



Annual Evaluation Report
covering FY 2023-24 of Polk's Community
Transportation Coordinator
LAMTD, d/b/a, Citrus Connection



Conducted during FY 2024-25
By The POLK COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED LOCAL
COORDINATING BOARD & POLK TPO

Draft

LCB Statement:

I, Jeremy Clark, as the Polk County Local Coordinating Board (LCB) Chairperson, hereby certify in accordance with Rule 41-2.012(5) (c), F.S., that the Polk County LCB has reviewed this Evaluation Report, and the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) has received a copy.

Date Approved: 6/16/2025

LCB Chairperson's Signature: _____



CitrusConnection

PROGRESS IN MOTION

Polk County Community Transportation Coordinator FY 2023 | 2024 Evaluation Report

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Evaluation Conducted by:



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Approved by the Polk Local Coordinating Board June 16, 2025

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Section 1. Introduction/General Information

TD Program and CTC Background

The Polk Transportation Planning Organization conducted a regular process to redesignate a government entity to be the Community Transportation Coordinator from March 2021. The Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD), doing business as Citrus Connection became the designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for the Polk County service area effective July 1, 2021, by entering into a five-year Memorandum of Agreement with the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. LAMTD operates Citrus Connection throughout Polk County. It's previous designation as the Polk CTC ran from April 1, 2016, through June 30, 2021.

Citrus Connection operates paratransit door-to-door services, fixed-route services, as well as complementary Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) services, in the urban and rural areas of Polk County as a partial-brokerage. Citrus Connection's service modes include trips for people who are ambulatory and trips for people who use wheelchairs. Trips are performed in county and out-of-county.

Pursuant to Florida Statutes, the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) evaluates the performance of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC), approves the CTC's annual [transportation disadvantaged] service plan, which includes an evaluation element, and provides recommendations to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged regarding the renewal of the CTC's contract.

Polk's operating environment is Urban. The operating area of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) includes all of Polk County, an area covering 2,010 square miles which makes it the fourth largest county in Florida. According to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, the 2023 population was estimated at 736,229. [Data Source 2024 APR]. There are two urbanized areas (Lakeland and Winter Haven) centrally located within its borders, with both areas exceeding 200,000 population according to the 2020 Census. This makes it the ninth largest populated area within the State of Florida. Fixed route bus service is available primarily in the Lakeland and Winter Haven urbanized areas and there

are routes serving rural areas which include Poinciana and many of the smaller cities in the county.

During the FY 2022/23 evaluation period, service was provided in the Polk County Coordinated system by Citrus Connection. The Network Type is "Partial Brokerage." There were 313,056 coordinated trips in FY 21-22 and 331,421 in FY 2022-23. The CTC has Zero (0) contracts with Transportation Operators in this reporting period.

Citrus Connection (the CTC) has 5 coordination agreements in place with various private-non-profit organizations throughout Polk County.

Non-sponsored (Transportation Disadvantaged) riders must contact the CTC to arrange transportation. They must make an application, and have their eligibility determined. The CTC verifies trip requests and assigns trips to vehicles based on input from the CTC's automated scheduling/dispatching system.

Section 2. Follow-up of previous Evaluation (covering FY 2022/2023)

The most recent evaluation of the CTC conducted by the LCB was conducted for the period of for FY 2022/23 or the period July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, (2023). Historical performance comparison data is from the Community Transportation Coordinator's 2022-23 Annual Operating Report (AOR). Another primary source used was the FY 2023 Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Annual Performance Report, (APR). The 2023 APR contains data for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023. An evaluation committee consisting of Polk TPO staff and representatives of Citrus Connection -- the CTC -- met in person and virtually, to review the evaluation process. A member of the TPO staff prepared the Evaluation Workbook, inspected vehicles, and took a ride on the paratransit services. Their experiences are described elsewhere in the **Evaluation Workbook**.

Section 3. FY 23-24 Evaluation, Observations, and Recommendations

FY 2023/2024 Evaluation Related Highlights

This evaluation is for FY 2023/24 or the period July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, (2024). Historical performance comparison data is from the Community Transportation Coordinator's 2023-24 Annual Operating Report (AOR). Another primary source used was the FY 2024 Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Annual

Performance Report, (APR). The 2024 APR contains data for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024. An evaluation committee consisting of Polk TPO staff and representatives of Citrus Connection (the CTC) met in person and virtually, to review the evaluation process.

Members of the TPO staff prepared the Evaluation Workbook, inspected vehicles, and took a ride on the paratransit services. Their experiences are described elsewhere in the **Evaluation Workbook**.

