

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

November 18, 2015

Presiding: Mayor John Woods (Davidson)

Present:

Ron Carlee (Charlotte City Manager)

Scott Jernigan (TSAC Chair)

Dena Diorio (Mecklenburg County Manager)

Mayor Chuck Travis (Cornelius)

Anthony Roberts (Cornelius Town Manager)

Leamon Brice (Davidson Town Manager)

Jamie Justice (Davidson Town Manager)

Mayor Jill Swain (Huntersville)

Greg Ferguson (Huntersville Town Manager)

Mayor Jim Taylor (Matthews)

Ralph Messera (Matthews)

Bill Thunberg (Mooresville Representative)

Mayor Jack Edwards (Pineville)

Chief Executive Officer: John Lewis

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Transit Commission was called to order at 5:05 p.m. by MTC's Co-chair, Mayor Woods.

II. Members Recognition

Mayor Woods began the meeting by acknowledging the contributions of long-time members who will be leaving MTC. He gave outgoing Mayor Jill Swain a plaque commemorating her service and said that MTC will be calling on her expertise in the future. MTC was formed in 1999. Two current Board members, Ralph Messera and Leamon Brice, were members of the original 1999 group. Staff from the 1999 group who are still here include Bill Coxe, John Muth and Dee Pereira. Mayor Woods asked Mayor Taylor to recognize Ralph Messera. Mayor Taylor said that Mr. Messera had a wealth of knowledge on transportation issues and said he is immensely proud and thankful for what Mr. Messera has done for MTC and the Town of Matthews.

Mayor Woods said that Leamon Brice retires from the Town of Davidson at the end of the year; Jamie Justice is transitioning into his position. Mayor Woods expressed gratitude for Mr. Brice's contributions for MTC and the area. Mayor Woods said that he hoped retiring members will continue to work for transit in the area. Mr. Messera said that after the election in 1998, there was uncertainty on how to proceed. The Town Managers met weekly for about four months to determine MTC's structure. They have continued to meet and watched MTC mature, and Mr. Messera said he is very proud of what MTC has become. Mr. Brice said that he is very proud of a lot of things he has accomplished in Davidson. Determining the structure of the governing body of MTC ranks among the things outside Davidson of which he is most proud. Mayor Woods said that we have to find a way to get these very important infrastructure additions done, and soon.

III. Review of Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of October 28, 2015 was approved as written.

IV. Transit Services Advisory Committee (TSAC) Chair's Report Scott Jernigan

Mr. Jernigan reported that TSAC met on November 12, 2015 and recommended to adopt the proposed service changes. TSAC also heard an information item on customer service. Staff updated TSAC on Section 5310 federal funding, including the grant process and payment structures. Mr. Jernigan said that he has completed his term on TSAC. He has learned a lot and appreciated the opportunity to serve his community as Chair of the committee. Mayor Woods thanked him and said that Mr. Jernigan would also be asked to serve in the future.

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

No report.

VI. Transit Funding Working Group Update

No report.

VII. Public Comments

None.

VIII. Action Items

a. Route 60 Tyvola Road Schedule Change Pamela White

Ms. White, CATS Manager of Service Development, reviewed challenges and opportunities in optimizing service productivity. Staff has worked with the Veterans Administration (VA) to determine if service could be provided at Charlotte's new VA Health Care Center (HCC) which is under construction. Staff determined that Route 60 could establish connections to the HCC and a Walmart, popular destinations for CATS' customers. Route inefficiencies were trimmed. Ms. White reviewed the proposed changes for Route 60, which would enter HCC's campus on W. Tyvola Road. MTC previously approved route changes to Route 60 that eliminated inefficiencies that included trips to the Tyvola Senior Center. The Tyvola Senior Center has since expressed concern as the Route 60 service allowed them to maintain their Senior Center of Excellence status. Therefore, the proposed changes to Route 60 allow for two trips a day to the Tyvola Senior Center, which will enable them to maintain that status.

Discussion: Mr. Lewis noted that there are particular individuals that make use of bus service to the Tyvola Senior Center. CATS will try to match the service extension to the Center with the times needed by the people at the Center who use the bus. Mr. Messera asked if a service analysis had been performed. Ms. White replied that it had and explained public outreach efforts. Mayor Swain asked if the service cost increase includes savings from the portion of the route that was taken away. Ms. White said that it does not. The route had no Saturday service, but the Veterans Hospital is open on Saturday. They say that service between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m. is necessary.

