

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

April 20, 2016

Presiding: Trevor Fuller (Chairman, Mecklenburg County Commission)

Present:

Mayor Jennifer Roberts (Charlotte)	Mayor John Aneralla (Huntersville)
Ron Carlee (Charlotte City Manager)	Bill Coxe (Huntersville Town Planner)
Michael Warner (TSAC Chair)	Mayor Jim Taylor (Matthews)
Rob Watson (CTAG Co-Chair)	Brian Welch (Mint Hill Town Manager)
Mayor Chuck Travis (Cornelius)	Mayor Jack Edwards (Pineville)
Anthony Roberts (Cornelius Town Manager)	Bill Thunberg (Mooresville Representative)
Jamie Justice (Davidson Town Manager)	

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 Chairman, Commissioner Trevor Fuller.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of March 23, 2016 was approved as written.

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

Michael Warner

Mr. Warner reported that TSAC met on April 14. The meeting's focus was the change in the fare structure and voting on a recommended fare option. TSAC's focus was to gauge the impact each option would have on low-income and minority CATS riders. The consensus was to recommend Option 1, which the committee felt would have the least impact on low-income and minority riders. A separate resolution was passed to adopt free fares on fixed routes for STS-eligible individuals. The recommendations were unanimously approved for presentation to MTC.

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

Rob Watson

Commissioner Fuller said that Rob Watson will be leaving CTAG after five years of service, several as CTAG's Chair. MTC members thanked Mr. Watson for his service. Mr. Watson reported that CTAG met yesterday and focused on their budget recommendation. Members recommended approval for all three aspects of the budget on a 6-1 vote. After much discussion, CTAG recommended Fare Increase Option 3, with two additional recommendations on a 5-2 vote: retaining the 15 percent discount on the 10-ride pass and preserving the \$1.10 student ticket price. The next meeting of CTAG will likely be in the fall.

V. Public Comments

None

VI. Action Items

a. Title VI – Fare Equity Analysis

Arlanda Rouse

Mr. Rouse, CATS Civil Rights Officer, reviewed the Title VI Fare Equity Analysis performed for the proposed fare increase options in the budget. The analysis revealed a disproportionate burden for low income riders for two fare types: full cash fare and one-ride ticket.

- Option 1: no increase would result in no impact for low income riders
- Option 2: \$0.10 increase for bus and rail – impacts low income riders
- Option 3: \$0.05 increase for bus and rail – impacts low income riders

Low income riders are disproportionately represented in two fare types, making 60 percent of all bus full-fare cash purchases and 33 percent of all one-ride tickets on the rail system. Therefore, Options 2 and 3 will disproportionately impact low income riders who purchase full-fare cash tickets. Mitigation efforts include expanding communication for day passes and retaining volume discounts for non-profits. Education efforts will include targeting a notification campaign to the non-profits and educating customers with contact information for the non-profits with discounted passes through rider alerts, interior ad cards and shelter ads as well as through ads on the CATS web page.

Discussion: Mayor Aneralla asked the cost of the mitigation efforts. Mr. Rouse indicated that he did not know the cost, which would be borne by CATS' Marketing division. Mayor Roberts asked how advertising for non-profits provides mitigation. Mr. Rouse replied that in the past, all discount passes were lumped in the same category. This recommendation is to retain volume discounts for non-profits that can get tickets to individuals in the affected populations. Mr. Lewis explained that if MTC decides on Option 2 or Option 3, to raise fares, staff would ensure that people who may be more impacted by that decision would know that there is an outlet through non-profits for discounted transit passes. The discount would still be there for non-profits, but other discounts would go away, for businesses and people who buy passes individually. Roberts noted that the calculation is that some of those who buy discounted passes can afford to pay more. Mr. Rouse noted that businesses normally allow employees to buy passes tax-free through payroll deduction. That would still apply, even though the volume discount would go away for businesses.

Mr. Kinard, CATS Director of Marketing, Communications & Technology, clarified that CATS has over 120 non-profits signed up to provide passes through the non-profit program. CATS will reach out to non-profit staff and to CATS customers to increase awareness that passes are available through non-profits for low income and minority customers.

Resolution: Mayor Travis motioned to approve the Fare Equity Analysis; Mayor Aneralla seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

b. Transit Operational Capital & Debt Programs

John Lewis/ Dee Pereira

Ms. Pereira, CATS Chief Financial Officer, Assistant Director of Public Transit, noted that budget highlights were included in the staff summary in the agenda, including the three fare increase options. The budget resolution has a blank for the approved fare increase option, which can be one of the three discussed or a different option, as MTC chooses.

