



**Transit Committee
Minutes - Draft**

**Regular Meeting
Tuesday, August 16, 2016**

Attending:

Committee Members: Anthony Mitchell, Vice-Chair; Bruce Emory; Calvin Allen; Tom Tomlin; Kim Roney; Gary Ray; Ed Johnson;

City/ART Staff: Mariate Echeverry, Transit Planning Manager; Elias Mathes, Transit Grants Coordinator; Nancy Lohr, GM of First Transit; Dee Leggett, Regional VP of First Transit

Community Members: Amy Cantrell, Just Economics; Dana Frankel, Downtown Development Specialist; Tom Brown, Nelson-Nygaard Consulting; Larry Gould, Nelson-Nygaard Consulting

3:37 PM – Opening of meeting

- Greeting and Announcement by Adam
- Agenda approval: Gary 1st, Bruce 2nd

3:42 First public comment

- No one speaks during public comment

3:42 Noteworthy experiences

- Kim: Ocean City experience - \$3-hour limited parking, but \$3-day fare printed on small piece of newsprint. Planned for tourists, but used by employees as well. Designed to keep tourist cars parked.
- Gary: nothing to report
- Calvin: Next bus out at Hillcrest today. Said it would be there in 8 minutes, then saw the bus coming. Message that said it was having maintenance issues, which was helpful.
- Bruce: problem accessing next bus from home computer yesterday and today.
 - Mariate notes that the Next Bus app is not working, but is in process of maintenance.
- Adam: Experience in Gatlinburg - no space for cars and no public parking. Everyone rode the trolley that came by all the time. Not known as a public transit mecca, but it works. Trolley may have been free.
- Ed: Normal experience with W routes being late.

3:46 Unfinished Business

- Introduction of Nancy Lohr by Adam, new GM of First Transit coming to us from Florida
 - Nancy: Thank you and welcome! Started in transit in 1999, most recently in the panhandle of Florida. Have experience with paratransit and management. Love Asheville, which is similar to home in the mountains of Pennsylvania.
- Retreat: Kim - suggests 6 to 8 weeks out, and not in the Summertime, so we can better plan ahead.
 - Mariate: suggest using the city's connection as an outside facilitator since she did the last TC retreat, as well as the MMTC and Greenway. Facilitator available after October 11th
 - Kim: will begin process again to plan further ahead.
 - Adam: excited that Kim is stepping up into Secretarial role
- FTA Triennial Review Update:
 - Mariate: we have minor findings we're trying to resolve through training

- Kim: Why move forward with Master Plan before Management Company RFP?
 - Mariate: We have grant funding we must return if we don't use it, and there is a deadline. If the city goes with a turnkey, we can still go through processes of the master plan. Not able to move forward last year with staff changes, but we see there are problems with operations, and the problems we currently see may be resolved with Master Plan.

3:58 New Business

- - Kim: Intro improvements at ART Station:
 - Kim: The flowerpot situation beside the transit center is a bigger issue than anticipated. Riders need to be safely out of the way of bus traffic while smoking, but also able to see incoming buses. Not as simple as removing the flower pots, but the new security guard stationed there seems like an expensive solution.
 - Mariate: project to fix entrance and install permanent fencing as well as painting is in place. The stonework and funding are still in process.
 - Calvin: Smoking area was moved to that location once no-smoking on platform was put in place.
 - Bruce: It's a safety issue to smoke on the platform.
- Adam: New Members to Transit Committee
 - Adam: we could bring on new member now or in February. Wants to do research on term expiration.
 - Tom: has the roster for review
 - Adam: Will look at bylaws for us to make informed decision
 - Mariate: Need to address needs - diversity, skills, etc.
 - Kim: Suggest signage in Spanish and Russian in addition to English to expand our invitation. Need to post in the bus to alert bus ridership to opening.
- Larry Gould from Nelson Nygaard Consulting: Consultant Update on Circulator
 - Tom Brown is the Project Manager for the parking study.
 - Shuttle Feasibility Study is part of the Downtown Parking Study
 - Goal is to have people park once, using system of shuttles to get around town.
 - Preview of tomorrow night's workshop:
 - Designed to get comment on roots of issues as well as potentially missed areas of service in current draft. It's a work in progress, like a charrette, that takes place before public comment.
 - Attendees will be able to draw directly on the map area.
 - Explanation of purpose: civic use, social services, employment, etc.
 - Assumptions in mind: free system, mostly to keep it moving faster, easy to understand close-face headways (quarter of the hour), as well as staggered rollout.
 - Phase 1 (known as pedestrian circulator): ART station & shopping locations
 - Phase 2: Biltmore Village and Mission Hospital. More expensive operations.
 - Phase 3: RAD route with 2 variations due to size of vehicles.
 - Phase 4: Haywood Road into West Asheville
 - Operating Costs: effects level of service. Range from \$5080 an hour cost, depending on size of vehicles, contracts, and non-unionization of drivers - similar to hotel or airport shuttle. The \$80-hour rate will possibly be more in line with service levels of ART.
 - Type of vehicles: electric self-charging are 700950k are very expensive and would be a financially challenging purchase for any community without specific grant funding. Trolley would be 350k new. Body on Frame model made similarly to school buses cost 100k new, last about 5 years, and have smaller wheel frame which may assist with tight turns. E-Bus out of Chattanooga is about 400k and charges at station. Short bus 50k, but not comfortable, though not on it long.
 - Branding, marketing, etc.

