

Metropolitan Transit Commission Special Meeting



August 11, 2021

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION
Special Meeting
Wednesday, August 11, 2021
5:30pm
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center
WebEx
AGENDA

- I. Call to OrderMayor Vi Lyles
 - Attendance (Roll Call)
- II. Approval of the June 23, 2021 Summary (p.5-10).....Mayor Vi Lyles
- III. Report from the Chair of the Transit Service Advisory Committee (TSAC).....N/A
- IV. Report from the Chair of the Citizens Transit Advisory Group (CTAG).....N/A
- V. Public Comments
- VI. Informational Items
 - None
- VII. Action Item
 - 2021 MTC August Meeting Schedule (p.12).....Mayor Vi Lyles
- VIII. MTC Commissioners’ BusinessN/A
- IX. Chief Executive Officer’s ReportN/A
- X. Adjourn

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION
MEETING SUMMARY
June 23, 2021

Presiding: Mayor Vi Lyles, City of Charlotte

Present:

Commissioner Leigh Altman (MCBOCC)	Mayor Pro Tem Renee Garner (Town of Matthews)
Taiwo Jaiyeoba (Assistant City Manager, Charlotte)	Brian Welch (Town Manager, Mint Hill)
Mayor Woody Washam (Town of Cornelius)	Randy Hemann (Town Manager, Mooresville)
Andrew Grant (Town Manager, Cornelius)	Bill Thunberg (Town of Mooresville)
Mayor Rusty Knox (Town of Davidson)	Mayor Walker Reid III (City of Gastonia)
Jamie Justice (Town Manager, Davidson)	Randi Gates (GCLMPO)
Mayor John Aneralla (Town of Huntersville)	Mayor William Dusch (City of Concord)
Mayor John Higdon (Town of Matthews)	

CATS Chief Executive Officer: John Lewis, Jr

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Transit Commission was called to order via WebEx conferencing at 5.30p.m. by MTC Chairman Mayor Vi Lyles, City of Charlotte.

II. Review of Meeting Summary

The meeting summary of May 26, 2021 was approved.

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

Krissy Oechslin (Chairwoman) reported the following recap from the June 2021 meeting: In our June TSAC meeting we received an update on the CATS TRAX performance measurement scorecard for Q3, and they will resume doing an on-board in-person survey this fall and that'll be great. Jason Lawrence gave us a review of CATS' planning process as more and more people return to work and resume using transit.

I know last time I mentioned an employer survey that we've all now received to share with our employers. We were pleased to hear that as of July 12th, thirteen (13) express bus routes will resume at least half of their pre-COVID frequency, which is a significant improvement over what had been running during COVID. Several TSAC members had previously expressed concern that they had resumed going into the office but were unable to use the express routes that they used to ride because they had been running so infrequently. We also got a preview of the October service change, one of the priorities for which will be moving any bus route with a 45 or 60-minute headway, trying to get that down to 30 minutes.

We also received an update on the ongoing Bus Priority Study. We get an update on that every month, and we plan to hear some of the results of the public survey that they're conducting right now, a preview at our next meeting, which will be in August. TSAC voted not to meet in July.

We received an update on the real-time app, which will show how long until the next bus or train arrives in real-time, not just based on what the paper schedule says. The app should go live next month, and this is a great benefit for current and future transit riders. As you may

recall, TSAC has been advocating for a true real-time app for years, so it's wonderful to see this come to fruition.

Discussion:

MAYOR LYLES (City of Charlotte): I'm really glad to hear you say good things about the app. I'm assuming that you've had a chance to try to dry run it and that it operates in a way that you feel like the riders will feel comfortable and be able to find it with great utility?

MS. OECHSLIN: I personally haven't tested it. I'm not sure if there's more testing to come once it's available or if they had had enough of folks who signed up to test it. I won't speak for CATS on that.

MAYOR LYLES (City of Charlotte): Mr. Lewis, can you tell us how you've been testing the app? It's an important amenity.

