed questions regarding procedural plans, i.e., hiring other agencies, coordinating committees, category priorities, publications, hiring costs, route coverages, dispatch authorities, TCATA staff.

Deputy Director advised TCATA dispatch is working on a tally for identifying calls for ride purposes, i.e., work, grocery, medical appointments, acquiring names, phone numbers, identifying advanced trip bookings. The focus is on supporting those who

really need rides, especially the elderly and handicapped. Some others should seek alternate rides or prepare for long wait times. Need all ADA vehicles. Limited door-to-door on fixed routes to accommodate grocery and social trips. There will be some possible alternate route changes, shifting final stops to hospital. Need to have discussions regarding coordinating dispatch (using ours or alternative assisting bus services). Will need to check with State and Federal regulators to see if possibly TCATA dispatch could be used, otherwise, public will possibly contact alternate agencies for rides.

Deputy Director has drafted a press release to newspapers, etc., will post on TCATA Facebook page and website, on City's Facebook page, etc., to get this information out to the public.

Deputy Director advised there are no plans to permanently close TCATA. Staff to be paid in full for at least 2 weeks, health insurance covered at least 30 days, after that, will revisit what can and cannot be done. Also looking into doing advanced preparations by way of unemployment if it's more beneficial for staff. No plans to let anyone go during this time. Reiterates that this is absolutely temporary.

After discussions, the Board unanimously agreed and approved the alternative backup plan.

**c. Insurance provider discussions:**

Deputy Director advised that Interim Director Shurn has been working on getting quotes, so he has more information; but her understanding is that a lot of the agencies contacted do not deal in public transportation - considered to be a high-risk industry. Other agencies denied TCATA due to our history. Brokers advised not to worry, that this happens all the time.

Looking at insurance hike from \$72,000 per year to \$3-\$500,000 per year. Looking at potential service changes to help accommodate that cost - in the long term, not now. Would wait to get public opinion, etc.

Deputy Director asks Board for their thoughts and input.

Suggestion to use Uber drivers. No service in our area. Checking with PACE. Others have vehicles but no drivers to commit to this. Easier to charter with First Student due to their down time. What about other private services, i.e., buses with their own businesses transporting people for emergencies and doctors appointments? Possibly County Veteran Services. Search needs to be far-reaching. Church buses. Senior Citizens buses. Medicaid transportation service providers. To keep costs down, we can provide a list of these services to the public; even though they're considered competitors. The Board will give the Deputy Director the names of suggested agencies and will compile a list. Will bring up at the next board meeting with how comfortable Board is with sharing that information. Need staff with authority to make these calls. Know of a few churches to possibly get volunteers to help provide services. The Deputy Director will check on regulations involving volunteers. Short window. Need to have a plan asap to make it work.

Have two weeks to have a plan up and running. Reaching out to other transportation agencies. People will still have to pay. TCATA uses tokens; how will that work with assisting buses? All need to be coordinated. This situation has not happened in Michigan before so there's no template for resolution. Deputy Director sent letter to Niles Dial-a-Ride for discussions. Their City Manager wasn't clear on what their resources were pertaining to additional buses. City manager is hesitant to get involved due to insurance issues. Possibly they'd be willing to go into Berrien buses' territory if not ours, shifting their territories for a couple of weeks. The hold-up with Niles Berrien Buss is political. Do have positive feedback from Berrien Bus, Niles Dart, and First Student.

Lots of work to be done. Will have more information on next week's regular Tuesday meeting as to whether we have insurance prior to December 1<sup>st</sup>. Once insured, will look at budget changes, i.e., cuts. If there's a need for approval of insurance, can schedule a special meeting prior to next week Tuesday's regular meeting.

**III. Public Comments:** Bishop Melvin Burton, a member of Ministerial Alliance, mentions this is about an insurance company dropping Dial-a-Ride because of high costs (risks). Dealing with churches is a hornets nest. Our church offered transportation services prior to Covid under our liability insurance. Had to shut down a church van recently servicing people while uninsured without my knowledge. Suggested using agencies established in transportation and community service, i.e. PACE; call Kalamazoo and South Bend for possible transportation contracting because they operate a line haul service; reach out to city managers; check with DOT regarding subcontracting. May have a problem with South Bend due to being across the state line. Most vehicles are line haul so routes would have to be restructured for pickups. Liked Dial-a-Ride started operations with using line hauls, more convenient but hard in cities like this to have a line haul. Check funding sources. If Dial-a-Ride have state and federal funding, will probably be charged quite a bit. Check with other nearby cities for availability, i.e., Charter busing services like the ones used for the Senior PGA, those companies might be willing to sublease for a while until things get straightened out. Check established companies that understand the liability. Subcontracting seems the best way to go in getting something fast. In the meantime, need to do something about the rumored bad record, i.e., bad drivers who have had accidents so now nobody wants to insure Dial-a-Ride. But there's always somebody out there for money.

**IV. Adjournment:** With no further business, Chair Ron Singleton adjourned the meeting without motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

**Attested:**

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Ron Singleton  
Board Chair

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Cora Robinson  
Board Secretary