



## MINUTES

**Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium  
(Orientation and Briefing for Commissioners)  
8510 Corridor Road, Suite 110, Savage, Maryland 20763  
August 24, 2016, 4:00 PM**

### Attendees

<i>Putative Commission Members</i>	
Allen Cornell	Howard County
Ron Dillon	Anne Arundel County
Judith “J” Davis	Prince George’s County
Brad Mims	Prince George’s County
John Spencer	Anne Arundel County
<i>Other attendees</i>	
Elaine Andrews	Howard County, Passenger Advisory Group
Kelly Cartales	Central Maryland Regional Transit (CMRT)
Astamay Curtis	Howard County Public Transportation Board Member (PTB)
Stephanie Dittman	Office Manager, Regional Transportation Agency
Kathleen Donodeo	Howard County Office of Transportation
Chris Firehock	Central Maryland Regional Transit (CMRT)
Anthony Foster	Prince George’s County
Semia Hackett	Prince George’s County Dept. of Public Works and Transportation
Bruce Hojnacki	Maryland Transit Administration
Dick Ladd	Resident and Retired
Emily Leclercq	Howard County Office of Aging
Jon Mayer	Anne Arundel County Office of Planning and Zoning
Phil Nichols	Howard County Government
Mark Pritchard	General Manager, Regional Transportation Agency (RTA)
Ron Skotz	Chief Administration Officer, Regional Transportation Agency
D’Andrea Walker	Prince George’s County Dept. of Public Works and Transportation
Vic Weissberg	Prince George’s County Dept. of Public Works and Transportation

The Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium (Howard County, Anne Arundel County, Prince George’s County and the City of Laurel) held a briefing session for putative members of the proposed Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Commission (the “Commission”).

Kathleen Donodeo served as chairperson and presided over the meeting with Mark Pritchard, RTA General Manager. Stephanie Dittman served as secretary and recorded the meeting proceedings.

Kathleen called the meeting at 4:05pm. Orientation binders were distributed to Commission members. Binders contained detailed information relating to the prior and current structure of the Regional Transportation Agency (RTA), relationship to Consortium Partners, current service and service area, components of the service, and issues and challenges the RTA faces today.

Introductions were made including the commissioners, consortium staff members, Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) staff, RTA staff, and other attendees.

**Overview of the agenda and slide presentation was conducted by Kathleen Donodeo** (see attachments).

Kathleen presented **Slide 3** showing the RTA's funding partners, Anne Arundel County, Howard County, Prince George's County and the City of Laurel and state funding partners including the MTA which is part of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT).

#### **Slide 4 Organizational Structure**

Under the proposed structure, the four jurisdictions would create the Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Commission (CMTMC), with two members from each jurisdiction, to provide oversight to First Transit (the contract manager), and to the RTA. Howard County is the current Contract Administrator for the management contract with First Transit. RTA is a brand name; the RTA's legal name is Transit Management of Central Maryland (TMCM).

#### **Slide 5 Overview of Operations/Administration**

First Transit provides three managers to the RTA; a General Manager, an Assistant General Manager of Operations and an Assistant General Manager of Maintenance. Their salaries are included in an annual management fee that also covers overhead, profit and other expenses. The managers direct the RTA - including all operations and administrative staff. Kathleen stated this model has many advantages. One advantage is that when the term of the current contract with First Transit expires, if a different contract manager is selected, the RTA's employees will not need to change.

#### **Slide 6 System Map**

The RTA system has fifteen fixed routes. The service area is large and combines 2 legacy systems, Howard Transit (HT) and Connect a Ride (CAR). Kathleen stated that some routes are high mileage routes, and that most operate on 60 minute headways which creates multiple service challenges and inconveniences for riders trying to use the system.

#### **Slide 7 Routes**

The RTA inherited (8) HT routes which were initially identified by colors and (7) CAR routes that were identified by letters. As part of the rebranding process, RTA designated all routes by three-digit numbers (e.g., Route 409/purple). The numbers help with segmenting jurisdictional service areas.

