



**Transit Committee
Minutes - Draft**

**Regular Meeting
Tuesday, July 19, 2016**

Attending:

Committee Members: Adam Charnack, Chair; Anthony Mitchell; Bruce Emory; Calvin Allen; Tom Tomlin; Kim Roney

City/ART Staff: Ken Putnam; Cathy Ball; and Elias Mathes

Community Members: Sabrah n'ha Raven; John Riddot, MMTTC; Dave Nutter, MMTTC; **need sign-in list**

3:30 PM – Opening of meeting

Adam called the meeting to order.

Review agenda – please note motion and 2nd of the meeting agenda

Approval of 7 June 2016 Minutes – please note motion and 2nd of the June minutes

Public Comment

- Phillip Besesi: I live in Black Mountain and it's dangerous to walk to the nearest bus stop. Asked Mountain Mobility and now ART for ways to give input. I would walk to Biltmore stops if it was safe. Would love to see buses go on the half hour, which might increase use. Would like to see parking on the outskirts of town with trams around town. Would like to see social justice as a focus of transit, not return on investment.
 - Bruce: Responded that the S1 & S5 routes are purposely staggered to provide some service every ½ hour

TC Experiences Riding the Bus

- Kim: Thankful for ability to use Sunday service.
- Tom: On the E1, kids were being loud on the bus so the driver stopped and reminded them to keep a respectful volume. Expects there are a lot of young people riding the bus to the mall. Additionally, wonders if it might be possible to skip Hillcrest stop in the evening to make up time due to parked cars being in the way of route, but there are multiple riders headed there from work.
- Adam: Experienced bus driver effectively defusing situation regarding racial slurs by passengers, while also being proactive about transfer needs.
- Others: non-noteworthy

Unfinished Business

- Retreat:
 - Adam: We've had a lot of turnover in the TC since our last retreat 1.5 years ago. Looking at a date in August. Kim suggests September, and will check in with Mariate to find out when facilitator is available. Calvin offers name of (need first name Jimenez-McGee) to get contact with friend who does facilitation.
- RFP Management Company Update:
 - Cathy: Working with Elias in developing process. The state of NC requires 3rd party management company when working with unionized employees, using a management fee model

or a turn-key model that makes money on the hours of service provided. Greensboro uses this model, and is based on service, not asset management. This may be the time to valuate the difference between this and the turn-key, and speaking from experience, this may be time for change. If the turn-key model seems wise to prepare, we're looking into difference in cost when paying for the service you get. It is more difficult to figure out what that actual cost will be and should be. The pros and cons are: are you willing to go along with us to explore this? We're on a month-to-month with First Transit, and Elias is ensuring we're on task while reporting to City Manager.

- Bruce: they seem similar, what's the difference?
 - Cathy: with management fee, they pay for bus maintenance, salaries, etc., then bill us for the cost. With turn-key, we require level of service then pay for each hour.
 - Kim: So if a bus runs out of gas and we tow it, the city is currently billed for that?
 - Cathy: Yes. With turn-key, each company runs them differently, but if they don't run a route, we don't pay for it.
 - Elias: we'd need an independent cost estimate first before we compare the bids. Hoping the process will be a bigger investment but with bigger returns.
- Cathy: FTA requires RFP, and some cities send out RFPs for both. Our most recent RFP was modeled after Charlotte, while Greensboro uses the turn-key.
 - Calvin: Chatam Co. Georgia hires citizens to be 3rd party.
 - Adam: has Greensboro been getting better returns with their system?
 - Cathy: suggests getting in touch to see if changes since 2014 have shown improvements.
- Adam: If the transit employees found they could get equal or better paying benefits from being city employees, could they opt to become city employees?
 - Cathy: that would have to be the transit employees choice. That is a right of the employees, and is not
 - Bruce: do you feel Diane represents the majority of the union due to her own interests?
 - Cathy: not a legal opportunity to broach topic.
- Anthony: is month-to-month open ended?
 - Cathy: yes.
- Calvin: Will ya'll need help from the TC?
 - Cathy: eventually yes, but we want to rely on a professional to help. We will make sure we're very clear about timelines, and don't want to revisit the hurt felt in the room. We are preparing a staff recommendation. Required to provide information and timeline of RFP with transparency.
- Adam: TC members felt like they didn't have all the information needed in the last RFP process. Learned about individual numbers in the evaluation.
- Tom: If we don't do this right, can the FTA reject it?
 - Cathy: At the end of the day, they don't give us money. We don't want to do anything that causes us not to receive those funds.
- Dee Leggett, Regional VP of First Transit. FTA will hear complaints regarding the process.
- Kim: Looking forward to a solution to knowing when the buses don't run and why.
 - Cathy: we're looking at moving towards a score-card that makes it easy to see data.
 - Dee Leggett: willing to provide outline of data to Transit Committee.
 - Tom: We would like to see when the buses don't run and why.
- Kim: interested in knowing what we're able to require regarding employee turn-over
- Cathy: also interested in seeing what we can change now to improve OTP.
- Tom: Wants to see a show-up driver in the afternoon for when routes get severely off-schedule.
 - Cathy: doesn't know enough to solve that problem at this time. Need to ask management company to improve our target OTP. If turn-key means aiming for 90%, that's going to

cost money. We want buy-in from the TC, but we also need to ask the drivers for suggestions on improvements.

