

**TRANSIT SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**Thursday April 8, 2010**

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PRESENT: Rick Sanderson, Charlotte  
Terry Lansdell, Charlotte  
Jenifer Falls, Huntersville  
Rob Cornwell, Davidson  
P. Wilson McCrory, Charlotte  
Walt Horstman, Matthews  
Scott Jernigan, Charlotte  
Don Carnahan, Cornelius  
Anthony Wesley, Charlotte  
Marvis Holliday, Van Pool  
Kevin Spitzmiller, Charlotte  
Wilson McCrory, Charlotte

STAFF: Joe Wormer, Duretta Weicken, Dwayne Pelfrey, Theron Barrino, Pamela White,  
Judy Dellert-OKeef, Larry Kopf, Celia Gray, Marshall Ruffner, Terrence Ardrey

MEETING TIME: 4:00-5:30 PM

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

Chairman Rick Sanderson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. The March meeting summary was approved as written.

**II. Chairman's Report**

**Rick Sanderson**

Rick reported on the last MTC meeting that was also a public meeting that 30 people signed up to speak regarding the proposed fare increase. Rick stated 5 people spoke concerning non-courteous drivers. There was conversation about items on the local buses, comments on the CTC and the fare increase. During the meeting the public stated they wanted customer service to be better if they were going to pay more for the service. Rick reminded the committee the action item on the fare increase would be a recommendation that will be presented to the MTC and MTC will make a decision on the fare increase at the April meeting.

Larry Kopf stated there would be a presentation on the secret shoppers program at today's meeting to give the committee an understanding of how CATS keeps up on how operators are doing in the field. Larry Kopf reminded the committee of the T.O.P.S. program that was presented at the January meeting.

Olaf Kinard stated that complaints can be called into the customer service center or sent in by mail to CATS where they are logged and should be responded to within 48 hours and resolved within 5 working days.

Jenifer Falls asked if these were the most complaints about bus operators CATS has ever had. Larry Kopf stated research has shown some complaints have come repeatedly from the same source but CATS does try to address the issues. Olaf stated yes this is the most complaints CATS has had but from the 2000-2007 annual surveys of CATS services have been good but since the budget issues, surveys have not been done. It has been discussed recently that funds for surveys be allotted back into the budget because of the current complaint status. Olaf explained how CATS keeps track of complaints and tries to resolve them but sometimes customers are not always satisfied because CATS must abide by laws and policies which may not generate a resolution the customer is hoping for.

### **III. Public Comment on Agenda Items:**

There was no public comment.

### **IV. Action Item:**

#### **A. Fare Increase**

Olaf Kinard

Olaf Kinard Manager of CATS marketing presented the committee with a presentation previously presented to MTC to help make a decision on the proposed fare increase. Olaf gave a brief review of CATS income and expense reductions pinpointing the sales tax revenue, operating expenses and growth rate, service hours, ridership and the FY2011 budget impact. Olaf continued with the \$23.5 million reduction, customer impact and a comparison of CATS proposed fare increase to other cities systems fares.

Walt Horstman asked if the reported data was from December stats. Olaf stated yes the information is mid-year estimates.

Don Carnahan asked who is responsible for forecasting the sales tax revenue. Olaf answered CATS finance, the City and CATS has services from Wachovia and Bank of America which also gives estimates along with what is coming in from the state.

Kevin Spitzmiller asked what the ratio of revenue is from sales tax in relations to actual fares. Olaf stated actual fares last year were about 13 million and roughly 58 million of that was sales tax revenue.

Terry Lansdell asked if CATS was the only one projecting a 3% increase in sales tax. Olaf stated Charlotte sales tax is not all profit; there are some purchases that we do not get sales tax on so you will see some disparity with the sales tax. CATS started making adjustment to the budget during the financial crisis in October 2008.

Scott Jernigan asked what the biggest driver for operating expenses is. Olaf stated there are typically two things that drive operating expenses, fuel and personnel costs.

Walt asked if 2008 is when the LYNX came in with service hours and the projection looks like service hours will go below the 2008 level. Olaf stated that 2008 was the first full year of LYNX and the service hours reflect 2008 levels as most of the service hours for 2010 were from cutting bus service.

Anthony Wesley asked if CATS budget included all the contracted services. Olaf stated yes that the contracted services and CATS work as one in making every effort to cut expenses.

Terry stated in regards to customer service he is in hopes the bus driver will be more trained about their routes and stops as he was on a bus that had the wrong schedules and the bus operator did not know the stops. Olaf stated that the drivers are to replenish the schedules at the beginning of their shift but in some occasions there may not be time to get them or they may have been assigned the route as an interim driver.

Walt asked if most other cities light rail fares and Local fares are the same. Olaf answered yes.

Walt asked what the fare is in Atlanta. Olaf stated that Atlanta fares are higher but they have a heavy rail system, they are typically 50-75 cents higher than Charlotte fares.

Walt asked if CATS was estimating the percentage of decrease in ridership with local and express routes. Olaf stated during a study in 91-92 period the study showed a usual 10% drop in ridership when fares are increased which has never proven to be the model for Charlotte. Altho CATS does feel there will be a temporary drop in ridership this time but will come back up in a short time period.

Wilson McCrory asked if the ridership losses are built into the budget. Olaf answered yes the budget reflects ridership losses. Olaf went on to say if CATS does not do the fare increase then CATS will have to do budget cuts that will eliminate 37,000 service hours.

Don asked what the 37,000 hours are in relation to the total number of service hours. Larry stated about 5% of bus service hours.

Scott asked if the 25 cent increase occurs this time when will the next increase be proposed. Olaf stated if everything comes out as projected the next proposed increase would be in two years.

Wilson asked where Charlotte was in comparison to other Cities fares and which other cities took an increase in fares. Olaf answered that 86% of the transit systems nationwide are either cutting service, raising fares or a combination of both.

Olaf went on explaining the next step is waiting to see what MTC wants to do cut services raise fares or next step what MTC wants to do in regards to the fare increase.

Larry stated budget options are the fare increase which is one element to help maintain the core services. Other elements proposed are to eliminate Guaranteed Ride Home and Charlotte Trolley services.

Anthony stated to help with the budget deficit could CATS start charging a fare for the Gold Rush. Larry stated a fare for Gold Rush has been considered but if Center City Partners cut their portion of funding for the Gold Rush service will have to be cut as well.

Olaf stated the ETC discounts will also be adjusted down to help balance the 2.4 million dollar deficit.

Walt asked CATS to check the percentages of increases to each service to make sure even amounts were being increased to all. Olaf stated the spreadsheet looks as if uneven amounts were being proposed but that CATS was trying to round the coins for customer convenience.

Jenifer asked what percentage of people pay cash for tickets. Olaf stated it has been about 52% of people use cash. This percentage includes the exchanges of services, bus to rail and rail to bus.

Kevin stated in regards to fare increase, what percentage of each line item actually account for fare collections. Olaf stated he did not know each one but has a spreadsheet that reflects the different fare collections. Olaf added that the total number of passes sold were roughly 8.5 million.

Jenifer asked if the proposed fare increase passes will that keep CATS balanced budget for next year. Larry stated yes unless sales tax drops more.

The committee then voted on the proposed fare increase. The committee voted by majority to recommend to MTC Option 1 of the 25 cent fare increase.

## **V. Information Items:**

### **A. Secret Shopper Program**

Celia Gray

Celia Gray Manager of CATS Quality Assurance presented the Service Quality Monitoring Program to the committee. Celia stated the purpose of the program is to evaluate the level of service in comparison to previous audits and to other transit agencies, to identify trends, communicate to the workforce, and reinforce positive performance with individual operators. Celia went through the program steps, and the categories to be evaluated.

Rick asked if CATS picks the routes to be audited.

Celia answered no. Larry added that the operators have no idea that they are being monitored.

Terry asked if this is the same forum the committee saw at a previous meeting. Larry stated yes it was included in the presentation of the T.O.P.S program.

Rob Cornwell asked if express bus operators were suppose to greet every customer. Theron Barrino answered yes it is hard to do but operators try.

Walt if operators have a responsibility to keep the buses picked up of trash and such. Dwayne Pelfrey there is a courteous walk through looking for lost, misplaced and suspicious articles at the end of the line.

Walt asked if there were incentive programs for operators to do well. Dwayne stated employees are recognized with the Spotlight Awards.

Jenifer asked if drivers are spoken to if there is a complaint or only when there is a survey with secret shoppers. Dwayne answered besides the five day response goal, all complaints are investigated daily then there is individual coaching and retraining.

Terry asked if the survey focus was mainly on the people. Celia answered the brunt of the survey's is people focused because CATS can monitor the system themselves.

## **VI. Service Issues**

**All**

Don stated on the first warm days of the year there always seems to be buses that overheat. Dwayne stated the buses now are thermostatically controlled each year there is seasonal process that has to be done to the buses and some still have to run before the process is completed so then we have overheated buses.

Rob stated in Davidson at the train depot a bus stop sign was moved but people are at the old stop to stay closer to where they park and the bus doesn't stop there. Rob asked if the bus only stops at designated stops. Larry stated buses are only supposed to stop at bus stops.

Terry commented that the park and ride lots need to have better lighting for safety reasons, especially at the Tyvola station lot. Larry stated he will check into that.

## **VII. Interim Manager of Operations Report**

**Larry Kopf**

Larry told the committee CATS will have two public meetings on the service changes in June and there also is a public meeting at the main library about the Guaranteed Ride home, the trolley, Gold Rush and the elimination of Lincoln County route 88X. Also the times and places of the public meetings are posted on the website as well.

NEXT TSAC MEETING: THURSDAY MAY 13, 2010 4:00 PM