

**TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
September 29, 2015**

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on September 29, 2015 at 12:00 pm in the airport's Eastern Conference Room. The following were present:

**Attendees:**

Wade Key, Chairman	Judy Keesee
Alexis Ehrhardt	Ken Larking, Deputy City Manager
Ralph Price	Marc Adelman, Transportation Services Director
John Moody	Lisa Bivens, Administrative Assistant

**Approval of Minutes**

Judy Keesee moved that the minutes of the May 19, 2015 meeting be accepted as presented and Ralph Price seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

**Election of Officers**

A motion was made by John Moody to nominate Alexis Ehrhardt as Chairperson of the Transportation Committee for FY16. Ken Larking seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed. Judy Keesee nominated Ralph Price to serve as Vice-Chairperson. John Moody seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Update on fixed route service schedule changes**

Marc Adelman updated the Committee on the fixed route service schedule changes that went into effect on August 1, 2015. The new service schedule added time for most bus runs after 12:00 pm. To promote the new service schedule large signs were placed in the windows and on the doors at the transfer center. Public information meetings were also advertised and held to discuss the changes. Adelman stated that the service schedule changes have aided in providing more reliable fixed-route service especially at the beginning of the month when ridership is very heavy. He also mentioned that the service schedule changes have assisted with the staff's transition to using tablets which occurred at the end of August by allowing supervisors and dispatchers to focus on training requirements.

**Update on the purchase of propane buses**

A purchase order will be issued later this week to procure a twenty-eight passenger propane bus. Bids are expected within the next few weeks for the second propane bus, which is a sixteen passenger vehicle that will be used for reservation based operations. Both buses should be ordered by the end of October.

### **Update on use of new dispatch and notification software and tablets**

Adelman said the implementation of the software module and tablets has been extremely challenging since the transition could not be completed incrementally. The major changes were highlighted and reviewed with the Committee using a PowerPoint presentation.

Before tablets were utilized by transit staff, when a driver was traveling from one location to another to transport passengers, drivers needed to refer to trip sheets. Trips are now identified on the tablet which eliminates the need for drivers to pull over and flip through multiple sheets of paper to review the service schedule. In addition, drivers previously logged trip data on the hard copy service schedule including mileage, boarding and disembarking times. However, use of the tablets has removed this requirement since the driver only needs to confirm that the information identified for individual trips is correct by touching the tablet. This situation has reduced the time needed to complete trips as well as the administrative requirements to enter performance data from the driver's trip sheet. Currently, transit staff is trying to figure out how to reorganize administrative duties to more effectively use the tablets. Discussion continued.

In addition to the recent use of tablets, an automated phone messaging system has also been implemented to notify passengers the night before of scheduled service. Before this software was available for use, passengers needed to call the transit office the prior day to learn of their scheduled boarding time. This software module has helped to decrease the number of phone calls received and has improved the ability of passengers to contact the transit offices for other needs.

### **Update on new mass transit office building**

Adelman indicated that an architect has been selected to provide bid documentation and a floor plan to construct a new office building for Mass Transit. If funding is approved for the project it would be bid next summer. Adelman also mentioned that he hopes the new floor plan will be available for the Committee to review at the next meeting. The new building is expected to be about 4000 square feet and would include a conference room with a kitchen so that the Committee meetings could be held at the transit facility. In addition, the floor plan will address overcrowding issues with drivers and administrative staff that currently exist due to limited office space.

### **Review of Financial and Monthly Ridership Reports**

Marc Adelman reviewed the monthly ridership and financial status reports with the Committee.

### **Consideration to provide shuttle bus service for Averett University**

Marc Adelman informed the Committee of new transportation funding options that are available to the City. In 2014 Governor McAuliffe signed off on new legislation (HB2) to evaluate funding opportunities for road construction projects that takes into account multimodal service factors. The state's selection process is designed to award more points to construction projects that address traffic congestion, public transportation access and environmental issues. The city recently secured Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) funding to widen Mount Cross road from the mall area to Averett's north campus. However, after the design work was finished it was determined that a \$1,000,000 funding shortfall existed. Therefore, the City's Engineering Office intends to submit a Phase 1 HB2 grant application for additional funding. In addition, the city would also like to submit a Phase 2 funding request to widen Mount Cross from Averett's north campus to the city limits, which is estimated to cost an additional \$10,000,000.

