

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
May 7, 2024

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on May 7, 2024, at 12:00 pm in the Mass Transit training room. The following were present:

Members:

James Buckner
Chris Franks, Vice-Chairperson
Debra Hairston
Anna Kautzman, Chairperson
Rhonda Spraggins

Staff and Other Participants:

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

Via Zoom

Kyle Trissel, Transit Project Manager, VDRPT
Dan Sonenklar, Statewide Transit Planning
Manager, VDRPT

The Transportation Advisory Committee meeting, held on May 7, 2024, was called to order at 12:04 pm by Chairperson, Anna Kautzman.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Approval of Minutes

James Buckner moved that the minutes of the December 14, 2023, Transportation Advisory Committee meeting be accepted as presented and Debra Hairston seconded the motion. All members in attendance were in favor and the motion passed.

Marc Adelman welcomed Kyle Trissel, Transit Project Manager and Dan Sonenklar, Statewide Transit Planning Manager, with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to the meeting via Zoom.

Financial, Ridership and Employee Status update

Marc Adelman updated the Transportation Advisory Committee concerning financial data, ridership, and the transit system's employment status. He shared that since the last meeting in December 2023, the number of full-time drivers has increased. The transit system currently employs twenty-seven full-time drivers, which is an increase of five drivers since December. Over the last year, several improvements have been implemented to improve the work environment for bus operators and to help the transit system provide more reliable service. The following activities were implemented this year.

- Three different standby driving positions were created to cover the 21-hour operation. The standby driver either fills in for another bus operator who is unable to report to work, assists other drivers to ensure service is provided on schedule or completes dispatching duties.

Financial, Ridership and Employee Status update (*Continued*)

- An off-duty police officer is stationed at the Transfer Center to assist with passenger issues. The number of hours of assistance provided is six hours per day.
- A new mini-split heating air conditioning system was installed to support improved conditions inside the drivers break room and the bathroom located at the Transfer Center.
- The drivers side windows for all buses were tinted.
- The senior administrative assistant was assigned new duties to help bus operators prepare to complete the DMV's Learners Permit test to obtain a CDL that will increase their wage rate by 10%.
- A power wheelchair was purchased this year to assist bus operators who transport passengers that weigh up to 600 pounds and who maintain an unpaved driveway.
- Drivers are provided their favorite snack and a pen or pencil that identifies "Happy Birthday" on their birthday by one of the supervisors.
- A cookout will be on June 6th for all mass transit staff. Marc Adelman invited the Transportation Committee members to attend the cookout.

Marc Adelman indicated that total operating costs for the first nine months of the fiscal year are under budget by \$340,682 (11.1%). Also, salary and wage expenses are under budget by 14.1% for the period, primarily due to job vacancies related to driver positions. However, overtime expense is significantly over budget by \$26,890 (40%) year-to-date. The main reason for this situation is because two full-time drivers are allowed to work overtime to clean the buses versus relying on an outside temporary services company to clean the buses.

Fuel charges are under budget by 20.1% year-to-date due to lower fuel prices that were available through the Public Works fuel contract arrangement. Workers Compensation charges are under budget for the period by 85% due to claims submitted. The General Liability Insurance line item is at budget related to the insurance premium. However, charges related to actual claims will not be posted until the end of the fiscal year. Vehicle maintenance charges are also under budget by \$37,022 year-to-date.

Passenger revenue realized for the first nine months of the fiscal year exceeded the budget figure by 4.4% or \$10,814. In addition, realized bus advertising revenue has significantly exceeded the budget amount by \$35,785. Only \$20,000 was budgeted for bus advertising for the entire fiscal year and \$50,785 was already realized through March 2024.

As a result of greater than anticipated revenue figures and actual operating costs that are under budget, the operating deficit is less than budgeted. Consequently, the transit system is eligible to receive less federal operating aid than budgeted in the amount of \$225,365 for the period. However, state operating aid received for FY24 is greater than budgeted by \$113,028 through March 2024. Likewise, the local match requirement is currently under budget by \$342,736.

Financial, Ridership and Employee Status update (*Continued*)

Marc Adelman provided background information regarding the state operating aid funding levels from FY2020 to FY2024, to help explain circumstances related to the pending reduction in state operating aid. During FY2024 Danville received \$950,704 in state operating aid. Next fiscal year Danville will receive \$786,477, which is a 17% reduction (\$164,227) in state operating aid. Discussion continued.

The decrease in state operating aid is related to available state funding and the state's performance formula that is based on different variables including ridership, revenue miles and revenue hours. One of the main issues influencing performance data for Danville Transit is the increased cost per hour to provide service. Danville's cost to provide service has increased approximately \$1,000,000 since FY2020. This is primarily due to the salary and wage increases by the City of Danville and the administrative cost allocation. Danville's state operating assistance funding level is also impacted by reduced ridership levels. Marc Adelman provided ridership comparisons by service mode and clarified that fixed route ridership has decreased significantly since the pandemic.

Comparison of FY2024 and FY2023 Year-to-Date Ridership Data

	FIXED ROUTE TRIPS	SENIOR TRIPS	RESERVE A RIDE TRIPS	HANDIVAN TRIPS
July-March 2024	150,245	10,973	27,616	3919
July-March 2023	150,766	9,280	22,344	3694
DIFFERENCE	-0.3%	15.4%	19.1%	5.7%

Comparison of FY2024 and FY2019 YTD Ridership Data (**Pre and Post Pandemic**)

	FIXED ROUTE TRIPS	SENIOR TRIPS	RESERVE A RIDE TRIPS	HANDIVAN TRIPS
July-March 2024	150,245	10,973	27,616	3919
July-March 2019	211,875	13,895	23,952	4491
DIFFERENCE	-41%	-26%	13%	-14.5%

Fixed-route ridership has not rebounded since the pandemic and this situation impacts the state funding allocation that Danville receives. Dan Sonenklar, the Statewide Transit Planning Manager, for the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) was present for the meeting to help explain DRPT's operating assistance formula. He indicated that over the last three fiscal years available operating assistance revenue exceeded projected levels due to temporary revenue infusions. This resulted in abnormally high allocations to transit agencies during FY22-FY24.

Financial, Ridership and Employee Status update (*Continued*)

Dan Sonenklar indicated that state funding levels are currently on a path to return to normal levels by FY2026. Discussion continued.

Marc Adelman informed the Transportation Advisory Committee that one of the unique features of Danville Transit's operation compared to other transit systems in the state is the fact that over 50% of Danville's service hours provided are reservation based. As a result, the number of trips completed per mile and per hour are typically far less than an agency that provides a greater level of fixed route service and consequently Danville's service model influences the state performance funding allocation. Danville's population density level is unfavorable to support cost effective fixed route service during off-peak hours in the early morning and evening and to remote areas of the city like the industrial parks that is currently provided through the Reserve A Ride service. Discussion continued.

Input was requested by the Committee concerning strategies to increase fixed route ridership. Marc Adelman suggested that the City of Danville could consider providing regional bus service to Greensboro. He said it would be a complicated service to offer considering the need to seek federal and state funds from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to travel to North Carolina. This service arrangement has been discussed with the state and there is currently no precedent for receiving funding for a state demonstration grant that would involve providing service to North Carolina. Discussion continued.

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

- Concrete work is completed at the transfer center.
- The new bus shelter project at Hardees on Riverside Drive is complete.
- The new mobile column lift was delivered to assist with vehicle maintenance repair work.
- A bus that was delivered in November 2023 now includes a cloud-based camera.
- Danville Transit anticipates receiving six (6) new 14-passenger buses by the end of July.
 - A delivery date has not been identified for the new 28-passenger bus.

FY2025 Capital Program of Projects and Operating Budget

Marc Adelman reviewed the FY2025 capital program of projects recommended by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation with the Transportation Advisory Committee. The listing of individual capital projects is identified on the following page.

FY2025 Capital Program of Projects and Operating Budget (Continued)

FY25 CAPITAL BUDGET ITEMS				
PROJECT	FEDERAL 80%	STATE	LOCAL 4%	TOTAL
Three 14, passenger buses	\$480,000	\$96,000	\$24,000	\$600,000
Replace bus wash system	\$264,000	\$52,800	\$13,200	\$330,000
Convert maintenance pit to bus parking area, 90' x 9', 4.5 depth	\$100,000	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$125,000
Four (4) bus shelters, concrete pad, installation 5' x 12' shelter	Not Applicable	\$267,715	\$11,155	\$278,870
TOTAL	\$844,000	\$436,515	\$53,355	\$1,333,870

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

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm.