

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
September 23, 2021

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on September 23, 2021 at 12:00 pm in the Mass Transit Training Facility. The following were present:

Attendees:

James Buckner	Marc Adelman, Transportation Services Director
Anna Kautzman	Eric Wright, Div. Director of Transportation Services
Judy Keesee	Steven Hennessee, State Project Mgr., participated
John Moody	in the meeting via Zoom
Ralph Price	
Earl Reynolds, Deputy City Manager	

The Transportation Committee meeting, held on September 23, 2021 was called to order at 12:04 pm by Vice-Chairperson, John Moody.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Approval of Minutes

Ralph Price moved that the minutes of the April 29, 2021 Transportation Committee meeting be approved as presented. Judy Keesee seconded the motion, all members were in favor and the motion passed.

Introduction of Eric Wright, Mass Transit's New Division Director

Eric Wright was welcomed as the new Division Director of Transportation. Eric Wright informed the Committee that he comes to Danville from Atlanta where he worked with the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) since 1999. He also commented that he worked in multiple positions moving through the ranks and is also known as an inspirational leader. He said he is glad to be in Danville and to be a part of what Danville is moving towards.

Election of Officers

Due to the resignation of Chairperson Alexis Ehrhardt, an election of officers was held. Judy Keesee nominated John Moody to serve as chairperson. Judy Keesee nominated Anna Kautzman to serve as vice-chairperson. All members were in favor and the nominations passed.

Review of Monthly Ridership Reports

Marc Adelman reviewed the monthly ridership reports for FY2021 with the Committee. Fixed route ridership decreased 26% for FY2021 compared to the previous fiscal year. However, Reserve A Ride ridership increased by 41% during FY2021 compared to last year. Handivan ridership is down by 11% and senior ridership decreased by 1% compared to last fiscal year. There was a significant uptick in ridership activity for all modes of service for the last quarter of the fiscal year except for the Handivan operation.

Review of Financial Status Report

Marc Adelman reviewed the financial status report for FY2021 with the Committee. He indicated that the passenger revenue level is under budget by 14.6% (\$292,158 actual versus \$342,000 FY21 budgeted). Passenger revenue is 4.3% less than what was realized during FY2020. Token sales increased by 3% (\$86,412 compared to \$83,582 for FY20). Salary and wage expense is 10% under budget primarily due to the job vacancies related to the Division Director's position and full-time driving positions. Fuel charges are 19% under budget (\$180,622 actual compared to \$223,000 FY21 budgeted). Total operating expenses for the period are under budget by 8.5% or \$266,438. The availability of federal operating aid through the Cares Act generated an additional \$1,289,915 in operating assistance during FY2021. A surplus in Cares Act funds of \$191,000 can be carried forward for use during this fiscal year.

Since April 2021 a significant turnover with driver employment occurred. As a result, Marc Adelman said he received permission from Human Resources and the City Manager's office to offer hazard pay to drivers, which began during the first week of September 2021. Hazard pay is financed through the surplus of the Cares Act Funds, which is sufficient to finance additional wages at 100% through June 30, 2022. Hazard pay provides an additional \$3 per hour and is earned only when drivers are operating a bus. A reduction in overtime was identified over the past few weeks since the hazard pay was implemented.

Marc Adelman identified that no part-time drivers were hired since May 2021 and five (5) full-time drivers were hired during this timeframe. However, ten (10) employment separations occurred that involved one part-time driver and nine (9) full-time drivers, which is a net decrease of one part-time driver and five (5) full-time drivers through September 2021. Presently, twenty-one (21) of the thirty (30) full-time drivers' positions are filled. Marc Adelman indicated that he spoke to Human Resources about the current employment situation and was informed they recently interviewed ten applicants for driving positions. Discussion continued.

The Transportation Advisory Committee was shown an image of a bus wrap to promote the new hazard pay that that will cover the driver's side and curbside of the bus. This wrap includes pictures of several of the transit drivers and is currently being produced and will be installed on the bus in October. Human Resources is also coordinating the production of a bus wrap to promote employment opportunities for the entire city.

