

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION
Meeting Summary
November 18, 2009

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Presiding: Mayor Patrick McCrory (Charlotte)

Present: Curt Walton (Charlotte City Manager)
Jerry Fox (CTAG Co-chair)
Rick Sanderson (TSAC Acting Chair)
Jennifer Roberts (Chair, Mecklenburg County Commission)
Sarah Nuckles (SCDOT Representative)
Mayor Jeff Tarte (Cornelius)
Anthony Roberts (Cornelius Town Manager)
Mayor John Woods (Davidson)
Leamon Brice (Davidson Town Manager)
Mayor Jill Swain (Huntersville)
Greg Ferguson (Huntersville Town Manager)
Mayor Lee Myers (Matthews)
Ralph Messera (Matthews)
Brian Welch (Mint Hill Town Manager)
Mayor George Fowler (Pineville)
Mike Rose (Pineville Town Administrator)

Interim Chief Executive Officer: John Muth

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Transit Commission was called to order at 5:10 pm by MTC's Chairperson, Mayor Patrick McCrory.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The Meeting Summary of October 28, 2009 was approved as written.

III. Transit Services Advisory Committee Chair's Report

Rick Sanderson

Mr. Sanderson reported TSAC met on November 12 and received a CATS staff information item about the ADA program CATS uses for bus and light rail stops. TSAC unanimously endorsed the upcoming February service changes, noting that all service changes are based on ridership numbers. TSAC's next meeting is December 10.

IV. Citizens Transit Advisory Group Chair's Report

Jerry Fox

Mr. Fox stated that CTAG met on November 17. CATS staff presented three information items: the Federal Legislative Priorities, the CATS budget update for FY2010, and the light rail fare compliance update. CTAG recognized Amy Aussieker for her four years of service as CTAG's Co-Chair. She will be replaced by Tom Cox. CTAG unanimously adopted a resolution to commend Mayors Patrick McCrory and Lee Myers for their outstanding promotion of regional mass transit

and for their contributions as Chairman and Vice Chairman to the MTC and as founding members of MTC. CTAG will not meet in December.

V. Public Comment on General Items

None.

VI. Public Comment on Agenda Items

None.

VII. Action Items

None.

VIII. Information Items

a. LYNX Red Line Work Plan

Brian Nadolny

Mr. Brian Nadolny, Interim Project Manager for the North Corridor LYNX Red Line, reviewed the history of the North Corridor LYNX Red Line commuter rail project. The project is currently under review by the Federal Railroad Association for possible funding through its Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) Program. Track and grade crossings are designed to a 90 percent level; stations and the Vehicle Inspection Facility are designed to a 30 percent level, as funding is not certain. CATS has submitted a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) application for the program, but the State's priority for TIGER funding remains the I-85 Yadkin River bridge replacement project. Mr. Nadolny reviewed the proposed North Corridor Work Plan, which identifies tasks that CATS staff, elected officials, towns and others can do over the next eighteen to twenty-four months to continue to move the project forward. A focus of the tasks is to investigate potential sources of funding as well as investigating how the project can best meet regional transportation and land use needs.

Discussion: Mayor Swain noted that the Urban Land Institute (ULI) North Study sponsored by the Lake Normal Transportation Council will not study only southern Iredell and the northern Mecklenburg towns, but will encompass needs in the entire area. Mayor McCrory asked if we could get an idea of the schedule for decision-making for TIGER projects and determine the likelihood of TIGER funding for the Yadkin River bridge project. Mr. Nadolny said that funding for all TIGER projects will be known by February.

Commissioner Roberts pointed out that meeting with Mooresville and Iredell County to generate their support should occur earlier than FY2011 to encourage earlier collaboration. Mayor Woods said that Mooresville has been an active participant and they hope Iredell County will participate in the ULI study as well. Mr. Nadolny said that CATS hopes to meet with the new mayor of Mooresville; Commissioner Roberts and Mayor Woods asked to be included in that meeting.

