

Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation Services

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Zoom Meeting

Meeting called to order at 10:15a.m. by Josh Bruns

Committee Members Present: Brandon Hatfield (TARC), Robert Harder (Astra), Anthony Fadale, Kim Dietrich (RCIL), and Deborah Dawkins (ETSC).

Committee Members Absent: Nancy Johnson, Brian Snodderly, Topeka Rescue Mission Representative, Mike Nolting, Mark Webb, Mary Thomas.

All were sent the previous meetings minutes and were approved.

Mr. Bruns started off the introductions with Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Harder, Mrs. Dawkins, Mr. Fadale, and Ms. Deitrich, introducing themselves to the committee.

Mr. Bruns gave a quick synopsis of ACATS and thanked all members present today.

The members were sent information on Severe Weather Preparedness Week, which was the week of March 2-6. Mr. Bruns told the members that Topeka Metro conducted our yearly Statewide Tornado drill; and everything went as planned.

Mr. Bruns told the members that an operator had asked why we could not drop off passengers where the employees park at TARC Randolph. Mr. Bruns explained that first, TARC would not allow that, and second, it would force our buses to back out, possibly causing an accident. TARC member Mr. Hatfield agreed with this. We discussed that although it can get chaotic sometimes, the way the drop off is conducted now is the best practice.

Mr. Bruns discussed a shared project between the City of Topeka, Topeka Metro, along with KDOT and CFS engineering, for improving three (3) bus stops in SE Topeka. Those stops are 27<sup>th</sup> & Indiana outbound, 29<sup>th</sup> & Indiana outbound, and the inbound Highland Park Townhomes. Mr. Bruns told the members, if they had any questions on any of our stops, to contact him and it would be taken to the Bus Stop Group.

Mr. Bruns brought up the ACATS By-laws saying that they have not been updated since 2017. He asked the members to look over them and bring to the next meeting any changes they would like to see. Mr. Bruns said, if they see that no changes need to be made, we can approve them as written and update the year.

With that, Mr. Bruns explained the by-laws allow us to vote for new members and vote out members that aren't participating or don't align with the committee's standards. Mr. Bruns asked the members if they knew of anyone that would like to be on the committee. If they know of someone, they can bring them up at the next meeting to be voted on. Ms. Deitrich asked Mike Nolting, Mr. Bruns said he contacted Mr. Nolting last month and he said he would still like to be a part of the committee. Mr. Fadale said he may have someone that would like to be a member. Mr. Bruns explained we need 12 members. 10 are voting members, with 6 of the 10 being consumers, the other 4 being agency representatives. We also have 2 non-voting agency members.

Ms. Deitrich mentioned Bobby Whyte as a possible member. Mr. Bruns told Kim that it was next to be discussed. Mr. Bruns told the members about Mr. Whyte. That he is visually impaired and has been a passenger with Topeka Metro for many years. Mr. Bruns asked the committee if there were any issues with voting Mr. Whyte as a consumer member. Mrs. Dawkins asked if we needed a motion, Mr. Bruns said yes. Mrs. Dawkins motioned for Mr. Whyte to be a new member of the committee, Mr. Hatfield seconded the motion, all approved. Mr. Bruns said he would be contacting Mr. Whyte. Ms. Deitrich brought up that Mr. Whyte will need to be present at the meetings. Mr. Bruns thanked Ms. Deitrich for bringing that up. Mr. Fadale said he thinks Mr. Whyte will make a good member, as he has worked with him for years, and says what's on his mind. Mr. Bruns agreed and said he had talked with Mr. Whyte last week and explained to him the importance of keeping the meeting positive. That's not to say that something may be said that may trigger someone, but we will deal with that as it comes.

Mr. Bruns asked the members to think of ideas that will help our disabled passengers. He explained that Topeka Metro does everything we can to accommodate all passengers. Mr. Bruns asked Mr. Harder if an issue arose with one of Astra's clients or one, we feel is having a mental health issue, what is the best way to get services to them. Mr. Bruns explained that we have a good

relationship with TPD's CIT unit and have been given information to contact behavioral health. Mr. Harder explained if a person is asking to go to Valeo or we see they may need mental health assistance, to contact the Mobile Crisis Response. This consists of a mental health professional and peer support. They can be reached at 785-215-8888 ext. 6369. Mr. Harder believes this is a 24-hour line.

Mr. Bruns asked Mrs. Dawkins about ridership with East Topeka Senior Center. Mr. Bruns thought the seniors rode the bus through the week. Mrs. Dawkins said all their clients are transported by their agency throughout the week. The only time they ride the buses are on Saturday's.

Mr. Bruns explained the Educator Passes to the members and what they needed to do to acquire them. Mr. Hatfield wanted to thank Metro for having this program and said it really helps them.

Mr. Bruns asked if there was anything they would like to discuss. Mr. Fadale mentioned a ride he took that the driver helped him. Mr. Fadale said there are some bad potholes and bumps on 21<sup>st</sup> Street by Washburn. Mr. Fadale said if you are in the back of a lift bus or even a big one, you will be jolted. Mr. Fadale said the driver got the information and gave it to a city worker. Mr. Fadale said he received an email stating the city would be looking into it. Mr. Bruns said the city has closed 21<sup>st</sup> Street from College to Washburn for a gas line repair. Mr. Bruns said, hopefully they will fix the potholes then. Mr. Fadale said he would like to thank the morning and afternoon driver that helped him, Mr. Bruns said he would make sure he was told.

Mr. Bruns said, if there is nothing else, the meeting will be adjourned. Mr. Bruns thanked all the members for their time and presence and asked them to think of ways to help the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 10:52a.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the initials 'JB' with a large, stylized flourish.