

COLUMBUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES

Minutes of the Meeting April 25, 2019
State Library of Ohio

ATTENDANCE

Tricia Kovacs	member, chair
Mary Hiland	guest
Bob Roehm	member
Paul Walker	member
Nick Popa, City of Cols. Public Services	ex officio
Claire Jennings, Age-Friendly Columbus	guest
Maudie Grace	guest
Jennifer Smith-Dudash	guest
Marlene Stewart	member
April Williams	COTA
Tiffany Pannell	guest, COTA
Nancy Pryor Sully, City Council liaison	guest
Tiffany McLain	member

CALL TO ORDER Chair Tricia Kovacs called the meeting to order and attendees introduced themselves. We welcomed new attendees, Maudie Grace, who is an advocate for residents on the south side of Columbus, and Jennifer Smith-Dudash, who works for Deaf Service Center. We also welcomed Tiffany Pannell, who presented information on the new Mainstream On Demand program.

ACCESSIBILITY PHONE APPLICATIONS Last month, members Deb Wood and Paul Walker described some of the phone applications that they use. We ran out of time to finish last month, so Paul finished up his presentation. Paul talked about VoiceDream, which lets you listen to various types of files, text, Word, PDF, etc. VoiceDream came out with a new scanner that works even better than other similar products (Seeing AI and KNFB Reader) and is less expensive. Paul reminded us about VoiceOver, which is a screen reader.

Paul demonstrated BlindSquare, which provides directions to a location you want to travel to. You can also plan a virtual trip in order to plan out your route ahead of time. My Places saves addresses you regularly visit. This application partners with FourSquare, which is another app which allows users to share places and businesses. As you're traveling, the app describes where you are located and where intersections are and how far away. It will also read off the businesses you are passing as you travel. BlindSquare also allows beacons to be placed to help with navigation. BlindSquare costs \$39 (one time price). There is a 50 page manual and the application may be customized to how you want to use it.
<https://www.blindsquare.com/>

Soundscape is a similar application which is free from Microsoft. It helps you with wayfinding by audibly telling the user where the location is and what you are "seeing" along the way. Paul recommended headphones which don't interfere with the ambient sound, such as AfterShocks or Jabra.
<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/product/soundscape/>

Nearby Explorer is another wayfinding app sponsored by NFB. This is an app that Paul has used but is no longer using.

Tune In gives you tens of thousands of radio and TV stations all over the world. This application is very accessible.

Mary Hiland described Victor Reader Track (used to be Victor Reader Stream which was a book reader) which has a GPS function. The app tells you which way you're facing, where you are located, nearest intersection, etc. The app does allow you to ask for directions to a certain place. Mary likes the function "Where am I?" Also tells you how many steps you've walked and how far.

Paul also mentioned the Bard app which lets you download books from the state library.

Tricia asked if any of the apps have information on where sidewalks exist and where traffic signals are located. Paul thought not. She suggested that it would be great if the databases could be integrated (e.g. the sidewalk maps from MORPC and the traffic signal maps from the MORPC traffic count maps). Claire Jennings said that the MORPC sidewalk map is a snapshot so it may not be being updated regularly. The sidewalk map also

does not show the width of the sidewalks, but does indicate which side of the road they are on (or both) and where the sidewalks are missing. Nick Popa mentioned that the Smart Columbus team is investigating integrating the MORPC sidewalk map into their wayfinding app.

COTA MAINSTREAM ON DEMAND

Tiffany Pannell talked with us about the new Mainstream On Demand service. The service launches May 6. The service is provided for non-ADA and same day trips. Currently, users must call 7 days in advance for non-ADA trips. An ADA trip is within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a fixed route bus and the same hours as the route schedule. A Non-ADA trip is outside the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile and outside the operating hours as the fixed route. But, same day requests for Mainstream On Demand are Non-ADA trips, even if they fall within the distance and operating hours of an ADA trip.

