



MINUTES

RTA Joint Partners Coordination and Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium

October 24, 2017

Clive Graham of Howard County Transportation served as Chairperson of the meeting. Stephanie Dittman, the RTA, Office Manager of Corporation, served as the Secretary and recorded the meeting proceedings.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 1:08pm.

Review/Approval of September 26, 2017 Joint Partners and Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium Meeting Minutes (Clive Graham)

The September 26, 2017 and October 24, 2017 Joint Partners and Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium meeting minutes will be reviewed for approval at the December 5, 2017 meeting.

Memorandum of Understanding, Commission Bylaws (Clive Graham)

MOU pending signature of approval from Prince George's County legal office to seat the Commission and adopt the revised bylaws. Clive Graham will distribute the current draft of the revised bylaws prior to the December 5th meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the delay in the signed revised MOU from Prince George's County. To close the gap in the budget allocated funding anticipated from Prince George's County, changes may be necessary to their service.

Action Item: MOU pending signature of approval from Prince Georg's County, seating of Commission and adopting revised bylaws pending approved MOU.

September 2017 Financial Report (Suzanne Brown)

Suzanne Brown reviewed the financial report with an explanation for September financials. Contributing factors to the September financials include a holiday, collective bargaining, insurance payout for Union non participants and the expenses associated with the October 1st route changes and enhancements. Fare recovery is down 22 percent for the month of September and 19 percent YTD.

To ensure adequate available banking funds for three payrolls and expenses for the month of September Howard County provided a three month advance payment to be settled with non-payment

for the months of April through June 2018. Based on the cost to complete the Partners will know in January if further budget adjustments will be needed.

It was noted that RTA is on an accrual basis but Howard County is on a cash basis. This means that expenses don't get reimbursed until they are expensed.

Action Item: Based on the cost to complete the Partners will know in January if further budget adjustments will be needed.

Statistical Snapshot Report (Mark Pritchard)

Mark provided an explanation on the absence of a Statistical Snapshot Report for September. He noted that ridership continues to decline.

Technological issues have been experienced with migrating from a manual tally system to an automated system. The automated system utilizes a programmed tablet on which the driver selects and records the type and boarding location as a GPS system. The software provided by RouteMatch was originally provided as a paratransit automated system. The fixed route product is not working properly. Since July 117 tickets have been opened with RouteShout 2.0 regarding software issues.

The tablets on the buses communicated accurately to the software for the various fare types and locations. However the two categories for manually recorded and auto electronically recorded ridership are not calculating as a total for the ridership monthly report. A report illustrating the ridership numbers for October is expected to be provided at the December meeting. Mark Pritchard said he would distribute the remainder of the report regarding missed trips, accidents, etc. prior to the December meeting.

Discussion ensued as to the status of payment for the RouteShout 2.0 program. Payments have been disbursed for invoices which were due in January. Attempts to further hold back payment resulted in possible legal action. The cost for the equipment on the buses and the service and maintenance agreement are due next spring at a cost of \$60,000. Ron Skotz noted that when negotiating the purchase he was able to provide equipment in 48-49 vehicles, with invoicing for only the required pull out number of 37 vehicles. Ron offered to draft a letter of satisfaction to RouteShout which will be available as public knowledge.

Sue Poole suggested that a request be made to assign a customer service representative to the account. With the company based in California there is a delay to noon for the return of messages, followed by an additional twenty minutes on hold as they locate the answer.

Action Item: Mark Pritchard to distribute the Statistical Snapshot Report for September without the ridership figures. A report illustrating the ridership numbers for September and October is expected at the December meeting.

GM Report/Staff Updates (Mark Pritchard)

Of the twelve new paratransit vehicles that arrived early October, one was sent back due to unresolved issues. Four of the buses will be exclusive to the Fort Meade route with the remaining eight added to the fleet. The buses are designed for paratransit use however, due to current challenges with the fleet they will be utilized to also help fixed route. Discussion ensued regarding the utilization of smaller paratransit vehicles providing service for fixed route service. In 3 to 5 years the paratransit vehicles will have reached their useful life. The cost factor for a smaller paratransit vehicle at \$80,000 versus the cost of a heavy duty vehicle at \$350,000 limits the options in providing service. Seven heavy duty fixed route bus are expected to arrive in December which will enable the retiring of up to eight older buses. The paperwork has been initiated to MTA requesting the December retirement of the International buses.

