

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
August 29, 2024

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on August 29, 2024, at 12:00 pm in the Mass Transit training room. The following were present:

Members:

Anna Kautzman, Chairperson
Tyrell Payne
Earl Reynolds
Rhonda Spraggins

Staff and Other Participants:

Marc Adelman, Transportation Services Director
Lisa Bivens, Senior Administrative Asst.

Guest:

***Elisabeth (Lib) Rood, AICP Senior
Transportation Planner, KFH Group***

The Transportation Advisory Committee meeting was called to order at 12:17 pm by Chairperson, Anna Kautzman.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Approval of Minutes

Earl Reynolds moved that the minutes of the May 7, 2024, Transportation Advisory Committee meeting be accepted as presented and Tyrell Payne seconded the motion. All members in attendance were in favor and the motion passed.

Marc Adelman welcomed Lib Rood, Senior Transportation Planner with the KFH Group to the meeting.

Financial, Ridership and Employee Status update

Marc Adelman updated the Transportation Advisory Committee concerning financial data, ridership, and the transit system's employment status for fiscal year-end 2024. He shared that since the last meeting in May the employment situation has remained stable; the same number of full-time drivers are employed. He indicated that mass transit lost one part-time driver during the period. During the period July 2023 through January 2024 the transit system employed between 21 and 23 full time drivers and currently 27 full-time drivers are employed. A total of 30 full time driver positions can be filled.

Marc Adelman indicated that total operating costs for Fiscal year 2024 were under budget by \$413,374 (10.1%). Also, salary and wage expenses were under budget by 13.4% for the year, primarily due to job vacancies related to driver positions. However, overtime expenses were significantly over budget by 45.5% for the year.

Financial, Ridership and Employee Status update (Continued)

Fuel costs were under budget by 20.0% for FY24 year due to lower fuel prices that were available through the Public Works fuel contract arrangement. Workers Compensation charges were under budget for the year by 83% since few claims were processed during FY24. General Liability Insurance expenses were also under budget by 18% and vehicle maintenance charges were under budget by 15%.

Passenger revenue realized for the fiscal year exceeded the budget figure by 3.7% or \$12,168. Token sales increased by \$4,000 for the year. In addition, realized bus advertising revenue exceeded the budget target amount by \$44,867. A total of \$20,000 was budgeted for bus advertising for the entire fiscal year.

As a result of greater than anticipated revenue figures and actual operating costs that were under budget, the operating deficit for FY24 is less than forecasted. Consequently, the transit system is eligible to receive less federal operating aid than budgeted in the amount of \$274,635 for the year. However, state operating aid received for FY24 was \$150,704 more than budgeted at \$950,704. The local match requirement for FY24 is under budget by \$416,660.

Marc Adelman updated the Transportation Advisory Committee concerning ridership trends. He mentioned that the passenger data reflects that the pandemic is still affecting fixed route ridership. Total passenger revenue increased during the fiscal year primarily due to increased passenger demand associated with the Reserve A Ride service.

Comparison of FY2024 and FY2023 Ridership Data

FISCAL YEAR	FIXED ROUTE TRIPS	SENIOR TRIPS	RESERVE A RIDE TRIPS	HANDIVAN TRIPS
July-June 2024	201,707	14,718	45,847	5448
July-June 2023	198,894	12,668	36,529	4812
DIFFERENCE	1.0%	16%	25.5%	13.2%
Ridership Data Prior to the Pandemic				
July – June 2019	283,145	18,678	30,714	6077

Update on FY24 and FY25 Capital Program of Projects

Marc Adelman updated the Committee on the FY2024 capital projects as identified below.

- The new bus shelter project at Hardees on Riverside Drive was completed this spring. However, the bus shelter was destroyed due to an automobile accident in June. The replacement shelter is currently on order.

Update on FY24 and FY25 Capital Program of Projects (Continued)

- Danville Transit anticipated that six new 14-passenger buses would be delivered by the end of July. However, five of the six buses were detected to be damaged prior to delivery.
- Only two buses have been delivered to date and only one of the six, 14-passenger buses have been placed in service.
- A delivery date still has not been identified for the new 28-passenger bus.

FY2025 Capital Budget Items

Marc Adelman reviewed the FY2025 capital program of projects with the Transportation Advisory Committee that were recommended by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

PROJECT NAME	TOTAL	PROJECT STATUS
Three 14, passenger buses	\$600,000	Buses have been ordered.
Replace bus wash system	\$330,000	Proposals due September 11, 2024.
Fill maintenance pit with concrete 90' x 9', 4.5 depth	\$125,000	Proposals due September 4, 2024.
Four (4) bus shelters, concrete pad, installation 5' x 12' shelter	\$278,870	Site prep engineering services to be completed by October 2024. Bus shelters will be advertised for bid during the fall. It is expected that the site prep construction requirements will be completed by April 2025. The lead time to receive bus shelters, once ordered, is six months.

The installation of four (4) bus shelters with concrete pads have been approved by the state for FY2025. The four areas that the shelters will be installed were discussed.

