



MINUTES

RTA Joint Partners Coordination and Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium

June 27, 2017

Clive Graham of Howard County Transportation served as Chairperson of the meeting. Stephanie Dittman, the RTA, Office Manager of Corporation, served as the Secretary and recorded the meeting proceedings.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 1:06pm.

Review/Approval of (May 23, 2017) Joint Partners and Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium Meeting Minutes (Clive Graham)

The May 23, 2017 Joint Partners and Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium Meeting Minutes were approved.

May 2017 Financial Report (Suzanne Brown)

Presentation was made of the May Financial reports. The budget is over \$31,000 for the month of May and \$189,000 YTD.

Cash fare recovery comparison noted for May 2015 \$114,000; May 2016 \$102,000; May 2017 \$93,800. A fare recovery team has been created. Fixed route ticket sales have decreased and paratransit sales increased.

Discussion ensued pertaining to the information provided in the financial reports. Anthony Foster inquired about the efforts to limit purchase expenses for the remainder of the fiscal year. Suzanne Brown replied that efforts are in force to hold off on certain significant expenses until July.

Ramond Robinson asked for additional information on the driver monthly expense of \$20,000. Suzanne Brown explained that sometimes the cost for the regular salary appears to be a savings however, it is offset by an increase in the overtime (OT) expense. There were 31 days in May plus a holiday. Driver turnover for FY17 was 63, out of a target of 113 drivers desired. Ramond Robinson commented that with such a large turnover it is affecting the high cost of training requiring two salaries. Suzanne commented that four weeks of training is required before a driver performs their route solo. Andrew Johnson explained that at the expense of \$3,000 per driver for training, the overall cost to have trained sixty three drivers that resigned is \$200,000. Mark Pritchard reminded the group that this cost does not include overtime.

Mark Pritchard explained obtaining CDL Drivers is a national problem. RTA competes for CDL drivers, offering wages that are not competitive compared to transit counterparts. A number of drivers that resign from RTA are seeking employment with WMATA, MTA or higher paying CDL companies. RTA offers the benefit of a smaller company where the employees know their supervisors and managers however, it is seniority-based compared to mega agencies. On Corridor Road there are a number of competitors, including UPS and Fed Ex. RTA requires their drivers to have their CDL license when hired and their Passenger Endorsement when training is completed. Andrew Johnson said that another factor for the high number for driver turnover is the equipment. A driver can be in three or four different vehicles in one day due to vehicle failure. RTA employs a core group of solid drivers that understand the issues working with the current fleet. The longevity of a driver's employment increases after completing a year with RTA. Mark Pritchard feels that with the arrival of seven new heavy duty buses and twelve smaller buses the employment turnover will decrease. However, the challenge will still exist due to the high demand for CDL drivers.

Andrew Johnson said that some transit companies are offering CDL drivers a sign on bonus. This often results in the driver receiving their bonus and then moving on to the next company that offers a sign on bonus. Clive Graham commented with the start of FY18, efforts are not far from planning the FY19 budget. If funding is required for training, the cost has to be included in the requested budget to illustrate essential funding. Mark Pritchard suggested that we look at the employment market and train someone with an aptitude to work with and train them to obtain their CDL license. Suzanne Brown shared that a trainer was part of the FY18 budget request that was not approved. Supervisors and Dispatchers providing the training removes them out of their daily role resulting with higher costs for OT. Andrew Johnson commented that the current driver turnover rate averages eight to ten employees per month.

Mike Dyer inquired if security is an issue with drivers. Andrew Johnson said that rocks were once thrown on the Route 201 and a BB gun was fired at the bus on the Route 202. The last driver assaulted was a year and a half ago. RTA employs a core group of fifty to sixty drivers, with many of the drivers employed since 1997. There is minimal crime associated with the routes and the local police are supportive when a problem does occur.

Statistical Snapshot Report (Mark Pritchard)

The report shows ridership remains down this year. Maynard Nash has added to the report the category of miles and hours missed showing substantially high figures. Missed trips for April and May were high, with June not yet showing signs of a reduction. Brad Mims asked about the reason for the spike in missed trips. Mark Pritchard said that the current fleet is old with a portion of the fleet constructed in 2010. The useful life of a vehicle is 250,000 miles with some of the current fleet logging in over 400,000 miles.