Due to the condition of the current fleet it was again recommended to request funding from the State for the purchase of new buses. The suggestion was made to contact Senators and Delegates and explain the daily challenges in providing service without adequate funding for an updated and reliable fleet. Allen Cornell offered to coordinate with Clive Graham on this. Clive Graham has previously requested that Ron Skotz work on this.

Sue Poole commented that we have positives with the new 409B and 504 as well as the electric buses on route 401.

Clive Graham had distributed an email on October 23rd regarding a very bad experience which a transportation board member, Astamay Curtis, experienced when riding an RTA bus. Clive has requested that Mark Pritchard provide an improvement plan addressing the systemic issues raised by the experience.

Mark Pritchard explained the problems with bus availability and the collapse that was experienced on Friday, October 6th which resulted in riders stranded for several hours. The concern runs deeper with the riders unable to contact a customer service representative when calling in to the office. Their call was directed to a voicemail to leave a message. Clive commented that callers need to be responded to when leaving a message. A complaint resolution database is set up to accept and respond to complaints with an Operations supervisor investigating each complaint. It was suggested that there need to be additional staff to provide the customer with a response within 48 hours. Emphasis needs to be made to provide training to the drivers in customer service techniques.

Clive Graham commented as the contract manager he needs to be provided with additional data which encompasses the service day. Beginning in November Mark has committed to provide a daily report for incidents, missed trips, breakdowns, etc. The decline in ridership cannot continue. Efforts must be put in place from the top to the bottom in the overall perception portrayed and experienced by the riders. This is the responsibility on the part of everyone in the organization. The attitude and perception of RTA is not good by the general public as evidenced by the decline in ridership.

Mark Pritchard will push for additional preventative maintenance to prevent issues to the fleet before they occur.

Ron Dillon suggested that the complaint be viewed on the reaction and response which was provided and perceived by the stranded riders. This letter is the basis on how we handled the situation not on

the condition of the fleet. It was how RTA reacted and provided service for their transportation needs home and/or to their place of employment. The biggest failure that lead to the frustration was no replacement for the 4:00 pm bus. An alternative bus should have been provided. Unsure of the status of the 6:00pm bus. At that point the riders had been stranded since 4:00pm. A suggestion was made to ensure that customer service is available during the hours of operation when buses are on the streets to answer phone inquiries. RTA needs to go back to the basics of customer service.

Sue Poole emphasized that a lot of grassroots efforts are provided as an organization. The drivers need to be on the buses wearing their RTA uniform and show that RTA cares. When a rider has a complaint the driver needs to listen to the complaint and provide feedback to Operations to provide a better service experience for the riders. It is important to have staff available monthly on the buses to provide riders with a positive, caring portrayal of RTA.

Ron Skotz shared that several years ago a beneficial idea was to implement an ambassador assigned to hubs to provide assistance to riders on how to utilize the public transportation system in addition to answering questions regarding the service. Although this will be expensive it will go a long way to provide the public with the vision that RTA cares and focuses on making their ridership experience a priority.

Action Item: . Emphasis needs to be made by the entire RTA organization to ensure that a positive customer service initiative is portrayed. Complaints need to be responded to within 48 hours. Customer service calls need to be answered with any messages responded to immediately. Beginning in November, Clive will receive a daily report outlining the service day.

FY 2019 Budget; Summary of Service Proposals, Presentation of preliminary draft budget: Questions from RTA (Clive Graham)

Clive had requested that by October 13th the Partners provide service requests to be effective July 1, 2018. Clive did not receive any service request changes from Anne Arundel or Prince George's County. Crystal McGill-Belk advised that Anne Arundel County is working on their service change request. RTA will be providing any service change requests to be considered at the December 5th meeting.

Clive Graham has asked that for FY 19 RTA change the Route 501 back to a 1 hour schedule, overlapping laps provided to the airport.

Howard County has requested funding for the purchase of six new buses with an October 2018 delivery date. Due to Howard County purchasing the buses with their funding the 6 new buses will provide transportation only on Howard County routes. If a route crosses from Howard County into another county the route will continue utilizing the new Howard County buses. The older buses currently in the fleet will provide transportation to Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties. The maintenance costs associated for the older buses providing transportation to Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties will be reflected to differentiate the utilization. Unfortunately this will take away from the set-up of a regional system however, there is no alternative.