- Tom: the drivers certainly know.

- Update on First Transit General Manager and operations

- Dee Leggett: Rose has submitted resignation that takes place August 5th. Have a candidate in Nancy Lohr who will be here from Florida on Monday this week, supported by Duane.
- Calvin with feedback on ART: The reason why I came upon TC is because I was working at McDonalds on Tunnel Road, and the ART changes to route 4 that came at 6am then came at 8am, meaning I had to wait 2 hours to get home. Buses were cut off that people rely on, such as the S4 that cuts off at 7pm and now people in public housing can't get a ride home from work.
 - Adam: the RFP for the transit master plan takes place later this year, and your experience is not unlike others. We want to make sure we're going in the right direction.

- New Meeting Date:

- Adam: moved TC meeting due to need for month-end data so we aren't analyzing 2-month old data, but also to move closer to MMTC partners while not being on a CC Tuesday. Hope that public can attend at least half of the meeting. Wants to see if this time works for people on the TC, and if so, should we make it permanent.
 - Ken: Suggest 4-6pm time to honor the fact that meetings are regularly longer than 90 minutes.
 - Adam: Yes, so we can at least end early.
 - Kim: limits members and audience at this time when several buses end service at 5:30.
 - Adam: scheduling is an art, not a science, and the goal is to find the most pros with the least cons.
 - Anthony: Support making a change, just want to look at 3rd week.
 - Adam: Group agreement regarding 3rd week. Proposing 4-6pm because I like that. Asks Sabrah who is a regular attendee who states...
 - Sarah: Just Economics has an event at 6pm on the 3rd Tuesdays.
 - Phillip: Consumers should be considered as valid people to be on the board, so having a meeting when they can't attend limits attendance. Suggests 3-5pm.
 - Adam: what about people who work 9-5.
 - Sabrah: experiencing that people who get off at 5 can usually get off early.
- Adam has a hand-up vote to decide between 3:30 and 4pm start times
 - Kim: abstain due to request for earlier meeting time
 - Vote of majority move to meeting time at 3rd Tuesday of the month from 3:30-5:30pm.
 - Elias: announcements need a week out.
 - Tom: need to ensure room available in city hall.
 - Adam will email Mariate.

- Route 170 update:

- Ken Putnam: Public meeting in Black Mountain last week with about 25 people in attendance. Public seemed greatly relieved that they weren't losing the entire route. Moving towards limited service, but just removed Warren Wilson route due to removal of funding.
- Bruce: Question about Saturday deviation and whether or not that was a deviation for Warren Wilson.
 - Elias: That route was just to Black Mountain outside of Warren Wilson schedule.
 - Ken: Once again, we're only removing the WW routes.
- Adam: new route makes sense getting people to work in Asheville, but not convenient getting back for 9-5ers to wait for 7:05 departure.
- Elias: We don't know how trailblazer is going to respond, but there is a missing connection now.
- Tom: Be aware that this will have effect on E2 connection, and will add load after 7pm.
 - Calvin: It's not WW's decision, but the Governor's proposed budget cuts to education.

- Ronny Payne: We're not taking any trips away, we're just eliminating the WW portion of the route.
- Adam: review- if riders use the 170 to get home, need to communicate transfer changes regarding route changes.
- Kim: The 7pm departure time catches the workers getting off between 5-6pm; the later the better.

New Business

- Bond Referendum:
 - Ken: The council is going through a process to consider a bond with meeting on July 5th being the first step. The 2nd step on July 26th followed by August 9th meeting will be supported with a poll. About half of the bond will go towards transportation.
 - Adam: The majority is not for transit funding because it needs to go towards capital projects, not operations. Hitting a roadblock for operations funding. Some money for shelters, as well as quite a bit of money for sidewalks, resurfacing and bike lanes/sharrows. Welcomes TC to reach out about specifics with ideas. Operations funding is not an option, and shelters are low on personal priority list of transit improvements.
- Secretary:
 - Kim: willing to be interim secretary because of tools available.
 - Adam: accepted and thanks. Reminder that notes can be as voluminous as able.
- TC member to assist with TPC hiring process (formerly filled by Yuri K.):
 - Ken: The hiring process is in place, and we're getting ready to start the interview process with a number of applications that have already come in. We want a rep from TC to service during that process. With the city, the standard interview process includes roll-playing as well as presentations. Your commitment would be an all-day commitment because interviews are scheduled, including lunch, and will happen in the next 2-3 weeks.
 - Calvin and Adam interested and moving forward together.

