

JATRAM Handilift Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 16, 2013

The meeting was held in the first floor conference room of the Hood Building, 200 South President Street. Attending today's meeting were: Rev. Sam Gleese (City of Jackson ADA Coordinator); Ms. Lee Cole (ADA Council Chairperson); Dr. Scott Crawford (Handilift Committee Chairperson); Ms. Traci Brent (City of Jackson Transit Services/ADA Transportation Accessibility Coordinator); Mr. Dewayne Cheatham (JATRAM's Head of Operations); Ms. Ollie Lester (Addie McBryde Rehab Center for the Blind); Mr. Desmeon Thomas (LIFE of MS); Ms. Judy Sikes (MSCCD); Mr. Jason Bunch; Mr. Dewone Banks; Mr. Willie Cook; Attorney Kay Hardage (DRMS); and Ms. Swannie Wilson (JATRAM Handilift Coordinator). Joining the Committee from MDOT Public Transit Division were Mr. Charles Husband, Ms. Janice Yancy, and Mr. Bul Mabil.

The meeting convened at 1:00 pm.

Approval of Minutes:

After introductions, Ms. Sikes read the minutes for the November 14, 2012 Handilift meeting. After one wording correction proposed by Ms. Brent, the revised minutes were approved unanimously.

Old Business:

- I. Nominations for Handilift Advisory Committee Officers – Ms. Sikes nominated Desmeon Thomas for Chairperson, but he declined. Then nominated Ollie Lester, but she declined. Finally, Ms. Sikes nominated Lee Cole, but she declined, noting that she is already serving as ADA Council Chairperson. Chairperson Crawford was nominated and elected by acclamation. Ms. Lester was nominated (by Ms. Sikes) for Vice-Chairperson, and she accepted. There were no other nominations and she was affirmed by acclamation. Mr. Husband nominated Ms. Sikes for Committee Secretary, which she accepted and was confirmed by acclamation.

- II. Ms. Brent gave an update on efforts to purchase new paratransit buses. She indicated that the City is looking into ordering four new Handilift buses with the fold-away, flexible seating arrangement requested by the Committee. However, she added that there may be paperwork glitches that might interfere with that purchase. Ms. Cole commented that paperwork problems should not be allowed to derail ordering buses with the most room and flexibility for wheelchair securement locations. Crawford asked Ms. Brent to have the City call him and the Committee should those problems significantly delay the purchase.

New Business:

- III. Crawford asked Ms. Wilson about the current status of bus operator training. She indicated that the City has a contract with Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE) to provide comprehensive ADA training for ALL bus operators on the following dates: February 19th, February 21st, and February 26th. The Director of LIFE, Christy Dunaway, asked Crawford to assist with that training.

- IV. Finally, the Chair opened a discussion of the Door-to-Door service policy by asking Mr. Bunch to relate a recent incident in which a Handilift operator left him at the curbside of the Robert E. Lee building. Mr. Bunch was unsure as to the accessible entrance, as he rarely travels there, and was unable to negotiate the curb ramps and sidewalks, resulting in his chair overturning. Apparently, people came to his assistance and he was uninjured. Crawford commented that the incident would have been prevented if the operator had assisted him into the door. There was a lengthy discussion in which some advocated Handilift customers taking more responsibility. Attorney Hardage commented that JATTRAN has a legal responsibility for its passengers getting to their destination safely, and that includes getting them in the door. Crawford referred to the Comprehensive ADA Paratransit Eligibility course he took with JATTRAN staff last year. In that training, it is recommended that paratransit providers evaluate the cognitive and physical ability of clients to navigate safely and independently. Based on that evaluation, it should be easier to know in advance which clients need greater assistance (door to door service) and thereby, minimize accidents. Mr. Letman said they will be undergoing that training in the near future.

Open Discussion:

- V. The Committee discussed what might be done to improve transportation options for people with disabilities. The unanimous conclusion was a Metro-Transit System, something that has been discussed for several decades. One obstacle to implementing this plan includes competition for sales tax revenue between neighboring cities. Crawford commented that this “infighting” is unwise in a global economy, adding that our society should be working together to become more efficient and be more concerned with competition with China.

Mr. Letman said that other jurisdictions, namely the City of Ridgeland, will not allow JATTRAN buses on their roads, preventing Route #12 from operating in both directions (thereby reducing headways). Some commented that the South continues to cling to outdated stereotypes of public transit as being only for the “poor or disabled.” Mr. Letman rightly commented that no such stereotypes exist in the North, where many prefer transit. Mr. Husband said that MDOT prefers the term “Community Transit” to public transit. Crawford indicated his belief that fuel prices and an aging population will make a Metro-Transit System vital as our population ages and as fuel prices rise.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 20th, 2013.

These Minutes were written by committee chairperson, Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D. and approved at the March 20, 2013 meeting.