



## ASHEVILLE TRANSIT COMMISSION

### Meeting Minutes

First Floor Conference – City Hall

March 6, 2012 3:30pm-5:30pm

#### Attending:

Commission Members: Julie Mayfield, Dave Erb, Tom Tomlin, Kevin Jenkins, Paul Van Heden, Georgia Shannon, Councilman Gordon Smith.

Staff: Mariate Echeverry, Martha McGlohon, Janet GeorgeMurr, Barb Mee, Norman Schenck.

Community members: Tom Herman, NCDOT

3:33 p.m.: Julie Mayfield, Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

#### Transit Commission Members and staff listed above introduced themselves.

#### March 6, 2012 Agenda review and approval:

- Under Staff Updates: Mariate stated that due to increase in fuel prices, staff was tasked at the Department level to list helpful transportation ideas, which will be presented to Council on 3/13. Mariate is asking TC to review the list that is in TC packet and to discuss/brainstorm other transportation ideas.

- Dave moved to approve the agenda, Tom seconded and carried unanimously.

- **February 7, 2011 Transit Commission Minutes Approval:** Edits made to the minutes, as follows:

- **Under New Business: Transportation Master Plan Implementation Updates:** Per Julie, last bullet point should read as follows: □ Julie proposed for free fare from the date of implementation through the Strive Not To Drive week up to 3 weeks. Julie moved to approve proposal; Dave seconded the motion and carried unanimously. This approved proposal will be presented to the Finance Committee. To confirm above change in the February minutes, Julie suggested TC to re-vote and confirm the motion. At this time the proposal has not been presented to Finance.

- **Under: TC Members' Experiences on ATS this past month:** Tom indicated two edits to correct Dave Erb's transit route from 28 to 18.

- **Under Old Business: Transfers:** to correct "Title IV" to "Title VI."

- Tom moved to approve 2/7/12 minutes as per the changes, Paul seconded and carried unanimously.

#### Public Comment - Part I: -

- Tom Herman, NCDOT PTD announced his retirement at the end of March, 2012. Tom also passed out an article to TC from the US Chamber of Commerce recapping transit, highways, rails, etc. through the country that we need and use the Transportation Bill. Tom stated that there will 4 positions for the NCDOT PTD to be filled, one from Charlotte for the urbanized area and 4 mobility specialists that will be placed all over the area.

- From an email to IRIDE Julie read as follows: Public comments through IRIDE requesting to add 5:15pm departure from Black Mountain on weekdays on Route 170 to build commuter traffic; and to reinstate the bus stop on Patton Avenue at Urgent Care, Post Office, Aldi Grocery Store. Mariate commented that this is not possible and that the funding for Route 170 ends on 12/31/12. To date, there is not an alternative to substitute the funding and there is not operational funding available as well. With the new routes, there will be a bus stop at Urgent Care on Patton Avenue.

#### Transit Commission Members' Experience on ATS this past month:

- Tom - rode Route 16 on Saturday had 12 outbound and 13 inbound passengers

- Julie – waited for the bus, but was picked up by friends on the way into town.

- Kevin - no problem

- Paul - rode Route 11 with no problems.

- Dave - no problem. Dave asked Norman about the announcements on Route 2 that are backwards. Norman stated that they are working on this problem.

- Gordon - solid on the Routes 1 and 9. Discussion on how to mount Gordon's long wheel base to the bike rack on the front of the bus. Mariate stated that we will call the manufacturer to see if a device could be added to the bike rack.

