

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
May 16, 2023

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on May 16, 2023 at 12:00 pm in the Mass Transit Training Facility. The following were present:

Members:

James Buckner
Chris Franks
Anna Kautzman, Vice-Chairperson
Tyrell Payne
Ralph Price, Chairperson
Earl Reynolds

Staff and Other Participants:

Steven Hennessee, State Project Mgr. via Zoom
Kyle Tressel, State Project Mgr. via Zoom
Marc Adelman, Transportation Services Director
Lisa Bivens, Senior Administrative Asst.

The Transportation Committee meeting, held on May 16, 2023, was called to order at 12:04 pm by Chairman Ralph Price. Mr. Price welcomed guests, Steven Hennessee, and Kyle Tressel from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation via Zoom.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Approval of Minutes

James Buckner made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2022, Transportation Committee meeting as presented. Chris Franks seconded the motion; all members were in favor and the motion passed.

Financial status and ridership report update

Marc Adelman updated the Transportation Advisory Committee concerning financial data related to mass transit services for the period July 1, 2022, through April 2023. He indicated that total operating costs are under budget by \$405,992 for the period. Salary and wage expense was under budget by 16.4% for the period, primarily due to job vacancies related to driver positions.

Fuel charges are still over budget by 12.8% for the period, however, the current fuel cost to provide service is less than the period July through October 2022 due to contract pricing changes. In October, the price per gallon decreased from \$3.30 to \$1.96 per gallon. Workers Compensation charges are over budget by \$18,681 year-to-date due to several employee claims. Vehicle maintenance is under budget by \$82,121 for the period.

Financial status and ridership report update (Continued)

Passenger revenue realized from July 1, 2022, through April 2023, exceeds the budget target by 9.3%. Previously, mass transit received only \$4800 annually in bus advertising revenue through a contract with a different company, however due to the sales efforts of the current advertising company realized revenue has already exceeded \$21,000 through April 2023.

Since the current operating deficit is under budget, the transit system is eligible to receive less federal operating aid than budgeted thru April 2023 (\$217,879). However, the local match requirement is currently under budget by \$217,922 through April 2023.

Marc Adelman reviewed ridership data highlights for the period July 2022 through April 2023 with the Transportation Advisory Committee. Related information is identified below.

- Fixed route ridership increased 4% including transfer activity (22% increase in full fare token trips).
- Reserve a ride ridership increased 1% year to date.
- Handivan ridership decreased 12% year to date.
- Senior ridership increased 7.3% compared to last fiscal year (meal sites now open).
- Total service hours for reservation-based operations decreased by 19% due to driver availability issues and improved service efficiency levels due to the new automated scheduling software.
- Revenue per hour increased for the Reserve A Ride service due to the new automated scheduling software and workforce training trips completed for the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (24.7%).

Marc Adelman updated the Committee on the employment status for bus drivers as identified below.

- Nineteen (19) full-time drivers are currently active compared to twenty-one (21) full-time drivers in December 2022.
- There are currently no full-time drivers unavailable to work due to medical leave.
- A total of twenty-nine (29) full-time and part-time drivers are currently employed compared to thirty-three (33) in December 2022.
- Two (2) new full-time non-CDL drivers should begin employment soon.
- Eight (8) drivers currently employed have been for less than a year.

Of significance Marc Adelman identified that since July 1, 2022, the Danville Transit System lost fourteen (14) full-time drivers. To clarify, a total of four drivers were promoted to different positions and ten employee separations occurred. On May 11, 2023, dispatchers and supervisors indicated that approximately 25% of all reservations submitted are rejected due to driver availability. Discussion continued.

Strategies to increase drivers' wages and improve flexibility

About fifty percent of the transit system's drivers currently do not have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and the service recently lost two fixed-route drivers to other jobs. Marc Adelman identified different strategies that were implemented to improve driver flexibility with bus assignments to ensure service can be provided reliably. This information is identified below.

- The transit system's Operating Policy and Procedures were recently revised to require part-time drivers to complete CDL training activities. Previously only full-time drivers were required to complete the training.
- Funding was obtained through the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to purchase CDL training materials.
- Bus drivers who do not maintain a CDL license are also being trained to operate a fixed-route bus run using a 14-passenger bus versus a 28-passenger bus in the event a driver is not available to operate a 28-passenger bus used in fixed-route service.

Marc Adelman also updated the Committee concerning in-house CDL training activities. He said that drivers that complete CDL training and obtain a CDL license receive a ten percent increase, however, he mentioned there is little interest on the part of non-CDL drivers to complete the training. Discussion continued.