Section 4. On site observation – Bus Ride

Summary of Scheduling Experience

On May 13, 2025, at 9:50 a.m., an attempt was made to schedule a door-to-door transportation service through Citrus Connection. The initial call was directed to Courtney Brown, who immediately transferred it to Customer Service.

Subsequent attempts to reach her via the provided extension resulted in confusion, as the voicemail greeting indicated the extension belonged to a different individual, Courtney McKay. Additionally, the voicemail box was full, preventing a message from being left.

After multiple attempts, the call was answered at 10:08 a.m. by Courtney Brown, who placed the caller on hold multiple times before proceeding with the scheduling process. Throughout the conversation, the sound of a smoke detector's low-battery warning was audible in the background.

The requested transportation appointment was for May 15, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. to travel to 1050 E. Van Fleet Drive, Bartow, FL. Courtney suggested adjusting the appointment to 10:00 a.m., which was agreed upon. She collected the necessary contact information and explained the pickup window—15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the scheduled time. Additionally, she stated that the rider would receive text message updates as the driver was in route.

The call concluded with Courtney repeating the appointment details for confirmation and thanking the caller. While the trip was successfully scheduled, the experience involved multiple call attempts, unclear communication regarding personnel, and extended hold times.

Ride Experience Summary

The overall ride experience was functional, with some notable communication challenges and operational observations. The scheduling process involved multiple attempts due to voicemail confusion and extended hold times, but the appointment was eventually secured.

On the day of the trip, there was an initial difficulty in coordinating the pickup location, as the driver struggled to locate the rider and did not acknowledge suggestions to improve the pickup process. The actual pickup occurred within the requested time window, with the female driver greeting the rider and ensuring seatbelt use before departure.

During the journey, the driver initially selected an incorrect destination on the GPS, requiring rider intervention to clarify the proper route. While the driver made an incorrect turn, she quickly adjusted and proceeded in the correct direction. The arrival at Walmart was timely, and the driver opened the door, allowing the rider to exit smoothly.

For the return trip, the bus was already waiting outside upon the rider's exit, and the driver promptly opened the door upon seeing the rider approach.

The vehicle interior was clean, signage was visible, and all required equipment appeared to be in place. The two-way communication system functioned properly, and the ride was comfortable. While the driver's workspace appeared cluttered, and identification visibility was limited, the air conditioning was effective, and there were no major service disruptions.

Upon arrival at the final destination, the driver stopped at the same location where the rider had been picked up and wished them a good day, concluding the trip on a positive note.

Area of Noncompliance: None

Recommendations:

General Service Improvements:

- Reinforce adherence to pedestrian traffic rules to improve safety measures.
- Provide ongoing customer service training to drivers to enhance

professionalism and responsiveness.

- Continue monitoring vehicle condition to maintain cleanliness, functionality, and passenger comfort.

Vehicle Readiness & Rider Experience

- Ensure that driver workspaces remain organized and free from unnecessary clutter.
- Improve visibility of driver identification, such as name badges or embroidered uniforms, to enhance rider confidence in service staff.
- Conduct periodic inspections of required signage and equipment to maintain compliance and accessibility.

Route Navigation & Driver Assistance

- Verify that drivers enter the correct destination before beginning the trip to prevent unnecessary detours.
- Increase driver familiarity with designated routes and key destinations to avoid misdirection.

Scheduling Process

- Regularly monitor and clear voicemail inboxes to allow riders/clients to leave messages when needed.
- Minimize extended hold times by streamlining the scheduling process or increasing staffing support during peak scheduling hours.

By implementing these recommendations, the overall ride experience can be significantly improved, ensuring more seamless scheduling, efficient pickups, precise routing, and enhanced rider confidence in the service.

Timeline for Compliance: TPO Staff will reevaluate the CTC rider experience during the next CTC Annual Evaluation.

Section 5. Vehicle Inspections

Polk TPO staff conducted a scheduled inspection of a paratransit vehicle while it was scheduled for maintenance service on March 24, 2025. All required signage and safety items were in place. A TPO staff member also checked the required signs in

the Paratransit vehicle during the scheduled Evaluation ride on May 15th, 2025. During the May 15th, 2025, Evaluation ride, it was observed that the signage with the helpline/ CTD telephone/ toll free number were not displayed.

Area of Noncompliance: During the May 15th, 2025; On the evaluation ride, it was observed that the signage with the helpline/ CTD telephone/ toll free number were not displayed on the vehicle.

Recommendation:

All fleet vehicles should be inspected to make sure all required signage is displayed in clear view for all riders consideration.

Timeline for Compliance: Follow up is needed.

