

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

August 24, 2016

Presiding: Trevor Fuller (Chairman, Mecklenburg County Commission)

Present:

Mayor Jennifer Roberts (Charlotte)

Mayor John Woods (Davidson)

Debra Campbell (Charlotte Assistant City Manager)

Bill Coxe (Huntersville Town Planner)

Michael Warner (TSAC Chair)

Mayor Jim Taylor (Matthews)

Mayor Chuck Travis (Cornelius)

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 5:39 p.m. by MTC's Co-Chairman, Mayor John Woods.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of June 22, 2016 was approved as written.

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

No report

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

No report

V. Public Comments

None

VI. Action Items

None

VII. Information Items

a. Refresh of 2030 System Plan

John Muth

Mr. Muth, CATS Deputy Director, reminded MTC members that an original systems plan was adopted in 2002 and updated in 2006. In 2010, MTC refreshed the system's financial plan due to a drastic reduction in sales tax receipts during the recession. There are many signs that point to a need for an updated system plan, including:

- Current financial environment
- Public's desire for continued investment in transit infrastructure
- Mecklenburg Livable Community Plan
- Project Connect (considering economic development, land preservation, transportation choices, cost of commute, etc.)

- Mecklenburg County has greatly exceeded 1990's population projections (in 1998 it was projected that by 2025 Mecklenburg County would reach one million in population. That milestone was achieved in 2014)
- Charlotte is the second fastest-growing city in the nation

Mecklenburg County is also the major employment destination in the region. Over 150,000 people commute to work each day to Mecklenburg County; 20 percent of people in the region who live outside Mecklenburg County work within Mecklenburg County. Areas such as SouthPark, Ballantyne and the Airport have become large employment centers.

Comprehensive Operations Analysis – CATS proposes to conduct a Comprehensive Operations Analysis to review route structure, route frequencies, etc. There is a definite expansion of crosstown routes and neighborhood feeders when reviewing the route structure from 1998 to present. However, there are still gaps and areas that are not being serviced as well as some would like. Additionally, bus revenue service hours have expanded from 400,000 hours in 1998, before sales tax implementation, to 950,000 hours in 2006-2007. As the recession hit, bus service hours trended down and have remained flat since the recession. Currently, CATS projects minimum increases in service, with some exceptions for grants and partnerships such as with UNC Charlotte and the Airport.

The Comprehensive Operations Analysis will:

- Be realistic – examine how best to deploy budgeted hours of revenue service given current financial realities (financially constrained)
- Be aspirational – based on citizen input, develop service scenarios that address desires for more routes, more frequency, shorter/more direct trips (not financially constrained)
- Take a fresh look at our bus route structure and route frequency
- Leverage existing bus service planning efforts:
 - LYNX Silver Line Corridor
 - LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) Bus-Rail Integration
 - North Corridor Mobility Study
- Leverage existing capital assets:
 - LYNX Blue Line and BLE
 - CityLYNX Gold Line

As the above work evolves, it will allow CATS to understand what citizens would like and will help give structure to CATS' capital program, which will include:

- Fleet Planning
- Location of future Neighborhood and Community Transit Centers and Park and Ride Lots
- Future needs at Charlotte Transportation Center
- Complementary needs at Charlotte Gateway Station (CGS)

2030 Transit System Plan Status – The status of the 2030 Plan is:

- **Operating**
 - LYNX Blue Line Rail Service
 - Sprinter Airport Enhanced Bus Service
 - CityLYNX Gold Line Phase 1
- **Under Construction**
 - LYNX Blue Line Extension

- **Under Design**
 - CityLYNX Gold Line Phase 2 (currently in bid process)
 - CGS Track and Bridge (currently in conjunction with NCDOT with design work on the track and bridge element to bring the multimodal Amtrak Station downtown)
- **Under Study**
 - LYNX Silver Line Rail Technology/Alignment
 - CGS Phases 2 and 3 (currently in conjunction with NCDOT planning efforts)
- **Unfunded – Design & Construction**
 - LYNX Red Line
 - LYNX Silver Line
 - CityLYNX Gold Line Extensions
 - Beatties Ford Road
 - Central Avenue
 - Airport (including the decision of whether the transit mode should be Streetcar or light rail)

LYNX Red Line – At this time, there is no definitive funding or implementation schedule due to:

- No local, state or federal funding sources
- Norfolk Southern Railroad’s Policy that provides no passenger access to the rail corridor.
The next steps are:
 - Mobility Study – working on enhanced bus operations plan leveraging the I-77 HOV/HOT Lane Project
 - Maintain LYNX Red Line as a key component of longer term Corridor System Plan
 - Ongoing discussions with Norfolk Southern, North Carolina Railroad and NCDOT
 - Ongoing funding discussions in the context of the need for additional funding

LYNX Silver Line Study Goals:

