



**Miami-Dade County
Commission on Disability Issues (CODI)
Stephen P. Clark Center (SPCC)
111 N.W. 1st Street, Miami, Florida 33128
18th Floor, Conference Room 18-4**

Date: Tuesday, July 22, 2025

Time: 10:30 AM – 1 PM

Call to Order Time: 10:50 AM

Meeting Adjourned: 12:55 PM

Opening and Attendance: Attendance recorded. Call to Order. Copies of documents were distributed.

- District 1 Oliver G. Gilbert, III Damian Gregory P
- District 2 Marliene Bastien Vacant
- District 3 Keon Hardemon Marilyn Orozco P
- District 4 Micky Steinberg Vacant
- District 5 Eileen Higgins Eddie Sierra Vice Chairman P
- District 6 Natalie Milian Orbis Vacant
- District 7 Raquel A. Regalado Rabbi Yossi Harlig A
- District 8 Danielle Cohen Higgins Vacant
- District 9 Kionne L. McGhee Vacant
- District 10 Anthony Rodriguez Natalia Wong A
- District 11 Roberto J. Gonzalez Katherine Magnoli Chairman P
- District 12 Juan Carlos Bermudez Maria Mercedes Villar A
- District 13 René Garcia Theo Karantsalis P

Miami-Dade County Staff and Members of the Public

- Jody Cox, PIOD, ADA Projects Administrator
- Michael Moran, PIOD, ADA Senior Officer
- Marie-Chantal Darius, PIOD, ADA Coordination Specialist
- Joyce Galbut, CAHSD and DSAIL, Center Manager
- Jorge Batista, PROS, Therapist
- Deputy Nicola Wake, MDSO
- Deputy Tiera Buie, MDSO
- Timothy Saller, OMB, Business Analyst Manager
- Brenda Lampon, Office of the Mayor, Senior Advocate

- Willie Lucas, National Federation of the Blind (NFB)
- John C. Williams, Transportation America
- Joel Llanes, resident
- Renita Holmes, resident
- Ernie Martinez, resident

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

- Meeting was called to order at 10:50 AM with five CODI members present. Quorum was achieved.

2. Approval of Minutes and Agenda: Chairman Magnoli requested a motion to approve the July agenda. Damian Gregory made the motion; Marilyn Orozco seconded the motion. Motion passed; July agenda was approved. Chairman Magnoli requested a motion to approve the June minutes. Theo Karantsalis made the motion; Eddie Sierra seconded the motion. Motion passed; June minutes were approved.

3. Public Comments (Two minutes per person): N/A

- N/A

4. New Business

a. Nathaniel Surrancy, DTPW ADA Coordinator, was unable to attend and provide an update about transit station elevators.

b. The Public Education Unit of Miami-Dade Fire Rescue was unable to attend and share a presentation about emergency evacuation methods for people with disabilities at the SPCC Government Center.

c. Heidi Johnson shared information about the ADA Office's upcoming ADA 35th anniversary celebration. She also asked CODI members what they believe are CODI's achievements in 2023 and 2024. The ADA Office needs this information for the statutorily required Sunset Review Report. Ms. Johnson suggested gas pump access and text to 911 as achievements.

d. Damian Gregory said that the final County housing document was not completed yet. Ms. Johnson has the housing document and will email it again to CODI. Mike Moran gave a brief overview of recent housing legislation that had been passed.

e. Deputy Nicola Wake gave a brief informational talk on the Miami-Dade County Sheriff's Office Occupant with Autism Program.

- Mr. Gregory asked about people with disabilities having a meltdown and asked police how they are trained to handle that. Officer Wake and Deputy Buie shared their experiences and training with persons with autism.

- Chair Magnoli expressed concern about safety of people with disabilities. Officer Wake explained that the information is in the police computer system.

Decal does not have to be shown physically. Mr. Karantsalis asked about procedure when a vehicle is pulled over. Officer Wake said that the autism information will be shown in the computer system when the officer looks up vehicle tag/info.

- Ms. Renita Holmes asked about how information about an arrestee's disability is communicated to correctional facilities to which they are taken. Ms. Johnson explained that the arresting police officers are expected to contact the facility where the individual is being taken. As soon as every arrestee (regardless of disability) is taken to a correctional facility, they are immediately evaluated for both medical and disability needs. Ms. Holmes said that there is only one ASL interpreter for the correctional facilities. Ms. Johnson said that is not the case. The County has a County-wide contract with multiple ASL interpreting service companies who can draw from a large pool of interpreters.