Discussion: Mayor Aneralla motioned to implement Option 1. Mr. Lewis explained that Option 1 has no fare increase to the base fare, reduces volume discounts from 20 percent to 10 percent, ten ride pass discount is eliminated, and weekly passes are priced at 14 rides instead of the current ten-ride price while retaining the unlimited ride feature. Mayor Travis seconded the motion, which he said most favors the folks who use the 77 Express and Village Rider buses. Mr. Thunberg said that with the public comment from the last meeting, the majority of commenters requested no fare increase, so this serves the public and those who need the benefit the most; he also supported Option 1. Mr. Coxe said that he recalled that CATS anticipates a revenue boost when the new fare boxes are implemented. He asked

if MTC could return to the issue of discounting the ten-ride pass in the future, which would reduce the impact on low-income riders, if there is a revenue boost after the new fare boxes are installed. Mr. Lewis said that we can certainly revisit that. The new fare boxes should be installed in September, so we should see an impact sometime in the October through December time period. Mr. Carlee said we would also know whether transit purchases had dropped off by then. Mayor Taylor asked if there was an estimated number on the gap. Ms. Pereira said that the total gap was about \$2.8 million. Mr. Kinard said that the gap attributable to fare box revenue was \$350,000 through February. CATS is down around \$890,000 over the last year. A lot of the decrease is attributable to faulty fare boxes. We feel confident that we can make up much of the decrease by replacing fare boxes early in the year. Mayor Taylor motioned for an amendment to the budget resolution to revisit reinstating the ten-ride pass discount at the next budget cycle based on the impact of the new fare boxes on fare revenue. Mayor Taylor asked if staff was confident enough to eliminate the discount that amounts to \$367,000 in foregone revenue; Mr. Lewis replied no. Mayor Taylor said that he would stand on his first comment. Mayor Aneralla seconded Mayor Taylor's amendment to revisit the ten-ride pass discount at the next budget cycle.

Resolution: Mayor Taylor motioned to approve the entire budget resolution, and approve Option 1 with the amendment to revisit the ten-ride pass discount at the next budget cycle; Mayor Aneralla seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VII. Information Items

a. Rail Trail Framework/ Vision Plan

Tina Votaw/ Michael Smith/ David Furman

Ms. Votaw, CATS Transit Oriented Development Specialist, said that the Rail Trail was constructed within the rail corridor adjacent to CATS' light rail system. It is largely located within the South End District. The City built the existing trail, which opened in 2007 with the light rail opening. It was built to a trail standard, a basic asphalt utilitarian trail with basic lighting. The trail has become hugely popular and serves as a linear park for residents of Uptown and South End. The City/CATS has been able to expand and lengthen the trail through converting industrial sites near the corridor and adding new pedestrian linkages. Pedestrian linkages near rail lines were discouraged during the days of industrial freight rail. The linkages are now necessary and desired with the population growth in the area, so CATS and the City are working with Center City Partners and other innovators to make the trail even more functional in response to all of the new residents and uses in the area.

Mr. Smith, the President and CEO of Center City Partners, compared Charlotte's Rail Trail to New York City's High Line. Charlotte has turned what was a very basic trail into one of the most popular urban greenways in the southeast. The Rail Trail is approximately four miles long. It begins at CATS' maintenance vehicle facility in South End and stretches to First Ward Park in Uptown Charlotte. Mr. Smith said that Mr. Furman has a passion for the line. He, along with Terry Shook, principal of Shook Kelley Architects and Richard Petersheim of LandDesign, were hired to create a vision for the trail, to create an urban linear park, transforming 90 leftover, inaccessible and unusable pieces of real estate. The vision was to strengthen the identity of Charlotte as a city with great creativity and cultural experiences. The Framework Plan suggests design of major activity areas and types of activities, as well as offering ideas on management and funding. The interdisciplinary project management team spearheading the effort has members drawn from CATS, CDOT, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation and Center City Partners.

Mr. Furman, FAIA and Founder, Centro CityWorks, said that since South Boulevard is not as pedestrian-friendly, the trail has become the pedestrian spine of South End. People use it to get from one place to another. Unlike New York's High Line, which was designed in one comprehensive vision, the Charlotte Rail Trail is developing organically over time, and will evolve and change. One of the more popular items on the trail is a chalkboard. Originally installed as 16' in length, it posed the provocative statement "Before I die, I want to..." Within 24 hours, the chalkboard was covered with funny and engaging responses. It is not vandalized, is cleaned every couple of weeks and kept supplied with chalk, and is so popular that its length had to be doubled. Instead of installing the minimum standard required by City zoning, developers along the trail have enhanced and jazzed it up and organized architecture that relates to the streets.

