

CITIZENS TRANSIT ADVISORY GROUP (CTAG)
Meeting Summary
November 19, 2013
DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Present: Hugh Wrigley, CTAG Co-Chair
Todd Steiss, Town of Huntersville
Kate Payerle, City of Charlotte
Gus Kretschmer, City of Charlotte
Christy Kluesner, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools
Matt Covington, Mecklenburg County

Staff: Allen Smith, Austin Faulk, Pete Wallace, Larry Kopf, Kirk Scott, Dee Pereira
Meeting time 7:30 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.

I. Call to Order

Hugh Wrigley, CTAG Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. He explained that the group moved to four meetings a year to focus on the approved and recommendation of the transit budget. Mr. Wrigley stated that Wanda sent homework material. Rob Watson was appointed co-chair over the summer.

II. Approval of April 16, 2013 meeting summary

The meeting summary was approved as written.

III. Overview of Transit Programs (Bus, STS, Vanpool and Rail)

Staff met with the chair of CTAG in the summer to prepare for the meetings. Prior to the review of the budget, staff wanted to get you up to speed on the programs. You will be informed and can make the decisions according. The operations group is presenting an overview; Allen Smith, General Manager of Rail, Larry Kopf, Kirk Scott and Pete Wallace. Austin Faulk will talk about the budget. Ms. Pereira stated that she would like this to be a conversation.

Larry Kopf started with the bus program. He presented the service development group that is responsible for the scheduling. That group is facing construction zones that will impact the bus routes. The landscape changes with closed roads and closed bridges. Staff is working on a resolution for the Gold Rush services that is funded partly by CATS and private interests in the uptown. We are working to get more contributions from the private partners; working with Charlotte Center City Partners. The service group is also implementing the recommendations for the countywide service plan. The other issue is bus stop accessibility, and complying with the ADA. There are various strategies that we use to help us make improvements when we can. We will work with the towns to see how we can improve the bus stops in those jurisdictions.

Q: Communications on routes changes?

A: We will have a large amount of communication about the changes. If it is a short range, we use our regular communications which is rider alerts. If it is a long-range, we will have community meetings.

Q: Gold Rush Services?

A: CCCP work with uptown businesses for the funding to run the free services. They are working to engage the business community for funding. It was a 50/50 share. This year we are paying 65% of the funding.

Q: Who is the ridership?

A: The service operates 6am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. It is mostly uptown workers. We have students since the extensions to CCCP and Johnson C. Smith.

Q: Does the convention authority contribute?

A: Not to my knowledge.

Q: What about the hospitality tourism alliance?

A: No.

Q: Is Atlantic City a model for us?

A: We have looked at different models.

Todd Steiss added that it is a good service that some are taking for granted. If it is cancelled, people will miss it. Maybe the uptown workers can petition their employers to keep it in service. CATS discontinued the Orange line. CATS approached the businesses on the Orange line.

Kirk Scott gave an overview of the bus services. We run the fixed routes seven days a week from 4:00 am to 2:30 pm. We carried about 60,000 a day. The service is contracted – Transit Management. The bus operators and maintenance employees are represented by local unions. The hourly wages and benefits are the major costs. Maintenance is also a big cost. We are purchasing fuel at \$3.05 a gallon today. The tires are leased because it is more cost effective. The major projects that management is involved in; North Davidson; under a purchase contract for buses with Gillig; fare collection system upgrade; bus operators labor contract is under negotiations. It was extended again. We report regularly to CATS. The on-time performance, tracked by the AVL system, is a little under goal at this point. The construction is causing problems with us meeting our goal.

Q: When are you looking to get the fare collection system in place?

A: The timeline is before the Blue Line Extension is online, by 2016. That would be a smartcard system with new fare boxes on the new buses. It is labor intensive to keep the old fare boxes working. The new system is a tap and go system.

Q: Does the buses have GPS / tracking?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there talk about linking to the smartphone with an app?

A: We are working on that; maybe in the next year. Olaf Kinard, Marketing Director, is working on that.

Ms. Pereira added that on the smartcard system, as the budget come through, you will see the dollars associated with that. It will allow us to review our fare system with transfer and boarding speed.

Pete Wallace stated that the STS have to follow the ADA requirements. Para-transit provides door-to-door for people with disabilities. It is not a taxi service. We provide some services beyond the scope of the ADA service areas; based on capacity and service area, STS can provide those rides. We go to Carowinds and the surrounding towns. STS operates 5:00 am to 2:00 pm Monday to Friday. Customers can schedule rides with an (IVR) automated system. We are also working to fuel our vehicles at the North Davidson facility. If we fuel at our location, it could save \$60,000 a year and save time for the driver. We are currently maintaining our vehicles at the City of Charlotte shops.

