



ASHEVILLE TRANSIT COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
First Floor Conference Room - City Hall
December 4, 2012
3:30 PM - 5:30 PM

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Attending:

Commission Members: Julie Mayfield, Dave Erb, Kevin Jenkins, Ken O'Connor, Tom Tomlin, Paul Van Heden, Georgia M. Shannon,

Staff: Mariate Echeverry, Martha McGlohon, Norman Schenck, Janet GeorgeMurr

Community Members: Tim Sadler

3:30 pm:

- Julie Mayfield, Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone;
- Paul read the Announcement for Public Comment
- Introductions by TC and staff

● **December 4, 2012 Agenda review and approval:** Add to end of agenda: Change of TC January 1, 2013 meeting. Agenda was approved unanimously.

● **November 6, 2012 Minutes review and approval:** After a correction under New Business: Clarification of the wording on the bus schedules to read: "1. Children 5YO and younger ride free" Kevin moved to approve the minutes, Paul seconded and carried unanimously.

● **Public Comment I:** Tim Sadler wanted to bring to the TC attention of a grant available through the Department of natural Resources for gas to electric conversions. Could this be for Transit or PW to apply? The application is due 1/18/13. Mariate stated that the new buses would not be converted and that the City is working on this grant with a group of departments. There are other things that this grant will allow other than the conversion. Georgia asked how long has the City known about this grant. Mariate stated that Transportation is not applying for this grant.

● **TC transit experience in riding the bus:**

- Tom - rode E1 last Wed at noon left 5 minutes late; but returned 3 minutes early. This shows that the extra E1 is helping. N is working fine and passengers seem to be satisfied. Norman stated the only complaint now is the bus marquee does not tell the passengers whether it is going to Klondyke or to Grove Park when it leaves. Norman stated that the destination signs would need to be re-programmed. The program company will be in Asheville in January to update the marquees to include the "N-Grove" change.
- Ken O - does not have anything to report, at this time.
- Julie - W1 was full and standing room. Julie was at the Walmart bus stop and saw many empty shopping carts. Mariate stated that the staff could call the property owners requesting to add a card return corral.
- Dave - N1 and N2 was good experience
- Kevin - S4 running late; but the rest is fine
- Paul - everything was fine
- Georgia - W4 was full and running a little late

● **New Business:**

- Transit Commission Annual Report:** Julie stated that the annual report is due to the City Clerk by 1/31/13. Julie will prepare a draft of the activities for the year by reviewing the goals that were established last year from the Transit Master Plan Implementation and the volunteer time during the kick-off. Julie will try to have a draft by the next meeting. Also, a presentation to Council by Julie on 5/14/13. Julie will send a draft to TC at her earliest convenience. Julie asked TC the other members to send her anything else they want to include in the report.

• **OLD BUSINESS:**

Transit Commission Goals: Julie reported that there were four teams, two of the teams met and Julie asked if the other two teams had communicated on setting up the drivers' team.

- ▶ Ken O. stated that the Buncombe County Commissioners took office yesterday and one district is recounting, therefore, a meeting has not occurred.
- ▶ Norman stated that he and Georgia were working on driver recognition. On Veterans Day Norman had a turkey grilled cookout at the ART operations as a thank you for the drivers during the new launch.
- ▶ Martha asked if this event was between Norman and the drivers and that there were no commissioners in attendance. Norman stated that TC did not attend the event.
- ▶ After a group discussion, Martha stated that it is extremely important that TC think about the relationship with the drivers and what the role as commission members versus what the drivers are seeking from the management company and whether those two roles may eventually conflict.
- ▶ Julie stated that it is clearly identified as one of the goals for the year to continue to improve communication with the drivers. Julie suggested that the team (Georgia as leader, Ken O, Kevin and Tom) consider Martha's advice and meet to discuss ways to improve drivers' communication.
- ▶ Martha stated that she will be happy to meet with the team to discuss the parameters.
- ▶ Mariate asked which TC members will be attending the monthly drivers' meetings. After a group discussion, it was decided that at least two TC members commit to attend the meetings and a third TC member would rotate. Mariate suggested that since the driver's meeting meets the 4th Thursday of every month that a decision could be made at each month's TC meeting who will attend the driver's meeting. Tom stated that there should be at least two TC members attending the monthly drivers' meeting.
- ▶ Julie stated that in the TC packet for today's meeting there are notes reflecting the recommendations made from two of the subgroups. Julie has asked TC members what they think of the below strategies and could TC put forth some time toward implementing the strategies.

