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**ASHEVILLE TRANSIT COMMISSION**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**First Floor Conference Room - City Hall**  
**June 4, 2013**  
**3:30 PM - 5:30 PM**

**Attending:**

**Commission Members:** Julie Mayfield, Dave Erb, Tom Tomlin, Itiyopiya Ewart, Bruce Emory and Kevin Jenkins,

**Staff:** Mariate Echeverry, Norman Schenck and Janet GeorgeMurr

**Community Members:** David Wilson, David Boshart and Diana Kanton.

3:30 pm:

- ❑ Julie Mayfield, Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone; Julie announced that she would need to leave at 5pm and Dave Erb, Vice-Chair will take charge of the meeting.
- ❑ Itiyopiya Ewart read the Announcement for Public Comment
- ❑ Introductions by TC and staff

● **June 4, 2013 Agenda review and approval:** Under Old Business to postpone agenda item: Bus Suspension for Martha McGlohon.

● **May 7, 2013 Minutes review and approval:** Dave moved to approve the 5/7/13 minutes; Tom seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

● **Public Comment I:**

1. **David Wilson** – recommends more frequency for route E1 due to buses filled to capacity. Julie stated that the frequency for E1 was doubled in August of last year. Due to the budget situation this would be the best that can be done at this time. David's comment will be duly noted.
2. **Diana Kanton** – is a resident of West Asheville and wanted to introduce herself to TC. Ms. Kanton is interested in public transit and may continue to come to future TC meetings. Julie stated that TC is about to have a way that Ms. Kanton could help and to stay tuned.

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

**Iti** – the month of April was challenging on the buses that she was riding on:

- ▶ S3 & E1 – could not open the bus windows;
- ▶ Trash can at Walmart bus shelter was covered with hornets and smells; suggest moving the cans outside of the bus shelters.
- ▶ Fight at the Art Station last week – no police officer was on site. Mariate stated that the police officer is at the ART station in the evenings only. More people in the smoking section are having verbal altercations. Norman stated that once a week on a random day an officer will be at the ART Station at different times. With one dispatcher answering the phones and radio, announcing when the buses are coming in; selling bus tickets, answering questions at the windows it is difficult to monitor the bus platform.
- ▶ Julie asked if there was emergency call system on site to alert the police station or the dispatcher. Mariate stated that she would look into this to include in the renovation.
- ▶ Iti was riding S3 from the airport. The bus already had 1 wheelchair passenger and then 2 more wheelchair passengers at the bus stop on Hendersonville Rd. Since there were only 2 wheelchair stations on the bus, one of the wheelchair passenger was left to wait another 1 ½ hours for the next bus. Norman stated that the ART support vehicles are not equipped for wheelchair. At times, there may not be an extra bus or driver to p/u the passenger. Iti is requesting to have S3 run more frequently.
- ▶ If a Dispatcher and/or bus driver knowing that a bus is broken down to use their discretion on whether to wait for the passengers on the broken down bus to make their connection at the ART Station. Mariate stated that the policy is not to wait. Iti suggested that policy should be consistent with all routes.

**Julie** – is riding her bike more rather than riding the bus.

▶ Julie stated that she was at the bus stop across from Green Sage at College and Broadway when the E1 at 6:00 pm was stopped at a long red light at the bus stop; Julie walked up to the bus knocked on the door; and the bus driver refused to open the door. The driver looked at Julie, looked at the light and she shook her head and that she could not open the door for Julie at the bus stop. Norman stated that if it was a bus stop, the driver should have opened the door; and there was no reason why the driver should have allowed Julie on the bus.

**Bruce** – no problems with N1 or N2. Missed connection at ART Station due to S1 being late. Bruce stated that he noticed that the schedules/timetables were not displayed.

▶ Mariate stated that due to the budget constraints, displaying more schedules is cost prohibitive.

▶ Bruce and Julie suggested laminating the schedules and posting them at each column of the respective bus slip as well as on the kiosk, similar to a “dangling phonebook.”