The Transit Development Plan (TDP) draft is scheduled to be provided by the consultant on Friday, October 27th. The draft will be reviewed with the full TDP available for the Transportation Board meeting on December 5th. The TDP will be presented to Howard County Council for consideration in January. For their portion, Howard County would like to go from 9 long routes to 14 shorter routes. Utilization of the main roads, i.e., Routes 29, 175 and 100 will provide quicker access to the routes. Phase 1 is expected to cost Howard County an additional 1.3 million dollars annually. Clive has requested RTA to work in the changed service cost for 6 months of the FY 19 budget. The TDP includes ideas to reduce the usage and cost of paratransit ridership, currently 40 percent of the budget, to be more in line with the budget at 20-25 percent.

Action Item: RTA to provide any service changes effective July 1st, 2018 at the December 5th meeting.

Marketing and Communications Presentation (Sue Poole)

To adhere to the route or fare changes policy, 120 days' notice is required for route changes that encompass over 25 percent of the route. Any anticipated changes effective July 1st required notice by October 21st.

The elements utilized for public notice of the proposed enhancements and changes effective October 1st included an email blast to POS centers, libraries, senior centers, etc. Information was posted on the buses regarding public meetings and the public comment. Advertising of a 16 page panel brochure was available on the buses (for 30 days) and at key locations in all jurisdictions.

Outreach for RouteShout will be provided at Hub locations during the holiday season for assistance with RouteShout 2.0 download access. The on hold message for customer service calls will be updated to include information regarding RouteShout 2.0. The availability to view an interactive map on the RTA website is currently in the development stages.

Other Business

Anthony Foster asked if the Howard County free fixed route service for seniors would be extended to the other counties. Clive Graham said that needed to be discussed with Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties. Clive said Howard County had completed an analysis on rider information and concluded that any loss in revenue generated from the reduced senior \$1.00 fare would be counteracted by reducing the paratransit GPT ridership and would be revenue neutral.

Discussion ensued with Ron Dillon stating that the cost for paratransit trips are over \$50.00 versus the loss of collection of a dollar for senior fixed route ridership. Mark Pritchard commented that this is true if we can be successful in moving riders from GPT to fixed route service.

Clive Graham stated that the cost for negotiations regarding operator salaries for contract negotiations will be affecting everyone. Clive commented that a new driver is not provided with a step program to

illustrate how much they can earn after 5 years of continued service. The current operator turnover is 50 percent. Mark pointed out that if we could reduce the turnover by half, it will provide a substantial financial benefit.

Mark Pritchard will provide a straight line budget to fiscal 2019. Anthony Foster commented that the maintenance cost of the older buses will increase their budget. Clive Graham has offered to provide additional information to Anthony regarding the maintenance cost of the older fleet on their service routes. Clive has preliminary ideas on how to portion out the cost to Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties.

Cristin Tolen has accepted the position of General Manager assigned to RTA. Cristin will commence at RTA on November 13th providing a few days of overlap transition prior to Mark Pritchard returning to Oklahoma.

Action Item: Mark Pritchard to provide a straight line budget for fiscal 2019.

Next Meeting: December 5, 2017

Adjournment: 3:04pm

Attendees:

Ron Dillon	Anne Arundel County
Crystal (need last name)	Anne Arundel County
Nathan Grace	City of Laurel
Robert Love	City of Laurel
Clive Graham	Howard County Office of Transportation
Kathleen Donodeo	Howard County Office of Transportation
Jai Saunders (??)	Howard County Office of Transportation
Allen Cornell	Howard County
Norm Schnobrich	Howard County Office of Budget
Ron Crites	Prince George's County
Judith "J" Davis	Prince George's County
Anthony Foster	Prince George's County Office of Transportation
Mark Pritchard	General Manager, RTA
Ron Skotz	CAO, RTA
Susan Poole	Director of Communications and Marketing, RTA

Suzanne Brown	Director of Finance, RTA
Victor Jimenez	Call Center Manager, RTA
Kevin Randall	Assistant General Manager of Maintenance, RTA
Maynard Nash	RTA
Stephanie Dittman	Office Manager, RTA