



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION

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### TRANSIT AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY GROUP (TPAG) MINUTES

June 15, 2020

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#### **Members Present:**

Marlene Hendler, Chair

Jackie Eng

Marian Vessels

David Ramsay

Nicole Dvorak

**Staff:** Bruce Gartner, Office of Transportation

Chris Eatough, Office of Transportation

Jason Quan, Office of Transportation

Kimberly Woods, Office of Transportation

Molly Nur, Office of Transportation

#### **1. Approval of January 21, 2020 Minutes**

Jackie Eng moved to approve minutes. Marian Vessels seconded that motion.

#### **2. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

#### **3. Introduction of New Staff**

Chris Eatough briefly introduced Molly Nur as the newest member to the Office of Transportation. Molly Nur is filling the Planning Specialist II (which focuses on bike and pedestrian issues) position replacing Albert Engel (who left to go to the private sector). The board members welcomed Molly on board.

#### **4. FY21 Budget Adjustments**

Bruce Gartner discussed two different elements of the budgets. The first being the operating side of the budget which is mostly related to transit. The budget that was submitted to the council included three expansion items (new service items). The expansion of service to the Howard County Public School campus off MD108 which was \$138,000 and was not approved by the council given the budget and revenue limitation. The council did approve if the county was to get a state match for vehicle replacements 98,000 was put in the budget for that. The County is expected to operating deductions on the State side for transit estimated to be around \$1million

possible up to 25% cuts for both FY21 and FY22. On the bright side the County has received 3.7 million in federal funds (CARES ACT) to help with transit operations. Essentially the county will be able to move forward with a modified service in FY21.

Like other neighboring counties HoCo will experience significant reductions to the capital programs. The original budget included a reduction in funding for complete streets as well as the depletion of DPW resurfacing projects for the year but was fortunately restored. It was a tough budget year and the council had to make a lot of tough decisions. Chris informed the group that on the pedestrian and bicycle side the budget K5061 Pedestrian Master Plan budget was cut by \$500K. The connections to schools' pathways and sidewalks K5035 put in a request 480K which was removed from the budget. Fortunately, the ongoing projects should be able to continue it's the new projects that are going to tough to get new funding. There was a million dollars requested for the sidewalk repair budget that was cut and ADA ramps requested \$1million and was eventually approved for \$400k. On the bike side 1.4 million requested for new funding that was cut down to 900k.

David Ramsay suggested writing a letter to the chair of the council regarding the budget cuts to transit, which Marlene agreed would be a good idea.

## **5. School Walk Zone Improvements for 2020-2021**

David Ramsay from Howard County Public System went over School Walk Zone Improvements. There has been about a dozen of changes to various walking areas. The changes stem from either reanalyzes of the areas due to redistricting or capital improvements that were made by the county. Some of the Walk Zone Improvements include:

- A crosswalk will be installed on Old Annapolis by Whitworth near Burleigh Manor Middle and Centennial High School. A pedestrian island also will be added to the middle of the existing roadway. Over 100 students will be reclassified as walkers.
- Bryant Woods Elementary students that live off Green Mountain Circle going to Long Fellow there is now a pedestrian infrastructure via the CA paths that is a reasonable walking path to Long Fellow.
- Northfield Elementary and Dunloggin Middle School- the community off Old Columbia Rd, students will now be walking to school.
- Parts of Stevens Forest that were redistricted, students that immediately live off Oakland Mills Road that previously attended Talbott Springs will now walk to school.

## **6. COVID-19 Transit Service Modifications**

Jason Quan informed the group that prior to this past weekend the RTA was operating on a modified Saturday, Sunday Schedule with a service span between 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. As of Sunday June 14<sup>th</sup>, there has been a partial restoration of services. The service span now extends from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and routes are now operating on their normal schedules. Passengers are currently boarding free of charge. Boarding is still in the rear of the bus, riders are still required to wear a face mask, and practice social distancing. OoT has seen an increase in ridership within the last

couple of weeks and expects that trend to continue. Jason announced that they are currently 3 routes that are not operating 402B, 406 and 414 until full service is restored.

## **7. Overview of RTA Real Time Bus Information Deployment in March**

Jason Quan went over his Opening Up Our Data PowerPoint regarding routes, bus schedules, service alerts and arrivals. General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) has grown to become the de-facto format for public transportation schedule data. GTFS allows trip planning applications such as Google Maps to take these feeds and can display transit directions in the same format they display driving directions. GTFS provides a huge value to people who utilize public transportation. It takes digital schedules and displays them in a trip planning app so that riders can plan trips across networks, and routes. As of May 5<sup>th</sup>, RTA GTFS went live to all the trip planning apps (google maps, transit app, apple maps, etc.), meaning those trip planning apps can display RTA's live data. With GTFS riders are now able to see real time bus arrivals.

OoT wants to move away from Proprietary Apps to more Open Mobility. With Open Mobility riders wouldn't have to download an app every time they are in a different area for transit service. Instead riders would be able use one of the trip planning apps of their preference and still be able to see local transit service and plan their trip all within one application. RTA has partnered with a company called Swiftly. Swiftly specialized in generating and collecting transit data to feed other applications- there is now "Swiftly app" to download. MDOT MTA began using this system two years hand has had a lot of success. RTA ran a pilot with Swiftly that began last fall resulting in a 50% reduction in "Where's my bus" calls to the call center. Jason informed the group that there is now a SMS and IVR function. Every bus stop should have a 5 digit stop code located on the bus sign, texting that code to the designated number or calling passengers are able to get real time bus arrival information.

## **8. E-Scooter Permit Solicitation**

Bruce briefly updated the group on the status of the E-Scooter Permit. The county hasn't issued any permits yet. The council has acted on all the legislations and have gone through the public comment process. OoT heard concerns from the NFB and made improvements regarding accessible information (via website and electronic communications). OoT plans on issuing permits by August 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **9. Complete Streets Update**

Working through the Complete Streets steps primarily with the Complete Streets Implementation team. There are various activities involved with those updates involved the biggest one being the Design Manual. The CSIT has 2 years to complete this update the design manual and is currently six months in. CSIT is also creating a new community engagement plan regarding transportation projects which is expected to be comprehensive in ways to outreach to affected communities. Project Prioritization process should help with prioritize projects that benefit the community as

whole and in the best way. The CSIT is also currently working on updates to the land development regulations improvements to how sidewalks are installed on public property. Previous policy 2/3 approval of adjacent property owners was required to put in a sidewalk on the road of a public right of way. They are developing a side walk policy which are similar the policies put in place by neighboring jurisdictions.

## **10. Adjournment**

This meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m. The next TPAG meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2020.

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Bruce Gartner  
Executive Secretary

Date