

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION
Meeting Summary
May 26, 2010

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Presiding: Jennifer Roberts (Chairman, Mecklenburg County Commission)

Present: Curt Walton (Charlotte City Manager)
Mayor Anthony Foxx (Charlotte)
Tom Cox (CTAG Co-chair)
Rick Sanderson (TSAC Co-chair)
John Collett (NCDOT Representative)
Sarah Nuckles (SCDOT Representative)
Anthony Roberts (Cornelius Town Manager)
Mayor John Woods (Davidson)
Leamon Brice (Davidson Town Manager)
Mayor Jill Swain (Huntersville)
Greg Ferguson (Huntersville Town Manager)
Ralph Messera (Matthews)
Brian Welch (Mint Hill Town Manager)

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 Co-chair Mayor John Woods. Commissioner Roberts joined the meeting in progress.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The Meeting Summary of April 28, 2010 was approved as written.

III. Transit Services Advisory Committee Chair's Report

Rick Sanderson

TSAC met on May 13 and toured the Special Transportation Services facility. CATS staff also presented an update on the area of Safety and Security.

IV. Citizens Transit Advisory Group Chair's Report

Tom Cox

CTAG heard presentations at its May 18 meeting on the Blue Line Extension and sustainability of City facilities. Mr. Cox commented that Jerry Fox will attend the MTC meeting next month for the last time, as he is rotating off CTAG. He has served on CTAG since its inception. Mr. Cox urged MTC members to recognize Mr. Fox's service to MTC and CTAG over the years at the June meeting.

V. Public Comment on General Items

Michael Morgan urged CATS to redesign bus routes to provide better access to retail centers for residents. He also asked MTC members to improve regional service by adding regular service to Gastonia and to Concord. Existing regional connectors would then give Charlotte residents access to the new research campus in Kannapolis.

Charles Strickland also encouraged CATS to provide daily regional service to bring people from other counties into Mecklenburg. He spoke in favor of two-car LYNX trains, particularly during the summer so small children do not have to stand.

VI. Action Items

None.

VII. Information Items

a. High Speed Rail

Pat Simmons

Mr. Simmons, Director, NCDOT Rail Division, spoke on the recent award of \$545 million from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) for future development of the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) Corridor. Approximately \$247 million was earmarked for three projects in the Charlotte area. \$95 million is allocated for the North Carolina Railroad Improvement Program (NCRRIIP) Double Track Project from northeast Charlotte to Concord. This project will complete double-tracking in the rail corridor from Charlotte to Greensboro. \$23 million is allocated for the NCDOT Locomotive and Railcar Maintenance Facility south of the current Greyhound Terminal in Uptown Charlotte. \$129 million is allocated for the NC/CSXT Mainline Grade Separation near Uptown, part of the Charlotte Rail Improvement & Safety Program (CRISP). NCDOT Rail is coordinating with CATS for the CRISP project, as its location impacts both the Red Line and the BLE.

Mr. Simmons commented that mid-day Amtrak service between Charlotte and Raleigh will begin on June 5.

Discussion: Ms. Nuckles complimented Mr. Simmons, saying that North Carolina is more advanced in high speed rail planning than South Carolina. Mr. Simmons mentioned that NCDOT has worked with Virginia recently, and it is clear that Georgia and South Carolina are interested in becoming involved in high speed rail. Mr. Messera asked whether the site of the NCDOT rail maintenance facility was large enough to accommodate the Red Line's maintenance needs. Mr. Simmons said that NCDOT Rail was interested in working with CATS. However, the Red Line's access to their site would be difficult to accomplish, as it would have to cross freight tracks. Mr. Simmons said NCDOT Rail is working with CATS to relocate the current Greyhound Bus Terminal for construction of their rail maintenance facility. NCDOT Rail did not ask for funding for the Charlotte Gateway Station under ARRA grants because it was necessary to complete CRISP Phase I first. NCDOT Rail is interested in working with developers for air rights to develop transit oriented development (TOD) on their site, as well as working with CATS to determine the number of buses and trains CATS would like to accommodate on the site. Mr. Collett commended Mr. Simmons on the work over the years which positioned NCDOT Rail to compete for and receive these awards. When the NCRRIIP project is complete, the heavily-traveled line between Greensboro and Charlotte will be completely double-tracked.

