

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

September 24, 2014

Presiding: Trevor Fuller (Chairman, Mecklenburg County Commission)

Present:

Mayor Dan Clodfelter (Charlotte)	Mayor Jill Swain (Huntersville)
Ron Kimble (Charlotte Assistant City Manager)	Mayor Jim Taylor (Matthews)
Rick Sanderson (TSAC Chair))	Ralph Messera (Matthews)
Dena Diorio (Mecklenburg County Manager)	Bill Thunberg (Mooresville Representative)
Anthony Roberts (Cornelius Town Manager)	Mayor Jack Edwards (Pineville)
Mayor John Woods (Davidson)	

Chief Executive Officer: Carolyn Flowers

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Transit Commission was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by MTC's Chairman, Commissioner Fuller.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of June 25, 2014 was approved as written.

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

Rick Sanderson

Since MTC's last meeting in June, Mr. Sanderson reported that TSAC has met twice, in August and September. In August, TSAC unanimously approved the proposed service change and received information on CATS' year-end and ridership reports. In September, TSAC received information on the LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) project, Art-in-Transit activities and on the CityLYNX Gold Line Phase 2 project.

IV. Transit Funding Working Group Update

Jill Swain

Mayor Swain said that the Transit Funding Working Group's (TFWG) report would be presented by Mr. Thunberg and Dana Fenton, Intergovernmental Relations Manager with the City of Charlotte. Mr. Thunberg reminded MTC members that they established the TFWG in February 2013 due to declining federal funds, changes in funding at the state level and stagnant local transit state tax revenues. The TFWG explored financing models using both existing funding sources and alternative sources. Ernst & Young has been engaged to investigate the alternative financing methods.

The State legislative strategies include regional priorities. Realizing the priorities will require MTC's leadership and support from MTC member jurisdictions, community stakeholders and the private sector including Industry. A key piece at the state effort level will be partnering with Triangle Transit Authority and the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation.

Mr. Fenton reviewed types of federal credit assistance that might be useful for some of the projects. The BLE may be able to obtain credit at favorable terms through the Transportation Infrastructure and Finance Innovation Act (TIFIA). The Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) financing may be appropriate for the LYNX Red Line and Charlotte Gateway Station (CGS) projects. Public-Private Partnerships may also be possibilities for CGS and the LYNX Red Line as well as the LYNX Silver Line and CityLYNX Gold Line projects.

The General Assembly extended the sunset date for the Special Assessments for Critical Infrastructure Needs Act; the sunset date needs to be repealed altogether to allow necessary time to develop these plans. Mr. Fenton directed MTC members to sample resolutions in their agenda packet to be adopted at the local governmental level. Mr. Thunberg said that these resolutions from local governments will be a powerful start to advancing the legislative advocacy agenda. He asked MTC members to request that their governing body adopt the resolution before the November 19 meeting to demonstrate regional support.

Discussion: Mayor Swain asked if a similar resolution had been drafted for the Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) or any of the other entities. Mr. Thunberg said that was a good idea and asked that it be brought up at the Metropolitan Mayors conference next month; Mayor Swain said that she was happy to bring it up with that group. Mr. Thunberg said that now is also the time to get letters of support from large employers and people with influence in the community. The effort will include not just government talking to government but businesses and citizens talking to government. He encouraged members to work on soliciting letters of support for transit funding from large employers and people who have an economic impact across the state as well. The alternative funding methodologies will be necessary for all transit agencies throughout the state, a difficult task but one worth doing. Ms. Diorio asked if the Chamber was going to pass a motion of support. Mr. Fenton said that they would be speaking with a lot of people before November 19, including the Chamber. Commissioner Fuller asked their assessments of the prospects for success and where the challenges are. If the whole agenda faces headwinds, Commissioner Fuller asked where to prioritize. Mr. Fenton said that no one has indicated that this is something they would not do, but it is a tough climb; there is a lot of work to do. Mr. Thunberg said that we need to be unified as a team in order to advance this. The environment is not good, so we need to pull together tighter and work smarter.

Mayor Swain commented we would be foolish not to pave the way, even if we are not immediately successful. We have the vision and are looking for the future. She said that if the profile of the legislature changes in the near future, we will have made valuable strides. Mr. Thunberg said that we have to be unified in order to advance this. The environment is not good but that does not mean that we should not move forward, but rather that we should work smarter. Commissioner Fuller said that it would be good to get partners in other regions. It is difficult not to infer an anti-urban bias in the legislature. If we could engage our rural partners somehow, that might be a way to blunt some of the resistance to the concerns of the urban areas of the state. Mr. Thunberg said that Representative Moore has volunteered to help find who to work with at the legislative level to advance the agenda.