b. Light Rail Fare Compliance

John Trunk

Mr. John Trunk, Assistant Director of Transit Support Services, said that the LYNX system was designed to be a barrier-free proof-of-payment system, relying on spot checks for proof of fare payment, and operates much like most of the modern light rail systems around the country. The design is less expensive to build and maintain than older systems that have barriers and turnstiles. Barrier-free design is more customer-friendly and is easier to move

large crowds on and off the platform. First-time riders often comment that riders who pass the TVMs did not purchase a ticket; however, only 53 percent of riders purchase tickets from TVMs. Approximately 46 percent of riders use bus transfers or weekly or monthly passes purchased from pass outlets. Fare checking is conducted by various groups from security personnel to CATS employee ambassadors during special events. Passengers without valid fares are subject to a \$50 civil citation and may be put off the train. Several stations have designated Fare Zones; customers must have valid tickets to stand within the Fare Zone. Fare blitzes held in the Fare Zones have shown that the vast majority of riders hold valid tickets. The fare blitz in August 2009 showed less than one percent of riders without a valid ticket in the Fare Zone. Similar light rail systems report fare evasion rates of two to ten percent. There are four blitzes scheduled for next year, one or more of which will be unannounced. Mr. Trunk introduced Bryan Leaird, the new CATS General Manager of Safety and Security.

Discussion: Mayor McCrory suggested that CATS not announce the next Fare Blitz to catch riders who do not purchase tickets. Mr. Messera asked if the Fare Zone signage at the stations would be improved. Mr. Trunk affirmed that signage will be improved, as will the paver delineations for the Fare Zone area. Mayor McCrory commented that it may be useful to make an announcement on the train to remind passengers to have their tickets ready for Fare Inspectors.

c. February Service Changes

Larry Kopf

Mr. Larry Kopf, Manager of Service Development, reviewed service changes planned for February. CATS plans to extend Route 17 Commonwealth to the park and ride lot at Independence Pointe rather than ending at the Crown Point Business Park. The North Meck Village Rider routes will be shifted to accommodate planned construction at the intersection of Sam Furr Road and Statesville Road. Route 97 Cornelius will extend to the park and ride lot at Huntersville Gateway at Exit 23; Route 99 Huntersville will be shortened, but will still work in combination with Route 97 to cover the same area. CATS also plans to adjust the frequency of Route 20 Sharon Road. Ridership on this line has dropped since the LYNX line opened, so this adjustment from a frequency of twenty to thirty minutes during peak hours should provide sufficient capacity to meet existing ridership. Ridership on Route 20 is currently lower than many routes with a thirty minute frequency. The 83X Mooresville Express is a regional service funded through a partnership with the Town of Mooresville, which funds 50 percent of the service. Mooresville is reducing their route subsidy, so CATS proposes to reduce service from four trips each in the morning and evening to three morning and three afternoon trips. Ridership on the route has decreased about 27 percent from last year, so this change adjusts for the lower ridership. Route 54X University Research Park Express currently has a 50-space overflow parking lot at the Presbyterian Medical Plaza University Park and Ride. Only about 5-8 people park at the Presbyterian park and ride daily; the Mallard Creek park and ride has capacity for those riders. CATS proposes to drop the Presbyterian park and ride, which costs CATS \$3,000 per year, in favor of the Mallard Creek park and ride lot, which CATS owns. TSAC endorsed the service changes.

Discussion: Mayor Tarte asked if CATS had gauged the impact that shifting the 83X from Mooresville will have on the new park and ride lot in Davidson. Mr. Kopf said that CATS hopes that most riders will stay with the 83X, as the route will have some excess capacity even if all current customers stay with the route. The Mooresville subsidy will still cover 50

percent of the cost of running three trips in the morning and afternoon. Mr. Rose asked whether anyone at Carolina Place Mall had expressed concerns over the service change to Route 20. Mr. Kopf said that he would contact the shopping center and let them know of the changes. Mr. Messera asked about the Sprinter service; Mr. Kopf said that ridership is holding its own compared to last year's Route 5 ridership. That is an encouraging sign since ridership on other routes is lower than last year. Mr. Kinard reviewed ways CATS is promoting the Sprinter service, including advertising at the airport and contacting area hotel concierges.

IX. Interim Chief Executive Officer's Report

John Muth

Under the CEO's report, Mr. Muth discussed the following:

a. Financial Report and Ridership Update:

The poor economy continues to impact sales, with sales tax revenue down about \$4.5 million, or about 24.5 percent, for the first three months of this fiscal year compared with last year's first quarter. Ridership is down about 13 percent and fare revenue is projected to be down about \$3 million in the FY10 budget. CATS is working to identify about \$7 million in possible reductions for the FY10 budget to keep pace with potential revenue decreases. The mid-year update in January will include a presentation on the FY11 balanced budget highlighting items not in the budget that will need to be reduced or eliminated. CATS is investigating all possibilities to meet budget, potentially including a fare increase of perhaps 25 cents. October ridership was down 18 percent. LYNX ridership is still strong, just under 15,000 on weekdays and still favorable on weekends. Mr. Muth displayed a comparison with other transit systems to demonstrate ridership decreases around the country for July, August, and September 2009. Mr. Kinard stated that ridership is decreasing around the country as well as in North Carolina. Other areas are experiencing the same lower gas prices this year and the same impact on ridership due to layoffs. Mr. Kinard noted that Portland has much more transit oriented development than Charlotte, which encourages secondary transit trips, so their ridership is not dropping as badly as other systems. Raleigh has added service, so their ridership decrease is only about 3 percent for this year.

