

**TRANSIT SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**Thursday March 12, 2009**

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PRESENT: PAUL EDMUNDS, DAVIDSON  
Jenifer Falls, Huntersville  
D Evans, Charlotte  
Scott Jernigan, Charlotte  
Rick Sanderson, Charlotte  
Terry Lansdell, Charlotte  
Walt Horstman, Charlotte  
Anthony Wesley, Charlotte  
Charles Jolla, Charlotte

STAFF: Vida Covington, Jim Zingale, Duretta Weicken, Larry Kopf, Don Ivey, Theron Barrino, Pamela White, Chuck Juliana, Sterling Faggart, Olaf Kinard, Dietrich Brown

MEETING TIME: 4:00-5:30 PM

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**I. Call to Order and Approval of February Meeting Summary**

Chairman Paul Edmunds called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Mr. Edmunds reminded the committee of Linda Newton's retired position on TSAC and presented her with a token of appreciation for service on the committee. February meeting summary was approved as written.

**II. Citizen Comment**

No public comments were made

**III. Information Items:**

**A. Van Pool Program**

**Dietrich Brown**

Dietrich Brown stated that the concept of vanpool is like carpool, to share cost and driving. Currently there are 84 active vanpools. Fares are currently under evaluation for a possible increase during the June service change. On March 2 the guaranteed ride home program reduced the number of rides home.

Don Ivey asked how many people it takes to start a vanpool. Mr. Brown stated for a 15 passenger van it takes 8-9 people and for a minivan it takes 4 people.

Charles Jolla asked if there were 84 active vanpools but only 15 passenger vans. Do you use a van multiple times? Mr. Brown stated the 15 passenger van is the name of the van not that we only have 15 vans, but each type of van, passenger or mini, has its own van- pool.

Jenifer Falls asked if the vanpool was breaking even with the budget. Mr. Brown stated about two years ago vanpool did operate within the budget but with the demand for vanpool vehicles and the use of older vehicles the cost of maintenance keeps vanpool operating in the red.

D. Evans asked how often CATS purchases fleet vans and are they gas vehicles. Mr. Brown stated vanpool vehicles are purchased annually but we never purchase as many as we need and yes they are gas vehicles.

Scott Jernigan asked if there are waiting lists for vanpool vehicles. Mr. Brown stated there is a consistent waiting list of about 70 groups for vanpool vehicles. Right now we have 4 vehicles to start vanpools. Mr. Jernigan asked when a vanpool is started can they deviate from the daily routes. Mr. Brown stated sometime it is necessary to deviate from the daily routes for various reasons, but if logs show a consistent deviation then we contact the customer and re-evaluate the miles.

Terry Lansdell asked how many vans were purchased in the last three years and who does the maintenance on the vanpool vehicles. Mr. Brown stated all the maintenance to vanpool vehicles is done by the city.

Mr. Lansdell asked what crime stats are on the vans parked on lots overnight. Mr. Brown stated there is not much vandalism, it is few and far between and there are no statistics on vandalism to vanpool vans at this time. Also Mr. Lansdell stated there is some concern about the aged vans and the number of miles vanpools travel.

Vida Covington stated that CATS may have access to stimulus funds allocated for rural areas that would assist in purchasing or replacing up to 40 vans. Mr. Brown added if CATS gets any stimulus money from the rural areas that out of the fleet of 100 vans, 41 need to be replaced.

Rick Sanderson asked if the fare increase in June would be enough for vanpool to break even with the budget. Mr. Brown stated with a fare increase in June and then possibly another fare increase the beginning of next year, we will try to get as close to breaking even as possible but in all actuality we will most likely always be a little behind.

Olaf Kinard explained that Wachovia employees pay 50% of the service which is more than the average bus rider pays but it is still a good deal.

Walter Horstman asked how long it will take to get vans for the groups on the waiting list. Mr. Brown stated about a year.

Paul Edmunds asked if the riders of vanpool have been alerted about the fare increase. Mr. Brown stated not yet but by law we are required to give vanpool groups at least 30 days notice before a fare increase.

Mr. Zingale stated before CATS rolls out the increase it will be brought before the TSAC committee.

Jenifer Falls asked if vanpool fares vary and if so who pays the most. Mr. Brown stated the fares vary by the number of days and round trip miles. Ms. Falls asked what average costs are per day for the groups that drive longer distances. Mr. Brown stated he did not have an average cost per day but a 15 passenger van from Winston Salem pays about \$80-\$90 a month and a minivan passenger pays about \$110 to \$115 a month.

## **B. Google Transit**

**Olaf Kinard**

Olaf Kinard presented Google Transit, a new service to be offered to CATS customers. The new service is a bus route locator and schedule for CATS bus routes. The service is provided free by Google and should be "live" in April 2009.

Rick Sanderson asked how the Google Transit system handles service changes. Mr. Kinard stated that CATS sends Google an upload of CATS scheduling database.