Kathleen stated that, to provide a better level of service, the RTA would like to move towards 30 minute headways instead of 60. Unfortunately at this time it is difficult to do based on the number of buses in the fleet, long routes and related operational costs.

### **Slide 8 Passenger Counts**

Kathleen said that currently the RTA has very few working Automatic Passenger Counters (APCs). Drivers have to manually log the number of riders per fixed route trip which may result in inaccuracies. The chart indicates the number of paratransit and fixed route riders for the period of July 2014- June 2015 totalling 1.7 million. Ms. Donodeo noted that the RTA is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest system in the state.

### **Slide 9 Paratransit**

While the RTA provides paratransit services to all jurisdictions, Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties also operate their own services. Anne Arundel provides free paratransit service to senior citizens and the disabled. Many Prince George's County residents opt to use Metro Access, which is provided by WMATA. Howard County residents constitute 95% of the RTA's paratransit service. The cost to the RTA of a paratransit ride compared to a fixed route ride is extremely high. The RTA strives to convert paratransit riders to fixed route whenever possible to help reduce costs.

### **Slide 10 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Kathleen referred to the draft MOU provided in the orientation binder. She stated that the initial MOU in 2014 was created by Howard County and signed separately by each jurisdiction. The MOU outlines what the jurisdictions' responsibilities are and how they will join together to form one regional service and pay their equitable share of the cost. The 2014 MOUs expired and a new draft MOU has been created by Howard County. Kathleen emphasized the importance of getting one, consistent MOU signed by all partners as soon as possible so the Commission can be formally seated.

### **Slide 11 Commission Purpose and Role**

Kathleen noted the Commission's purpose and role is stated in the draft MOU as follows, "(The Commission)...shall provide policy and direction for the services operated under the RTA and shall oversee the third-party contractor who will manage the RTA on behalf of the Parties." In response to a question she confirmed that RTA has directors liability insurance for the Board.

Kathleen stated that the Commission's first action will be to adopt bylaws. Under the bylaws Commissioners can change the bylaws, create management and service policies and form committees. She discussed immediate administrative and substantive issues that need to be addressed such as adopting draft policies and addressing issues such as a unified fare structure, the FY 2017 and 18 budgets, fleet replacement costs and the preparation of a Transit Development Plan (TDP). **(see slides 12, 13 and 14).**

### **Slide 15 RTA Fleet**

Kathleen asked Mark Pritchard, RTA General Manager, to discuss the RTA's fleet. Mark referenced the diagram on the slide, stating that fixed route fleet replacement is the RTA's single biggest challenge. Out of 42 vehicles total, 20+ are at their useful life, i.e., about 12 years old. The Gilligs are 14 years old which results in high maintenance costs. The Eldorados have exceeded 300k miles and have had water-caused structural damage. The RTA owns 3, 35- foot hybrid vehicles which are good quality vehicles. Mark stressed the need going forward for heavy duty fixed route vehicles that can withstand the rigors of up to 15-18 hours of service a day for 12 years or more. Mark mentioned, if an order were to be placed today for new vehicles the delivery time is approximately 12 months.

Questions were raised regarding how many buses were needed to cover all 15 routes and how many buses are in reserve. Mark said that 32 buses are needed to run peak fixed route service. While the chart indicates there is a more than 10% reserve, many are not running and are scheduled for maintenance. More times than not the paratransit fleet vehicles are pulled to cover fixed routes. Paratransit vehicles are not meant to run 12-16 hour days and before long will wear out their engines.

Kathleen shared that Prince George's County provided the RTA with old buses. While these buses do run, they are high maintenance. Ron Dillon commented that the RTA has a huge issue here as a fleet is the heart of the service and it seems the RTA has major capital needs. Mark mentioned that it is extremely expensive to maintain the fleet. Last year it cost the organization \$1.2 million in parts alone. Kathleen said that the staff has discussed lease/purchase options. She noted that the MTA is the Maryland's designated recipient for Federal Transit Administration funds and is not currently proposing new fixed route buses for the RTA.