## NEW BUSINESS:

- **Review of public comment standards:** Julie stated there is no need to change the language of the Public Comment Standards but suggesting changing the practice. Paul and Julie suggested to recognize the public to provide input after Transit Commission's discussion of the issue(s) and before the issue is voted upon.
- **Complete Streets policy and schedule:** Barb is asking the TC to review the draft (in the packet) of Complete Streets Resolution in preparation for TC endorsement consideration next month. Barb briefly summarized that complete streets are designed for all travelers of motorized, non-motorized, which is a more balanced approach. The Council has established enacting a Complete Streets policy as one of their Strategic Goals for this fiscal year. At this point, the NCDOT is in the final comment period for their Complete Streets implementation guidelines, so we know what NCDOT policy looks and how they plan to implement it. The MPO is also working on a policy as well as the City. Barb asked that TC review the attached resolution and send comments to her in the next two weeks. Barb is also asking Greenway Commission, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force to review and endorse the proposed policy, and then it will go to the Planning and Economic Development Committee of the Council in mid April and then to Council in May. Paul asked Barb of any sections in the policy talking on street parking for cars. Barb stated that we are trying to figure out how to incorporate this which is mentioned in the draft resolution under "we recognize" that part of using vehicles is parking the vehicles. Barb encourages comments and participation in that regard. Paul suggested to place on street parking as a lower priority. Mariate stated that Complete Streets incorporate everything depending on the road that you are considering of transit, bikes, pedestrians, parking. Gordon stated that he has concerns about on street parking as well as Paul. It really works in residential neighborhoods as far as being able to reduce speed. But, then you have streets like Westwood which are through streets that use street parking on both sides. People who have driveways should use them.
- **Buncombe Environmental Leadership Award (BELA):** BELA is to honor people and businesses whose action and leadership have made a positive impact on the environmental. Barb has asked TC's consideration of nominees by March 16.
- **Transit Commission Retreat:** Julie stated that she and Mariate discussed an appropriate date to have a TC Retreat. It was suggested moving the retreat to a date that would be relevant to City Council Retreat in January. Julie proposed to schedule the retreat in September, 2012, which will allow the discussion of the Capital Improvement Budget due in October. Also to discuss the budget, this is due early in the year and allows setting goals for the year. Julie stated that TC will continue with the goals that were established last year and the upcoming implementation of new routes. At the June TC agenda to add scheduling of TC retreat in September.

## OLD BUSINESS:

- **Strive Not To Drive (SNTD):** Julie moved to have free fare starting at the date of implementation through SNTD week for to up three weeks; Dave seconded. Paul opposed and the rest of the members were in favor. This recommendation goes to the Finance Committee, then to Council for approval. Julie volunteered to attend the Council Meeting. Gordon recommended that Julie attend the Finance Committee as well. Mariate anticipates this to go to Council in April.
- **Fuel blend for Asheville Redefines Transit (ART) from B5 to B20:** Gordon stated that this was an item that he was interested in lowering the fuel cost and to look at ways to improve air quality. To have analysis of what the pros and cons were of shifting to a higher blend. After a group discussion, Gordon would like to see if there are significant cost savings. Gordon would like to continue the discussion. Mariate stated that the staff would work on this issue. Dave Erb voiced his opposition to the B20 blend and Paul Van Heden concurs with Dave.
- **Transit Commission Work Plan Updates:** Julie asked for updates from TC members:
  - 1. Paul had a productive conversation with Council Members Marc Hunt and Chris Pelly; they are both very interested in public transit. Three important messages from the conversation: 1. Don't "skimp" on transit; 2. The importance of marketing; and 3. The importance of the Transit Master Plan. Also discussed the MAHEC situation.
  - 2. **Funding: Advocate for a 2013 marketing budget to City council.** Julie stated that Gordon brought this issue during the Council Retreat in January. Gordon has been speaking about this at every opportunity including when Council pass the Technology Improvements at the last City Council meeting and continuing to help Council remember that the TMP was a community driven process which is similar to Downtown Master Plan. Julie stated

that TC will talk a little later about the need to meet with Council about other things and will roll this into the conversation.

- 3. Strengthen Communication with Drivers: The bus drivers meetings have not occurred in January and February. Julie wanted to convey the message to the drivers that the meetings are important. Norman will send Mariate other meeting option times. Martha stated to be careful because the drivers are controlled by the Union and if the drivers decide not to meet with staff and TC, then it should be honored. Julie stated that TC are citizen members and do not have a contract with the Union. Martha stated that TC was appointed by Council.

- Advertising on shelters/benches: Mariate stated that a policy will have to be drafted by the staff and TC will review. Gordon asked if the advertising would be a co-branding with City of Asheville or ART branding on the benches as well as any sort of sponsor. Mariate stated that last month, Shannon Tuch explained the UDO process. The process is to write policy first; to TC for review; to Council for approval, and then changes to UDO. Jeannie Rosenthal suggested make public service announcements on the buses and benches, e.g. calling 211 to quit smoking; or music without headphones.