Terry Lansdell stated he was glad to see CATS online and wondered if there is a way to give live updates on cancelled or late buses. Mr. Kinard explained all the buses are on the AVL system and that CATS is looking into how to develop a program for live updates or to tell when the next bus or train will come as a convenience to customers. CATS will save money having the info on the Google Transit website as the next generation will be using the web devices more so CATS will only need to pay for the software not the equipment.

Vida Covington asked if people with disabilities would be able to access the Google Transit information. Mr. Kinard stated that is something CATS will look at once the system is up and running. D. Evans stated if the customer has talking software on their computer it should take care of accessibility issues for people with visual disabilities.

Paul Edmunds asked if Google Transit accommodated the CATS trip planning. Mr. Kinard stated the Giro system that CATS uses is compatible with Google Transit but Google is not supporting Giro's software at this time.

## **C. June Service Change Discussion**

**Larry Kopf**

Larry Kopf stated the March service change had some major changes with reduction in service and as everyone knows it snowed the first day of service which caused some pullout delays and also affected ridership but this gave the drivers a chance to get use to the new service schedule. Mr. Kopf stated there were approximately 14 complaints about the service change to the Gold Rush not going to Carson Street, the 77X not running as late, and the connecting 56 bus to light rail.

Mr. Kopf continues saying that after reviewing the 77X route the 8:10PM bus was added. Mr. Kopf stated the June service change won't cut whole routes but due to budget constraints CATS may need to move up the June service change for more savings in this fiscal year's budget. The committee was asked if June 1 would be a good date for the service change. Mr. Kopf also reminded the committee there are 4 new enhanced buses here that will be used for the airport route and CATS plans to show the buses to TSAC in the near future.

Jim Zingale asked how many TSAC meetings there are before the June service changes. Mr. Kopf stated TSAC would need to vote on a date for the service change at the next meeting April 9.

Paul Edmunds asked what requirements were for public hearings before making changes to express routes. Mr. Kopf stated if cuts affect 25% of the riders or service, a public meeting is required. But CATS does not expect to make that percentage of changes. Mr. Kopf added that CATS is starting to talk to all the regional partners to get them to commit to service so that we know where we stand for the future budget.

Mr. Edmunds asked for comments or changes from the committee. There were no comments or changes.

#### **D. Service Issues**

**All**

Anthony Wesley stated he was impressed with how CATS handled late night service for the CIAA and wondered if the bus rail connections could be fine tuned by one minute. Mr. Kopf stated the train schedule is very tight; adjusting even 1 minute would affect the on-time performance. Mr. Zingale stated that the train operators do what the Controller tells them to do so if the train is late they must go as instructed. Mr. Kopf stated there is also a time issue with the rail gates and traffic when adjusting time. Mr. Zingale added some operators can wait when they are not behind schedule.

Scott Jernigan stated CATS had a good response when the rail gate got clipped by a car and it landed on the tracks. Mr. Zingale stated we have supervisors around there all the time so when the operator calls in they can respond very quickly.

Terry Lansdell asked how CATS becomes a lending agent, how it works and where in the half cent sales tax it allows that action. Mr. Zingale stated CATS does not loan money to vendors for projects but economic development usually works those kinds of arrangements and it does not affect the CATS budget. Mr. Lansdell asked Mr. Zingale to explain the SBO, how it affects the overall budget and does it affect the service budget. Mr. Zingale stated SBO is included in the overall City budget and gives the City opportunity to support small businesses within our sales tax area. All CATS does is determine if it is a SBO project and there is no cost to CATS.

Mr. Zingale stated that ridership was lower during the CIAA even on the late night trips and that the Epi-Center has contacted CATS about late night service which CATS can provide but someone would need to fund late night service. Mr. Zingale continued saying

that the Epi-Center felt they could find the funds for a late night Saturday & Sunday service so CATS is now negotiating a contract with the Epi-Center for those nights if they fund it 100%.

Paul Edmunds asked if the signs at the 77X temporary lot would be moved as the buses are staging at the stop more near the lake. Mr. Kopf stated he would check into that.

**IV. Chairman's Report**

**Paul Edmunds**

There was not chairman report

**V. Chief Operating Officer's Report**

**Jim Zingale**

Mr. Zingale reminded the committee that the new hybrid buses are for the airport service only. The overall ridership is still holding with the local ridership down about 1%. Mr. Zingale told the committee the MTC will be looking this month at the capital budget and the April meeting will focus on the total budget. CATS overall reduction in the budget was originally 6% but now we are looking at 8-10%. While trying to reduce the budget the goal is to do it without cutting staff but CATS still needs to find the dollars to meet this fiscal year's budget. At current CATS has 60 staff position that are vacant, these will not be filled at this time.

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NEXT TSAC MEETING: THURSDAY APRIL 9, 2009 4:00 PM