

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION
Meeting Summary
March 24, 2010

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Presiding: Jennifer Roberts (Chairman, Mecklenburg County Commission)

Present: Curt Walton (Charlotte City Manager)
Jerry Fox (CTAG Co-chair)
Rick Sanderson (TSAC Acting Chair)
Harry Jones (Mecklenburg County Manager)
John Collett (NCDOT Representative)
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)
Bill Coxe (Huntersville Town Planner)
Mayor Jim Taylor (Matthews)
Ralph Messera (Matthews)
Brian Welch (Mint Hill Town Manager)
Mike Rose (Pineville Town Administrator)

Chief Executive Officer: Carolyn Flowers

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Transit Commission was called to order at 5:30 pm by MTC's Chairperson, Commissioner Jennifer Roberts.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The Meeting Summary of February 24, 2010 was approved as written.

III. Transit Services Advisory Committee Chair's Report

Rick Sanderson

Mr. Sanderson reported that TSAC met on March 11. CATS staff presented information on upcoming service changes and gave a presentation on the FY2011 budget. Staff answered TSAC's questions and the committee had no concerns.

IV. Citizens Transit Advisory Group Chair's Report

Jerry Fox

Mr. Fox said that CTAG met last week and heard information on the 2011 budget. Members discussed the proposed fare increase and service reduction options. CTAG will make its recommendation at the MTC meeting in April.

V. Public Comment on General Items

None.

VI. Action Items

None.

VII. Information Items

a. North Carolina DOT / High Speed Rail

Patrick B. Simmons

Patrick Simmons, Director of NCDOT Rail Division, was scheduled to give a presentation on recent stimulus fund awards given to NCDOT and the impact for the Charlotte area. Ms. Flowers announced that Mr. Simmons' presentation will be rescheduled as he was unable to attend the meeting. Staff will distribute his presentation to MTC members for their review. Ms. Flowers asked MTC members to send any questions for Mr. Simmons on the presentation to Ms. Braswell.

Discussion: None.

b. Urban Land Institute Panel Study

Carroll Gray

Carroll Gray, the Director of the Lake Norman Transportation Commission (LNTC), presented preliminary results of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Advisory Panel study commissioned by the LNTC. The panel projects the population for the already-congested Lake Norman area to increase in the future. To relieve congestion, the study recommends new road construction to improve the region's east-west and north-south connectivity and improving currently congested roadways incrementally as funding becomes available. The study recommends that CATS and MTC adopt a two-line strategy and seek funding strategies to advance both the Blue Line Extension and Red Line. The study projects that the Red Line has the potential to significantly increase development in the Lake area, which would increase property tax revenues and create additional jobs in the area. The final report is due soon.

Discussion: Ms. Nuckles asked about the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) recent decision to give a higher weight to economic development. Mr. Gray said that Secretary LaHood said recently that the cost effectiveness equation is still in effect, but the Obama Administration has indicated a desire to consider transit's total impact, including ridership and cost, as well as commuter benefit. Economic development is a part of transit's total benefit. FTA is undergoing a rule-making process now; new regulations will be promulgated when that process is complete. Ms. Nuckles commented that she was glad to hear the news of the FTA's reconsideration of the importance of cost effectiveness. Mr. Gray noted that all the Towns had established TOD zoning. Mayor Swain asked whether the final report will be on LNTC's website. Mr. Gray confirmed that it will. Mayor Swain commented that she thought that overall land use was also going to be included in the new rules. Mayor Tarte commented that Mr. Gray was president of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce for two decades and has a great interest in seeing the area develop economically. He thanked Mr. Gray for his work on the Commission.

c. Public Hearing

Olaf Kinard, CATS Director of Marketing & Communications, explained that CATS projects sales tax revenue for next year to be close to the FY2005 level, while operating expenses and service hours are at the 2008 level. Ridership remains strong, at around the 2009 level. Mr. Kinard noted that CATS has revenues at the FY2005 level, but service and demand is around FY2009 levels. CATS has reduced expenses where possible through better inventory

management, achieved energy savings, shifted expenses where possible, reduced staff and staff hours, frozen positions, and reduced expenses for travel, training, advertising, and customer research.

CATS has proposed four options to cover an almost \$2 million budget shortfall due to declining revenue from the half-cent transit sales tax. One option is a 25-cent fare increase, to \$1.75 for local buses, effective July 1. The other three options are: no fare increase, a 25-cent fare increase effective October 1, or a ten-cent fare increase effective July 1; each of these options involve service reductions and job eliminations. Seventeen members of the public made comments during the Public Hearing on the proposed fare increase. Although a few speakers were opposed to any rate increase, the majority were not opposed. However, they requested CATS seek to improve customer service skills, improve bus route layouts, add stop locations, and ensure that buses are clean.

Discussion: Mr. Kinard said that the comment period is open until April 5. Comments may be e-mailed to mtcinterest@charlottenc.gov or made through CATS' website at <http://www.charmeck.org/Departments/CATS/Riding+CATS/FareIncrease2010.htm>. After the comment period ends on April 5, staff will compile the transcript from tonight's public meeting with additional comments received for review at the April MTC meeting. Mr. Roberts commented that since bus drivers are unionized, he would want to know what mechanism will be used to address customer service concerns for those employees.

d. FY2011-15 Transit Capital Investment Plan

Dymphna Pereira

Ms. Pereira, CATS Division Manager of Finance, reviewed the five-year Transit Capital Investment Plan (CIP) and the financial policies behind creating such a plan. Over 50 percent of projected capital revenue is directed to specific projects such as asset vehicle expenditures, construction and renovation for transit amenities such as bus stops and rail crossings, and corridor development. CATS projects 57 percent of capital expenditures to be utilized for corridor development for the Blue Line Extension and Red Line. CATS anticipates using the remainder of capital expenditures to make system improvements, primarily in the areas of Safety and Security, Technology, and Asset Maintenance. Although the five-year CIP includes the purchase of 99 buses, most of the new buses will replace older buses. The fleet is projected to increase by only four vehicles. The plan also includes funds for a renovation of the Charlotte Transportation Center and building additional park and ride lots.

Discussion: None.

VIII. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Carolyn Flowers

Under the CEO's report, Ms. Flowers discussed the following:

a. Legislative Efforts:

Ms. Flowers reported that she and Ms. Pereira had accompanied City Council members to meetings in Washington, DC with congressional delegates and to attend the APTA Legislative Conference. She was hopeful that changes in FTA and Federal Railroad Administration guidelines will lead to future funding opportunities for CATS. She and Mr. Muth gave a presentation in Raleigh yesterday before the Infrastructure Committee, along with Art in Transit, about the needs for public transportation in North Carolina.

Discussion: None.

b. FTA Update:

The FTA Quarterly meeting will be held in Charlotte on Thursday, March 25, 2010.

Discussion: None.

c. April 2010 MTC Agenda:

Ms. Flowers reported that the agenda for next month will include an information item on customer service, to follow up on public meeting comments from tonight's Public Hearing, and an action item on the budget.

Discussion: Mr. Messera requested that a member from the bus management company be present for the customer service discussion. Ms. Flowers assured MTC members that Stephen Keiper, General Manager for McDonald Transit, had attended tonight's meeting and heard the comments. He will be able to respond to customers' concerns.

IX. Public Comment on Agenda Items

None.

X. Other Business

MTC members observed a moment of silence to honor Bill Carstarphen, who was a legislative advocate on CATS' behalf to advance transit issues for the region and state. Mr. Carstarphen died suddenly on March 16, 2010.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm by Commissioner Roberts.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2010, 5:30 PM