

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

September 23, 2015

Presiding: Mayor Dan Clodfelter (Charlotte)

Present:

Trevor Fuller (Chairman, Mecklenburg County Commission)

Ron Carlee (Charlotte City Manager)

Anthony Wesley (TSAC Co-Chair)

Dena Diorio (Mecklenburg County Manager)

Andrew Grant (Cornelius Assistant Town Manager)

Mayor John Woods (Davidson)

Mayor Jill Swain (Huntersville)

Bill Thunberg (Mooresville Representative)

Chief Executive Officer: John Lewis, Jr.

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Transit Commission was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by MTC's Chairman, Mayor Clodfelter.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of August 26, 2015 was approved as written.

III. Transit Services Advisory Committee (TSAC) Chair's Report

Anthony Wesley

Mr. Wesley reported that TSAC met on September 10, 2015 and welcomed two new members. CATS staff presented information on the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) 2016 Bus and Paratransit Conference and International Bus Rodeo to be held in Charlotte next May. CATS will host the conference; about 1,000 people from the U.S. and Canada are expected to attend. The second presentation was on CATS' five-year plan, which will be discussed in more detail at future MTC meetings. Staff also went over the year-end review, including information on the Ridership goal, which was not met.

IV. Citizens Transit Advisory Group (CTAG) Chair's Report

No report.

V. Red Line Task Force Update

No report.

VI. Transit Funding Working Group Update

No report.

VII. Public Comments

None.

VIII. Action Items

None.

IX. Information Items

a. Countywide Transit Service Plan (CTSP) Update

Pamela White

Ms. White, CATS Manager of Service Development, reviewed the CTSP. The last CTSP update was completed in 2012. Staff is beginning work on the next five-year update now. It will be brought to MTC in 2017. Guiding principles include matching service levels with demand, aligning bus routes with light rail services, streamlining service on corridors and improving cross-town connections. Two committees will have input on the project, a Technical Committee drawn from an interdisciplinary team of City and County employees and a Steering Committee drawn from transit riders, neighborhood and community advocates and human services representatives. Public outreach will include public and neighborhood meetings and a survey instrument incorporating hard-copy data from meeting participants and online feedback from riders and the public. Goals for public outreach include identifying service gaps, discovering potential destinations and establishing service priorities. Staff will review existing studies and data including the current CTSP, travel markets and service standards, and perform a route-by-route, segment-level performance review to determine whether routes are working and ridership levels are being met for each segment of each route. Staff will review and analyze service data to identify potential park and ride locations, transfer facilities and enhanced customer amenities.

As part of the CTSP, staff will benefit from a Southeast Corridor transit study to determine and group routes on US-74, routes that intersect with US-74 and routes on Monroe Road. Staff will also benefit from the bus-rail integration planning for the LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) Bus Service Plan. Staff will evaluate other parts of the service area that are not part of the Southeast or BLE studies, as well as neighborhood and community shuttle service and express service, to determine whether they are functioning in the manner in which they were designed and whether service improvements need to be made. Service improvements implemented as part of the current CTSP include crosstown service through Route 51 Pineville/Matthews and Route 60 Tyvola SouthPark, as well as new local service, neighborhood and community shuttles and new Express routes.

The committee work will begin this fall with the Technical Committee meeting in October and the Steering Committee in November 2015. Public outreach will be held from November through February. In-depth route analysis will occur November through April with the Capital Needs Assessment in November/December.

Discussion: Ms. Diorio asked Ms. White to discuss Human Services Transportation and how that would take place outside STS. Ms. White said that CATS has worked with Masie Jones, Mecklenburg County Social Services Manager, before and will need to meet to identify the needs and gaps in supply and demand. Ms. Diorio said that the County received some funds from the transit sales tax and grants before the recession; that money largely dried up during the recession. There is a lot of need in the community but she said it does not seem to be part of the plan discussed tonight. Mr. Lewis asked Ms. Diorio to let staff examine that further and come back to her with some options for consideration. Ms. White said that her team is working on the Coordinated Human Services Plan and they will examine some of the countywide services Ms. Diorio mentioned. Staff has begun identifying who will fill what roles in that review.

