

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

June 22, 2011

Presiding: Mayor John Woods (Davidson)

Present: Jim Schumacher (Charlotte Assistant City Manager)
Tom Cox (CTAG Co-chair)
Terry Lansdell (TSAC Co-chair)
Jennifer Roberts (Chairman, Mecklenburg County Commission)
Sarah Nuckles (SCDOT Representative)
Mayor Jeff Tarte (Cornelius)
Greg Ferguson (Huntersville Town Manager)
Ralph Messera (Matthews)
Bill Thunberg (Mooresville Representative)

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 Vice Chair, Mayor John Woods.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of May 25, 2011 was approved as written.

III. Transit Services Advisory Committee (TSAC) Chair's Report

Terry Lansdell

TSAC met on June 9. Members received their first update on the Countywide Transit Services Plan (CTSP) and reviewed route changes and modifications that might occur. Staff also presented a Safety and Security update on recent actions and future plans.

IV. Citizens Transit Advisory Group (CTAG) Chair's Report

Tom Cox

CTAG met last month and this month on June 22. Last month, members toured the new maintenance facility. The June 22 meeting included a review of the multimodal center. A third of CTAG's membership is new, so CTAG members are undergoing a training phase.

V. Red Line Task Force Update

John Woods

The Red Line Task Force met just prior to this meeting. Today's discussion centered on financial roundtable discussions by the towns in a meeting on June 8. Members also reviewed a schedule for towns to continue to meet through October on financial planning and project definition. The task force also reviewed several deliverables, including a potential new station north of Uptown, the possible relocation of the Mt. Mourne station, a comparison of other commuter rail projects and operations maintenance costs. The next meeting will be July 27.

VI. Public Comments

Charles Strickland stated that the recent Brookings Institute study indicated a missed opportunity for regional transit. The Brookings study ranks the Charlotte region 75th out of 100 regions studied. He said that the NC Music Factory also represents a missed opportunity. The closest bus stop is a decent walk from the Music Factory and at night would not be a

comfortable or safe-feeling walk. A closer stop could result in increased ridership. Mr. Strickland stated that these missed opportunities disturb him. Charlotte has outgrown the single-hub system. People want to use the system and the potential is there if CATS can adapt.

VII. Action Items

a. Uptown Circulator Service (Gold Rush) Contract

Lisa Flowers

The Uptown Circulator Service, commonly called the Gold Rush, is a fare-free service that has operated in the Uptown area since 2002 and was recently extended to encompass Johnson C. Smith University, Central Piedmont Community College, and Presbyterian Hospital. Charlotte Center City Partners (CCCP) offsets the operating costs of Gold Rush service through contributions received from Uptown employers. Although the current contract does not expire until 2014, CATS and CCCP would like to enter into a new contract in order to give more flexibility in planning for funding or operating cost fluctuations.

Discussion: Mayor Tarte asked if CATS had identified funding sources. Ms. Flowers replied that current partners are Central Piedmont Community College, Johnson C. Smith University, Bank of America and Wells Fargo. Previously, CCCP obtained funding agreements on a handshake, but now asks for a three-year commitment from funding partners. Mr. Messera asked if the \$325,000 minimum covers the operating costs. Ms. Flowers replied that it does not and CATS continues to negotiate the amount. Ms. Flowers added that CATS hopes for a funding commitment of \$439,000 from CCCP, which would divide the costs equally between CCCP and CATS. If CCCP is not able to contribute \$439,000, CATS will adjust service to reduce operating costs. Mayor Woods noted that currently, payment is made at the end of the year; if payment is not made, it is too late to adjust service. Ms. Flowers said the new contract would help mitigate that risk. The contract will require CCCP to notify CATS by November at the latest on anticipated funding; CATS can adjust service then if necessary. Mayor Tarte asked Ms. Flowers whether staff recommends that MTC move forward, and Ms. Flowers confirmed that to be the case. Mr. Lansdell asked the limiting factors for adding new partners and extending service. Ms. Flowers said that the limit was funding; there is no restriction on funding partners.

Mr. Messera asked why the contract was renegotiated now. Ms. Flowers said that it was already on tonight's agenda when funding concerns came up today. CATS will speak with City Council next Monday to see if funding can be adjusted through service parameters. CATS wanted the contract to begin with a new fiscal year and be on the fiscal year cycle. The current contract still has a minimum funding commitment of \$325,000, but CATS wants the flexibility to adjust service during the year as each side gets new information.