CATS CEO LEWIS: Yes, I'm going to have Rachel Gragg, who is our project manager, address that if Rachel is on, but I believe we started the beta testing live, and the app is actual available in the app center in the Google center on phones, and our beta testing with our members of TSAC and CTAG who have signed up begins next week.

MS. GRAGG: Absolutely. I'll give a quick update. Actually, a real-time app is undergoing penetration testing with some our cyber security members. That testing is going on all week, probably within a few days next week as well. The end of next week we will do administration training and we will start training on testers. At that time the app will be available in the store for all of our testers.

MAYOR LYLES (City of Charlotte): Do we have a roll-out marketing campaign for the users?

MS. GREEN: Yes, we do have a marketing campaign that's going to come out with that. We wanted to get through the testing first so that we would feel very comfortable about letting folks know what was coming, and once we make it through that then we plan to let the world know that the real-time app is going to be available for usage by our citizens..

IV. Citizens Transit Advisory Group (CTAG) Chairman's Report – No Meeting

V. Public Comments - None

VI. Informational Item

a. Regional Express Service

Jason Lawrence

Jason Lawrence – CATS Senior Transit Planner – made a presentation on the Regional Express Service, based on pages 14-26 in the MTC Agenda packet for June 23rd, 2021 meeting.

Discussion:

CATS CEO LEWIS: I would like to remind MTC members that although this is for information only, based on the discussion that we will have here, we would bring back an action item at the next board meeting to address any changes that the board may want to make on the operating on what we determine are appropriate direct costs to charge our funding partners in

that. I think this is very important, as we consider additional conversation on what to do in this realm.

MR. LAWRENCE: One thing I will add is the capital for the purchase of the vehicles. All these do not include the capital aspect of the vehicle costs as well, so another item to consider.

CATS CEO LEWIS: Jason, can you go back to the direct cost breakdown? So again, Madam Chair, we're not asking for action tonight, but I think there's been quite a bit of discussion over the last several MTC meetings about what is an appropriate cost-sharing arrangement with our regional partners. CATS staff certainly believes that the policy that's established when CATS began for the 50-50 funding arrangement is the appropriate method of moving forward. There are benefits in both jurisdictions, in multiple jurisdictions, in providing that regional type of service, but I think that it is worthwhile to consider how we determine direct operating costs and what should be included in that model.

Right now, we are beginning discussions with our regional partners for the FY23 service. FY22 service agreements have already been in place, and that is the service we'll be operating for the next year, but now we're beginning the discussions for service that will begin next fiscal year, July 1 of next year, and if the MTC is going to decide to make changes now is the time to do that. I would love to hear the thoughts of the MTC on where we should go so that we can bring an appropriate action item back to the board at the next meeting.

MAYOR LYLES (City of Charlotte): Since all the budgets have been adopted, that you would recommend any adjustments being done in consideration of the fiscal year coming up, and what you're looking for are the questions that people have or suggestions that people have for you to consider to bring back an action item, whether or not we make any changes or recommend any changes to -- I believe that this would be in our policy bylaws or policies, any changes to the existing policy or any ways of changing -- I think what you're suggesting is looking specifically at how do we cost this out and is there anything that anyone would suggest to do differently?

MAYOR HIGDON (Town of Matthews): Which one of those hourly rates do we charge? Do we charge different rates for different funding partners?

MR. LAWRENCE: Currently we are at our direct bus operation cost, which was a \$86.44 per hour, and that's across the board for our regional services.

MAYOR HIGDON (Town of Matthews): Is one of the asks of us would we want to move away from that and maybe go to a higher tier for funding, correct?

MR. LAWRENCE: Yes that's the discussion, yes.

MAYOR ANERALLA (Town of Huntersville): Jason and Blanche, thank you so much for doing this. I think it puts a lot of clarity to some of the things I'm asking about so I really appreciate that. Also, the fact that we have to remind ourselves that there are no capital costs included as well as interest payments on our debt. I think, like any negotiation, we should be certainly higher than where we are. I don't know where that number is, but obviously we have partners on the other side, but I don't see why we would continue to supplement our partners when the MTC as a whole is paying more than what our partners would be paying.