### **Staff Updates:**

- Discussion on ideas as gas prices increase: Mariate stated that Council asked Transportation Dept. to provide ideas of how to engage people in saving fuel. Mariate had a list of ideas in the TC packet that could be achieved in order to facilitate service to people when gas prices increase. To have platform before the crises reaches their maximum.

- Mariate has asked TC to review the list before it goes to Council and for other ideas.
- Julie stated that rolling the promotion with the new routes is a good idea
- The idea is to compile all of this information in a single card. For people who do not ride the bus that the card would be useful as a transit option. The cards will be distributed in libraries, schools, mailing list.
- Gordon suggested "creating a segment" using Buncombe County TV
- Gordon stated focusing on dependability, convenience and economic, so it still fits in.
- Kevin asked about the Active-Mapper. Mariate stated that Active-Mapper is a digitized map where one can find properties, parks, but is another tool for the citizen to see the Active Mapper to see, for instance, biking from one destination to another or walking.
- Kevin stated that like Google Maps where you can choose what your transportation system is and if the bus system is part of Google Map would be useful and COA could have a map that shows the greenways; "this is your most efficient route with bus to here and sidewalk to there and be all inclusive." Mariate stated that Google Maps could be added to the card.
- Norman stated the TMP routes are on the Google Trip portion put not for public use now until launching of the routes.
- Harry Brown volunteered to pay for the printing and materials.

- JARC/New Freedom - Mariate stated that a call for projects just opened for JARC/New Freedom. There is a great need to retro-fit the Transit Center for ADA features through New Freedom. The capital budget focuses on maintenance to the Transit Center, including retrofitting the ADA features. The grant would need Council approval to apply for the grants. If we are able to sort the administrative problems, we will apply for New Freedom.

### ● **TMP Update:**

- Mariate stated that the maps are 90% completed. For TC to view the map. Mariate would appreciate a fast turn around from TC. Maps will be distributed at 1st public information meeting; two weeks to print the maps. Bus stop signs are ready for the Steering Committee to review.
- The Wayfinding signs: in the process of hiring the manufacturer to manufacturer the signs.
- Map holders will have the TMP Implementation Date; once the implementation is complete, the map holders will be removed.
- The bus stop sign will have space for the stop ID for the AVL system.
- The ads are soon to ready and waiting for the designer to send final version which will go to the Steering Committee for final review. The bus wraps for the 2006 buses are ready for the quote and ordering them soon and will be wrapped for the implementation. Due to high cost of the wraps, the 1996 buses will not change because they will be discontinued in November.

- ❑ Operations: Some of the training sessions are happening now and Norman will work on the other training sessions with the drivers. The sign up for routes are posted and by early April (around Easter) the sign up should be complete.
  - ❑ The new phones will be installed. Yuri is working with the consultant in finalizing the phone script for the talking bus that tells you where you are located. Mariate stated that since we are changing the routes, the consultant has to take each point/stop again to do the GPS work. It is not complicated but time consuming. The talking bus works with the GPS location.
  - ❑ Google Maps are ready. We are working with communication and sustainability offices in developing this communication plan further and Mariate does not have an update on the communication plan, but it is moving forward with Maggie U. and her team is helping our department with the materials to produce for implementation. They will also manage the volunteer crews and Transit will work on operations.
  - ❑ Working very closely on the public meetings. We have discussed to have 4 meetings in each quadrant to bring the neighbors to the meeting and working on the layout where there will be stations so that people could visit the table and will have Google maps to learn how the new routes. The meetings will be informational. Dates of the public information meetings will be scheduled soon.
  - ❑ Julie announced Asheville Green Drinks on 4/4/12.
  - ❑ Mariate stated that there is a discussion in having a central meeting to bring a bus and to have similar meeting as to the first Transit Master Plan Meeting.
  - ❑ Julie asked about Title VI on the timeline, Mariate stated that this is an outreach to the communities. We will be able to target the communities in the public meetings and also sending letters to specific agencies to see if the need to meet to explain the changes, e.g. Aston Park Towers, VA, DSS, etc. We have sent letters out before in the past and very few places wanted to meet with Transit.
  - ❑ Tom asked about the target date for the launch. Mariate stated that she would want the maps in her hands before setting dates for community meetings.
  - ❑ Mariate stated that the people purchasing the monthly passes during the free fare segment, there passes will be prorated.
  - ❑ Julie asked Mariate as part of the communication plan are there plans to report to the Citizen Times, Mountain Express to have big splash of articles. Mariate stated that the newspaper usually contacts Transit when they know something big is happening and Transit will reach out to them.
  - ❑ Julie asked about TC role in the TMP Implementation are committed in being volunteers, recruiting volunteers and getting trained. Mariate stated we are still figuring out the volunteer part and will let TC know.
  - ❑ The other role that TC can play is to meet with City Council between now and the implementation to remind them what this is about and remind them why it is important. Julie suggests to do pro-active work with City Council and to help them to be prepared to answer questions and calls when they come. Julie will assume that all of TC will participate and Julie will contact everyone. Gordon stated that this is a great idea and obviously there will be complaints whenever there are big changes.
- **Transfers:** Mariate stated that she has nothing to report at this time. She would have to meet with the drivers. Norman has talked with the drivers on what can be done to prevent this abuse. To be added to the April agenda.
  - **RFPs-** Mariate stated that the roof bid closed and is in the process of finalizing the bids.
  - ❑ Mariate applied for Advanced Technology Grant which went to Council last week and we are applying for \$450,000 with NCDOT. Grant is to acquire automated vehicle location system. Mariate stated that we also sent a Statement of Interest with the federal government to use the 5307 to pay for fuel. Currently we are not allowed and this provision is only for 2012. FTA says that depending on the number of systems that request assistance they will grant it or 2% of the annual apportionment

