JATRAN Handilift Advisory Council Meeting Minutes March 28, 2012

The meeting was held at the MS Arts Center first floor conference room, 201 East Pascagoula Street. Attending today's meeting were: Dr. Scott Crawford, Chairperson; Rev. Sam Gleese, City ADA Coordinator; Ms. Traci Brent, City of Jackson Transit Services/ADA Transportation Accessibility Coordinator, Dr. Christy Dunaway (Director of Living Independence for Everyone), Mr. Theo Letman, JATRAN's new General Manager (PTM), Dewayne Cheatham (JATRAN's Head of Operations), Lee Cole, Jason Bunch, Namon Hulitt, Jr., Attorney Kay Hardage (DRMS), Karen Robinson (JATRAN Handi-Lift Dispatcher), City Attorneys Azande Williams and Monica D. Joiner, George Ewing, City of Jackson's Office of Public Works (Engineering), and members of JATRAN's Fixed Route Advisory Committee including Sheila O'Flaherty, Gladys Bunzy and Harriet Tanzman.

The meeting convened at 1:00pm.

Old Business:

By request, the minutes were tabled as Attorney Williams needed to leave early and I. needed to discuss ordering of new paratransit buses first. Dr. Crawford summarized the prior recommendation made last year by this Committee that the City orders four new paratransit buses with additional wheelchair securement locations. Crawford listed the advantages of such buses as follows: (a) bus operators have difficulty maneuvering around people in wheelchairs using the current configuration because the lift itself takes up some of the space, and therefore, there is BARELY enough room to fit two chairs side-by-side. This makes it difficult for bus operators to secure even two chairs; (b) placing wheelchairs behind the rear axle creates an excessively bumpy ride on Jackson streets, and people in wheelchairs can "go airborne" even when using lap belts; (c) there are times when it would be helpful to have increased wheelchair capacity (e.g., disability meetings/functions); (d) having more than one row of wheelchair securements allows flexibility in boarding and alighting passengers in any order (the current configuration allows no flexibility); and (e) in the event of an emergency evacuation order, there will likely be a need for greater wheelchair capacity.

Attorneys Williams and Hardage briefly related the discussion that occurred during a recent conference call with the Department of Justice and Monitor Russell Thatcher (TranSystems), regarding this issue. The possibility of ordering two buses now, with the current two-wheelchair configuration, and two more later, with four, was discussed.

There was much discussion about the pros and cons of that option. The City wishes to wait until May to hear from Mr. Thatcher and get his opinion of whether additional wheelchair spaces are necessary. Dr. Dunaway asked why an outside opinion was necessary considering this body already made the recommendation, and that its

opinion is based on direct experience using these very vehicles. Ms. Cole was of the opinion that we should order the buses now so as to get them on the street as quickly as possible. She proposed ordering two additional vans now, with the traditional two-wheelchair locations in the rear of the bus, and then ordering two (rather than the previously recommended four) buses with four securement locations. The motion was seconded by Jason Bunch and passed four to zero. Crawford as Chairperson abstained from the vote, but expressed concern about the possibility of liability on the city should there be a need for a large-scale evacuation sometime in the future.

Approval of Minutes:

Dr. Dunaway read the January minutes. There was one minor wording correction, but they were approved unanimously with that one revision.

New Business:

- I. George Ewing, City Engineer, showed a prioritized list of some six hundred JATRAN bus stops that were recently submitted to a consultant for bus stop and sidewalk upgrades. Mr. Ewing indicated that some of the bus stops cited in the sidewalk surveys conducted by LIFE volunteers and Dr. Crawford are included in the list. Crawford noted that there are some changes to the prioritization based on the new bus routes; for instance, there is a new transfer point on I-55 in front of Big Lots that should receive high priority. Mr. Ewing said he looked forward to working with this committee as things progress in upgrading the higher priority bus stops and sidewalks. Crawford thanked him, but asked that people from the ADA Council be consulted about specific designs and construction so that mistakes are avoided. He agreed.
- II. Lee Cole gave a brief summary of a public hearing on taxicab fare increases last Thursday (March 22nd) at City Hall. The ADA Advisory Council considered this matter earlier in the month and formally recommended that fare increases be contingent upon a demonstrated track record of providing "equivalent service" to people with disabilities, including those that require a lift/ramp equipped vehicle. Ms. Cole said that the taxicab companies want the City of Jackson to pay for the lift/ramp equipment for their vans. According to Ms. Cole, Councilman Lumumba (City Council Transportation Chairperson) said that they would have to find other grant or funding opportunities.

Announcements: The next meeting of the Handilift Advisory Council needed to be changed due to Mr. Thatcher's (JATRAN Consent Decree Monitor) visit during the week of May 16th. So, the next meeting of the Handilift Advisory Council was scheduled for Wednesday, May 30th at the Hood Building, 200 South President Street, and First Floor Conference Room.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

These Minutes were written by Council Chairperson, Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D. These Minutes have been approved at the May 30, 2012, regular meeting.