In July 2017, RTA will receive twelve smaller buses designed for paratransit use. Due to the lack of adequate buses in the fixed route fleet, the new buses will be utilized for fixed route service as a short term solution. Although this will assist with the current fleet shortage for the remainder of the year, this will decrease the useful life of the new smaller buses. Seven heavy duty buses designed for fixed route service are scheduled to arrive in December.

Mark's general observation on collected ridership data is a sense of a higher accuracy rate for paratransit ridership than fixed route. Fixed route drivers currently work with an obsolete system of using a denominator to transfer collected information to a hand written tally at the end of their day. Ridership has decreased however, the method for data collection provided on fixed route leaves room for error. Paratransit for the past two years has utilized electronic tablets to tally ridership. This month progress was completed to upgrade fixed route service to an electronic system based on satellites going into the new fiscal year. This will improve passenger tallies, but electronic fare boxes are needed for better accuracy, count and security of collected fares.

GM Report/Staff Updates (Mark Pritchard)

The June Operator training class was attended by ten drivers resulting with three drivers remaining employed upon completion of the training class.

Working with Howard County Office of Transportation for a new route, Route 409B, which will provide service to the Route 1 Corridor. The new route will be one of the subjects discussed at the upcoming public hearing on July 25th.

Three new electric buses provided by a research funding grant will be in revenue service for the first full week beginning on July 10th.

A cash handling fare recovery team has been established to review the fare collection process from the initial rider fare box deposit to the final deposit into the RTA bank account. It is important to confirm that each element in the processing of fare collection is completed accurately and securely.

Sue Poole has prepared and distributed the documentation required to be in compliance of the 30-day public notice for the public hearing on Tuesday, July 25th. Methods of distribution include RTA website, newspaper print and digital advertising, email blasts to all jurisdictional libraries, media alert, social media posts and printed brochures available on all RTA service buses.

Clive Graham began discussion on the upcoming August retirement of Mark Pritchard. Mark Pritchard has served as the General Manager for two years, providing a steady hand for a system with major issues. First Transit has offered Clive the opportunity to interview and meet with prospective candidates for the General Manager position. Clive noted that Mark is employed by First Transit with First Transit selecting and providing the new General Manager. Andrew Johnson will remain and continue as the AGM of Operations of RTA. Clive expressed his appreciation of Mark.

Mark thanked Clive for his nice comments and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity of serving as General Manager these last two years

FY 18 Budget, Allocations, Memorandum of Understanding (Clive Graham)

Clive indicated the FY18 budget goes into effect on Saturday, July 1st. He indicated at this point he had not received any MOUs and that the structure of RTA as intended up to now was in doubt. He continued that unless and until there was a commitment to RTA through the acceptance of the MOU, he was prepared to send service contracts to each jurisdiction specifying the service levels and costs.

D'Andrea Walker commented that the attachments previously distributed with the MOU have changed. It is difficult for their legal department to approve a MOU with attachments that have changed and are not accurate.

Clive Graham expressed his concern regarding the lack of signatures of the MOU to create the Commission and that he would schedule a special meeting of the Partners in July to determine the available funding for FY 2018 and the interest from each partner in going forward with signing the MOU and seating the Commission.

Ramond Robinson commented on his request in the past to separate the question of funding from the seating of the Commission. He further pointed out that Howard County was not represented at the meeting, by either prospective Commissioner, so there would not be a quorum for today's meeting.

Anthony Foster asked about the role of the Partners regarding the selection of the new General Manager. Clive Graham answered that given the continuing status of the MOU, there currently is no partnership. First Transit is responsible for providing a General Manager. Clive has been provided with the opportunity to be involved with the selection process. Anthony asked if the MOU were in place, would there be a partnership? Clive responded that a signed MOU would be a good indication.

Mark Pritchard commented that he wanted to insure everyone really understood what was at stake if there continues to be no MOU and agreement about future RTA funding. An option would be to stop the buses at the County lines, however this is not recommended. Another option is in lieu of an MOU, a contract for service and funding could be developed for each partner jurisdiction without representatives on a Commission.

Discussion ensued about the difficulty for the jurisdictions with the continual change in the budget requests and number of hours made it difficult to develop the confidence necessary to move forward. Given that the documents have to be reviewed and approved by individual legal departments, which made it all the more difficult. The Partners have not received solid numbers for the first quarter payments.

