

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

April 22, 2015

Presiding: Mayor Dan Clodfelter (Charlotte)

Present:

Ron Carlee (Charlotte City Manager)

Rob Watson (CTAG Co-Chair)

Dena Diorio (Mecklenburg County Manager)

Tracy Dodson (NCDOT Representative)

Mayor Chuck Travis (Cornelius)

Mayor John Woods (Davidson)

Mayor Jill Swain (Huntersville)

Mayor Jim Taylor (Matthews)

Ralph Messera (Matthews)

Bill Thunberg (Mooresville Representative)

Mayor Jack Edwards (Pineville)

Interim Chief Executive Officer: John Muth

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, Mayor Clodfelter. Mayor Clodfelter said he may have to leave early. In that event, Mayor Woods would preside over the rest of the meeting. MTC welcomed Tracy Dodson, the new NCDOT Representative to MTC.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of March 25, 2015 was approved as written.

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

Larry Kopf

Mr. Kopf, CATS Chief Operations Planning Officer and Manager of Bus Operations, reported that TSAC had two presentations at their last meeting. TSAC endorsed the planned July service changes and heard a presentation on managed lanes on I-77, with a cost projected to flex according to the number of vehicles on the road.

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

Rob Watson

Mr. Watson reported that CTAG met yesterday morning and received two presentations. They received a presentation and discussed the annual responsibility for budget approval and approved both the operating and Community Improvement Plan (CIP) budgets. They also completed the CTAG Transit Survey. One of CTAG's mission statements is to provide advice to MTC, so they developed a citizen survey using SurveyMonkey and received 379 responses over the course of about a month. The survey link was promoted in social media, the Charlotte Observer, the newsletter for the Transportation Choices Alliance and other newsletters. There were three categories of questions: services, transit plans and funding sources. 55 percent of respondents never ride transit, 6 percent are regular riders, 16 percent ride for special events and 23 percent of respondents ride occasionally. 81 percent of respondents said that Charlotte's transit plans are not keeping up with peer cities. Consistent themes included comments about excellent service, interest in LYNX Red Line to relieve major pressure on I-77 as well as comments that better bicycling options are needed and negative comments about CityLYNX

Gold Line. Interestingly, although over half of respondents never ride transit, 80 percent supported the half cent sales tax for transit and 63 percent supported an increase in sales tax for transit.

Discussion: Mayor Swain commented that it was interesting that a comment mentioned “Special Assessment Districts;” citizens rarely know that phrase. Mayor Clodfelter asked if we knew where the comments came from. Mr. Watson responded that comments were anonymous; the survey was mentioned in the University City section of the Observer and Mayor Swain and City Council members posted about it on social media. There were comments on LYNX Red Line, but the survey had no question on where people lived as SurveyMonkey is restricted to only ten questions. Mayor Clodfelter said that it might be useful to do in a more in-depth survey with more than ten questions and dig deeper. Olaf Kinard, CATS Director of Marketing & Communications, said that prior to the recession, CATS surveyed riders on all routes as well as non-riders both in Mecklenburg County and surrounding counties. The regular surveys had to be discontinued during the recession but CATS hopes to add that back. We have the historical survey information, which asked about CATS, planning for the future, transit planning and station development and other areas. Mr. Kinard said that CATS thinks it can add surveying back to the Marketing budget every couple of years.

V. Transit Funding Working Group Update

Jill Swain

Mayor Swain reported that there is no new information from the group.

Discussion: Mayor Woods asked when the group would be meeting again and when the group could come to some final conclusions. Mayor Swain replied that we would not be able to wrap it up. The weather threw the meetings off-schedule and now there are scheduling issues. We have to follow the pulse of what is going on in the state and community to see when and how we can regenerate interest. Presently there are other things happening in the state with the bond package, which may present opportunities for some items if the bond package passes. She said that she would keep MTC posted as the group gears back up.

VI. Public Comments

None

VII. Action Items

a. Adoption of FY 2016/17 Budget

Dee Pereira

Ms. Pereira, CATS Chief Financial Officer, Assistant Director of Public Transit, said that staff will ask MTC for budget approval today. Financial policies require MTC to approve the recommended budget programs by April 30 yearly. The budget reflects some sales tax recovery. Staff anticipates long term growth at 3.5 percent in sales tax. CATS may exceed that number this year but have budgeted for 3.5 percent growth. New services include opening the new CityLYNX Gold Line streetcar service and 5,000 new bus service revenue hours. Changes to the budget include Special Transportation Service (STS) fleet maintenance service to be performed by BOD Maintenance Division and the addition of 35 positions to Rail for LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) rail car start-up and testing.