Resolution: Mayor Swain motioned to approve the proposed service changes for Route 60 as recommended by staff; Ms. Diorio seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

IX. Information Items

a. LYNX Silver Line Transit Study Jason Lawrence

Mr. Lawrence, CATS Transportation Planner, reviewed existing and planned transit service. IN 2011, MTC passed a series of decisions governing transit on the Southeast Corridor. Following the Urban Land Institute Rose Fellowship study, MTC decided that the best use of rapid transit might not be in the median of Independence Boulevard and directed staff to

look at rail transit alignment options in the Southeast Corridor that were not in the median of Independence Boulevard. The question now is how rail and bus elements work best together for this corridor. The bus element will focus on service in US 74 express lanes. Staff held a two-day workshop to determine transit needs and lessons learned from the LYNX Blue Line. Conclusions from the workshop included a desire to provide access to a number of destinations; that bus and rail should not duplicate efforts, so rail will not duplicate the bus express lane commuter service; exclusive rail right-of-way is a high priority; people want a dedicated travel time; and there is interest in a future extension forming a single line from the Southeast Corridor to the Airport. One of the discussion items was the emerging vision, using high-quality transit to connect and strengthen activity centers, create more transit options and using transit to help focus and shape growth at key nodes along the corridor.

Using the CSX tracks would be difficult. It is a narrow corridor and bypasses some key nodes. However, nearby streets may hold potential. Other options to study include interlining with CityLYNX Gold Line, accessing the Midtown area, side-running options adjacent to US 74 and using a shared or exclusive right of way on Monroe Road. Idlewild Road is emerging as a significant hub; an extended Krefeld Drive could also be useful. Staff will consider corridor preservation options and end-of-line station options. Lower-ranked options are commuter rail service, which would duplicate bus service in express lanes; having long stretches of in-street rail, which would not offer a dedicated travel time; and shared use of CSX tracks, which has significant challenges. Where the CSX right of way is wider, shared use of the right of way may be a possibility.

Next steps are to communicate the vision and goals, define and develop design concepts for rail options, evaluate impacts of rail options and select a preferred rail option and define corridor preservation and implementation strategy. Mr. Lawrence reviewed the project's timeline, which will update the 2030 Transit Plan with a rail guideway recommendation in May 2016. MTC will vote on the staff recommendation in June 2016.

Discussion: Mayor Swain asked Mr. Lawrence to perform the same study for the LYNX Red Line. Mr. Lawrence said that the methods used on this corridor could be used on any corridor. Mayor Woods asked the distance of the corridor; Mr. Lawrence said it is about 13.5 miles from Uptown Charlotte to the Union County Line. Mr. Thunberg asked when the process started; Mr. Lawrence said it started in February 2015. Mr. Thunberg asked for an example of a side-running option. Mr. Lawrence said that the part of Independence Boulevard near Charlottetowne Avenue has no driveways, just a brick wall on one side and an earthen berm on the other side. That might be a possibility for side-running. Mr. Thunberg said that the same corridor may have potential for mixed options, switching from side-running to other options and Mr. Lawrence agreed. Mayor Travis asked whether costs and funding mechanisms will be identified once the preferred option is known. Mr. Lawrence said that there will be a very preliminary cost estimate involved. However, this is not a study for project design or funding mechanisms but is instead about the vision and mode, so the cost estimate will be very low-level. Mayor Travis said that he felt the funding is the key point. Mr. McDonald added that we have gone back and forth so many times in this corridor that we have never had a definitive vision.