Transformer Plaza will have a wading pool and swings for parents to sit on as they watch their kids playing in the fountains. At Bland Street Station, there is a giant transformer substation on the trail owned by Duke Energy. We are programmed to think that we should screen substations. In this case, we approached Duke about lighting this up and creating a lovely piece of illuminated public art. They were an enthusiastic participant and funded the project. Beacon Properties owns the cell tower in the middle. They paid to light that up as well, creating an amazing display. In another location, part of the Art Place Grant secured by Center City Partners is allocated to two artists who designed three Magic Carpet Murals for the trail, with public input on the patterns. Another trail enhancement project is the Kingston Connection Plaza, which will create a pedestrian link where Kingston Avenue dead ended twelve feet before the trail. The Dilworth Artisan Station has engaged artists in the building to paint bricked-up window areas. The restaurant Futo Buta has zero street presence but is a popular restaurant now because of its prominence on the trail. Sycamore Brewing, a popular brewery, is currently brewing their Rail Trail Pale Ale. Guerilla art has also appeared on the trail, including a hexagonal ping pong table where six players can play and an 8' rooster in a fenced-in space that formerly held a trolley transformer at Bland Street station. A baby rooster has since appeared next to the 8' rooster. Mr. Furman stated that the vision for the Charlotte Rail Trail is that every time you go out on the trail, you will see something new. It has been a successful organic venture with partners along the trail who believe their assets are more valuable because of the presence of the trail.

Mr. Smith said that we are excited about next steps and bringing in more sponsors. The Friends of Rail Trail effort has received funding. Social media is an active part of this grass-roots effort. News will be posted at the website www.CharlotteRailTrail.org.

Discussion: Mr. Carlee noted that much of the effort started with the individual passion of David Furman and thanked Mr. Furman for his amazing, infectious passion. Mayor Travis said that it came from Mr. Furman's passion, but also his pocketbook, since he paid for the chalk board and possibly the roosters. Mayor Travis said that Mr. Furman is his business partner and asked for the vision as we move forward. He asked what steps we are taking to extend the trail now that we have the opportunity to extend it with the LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE). Ms. Votaw said that the City is very interested in extending the trail through the Cross Charlotte Trail. While the Cross Charlotte Trail may not follow the BLE rail corridor exactly, it will still function as a trail that crosses through the heart of Mecklenburg County for miles. The City is working on the design for the Cross Charlotte Trail now. Mr. Furman said that the Cross Charlotte Trail is unique; it does not go over bridges or in the median of streets as the BLE will; it goes through neighborhoods. On the LYNX Blue Line, it would be

difficult to take the trail past Scaleybark Station. He said that he liked the way the trail is defined into manageable lengths. Mr. Smith said that a long-term aspiration is to have the trail connect more directly into Uptown through Stonewall Station. Mayor Taylor asked if the connectivity was being incorporated into the Greenway System and Carolina Thread Trail. Ms. Votaw said that there was collaboration with the County that oversees other portions of the trail development. This will be quite a network, created piece by piece.

VIII. Chief Executive Officer's Report

John Lewis

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

a. Ridership:

Ridership and accuracy of ridership numbers has been in discussion for months. The trend of ridership numbers over the last couple of quarters continues to creep upward. We are now at an increase of 1.1 percent over the same period last year and four percent for year-to-date increase. Mr. Lewis said that ridership is a key driver for him. He will continue to discuss it and will have accurate numbers to report at some point.

b. Financial Update:

Sales tax receipts continue to outperform budgeted estimates. We are at 96 percent of budget revenue estimates at the beginning of the fourth quarter.

c. I-77 Corridor:

From CATS' viewpoint, variable pricing lanes in the I-77 corridor currently under construction are an opportunity to jumpstart premium service in the corridor. CATS' goal has not changed: to construct and operate commuter rail in the corridor. CATS will continue to work with partners in Norfolk Southern and North Carolina Railroad to construct a mutually beneficial strategy to achieve that goal. It is also important to provide rapid transit options for customers within that corridor as soon as possible. The budget passed tonight has funding for a study on an implementation plan for bus rapid transit when the I-77 lanes open in the near future. Staff will work to define the plan's work scope and work with the towns' staff on the implementation plan. We would like to put together a Small Starts grant submission to move the concept along in conjunction with the long-term plan of commuter rail. Bus rapid transit stations can be where commuter rail stations will ultimately be located. Marketing the service will be a key to ensure citizens along the corridor understand the opportunity that the premium transit service will provide for corridor mobility.

d. APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference:

CATS is hosting the annual APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference beginning on Saturday, May 14, 2016. The annual International Bus Roadeo will take place on Sunday, May 15. If you are interested in seeing transit professionals doing amazing things with vehicles, a few hours at a transit roadeo will surprise you.

IX. Other Business

None

X. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m. by Commissioner Fuller.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2016, 5:30 P.M.