

TRANSIT SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Summary
Thursday April 12, 2012

PRESENT:

Rick Sanderson, Charlotte
Terry Lansdell, Charlotte
Dee Evans, Charlotte
Marvis Holliday, Van Pool
George Schaeffer, Charlotte
Anthony Wesley, Charlotte
Rob Cornwell, Davidson
Michael Warner, Charlotte
CHRIS MCKILLOP, CHARLOTTE
JEAN VEATCH, CORNELIUS
TOM LOW, CHARLOTTE

STAFF: PAULUS FORD, Duretta Weicken, Theron Barrino, Kirk Scott, Shannon Dabney,
Vince Brown, John Trunk, Larry Kopf, Chris Spry, Pamela White, Mike
Lacagnina, Dee Pereira

MEETING TIME: 4:00-5:30 PM

I. Call to Order and Approval of the March Meeting Summary

Chairman Rick Sanderson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m., the March meeting summary was approved with one correction.

II. Public Comment on Agenda Items:

There was no one from the public to speak

III. Information Items

A. Fare Increase

Dee Pereira CATS Chief Financial Officer presented financial information about the proposed fare increase and reminded the committee the fare increase is part of the MTC policies allowing CATS to do a small increase every two years to avoid major increases down the line.

Mike Warner asked if the fare increase does not pass and hours have to be cut and CATS cut one bus route in a day how many hours will that affect. Larry Kopf stated it all depends on what route we pull since all buses don't run the same amount of hours in a day so CATS has to consider the route, runs and there also has to be public meetings and a plan to reduce service.

Rick stated that Larry sent a list to each TSAC members of the 19 people who gave comments at the MTC public meeting on the fare increase. Larry stated the public comments were comments that CATS usually hears when a fair increase is proposed.

Anthony Wesley stated in regards to the transit system how CATS addresses public comments about customer service. Larry stated in the past CATS has presented MTC with a customer service presentation and how CATS handles complaints but recently CATS has just completed a survey of riders and found that CATS ranks fairly well and those results will be presented to TSAC as soon as it has been compiled.

Tom Low asked if CATS has done everything they can to reduce costs and is the fare increase the last resort. Dee stated CATS has done everything in with discretionary expenses in our control and are now asking for the proposed increase so that CATS can maintain service. Tom asked if the fare increase does pass will some of the issues brought up be taken care of. Larry stated in the FY2013 budget there has been an increase for the Special Transportation service which has had issues and there has been a request to have money for operator training. Dee stated there is also money in the capital budget for the benches and shelters program and money in the Operations budget to install them. And the capital budget also includes money for bus replacements which also helps to keep down maintenance costs while providing good safe service.

George Schaeffer reminded the committee in last month's meeting the comparison chart of the CPI showed the general inflation up 4-5% and the cost of gasoline was up 49% but asked the committee to remember the fare increase not only supports inflation but supports to maintain the current service level.

Rob Cornwell asked if the variables affected the last 2 years budget downfall. Dee stated planning variable costs are hard to predict, fuel jumped higher than expected, sales tax dropped much more than expected. Dee then explained that CATS has a 30 year plan and at the end of the year adjustments are made to balance the budget. Rob also stated he was concerned for the people on fixed incomes. Dee explained that CATS does have discounted fares that serve the fixed income group and non-profits as well.

Rob asked if CATS has a lot of people skipping fares. Larry explained that sometimes there is a perception that people are not paying the fare when they just pass the TVM and board but they could have purchased a weekly pass or they could have a transfer. John Trunk stated that fare evasion was about 2% last year, this year it is a little bit higher at 2.5% but CATS believes that is because enforcement is higher, CATS has added nine company police to enhance enforcement. The 2.5% for this year is considered on the low end of agencies reporting fare evasion. Other agencies report about 6% evasion.

Terry Lansdell commended staff on efforts to keep service going through the downfalls but was still concerned with parking issues explaining he understood the importance of CATS owning property for collateral for Federal loans and for the expansion of service but for him personally the park and rides generate pollutants of the air quality control which jeopardizes future Federal funding and felt if even a dollar was charged per car parked that the twenty-five cent fare increase would only need to be twenty cents. Terry felt that CATS was providing amenities in an inequitable fashion to the community and in the next few years that CATS needs to look at amenities for greater returns in the investments.