MAYOR WASHAM (Town of Cornelius): I would concur with Mayor Aneralla. I think that with transit becoming a more integral need in our outlying areas as we spread out, that our outlying areas need to step up more. I mean I think for us to pay 50% of that roughly is a little bit low. I like to see us do a little bit better and basically concur with Mayor Aneralla.

CATS CEO LEWIS: If I can make sure I understand what I'm hearing from Mayors Washam and Aneralla, there are two ways we could go here. The current MTC policy calls for a 50-50 share of all direct cost. What we have outlined is the different ways that we can establish direct cost. What we are currently charging for our service is only the operations of that particular bus, the cost of the operator behind the wheel, the fuel in the tank, that's the operating cost.

We could go to, still with the 50-50 split but of a higher number direct cost of the bus and maintenance, which would change that number from \$86.44 to \$109.67 but still at the 50-50 split, or we could go to direct operating costs and add administrative costs, so a portion of my salary would be included in that. Or we can go with the fully allocated administrative costs of \$151.97 and then fully allocated would be \$169.52 but still at the 50-50 split.

I just want to make sure that Mayors Aneralla and Washam, what I think I'm hearing is do we want to do a 50-50 split of the higher number or do we want to completely change the cost sharing that is within the MTC agreement now?

MAYOR LYLES (City of Charlotte): I think both of the mayors said two things: One, it is a negotiation, and at some point the negotiation needs to be held with the people that are -- we are thinking about what our position would be, and what I heard the mayors say is that what we're doing right now is not sufficient in terms of what we're doing, but I also think that any mayor on this call would recognize that if you were paying \$10 an hour and your partner came in and said no, I want you to pay 50, that might be a little bit of a leap but it could be a negotiation on how to do it and when and how to do it, and to make sure that we don't lose the benefit of it. But I'm assuming that that's what people have said, not the existing rate, something that would I think be a negotiation with the partners.

No mayor wants to be surprised in a budget request, and I think this is a good time to do it for next year and allow people the time to plan for it, but I also want to make sure, one of the questions I have, unintended consequences, as this negotiation is going along I think we also need to think about intended consequences. I'm going to ask some basic questions.

Do we know how many people from Charlotte go to work in the other areas and do we know how many people come from the other areas to come to work in Charlotte? Do we know that or is in destination, is it split that way? I don't know, it's just for me one of those questions like what's the benefit besides all of those things that you talked about, what would it mean for the person if the service stopped or wasn't available just because we had something in the rate? And I'm going to see on administrative costs, John, we're not going to fire you if they don't pay your percentage of that salary, so we have to think about things like that.

I would like to understand the practical part of this. I think the rate needs adjustment. It definitely needs adjustment, but I also want to make sure that we approach it in a way that is sustainable for the next -- it shouldn't be 20 years for anything anymore. I would say with a review every five years or something like that, but I just wanted to make sure that we also addressed the practical and had no unintended consequences as a result.

CATS CEO LEWIS: Madam Chair, great question. I will say that right now, as our TSAC chair mentioned, our express ridership is down significantly as a result of the pandemic, and that ridership will grow, but right now we do not have again good ridership figures that includes origin and destination that I am comfortable with presenting to the MTC. We have overall ridership for all of those routes, but I could not tell you X percentage of those riders started in Charlotte, ended in Gastonia, and vice versa, or X number of riders started in Charlotte and ended in Rock Hill and vice versa. So we do have overall ridership, but not to the level of detail. From this point forward we will start tracking that level of detail, but right now we just don't have it.

MAYOR LYLES (City of Charlotte): And I agree, I think that's fair, because I know the pandemic but I think it's one of those things if we say we're going to review something every five years maybe we should decide what data we want to use to create this cost. It's not just well, we're going to charge direct in this. It's got to have some foundational portion of it, because there are many places that we negotiate to provide bus service because of employment. I mean the Concord Mills route was decided because of the people being able to get jobs up in Concord Mills from Charlotte, and I think that that has changed perhaps now, but I think that's why a policy with a review date in it is really a good idea, and collecting the data by which to create a policy would be good as well.