Resolution: Mr. Schumacher motioned to approve a resolution for a new annual contract with optional one-year renewals with CCCP. The contract would include a minimum guarantee of \$325,000 annually from CCCP; however, since CCCP's estimated share of the FY12 operating expenses is \$439,000, the resolution is to approve the contract as long as a compromise is reached between CCCP and CATS on either adjusting service to reduce costs or a commitment from CCCP to raise additional funds to meet the estimated \$439,000 cost. If those negotiations fail, the existing contract remains in force. Mayor Tarte seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VIII. Information Items

a. **Center City Access Study – CGS Bus Operation Assessment**

David Feltman

John Muth, CATS Deputy Director of Development, introduced the study noting that the City is partnering with NCDOT to integrate the Charlotte Gateway Station (CGS) with streetcar, bus, commuter and passenger rail. The purpose of this project was to examine how a future two-hub bus operation would work. NCDOT has studied the project and asked for CATS' programming needs for the area so they can integrate them with their rail plans.

Mr. Feltman, CATS Manager of Project Development, stated that when the CGS is completed, transit in Charlotte will move from a one-hub bus system centered at the Charlotte Transportation Center (CTC) to a two-hub system. At NCDOT's request, CATS examined programming needs for the CGS and surrounding area. Design guidelines were developed into three tiers, from basic facility requirements that must be met in Tier I, to preferred but not essential guidelines in Tier II. Tier III items are design restrictions, such as that bus patrons should not have to cross non-transit traffic to access bus bays and that security services in the station should be coordinated among providers to prevent gaps in coverage. The project gives a framework for developing bus transit aspects of the multimodal station, which will serve Amtrak at the state and national level, integrate Greyhound national bus transit, and serve CATS' Red Line, Gold Rush, Sprinter and local and express bus routes.

Discussion: Mayor Woods said that it is exciting to see concepts begin to come together. Mr. Lansdell asked how pedestrian mobility would be facilitated between modes. Mr. Feltman showed a rendering as an illustration of how bus patrons may take an escalator to access the other modes, and noted that Greyhound service would have to be integrated as well during the Master Development process. Mr. Messera asked about the proscription against subterranean bus service. Mr. Feltman replied that subterranean service would add underground escalators, tunnels and added security and was not preferred or desirable.

b. **Countywide Transit Service Plan (CTSP)**

Larry Kopf

Mr. Kopf, CATS Chief Operations Planning Officer and Manager of Bus Operations, introduced Pamela White and Patrick Hoskins, the two staff members spearheading the CTSP. The two main components of the CTSP are the five-year bus plan, which recommends service adjustments, and the capital development recommendations, which provide a blueprint for new park and ride construction. He reviewed the guiding principles of the project, to match service levels with demand, create more streamlined service, and improve cross-town connections. The plan will be financially constrained given the current economic climate. Staff held 32 community and area meetings to solicit the public's input on the plan's development. 547 surveys have been completed on the CATS website. Mr. Kopf reviewed sample route adjustments and the trade-offs that may be made to streamline and extend service, as well as a sample of how bus routes may change to integrate with the light rail line when the Blue Line Extension (BLE) is completed. A new route is proposed for Highway 51 to be funded through a Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) grant. It will connect Carolina Place Mall with shopping centers along Highway 51 such as the Arboretum and will end at the Matthews Park and Ride lot. Next steps include another round of public meetings this summer, further route development and investigation of possible funding sources for capital development, and exploring technology advancements such as fare collection via Smart Cards and mobile apps with real time bus arrival information. The

current project schedule will culminate with a request for MTC action on the final report in January 2012.

Discussion: Mayor Tarte asked about tracking buses. Mr. Kopf said that CATS's current bus tracking technology can be utilized to allow real time bus information on cell phones. Mr. Lansdell asked where new park and rides would be located. Mr. Kopf replied that the study is just entering that phase. Mr. Lansdell asked if there was any consideration to charging for parking. Mr. Kopf replied that CATS has investigated paid parking in the past; it would be part of the budget process and not the CTSP. Ms. Flowers noted that Olaf Kinard, CATS Director of Marketing & Communications, is examining parking revenue options. CATS plans to investigate areas such as whether to charge for special event parking or for the ability to reserve a parking space in a certain lot, such as I-485, for a monthly fee.

Mayor Woods called on Bill Coxe, Town Planner for Huntersville, for comments. Mr. Coxe noted that the five-year CTSP is a financially constrained plan. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is moving to a long-term comprehensive transportation plan that is not financially constrained. He suggested that the MPO's long-term transportation plan could be tied into the CTSP as a long-term goal.

