



Meeting Summary

External Stakeholder Meeting 4

March 27, 2024, 11 AM–12 PM

Meeting Topics

1. Welcome
2. Review of existing conditions report
3. Discussion

Welcome

Robert Jones welcomed everyone, thanked them for attending, and gave a brief recap of the project.

Review of Existing Conditions Report

Bill Schwartz provided a high-level recap of the report using a PowerPoint presentation, included as an attachment to this summary.

Discussion

Question: When will you have your estimates of the cost to expand service and what is the deadline for completing the study?

Answer: The second phase is underway now and includes looking at future PAL demand as well as demand, costs, and options for delivering services outside the minimum ADA service area. The third phase will include helping NFTA implement the strategies that have been discussed. The study will be completed this year.

Comment: Since you spoke with other transit agencies, we would like to know what you learned and have that included in an appendix of the study.

Answer: We will include this information in our upcoming report.

Question: State legislators have introduced a bill to expand paratransit service statewide and are waiting to learn about this study's findings. When will this analysis be ready?

Answer: This summer, we will have completed our analysis and will be preparing another report explaining what we heard from the community, what different service expansion concepts look like, and how much expansion might cost. The report will include maps, estimates of ridership, travel patterns, hours of service used, and metrics for vehicle revenue hours.

Question: What does NFTA do with incomplete applications as noted on Page 31? Is there a coordinator or someone who contacts people with incomplete applications? Is there a metric to follow up with to ensure it is processed and received?

Answer: There is a coordinator that looks at each application. We follow up with the healthcare professional who assisted the person in completing the application and we also follow up with the person.

Question: Are you tracking the success of the outreach efforts of people following up and completing incomplete applications?

Answer: After following up with many of these applicants, they do complete the process. The current number of incomplete applications in the report reflects applicants who do not wish to continue with the process. Some applicants apply and recognize they are not eligible, causing them to withdraw.

Question: What about the difficulties some applicants have finding the right person to fill out Part B of the application?

Answer: The report notes that the team found the list of acceptable treating professionals was not broad enough and noted additional professionals who could help with Part B.

Comment: WNY Independent Living just received a grant from New York State to assist clinics to help more people fill out that information. We will send out more information when we have it.

Question: Have you explored what other regions in New Your State have done with their paratransit systems?

Answer: We spoke with two regions so far as part of this study (Syracuse and Rochester) and can speak with Albany.

Comment: We would like to know what other [regions] in the state are doing with service expansion.

Answer: We can compile a table using available data to compare the different regions in the state.

Question: Would you be open to using a private company to support the paratransit expansion?

Answer: Our analysis will look at different ways of delivering additional transportation services that will meet people's needs. NFTA is obligated to deliver compliant ADA service to existing customers, and any expansion of PAL service cannot be at the expense of the service required under ADA.

Comment: Concern that you are not keeping government officials updated on the progress of this study.

Answer: NFTA provides monthly updates through their government affairs department on the progress of this study and will continue to provide future updates.

Comment: PAL riders should be able to keep using their punch cards instead of the fare payment system that sometimes does not work. Punch cards make it easier for people without credit cards to use the paratransit system.

Answer: NFTA Metro has not discontinued punch cards. We are also looking to resolve some of the ongoing issues with the fare collection system.

Meeting Attendees

Steering Committee

| First Name | Last Name | Organization / Title |
|------------|------------------|--|
| Jordan | Bellassai | Health Foundation of Western & Central NY |
| Mike | Billoni | Advocate for Stephanie Speaker |
| Frank | Cammarata | Executive Director for Erie County Office for People with Disabilities |
| Aaron | Carlson | Hearts and Hands |
| Mindy | Cervoni | Community Services for Every1 |
| Ericka | Glick | Western New York Independent Living |
| Jeanette | Grimaldi | Advocate for Deaf Access Services |
| Kristen | Luppino-Gholston | Health Foundation for Western & Central NY |
| Nick | Hester | Niagara County Department of Mental Health |
| Kevin | Peterson | Village of Depew |
| Stephanie | Speaker | PAL Rider and Advocate |
| Todd | Vaarwerk | WNY Independent Living |
| David | Wantuck | Deaf Access Services |

Project Team

| First Name | Last Name | Organization | Role |
|------------|-----------|---------------------|---|
| Julie | Boasi | Highland Planning | Public Engagement Consultant |
| Nadine | Chalmers | NFTA | Manager, Service Planning |
| Samuel | Gallivan | NFTA | PAL Study Project Manager |
| Robert | Jones | NFTA | Deputy Director |
| Rachel | Maloney | NFTA | Manager, Bus and Special Service Operations |
| Megan | Morsch | Highland Planning | Public Engagement Consultant |
| Bill | Schwartz | Nelson/Nygaard | Consultant Project Manager |
| Russell | Thatcher | Thatcher Consulting | Consultant |
| Patricia | Wiseman | NFTA | Paratransit Customer Service |