### **Consideration to provide shuttle bus service for Averett University (continued)**

Adelman explained that Danville's application for road construction could be enhanced if transit service was provided in conjunction with the Mt. Cross Road widening project. He mentioned that he received a call from Kent Shelton of the city's engineering office asking if bus service is provided along Mt. Cross Road towards Averett's North campus. Since Danville Transit does not offer bus service along that corridor it was decided to approach Averett University to see if they would like for Danville Transit to assume some of their shuttle service operations, which would improve the grant score for the HB2 application.

The multi-modal HB2 grant is provided at 100% funding, therefore it is anticipated that no local contribution would be provided if a grant was received for the Mt. Cross Road widening project. In addition, it is estimated that the grant will receive a better score if propane buses are used and if there is a link to the transfer center due to accessibility and environmental factors. Discussion continued.

With the Committee's approval today, the Phase I grant for the Mt. Cross Road widening project would involve a request for \$1,500,000 to make up for the funding shortfall to finish construction to Averett's north campus, purchase two, 28 passenger propane buses and install a bus shelter at Averett's north campus. The tentative service agreement discussed so far with Averett would call for bus service to start during the fall of 2017 and Averett would pay the City of Danville \$20 per hour to operate shuttle service for six hours per day for approximately nine months out of the year. This arrangement may also include providing service from their main campus to Averett's Riverview campus. To support, the grant application review process the route would need to link to the transfer center. Phase II of the project would include widening Mount Cross Road to the city limits and also include a park and ride lot to support public transportation access. Discussion continued.

Adelman pointed out that the proposed service arrangement with Averett University would involve two issues for the Committee's consideration. The first issue involves whether the Committee is supportive of making application for this grant if Averett University pays \$20 per hour for service provided. The second issue for consideration pertains to whether students would be required to pay for service if they travel from a location that is not affiliated with Averett University like the Danville Mall and did not receive a transfer. Averett has asked if students could use the service from any location in Danville without a transfer at no charge as well. Adelman mentioned that whatever is offered to Averett University would need to be offered to other organizations if requested under a similar arrangement. Discussion continued. *A motion was made by John Moody for the Committee to approve moving forward with Phase I of the Multi-Modal HB2 grant as discussed. Judy Keese seconded the motion. All were in favor with Alexis Ehrhardt abstaining from the vote. A motion was made by Ken Larking and seconded by John Moody to provide the shuttle service and allow for one transfer at no additional charge for Averett students. All were in favor of the motion with Alexis Ehrhardt abstaining.*

### **Consideration to reduce the Reserve A Ride fare for students**

Adelman said he was recently approached by the Danville Community College (DCC) which involved a request for improved access for students traveling to the Regional Center for Advanced Technology and Training (RCATT) and the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) for classes.

### **Consideration to reduce the Reserve A Ride fare for students (continued)**

Adelman also stated that the community college is providing additional programs at RCATT and IALR for students and college representatives believe the \$4 Reserve A Ride fare may be too expensive for many students to pay. Adelman said that one way to accomplish improved access to RCATT and IALR is to offer students a reduced fare arrangement for the Reserve A Ride service. However, he mentioned there are financial issues to consider regarding a possible fare reduction. Currently, during the last fiscal year a total of 525 student trips were completed using the service. Some students travelled to American National University, IALR and to DCC. Adelman communicated that if the fare is reduced a potential loss of approximately \$1,000 in cash fares could occur.

Adelman also estimated that service hours could increase approximately four hours per day and the cost to provide the service could increase \$14,000 annually but the receipt of federal operating aid could contain the local contribution increase to approximately \$7,000 to \$10,000 annually. Discussion continued.

Adelman proposed that students would be required to verify on a regular basis that they are enrolled in either college or high school. Transit staff would be responsible for the verification process and would provide a convenient way for students to receive a card to obtain the reduced fare. Discussion continued. ***A motion was made by Ken Larking and seconded by Alexis Ehrhardt to approve the recommendation be made to City Council to reduce the Reserve A Ride fare for students to \$2.00. All were in favor of the motion***

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm.