

TRANSIT SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Summary
Thursday February 9, 2012

PRESENT: Rick Sanderson, Charlotte
Terry Lansdell, Charlotte
Dee Evans, Charlotte
Marvis Holliday, Van Pool
George Schaeffer, Charlotte
Anthony Wesley, Charlotte
Rob Cornwell, Davidson
Michael Warner, Charlotte
Chris McKillop, Charlotte
TOM LOW, CHARLOTTE
WALTER HORSTMAN, MATTHEWS
JEAN VEATCH, CORNELIUS

STAFF: PAULUS FORD, Duretta Weicken, Theron Barrino, Kirk Scott, Gary Lee, Judy Dellert-OKeef, Austin Hardison, Larry Kopf

MEETING TIME: 4:00-5:30 PM

I. Call to Order and Approval of the January Meeting Summary

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

II. Public Comment on Agenda Items:

There was no public comment.

III. Information Items

A. CATS FY 2013 Budget Update

Rick explained there would be two presentations given, one on the budget and the other on the fare increase. Rick stated the committee's purpose is to review and provide input on the budget and any fare increases. Rick continued

saying that the fare increase proposal would come back to TSAC in April as an action item for an approval recommendation to MTC.

Austin Hardison of CATS finance gave a general overview of CATS FY-13 budget reminding the committee the main focus of CATS is to maintain Core services, maintain a structurally balanced financial plan to promote sustainability & growth, preserve mobility for riders within existing resources and leverage local funds. Austin stated any recommendations that come through the process will be incorporated into the budget proposal for the adoption in April.

Walter Horstman asked if the proposed fare increase translates with the loss of ridership. Larry Kopf stated the budget is based on 2% increase in ridership for next year with the fare increase because the economy is looking up and the price of gas is going up.

Larry stated that fuel is a risk area for CATS because the price of fuel is something we cannot control so CATS does not know exactly when the lowest price has been reached.

Larry continued the presentation explaining the proposed 25 cent fare increase and stated there will be a public meeting on the fare increase, March 28th at 5:30pm at the government center in front of MTC. Then the proposed fare increase will come back to TSAC in April for recommendation and then for MTC approval.

Jean Veatch asked if there had been an analysis of groups that are affected by the increase. Larry stated CATS knows everyone will be impacted by the increase equally. Jean asked if the public views a fare increase negatively and does the public take part at the public meetings. Larry stated in the past not a lot of people show up at the public meetings but the ones that do show up are more concerned with quality of service rather than the fare increase but the March 28th public meeting will give us more information about how people feel about the increase.

D. Evans voiced strong concerns about the fare increase for the paratransit riders due to their limited fixed incomes.

Anthony Wesley asked if the local bus, light rail fare comparison to other cities was an accurate chart as some cities are much larger than Charlotte. Larry stated some cities are larger but some are about the same size.

Rob Cornwell recommended the comparison have a chart index that equalizes all the cities then the chart should compare the fares of each city.

George Schaeffer asked if the proposed increase is about 3% of net increase in hours. Larry stated yes the net increase in hours will be about 3%, but if we don't have the increase CATS will cut 2% less than we run today.

Walter reminded the group, a few years ago CATS had an extra increase because of fuel prices and MTC approved the increase but right after the approval the gas prices dropped but the prices of the fares did not come back down. Walter also stated if CATS continues on the 25 cent increases every two years, down the road it will be a huge fare to pay and right now a 33% increase in fares in just a few years is a bigger increase than most transit systems have done.

Terry Lansdell stated he still believes CATS is losing revenue by not charging for parking in the parking decks and believes if CATS did charge for parking and lowered the proposed increase to 20 cents instead of 25 cents, it may give some relieve to the lower income riders. Larry reminded Terry by asking to charge a fee for Parking; it targets a select group of people. Because CATS has a limited amount of routes that have CATS built facilities. Also there is a number of park and ride lots that are at shopping centers which CATS has agreements for parking that we would not be able to have a fee for those areas. So basically if we add a parking fee for CATS owned facilities there is a fare increase for a very select group. Terry stated as he mentioned in the past the larger CATS built facilities are the ones he believes should have a parking fee. Austin reminded the committee when CATS uses tax exempt bonds to build facilities there are limitations on the amount of revenue CATS can generate on those facilities and with CATS advertising generating revenue, there is a percentage of revenue we must not go above to stay within the Federal guidelines.

Larry reminded the committee there will be another opportunity to discuss the fare increase at the April TSAC meeting and that will be after the March public meeting that will generate more information to build a recommendation.

Rick reminded the committee that they have the right to make a different recommendation. And added the committee should bring recommendations to the next meeting for discussion because the recommendation of TSAC will go to MTC in April.

Larry told the committee if they need other information to help with building their recommendation, to contact him.

Marvis Holliday asked when the transit system does a rate increase have there ever been a lock in on the rate that increase to keep it from going up again for a period of time. Larry stated the MTC policies states there will be an increase every two years or the average two year inflation rate whichever is higher.

Marvis stated that Charlotte has become the fastest growing city in the past 10 years and before the growth it had that small town feel about it but now as it has grown to a large city it is trying to catch up on things other large cities did five or six years ago and perhaps people are not seeing the growth part of it and the need to expand but instead only see the increase. If that perspective is considered perhaps an increase can be done that will be fair to all groups.

IV. Service Issues

There was no service issues reported.

V. Chairman's Report

Rick reported at the last MTC meeting the Budget was presented and Larry presented the Countywide Transit service plan. Rick added the next two MTC meetings will be on the budget and fare increase.

VII. CATS Manager of Operations Report

Larry stated that CIAA is in Charlotte the end of February to early March so there will be bus detours at night along with extra Gold rush service. There will be ambassadors and ticket sellers on the rail lines. Larry continued saying there will be new service to the New Walmart store on Independence starting in March.

Rob Cornwell asked if the new Walmart would be a park & ride as well. Larry stated no there has not been any arrangement and if anyone parks there they will be towed.

NEXT TSAC MEETING: THURSDAY MARCH 8, 2012 4:00 PM