Ms. Nuckles noted that in Atlanta, a suggestion was made that Departments of Transportation across the country should be renamed Departments of Intermodal Transportation and examine the total system. Currently, the different types of transportation do not interact much with each other. Mayor Swain commented that the vision is the different modes will work together to benefit the total system.

b. Blue Line Extension (BLE) Update / South Corridor Retrofit

Danny Rogers

Mr. Rogers, CATS Senior Project Manager for the LYNX Blue Line Extension, presented an update on the Northeast Corridor BLE Preliminary Engineering (PE) activities. CATS has completed the 30 percent design level, and will submit the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to FTA this summer. CATS expects to complete PE at the 65 percent design level in Summer 2011, and anticipates award of a Full Funding Grant Agreement in Fall 2012. Local funding will play an important role in schedule development after PE completion. The Final EIS should be completed next spring. CATS will have an updated cost estimate at the 30 percent design level with the Year of Expenditure cost in August. MTC will be briefed on the updated cost estimate at its August 25 meeting. The revised schedule and cost estimate will be given to FTA in September.

The success of the South Corridor LYNX Blue Line has driven the design of the BLE, with infrastructure planned to support three-car trains. Staff described the need for additional design and environmental work to retrofit the Blue Line to allow for three-car operations. The Blue Line EIS was developed for three-car operations; CATS will study the area to see if there have been changes since the original EIS. CATS has requested that FTA include Blue Line retrofit elements in the BLE project; FTA's decision on including those elements in the BLE project is expected in June. If FTA approves including the Blue Line retrofit in the BLE project, the BLE engineering contract will need to be amended, and it will be discussed at the June 28 City Council meeting. CATS has received Federal earmarks of \$39.65 million to date for the BLE. CATS has a commitment from the State to match the project's local share, and has the funds to complete the PE phase.

Discussion: Commissioner Roberts stressed that despite recent media reports, there is no plan to phase the project; it is being planned for construction to UNC Charlotte, terminating at I-485 and North Tryon Street. She asked for ridership estimates. Mr. Rogers replied that ridership for the BLE is projected at about 24,000 daily passengers, which is about the estimate for the Blue Line for 2030. The entire line is estimated at about 50,000 daily passengers. Mayor Swain asked about funding, specifically for the northeast. Mr. Rogers clarified that if FTA approves adding the Blue Line retrofit, the cost would be added to the BLE project cost. Mayor Swain said she is proud of the line and that the region is lucky to have so many different areas wanting transit. She commented that it was difficult to justify expanding a successful line before adding rail to other areas. Mayor Woods noted that changes in a project's scope can only be authorized by the MTC and should not be discussed publically prior to MTC approval. Commissioner Roberts agreed and commented that people nationally have heard of the success of the Blue Line. Mayor Swain said that in this economic climate, MTC and CATS have to be creative to find new funding opportunities, and will make decisions as these items come up.

c. City of Charlotte Policy for Sustainable Facilities

Tina Votaw

Ms. Votaw, CATS TOD Specialist, discussed the City of Charlotte Policy for Sustainable Facilities which was adopted in September 2009 and how the policy will apply to CATS projects. Ms. Votaw reviewed the policy background, how the City's policy was developed, and discussed research into how peer cities have approached sustainability, including those that have adopted policies based on Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED). The City's new policy is LEED-centric. A key component of the policy is commissioning, making sure designed features are constructed and operated according to their intended

design, to ensure that the pieces work together for maximum efficiency and sustainability. Ms. Votaw reviewed various CATS projects that currently include sustainable features and discussed future projects and potential opportunities to include sustainable elements that conform to City policy. It is intended that the City's new policy will be updated annually, incorporating lessons learned.

Discussion: Commissioner Roberts spoke in favor of CATS' efforts to control and contain runoff in parking lots. She asked whether CATS is coordinating performance contracting with schools and other areas. Ms. Votaw said that departments work cooperatively through the Joint Use Task Force, but procurement is negotiated by departments according to their needs. Ms. Nuckles asked if any of the sustainability efforts would affect air quality. Ms. Votaw commented that these efforts would produce incremental improvements, but the greatest reduction in greenhouse gases will occur with the transit corridors. She concluded that throughout the county, combined efforts will ultimately impact air quality favorably.

VIII. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Carolyn Flowers

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

a. Ridership:

Ridership for April 2010 increased 3.3 percent over April 2009, an encouraging indicator. Bus ridership increased, and rail service was up 10.7 percent over April 2009. Rail averaged 16,000 weekday trips, with some days exceeding 18,000 riders.