Clive said he was hopeful to distribute final jurisdiction allocation figures shortly. The budget was set up that each jurisdiction would commit to the first quarter figures. The change in figures previously distributed are lower for Anne Arundel County. For Prince George's County, the figures are higher than previously distributed.

Service Changes Public Hearing July 25 (Clive Graham)

Without a signed MOU which would officially seat the Commission, Howard County Public Transportation Board will be required to officially hold the upcoming public hearing scheduled for July 25. This is per an adopted policy for receiving public input on service changes and fare increases that MTA required of Howard County as a grantee and contract manager. Individual informational meetings will be held in each jurisdiction affected by the proposed route changes and enhancements.

Clive Graham stated next month's regular Joint Partner meeting will be held in the afternoon. The public hearing will be held in the evening. John Spencer commented that he would like to be provided with the opportunity to attend a separate meeting where they can speak freely with clarification on who will represent who and about the future of the RTA. John Spencer, Ramond Robinson, Brad Mims and D'Andrea Walker were in agreement. John Spencer commented that there needs to be an entity that wants to participate. There cannot be the absence of one jurisdiction not represented. Clive Graham will send out the dates and times for three possible meeting dates next month to address this concern. John Spencer and Ramond Robinson need to discuss with their County what they are looking for from RTA.

Clive reiterated the regular July Joint Partners meeting will be held in the afternoon, followed by the public meeting that night. Sue Poole did a great job preparing a brochure illustrating the proposed changes and enhancements along with maps to provide a visual of the proposed changes. Notices were distributed in compliance of the thirty day notice requirement.

Clive Graham advised that tonight is an informational meeting for Howard County with one additional meeting planned prior to the hearing. Ramond Robinson said that Anne Arundel County will host at least one informational meeting. Anthony Foster commented that there are no proposed changes or enhancements scheduled for Prince George's County therefore a Prince George's information session is not necessary.

Route Match Software Demo (Andrew Johnson/Maynard Nash)

Mark Pritchard explained the demo for Route Match was anticipated to be displayed on the screen to provide a visual on the location and movement of the vehicles. However, there were problems with the display screen and the presentation was deferred till the next meeting.

Transit Development Plan Update (Clive Graham)

Progress continues with the TDP. Howard County has scheduled their first public meeting for August 21 at the North Laurel Community Center. Consultant KFH will assist with holding three meetings however, additional meetings can be held by County staff if necessary.

Clive had recently presented to the Howard County Executive an update on TDP plans and strategies developed to date and it was well received. Howard County is currently looking at route realignments that involve shorter more direct services at a projected additional annual expense of \$1.3 million. Public meetings will be scheduled in August and September to receive input leading to a full draft plan in October to be submitted to the Howard and Anne Arundel County Councils in late 2017. Implementation will necessarily come later and will be tied to future budgets.

Ramond Robinson suggested that the TDP needs to increase the frequency of the routes. Some areas are underserved. He is looking at zonal services and also flexible service. Anne Arundel is currently working with Annapolis Transit to determine if there are possibilities to fill in service gaps as an example to BWI airport. Anthony Foster suggested route changes as part of the TDP that would extend Route 301 further west into newly developing areas. He also commented on the need to extend Route 502 B further to BWI Airport which would provide a direct connection there from Laurel and Prince George's County.

Clive reiterated there will be two meetings in July with the regular joint Partner-Commission meeting Tuesday, July 25 and a separate meeting to be scheduled for discussions of final FY 2018 budget figures and for status of the MOU and seating of the Commission.

Adjournment: 2:45 pm

Attendees:

Ramond Robinson	Anne Arundel County
John Spencer	Anne Arundel County
Mike Dyer	City of Laurel
Nathan Grace	City of Laurel
Clive Graham	Howard County Office of Transportation
Allison Calkins	Howard County Office of Transportation
Jai Saunders	Howard County Office of Transportation
Anthony Foster	Prince George's County Office of Transportation
Brad Mims	Prince George's County
D'Andrea Walker	Prince George's County Office of Transportation
Mark Pritchard	General Manager, RTA
Ron Skotz	CAO, RTA
Andrew Johnson	Assistant General Manager, RTA
Suzanne Brown	Director of Finance, RTA
Elaina Evans	Human Resources Manager, RTA
Victor Jimenez	Call Center Manager, RTA
Maynard Nash	Manager of Planning, RTA
Stephanie Dittman	Office Manager, RTA

Next Meeting

July 25, 2017