

**BOROUGH OF FRANKLIN PARK  
BOROUGH COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING - SENIOR CITIZEN TRANSPORTATION  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2008**

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A special meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Franklin Park was held on Wednesday, April 23, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building, 2344 West Ingomar Road, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15237, to discuss a proposed senior citizen transportation program.

Council President Martha Creese called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance

Cathy Krummert called the roll:

**COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

Martha A. Creese, President .....present  
Richard H. Hartman, Second Vice President .....present  
Jane A. Hopey, Vice President .....present  
Ash K. Marwah .....present  
Andrew Hrishenko .....present  
Amy E. Sable .....present  
Junior Councilperson Brenna Thorpe .....present  
Mayor G. Reynolds Clark .....absent

**STAFF:**

Cathy Krummert, Borough Secretary .....present  
Ambrose Rocca, Borough Manager .....present

Mr. Rocca announced that Mayor Clark works at the University of Pittsburgh, and the Chancellor of University was recently injured. Because of this injury, Mayor Clark's workload at the University has increased, and he is unable to attend this meeting.

**OPENING REMARKS BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT MARTHA CREESE** – Mrs. Creese noted that the purpose of this meeting is to receive comments from the audience regarding the need for senior transportation. The borough has also invited Ms. Holly Dick from Access Community to make a presentation regarding all senior transportation programs that are currently available in, and provided by, Allegheny County. After the presentation, the audience may make comments. At the conclusion of the public comment portion, council will discuss the information presented and will decide the best course of action to take.

**PRESENTATION BY MS. HOLLY DICK, ALLEGHENY COUNTY, ACCESS COMMUNITY LIAISON** – Ms. Holly Dick of Access Transportation made a presentation regarding the available transportation programs in Allegheny County.

Port Authority Bus Service (13J) –This bus service is chiefly a rush hour service in the morning and afternoon that runs from Franklin Park to the City of Pittsburgh. Bus schedules are available on the table in the back of the room. All seniors over the age of 65 are entitled to free bus service, 24 hours per day. She noted that The Port Authority is starting its Connect 09 Program, where they will look at the entire bus system throughout Allegheny County, and they will be rebuilding it from the ground up. They will be holding a series of public hearings within the next few months in various areas of the county. Residents will be able to attend the hearings and tell the Port Authority what they want in the way of bus service.

MATP (Medical Assistance Transportation Program) – This program is available to current medical assistance recipients. This service provides free bus tickets or paratransit on Access to medical appointments. Medical assistance recipients can call their caseworker and apply for MATP. Pamphlets are available on the table in the back of the room.

The main two paratransit (supplement to bus service) services in Allegheny County are Access and OPT.

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Access – The Port Authority sponsors Access and it has two main components. One component is a program for people with disabilities under the age of 65, and the second component is the 65+ program. Access is a shared ride program, where you share a ride with other people who are going at about the same time in roughly the same direction. Sharing a ride keeps the cost way down. The Pennsylvania Lottery funds Access 65+ service and anyone in Allegheny County who is over the age of 65 is eligible. Riders pay about 15% of cost; the Pennsylvania Lottery pays for the other 85%. It is an advanced reservation service and rides must be scheduled the day before. It is a door-to-door service. The driver will meet you at the front door, take you to the vehicle, secure you properly and the driver will take you to the front door of your destination. This service uses tickets rather than cash. Riders can purchase a book of 20 tickets for \$12.60 (\$.62 per ticket). The amount of tickets you pay depends on the distance of your trip. Access can be used for any purpose from 6 a.m. to midnight, every day of the year. The only time the service is shut down is if the Pittsburgh City Schools are closed because of inclement weather. Access is a brokerage and they subcontract with the Port Authority. Access in turn has eight companies that subcontract with Access. Each of these companies is assigned to a particular geographical area of Allegheny County. The Northern Area Center provides transportation for most of this area. The Northern Area Center is a non-profit company that provides transportation under the Access umbrella. They provide local transportation, as well as transportation to Pittsburgh or Oakland. Three different types of vehicles are available: taxi cabs or cars, shopper vans and lift vans. They have an on-time window that extends from 10 minutes before to 20 minutes after the designated pick-up time. They suggest that riders allow one-hour for a ride, unless they are going far within the county. Seniors can sign up for the service at the offices of State Senator Jane C. Orié and State Representative Mike Turzai. Tickets may then be purchased by mail. Escorts over the age of 65 are expected to use their tickets. If a younger person is escorting someone, they can purchase companion tickets for \$2.50.