Mayor Swain said that Senator Tarte had posted a question on social media recently on whether we would be willing to pay taxes to widen I-77, saying that it was related to something that was being discussed in the legislature. The feeling is that there is some discussion on putting increased responsibility on the counties and municipalities for transportation and transit issues.

If that is the case, she thinks this may not be an uphill climb, because this will give more ability locally and regionally to achieve what we want to achieve. Mayor Clodfelter said that he had cosponsored legislation with Senator Rucho on this subject, and Senator Rucho still has a strong interest in it concerning secondary roads. Mayor Swain asked that the resolution be sent to the managers and said she and Mayor Woods would contact the appropriate decision makers in their regions; she will also take it to the Metro Mayors conference.

V. Public Comments

Ms. Flowers read a statement by Christopher McMillan, who emailed a request to her that his letter be submitted as public comment. In his statement, Mr. McMillan said that he would have liked to attend the meeting as a legally blind citizen, but he lacks bus service and STS is unable to assist him. Mr. McMillan urged MTC members to work for support for transportation options in the UNC Charlotte area and to continue to fight for funding to improve transportation options on the Mecklenburg-Cabarrus line in Charlotte's Harrisburg area. He said he was grateful for the light rail extension coming to the area, but more options are needed.

VI. Action Items

None.

VII. Information Items

a. 2015 Legislative Agenda

Dana Fenton

Mr. Fenton reported that House Bill 375 from the 2014 State Legislative Agenda has been passed. The bill increases the maximum allowable length of CATS buses to 60 feet under specified circumstances. The State General Assembly also maintained funding for the BLE and State Maintenance Assistance Program at previously appropriated levels. On the Federal Legislative Agenda, the Surface Transportation Program (MAP-21) was extended to May 2015 and appropriations bills fully funded the BLE's federal share for FY2015.

The 2015 Federal Legislative Agenda will have the same issues as in 2014. One agenda item is to support reauthorization of the Federal surface transportation program for a long-term program, preferably six years. The extension granted was for less than a year, not enough time for long term planning. Also important is to support local decision making and funding directed through Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Other key messages are to support a balanced transportation network for the region and to emphasize that the federal role in implementing that network is of national significance. The agenda will also include continuation of federal resources for completion of the 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan. Federal funds are needed for completion of the BLE and the CityLYNX Gold Line.

Discussion: Mayor Swain asked whether the federal area is an appropriate venue for encouraging support for MPOs. Mr. Fenton replied that it is an initiative of Mayor Foxx and he did not think there would be negative fallout in encouraging MPO support.

b. LYNX Blue Line Extension Construction Update

Danny Rogers

Mr. Rogers, LYNX Blue Line Extension Projects Director, said that this is an exciting time on the BLE. The MTC's agenda packet includes the BLE Monthly Report that is submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), a comprehensive document detailing the project's progress. He gave an overview of the project, a 9.3 mile light rail line with 11 stations and four park and ride facilities including three parking garages, two of which are recent

upgrades approved by FTA. There will now be a parking deck at the Sugar Creek station rather than surface lot parking; the JW Clay garage was expanded to add another level to the deck. When BLE service begins, peak service frequency will increase from 10 minutes to 7.5 minutes since modeling estimates show demand will increase all along the line.

Construction is in full force all along the project. Clearing work is progressing Uptown and along the railroad corridor, the land purchase for the Norfolk Southern Intermodal Yard has been completed and the property is being readied for construction and utility work is going on all along the line. There are a lot of utility pole relocations in progress on North Tryon Street, as well as underground relocations. The Eastway Drive bridge will be lengthened to accommodate tracks beneath it.