Discussion: Commissioner Roberts asked about sales tax revenue for FY09; Mr. Muth replied that it was about \$61.8 million, about \$10 million less than projected. The FY10 budget originally projected \$64 million. Now we are projecting about \$60 million, \$4.4 million down but still presuming a slight rebound. There was discussion of the impact of preventive and predictive maintenance on the operating budget, and the impact the replacement cycle of buses has on capital expenditures. Mr. Muth said that CATS will talk with Operations staff to see if CATS does oil sampling on the buses, which Mr. Tarte said may help predict bus downtime. Ms. Nuckles asked if CATS has looked at the relationship between fare price and ridership volume, price elasticity. If the fare is lowered, will more people ride? Mr. Kinard noted that CATS passes include unlimited rides, so the more pass riders use CATS facilities, the greater their discount. The retail discount to the general public works in the opposite direction to the pass. CATS has examined eliminating unlimited rides. Mr. Kopf said that when CATS proposes a price increase, our elasticity model predicts how many riders will be lost due to a price increase. CATS did not lose riders with the last two fares increases, but the economy was better and gas prices were high. We may lose riders this time due to the economy. Mr. Kinard agreed to examine price elasticity closely.

X. Other Business

- a. CTAG Co-chair:** Mayor McCrory announced that he has appointed Tom Cox, a former Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners for Mecklenburg County, to serve as Co-chair for CTAG. Mr. Cox has accepted the appointment.
- b. Megaregion Report:** Mayor McCrory reported that he recently attended the third meeting of the Megaregion group in Greenville, SC, a coalition of people from the private and public sectors. Their goal is to plan future infrastructure needs in the areas of transportation, water, and energy. In the short term, the group plans the area between Atlanta and Charlotte. In the long term, they hope to form plans for the area between Birmingham and Raleigh. The group is comprised of mayors, academicians, and members of the private sector in the areas of utilities, construction, and other businesses. The group hopes to expand in the future, but is a small group presently concentrating on roads, energy, and water resources.
- c. New MTC Members:** Mayor McCrory introduced Mayors-elect Anthony Foxx (Charlotte) and Jim Taylor (Matthews) to the group.
- d. Interim CEO and CEO Transition:** Mayor McCrory thanked Mr. Muth for his excellent leadership during the CEO transition. MTC members applauded Mr. Muth's leadership with a standing ovation; Mr. Muth commended CATS staff for their hard work to ensure a smooth transition. Mayor McCrory thanked MTC members and staff from the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and CATS for their help during the CEO search process and the transition period. He asked everyone to help the new CATS CEO, Carolyn Flowers, and her staff during her transition.
- e. MTC Chairmanship:** Mayor McCrory relinquished the Chair to Commissioner Roberts.
- f. December MTC Meeting:** MTC members moved unanimously to cancel the December meeting.
- g. Recognition of Outgoing Members:** Commissioner Roberts led a standing ovation for outgoing Mayors Lee Myers and Patrick McCrory for their vision and support of transit in this region, now nationally renowned. Mayor Myers said that Mayor McCrory deserved all the accolades; he led the vision from its inception. Attendees gave the mayors a standing ovation to honor their efforts. Mayor Myers thanked Mayor McCrory for his efforts to promote transit. Mayor McCrory recognized Mayor Fowler, who was also involved in transit planning from the beginning. Mayor McCrory acknowledged the work of retiring Executive Assistant to the City Manager Boyd Cauble. Mr. Cauble's efforts with the delegation in Raleigh are also integral to transit's success in the region. Mayor McCrory said that Mr. Cauble helped develop the concept of the MTC and Mayor Myers' leadership helped involve small towns. Mayor McCrory led the MTC in a standing ovation for Mr. Cauble.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 pm by Commissioner Roberts.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2010, 5:30 PM