Outstanding debt as of June 30, 2014 was \$257.8 million. A Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan for funding the BLE’s local share is expected to close in the fall of 2015. The Revenue Reserve Fund balance will be \$5.5 million by FY 2015.

The five-year CIP for FY 16-20 is \$646 million. The majority, \$460.2 million, will be spent for BLE construction. Other areas for investment include asset management, safety and technology.

Discussion: Mr. Messera said he found the transfer of debt service in Attachment 1 in the MTC agenda packet to be confusing. Attachment 1 mentions the transfer of \$23 million to debt service. Under Operating Revenue, \$13.9 million is transferred from debt service under "Transfer from other funds." Ms. Pereira said that CATS schedules up-front payment for all debt service from the debt service fund. However, CATS receives a certain amount of grant fund income received to pay finance charges on the debt. So at some point, a percentage of the amount paid out for debt service is returned to the operating fund. That accounts for the difference. Mayor Swain commented on the lack of public present to speak, and no media present. She noted that there are fewer worries with the economy improving and sales tax trending better. Ms. Pereira noted that one of the documents distributed tonight was incomplete; members returned their copies so they can receive complete copies at next month's meeting.

Resolution: Mayor Taylor motioned to approve the budget; Mayor Swain seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

b. Title VI Service Equity Analysis

Arlanda Rouse

Mr. Rouse, CATS Civil Rights Officer, reminded MTC members that they received the Service Equity Analysis last month. CATS has an MTC-approved policy for major service changes; as the CityLYNX Gold Line is a new route, it is a major service change and required a Service Equity Analysis. When the CityLYNX Gold Line service begins, Gold Rush Red Line service will be discontinued for the portion of that route that will be covered by the CityLYNX Gold Line. The only negative impact staff was able to determine is that CityLYNX Gold Line has three minute longer headways than the Red Line, but the service's hours will be greatly expanded.

Discussion: Mayor Swain interjected that she felt members thoroughly understood the analysis report from last month's discussion and was prepared to make a motion. Mayor Clodfelter asked if there was any new information tonight. Mr. Rouse said that there are no changes from last month. MTC members indicated they were prepared to move forward.

Resolution: Mayor Swain motioned to approve the CityLYNX Gold Line Phase I service equity analysis; Mayor Taylor seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

c. BLE Project Enhancements

Danny Rogers

Mr. Rogers, CATS Blue Line Projects Director, said that MTC members heard most of the information on the proposed changes at the March 11, 2015 MTC meeting. The only change is that the pedestrian bridge at University City Boulevard (UCB) has been removed from the proposed enhancements. Since it would connect with land that is currently undeveloped, it is not as critical as the other enhancements and can be done in the future. The UCB station will be built to accommodate a bridge extension in the future. Tonight's motion is to expand the planned North Yard facility to increase fleet maintenance capability and vehicle storage capacity; to extend the pedestrian bridge across the North Carolina Railroad corridor to avoid pedestrians crossing the freight and light rail tracks at-grade and to connect neighborhoods across the tracks to the Sugar Creek Station, an important safety feature;

and to extend the pedestrian bridge at the JW Clay Boulevard/ UNC Charlotte Station to reach all the way across North Tryon Street. This pedestrian bridge will allow quicker access than crossing North Tryon Street at-grade for pedestrians coming from the football stadium to the station and is likely to be preferred than crossing at-grade further from the stadium. We are asking for approval to partner with the State using existing State Full Funding Grant Agreement funds, so the enhancements will be funded with savings and will not increase the budget. The estimated cost of the proposed changes is \$19,580,000. With project enhancements and the State and local share split at 50 percent each, the remaining contingency will be \$151.9 million. This is well above the FTA minimum contingency of \$100.6 million for this phase of the project. If MTC approves the BLE project enhancements, the information will be taken to the NC Board of Transportation for information at their May meeting and potential action in June.

Discussion: Mayor Clodfelter asked about the likelihood that the 50/50 match being approved. Mr. Muth said that preliminary conversations with the NC Deputy Secretary for Transportation and the chair of the NC Board of Transportation indicated that they held a favorable view of the enhancements. The Co-chairs of the Joint Transportation Oversight Committee will be consulted; it will not require action by the entire committee or the General Assembly. Mayor Taylor asked for verification that there is still a net reduction; Mr. Rogers affirmed that the amount requested is significantly less than what we have already saved.

Resolution: Mayor Taylor motioned to approve the BLE project enhancements; Mayor Swain seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

d. Proposed Route Changes

Pamela White

Ms. White, CATS Manager of Service Development, said that there are no changes from last month's information presentation on the proposed route changes. TSAC unanimously approved the changes; the represented Council members endorsed the route changes as well.