Our biggest cost driver is salary and benefits; the second is maintenance; fuel; various insurance make up .5% of the budget; 1.2% is for communication maintenance on the vehicles. The cost per ride is on track with our systems. The goals for STS include on-time performance, call abandonment.

The vanpool program has four employees and 100 vehicles in the fleet. The customers are the drivers and responsible for keeping it in operation. The monthly ridership is 20,300.

Q: Is the phone app used for STS?

A: if you have a smartphone, you can currently schedule a ride. The IVR system alerts the passenger the night before as give a five-minute alert the day of the ride that the vehicle is near.

Allen Smith, general manager for rail operations, gave an overview of the rail system. Rail has 20 cars on 9.6 miles of track, 15 stations, with daily ridership of 15,000. CATS has a good core bus system that feeds into the rail which makes Rail successful. Rail has about approximately 108 employees. Our safety rail record is great. Most of our cost is equipment and parts. Some cost will increase because the Blue Line is over five years old and things will need to be addressed. MAP 21 has made CATS accountability with how we spend our dollars. The state of good repair is to maintain the system and the rail to keep it safe and efficient. Asset management will include a data base to keep up with the condition of the assets on an annual basis. Big ticket items: LRV-truck overhaul ; signal system/upgrade; carborne/wayside added safety measure to ensure the trains operate at the appropriate speeds; street crossing/panel repair – there is a need to install drainage; various other normal track maintenance procedures; i.e. ballast replacement and refurbishment, rail grinding etc.

The City LYNX Gold Line is currently under construction by the City of Charlotte; however, CATS will be responsible for operating and maintaining the new trolley system and vehicles. The operating cost will increase because the current VMF facility at 3200 South Boulevard can only be expanded to accommodate 24 vehicles at a time for storage when our total vehicle amount will be 45 so vehicles will be shuttled from the “North Yard” to the VMF for repairs.

Q: What is the cost that you will accrue?

A: Staff is still evaluating. Drive cost 15% to 30%; adding positions. Staff will need to be on duty 24-7.

Q: Is there an opportunity to build later?

A: (Yes) the opportunity is there; however, with the federal dollars being limited. We need to justify our case to support that need.

IV. FY2015 Operating Budget

Austin Faulk, budget manager, explained that we have to use the City's strategy to develop the transit budget. In May we had a retreat to work on the balanced scorecard initiatives. The CEO worked with staff to make sure we focused on the core business. We report to the city the measures of transit. Ms. Faulk reviewed the current balanced scorecard.

Q: Do you achieve the targets and measure?

A: Yes.

Ms. Pereira added that we also participate in the NTD. NTD is an annual report on performance, where we are judged by our peers. The federal formula funds are based on the performance through the NTD. We fit it into the City's process.

V. CEO's Report

Dee Pereira reported that Carolyn Flowers is on the way to DC with Ron Carlee to meet with the local delegation and the FTA. She will request the local delegation to ensure appropriation of funding (per FFGA) for the BLE project. CATS is preparing to submit a Small Start application for Phase 2 of the streetcar project. The cost will be about \$126,000,000 for the streetcar project, of which 50% is being requested from FTA. The CEO will meet to discuss getting 60% of that cost. This cost will extend the current project to Johnson C. Smith University and to Presbyterian Hospital.

When meeting with the FTA administrator, Ms. Flowers will specifically talk about the TIFIA loan. The benefits are 1) repayment starts following completion of construction; 2) interest is at Treasury rates; 3) longer repayment schedule will help CATS cash flow. The repayment schedule is delayed that will help with cash flow as we bring the BLE.

The first construction contract for the BLE was advertised yesterday. The second construction contract is scheduled for December 25.

The Transit Funding Working Group, created by then Mayor Foxx and chaired by Mayor Swain and Council member David Howard, completed the work in May of 2013; however, have divided into sub-committees. One of the tasks is a P3 conference that they have scheduled for March 2014. The conference will focus on public / private partnership in the Southeast region on transportation and public works. The Communications group has started to re-educate the public on the vision on the 2030 plan. The Funding and Advocacy groups

are working on funding mechanisms; some of which will need support from the General Assembly to implement.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 a. m.

NEXT CTAG MEETING: JANUARY 21 AT 7:30 AM