IX. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Carolyn Flowers

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

a. Security Update:

John Trunk, CATS Assistant Director of Transit Support Services, reviewed CTC security plans for July 4 events Uptown. The CTC will be staffed with a full contingent of security from both CMPD's Transit Unit and AlliedBarton personnel. Trade St. will be blocked off. Retail outlets will close at 9 p.m. Staff will ensure that the CTC will be used only by individuals with a legitimate transit need. MTC members were also briefed on the FBI's recent request for the public's help in identifying an individual who acted in a suspicious manner in a restricted area along the light rail line.

b. Legislative Report:

Ms. Flowers reported that restrictions in the State budget that precluded NCDOT's entering into funding commitments for the BLE and Red Line were removed in the final version. Funding for the State Maintenance Assistance Program (SMAP) was reduced in the final budget by six percent. CATS had budgeted for a four percent reduction, so staff will work to absorb the difference. HB 422 extended authority to Cornelius and Charlotte for any combination of design-build-operate-maintain, which will help with planning and funding rail projects. It did not include design-build-finance-operate-maintain, but will still help with project delivery options for the Red Line. The Studies Act of 2011 will provide for a continuation of study for public-private partnerships, which is helpful for CATS. The legislature removed from the State level the limitation of 25 design-build projects. This action was needed if NCDOT were to assume Red Line commuter rail design and construction activities. There was no additional funding in the Mobility Fund.

c. Upcoming Procurements:

Upcoming procurements to be taken the City Council include a Risk Assessment for the BLE, bus preventative maintenance filters and the Blue Line vehicle engineering consultant. Other procurements include the light rail vehicle overhaul project, BLE appraisal services and legal services for title and rights of way, and light rail video enhancements.

d. Miscellaneous:

- The FTA Quarterly Meeting will be in Atlanta on June 23.
- CATS will go to the State Board of Transportation on July 6-7 to seek approval for the commitment for the State Full Funding Grant Agreement for the BLE.
- Sales tax revenues for the current month were at \$5.143 million, slightly above the FY10 level but less than budget projections. It is an improvement; CATS is still on track to meet midyear revenue projections. Staff will monitor costs, including gas prices, closely. Year to date ridership is up 2.1 percent.
- Ms. Flowers reminded MTC members that she indicated last month that bus operators scheduled an election to decide whether they would be represented by the Teamsters or UTU. Operators chose UTU in the election, so staff is beginning negotiations with UTU.
- MTC members decided by acclaim that MTC will not meet in July as there are no action items on the agenda.
- The Ribbon Cutting for the renovated North Davidson Street Bus Facility will be July 28 at 10:00 a.m. MTC members are invited and encouraged to attend.
- CATS will be developing grant applications for two federal grants.
- Mayor Woods congratulated Ms. Flowers for receiving an award as one of the top 25 Outstanding Business Women from the Charlotte Business Journal.

Discussion: Mr. Messera stated that his daughter is a senior researcher for Brookings Institute. He has discussed the study mentioned earlier in the meeting with her. She was not happy with the methodology used in the study. The focus was on getting to work, as with the congestion study DOT uses. The Brookings Study implies that CATS should provide service from Gaston County to Anson County, which is not a reasonable service area.

X. Other Business

Bus and paratransit roadeo winners were introduced to applause by MTC members as the best of the best. STS winners included Henry Minnet, a multiple-year winner for his paratransit driving skills, in first place, followed by Janine Miller and Tawanda Buckhalter for second and third place. Lonny Earnhardt won first place in the bus operator competition, his thirteenth first place win, followed by Carmen Alaman and Junior Bush. The winning team in the bus maintenance technician competition was Craig Patch, Troy Andrews and Billy Belcher.

In the light rail operator rodeo, Metro Coston won first place, followed by Harry Ruiz and Florence Howard. Rail mechanic winners were Patrick Mills, Robert Hudgins and Sammie Allen.

In the State competition, STS contestants brought home the Overall System Trophy for the fifth consecutive year. STS won the safest Urban Dial-a-Ride system in the state for the third consecutive year.

Lisa Bowden is the CATS Customer Service Champion. MTC members applauded video showing her exceptional driving skills while driving an express bus in an HOV lane when a vehicle pulled into the lane from stopped traffic.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm by Mayor Woods.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2011, 5:30 PM