A. Improving the rider's experience by helping riders make the best use of the system and by making the system attractive to all riders. Team: Julie, Dave, Ken, Kevin. Julie directed the TC members of the strategies which were in the TC packet and asked for TC's participation.

1. This will include an education campaign to increase the opportunity for TC to speak with riders helping to navigate the bus system on a 1 on 1 basis by creating an ambassador core of volunteers at the ART Station and on the bus.

- ▶ Martha stated that perhaps developing an Ambassador Board similar to Board and Commissions who are interviewed by a Council Member and are vetted through the application process.
- ▶ Ken O. stated to have a well-trained person to give the information.
- ▶ Julie stated that there is a list of volunteers from the roll-out that could be used as volunteers.
- ▶ Georgia suggested having hands on training for TC.
- ▶ Norman will announce the optimal times to be at the ART Station.
- ▶ Martha will investigate further the limitation of the Ambassador and the waiver of liability would be issued.
- ▶ Other inventive ways for outreach is: a video on how to ride the bus, etc.; campaign to improve rider etiquette; partner with ADC and communities to build and install bus shelters.

2. Invite riders to come to TC meeting 30 minutes prior to obtain help from a TC member;

- ▶ Dave volunteered. Tim Sadler stated that this would not be effective use of time for riders.
- ▶ Julie stated that this will be crossed off of the list.

3. To attend community/neighborhood meetings to offer one on one help.

- ▶ Dave volunteered.

4. To offer Rider 101 classes to groups on a regular basis.

- ▶ Dave could be available.

B. Support Implementation of the Transit Master Plan (TMP) is the overall goal which Dave and Julie are on this team. The attached notes reflect the meeting with Julie and Mariate which was focused on strategies to support TMP that includes 3 overall strategies:

1. Increase funding for the TMP by new ways to bring money into the system.

a. Increasing partnership as we have with UNC-A, Warren Wilson College, in which entities in the system help support the transit system to serve their own constituents. There are two new partnership possibilities with Mission / MAHEC and Biltmore Park, Western Carolina University and Sierra Nevada at Biltmore Park.

- b. Expanding the Passport Program
 - c. Increase ridership on the current Passport Program participants by looking into how the employer markets the Passport program.
 - d. Idea of creating an Adopt-A-Shelter program
 - 2. Improve Funding for Transit;
 - a. Julie stated that the "white paper" on funding is close to being completed;
 - b. Council Gordon Smith has proposed the idea to the City of getting two new congressional representatives to Asheville to learn about the City's transit needs and the relationship with federal funding.
 - 3. Provide PR/Advocacy for Transit
 - a. Dave's article that TC approved at the last TC meeting will be in Mtn Express soon.
- ▶ Tim Sadler asked about the possibility to have a sponsorship to build a shelter or buy a shelter. Mariate stated that there are shelters built by the communities such as of Shiloh, Clingman, and Larchmont, to name a few.
 - ▶ Georgia noticed a lot of smokers at the bus stops and suggested having cigarette trash can with sand.
 - ▶ Kevin stated that some of the Asheville Housing Authority residents will need to do community service which could include cleaning the bus shelters in the area.
 - ▶ Julie asked TC members to review the goals list and to think of other strategies in having an outreach program.

- **MAHEC Health Express Update** - Julie stated that a meeting was held, therefore, no updates.

STAFF UPDATES:

- **TAC representation by Transit Commission** - Mariate stated that the requirement of the Transportation Map Bill 21, the MPOs must have a transit representative attending the TAC meetings. FTA will provide more guidance since it is very confusing as to who needs to be appointed to the MPO before moving forward. Julie explained that the possibility of someone from the City representing the City's system on the Regional Transportation decision making body is very important. Mariate stated that with the Transportation Bill most of the transit agencies are not part of the City's government or a county government. FTA would like to have transit be part of the Regional Planning, therefore, would like to have a person from transit in the decision making. Currently, two City Council members sit on the MPO which are Jan Davis and Marc Hunt but neither one of them are working with transit issues at this time.

- **Transit Master Plan Implementation:** Mariate reported:

1. All of the buses were received and will be on the road soon. Norman stated that one of the new buses were on routes N3 and S2. The automatic passenger counter information from all bus stops is being stored until staff is trained.
2. The technicians are calibrating the system for accuracy of ridership.
3. Mariate stated that the buses will run on the first holiday of the year. Routes E1, E2, N1, S3, W1, W3, S4. E1 will be paired with N3 which will be the E1 night route on holidays. Due to the "pairing" ART will provide more routes than originally anticipated. Buses will run for 10 hours a day, 9am-6pm.
4. Mariate and staff met with the drivers last month to review the routes as to their preference and all agreed upon.
5. As of 1/1/13, the additional E1 will be permanent and will send a press release.