▶ Norman also mentioned that the passengers can go to the dispatcher to pick up a copy of the schedule which saves money.

▶ Mariate stated that she will work with the designer on the best method of displaying the schedules.

▶ Mariate stated that there is now funding to renovate the ART Station and that this could be included in the project to have schedules posted on each of the columns.

▶ Kevin suggests to also having a map of the bus slip locations. Kevin also suggested for the sight disabled passengers to have a darker color lettering, i.e. dark blue lettering on white and let the green be the trim; or outlining around the white so that outline would provide the contrast.

**Dave** – N1 and N2 were on time.

**Kevin**- S4 gets later during the day and more likely to miss a connection at the ART Station; and E1 was very crowded today at the point that it was difficult to get off the bus. The maps for where the bus slips were moved most of those have been torn down by now and it is still confusing.

**Tom** – E2 last Wednesday at 10:30 am; made the U turn at the Billy Graham Center without difficulty. Rider was flagging the driver to stop on Tunnel Rd and driver refused to stop since the rider was not a designated bus stop. On the return the rider got on the bus; reprimanded the bus driver; and the driver was very calm.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

● **Bus Suspension Appeal Process** - on hold until Martha McGlohon can be present.

▶ Norman gave an update on Mr. Anthony Agnew’s suspension case that his restraining order has been lifted and he has full access to the transit system starting this week. The social worker thanked the people involved in being flexible with Mr. Agnew.

● **Transit Commission Goals:** Julie is not aware of updates since the last meeting. Julie stated that the real conversation is what will happen to the goals in the transition. There will be further discussion under the Multi-Modal Transportation Commission agenda item.

▶ Mariate the Multi-Modal Transportation Commission (MMTC) Ordinance is going to Council next week.

▶ Health Express – Mariate stated that the information has been sent to Mission Hospital and MAHEC representatives, but have not heard back from them regarding the data analysis. The representatives wanted to know the process and that was the last time that Mariate spoke with them. Mariate will contact the Mission and MAHEC for updates.

● **Strive Not To Drive (SNTD) update:** Norman stated that the ridership was down during SNTD week which was approximately 3,000 riders compared to 5,000 a day. Mariate stated Norman will do an analysis because Mariate feels that the ridership was incorrect. Mariate will bring the SNTD analysis at the next meeting.

▶ Julie asked TC members who volunteered of their experience during the SNTD week:

- Dave stated that in the 2 hours that he there he only spoke with 6 people and not all of those needed any help.
- Bruce – did not have the table ready.
- Kevin – spoke with approximately 6 people and Kevin prompted the conversation;
- Iti was there with Kevin initially and thinks that it could have been set up differently at the ART Station.

- Julie – was there on Friday with 3 volunteers who talked to dozens of people. Julie’s experience that she spoke with ~2 dozen people.
  - ▶ Two of the volunteers would take maps and walk up and down the platform and asked if anyone needed help.
  - ▶ There were people who thought they were using the system well and in fact were not. Julie was able to show a different route that they could take or a transfer point that they could use. In one instance, Julie had save one person two hours a day in riding the bus. Julie is convinced that it is right for this SNTD outreach.
  - ▶ Also interacted with new riders to the City or system and not even SNTD people and Julie were able to help them. Julie was there on Wed 2 to 5pm; and Friday 11a- to 2pm.
  - ▶ Norman indicated that the ridership was higher on Friday. Julie stated that SNTD was not as successful as TC wanted it to be and will think further about the process for next year.
  - ▶ Mariate stated that the main concern that the people are not using the system efficiently and not to the best of their advantage.
  - ▶ Mariate suggested working with the communication officer for the City to design the activity in a different way, such as a large sign that says “Make your trip more efficient” and to let people know why the volunteers are there.
  - ▶ Bruce suggested to a laptop to demonstrate how to use Google Transit.
  - ▶ Julie suggested going to outlining bus stops to help the riders to use the transit system more efficiently; Mariate suggested placing signs on the buses to say “Do you want to make your trip more efficient? Contact one of the Transit Commissioners.”
  - ▶ Bruce questioned if the \$0.25 fare for the week of SNTD was worth it. If the intent was to attract new riders to the system by having a low fare, then it should be accompanied by some publicity and Bruce was not aware of it.
  - ▶ Norman stated that the schools were also out for the summer during SNTD week which would account for a low ridership.
  - ▶ Bruce suggests having SNTD earlier in May.

