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INFORMATION:

August 26 Metropolitan Transit Commission Meeting Summary

Staff Resource: John Muth, CATS, 704-336-3855, jmuth@charlottenc.gov

MTC considered one action item and heard two information items at the meeting:

Introduction of CATS Chief Executive Officer John Lewis

MTC members greeted John Lewis, who will begin as CATS CEO on September 8, 2015. Mr. Lewis thanked Mr. Muth for his leadership in the interim, and said that he looks forward to joining CATS to move the community and department forward.

CATS Fare Policy

MTC reviews CATS policies every three years. MTC unanimously approved the CATS Fare Policy, which had no changes. Over the next 12-18 months, staff will perform a fare structure analysis to see if there is potential for a new fare structure. MTC members will be informed as the analysis is performed; if the analysis indicates changes in the fare policy are needed, MTC members will consider those changes in the future.

LYNX Silver Line Public Meeting Update

The LYNX Silver Line transit study began in February 2015 with three goals: 1) to define a fixed rail guideway alignment; 2) provide a transit strategy that uses future express lanes proposed for Independence Boulevard; and 3) coordinate with land development strategies to protect and preserve the fixed guideway alignment. Three public workshops were held in August at different locations along the corridor, drawing 189 attendees, to obtain public input on how rail could fit into the corridor, how buses could use the future express lanes on Independence Boulevard and what key issues could be considered. There were interactive exercises so people could see trade-offs involved in issues such as peak-focused vs. all-day service and rail options. Public meetings and outreach will continue in the fall.

LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) TIFIA Loan Update

Federal and state BLE grant distributions are scheduled to stretch over thirteen years. To ensure sufficient funds during the construction phase of the BLE project, short-term and long-term financing was needed. MTC's Transit Funding Working Group suggested that CATS look at alternatives such as government credit assistance to preserve the ability to use local dollars for other capital projects. The City Council approved a financing plan in March 2015. CATS and City Finance staff investigated the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan program through the US Department of Transportation. Some TIFIA benefits are low cost of capital, since TIFIA rates are the Treasury rate; no repayment penalties and the terms of the loan are negotiated between the TIFIA office and the borrower. CATS submitted its formal TIFIA application in June. TIFIA staff was in Charlotte in August reviewing the loan agreements. The goal is to close on the loan in mid-September. Total project savings with this loan will probably be between \$10 and \$32 million in present-value dollars.

CATS CEO Report

Under the CEO's report, John Muth discussed:

a. Ridership:

Staff reported that the July 2015 ridership report still reflects the recent downward trend. Staff has talked with peers in North Carolina, some of whom also have downward ridership trends. Dropping fuel prices may be driving the downward trend. Paratransit is the only service that is up, by ten percent. This is good, but is a concern from a resource standpoint. CityLYNX Gold Line is a bright point, with initial ridership exceeding expectations and averaging up to 2,000 per day since school has resumed. Ridership to CPCC is up.

LYNX Blue Line ridership is also down, but rail service has been curtailed on a number of weekends for rail construction. Uptown construction has also impacted service.

b. Financial Update:

Sales tax revenue remains strong and exceeds budget projections. CATS received the full allocation for the federal Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) this year. The Core Capacity Grant application to FTA for additional design work to extend the other eleven current stations is approved for Project Development. There are three additional capacity items under consideration for the BLE: a larger maintenance facility at the North Yard, a pedestrian bridge at the Sugar Creek deck to extend over the North Carolina Railroad corridor and an additional pedestrian bridge from the middle of North Tryon Street toward UNC Charlotte and the hospital. The Charlotte City Council authorized CATS to amend the State FFGA to include those items. CATS is hopeful that the NC Board of Transportation (BOT) will take action on those items at its meeting next Thursday and approve funding participation for those items.

The next MTC meeting will be September 23, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.