



MEMORANDUM

TO: Randy Tamez, Chair, Committee for Transit Accessibility

FROM: Dolly Sandoval, Chair, Transit Planning and Operations Committee

DATE: December 13, 2007

SUBJECT: Committee for Transit Accessibility (CTA) Concerns with Services from VTA Staff

At the October meeting of the Transit Planning and Operations Committee (TP&O), you presented a list of concerns relating to services provided by VTA staff to the CTA.

After working with staff, I want to group your concerns into two categories: items that are operational in nature and should be worked out with the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and staff; and policy items that I propose be placed on your work plan and worked through systematically, with TP&O involvement as appropriate.

The following items are operational in nature, to be addressed by the COO and staff:

1. Distribution Lists

CTA members have been placed on the distribution lists they requested. At the December CTA meeting, members were asked to reaffirm their interest in being on distribution lists, as required each year.

2. Accessible Formats

I am satisfied that VTA is heading in the right direction, although there is room for continual improvement. CTA was asked to provide input on a draft Accessible Information Policy at its December meeting. Staff will take into consideration the CTA's input and revise the policy, as appropriate, before it is finalized. While substantial improvements have already been made, VTA is committed to providing documents in accessible format(s), as required by ADA.

3. Work Programs

The CTA has confirmed that the current work plan format and content is satisfactory. TP&O encourages CTA to place items on its work plan and review/refine it periodically. To strengthen the workplan and give the Committee focus, I believe TP&O should review it every January. By doing so, we can all be assured that the priorities of VTA are being met, with the CTA's expertise being added.

4. No Verbal Reports

Given the lead times necessary to prepare written reports, the CTA has two choices: verbal responses documented by the minutes can be provided sooner, or written reports need to be placed on the work plan for a future meeting. The Chair and Committee will also need to make choices about the number of written reports on an agenda, as staff's time to research and produce written reports is limited.

5. Equal Planning Opportunities

Planning processes typically have long lead times with multiple opportunities for input from various constituencies. Having said that, staff does not always have time to take every item to every advisory committee. Yet, staff is taking items to those committees that are most relevant to the topic. In the case of CTA, I believe the most relevant items are accessibility of fixed route service, paratransit service, and mobility training. These items should be on your workplan well in advance of when they need to be addressed by TP&O and the full Board.

6. Accountability of Accessible Services Department

Job descriptions for all VTA positions are, and have been, available on vta.org. It is my understanding that most VTA departments don't have individual "mission, goals, and objectives". In fact, the Board plans to revisit VTA's overall vision and mission statements. Some time ago staff provided the CTA with the titles of positions in Accessible Services, their reporting relationships, and copies of the job descriptions for these positions.

7. Integrating Services for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

The perception that seniors and the disabled community are automatically routed to the Accessible Services Department is incorrect. Accessible Services staff is consulted when their expertise is needed. It is important that VTA be organized so that expertise, experience and knowledge of the industry resides in and is managed by our Accessible Services Department.

8. CTA Motions as a History of Frustration

I understand the motion-tracking matrix is of great benefit now and the Committee is using this tool. As the CTA knows, its input is advisory and is only one of many sources of input the Board considers as it makes decisions. An additional opportunity for CTA input is provided each month at the TP&O Committee, where the CTA Chair reports on CTA issues and concerns. The Board is aware of, and appreciates, your perspective on issues. That doesn't mean we will always act as you wish.

9. VTA Staff Discrediting CTA Members

If you believe VTA staff discredits CTA members you need to bring that to the attention of the Chief Operating Officer or the General Manager. I am confident they will deal with any inappropriate behavior.

10. Lack of ITS projects

Included on your workplan should be a discussion of IT-related projects if the CTA would like this addressed. Please note, though, the budget cycle is long. There is an extensive review and evaluation process conducted by staff before projects are included in the recommended budget, and many more projects are proposed than can be funded. Again,

plenty of lead-time is necessary for the CTA to sort out its desires and then forward recommendations through the regular budget review and adoption process.

The following are policy-related items:

11. Spending \$600,000 on Organizational Efforts while doing little to satisfy CTA requests
The Board is committed to implementing the recommendations of the Organizational and Financial Assessment and has approved a work plan to address the three areas of concern – governance, organizational structure, and financial management. It is premature to speculate on what will or will not be changed as a result of this effort. Staff will continue to keep you apprised of activities in this area. The Board may also seek your input as we deal with recommendations relating to advisory committees. If there is something immediate that you think we should address, please let me know.

12. Origin to Destination

This appears to be a complex issue on which VTA and CTA have provided comments to the Department of Transportation, the comment period has ended, and a final ruling is still pending. I understand staff prepared a written report for discussion at your December meeting. VTA's paratransit service is provided as door-to-door service. It is my understanding that neighboring paratransit operators in San Mateo County and the East Bay provide door-to-door service in some circumstances. Hopefully, the final ruling, once issued, will provide some clarification and guidance on what is expected of paratransit operators.

13. Mobility Training

This is an area that I would like the CTA to work with staff on. It should be the Committee's main focus for 2008. I would like you to follow the successful model (which included a Task Force comprised of CTA members, outside agency representatives, and VTA staff) that was used to develop and implement the Mobility Device Securement policy and program, and advise TP&O periodically on your progress.

Thank you, Randy, for your involvement with CTA. I appreciate your desire to see better process and procedures here at VTA. I believe this memo addressed your recent concerns. Please do get back to me if you have any questions. I certainly look forward to CTA working on the long-range policy issues that VTA will be addressing in 2008.

c: Board Member Forrest Williams, CTA Committee Liaison
Michael Burns, General Manager
Dan Smith, Chief Operating Officer
Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager
Committee for Transit Accessibility