- **Monthly Report** Mariate stated that the ridership is up by 20% from last year. Increase of ridership could be from high gas prices, the new brand and buses or good weather during the winter months. A 4% increase in the total ridership since July compared to prior years. Usually ridership increases not more than 3%.

- **Accident Reports:** Norman stated that the accident report is attached. The safety program is improving and with the Smith System Drivers Training the accident rates will drop.

- **Second Public Comment:**

- Jeanie Rosenthal suggested changing the term "Choice Rider" "Riders by Choice." Jeanie requested to have a hyperlink to the TC minutes on the IRide. Mariate stated that the minutes are on the website. Kevin suggested having a signature attached to the bottom with links to certain Transit related issues.

- **Further comments from TC:**

Georgia stated that she rode Route 15 and asked if animals are allowed on buses. If they are pets they have to be in a pet carrier. Norman stated that Transit cannot, by law, prohibit the service animals from using public transit. Under federal standards the only question that the driver can ask is: "Is this a service animal?" and "What services can they perform?" Mariate stated that this is the same rule as disability. Mariate stated that the service animal can be removed if is dangerous and the person cannot control the animal and is attacking people.

Georgia asked if TC could read the Union contract. Georgia would like to see the draft.

**Announcements:**

1. Julie announced that the SNTD Workplace Challenge kickoff is March 21, 2012 at the YWCA at 8:30am. For businesses competing against each other for having employees participate in SNTD. There is information on the website about how to do this.
2. The Alliance and Transition Asheville are hosting another transportation planning workshop on 4/7 at Reuters at UNC-A from 9a-noon.
3. MAHEC - update - Julie stated that the MAHEC conversation has reopened. Julie met with the new director of MAHEC and he very much wants to solve the problem of people walking up the hill from the bus stop to the new facility. Also, that MAHEC become more integrated and supportive of the transit system. The new director is in the process of discussions with Gordon, Mariate, Julie and Ken P. and a representative from Mission. There could a solution to the problem of getting people to the new facility that could involve Mission, since Mission has a medical shuttle. Also, this will open the door for TC to speak with Mission and MAHEC of becoming part of the PASSPort Program. Mission is running into parking issues which will get people interested in transit. The meeting will happen in the next two to three weeks and Julie will report to TC in April.