- Mr. Gregory asked how info about the autism program is shared with the public. Officer Wake said they are doing outreach at public events and on social media.

f. Paratransit RFP, reliable service and the STS fare increase

- Mr. Karantsalis spoke with commissioners about the STS RFP. Theo stated: "Last week I attended a transportation committee meeting, I want to recognize Renita Holmes because she showed up to speak also. What I said was brief, RFP, this particular one, was intended to modernize Miami Dade's micro-transit for reliability with new software, I received calls from members of the disability community when it was suddenly removed without explanation. The system proposed critical improvements to transit. The shortcomings impact the daily lives of those with disabilities; many rely on transport for healthcare essential community activities and work. I mentioned that Jarice Rodriguez spoke and outlined the benefits of the proposed of the system. This is above her pay grade in my opinion. Its sudden withdrawal caused confusion and concern within the disability community that has long advocated for equitable transportation, it should be a bridge not a barrier, the community is not asking for special treatment, just fair and equal service. So the disability community urges the BCC to explain the rationale for the cancellation of this particular RFP. It got the attention of the commissioners there; I spoke with several of them about it. One of them went on the record. It was your commissioner. Who is lovely, by the way. She is commissioner Eileen Higgins; she's very pro-transit. My understanding is this is going to be a big item on their next agenda. It's not resolved."

- Theo also provided more info: Errata – Item F: Paratransit RFP, Reliable Service, and STS Fare Increase

- Mr. Karantsalis reported that he spoke before commissioners at the Miami-Dade County Transportation Committee meeting and urged reinstatement of RFP EVN0001136, which was withdrawn without explanation. His statement entered into the record (which he read into CODI's record) read:

- “RFP EVN0001136 was intended to modernize Miami-Dade’s Paratransit and Microtransit systems with improved scheduling, tracking, and reliability through new software. I’ve received calls from members of the disabled community who have reached out to me after it was suddenly withdrawn without explanation. What is the status of this RFP, please?”
- He emphasized that the canceled RFP would have replaced the outdated STS system with a modern platform offering real-time tracking, faster pickups, video monitoring, and greater rider independence. The current system, he noted, remains unreliable, untracked, and noncompliant with ADA standards—leaving disabled riders without the basic service they were promised.
- District 5 County Commissioner and Transportation Committee Chair Eileen Higgins responded at the end of the meeting, saying: “You should expect that there will be a discussion item at the next committee meeting about this.” She added: “I would rather not have a discussion item about it. I’d rather have the RFP out.”
- Mr. Karantsalis also reported that he spoke directly with several County Commissioners outside the meeting and urged CODI to go on record in support of reinstating the RFP.
- He then read two formal resolutions into the record, both of which he drafted:
 - o A resolution urging the Mayor and Board of County Commissioners to reinstate RFP EVN0001136 and modernize paratransit services.
 - o A resolution opposing the proposed STS fare increase from \$3.50 to \$4.25, which would disproportionately impact low-income residents with disabilities.
- Both resolutions were adopted unanimously by the Commission on Disability Issues.
- Errata – Item #5: Old Business
- Mr. Karantsalis shared that he would be speaking at the inaugural meeting of the Miami-Dade County Behavioral Health Advisory Board on July 27, held in the second-floor Commission Chambers. He also reported attending a successful July 20 bowling event at Bird Bowl, sponsored by the Disability Independence Group. He said he would speak on the record at the July 24 Miami Beach Commission meeting to request reduced pool fees for disabled swimmers, as a goodwill gesture following a similar success in Miami Springs. He also shared that he was selected by the Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance to participate in a WebMD article about living with schizophrenia.
- CODI should go on official record that we need to support this RFP.
- Eddie Sierra said that people should not apologize for having a disability. The County does not address disability well and spends lots of money but does not solve problems. On the Human Rights and Fair Employment Practices website, it is almost impossible to submit official grievances.

- Chair Magnoli expressed concern about the STS fare increase from \$3.50 to \$4.25 per ride. Mr. Gregory made a motion to send a communication from CODI to the BCC about the fare increase. Marilyn Orozco seconded the motion.
- Ms. Orozco made a motion to send a communication from CODI to the BCC about restoring the RFP. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion.

5. Old Business:

- Chair Magnoli expressed concern about the potential withdrawal of federal funding for programs at the Mailman Center. She said CODI should write a letter to the BCC stating it should not be defunded. Every CODI member must write a paragraph to help, send it to Michael Moran and Chair Magnoli will edit it into a final draft.
- Chair Magnoli said that all CODI members should be in attendance of the ADA anniversary celebration event on July 25 and should invite their commissioners. Commissioner Milian Orbis has stated that she will be in attendance.
- Jody Cox said that CODI members can invite their Commissioners to the ADA Office Disability Resource Fair. Commissioners are permitted to buy CODI members a tablecloth, shirts, etc. Commissioners can also donate money to help. The ADA Office cannot directly contact Commissioners, but CODI members can.
- Mr. Karantsalis shared information about the mental health advisory board and bowling disability event. He will speak at an event in Miami Beach and also did an interview with Web MD.
- Chair Magnoli shared information about disability pride month and Sunny Isles Beach Adaptive Beach Day. An article about her in an occupational therapy journal called Journal for Humanities of Rehabilitation will come out in October.
- Mr. Gregory made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Next Scheduled Meeting and Adjournment:

- The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 PM.
- Next meeting: Tuesday, August 26, 2025: 10:30am-1pm, SPCC 18-4