• **Budget Update:** Mariate reported:

- ▶ The budget was presented to City Council without operating cuts and therefore operating budget may remain flat. FY14 is lower than FY13 due to savings of the Union Contract.
- ▶ Next Tuesday 6/25/13 Council meeting will be the adoption of the budget.
- ▶ The Union Contract was signed with an increase. Norman stated the senior drivers with 5% increase this year; 1.75% next year; 2% third year. The non-senior drivers that did not have four years’ experience raise was .75%; next year 2%; and 2% third year and that the drivers proposed this raise option.
- ▶ Savings from the fuel cost savings with the new fleet and in maintenance costs and most of the expensive maintenance is still under warranty which will help this year and next year. Year 3 will be noticing a change in the maintenance budget. There is less maintenance due to new buses and higher MPG from 2.9 to 3.7 MPG; 7 hybrids at 6 MPG.
- ▶ Norman stated that there were 16 new bus drivers in the last 12 months. The replacement of drivers was due to retirements, forced retirements and other economic opportunities for the drivers.

• **Multi-Modal Transportation Commission (MMTC):** Mariate reported no updates at this time for MMTC.

- ▶ Julie outlined what TC thinks will happen in the transition and what TC would like to see happen:
  1. Starting 7/1/13 – Bruce, Iti and Julie will become part of the newly formed MMTC but not sure as to what MMTC will be working on;
  2. Per Cathy Ball, to look at Transportation from a holistic point of view integrating sidewalks and greenways, bike infrastructure, transit, cars, roads and highways. Julie is concerned that transit will get

lost in the MMTC because it serves a different kind population. The members that remain on the Transit Committee to continue to be the advocates and voice for the ridership that we do have.

▶ Julie does not have a vision of how the MMTC will deal with some the issues that TC deals with. If the MMTC will not deal with it what makes sense as to how the issues will be dealt with.

▶ Mariate stated that the first thing that the MMTC will be charged with is the multi-modal plan. The City will receive \$200,000 from the MPO to do the project which will take 1 to 1 ½ years. This will define many of issues that MMTC will be handling.

▶ Mariate does not see the Transit Commission losing its role because there are big issues and small issues; the small issues need to happen with the Transit Committee for example, smoking at the ART Station or Wayfinding at the ART Station.

▶ In the MMTC issues would consist of where the new ART Station will be located. One of the goals of MMTC is to be able to prioritize in a different way which will help getting better distribution of funding.

▶ Mariate stated that the MMTC will have a role in the Multi-Modal Plan review which will be a priority and the creation of the plan. The MMTC will look at the existing plans and expects some overlapping but also expect visioning, i.e. what is going to happen.

▶ In following a similar process with the Tiger Grant that is being developed for East of the Riverway Transportation Network, the first thing that the consultants are doing is to overlap the existing plans, but also to see where the gaps are; what is the vision for the area; and what needs to be linked. Mariate feels that this will be “guinea pig” for the big Multi-Modal Plan and will have a better idea of what can be accomplished with the bigger plan.

▶ Mariate will be present at both Transit Committee and MMTC meetings and staff will be providing stats and discussing issues. Staff will also be taking minutes in the transitional period. After a time, Transit Committee members will produce the agenda and the minutes. Staff will continue to provide copies and arranging the setup of the meetings.

▶ Julie recommends that the Transit stats be part of the MMTC.

▶ Julie asked what happens to the TC goals and which of the goals stay with the Transit Committee and which goals to transition to the MMTC or do they get worked on by both Committee and Commission. Julie suggests that the goal “Improve Communication with Drivers” to stay with Transit Committee since the two members are staying with the Transit Committee.