**OPT (Older Persons Transportation)** – OPT is sponsored by the Area Agency on Aging, which is a county agency. Tickets for OPT cost \$5.00 for a book of 20 tickets. OPT can only be used for certain purposes. The first purpose is for two round trip medical trips per month. If a doctor prescribes treatment, a rider can use OPT as many times as the doctor prescribes. The second purpose is to go to any senior center in Allegheny County. OPT can also be used for a weekly food shopping trip. Two or more individuals can ask their carrier to set up a weekly food trip or join one that is already set up. The driver can assist the rider with up to four regular size grocery bags. They are considering some future additional service to carry bags into the home. Riders can sign up at a local senior center. In this area the two closest senior centers are The Benedictine Center in Ross Township and the Northern Area Center located in the Nativity Lutheran Church on Mt. Royal Boulevard in Hampton Township. Riders can sign up for OPT at age 60. Escorts can go along free of charge.

Ms. Dick stated that she encourages everyone over the age of 65 to sign up for Access and OPT in case it is ever needed in a hurry. The paperwork takes about two weeks to process. Ms. Dick brought pamphlets that are available on the back table.

Ms. Dick also noted that Access has also set up shuttle services in some areas. If there were sufficient need, they would dedicate one vehicle to provide transportation in a designated area, such as the Franklin Park area. If there are sufficient numbers of riders who use it everyday, they will dedicate a vehicle to the area at no cost to the borough. If not, the borough can work with Access to provide whatever kind of shuttle service it wants.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Marilyn Senik, 2515 Hopkins Church Road – Mrs. Senik voiced her opposition to the borough establishing a senior transportation program. Mrs. Senik provided several reasons and statistics to support her opinion.

Mrs. Betty Gail Dietz, 2442 Rochester Road – Mrs. Dietz voiced her opposition to the borough establishing a senior transportation system.

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Mr. Bob Galbraith, 1565 Lenora Drive – Mr. Galbraith spoke in favor of establishing a senior transportation system. He indicated that he has vision problems and would use the service. He would appreciate some possibility to work something out, and he will also look into Access. Mr. Galbraith indicated that when he had completed his survey he was responding favorably toward a service to be provided by the borough. However, if the Access services will meet his need, and it is not costing the borough any money, it would suit him just fine. He stated that it has a major impact on your life when you live in the suburbs and cannot drive.

Mr. Rocca – Mr. Rocca indicated that the borough had mailed surveys to approximately 4,500 homes last fall, and approximately 580 surveys were returned. Of the surveys returned, approximately 45 households indicated that they would use a senior citizen transportation service. Responses varied from using the service once per week to possibility needing the service in the future. The general feeling among those responding to the survey was that the minimum cost should be \$5 per trip. Sixty-two residents volunteered to drive. Council then discussed a volunteer based system because utilizing a van with a fixed rout would be expensive (\$100,000 the first year and \$50,000 per year thereafter). The second proposal for a volunteer based system included \$25,000 in administrative costs and council felt that this was very expensive. The third option council discussed was a taxi-based system where the borough would reimburse residents for a portion of their ride (50% of fee suggested) on a limited basis. Mr. Rocca commented that transportation systems are very expensive to run. Ross Township is paying \$15-\$16 per trip for their transportation system, and they are in a more congested area than Franklin Park; our costs would be higher. Councilwoman Sable had suggested talking to the residents to find out their needs, and that is why this meeting was scheduled. Mr. Rocca encouraged everyone to come forward and provide opinions and indicate need.