Chris McKillop stated he understood why the Feds don't want to see cuts in service especially when they are handing out money in grants and wanted to know how CATS accounts for the hours when buses are empty.

Dee stated CATS has a route monitoring service that looks at routes that are not doing well twice a year. Larry stated that working staff are riding buses and trains, we look at routes and when a bus goes out it may be full but when it comes inbound it may be empty.

Jean Veatch commends staff for helpful information and properly presented facts but she is still on the fence about the \$.25 fare increase and wondered if there was a way to meet in the middle with the STS and other routes that would be compromised with the fare increase.

Mike Warner stated concerns about raising fares and service cuts.

Mr. Warner asked if the current proposed fare increase was to continue expansion of the system. Dee stated CATS has to have a financially balanced plan and to have capacity to sustain the current system as well as to grow.

D. Evans restated her concerns with a \$.25 fare increase for STS riders with limited income and how it will create a hardship on most riders. Ms. Evans wanted to know why CATS could not have some sort of fixed routes because so many people calling for STS rides are in the same area needing a ride around the same time so why can't CATS picked up more than one rider at a time so they do not have to wait so long. Larry stated that the paratransit riders have lower ridership and STS caters to individual needs unlike fixed route

buses. STS has a lot of one seat rides that pick up at the door but Larry stated he would check into providing multi pick up zones.

Marvis Holliday stated he understands CATS concerns with the variables affecting the cost of fuel and decrease in sales tax but wondered if these variables were to become stable again if the expectation of a fare increase in two years could be changed or bypassed.

Anthony stated he did not agree with having park & ride lot fees as they may ruin the incentive to ride. Larry stated that CATS could do some sort of study or survey about park and ride fee lots but it will be selective to some lots since CATS has some lots that are under agreement with business owners.

Rick mentioned if sales tax comes back and gas prices stabilize wondered if in two years if the fare increase could be excused, but guessed all would have to wait and see how things go in two years.

B. Action Item:

There was a motion to approve for recommendation to MTC the \$.25 fare increase as proposed. The committee voted 10 to 1 in favor of the recommendation to MTC the proposed \$.25 fare increase as written.

There was a motion for CATS staff to do an ancillary study for park & rides. The committee voted yes.

John Trunk commented that the cost of security for the system continues to increase and the challenge of providing security on the transit systems continues to go up so in order to keep the system safe and also as the Blue Line Extension is added the challenges will increase as well as the cost of keeping the system safe. John assured the committee that CATS is doing everything possible to keep the system safe but cannot count on the Homeland Security grants for the future revenue needed to sustain the system so, CATS will be challenged. Dee stated the marketing folks have an ancillary revenue program that covers a lot of the things discussed today so if the committee would like a copy of the plan for the next five years CATS can supply that.

Tom stated he was in favor of a parking study but wanted CATS to keep the big picture in mind in terms of how it affects the land use decisions based on whether it is revenue driven or degradation to the regions quality of life.

Rick stated he would like a report back to the committee on ridership in a few months if MTC passes the fare increase. Larry stated CATS does keep track of the ridership and will report back to the committee if MTC passes the fare increase.

C. Service Change

Pamela White CATS Service Development Manager presented the committee with the proposed July 1 service changes saying that the schedule adjustments were to improve on-time performance. Pamela explained the lynx line would have an added 1:30am outbound trip on Fridays & Saturdays, UNCC has requested real-time technology, route 42 Carowinds would start the seasonal service June 18 to August 12 and route 232 Grier Heights would have route structure change to accommodate the New Walmart store on Independence Blvd.

IV. **Service Issues**

Due to time restraints the committee was asked to email any service issues to Larry Kopf.

V. **Chairman's Report**

Rick briefly reported on the last MTC meeting stating the meeting consisted mostly of the public meeting.

VII. **CATS Manager of Operations Report**

Larry stated that Pamela White was promoted to CATS Service Development Manager and that Vince Brown STS Asst. GM will be leaving CATS for a new venture.

NEXT TSAC MEETING: THURSDAY MAY 10, 2012 4:00 PM