Mayor Swain added that this is a very important time to be looking at what our transit service plans are; she stated that this seems to be the precursor to reworking the 2030 Transit Plan. There are a lot of factors going on at the state level currently that create transit challenges; she hopes that rather than a rote review, that we take this opportunity to go beyond. She would like for outlying towns to be able to have input; there will be a lot of citizens throughout Mecklenburg who would like to have input on transit. Commissioner Fuller reiterated that this is a key moment; we should not lose this opportunity to think hard about what our transportation needs are, particularly in the human services area as we use County money for constituents who have no other resource. A truly comprehensive transit plan should include those constituents. He said that he hears a lot from people who say that they would like to get Uptown from the Southeast Corridor area without using their car, but there are so few options. He asked staff to look very hard at that. Companies are moving to the area, but people need to be able to get to these new jobs in a timely manner. The effect of that is that parts of our community are not participating in the economic activity that is going on. Does it make sense for someone from the west side to go to the Transit Center and then go out to where these jobs are? We have to think about that because it has tremendous importance to continued economic vitality, and it may not come up in the public meetings. Mayor Swain said that she would like to be able to think about this more. Commissioner Fuller agreed that we should not lose this opportunity.

b. CATS Water Conservation Efforts

Larry Kopf

Mr. Kopf, CATS Chief Operations Planning Officer and Manager of Bus Operations, said that Charlotte Water announced voluntary water conservation efforts on July 20. We are still in Stage 1 drought conditions and CATS is complying with the voluntary water conservation protocol. CATS recycles wash system water, collecting as much as possible and filtering it to use again. There is some inevitable water loss, so CATS washes rail cars and buses less often during drought times. Rail cars are being washed twice per month now, where they were washed once weekly before the drought. The bus wash cycle is twice a week instead of three times a week. CATS pressure washes rail platforms and bus shelters at a rate of one station and one shelter per week, where previously 2-3 stations and shelters were washed weekly. CATS' landscaping water conservation measures include choosing drought resistant vegetation and drip irrigation. Spray irrigation is limited to no more than twice per week between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

Discussion: None.

c. LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) Art Update

Kati Stegall/ Chris Lange

Ms. Lombardi, Art-in-Transit Program Manager, said that art has been incorporated into 18 capital projects since MTC authorized the Art-in-Transit program in 2002. This includes the LYNX Blue Line, and most recently the CityLYNX Gold Line. Artists are selected by a panel of their peers who review their past accomplishments. Fourteen of the selected BLE artists have worked through design phases over the past five years, engaging with representatives of the neighborhood communities and the BLE project team. They presented their art ideas to the Art-in-Transit Advisors for review, input and approval. Their art was also included in each engineering and architectural plan set and reviewed by the interdisciplinary project team, consultants and state agencies based on design criteria and technical requirements for the project. After final approval, the artists were introduced to the community and their proposals shared with the public. Currently, the art is in fabrication. Some art is being

fabricated by the artists or their subcontractors, and some designs are fabricated by subcontractors to the general contractor. Installation for some of the art, such as wall art, is in progress and visible now along the project. Ms. Lombardi introduced Art-in-Transit Program Administrators Kati Stegall and Chris Lange to share more details about BLE art.

Ms. Stegall said that each of the 14 artists developed a different concept or theme for their site-specific art at stations and throughout the corridor. At stations, typical BLE station art includes art incorporated into windscreens, column cladding, fencing, benches and platform concrete paving. Art will touch the BLE project in 471 places. Half of the artists on the project are Carolina-based. Each windscreen will be larger than windscreens on the current LYNX Blue Line and will make a great visual impact for riders. Art will be laminated in color between glass panels, or etched on the glass. Column cladding under station shelters will provide a different approach to integrating the artist's design. At the Sugar Creek station, North Carolina artist Chandra Cox wove the neighborhood's various spellings – Sugar, Sugaw, Shuger, Soogaw – into a graphic pattern on the column cladding. The Parkwood Station, designed by artist Maria Artemis, will reveal information about Charlotte's geological history spanning back 500 million years. Where artists replaced standard benches with custom art benches, each artist carefully evaluated standard bench safety requirements to ensure that their custom designs are crafted to meet our riders' needs.