MAYOR DUSCH (City of Concord): We were looking at whatever the costs as being decided on and decide whether we provide the service, or we let CATS provide the service? Tell us about much it is, and we'll do the analysis.

MAYOR HIGDON (Town of Matthews): I just wanted to say that I agree with my fellow Mayors Aneralla and Washam in that it should be higher than currently. And I also agree with you, Mayor Lyles, that we shouldn't go all the way to that very top tier, so maybe for the first round we look at capturing the second tier, the \$109.57, that's something that maybe wouldn't have too much sticker shock. I agree if we go all the way fully allocated, a lot of these routes may go away, but it is a good starting point to do a phased approach over several years phrasing it.

I think what the ultimate goal for me anyway would be to have the fully allocated number realized because again, we're not doing debt service or the cost of the capital equipment so that seems fair.

VII. Action Items

a. 2021 MTC Summer Meeting Schedule

John Lewis Jr.

John Lewis, Jr – CATS Chief Executive Officer – Presented the option for the MTC Summer Meeting Schedule, based on page 28 in the MTC Agenda packet for June 23rd, 2021 meeting.

Resolution: A motion to adopt Option 1: Cancel July 2021 MTC meeting was made by **Mayor John Aneralla (Town of Huntersville)**; seconded by **Mayor Woody Washam (Town of Cornelius)**. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Title VI CityLYNX Connector Service Equity Analysis

Jason Lawrence

Jason Lawrence – CATS Senior Transit Planner – Presented the Title VI CityLYNX Connector Service Equity Analysis for approval, based on pages 30-37 in the MTC Agenda packet for June 23rd, 2021 meeting.

Resolution: A motion to adopt Title VI City LYNX Connector Service Equity Analysis was made by **Commissioner Leigh Altman (Mecklenburg County)**; seconded by **Mayor John Aneralla (Town of Huntersville)**. Motion carried unanimously.

VIII. MTC Commissioners' Business

MAYOR HIGDON (Town of Matthews): I just want to give a quick update for the many of you that are attending this meeting also attended the U-2509 NCDOT Independence Boulevard project meeting this morning. This was discussed, the value engineering of the project, and there has been 20 or so proposals made to cut that project to lower its cost. Several of them definitely have effects or would have an effect on CATS and the Silver Line, etc. The meeting lasted two hours and we went over four of the suggestions out of 20, so it looks like there's going to be many more meetings, but it just continues NCDOT's trials and tribulations for being underfunded or too many projects that they can't find. I'm hopeful that the legislature will allocate some of their surplus funds to NCDOT so we can get these projects going again. I just wanted to make everybody aware of that meeting.

IX. Chief Executive Officer's Report – No Report

X. Other Business – None

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m. by Mayor Vi Lyles – MTC Chairwoman (City of Charlotte).

NEXT SPECIAL MTC MEETING: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11TH, 2021, STARTS AT 5:30 P.M.

**METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION
ACTION ITEM
STAFF SUMMARY**

SUBJECT: MTC August 25, 2021 Meeting Schedule

DATE: August 11, 2021

- 1.0 **PURPOSE/SCOPE**: This action will establish the Metropolitan Transit Commission's August 25, 2021 meeting schedule.
- 2.0 **BACKGROUND**: Special circumstances has facilitated a proposed cancellation of the August 25, 2021 regular scheduled MTC meeting.
- 3.0 **PROCUREMENT BACKGROUND**: Not applicable
- 4.0 **POLICY IMPACT**: Not Applicable
- 5.0 **ECONOMIC IMPACT**: Not Applicable
- 6.0 **ALTERNATIVES**: Not Applicable
- 7.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**: MTC has the following options:
- Option 1: Cancel August MTC meeting
 - Option 2: Hold the meeting as schedule
- 8.0 **ATTACHMENT**: Not Applicable

SUBMITTED AND RECOMMENDED BY:



John M. Lewis, Jr.
Chief Executive Officer, Charlotte Area Transit System
Director of Public Transit, City of Charlotte