Transit Committee Business

- **MMTC Meeting Update - Kim:** - We didn't have a quorum at the beginning of the meeting, so votes regarding agenda and minutes were moved to the end of the meeting after we had a quorum. The public hearing passed without comment. Mariate presented updates on the 2016-2017 budget and the ART drug & alcohol program, then Terri March provided details on Open Streets, which takes place Sunday, Sept 18th from 1-4pm. More info at openstreetsasheville.org. The management company RFP memorandum was in our packet, but no action was taken. Amy Cantrell from Just Economics address concerns regarding safety, operations management, and lack of reports on breaks in service. Mariate reported on the bond referendum, which is expected to be on the Nov. ballot, and includes sidewalk and greenway infrastructure improvements. MMTC recommended Billie Lofland to fill the vacancy on MMTC representing Bike/Ped interests.
 - Bruce added that Open Streets will take on several streets and are in need of volunteers.
- **Driver's Meeting Update - Tom:** Discussed that some of the buses are having problems with cars double-parked in Hillcrest as well as people mingling in the roads. Consider not going up into Hillcrest after 7pm at night. There are a lot of working people, but if it's all young people, they can walk.
 - Bruce: is it possible to go in a different way?
 - Tom: not without backing up.
 - Tom continues: Also, there's an issue with the light at Sardis/ Brevard to get the left-turn light on longer. Brevard at I-26 holds longer. The light at Merrimon going on to Weaver sometimes requires 2-3 lights to get the left. The bus stop and Merrimon/Beaver Dam, and we may need to move it up to where the entrance comes up towards the animal hospital to keep traffic from backing up.

- Ken: We don't want to put the stop mid-block because we want folks to cross at the traffic light.
- Group conversation about N1/2 stops at that intersection, including busy intersection crossing.
- Ken asks for email to address with DOT with consideration of

Staff Updates:

- Ken: Not much of an update at this time, so this is for your reading pleasure.
 - Bruce: Points out that pedestrian safety audit was done over a year ago, but we still don't have study results.
 - Ken: NCDOT is in turn-over turmoil, and this has been wrapped into that issue. NCDOT has suggested a staff working group to City Manager to use the audit as the basis for making bike/ped improvements. We've had initial meeting, and TC as well as MMTC will get their own copies of these updates.
- Tom: Why do we get the capital project reports?
 - Bruce: Prepared for the MMTC so it's given to committees as well.
- Operating Stats:
 - Adam: Once again, this is for our reading, but asks for comments.
 - Ken: Suggest working with Kim's earlier point to pull dashboard of key features.
 - Dee: Will bring proposal for key metrics to next TC meeting. It can be a living document that's able to be modified to what the TC needs.

Public Comment

- Sabrah: Commenting on Merrimon/Beaverdam stop, most people are going to the grocery store and returning at the church. The vet office stop seems mostly to be people in the neighborhood. The idea of people crossing mid-road would be a very small group of people.
 - Bruce: Agree on use for grocery shoppers. Gives example of UNCA ridership.

Future Agenda Items

- Ad policy:
 - Adam: Likely on hold while bringing on new transit staff.
- Goals:
 - Adam: Will be discussed at future retreat.
- Kim: the area at the transit center used for waiting has empty flower pots and lack of trash receptacles, especially for cigarette trash. Needs attention, and plans to come with potential solutions next month.
 - Bruce: Concerned that smoking in that area should be discouraged due to safety issue. Need people to cross at legitimate crosswalk, not crossing in front of buses because someone will be hit.
 - Ronnie: Group that planted flowers stopped and we're looking at moving pots, which are full of trash and recycling.
 - Kim: People are going to smoke in a location where they can see their buses come in. Need solutions, and look forward to before and after pictures.
- Bruce: Are we going to advertise to fill Lauren's seat?
 - Tom: currently have 11, 10 within Lauren.
 - Adam: My opinion that we have a lot of people on committee.
 - Kim: Might be good to bring on one new person now instead of several at once since we have upcoming term endings.
 - Adam: Discuss next meeting.
 - Ken: Offers to provide spreadsheet of rotations date. Staggering of terms has merit.
 - Kim: Document already available.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:12pm

Next Meeting: August 16, 2016 – 3:30-5:30 PM – 4th Floor Training Room at the Municipal Building at 100 Court Plaza