Mr. Lange said that four stations will have art integrated into the concrete paving. At the Parkwood Station, the pavement will incorporate two different colors of glass aggregates to reference the influence of water and gold mining on the area's land development. Art is integrated into trackway barrier fencing with custom laser cut designs at McCullough and Tom Hunter Stations. At the Old Concord Road station, artist Chandra Cox will create a custom bird and cattail fence; the tops of the cattails will be lit by small LED lights to simulate fireflies at night, a design influenced by the woodland bird habitat adjacent to the station location. At the 9th Street Station, Charlotte's historic textile industry influenced artists Anna Valentine Murch and Douglas Hollis' undulating design for the ten station canopies, creating an airy, dynamic gateway to the BLE.

Ms. Stegall said that system-wide art elements will include bike parking, elevators, underpasses, walls and bridges. Ms. Stegall showed examples of stair and elevator towers as well as underpass art. Mr. Lange discussed the walls and bridges art designed by artist Carolyn Braaksma, currently visible along the alignment. It took Ms. Braaksma over a year to create the 17 prototypes for the wall art. Contractors can produce hundreds of concrete panels from a single form liner made from the artist's master, making it a very cost effective method. The artist was very purposeful in her wall design, and the finished modules are laid out according to her plan, with modules blending together but not matching exactly. Thirteen walls have been completed with the artist's calico pattern, 18 are currently under construction and the remaining 14 are still to be constructed.

Discussion: Commissioner Fuller said that we are creating a museum and asked if we will create signage to tell people about the art and who created it. Ms. Lombardi said that public art is hard to label, but technology has helped get that information out. We use bar codes now, so riders can go into a shelter and use the barcode on the windscreen to get information from the CATS website. Staff also puts brochures on light rail vehicles and gives tours to interested groups.

X. Chief Executive Officer's Report

John Lewis, Jr.

Under the CEO's report, Mr. Lewis discussed the following:

a. Ridership Report:

Mr. Lewis referred MTC members to the August ridership report and said that staff continued to see a drop in ridership across all modes in August. Staff suspects that declining gasoline prices has had an impact, but will examine the issue more closely to see if there are factors involved that CATS can address.

b. Financial Update:

Sales tax receipts continue to track ahead of budget. September receipts dropped, but that is a normal drop that occurs twice a year as nonprofits apply for sales tax reimbursement, usually in September and February.

On September 17, the City closed on the final phase of BLE financing with the signing of the \$180 million long-term Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan. The loan will be repaid over 33 years at 3.07 percent, a rate below what CATS could have received in the private market. This reduces the cost of our borrowing by over \$32 million over the life of the loan. MTC members applauded the efforts of Ms. Pereira and her team in securing the loan.

Mr. Lewis said the impact of the legislature's increase in sales tax base is unclear, but it appears that CATS may bring in \$2.1 million in additional sales tax revenue, which may be offset by up to \$750,000 in aviation fuel tax receipts. Staff will continue to track tax receipts.

c. Bus Incident:

Media reported an incident this morning when a CATS vehicle impacted an individual on a bicycle. Preliminary investigation indicates that the bicyclist turned into the traffic stream and into the path of the bus. The driver swerved but was unable to avoid the cyclist, who was not wearing a helmet. CATS Safety and Security will investigate and offer a final report. CMPD has preliminarily issued a finding of no fault for CATS. The individual was taken to the hospital in critical condition. [Note: On September 27, the hospital reported that the bicyclist had died.]

XI. Other Business

None.

XII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m. by Mayor Clodfelter.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2015, 5:30 P.M.