Mr. Rogers said that there is good news with the budget. FTA determined at the time of the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) award that \$224.3 million dollars was required in total contingency for the project. Contingency levels have a drawdown curve over the course of the project. At the current stage of the project, FTA had hoped that we would have \$114.0 million in contingency; the project has \$184.7 million, exceeding contingency level requirements. Major contracts have been awarded and bids came in under engineers' estimates. Mr. Rogers reviewed the major contracts which have been awarded and the schedule. The project was designed with a very aggressive schedule, and the schedule remains the most challenging part of the project. Utility relocations have taken longer than we had hoped. With an estimated completion date of summer 2017, we are still well within the FFGA revenue service date of March 31, 2018, but we had hoped to be in revenue service in spring 2017. Advanced utility relocations are largely completed, although private utilities are still doing relocations throughout the corridor. A joint venture between Balfour Beatty Infrastructure and Blythe Development is working on Civil construction for Segment A, from Uptown to the intersection of North Tryon Street with Old Concord Road. Work on Segment A began in March 2014. Lane Construction has Civil Segments B and C, from Old Concord Road to the UNC Charlotte campus. Track and Systems construction began in August with Balfour Beatty Rail, though that work presently is largely confined to programming work.

In Segment A, the Norfolk Southern (NS) track relocation and 36th Street grade separation means that 36th Street is closed and will remain closed for a couple of years. There are traffic impacts, as the area is in downtown NoDa. Businesses will notice cuts in utility services as lines get cut during normal construction work due to utilities' incorrectly marking of service placements. There will be periodic lane closures along North Tryon Street between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. when traffic is not as heavy, and intermittent street closures along 7th, 8th and 9th Streets in Uptown. 8th Street will be closed for a significant amount of time, not only due to the BLE but also because of the Levine development. In Segment C, the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) will replace bridges on North Tryon Street south of Mallard Creek Church Road, just north of the BLE project limits. This will not affect the BLE project, but NCDOT's road closure for bridge construction will affect nearby businesses. There will be limited traffic on that part of North Tryon Street during the bridge closure. BLE staff is coordinating with NCDOT to perform as much BLE work as possible in that section of the project while traffic is already limited to minimize impacts on businesses.

Mr. Rogers showed an example of BLE public art, walls with a “calico” design. The project has purchased additional light rail vehicles (LRVs). The first four of 22 new LRVs purchased will be delivered in the next few months for testing and burn in. The first LRV will arrive in October; the remaining three should arrive by January.

Mr. Rogers said that this is a corridor improvement project. Public outreach is designed to support businesses and residents in the area so people and businesses can adjust to construction impacts ahead of time. The public outreach team is comprised of staff from CATS, the City and the State working to make people aware of what will be happening in their area.

Discussion: None.

VIII. Chief Executive Officer’s Report

Carolyn Flowers

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

a. Budget Update:

CATS received July revenues for the first month of the fiscal year, which included record high revenue of over \$8 million. Staff is cautious about the number, which may not reflect future revenue levels. Staff will monitor to see if this trend continues.

b. Ridership Update:

Ridership through August: light rail is up 6.8 percent, even with having to do a bus bridge for repairs in August. Bus ridership is down slightly, but Vanpool and STS ridership are also up.

c. Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO) Representative Update:

CRTPO voted to amend their bylaws to permit the MTC representative to be a non-elected official. The bylaws were also changed prohibiting members of a technical coordinating committee from being voting members. CATS will be asking for nominations; a vote will be held next month.

d. Funding Update:

The Southeast Corridor Study was approved by the Charlotte City Council and awarded to Parsons Brinckerhoff. The contract will be executed by the end of the week and MTC members will be apprised of the start date when negotiations are complete.

Charlotte City Council also approved an additional \$12 million to bring the City’s match for CityLYNX Gold Line Phase 2 to \$75 million for a Small Starts Capital Construction grant application. The proposal includes provisions to address the Hawthorne Bridge MOA. Public meetings are scheduled in October. The Streetcar Advisory Committee will meet on September 26.

The Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) rankings were released today and are available on the NCDOT website. There are portions of the overall vision plan with which CATS can probably align, as it speaks about Divisions and light rail and other modes. This is not about priorities, but about the overall vision.

e. Charlotte Chamber Salon:

MTC members received an invitation from the Charlotte Chamber for a salon on October 28 on infrastructure financing. McGuire Woods is a partner in the event.

f. November MTC Meeting:

The November MTC meeting is scheduled for November 19 due to the Thanksgiving holiday. The National League of Cities meeting in Austin, TX conflicts with this date; staff will poll MTC members to see if there will be a quorum. Mayor Woods said that he has a different conflict for November 19. Mayor Taylor said that CRTPO meets on November 19 at 6. Ms. Flowers suggested that the MTC meeting could begin at 5:00 p.m. for a one hour meeting. Mr. Taylor said he could make the meeting then.

IX. Other Business

None.

X. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m. by Commissioner Fuller.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2014, 5:00 P.M.