Discussion: Mr. Messera asked if this had triggered an equity analysis. Ms. White replied that the route changes were major changes, so they had triggered equity analyses. The information in last month's presentation was a summary of the analysis on the changes, and must be approved by MTC.

Resolution: Mayor Swain motioned to approve the proposed route changes; Mayor Travis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

e. Charlotte Gateway Station (CGS)

Tina Votaw

Ms. Votaw, CATS Transit Oriented Development Specialist, reminded MTC members that the Municipal Agreement discussed at the last two MTC meetings includes the acknowledgement that it will take a number of different funding sources and financing projects to advance CGS. The agreement MTC endorsed at its March 25, 2015 meeting requires that the City and the State support each other as we seek various financing sources. New information this month is USDOT's recent announcement that \$500 million will be available in the seventh round of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grants (TIGER FY 15). This will be highly competitive. The State wants to submit a

TIGER FY 15 grant application for CGS to seek funding to design and construct two new tracks to the east of the existing tracks, a platform and the bridges and vertical elements such as elevators, ramps and escalators required to access the platform. The State will seek approximately \$90 million for these improvements. Design and construction of the rail lines is critical in order to define what is usable for development after rail line construction. State law requires NCDOT to request approval of the General Assembly to accept any funds that exceed \$5 million; rather than wait until grant acceptance, it is staff's policy to seek approval of the General Assembly before applying for funds. The State is not asking CATS for any local match on this project, but they are asking CATS to consider adding the future Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs required to maintain the rail improvements and the platform into CATS' future budget. This is consistent with what the State required of Raleigh, whose new Amtrak station breaks ground next week. Staff recommends that MTC authorize staff to support the State's pursuit of the TIGER FY 15 grant and directs CATS to incorporate the future O&M costs of about \$75,000-\$100,000 in FY 14 dollars into the future budget. Staff plans to develop a business plan for the station and review revenue sources and operating costs so the O&M costs can be assigned to the appropriate party. This is the model Raleigh followed, and is a good model.

Discussion: Mayor Swain asked whether we were locked into any particular methods to pay for the O&M at this time; Ms. Votaw replied that we are not. If approved, staff will add to a future budget cycle, but that is not to say that it cannot be mitigated, defrayed or otherwise offloaded to a future partner. Mayor Clodfelter asked if this would commit us to the future O&M for the station; Ms. Votaw replied that is already CATS' responsibility in the current agreement. Mr. Thunberg thanked Ms. Votaw and Mr. Muth for bringing this forward and said that this is exactly the strategy discussed last year and is a crucial element in bringing forward the 2030 Transit Plan. Mayor Travis asked what is included in the platform construction. Ms. Votaw said that it is truly a platform. An interim station will be developed to the north of the platform while the permanent station on the main block is designed and constructed. The State plans to demolish the current Greyhound station and construct a smaller temporary building with the grant funds. Mr. Messera asked the source of funding for the interim station. Ms. Votaw said the funds for the interim station would be part of the TIGER FY 15, including approximately \$30 million in the conceptual cost estimate for the platform and temporary station. She was not sure if the platform would be covered and will check on that, as MTC members felt the platform should be a covered one. Ms. Diorio asked when the O&M would hit the operating budget. Ms. Votaw said that it would be 2018 or 2019 on an aggressive schedule.

Resolution: Mayor Woods motioned to approve the resolution; Mayor Travis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VIII. Information Items

There were no information items for April.

IX. Chief Executive Officer's Report

John Muth

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

a. Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) Participation:

Mr. Muth directed MTC members to the information distributed on the USDOT Bonding Education Program. CATS is a sponsor for the kick-off event. The program is an effort to help DBE contractors understand the system and get bonded so they can participate in projects. MTC members will receive more information on this program at the May meeting. The kick-off meeting will be on Thursday, May 28, 2015 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in room 267 of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center.

b. Stand Up 4 Transportation:

The Stand Up 4 Transportation day on April 9 was very successful. Mayor Clodfelter and others spoke at the event.

c. Park and Ride Update:

Property acquisition for the Cornelius Park and Ride lot will go to the Charlotte City Council on May 11. The design team is beginning to work on the project and working with Cornelius town staff. Ridership information is in the notebook.

d. Fare Collection:

Mr. Kinard said that CATS submitted an application for a TIGER grant last year for the fare collection system, as well as applications for the paratransit system and the CityLYNX Gold Line. The projects made it to the second round, but were not successful in gaining funding. FTA staff has since given feedback to CATS staff, so CATS will resubmit those applications for a TIGER FY 15 grant, as well as a few other items including an effort to reach out to and assist people without sufficient banking services to increase their financial literacy. In June, staff will give an overview of CATS' fare collection strategy, including equipment.

I. Other Business

None

II. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m. by Mayor Clodfelter.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2015, 5:30 P.M.