- **Status on RFPs:** Mariate reported:

1. IT has approved the standardization of the camera system; which means that ART will purchase directly from the provider rather than bidding. All of the documents are ready once there is Council approval. The new camera system is already in the new 9 buses, so, the idea is to bring the rest of the cameras to the remaining fleet. The information is downloaded wirelessly by seconds or specific times and dates.
2. Negotiations are in progress for the contract that will install the ARRA and CDBG shelters approximately 6 to 10 new shelters and anticipate the progress will be ready by the end of the fiscal year.
3. Advertised for bids on the Clingman and Hilliard Avenues pedestrian signal. Two bids were received and are in the process of determining which will be awarded.
4. Garage Roof is now finished and the engineers had completed the final inspection and now waiting the final report.
5. Received the support ART vehicles, two Chevy Equinox. Norman is waiting for the new required tags and the installation of emergency flashing system.

- **Title VI Update:** Mariate stated that under the Title VI program a report of the composition of the Transit Commission to ensure that there is a diversified board and remind the TC when making recommendations to reach out to minorities and low income populations.

- **Review of ART monthly reports:**

Monthly Reports: Mariate stated:

1. October 2012-Transit Commission Route Statistics Report: A new report will be produced every month which will provide useful information not only the ridership but ridership comparison. In October there was an increase in ridership of 2%.

2. Percent Change in Ridership per route from June to October Report: This report shows how the routes rank on ridership.

▶ Mariate stated that with the combined score there will be a better representation on how the route is performing which is not only ridership but passenger trips per hour and passenger trips per mile which gives a complete picture of how the system is performing.

▶ Julie asked if the decrease in ridership for two routes is a long term problem. Mariate stated that the routes will need to be observed for a couple more months before making any changes. In the report it does show that most of the routes are in the positive numbers.

3. Passport ridership stats: The Grove Park Inn (GPI) had a very large jump in October. It was reviewed and the records are correct. The City of Asheville also had a smaller jump in October.

▶ Julie asked about Grove Park Inn's decrease of ridership since the launch. Was there communication with the new management of GPI? Mariate stated that GPI will continue with the Passport Program as a very valuable benefit.

4. Comment/Complaints Log: Norman asked TC if the format of the spreadsheet was agreeable. The design of the log is to track what people are asking over the phone. Norman will reformat the spreadsheet to be more user friendly.

Norman stated that in addition to collecting the data, staff is also looking at solutions.

Norman showed TC an instrument or bracket that would be on the bus stop signs that the rider would slide a bar that shows a strobe that the driver could see from 100 yards away. This is on a trial basis to see if riders would use them on bus stops that are not easily visible at night.

4. Norman stated that the drivers are commenting positively regarding the fence on the Post Office side. The complaints have stopped completely and not as much loitering.

5. Accident Report: TC reviewed the report.

- **January 1, 2013 TC Meeting:** January 1st TC meeting was discussed. Paul made a motion to cancel 1/1/13 meeting, Dave seconded and carried unanimously.

- **Presentation of Plaque to Paul Van Heden:** Julie presented a plaque to Paul for his inspiration, passion, energy and social clubs towards transit and of his dedication and time to the Transit Commission. Paul stated that transit has improved and enriched his life; and he appreciates and respects each TC member.

- **PUBLIC COMMENT II:** Tim Sadler stated:

1. On one occasion, the bus driver would not allow Tim on the bus because he did not have exact fare. This reflects on the City and that "leave no rider behind" should be motto for transit.

2. City of Asheville does not take transit as seriously as tourists.

3. The bus was full and driver continued to pass the bus stops when there were clearly two seats available.

4. Better signage at ART Station of changes in routes, hours of the day, etc.

5. Situation as a rider on the bus when teenagers were speaking openly about sexuality.

▶ Julie stated that TC is working on rider etiquette as part of the rider experience.

6. Tim is a student at AB Tech and wanted to know the status of transit on campus.

▶ Julie asked Tim for his assistance to get students involved in the Passport Program.

7. Ridership tips: digital interface with streaming content that helps riders on the buses and updates. Tim would like to make a presentation or someone come in to make the presentation.

▶ Norman stated that the new AVL will help with the challenges of getting notices on immediate bus changes.

- **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** None

- **Agenda Items for next meeting:**

Meeting Adjourned at 5:00 pm.