One of the goals of this study is to develop a rail vision for the corridor. After we have the vision, then we can move forward to funding and implementation. Mr. Lawrence said he

looks forward to gaining Mr. Messera's input as we move forward. Mr. Carlee asked if an analysis of land use around the nodes would be included as the nodes are defined, and what the capacity was for transit oriented development around the nodes. Mr. Lawrence said that consultants are looking at what the envelope for station areas should be and what development should look like. Mr. Carlee asked if the capacity for land use was also being studied and asked how we assess the capacity at the different areas for appropriate rezoning to maximize the use of the chosen transit option. Mr. McDonald said that a lot of that work was done with the Independence Area Plan; it was an integrated process. There may be additional studies to look at potential changes within the corridor, but there was a lot of work done with that Plan in terms of density and locations, and it lines up with the same station locations. Once a corridor is defined and we choose station areas, then as rezoning requests come in, they will be where the density was planned. Mr. Carlee said that if an area is not interested in rezoning to transit oriented development (TOD), then the corridor will not be maximized. Mr. McDonald said that both the City of Charlotte and the Town of Matthews have adopted plans for TOD. If the final alignment varies, then adjustments will be made. In some areas, the land use is already set. We are coordinating with planning and teams working on other projects in the corridor to integrate their work to establish and protect the corridor.

Mr. Carlee asked if we should partner with Union County. Mr. McDonald said that the key is crossing I-485. We are looking at the alignment to make sure we are not hemming ourselves in and precluding future extension. With the South Corridor, CATS did a study with the Town of Rock Hill on extending the line; their choice was to go with Bus Rapid Transit to connect with LYNX Blue Line. Mr. Lawrence said that staff is contemplating stakeholder meetings with Stallings, Indian Trail, Mint Hill, Matthews, and Monroe to coordinate planning. Additionally, when the Independence Area Plan was approved, the transit mode was still Bus Rapid Transit in the median of Independence Boulevard. The Independence Area Plan may need to be amended when the transit nodes are finalized to see if the nodes in the Independence Area Plan need adjusting. Mayor Woods said that he would like for us to establish relationships with neighboring counties, in Union as well as Iredell and Cabarrus counties. He said that should be a focus in 2016; the boundaries do not mean anything, transportation-wise. Mayor Taylor said that towns like Stallings and Indian Trail who were not interested previously are now interested in working with us on transportation. Mayor Taylor said that we may not ever get over or under I-485 but it is important to get to CPCC's Levine Campus and said it would be foolish to stop at Union County's line. If we stop at I-485, we are dead in the water. Mr. Messera said that Union County is an ex-officio member of this Board but they do not attend meetings. Having no money on the table takes away some interest. Mr. Lawrence said that staff is working with the Centralina Council of Governments to engage other area counties in the effort and build relationships. Mr. Ferguson said that talking about bus service may help open doors; Mayor Woods noted that with increasing congestion, neighbors who were not interested five years ago may now be interested. Mayor Taylor said that the dynamics of each individual community changes; one area wanted growth and another area wanted no growth and they are at each other's throats. Mr. Thunberg said that when the work begins on the North Corridor, there should be a scoping meeting with Lake Norman Transportation Commission, which represents all the jurisdictions along that corridor, to look at all the transit alternatives on that corridor. A two-prong approach may be helpful, to look at bus options for all the communities involved and long-term to revisit all the transit alternatives available along the corridor.

X. Chief Executive Officer's Report

John Lewis

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

a. Ridership Report:

Mr. Lewis said that continuing ridership declines are perplexing; the numbers do not make sense. Although last month had one less weekday than the same month last year, ridership figures reflect a steeper drop than would be expected. CATS has not cut service or raised fares. Revenue and pass sales have declined, but not as significantly as ridership reports would indicate. Mr. Lewis said that staff needs to gain an understanding of this; personal interview surveys and manual ridership counts may be necessary.

b. Financial Update:

Sales tax revenues continue to track ahead of budget estimates.

c. Coordination with UNC Charlotte:

Rail staff has been meeting with representatives from UNC Charlotte's Energy Production and Infrastructure Center (EPIC) discussing opportunities for collaboration and partnership. The Center was established in 2012; it is dedicated to energy research and education in partnership with Duke Energy. EPIC has a phenomenal modeling and simulation program, which will be useful in extending the LYNX Blue Line, streetcar and other modes, as well as determining alternative ways of powering rail cars. They are uniquely qualified to double-check manufacturers' claims. We look forward to continued collaboration with EPIC.

XI. Other Business

Mr. Carlee noted that incoming Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts joined the meeting in progress. MTC members applauded her and welcomed her back to MTC. She said she looks forward to returning. Mayor Woods concluded the meeting by welcoming Jamie Justice from Davidson to MTC and again thanked Mayor Swain, Mr. Messera and Mr. Brice for their service.

XII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m. by Mayor Woods.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2016, 5:30 P.M.