Mr. Marwah – Mr. Marwah noted that council has been discussing several options for a senior transportation system. He reviewed the responses to Question #6 on the survey and noted that if the borough would consider the original proposal from North Hills Community Outreach to purchase a 14-passenger van, and charge \$2.00 per trip, the borough would make money on the program. Mr. Marwah noted that he and Mr. Hrishenko met with Ms. Dick last week at Access, and their proposal is even better than what the borough can do on our own. It would be more economical and it would also service the handicapped. Access could run a dedicated van in Franklin Park and McCandless if there are enough riders, and they have started a discussion with McCandless already. Mr. Marwah asked how many riders we would need to justify a dedicated van?

Ms. Dick responded that they could do some surveying to come up with some proposals for a dedicated vehicle. She indicated that currently there are approximately 161 people over the age of 65 in Franklin Park registered for Access, and somewhat under 2,000 in McCandless. If the borough would put on a big campaign to make people aware of the service, we would probably get more people to use the service. Ms. Dick also mentioned that there could be a combination of pre-scheduled stops and on-demand service. All Access carriers screen and train all drivers; they test for drug and alcohol use; they have strict liability insurance requirements; they provide vehicle maintenance and safety standards and inspections for all vehicles.

Mrs. Creese – Mrs. Creese indicated that council would prefer to meet the need without spending tax dollars. If there is a need, all of us have a common goal to address those needs. Most council members were previously in agreement that a borough subsidized taxi-based system would be the best approach. However, she noted that only 45 people responded that they would use a transportation service, and it did not seem feasible when the county has several options available. However, Council would like to help our residents.

Ms. Barbara Brock, 2347 Wilvan Lane – Ms. Brock responded that she does not need the service now, but she may need it in the future, and she is in favor of providing a service. She noted that she was not aware of all of the services provided by Access. She encouraged council to investigate Access and noted that riders would be willing to pay their fair share. She asked if riders could use Access on a daily basis. Ms. Dick responded that riders could use Access as many times as they want. Ms. Dick also noted that the riders would be paying their fair share by using the tickets they had purchased.

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Mr. Hartman – Mr. Hartman noted that his grandson has used Access for the last 12-14 years to travel to and from work. He noted that the Access program has been very sufficient. Mr. Hartman asked why the Mobility transportation service closed years ago.

Mrs. Pat Beatty, 1598 Arndt Road – Mrs. Beatty indicated that she had previously worked for Mobility, a transportation company that was located in a building at the Five Points Intersection years ago. Mobility was then bought out by Laidlaw, and after a few years they decided to disband the service because they said it was not feasible. Mrs. Beatty asked about a possible shuttle service to be provided by Access and how it would be funded. Ms. Dick responded that if there were a sufficient amount of riders to keep a vehicle busy in the area, there would be no cost to the borough; the riders would pay for the service. Ms. Dick indicated that the borough could subsidize a dedicated shuttle. Mrs. Beatty also noted that local churches provide transportation for their members. She also suggested that the borough could match volunteer drivers to those in need. Mrs. Creese noted that the borough contacted all of the churches in the borough, and they are all willing to help any one in need of transportation. She also noted that the borough had discussed a volunteer program, and there was a concern about the liability. Mrs. Beatty also stated that no tax money should be spent.

Mrs. Jane Wetzel – Ms. Wetzel indicated that her husband has vision problems and had previously looked into Access. She indicated that he had to qualify for the service. She asked that the borough make information about transportation services more available to residents. She was also concerned about safety issues on both sides.

Mr. Marwah – Mr. Marwah asked if the borough could subsidize a shuttle service through Access if it is made available to everyone. Ms. Dick responded that it would be possible. Mr. Marwah noted that this is another option to consider.

Mrs. Cindy Lang, 2379 Wharrey Drive – Mrs. Lang spoke in favor of a transportation program. Her father does not drive and he visits her mother at a nursing home. She indicated that her father would be comfortable with someone he knew that was local. Currently, five family members provide transportation for him. Mrs. Lang also indicated that the low response of those who would use the service might be because senior citizens could not read or complete the survey.