Discussion: None.

b. Legislative Efforts:

Ms. Flowers reported that she went to Washington, DC, with three members of the MTC (Commissioner Roberts and Mayors Swain and Woods), along with John Muth, Deputy Director for Development, to meet with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to discuss the Red Line project. The delegation received good feedback and clarification on criteria FTA currently uses for rail projects. FTA received over 1,000 applications for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program. The Red Line fared well in the process, reaching the finalist list of 166 projects. Grants were awarded to spread stimulus dollars over as many states as possible, with only a few projects receiving more than \$100 million. FTA indicated that the next round of TIGER grants will stipulate a minimum of 20 percent local match. Those projects having a greater than 20 percent local match will likely have greater success in the process, and projects which show benefits for passenger intercity rail, which the Red Line lacks, will also fare well. CATS will continue efforts such as the ad hoc task force to advance the Red Line project. The delegation learned much that will help in developing future Federal funding requests for the project.

Discussion: None.

c. CATS-CMS Collaboration:

CATS has been in discussion with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) on transportation for magnet school students. The County's budget situation has necessitated cuts in busing for school students. Under FTA regulations, CATS cannot offer services that are not open to

the public and cannot accept funding for temporary special events. CATS believes that approximately 30 percent of magnet school students can be accommodated utilizing CATS current service.

Discussion: Commissioner Roberts noted that in the past, CMS had been reluctant to speak with CATS about student transport. Larry Kopf, CATS Chief Planning Officer and Interim Manager of Bus Operations, commented that the groups are making progress. The primary area of concern is that CATS buses are open to the public, unlike the CMS system. Mr. Kopf said he understood parents' concerns. However, CATS has a reputation as a safe system with security systems on buses, and he felt progress is underway.

d. APTA Legislative Alert:

The American Public Transit Association (APTA) announced a US Senate bill authorizing \$2 billion for emergency transit operating assistance for transit systems across the country. The proposed bill would distribute funds to help restore and prevent service reductions and layoffs, or alleviate fare increases that have happened due to decreased state and local funding since January 1, 2009. APTA has urged immediate action to generate support for the bill. Ms. Flowers will be speaking with CATS lobbyists to see if letters of support from MTC members will be helpful.

Discussion: None.

e. Sales Tax Revenue:

CATS sales tax revenue has been down compared to revenue the City receives from the State. CATS has asked the City to speak with NC Department of Revenue to determine why the two tax revenues are tracking differently.

Discussion: None.

f. Stockholders' Meetings:

CATS staff plans to meet with the community in July and August to discuss the area's transit vision and get the public's feedback. This is part of CATS' long-range review of transit plans. To allow more time for the community meetings, CATS will propose that the MTC not meet in July.

Discussion: Commissioner Roberts asked about the MTC's agenda for July. Ms. Flowers replied that there were no pressing items on the agenda.

IX. Public Comment on Agenda Items

None.

X. Other Business

Ms. Flowers announced the results of the Clear the Air campaign, an interdepartmental transit use competition between Planning, CDOT, and CATS. CATS had 90.9 percent staff participation last week and won the challenge this year. She pledged that CATS will do even better next year.

Ms. Nuckles asked whether the business community added something to bus pass benefits. Ms. Flowers noted that many large area businesses have coordinators for passes, and said CATS will meet with Bank of America to increase LYNX ridership among their associates. She felt that UNC

Charlotte will also be interested in pass sales when LYNX is extended to their area, particularly since UNC Charlotte is planning an extension campus at 9th Street. Olaf Kinard, CATS Director of Marketing & Communications, elaborated on agreements with large employers through CATS' Employee Transportation Coordinator program.

Mr. Collett commented that he had noticed bus advertisements on the sides of buses in Raleigh. Ms. Flowers noted that is on the MTC's agenda for discussion in June. Mr. Collett said that in these economic times, MTC should look at all revenue options. Commissioner Roberts observed that the delegation heard in Washington that Charlotte should keep trying for funding, and also should look at fostering private support and partnerships to obtain as much local collaboration as possible. She noted that the group also heard feedback that many successful lines pass additional revenue sources after the successful line opens, but this line opened shortly before the economy crashed. Mayor Swain stated that she appreciated the opportunity to go to Washington and the area needs to continue to tell the good news of this line. Mayor Woods noted that CATS' policy of raising fares and not cutting services is very important right now. He stated that it will be a challenge to accelerate the efforts before us. Mayor Foxx commended MTC members for making the trip and said it is important to develop the infrastructure investment and to put the region's entire vision in front of Washington. There is a discussion on land use and transportation going on now, a discussion Charlotte has been having longer than most areas.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm by Commissioner Roberts.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2010, 5:30 PM