

TRANSIT SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TSAC)
Meeting Summary
June 14, 2001

Meeting Time: 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Present: Mark Loflin, Chair, Charlotte
Jim Bensman, Cornelius
Jim Blank, Charlotte
Laura Blue, Charlotte
Linette Fox, Charlotte
Kelly Gallant, Charlotte
Raenice Goode, Mecklenburg County
Sherry Helms-Miller, Charlotte
Walter Horstman, Matthews

Staff: Keith Parker
Vida Covington
Katrina Heineking
Pete Wallace
Dave Hines
Brad Miller
Dietrich Brown
Jon Downing
Pamela Seward
Ann Boggs

Absent: Paul Edmunds, Davidson
Bob Inskeep, Huntersville
Kathy Matson, Mint Hill

I. Call to Order

Mr. Loflin called the meeting to order, and introduced new members Ms. Gallant, Ms. Helms-Miller, and Mr. Bensman.

II. Approval of March 8, 2001 Meeting Summary

The March 8, 2001 Meeting Summary was approved as written.

III.

Discussion Items

A. Travel Markets Policy

Mr. Parker reviewed the provisions of the proposed CATS Travel Markets Policy. In response to various queries, he explained that the policy does not require that one priority market be completely fulfilled before another can be addressed, but rather that the priorities will be reflected in the resources allocated to the various markets. Ms. Goode expressed the opinion that bus service should be available to all potential riders, regardless of location, and Mr. Parker explained that the Travel Markets Policy supports both land use and cost effectiveness goals.

There was some discussion over the prioritization of markets, and both Ms. Helms-Miller and Ms. Blue expressed their opinions that the prioritization as reflected in the policy was correct, and that existing customers should be served before new routes are established. Mr. Bensman asked what if any economic dynamic was included in the policy, and Mr. Parker referred him to the Countywide Transit Services Plan, which addresses service standards monitoring. Mr. Bensman also asked whether traffic congestion mitigation had been a consideration in the formulation of the policy, and Mr. Parker explained that CATS will add or modify service to relieve temporary congestion, such as during the widening of Independence Boulevard, but will maintain its focus on those heavily congested corridors already identified, thereby maintaining its competitiveness while not encouraging urban sprawl. Mr. Horstman expressed his concern that service to the Town of Matthews could be limited as a result of over-emphasis on priority #1, and suggested that the word "customers" not be used in priority #2.

Mr. Blank moved to recommend that the MTC adopt the Travel Markets Policy as written, and Dr. Fox seconded the motion. The TSAC approved the motion unanimously.

B. Countywide Transit Services Plan

Mr. Dan Boyle of TMD, the consultant firm which produced the Countywide Transit Services Plan, provided a presentation on the Plan. He addressed three specific aspects of the Plan.

1. Service Recommendations: Mr. Boyle explained the five guiding principles used in the development of the service recommendations, and briefly explained the seven major elements of the recommendations. He also explained that the implementation of the recommendations will be accomplished in five phases, and showed the members the operating budgets required for service recommendation implementation. Mr. Bensman asked whether the calculation of those costs had included the accompanying revenue offset, and Mr. Boyle told him they had.

2. Paratransit Services: Mr. Boyle explained that CATS is required by the Federal government to provide paratransit service, and that other agencies in Mecklenburg County also provide such transportation services. The Countywide Transit Services Study found that paratransit services throughout the area could be better coordinated to achieve better service to customers and better use of resources. The Study determined that simply combining all the services of all the agencies would be less effective than establishing a brokerage program. Such a program would retain their own client bases and independent identities, while centralizing management and administration of the services, guaranteeing uniform performance standards, and lowering overall costs.

3. Fare Policy: Mr. Boyle explained the objectives behind the suggested fare policy, and outlined 11 elements of the fare policy. There was some discussion on fare box issues. Mr. Parker explained that the same presentation was scheduled for the June 27th MTC meeting, and that once the Plan is finalized, in early August, it will be provided to members of the MTC and TSAC, and presented to the MTC for approval at its September 2001 meeting.

{In the interests of time, it was decided to change the order of the agenda somewhat at this point}

- D. STS Countywide Expansion: Mr. Wallace of STS explained that the Special Transportation Service will expand its operations throughout Mecklenburg County. The expansion will be executed in phases, beginning with service into Pineville and Matthews on July 2nd. Mr. Horstman asked whether wheelchair use automatically qualifies a rider for STS service, and was told that it does not, and that there is a certification process in place. Mr. Wallace told the members that the STS will have acquired eleven new vehicles by late August, and will serve the entire county by the end of the summer.
- E. Impact of Independence Boulevard Widening Project: Ms. Covington of the CATS Staff briefed the members on the impact of certain NCDOT projects on Independence Blvd scheduled for the near future.

She told them that Independence Blvd will be converted into an expressway from Eastway Drive to Albemarle Road, with construction slated to take 44 months, beginning October 2001. She noted that since CATS buses will not be allowed to use Independence during part or all of that time, Route 17 will have to deviate, affecting approximately 200 riders daily.

Ms. Covington also told the members that the existing bridge on Independence at Eastway Drive will be removed and replaced in a 27-month construction project beginning in March 2003. During that time, the busway on Independence will continue to be used, although the buses will have to leave the busway for some portion of its length.

Ms. Covington also briefed the members on several traffic congestion mitigation measures that are expected to be put in place.

IV. Chairman's Report

Mr. Loflin noted for the benefit of new members that they will be asked to choose a Corridor in which they will be expected to take special interest, and to attend as many public meetings having to do with that Corridor as possible.

He also expressed his concern that the role of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission in transit planning has not significant, and Mr. Miller explained that every Corridor project team includes a CMPC representative.

V. Chief Operating Officer's Report

Mr. Parker briefed the members on tentative agenda items for the next TSAC meeting, including a presentation on a very large body of service changes scheduled for October 1st; an update on bicycle amenities; a briefing on the

status of acquisition of sites for park-and-ride lots; and an update on the bus stop amenities program.

A member asked for a copy of the 2025 Transit/Land Use Plan, and Mr. Parker told the members they will all receive copies.

VI. Next Meeting

As there is no MTC meeting scheduled for July, it was decided to hold the next TSAC meeting on Thursday, August 9, 2001.

For more information on any TSAC meeting, please email us at telltransit@ci.charlotte.nc.us.