Service Contract Update

The driver availability situation is now overlapping with the transit system's ability to provide contracted service for Averett University and the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research. Marc Adelman said he met with both groups recently to make them aware that mass transit may not be able to provide service in the future relative to driver availability issues. However, he mentioned that both operations could be provided using a minivan due to passenger to load requirements but both schools indicated they do not have the resources to provide their own service. Earl Reynolds commented that we are not the only locality having these issues and stated that communities are having to come up with other avenues to address needs. James Buckner asked about the possibility of providing a sign-on bonus for new drivers. Discussion continued.

FY23 Capital Project update

Marc Adelman updated the Committee on the FY2023 capital projects underway as identified below.

- **Four (4) passenger benches installed this fiscal year** – New benches were installed at the following locations, North Main and Worsham, Chatham and Bonner near Cardinal Village, Big Lots on Executive Drive and at Betts and Epps Streets. Additional passenger counts were completed for bus stop locations as requested by passengers.

FY23 Capital Project update (Continued)

- **New bus delivery** – One 14-passenger and one 28-passenger bus was ordered. The 28-passenger bus is expected this summer and the 14-passenger bus is expected to arrive by late fall of 2023.
- **New bus stop signs** – Transportation services staff replaced all bus stop signs with new signs that include text message servicing capability and a QR code that links to the transit system’s automated vehicle locator system.
- **Transfer Center renovations** – The construction of a new bathroom for employee use was completed in April 2023.
- **New Automated Scheduling Software System** – Danville Transit began use of the new software system in January 2023. The web portal was promoted to 2000 customers for use in March. Customers were also informed via a mailing about the mobile app that was made available for use in April.

FY2024 Capital Budget Items

Marc Adelman updated the Committee on the approved FY24 capital budget. All the projects recommended by the Committee to be included as part of the FY24 capital grant application were approved by the state for funding. A list of the capital projects approved for funding is identified on the following page.

FY2024 CAPITAL BUDGET ITEMS		
Recommendations were approved for funding by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation		
FY24 CAPITAL PROJECTS	TOTAL COST	ESTIMATED LOCAL COST
REPLACE SIX (6), 14-PASSENGER BUSES	\$1,044,786	\$41,791 @ 4%
PURCHASE ONE (1) 28-PASSENGER BUS TO REPLACE TROLLEY BUS WHEN ITS USED IN FIXED ROUTE SERVICE	\$235,000	\$9,400 @ 4%
PURCHASE AND INSTALL ONE BUS SHELTER AND TRASH CAN AT HARDEES ON RIVERSIDE DRIVE	\$60,000	\$2,400 @ 4%
PURCHASE SECOND MOBILE COLUMN LIFT	\$46,000	\$1,840 @ 4%
PURCHASE MAJOR COMPONENTS (I.E. ENGINES/TRANSMISSIONS FOR THREE EXISTING, 28 PASSENGER BUSES AND THREE EXISTING 14 PASSENGER BUSES IN THE FLEET	\$121,116	\$4,845 @ 4%
CONCRETE INSTALLATION AT TRANSFER CENTER TO REPLACE BRICK CHIPS	\$67,000	\$2,680 @ 4%
TOTAL COST FOR ALL PROJECTS	\$1,573,902	\$62,956
MID-YEAR GRANT TO INSTALL A NEW BUS WASH SYSTEM WITH ACCESS CONTROL	\$277,788	\$11,112

Marc Adelman stated that the transit system has not only been challenged with finding drivers, but also with recruiting bus custodians. Different approaches have been tried over the years to hire staff to clean buses and most recently the transit system has used a temporary services company to hire bus custodians. However, during the last six months a total of three different custodians worked for mass transit. As a result, Marc Adelman said he would like to submit a mid-year grant request to purchase and install a bus wash system. He added that a new bus wash system would help to reduce the reliance on airport staff to clean buses when bus custodians are not available. The proposed system would be a polyethylene three-brush bus wash system which includes an overhead structure that rolls over stationary vehicles, providing cleaning through strategically placed sensors, pressure washing sprayers and rotary brushes. Marc Adelman also said this system could be installed in the existing bus wash bay, which is equipped with adequate utility connections. A video was provided for the Committee to see the system. ***After discussion, a motion was made Ralph Price and seconded by James Buckner to approve the submittal of a mid-year grant application to purchase and install a bus wash system. All members in attendance were in favor and the motion passed.***

The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 pm.