Within 90 days of report being issued.

Section 6. Performance Measures

The performance measures in **Table 1** are from the June 2024 adopted update of the TDSP as amended by the LCB at their meeting in March 2025, and are monitored quarterly by the Local Coordinating Board:

Table 1. Performance Measures, TDSP 2024, amended March 2025

Performance Measure	Target
Potential TD Population Served	At least 5%
Percent of Trips on Fixed-Route	At least 35%
Average Cost per Trip	No greater than \$19.00
Average Cost per Paratransit Trip	No greater than \$50.00
Accidents per 100,000 Vehicle Miles (Paratransit)	No more than 1.0
Accidents per 100,000 Vehicle Miles (Fixed-Route)	No more than 1.0
Vehicle Miles between Road Calls (Paratransit)	At least 30,000
Vehicle Miles between Road Calls (Fixed-Route)	At least 10,000
Complaints per 1,000 Paratransit Trips	No more than 2.0
On-Time Performance	At least 90%

Performance Measure Outcomes:

The CTC is doing a good job reporting on identified local standards and performance measures. These are reported to the LCB at each quarterly meeting, and the CTC also provides that data to the Annual Operating Report. When we compare AOR/APR data from FY 2023-24 (2024) to the Performance indicators in the TDSP, we note the following:

Meeting standards or performance measures:

- * Fixed Route utilization, 72% of trips on FR.
- * Accidents per 100,000 vehicle miles
- * Vehicle miles between road calls.
- * number of complaints,
- * Complaints per 1000 paratransit trips.
- * Average cost per paratransit trip. (It is \$41.28, this meets the updated performance measure)

Not meeting standards or performance measures:

*None

Area of Noncompliance: None

Recommendation: In June 2024, The LCB Board initiated a directive for staff to revise the performance measure for the Average Cost per Paratransit Trip (\$35). Subsequently, in March 2025, during the quarterly meeting, the LCB Board approved the adjusted performance measure, setting the amount at \$50.

No further follow up is needed.

Timeline for Compliance: **No further follow up is needed.**

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Demographics	Number
Total County Population	736,229
Unduplicated Head Count	3,048



Trips By Type of Service	2022	2023	2024
Fixed Route (FR)	200,652	202,727	248,986
Deviated FR	8,868	7,708	7,582
Complementary ADA	48,694	49,288	54,122
Paratransit	54,842	71,698	68,642
TNC	0	0	0
Taxi	0	0	0
School Board (School Bus)	0	0	0
Volunteers	0	0	0
TOTAL TRIPS	313,056	331,421	379,332

Passenger Trips By Trip Purpose	2022	2023	2024
Medical	71,796	66,229	77,838
Employment	7,381	7,773	10,584
Ed/Train/Day Care	54,126	81,148	79,432
Nutritional	3,050	6,795	9,215
Life-Sustaining/Other	176,703	169,476	202,263
TOTAL TRIPS	313,056	331,421	379,332

Passenger Trips By Revenue Source	2022	2023	2024
CTD	99,278	107,338	137,641
AHCA	1,734	7,703	10,625
APD	18,857	26,450	19,354
DOEA	2,060	2,666	0
DOE	29,436	29,554	43,603
Other	161,691	157,710	168,109
TOTAL TRIPS	313,056	331,421	379,332

Trips by Provider Type	2022	2023	2024
CTC	276,992	280,426	334,086
Transportation Operator	0	0	0
Coordination Contractor	36,064	50,995	45,246
TOTAL TRIPS	313,056	331,421	379,332

Vehicle Data	2022	2023	2024
Vehicle Miles	833,205	778,063	883,024
Road Calls	91	68	85
Accidents	3	2	5
Vehicles	140	129	117
Drivers	270	243	225

Financial and General Data	2022	2023	2024
Expenses	\$5,362,754	\$5,508,624	\$6,165,371
Revenues	\$5,322,439	\$5,462,571	\$6,231,324
Commendations	29	31	2
Complaints	119	169	46
Passenger No-Shows	460	501	397
Unmet Trip Requests	33	21	10

Performance Measures	2022	2023	2024
Accidents per 100,000 Miles	0.36	0.26	0.57
Miles between Road Calls	9,156	11,442	10,389
Avg. Trips per Passenger	133.33	91.28	124.45
Cost per Trip	\$17.13	\$16.62	\$16.25
Cost per Paratransit Trip	\$45.85	\$41.28	\$45.63
Cost per Total Mile	\$6.44	\$7.08	\$6.98
Cost per Paratransit Mile	\$6.19	\$6.83	\$6.74

2024