**Agenda Items for next meeting:**

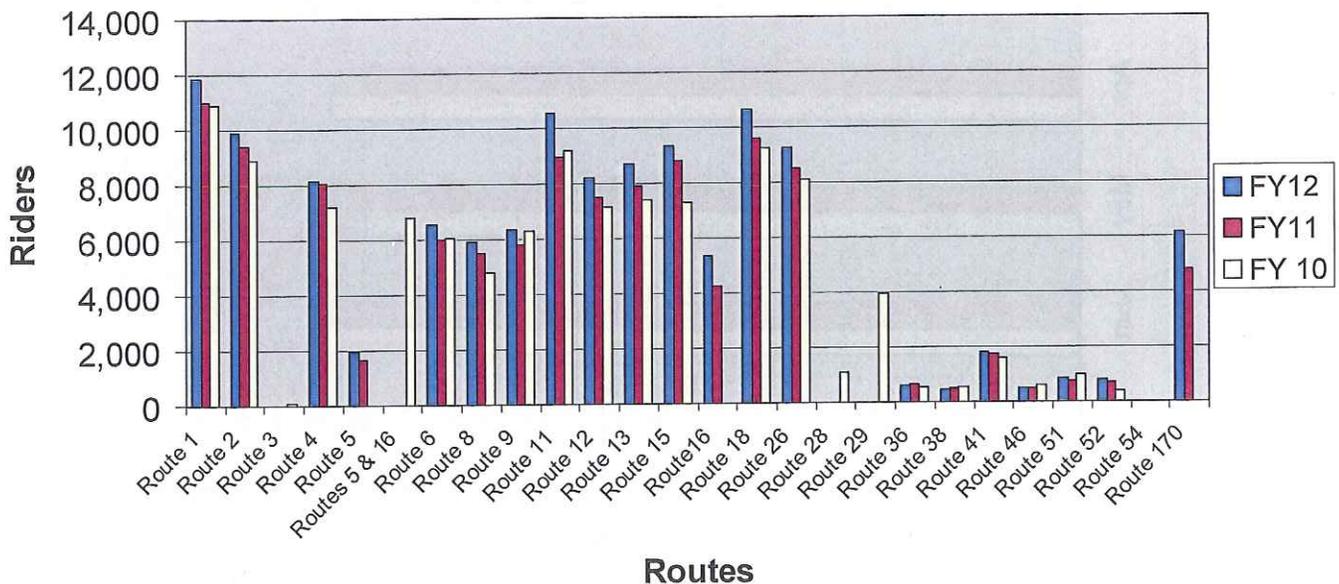
Smoking at Transit Center.  
SNTD update

Meeting Adjourned at 5:30 pm.

## Route Ridership-February, FY11

Route	Current Month				Fiscal Year to Date			
	This Year	Last Year	Change	Delta	This Year	Last Year	Change	Delta
1	11,840	11,006	834	8%	94,697	94,754	(57)	0%
2	9,921	9,384	537	6%	78,910	79,488	(578)	-1%
4	8,139	8,033	106	1%	65,304	63,668	1,636	3%
5	1,962	1,668	294	18%	21,240	36,731	(15,491)	-42%
6	6,540	5,998	542	9%	53,596	52,750	846	2%
8	5,909	5,485	424	8%	48,441	47,310	1,131	2%
9	6,369	5,777	592	10%	50,593	54,955	(4,362)	-8%
11	10,531	8,968	1,563	17%	77,979	75,970	2,009	3%
12	8,196	7,517	679	9%	66,932	64,881	2,051	3%
13	8,717	7,896	821	10%	71,184	66,465	4,719	7%
15	9,355	8,776	579	7%	68,536	64,645	3,891	6%
16	5,364	4,238	1,126	27%				
18	10,650	9,614	1,036	11%	79,432	78,324	1,108	1%
26	9,274	8,494	780	9%	65,934	64,011	1,923	3%
36	604	635	(31)	-5%	5,527	6,140	(613)	-10%
38	471	507	(36)	-7%	13,297	13,636	(339)	-2%
41	1,800	1,754	46	3%	7,702	7,775	(73)	-1%
46	486	512	(26)	-5%	7,267	7,733	(466)	-6%
51	844	729	115	16%	5,278	5,032	246	5%
52	801	680	121	18%	801	1,153	(352)	-31%
170	6,148	4,794	1,354	28%	11,112	9,690	1,422	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>123,921</b>	<b>107,671</b>	<b>16,250</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>893,762</b>	<b>895,111</b>	<b>(1,349)</b>	<b>0%</b>

### Route comparison February FY11-12



# Ridership Comparison