- Questions from TC:
 - Gary: Where is NNC located? Answer: New York
 - Calvin: Will they all go downtown or in a circle?
 - Larry - Like short transit route that will return to central location.
 - Calvin: suggest RAD run from UNCA, to Riverside, to Grant Center, and back around, avoiding Downtown. May save gas and be more efficient with traffic.
 - Larry: How important is it to hit the ART Station with a circulator? It's possible that not going to the ART Station would work to not block ART Network.
 - Bruce: How will the WAVL route relate to the W1 and W2?
 - Larry: If ART carried less traffic on the further out stops, the circulator would relieve load with other services.
 - Bruce: fare comparison
 - LG: It doesn't have to be free
 - Kim: Free express route is desirable to increase parking relief.
 - Larry: Stops are negotiable
 - Kim: excited about late night hours for service industry workers!
 - Larry: Seeing need with bars, restaurants, and need at Mission Hospital
 - Ed: Mission has shift changes at 6 and 7 with 12-hour shifts. May not need service until 11.
 - Gary: Trying to work with tourists and employment. Sees the new hotels as a major problem, since American culture revolves around driving, and we have serious parking issues. The big problem is going to become the traffic.
 - Kim: consider employees of the hospitality industry.
 - Adam: I see it as one overall route that covers multiple activity centers. Elevates profile of our current service, increases our stakeholders, and understands our time constraints
 - Calvin and Tom: Mcdowel St. currently has limited service on the 90 minute circuit.
 - Kim: Mcdowel route gets to Biltmore without having the train in the way.
 - Mariate: Previously removed all parking lots due to liability.
 - Kim: Pleased to see RAD service for business and access to affordable housing not currently serviced, but want to see that prioritized higher for residents and for employees. Would like to see TDA funding for the trolleys.
 - Mariate: TDA doesn't fund operations.
 - Bruce: echo increased service to RAD
 - Amy: We've talked about free-fare, and I'm curious about funding.
 - Larry: Have not identified funding stream, but looking at similar communities.
 - Gary: Where?
 - Larry: Cleveland, Connecticut, and a number of college towns. One possible funding stream is having stakeholders contribute. When you look at larger, more expensive vehicles, they have higher requirements for drivers which leads to higher wages.
 - Gary: examples of stakeholders? Mission, Biltmore, ABA?
 - LG: West Asheville Associations. There are other cities that use them.
 - Nancy Lohr: Concerned about cutaway model's paratransit ability in the back. Gives example of previous experience.
 - Danielle: the presentation will address stakeholders...

- Larry: When you purchase the buses new, you can make custom requirements.
- Adam: The first option of downtown wouldn't take advantage of as many positives as if it included the neighborhoods around Downtown. It will be less poised for success unless you get out of the core and into employment centers and affordable housing.
- Kim: Requests maps and presentation from today.
- Calvin: requests time and location of presentation.
- Tom Brown: Tag-on benefits of a shuttle represent the feasibility of the parking study, getting people around without use of their cars.
- Adam: It's not a vacuum, since a significant of the parking Downtown is used by residents nearby who are underserved by our current bus system. Do we need duplicate service? Perhaps consider cost savings by adding to our existing service.

● **5:05: Transit Committee Business**

- MMTTC: Bruce - Couple new members to MMTTC, Dave Nutter and Billie Laughlin. Heard update on Transit Management Company RFP.
- Driver Meeting: Tom -
 - Discussion of E1 route and need for more accessible turn around, but will likely keep the same.
 - Mariate: Can't use private property to turn around.
 - Tom: Consider W5 use of Hazel Mill.
 - Mariate: Drivers requested removal of Hazel Mill.
 - Bruce: Will miss Kmart stop on Patton.
 - Calvin: Hazel Mill has a lot of new affordable housing without a bus stop.
 - TT: Replacing one 35-foot bus, but wondering why we're not replacing both of the 12-year old 35-foot buses due to end of life span. Wanting to bypass PVA on the outbound of W2. Would save 10 minutes.
 - Kim: can't cut PVA routes due to employee needs.
 - Mariate: echos concerns for PVA residents.
 - Kim: can we cut a handful of the Haywood stops instead?
 - Mariate: Will look at during TMP to see where in the route we're having issues - lights, stops, speed limit, etc. Cutting out segments that serve the most vulnerable populations is not ideal.
 - Calvin: Need to consider expanded service of W2 for all these new housing units, perhaps with trailblazer.
 - Tom: The traffic signals on Brevard Rd have been brought to attention of Ken Putnam's office. At certain times of day, we need to increase length of lights.

5:16: Projects

- Mariate: Workshop tomorrow night at US Cellular Center
- Operations Data: Nancy
 - Don't have access to all data yet. System expenditures do not yet include fuel.
 - Kim: Desire info on missed routes.
 - Nancy: missed trips are tracked, but need reasons why trips are missed.
 - Dee: What does the dashboard look like so it's broken into usable chunks such as reasonable information and goals, ex: OTP.
 - Calvin: I know how bad traffic is, but is 5pm traffic really bringing down the rest of the day OTP? Perhaps we can break out high-traffic times?
 - Nancy: I can do that.

- Dee: Need information on critical OTP, as well as standby bus to help during critical times.
- Mariate: Extra bus is in the budget.
- Bruce: Ranking is backwards. Also, what was the ridership this time last year?
- Dee: Want to change the report to reflect performance to target as well as comparison data.
- Tom: When you're doing the missed trips, are we going to get the reason? Is it possible to give reason for road calls.

5:23: Public Comment

- Amy: appreciate this meeting - really good!

5:24 - Meeting Adjourned at 5:24pm

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