- Define a rail fixed guideway alignment and confirm the technology for the Southeast Corridor
- Provide an interim bus transit strategy for utilizing lanes on the Independence Corridor
- Develop strategies to protect and preserve the rail alignment

LYNX Silver Line Update with a new Locally Preferred Alternative:

- Future conversation concerning the technology and alignment with a potential recommendation to MTC on September 28, 2016
- Future action item for MTC approval on October 28, 2016 to update the LYNX Silver Line element of the 2030 System Plan
- CATS will submit the LYNX Silver Line update to CRTPO for inclusion in the Adopted Plan.
The next steps are:
 - Evaluate how to integrate through Center City and connect the Airport Corridor with the LYNX Silver Line
 - Community Investment Plan (CIP) Request for Preliminary Engineering/ Environmental Study
 - Corridor Protection Strategy

Uptown Segment Consideration – A key element for the LYNX Silver Line is a comprehensive plan for its entrance into and through Center City and integration with the West Corridor to the Airport.

Airport – West Corridor:

- In the 2002 Plan, Bus Rapid Transit was recommended
- Light Rail was not cost effective under FTA's formulas and was therefore not likely to receive FTA funding for construction
- In the 2006 Plan, Streetcar extension (post 2030) was recommended. The LYNX Blue Line had not opened then, and its ridership success was not certain. There was also discussion of taking a couple of lanes on Wilkinson Boulevard to provide light rail to the Airport. NCDOT had concerns about that option, as Wilkinson Boulevard is viewed as a key detour route for I-85.
- In 2009 Sprinter Enhanced Bus service was implemented to the Airport for the interim
- Undertake a study within the next year or so similar to the LYNX Silver Line Study to determine a potential alignment. Part of the study would define how to connect with the Southeast Corridor
- Next Steps would include:
 - Evaluate West Corridor for light rail
 - Coordinate with the Airport's Master Plan
 - Consider proposed River District and service to Gaston County
 - Evaluate how to integrate service through Center City and connect with LYNX Silver Line Light Rail

CityLYNX Gold Line – Identify funding to prepare final design/bid documents for remainder of proposed alignment (construct Phase 2) for:

- West to Rosa Parks Place Transit Center (Beatties Ford Road)
- East to former Eastland Mall site (Central Avenue)

Charlotte Gateway Station – Planning for CGS is proceeding in close partnership with NCDOT. The project has received some funding through a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant. MTC members are aware of existing issues. Work has started to discuss the long term vision for the district and how the CGS can be a catalyst for that area's growth.

- Phase One – Funding is secured for this phase and includes a TIGER grant and gap funding for the phase's \$70 million cost. Some work has started on the track, structures and signals piece of the project.
- Phase Two – Includes the platform, canopy and interim station if the project is not able to enter Phase Three quickly. This phase cost is approximately \$20-25 million. No funding or financing has been identified at this time.
- Phase Three – Finding a potential partner, developing and incorporating a multimodal station into the overall development. The cost is unknown at this time. CATS may be able to identify some Federal funding for some of the bus elements, but the magnitude of this project has not been determined.

Immediate Challenges/Opportunities:

- Expansion of the existing bus system is critical to the region

- Now is the time to conduct necessary Planning and Design to get projects shovel-ready, so when funding is available, we will be ready to move
- The need to study and update the Airport Corridor
- Identify FY18 funding for technology/ alignment update of Airport/ Center City System Integration
- Significant funding is needed to advance the remaining corridors to Preliminary Engineering/ Final Design/ Construction
- Need to build on the work of the Transit Funding Working Group (TFWG)

Near Term – Next Steps:

- Undertake and carry out the Comprehensive Operations Analysis
- Continue work on CGS
- Conduct North Corridor Mobility Study – Develop Operating and Capital program on how to improve services in the North
- MTC & CRTPO approval of Silver Line Alignment and Technology

FY18/FY19 Budget Process:

- Propose a CIP Request to study the West Corridor and develop a Center City System Plan for integration of the LYNX Silver Line and the West Corridor
- Develop CIP Request for MTC consideration of Preliminary Engineering/Environmental Study
- MTC CIP Budget development will include identification of funding needs for advancing the Refreshed System Plan

Discussion: Commissioner Fuller asked how the cost of CGS Phase 3 would be determined. Mr. Muth responded that the vision work happening with CGS Phases 1 and 2 will help identify the elements that need to be considered in a good estimate of the project's total cost. Mr. Lewis added that CSG Phase 3 has been envisioned as a Public/Private Partnership. After Phase 2, there will be Amtrak service Uptown, a temporary station and an idea of the cost of a permanent station. The goal is to determine how to incorporate the transportation needs into an overall plan for the private development, and find out how much of the cost of Phase 3 can be borne by the private sector. Commissioner Fuller commented that as the 2030 Plan is refreshed, we need to identify the costs associated with such an undertaking. If we need to find different funding sources, as Denver did, we need to know the funding goal we are trying to reach. Additionally, MTC needs to be open to creative possibilities to create new funding sources. Mr. Lewis shared that CATS envisions 1) a short term immediate redesign of the bus system, which will occur over the next year; then 2) in the mid-term, over the next two years, a refresh of the 2030 Plan and identifying the funds to get to that point. The current 2030 Plan is a Mecklenburg County Plan. Meetings with the Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) revealed a need to expand the 2030 Plan to meet the transportation needs of our regional partners and create a truly regional plan that takes our transportation efforts to the next level.