Bus Operator Mentor Program

Marc Adelman said that Eric Wright is working to implement a new Bus Operator Mentor Program that he plans to roll out on October 1, 2021. Eric Wright updated the Committee on the new plan. He thanked Marc Adelman for the insight to see what can be done in transit to ensure that we create a sustainable model. Eric Wright said this program started in 2018 when MARTA went across the country to visit other transit agencies to review best practices.

Eric Wright explained that a mentor is someone who guides a less experienced person by building trust and modeling positive behaviors. A mentee is a willing student, who is open to absorb the mentor's knowledge and have the ambition and desire to know what to do with this knowledge. Eric Wright also said that MARTA saw a positive impact from the program after it was implemented by retaining employees and saving money. Discussion continued.

This type of program helps build the following:

- It builds a strong cohesive workplace
- Promotes skill development
- Eases the new hire induction and inclusion process
- Builds/defines the culture of the organization
- Ensures accountability and teamwork
- Yields positive retention results

FY2022 Transit Development Plan Update – Planning Activity Examples

Marc Adelman informed the Committee that every six years Virginia transit systems are required to complete a Transit Development Plan Update and indicated a new study is expected to begin soon. He mentioned that the consultants should be on board within the next 60 days to begin work on the comprehensive study that addresses service and capital development issues. He asked the Committee to inform him if they would like the consultants to address certain issues. He remarked that there are some major economic development projects underway and pending that could impact the transit system significantly over the next few years. He discussed some planning activities and capital projects that could be studied as identified below.

- Regional bus service development to Berry Hill Mega Park
- Possible service development to support Caesars Casino
- Local match requirement to support operations and capital budgets
- Possible fare increases to contain the local match in the future
- Possible expansion of bus fleet
- Install bike racks on small buses to improve connectivity to parks and bike trails
- Transfer Center building renovations – private bathroom facilities for staff

FY2022 Transit Development Plan Update – Planning Activity Examples (Continued)

Marc Adelman said he feels that one of the main issues the consultants will examine is Danville Transit's link with offering bus service to the casino. Marc Adelman identified a possible route path from the casino to several hotels located on Riverside Drive. In addition, he explained that bus drivers are challenged with accessing and departing from the Marriott Courtyard due to the parking lot footprint. He also stated that the time constraints associated with serving hotels located near the airport could make the service to the casino less convenient than desired. He mentioned that the Transportation Advisory Committee may also determine that the best way to approach serving the casino is through the existing Reserve A Ride operation. Discussion continued.

James Buckner said that he thinks we really need to look hard at this service arrangement because there will be 500 hotel rooms that will not need transportation. He said this is great information, but he thinks we should keep this plan in our pocket and implement it, if there becomes a need for it. Anna Kautzman said she could see the potential need for the regional bus service for locals that want to come and enjoy the amenities of the casino without driving. John Moody asked about whether the casino has communicated their interest for needed support. He also said that businesses such as the Marriott Courtyard will need to step up and run their own shuttle service. Discussion continued.

Marc Adelman asked Steven Hennessee about including the possible merger of Danville Transit with Danville Public Schools Transportation as a study item for the Transit Development Plan Update. Mr. Hennessee said it could be included for the KFH Group to investigate if we would like to do so. He said that there would have to be a very strong cost allocation plan developed to identify what it would cost the schools and what it would cost transit taking everything into account including facilities, hours of use and everything applied across the board. He also mentioned that the Federal Transit Administration may have to approve a merger as well. Judy Keesee said that she thinks it could be investigated as part of the update.

2022 Black History Bus Wrap

Marc Adelman asked for the Committee's input regarding completing a new Black History bus wrap in February. He said that funds are available if the Committee would like to complete a new wrap. If there is interest, we would need to start working on the list of persons to be included immediately. Currently, there is one bus in operation that has the last Black History wrap on it that will be in service for the next two to three years. Judy Keesee mentioned the possibility of developing a community bus wrap in the future. Anna Kautzman made a motion to move forward to install a new Black History bus wrap in 2022. A second to the motion was not received. Motion was lost.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:17 pm.