Memorandum

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Date: September 2, 2014

TAC
Agenda Item No. 7(A)

To: Honorable Commissioner Dennis C. Moss
Chairman, Transportation and Aviation Committee

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

Subject: Miami-Dade Transit Update: Mr. David New, Special Transportation Services Customer Complaints

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This report is provided in response to statements made by Mr. David New during the Board of County Commissioners (Board) meeting on May 20, 2014. In addition, it was requested that the Department prepare a written report to present to the Transportation and Aviation Committee for review. After the conclusion of the Board meeting, Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) reached out to Mr. New and assured him that all safety issues which he expressed would be addressed. Additionally, a follow-up written response (via e-mail) was forwarded to Mr. New on June 9th.

Detailed below is a re-cap of the concerns and issues Mr. New raised and the department's response to each.

General Overview – Mr. David New and Customer Service History
A review of Mr. New's Special Transportation Service (STS) trips from January 1, 2014 to May 14, 2014 indicates that he has taken 84 trips. Of those 84, Mr. New was picked-up later than the contractually allowable 30-minute window on nine (9) occasions. In addition, Mr. New has filed two (2) complaints for late pick-ups. One complaint was received on February 10, 2014 when his transportation arrived 54 minutes late. The second complaint was received on February 12, 2014, after his transportation arrived 39 minutes late.

Although the contractor routinely meets the overall on-time performance requirements (80%), trips provided late resulting in customer complaints result in the assessment of liquidated damages. Staff works with the contractor to assess whether the collection of liquidated damages is warranted and final assessments are determined as provided by the procedures outlined in the contract. To date, MDT has collected $95,496.59 in liquidated damages for late trips.

Issues Presented at the Board Meeting:

1. STS Service is Unsafe: Mr. New stated that the STS service was unsafe, but to date, has not provided any specific incidents.

2. Technical issues with the Radio Frequency Identification program (RFID): Mr. New has been advised that MDT is currently reviewing functionality of the program. More specifically, Transportation America and MDT staff recently conducted field testing to both assess the number of passengers carrying their identification EASY Cards and a technical analysis of the card readers and antennas. As a result, it was determined that a segment of the rider population may find an alternative type of RFID identification easier to use. Among the compatible RFID-options are bracelets, rings and straps which can be affixed to some mobility aids. Additionally, Transportation America is evaluating the use of a multi-antenna application that may improve overall RFID detection.

3. STS Drivers are not Proficient in English: STS drivers must pass an English proficiency exam administered by the Miami-Dade County's Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division (PTRD). The exam measures English proficiency at a third grade reading level. Additionally, the topic of English proficiency has been brought to the attention of the County's licensing department (Regulatory and Economic Resources).

4. MDT Website is not Accessible for the Visually Impaired: As a result of this concern, an accessibility review of the department's website was conducted. It was discovered that two pages on MDT's website were not compatible with the most common screen reading software for the visually impaired, known as Job Access with Speech, or JAWS. The two pages have since been corrected.

5. Long Wait Times When Calling Transportation America: The contractual requirements for "Average Hold Time" is two (2) minutes and 45 seconds for "Average Speed of Answer." For the period between June 2013 and June 2014, the average hold time was 27 seconds and the average speed of answer was 73 seconds. Per the contract, the contractor is assessed $600.00 per week when the standard is not met. To date, the contractor has been assessed $ 4,800.00 for exceeding the 45 second limit.

6. The Prepayment or Voucher Program is not User-friendly: The sale of vouchers is a Transportation America function. However, we will be adding information to the STS section of MDT's website which directs customers to the Transportation America website and provides instructions and purchasing information.

7. STS Contract Should be Made Public: The current STS contract is a public document and is available upon request. Mr. New was forwarded a copy of the contract in an accessible format on June 9, 2014.

8. Performance Data on Transportation America: Mr. New was directed to the STS Reports section of MDT's website which contains published reports, including the number of complaints and on-time performance statistics for the vendor. Further, Mr. New requested a meeting with management from Transportation America. MDT provided him with the contact information for the General Manager.

9. MDT Should Conduct a Service Survey: The department does not currently have a plan for a survey. However, routine trip monitoring is done by the STS Customer Service section and the monitoring reports are also available on the STS Reports section of the department's website.

MDT fully appreciates any and all opportunities to assess and evaluate the quality of all services provided to our valued ridership. Further, staff has communicated with Mr. New on several occasions and invited him to meet with us in person to further discuss various service issues.

Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact Ysela Llort, MDT Director at (786) 469-5411.

Alina T. Hudak
Deputy Mayor