Mayor Roberts commented that there was a discussion with the Mayors Institute on City Designs in which Charlotte was asked to participate in a seminar in Charleston. The Mayor's Institute asked on which project Charlotte would like their input. There are 6-7 world renowned architects, urban planners and designers who will gather to come up with a plan/design for CGS that may result in possible station designs, which may give an idea of

the amount of funding needed. This will also be something that can be shared with developers to help them envision the components that can go in to the CGS development and how the development can transform that area of downtown. Also, Mayor Roberts said she had visited Statesville and shared there that CGS will be the terminus for the LYNX Red Line, bus service and Streetcar. We asked Statesville to be a part of this vision. Managed lanes, Express Bus and community input were also discussed in Statesville during a very positive meeting. Mayor Roberts said that the Mayor Pro-Tem of Huntersville said that positive conversations are happening in Iredell County relating to this initiative. At the October MTC meeting, Mayor Roberts said she can give a report on feedback from the Mayors Institute of City of Design and share their ideas for CGS. As we continue to enlighten communities, their feedback will be very helpful. Once communities see some kind of format, people begin to get excited about things that can happen and it gets easier to provide estimates. However, what if the development is a result of a Public-Private Partnership? Our estimate would not apply if the private sector wants to build its vision.

Mayor Roberts also shared that as discussions continue about redeveloping the site of the former Eastland Mall, there is talk about enhanced bus service to connect with Streetcar Phase 2 after completion. Even a fixed line like Sprinter is attractive so people can see what that will look like down the road. A South American architect who reviewed the former Eastland Mall site made some suggestions on transportation mode, such as double buses, Sprinter and hybrids, to stimulate interest in the use of the line and influence preference toward more of a transit corridor. This may help with the development that we hope is coming as we continue to look at Eastland.

Mayor Roberts asked the usage level for Sprinter service. Mr. Lawrence said the ridership total is around 28,000 to 30,000 monthly. Since the Sprinter Service's implementation in 2009, the route's ridership has increased 30 percent.

Mayor Woods commented that the short term and medium term plans are good. He would like to have dates applied so there are deliverables in place with completion dates. To this point, the 2030 Plan is only a Mecklenburg County plan. That is a valid issue on which we must continue to work. The meeting in Iredell County was extremely positive but the crux is when will that county be ready to help build the system in their county, and what connectors will be needed to support the operations of the entire system. We need to pursue that idea in the surrounding counties also. In the "Dream BIG" category, we need to find a method to better connect these parallel LYNX Red and Blue Lines, then the Streetcar. Mayor Woods said that he did not believe Streetcar was the best long term connector for a first class system. Denver shows us how to "Think BIG" and we must follow suit for the future. Mayor Roberts suggested that we partner with CCOG and use their established relationship with the regional surrounding counties to help facilitate our regional transit plan and efforts.

Mayor Travis stated that he appreciated hearing about the meeting in Statesville and the support from a regional basis for transportation improvements. It is going down the line of "Thinking BIG." He reminded MTC members of the need to have emphasis, especially on how to connect with the Airport. We need to have a true connection from the heart of our commerce to the Airport. The Sprinter service currently in place has been watered down to a local route and does not provide the attention to the Airport that is necessary. Mayor

Travis also stated he is excited about the Mobility Study of the North Corridor and the opportunities there. Although we do not control the fate of the LYNX Red Line, we can take full advantage of managed lanes now that we are hearing positive feedback from the northern part of Mecklenburg and Iredell counties.

Bill Thunberg, Mooresville Representative, said that he heard in these comments a ringing endorsement for undertaking these efforts and bringing all the members of MTC, as well as partners such as SCDOT and others, back to the table to make this a priority and develop a truly regional transit plan.

VIII. Chief Executive Officer's Report

John Lewis

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

- a. **New Fare Boxes:** New fare boxes will be installed in the rest of the fleet this weekend, August 27-28, 2016. The fare boxes have been in testing for the last month and all results have been positive, including feedback from both bus operators and passengers.

IX. Other Business

None

X. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m. by Commissioner Fuller.

NEXT MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2016, 5:30 P.M.