Mrs. Creese – Mrs. Creese noted that the borough has to be mindful of spending public dollars on a service for a small portion of the residents in the borough (45 out of 14,000 residents) when there are other services available. However, there is a common goal to help the residents of the borough, and we will try to address the needs of everyone.

Mr. Ray Beatty, 1598 Arndt Road – Mr. Beatty stated that there is no need for a borough sponsored transportation program when there are so many services available through Allegheny County.

Mr. Marwah – Mr. Marwah once again reviewed the responses to Question #6 on the survey and noted that the number of responses to Question #2 on the survey is contradictory. Mr. Rocca noted that the survey was not statistically sound and was done in-house. The survey provided a general guideline as to what the residents want, but it was not specific. There was some confusion and residents had problems understanding how they should complete some of the questions. Mr. Marwah noted that the borough uses tax dollars for other public services such as, maintaining roads, police service, fire protection, Northland Library, and we should also contribute toward this type of public service.

Mrs. Hopey – Mrs. Hopey reminded everyone that Connect 09 would be holding public meetings to gather input to rebuild their service. All persons who cannot drive should make an effort to attend these public meetings. The borough will post this information on our web page.

Ms. Maria Christina – Ms. Christina lives in the borough and she is an outreach manager for the North Hills Community Outreach (NHCO). The NHCO Faith in Action Program utilizes volunteers to provide transportation for senior citizens or adults with disabilities. They provide volunteers who are trained by NHCO. They work with church groups to match drivers with those in need.

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**DISCUSSION BY COUNCIL AND MAYOR OF FUTURE DIRECTION –**

Mrs. Hopey noted that Access is doing a wonderful job.

Mr. Marwah suggested looking at the Access proposals and considering a shuttle for older people or a shuttle for everybody. He also noted that the borough should consider subsidizing the shuttle.

Mrs. Hopey responded that the PA Lottery already subsidizes Access. She noted that the borough's role is to be here to provide information to the public and to help them understand what is available.

Mrs. Sable noted that she was appointed to council in December when council was discussing purchasing a van for transportation. She suggested holding this meeting to find out what the seniors need. She knew that Access existed, and she called them to find out more information about their service. Through the phone and their web site, she was able to obtain a chart in the Pittsburgh Senior News that outlined the transportation options in Allegheny County. Her biggest concern is that the borough does not duplicate a service that is already offered. She noted that Access is a wonderful option that is cost effective and will not cost our taxpayers any additional money. Mrs. Sable also had thought that seniors might want to go out with a group of other seniors on scheduled trips. Ms. Dick noted that group trips could be planned and set up through Access. Mrs. Sable feels that Access is the answer the borough is looking for, and the borough must do a better job of making this information available and easily accessible to residents. We can put the information on our web page and in the newsletter.

Mrs. Creese agreed and encouraged everyone to take the information that is available this evening. She also noted that residents may call their council members directly.

The Pittsburgh Senior News is also a great source of information. It is available online at [www.pittsburghseniornews.com](http://www.pittsburghseniornews.com) and they will deliver free copies to areas of Allegheny County.

Mr. Hrishenko stated that the borough is heading in the right direction by holding this meeting. This is something that is well deserved for senior citizens, and we should have compassion and help out the senior citizens.

Mrs. Hopey thanked Ms. Dick for coming this evening; it was very informative. She noted that Access is a great program that the borough cannot duplicate.

Mrs. Sable thanked Ms. Dick and everyone in the audience for attending this evening.

Mr. Marwah is delighted that this is coming to a conclusion, and we will have some service started - the sooner the better.

Mr. Hartman thanked Ms. Dick for coming and for providing transportation services for his grandson.

Brenna Thorpe, Junior Councilperson, stated that she is glad that things are moving along. She thanked Ms. Dick for coming this evening, and she thanked Mrs. Sable for looking into the transportation options that are already available.

Mrs. Creese thanked the audience and Ms. Dick for coming this evening.

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**MOTION TO ADJOURN** – Mr. Hartman moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mrs. Sable and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy L. Krummert  
Borough Secretary

Audience Present - 26