- Westover Drive across from the Post Office
- 1614 Richmond Blvd. at Purdum Woods apartments
- Taylor Drive across from the Health Department
- West Main and Baltimore Avenue across from the casino

Regional Bus Feasibility Study Discussion

Marc Adelman provided background information regarding the Regional Bus Feasibility Study. He indicated that Danville Transit is unable to reliably provide additional bus service that would involve a minimum of 12 to 15 hours per day due to driver limitations. He commented that prior to the pandemic, state and federal funding was provided for Danville Transit to provide regional bus service within Pittsylvania and Halifax Counties at the request of the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center.

Regional Bus Feasibility Study Discussion (Continued)

He commented that all operational funding awarded to the transit system and the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center including Tobacco Commission funding was returned since insufficient drivers could be hired to support the operation. In addition, the three expansion buses that were received to expand the fleet and provide regional bus service were used instead to replace buses that exceeded their useful life. Information concerning the scope of work for the regional bus feasibility study is identified below.

- The consultant firm will evaluate the feasibility for other transit systems and/or private transportation providers to supply drivers using buses that would be purchased by the City of Danville to offer regional bus service. In addition, the consultant firm will need to consider the cost for a private transportation operator to provide service using their buses if there is insufficient interest by other operators to provide drivers that would use Danville Transit's buses.
- The study is funded by the Danville Pittsylvania Regional Industrial Facility Authority (RIFA) to support the development of the Mega Site at Berry Hill.
- Danville's Economic Development Director requested that the study evaluate service options to from Danville to Greensboro, Martinsville and Lynchburg. RIFA representatives also requested the study should evaluate potential stops in Chatham, Gretna and South Boston Virginia.
- To reduce the cost of the study, it was determined that Danville Transit staff would complete on-board passenger survey activities in Danville. In addition, electronic surveys could be completed in other cities and towns that may be served by the regional bus operation.
- Significant factors influencing the feasibility to provide regional bus service include long-distance daily mileage requirements, driver availability issues, communications needs, vehicle maintenance challenges, the number of buses needed to support the operation and the ability to respond in a timely manner to vehicle accidents, passenger issues and vehicle breakdowns. In addition, the ability to obtain federal and state funding to subsidize the cost of the operation could be challenging especially for the proposed North Carolina route.

Lib Rood, Senior Transportation Planner with the KFH Group was present for the meeting to discuss the status of the Regional Bus Service Feasibility Study. She commented that she would like to review the scope of work and the survey questions with members and gain their input. It was identified that the survey will be completed by distributing surveys to passenger on buses as well as through an electronic survey platform.

Regional Bus Feasibility Study Discussion (Continued)

Lib Rood indicated that the first task of the study is to complete stakeholder outreach and discussions with various entities regarding the potential for regional bus service to gain their input. The entities that will be contacted are listed below.

- Danville Pittsylvania Regional Industrial Facility Authority
- Danville Transit's Transportation Advisory Committee
- Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
- North Carolina Department of Transportation
- RADAR, which provides public transportation under contractual agreements with several Southern Virginia localities, including the City of Martinsville
- Greater Lynchburg Transit Company
- Altavista Community Transit System
- Greensboro Transit Authority
- Rockingham County, North Carolina's Ride SKAT program
- Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART – NC)

Lib Rood commented that she thinks that working with Reidsville, North Carolina bus service may be a viable option to increase ridership. She added that work has also already begun on the task of gathering and completing data analysis. Marc Adelman said he spoke to casino officials about service schedule preferences and was informed the casino does not operate like a typical manufacturer that might maintain a few shifts and instead employees are coming and going on an hourly basis.

Lib Rood said that the shift time requirements to establish a service schedule would be more important for the mega park. She added that the survey is a very important piece of the study and she plans to get the link out soon to the stakeholders previously mentioned. Once all the information is received the consultant firm will use the data to develop service alternatives that have the most potential to stimulate ridership activity. The study will also involve examining opportunities to fund the service both in the short term and long term. Earl Reynolds suggested that Corrie Bobe, Danville's Economic Development Director and Linda Green, Executive Director of Economic Development at Southern Virginia Regional Alliance be added to the stakeholder list. Marc Adelman said that the final presentation will be presented to the Regional Industrial Facility Authority (RIFA) and to the Transportation Advisory Committee.

Potential survey questions were reviewed with the Committee. Members discussed fare options and possibly establishing a fare structure dependent on the trip length. Lib Rood said she needs to check on fares offered by regional transportation providers before a final decision is made on the minimum fare arrangement. It was also discussed to consider establishing a monthly pass or discount pass arrangement. Tyrell Payne commented that it is important to keep in mind the importance of offering a senior discount when developing the fee structure. Marc Adelman mentioned the need to support a credit/debit card fare arrangement if regional bus service is provided. Discussion continued.

Regional Bus Feasibility Study Discussion (Continued)

Lib Rood said she will summarize input received during the discussion from today's meeting and continue with the task work as discussed. She will also send an updated draft survey to Marc Adelman for review to incorporate the Committee's suggestions. The goal is to begin survey activity in October 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 pm.