Ron Dillon asked if the RTA is self-insured or has a commercial policy. Mark replied, First Transit provides the bus and general liability insurance.. Dick Ladd inquired as to who owns the buses? Mark responded that currently Howard County owns most of the buses with Anne Arundel County owning some. The expectation is that if RTA becomes a Transit Authority, it will own the vehicles and other assets. Kathleen responded that Howard County approved in its FY 2017 budget an amount equal to 70% of the cost for 11 buses on a lease to buy basis. Discussions continue with other Partners about whether or not they would contribute to their 30% share of an 11-bus order.

Dick Ladd wanted to know if there is a cost benefit of leasing to buy. Mark answered yes, the leasing option would be a municipal lease and qualify for lower interest rates. Ron Skotz commented that a lease program is ultimately more expensive, but without a capital fund or access to capital grants it was likely the only feasible approach to replace the fleet. The RTA had been quoted a number of different interest rates and was currently looking at a 10-year lease. Lease payments would not begin until delivery.

## **Open Discussion**

Questions were raised about riders understanding transfers and rate differences between two legacy systems including transfer fees, **Slide 17**. Mark commented that it is a great challenge and the RTA would like to move towards a single fare system. Ron Dillon inquired how much of the fare box revenue is part of the budget? Mark answered, 13% and in regards to other systems in the country, 20% is considered high. The RTA does not have electronic fare boxes on the buses.

Dick Ladd asked if our source of funding was state, federal or county? Mark replied that all of those sources contribute. After state, federal and passenger fares are considered, the Partners contribute the balance with Howard County contributing approximately 70%. RTA also sells advertising on the buses which equates to about \$125,000 in revenue a year. Dick Ladd asked, does Howard County receive a grant from the state? Kathleen replied, yes. John Spencer commented that all the problems seem to be due to the inadequacy of the funding stream for what is needed. Mark explained that RTA is a Locally Operated Transit System (LOTS) which is treated as a separate program division of the MTA. He added that when the RTA was formed there was the expectation of capital funds to replace the fleet, which did not happen. John Spencer commented the state has made a decision for a large share of transit funds to go to the Baltimore Metro Region.

Bruce Hojnacki, MTA, stated that under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) federal stimulus funding was available at 100% for capital improvements. ARRA funds are no longer available and the State cannot provide replacement funds. Operating grants have been flat the last 15 years and the MTA can only fund a few vehicles for different LOTS at alternative times. Mark and Kathleen asked if there was a formula that MTA used to allocate bus replacement funding or was it entirely discretionary? Bruce said he did not know. Kathleen said transit dollars coming to the State have grown about 11% and the money is going somewhere. Ron Skotz said that Maryland is the only state in the country with only one FTA-designated recipient. Other states have multiple designated recipients.

Kathleen said that a Transit Development Plan (TDP) should be completed every 5 years and the current plan will take until the end of 2017 to complete. The current plan will focus on Howard and Anne Arundel Counties but will include, the entire RTA service area. This plan will be used as a means to assess and plan the RTA's future needs.

The question was raised as to what dollar amount would be needed to replace the bus fleet? Mark stated about \$12 million to replace all 42 units in the fleet. Brad Mims commented that would be 3-4 million a year for 4 years.

Commission members agreed to get together again and discuss the MOU, look at the bylaws and the 2018 budget. Kathleen stated that until the MOU is signed there is no formal voting process, however all felt that it was important to meet regularly to get the Commission off the ground. It appeared that the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday at 4 pm could be a good regular meeting time but Commissioners should let Kathleen know their preferences.

### **Action Item**

Kathleen or Clive Graham will reach out to the consortium to determine the next meeting date.

**Adjournment: 5:35 pm**