Tiffany walked us through the informational flier and FAQ for the service, including service hours for reservations and trips. Here are those links:
<https://www.cota.com/accessibility-for-riders-with-disabilities/mobility/>
<https://www.cota.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MainstreamOnDemand-FAQ.pdf>

Some additional information: The cost is \$5 plus additional cost per mile. The fare schedule is now available on the COTA website (see first link above). Currently only credit cards will be accepted for trips. The charge is made after the trip is completed. Drivers will wait 10 minutes for the rider and will attempt to contact the rider via cellphone. Drivers will have background checks. Users can identify drivers by their license plate numbers and a UZURV placard on the vehicle and an emblem on their shirt. But Tiffany asked for suggestions from our committee as to how security could be improved for riders with vision disabilities. A suggestion is to ask the driver for the name of the person they are picking up, which the Mainstream driver would know. There will be wheelchair-accessible vehicles using Tristar. We discussed the issue of requiring re-certification for people with permanent disabilities, but April Williams told us that COTA is not allowed to do permanent certifications. April also told us that people who are certified to use ADA transit who live outside the COTA service area may use COTA Mainstream. An example is a client who lives in another state but visits her elderly parents in Columbus. Other cities are providing similar services including Jacksonville, FL.

This is a 6 month pilot and there may be changes to the operation and hours based on the demand for Mainstream On Demand.

BUSINESS

We approved the meeting minutes from March. We discussed the need to update our membership and asked guests who would like to join to send a resume or letter of interest to the City via Zane Jones.

PERSONAL ISSUES

Tricia described a program from MORPC to provide consulting to cities on making improvements for active transportation. Tricia provided comments on the application regarding the need for disability accessibility.

Governor DeWine was making a public statement on the day of our meeting about the need for reducing distracted driving in Ohio. Tricia was on the ODOT/ODPS committee which has been addressing this issue and provided a report to the Governor. She hopes that Ohio will adopt a primary hands-free cellphone law. Another legislative development is Senate Bill 73 which will require motorists to yield to pedestrians who are WAITING to use a crosswalk.

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA133-SB-73>

Nancy Sully announced another city council community meeting at Hoyo's Kitchen on April 30. She will send out the list of council committee assignments. She also reminded us about the bond issues that will be on the ballot.

Marlene Stewart asked how to find out if a building is ADA compliant? Nick suggested to start with Zane Jones, who will probably put you in touch with the building and zoning department. Paul Walker suggested the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. Marlene had questions about automatic doors and bicycle rack locations.

Bob Roehm described the problem with the White Castle on South High St which has a parking stop blocking a sidewalk.

Claire Jennings shared the 2018 Age Friendly progress report. Age Friendly Columbus is working with the Better Business Bureau to evaluate age-friendly businesses. May 4 is a day set aside to visit businesses for evaluation, but these businesses may be evaluated anytime.

The Smart Columbus wayfinding app will also be available for testing for people over age 55.

Tricia announced that VSA Ohio (arts organization for people with disabilities) has an opening for a new executive director.

Traffic signal removals are under study at Thurman & Jaeger, Frebis & Champion and Brentnell & Woodward. Tricia explained that Ray Charles Harrison (a resident who is blind) has asked that the signal be retained due to the traffic volume at Thurman & Jaeger and she created a 311 on his behalf. But the service request was closed saying that the traffic volumes were not met. Erin Synk (Southside area commission) has asked that the signal be retained at Frebis & Champion because there is a nearby food pantry so many pedestrians are crossing there. Tricia reported that there was a crash involving a school bus in which students were injured at Livingston & Champion, where the traffic signal was removed. Tricia also suggested to Reggie McMillian of the Woodland civic association that they should request a pedestrian beacon for the Brentnell & Woodward intersection where there is a recreation center. Nancy Sully-Pryor also mentioned that Shayla Favor is the new chair of the city council public service committee.

Nancy reminded us that we must submit 311 requests because those are what determine where improvements should be made.

Bob Roehm and Tricia described the walk audit which we attended at the Blackburn recreation center. Tricia would like to hold our walk audit in June, if possible, at a location that has the two new types of pedestrian beacons, to evaluate them for accessibility by people with disabilities.

ADJOURNMENT. Meeting adjourned at 2:50pm

Next meeting: May 23, 2019, at State Library of Ohio

Patricia Kovacs