▶ Bruce asked for a clarification that the 3 members on MMTC will still be on the Transit Committee. Mariate stated that is correct.

▶ Mariate explained: Appointments to the Transit Committee will be made by the MMTC. The idea is to have the 7 people on the Transit Committee; the Transit Committee selects the three members to be on the MMTC; the 3 MMTC members will continue to be on the Transit Committee in order to continue the relationship. When MMTC meets the first time they will determine their schedule.

▶ Julie asked if a TC member would take on the leadership role of #2 Improving the Rider Experience Goal of the TC Goals to organize the meetings; carrying out the agenda; and work as a team to figure out what are the next steps. Dave could not take on any more roles; Bruce would like to wait until the MMTC meetings are decided. TC group will discuss who will lead Goal #2 on Improving Rider Experience at the end of this TC meeting.

▶ The staffing of the MMTC will be a group of staff members: Mariate, Barb, Al Kopf in Parks & Rec. and Janet to take the minutes.

▶ Julie has a professional videographer volunteering to do a transit video on rider etiquette. TC will discuss this issue at the end of this TC meeting.

● **Staff Updates:**

**Transit Master Plan (TMP) Implementation:** Mariate reported that she and the staff will be looking at ridership to see if small changes can be made:

- a. Stagger E1 and E2 in a different way; similar to E1 on the 15 and 45 of the hour; and E2 on the half hour;

b. Route 170 will no longer exist as of 12/31/13 unless funding is found by federal or state. The approximate amount of year to operate Route 170 is \$120,000 a, which was funded by JARC (Job Access and Reverse Commute.) The new Map 21 Circular and JARC program does not allow funding of existing programs. There will be a meeting with the MPO in approximately 3 weeks to discuss this issue. Mountain Mobility has funding for two years since it is a small operation but that route will be very weak if Route 170 is no longer in existence.

c. Route 170 will still go to Warren Wilson College (WWC) since it being funded by WWC. WWC is funding the 7am and noon route; but not interested in the middle of day routes.

d. Will be meeting with Mountain Mobility to discuss restructuring the route to tie into WWC.

**Monthly Reports:** C and N and Route 170 continue to be low performing routes. After one year since the implementation we know which routes are good routes and which are not as good. Mariate noted that April 2013 ridership was higher than the last year.

▶ Norman stated that the safety issue is occurring in the smoking area of the ART Station which needs to be readdressed from a safety stand-point. Mariate stated that this was discussed with the prior union and Yuri indicated that there were some discussion about it and we will bring it up again. The bus drivers understand those issues. Julie suggest to add to the July agenda and to speak with the drivers.

▶ Julie asked Norman about the “Hot Spot Safety Board” listed on the Safety Items Report. Norman stated that the idea is that when the drivers turn in issues, such as with an intersection with pedestrian that we have a way that it is communicated to the managers.

● **Surveys:** Julie reported that Land of Sky did their survey on the bus week after SNTD week. The City survey and working with Just Economics and agreed on the questions on the survey. After a group discussion:

▶ Mariate suggests: To use what Just Economics has done and we can take it as is. In the fall, Transit will do a full blown survey when the schools are in session; when all of the conditions are there for us to have good results. Julie asked if those results can be looked at together along with Just Economics. Mariate stated that they can be looked at together and can give us useful information. The data from Just Economics survey can be valuable and the transit staff’s extra effort will also be valuable for the rest of the survey to be applied.

▶ Note that Good Friday Holiday is part of the 3 year union contract and the holiday service will be provided.

▶ Julie received an email from Tim Sadler before the meeting that someone is printing and selling June passes. Norman stated that they are looking at them very closely and the drivers will be very vigilant

● **Public Comment II:** None

● **Agenda Items for next meeting:**

▶ Nonsmoking by bus drivers meeting

▶ MMTC

▶ Suspension process

▶ SNTD ridership report

● **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** None

Meeting adjourned at 5:15pm