

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
August 18, 2017

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on August 18, 2017 at 12:00 pm in the Mass Transit Conference Room. The following were present:

Attendees:

Alexis Ehrhardt, Chairperson	Betty Adams, Southern Virginia Higher Ed. Ctr.
Ralph Price, Vice-Chairperson	Jim Halasz, Halifax County Administrator
Councilman Larry Campbell	Larry Giordano, Halifax Co. Board of Supervisors
Judy Keesee	David Smitherman, Pittsylvania County Administrator
John Moody	Marc Adelman, Transportation Services Director
Ken Larking, City Manager	Lisa Bivens, Administrative Assistant

Approval of Minutes

Larry Campbell moved that the minutes of the April 19, 2017 meeting be accepted as presented and Ralph Price seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Regional Transportation Initiative

Marc Adelman provided background information regarding a proposed regional transportation initiative. In early 2017, the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center partnered with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to complete a transportation feasibility study. The focus of the study was to gain information regarding transportation needs in a multiple county area. The consultant firm recommended that service development should focus on two transportation corridors including the following; Chatham to Danville and Danville to South Boston. Adelman said Committee input is desired to move forward to consider implementing bus service to those areas and for county representatives to submit a grant application to the Tobacco Commission for local match funding.

Betty Adams from the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center and Jim Halasz, Halifax County Administrator were in attendance and discussed transportation issues with the Committee regarding the proposed regional transportation initiative. Adelman said there are three funding sources that would be pursued to implement service. Halifax and Pittsylvania counties intend to submit a grant request to the Tobacco Commission for local matching funds for operating and capital expenses and the City of Danville could submit federal and state grant applications to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to subsidize operating and capital expenses. The earliest bus service could potentially begin would be the spring 2019 since additional buses are needed to support the service and the vehicles could not be delivered until February 2019.

Regional Transportation Initiative (continued)

Adelman provided additional information related to the regional bus service such as transfer connection options and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) service requirements. He clarified the transit system must provide complementary service for persons with disabilities along intercity routes. As a result, the transit system must provide door-to-door service for persons with disabilities within a ¼ mile corridor of the planned route if requested. Adelman said that at least 15 minutes should be added to each leg of service to accommodate this requirement.

Draft cost estimates were reviewed and discussed for year one and year two of the proposed service based on four round trips per day and capital funding to purchase expansion vehicles in year one. Adelman indicated that for the first year of service a state Demonstration grant would provide eighty percent funding related to the net operating cost however, anticipated cash fares are not guaranteed. During year two of the service, operating expenses could be subsidized using federal operating assistance but it is uncertain whether state formula operating funds would be provided until year 3 of the service. Discussion continued.

Service Plan Recommendations:

- Require passengers to reserve service based on fixed schedule times until demand increases and supports the provision of cost effective service without reservation requirements
- Establish a toll free line for passengers to make reservations
- Provide connecting van service within Pittsylvania and Halifax counties to fixed route bus stop locations

A motion was made by John Moody and seconded by Ralph Price to recommend to City Council that a grant application be submitted to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation for a Demonstration Grant to support the regional transportation initiative. The Committee also recommended that the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center should submit a grant application to the Tobacco Commission for local matching funds. All were in favor of the motion.

Update on Propane Bus Procurement Activities

Adelman mentioned that some of the propane-powered vehicles used in service are experiencing significant vehicle downtime. Consequently, he proposed to modify future vehicle purchases by securing a bi-fuel arrangement that Public Works maintains subject to the Committee's approval. He explained that a primary reason for excessive vehicle downtime is due to the lack of maintenance technicians in this area that can work on propane-powered buses. He believes the proposed arrangement to use gas buses that are equipped with a supplemental propane tank could expand the driving range of propane-powered buses currently used in service. In addition, he stated that a bi-fuel arrangement would provide for more flexibility in the event gas or propane fueling facilities area are not working properly. Public Works currently has eighteen bi-fuel vehicles in their fleet. Adelman said the Virginia

Update on Propane Bus Procurement Activities (continued)

Department of Rail and Public Transportation just gave their approval to allow the City of Danville to procure bi-fuel vehicles.

After discussion, a motion was made by Judy Keesee and seconded by Larry Campbell to procure bi-fuel powered propane buses in the future. All were in favor of the motion.

Review of Financial and Monthly Ridership Reports

Marc Adelman reviewed the monthly ridership and financial status report data for FY2017 with the Committee. Of significance, salary and wages exceeded budget targets due to a 15% wage rate increase that all full time drivers received in August 2016. The increase was implemented due to workforce retention issues. Overtime expense is also over budget due to turnover and a significant increase in service hours that were incurred with the Reserve A Ride service during FY17. Reserve A Ride ridership increased 32% during the fiscal year. Vehicle maintenance is also over budget due to unscheduled repair requirements. Two diesel engines were replaced during the year that cost \$16,000 per vehicle. Token sales increased \$18,418 or 24% in FY17 due to the spike in passenger demand for the Reserve A Ride service. Adelman said that additional federal operating assistance in the amount of \$76,557 may be available to offset the increased operating deficit.

Highlights from the ridership reports shows that fixed route ridership decreased by 7.8% during FY17. It is anticipated that the decrease occurred primarily due to reduced fuel prices, which impacted passenger demand. Handivan ridership increased 9.3% during FY17.

Update on Operating Projects

Adelman provided the following information concerning a variety of operating projects that are currently underway;

- Fixed route bus service to the Danville Centra Medical Facility started August 1st
- The Mainline Trolley service started on August 4th
- Averett University bus service will start on August 23rd
- New route and schedule guides were distributed in July
- The new brochure for the Mainline Trolley service was distributed at the end of July

Update on Capital Projects

Additional information was shared with the Committee concerning planned capital projects including the following;

- Two propane-powered buses were delivered to support the Averett service
- Proposals were received for the propane refueling station
- Five new small buses and two vans will be ordered this month
- A new coin counting machine has been ordered
- A new bus shelter will be installed next week at Averett's north campus
- An invitation to bid has been advertised for a new bus shelter for the Adult Education bus stop. Sidewalk improvements will also be bid to support this project.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 pm.