



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION BOARD

February 24, 2015

7:00 p.m.

The George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043

AGENDA

1. Approval of the September 11, 2014 Minutes Sharonlee Vogel
2. Announcements John Powell
3. Public CommentsSharonlee Vogel
4. Update Report of the Bridge Columbia Project..... John Powell
5. Discussion- Pending County Council Bill 3-2015 Sharonlee Vogel
6. Paratransit Presentation- Origin to Destination Phil Pumphrey
7. Board Discussion Sharonlee Vogel
8. New BusinessSharonlee Vogel
9. Adjournment Sharonlee Vogel

Future Projected PTB Meetings Dates

- March 24, 2015
- April 28, 2015
- May 26, 2015
- June 23, 2015
- July 28, 2015

For confirmation, please call the Office of Transportation at 410-313-3130.



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION BOARD MINUTES

February 24, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Sharonlee Vogel, Chair
Ron Hartman, Vice-Chair
Astamay Curtis
Jason Quan
Larry Schoen

Staff Present: John Powell, Executive Secretary
John Ainsley, Recording Secretary

Not attending: Hector Garcia

Sharonlee Vogel opened the Public Transportation Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

1. Approval of the September 11, 2014, Minutes

The Minutes of the September 11, 2014, meeting was passed by a vote of 5-0.

2. Announcements

- ◆ Mr. Powell introduced Mr. John Andrews of the New Flyer Bus Company that is currently visiting the Mid-Atlantic region. New Flyer is one of the major bus manufactures in the United States. Mr. Powell is hopeful that New Flyer buses may become part of the future RTA fleet in FY17. New Flyer is a high quality bus that offers several low floor models with 12 year life spans which have been proven at Altoona. Mr. Andrews advised the current clean diesels buses are more cost effective versus hybrid buses because the hybrid package may cost \$200,000 more per bus. New Flyer currently produces 35-, 45- and 60-foot buses and currently has several clients in the Baltimore-Washington area. Mr. Andrews believes that Governor Hogan here in Maryland may be directing the MTA to convert over to clean diesel. This will allow the state to purchase more buses with the same funding. There is current interest in Compressed Natural Gas buses due to the currently low fuel costs. The Board asked why CNG buses were not more popular. Mr. Andrews stated the cost of the initial purchase of the CNG infrastructure was expensive at startup. He also stated the fuel tanks in the buses were very heavy and were a concern to prospective buyers. WMATA are currently using some CNG buses. There is no indication WMATA plans to expand the use of CNG at this time. The Board thanked Mr. Andrews for this information and his comments.
- ◆ Mr. Powell advised the RTA preventive maintenance plan has improved and has had an excess of buses available for morning turnout. Due to the cold weather, there has been an expected issue of some buses not starting in the morning but relatively little service has been missed. The service perspective indicates that the RTA has been doing well in dealing with the extreme cold weather. On a budget standpoint, the RTA has basically been on budget. They are under budget on Revenue by \$70,000 and under budget on expenses by approximately \$84,000 with a balance of \$14,000 below the current projected budget.
- ◆ Mr. Powell made the Board aware that Howard County will be receiving a rebate from the State of Maryland for "taxes paid on fuel" in the amount of \$150,000. This would be reflected in the RTA budget as an additional \$150,000 bringing the total sum under budget to approximately \$164,000. Mr. Powell also noted the proposed budget for FY16 will be less than the budget submitted for FY15 as a result of positive RTA decision to purchase used Gillig buses to replace the old Champion buses. This has shown an immediate reduction in monthly bus maintenance costs.
- ◆ Mr. Powell informed the Board that several Connect-A-Ride routes are currently being reviewed to adjust the route schedules and fix the poor running times. It was noted that CMRT had made several changes to route schedules and services last year prior to the RTA taking over the contract. Mr. Powell has confidence that the changes in the route schedules and running times will be solved by "interlining" some segments of the existing routes together. This will dramatically help the running times and improve the routes with minimal reductions in service without increasing cost. The RTA will be hosting Public Forum Meetings within the next 30 to 40 days to present any proposed changes of service to both the paratransit and fixed bus routes.
- ◆ Mr. Powell informed the Board that the RTA has hired Suzanne Brown as the new Finance Manager. She will oversee the budget and day-to-day financials at the RTA. Ms. Brown's vast experience and background as a CPA will be an asset to the RTA.

3. Public Comments

- ◆ There were no public comments.

4. Bridge Columbia Update

- ◆ Mr. Powell summarized a short update of the Bridge Columbia project. The County Council had passed a bill to study a possible bridge linking Downtown Columbia with the Village of Oakland Mills. The Office of Transportation directed the study to be a feasibility study to determine options for the bridge. The study has been completed and is now in the Office of the County Executive for review. The study provided 12 to 13 various options for the bridge. The first option would be to fix up the current bridge and give it a new look. The second option would include making the current bridge a bicycle /pedestrian bridge with a companion bridge for vehicular traffic. Other various options would include an array of ideas and plans for the project. The OoT did make a short-term recommendation to currently “fix up” the current bridge, but did not recommend which long-term option to choose. It will take several years to determine which option should be used and to secure the funding for a project of this size. Mr. Powell stated that he would forward a copy of the report to the members of the Board and have URS attend the next PTB meeting to present the feasibility report.

5. Paratransit Presentation

- ◆ Mr. Phil Pumphrey of the RTA gave a presentation on Paratransit Origin to Destination Service. Mr. Pumphrey advised the 2005 ADA discretionary (curb-to-curb) regulations now require the services to be “Origin-to-Destination”. This change now requires the drivers to assist the passenger beyond the curb such as going to the door and assisting the passenger to the vehicle. The additional service should not be beyond 150 feet from the vehicle, be safely parked and the vehicle should not be out of the driver sight at any time. The RTA is currently researching how the heating/air conditioning can remain on during extreme weather conditions while the driver leaves the vehicle. While the ADA regulations require that reasonable services cannot be withheld, Mr. Pumphrey added that the changes should not create an undue burden on the service. He advised there is a little flexibility in the regulations. On a positive note, there would be less no shows for scheduled appointments. The negative side would be the number of paratransit trip appointments that can be scheduled and provided during a given period of time. Mr. Pumphrey advised we will learn more about the impact of the changes on the paratransit service as time goes on. The proposed paratransit service changes will be presented at the future Public Forum Meetings which are schedule to take place in next month.

6. Board Discussion

- ◆ Ms. Vogel reviewed the main topics the Board chose for discussion in the upcoming County Council Report. There will be slides needed for the presentation to the County Council.

Ms. Vogel summarized the points selected by the Board by timeframe for the slides.

Short-Term Recommendations

- Create the process which requires the Office of Transportation to sign off on projects
- Finalize the site and design of the Downtown Transportation Center
- Program the Transit Service Standards to drive routing and scheduling decisions on fixed-route; utilize standards to drive improvements, new services
- Revise and enact into law County Design Manual, Roads & Bridges III, to support sustainable transportation (bicycle/pedestrian)
- “Complete Streets”

Medium-Term Recommendations

- Convert to automated next-generation fare collection for transportation
- Implement regional express lanes and dedicated bus lanes
- Institute BRT on Rt. 29, integrated with Montgomery County BRT

- Study the establishment and construction of transportation centers in Gateway, Maple Lawn, Odenton, Clarksville, Savage

Long-Term Recommendations

- Connect Columbia and Howard County to Baltimore via “light rail” and Washington Metrorail
- Extend MARC service into Columbia using CSX line spur into Gateway

Quick & Visible Opportunities Recommendations

- Ensure OoT front-end participation in development/redevelopment projects
- In coordination with *Bike Howard* and *Walk Howard* plans, when paving for repair or expansion, include the addition of bike lanes and sidewalks as well as ADA curb cuts
- When developing/re-developing, look for opportunities to include bike lanes, sidewalks, and ADA curb cuts along with transit stops. This includes bus stop pads and shelters
- Aggressive Marketing Plan

Tag line will be: ***It is the government and community working together to create connectivity.***

The entire Council already has the Report; many have read it several times. The majority of the time at the meeting will be devoted to Q&A from the Council to the PTB.

7. New Business

- ◆ No new business

8. Adjournment

- ◆ Ms. Vogel adjourned the meeting at 8:06 pm. The next Public Transportation Board meeting is scheduled for **March 24, 2015 at 7:00 pm.**



3/19/15

John Powell
Executive Secretary

Date



3/19/15

John Ainsley
Recording Secretary

Date