



MINUTES

Joint Meeting of the Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Commission and the Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium

January 22, 2019

Allen Cornell called the meeting to order at 1:03PM. Present were:

Commissioner Members:

Allen Cornell, Chair
Ron Dillon, Vice Chair
John Spencer
Judith Davis
Michael Dyer
Robert Love

Commissioners Not Present:

Earl Armiger

Staff:

Cristin Tolen, RTA
Andrew Johnson, RTA
Stephanie Dittman, RTA
Susan Poole, RTA
Suzanne Brown, RTA
Victor Jimenez, RTA
Kevin Randall, RTA
Crystal McGill-Belk, Anne Arundel County
Nathan Grace, City of Laurel
Chris Eatough, Howard County
Jason Quan, Howard County
Anthony Foster, Prince George's County
Astamay Curtis, RAC

1. Approval of the November 27, 2018 Joint Meeting of the Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Commission and the Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Consortium Meeting Minutes. (0:55)¹

The November 27, 2018 meeting minutes were approved.

The Commission has requested the advertising policy and a copy of the handbook. Cristin to provide the documents. *These documents were emailed to commissioners and jurisdictional staff on February 13, 2019.*

¹ Minute references are to the meeting audio recording; see link on the transitRTA.com/CMTMC website.

2. Riders Advisory Council (02:05)

Astamay Curtis provided an update from the Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) January 10, 2019 meeting.

The RAC meeting on January 10th was quite impressive with many riders in attendance to voice their concerns, with customer service being the priority. The overall concern was not only with drivers but also with customer service representatives that answer the 1-800 phone number, in addition to responses when calling in complaints.

The recording of the meeting is available on the website; www.transitRTA.com/RAC.

Based on the information received at the December 13th TDP Public Hearing, amendments were made to Route 404 and 406. Jason Quan announced that the roll out implementation target date will be the end of April 2019.

RTA has taken the initiative to request additional "no parking" signs for the Shalom Square area (Long Reach Village Center). RTA vehicles are currently unable to enter the circle when vehicles are blocking the area, due to church parking.

The three Columbia Crossing shopping center bus stops (Target, Pier One) have been condensed to one bus stop, providing a safer and more accessible location (close to Pier One). It was noted that the TJ Maxx bus stop will require additional time. The Dobbin Center bus stop shelters will take additional time to move (Walmart shelter not accessible).

Riders requested annunciators on the buses to announce stops. Andrew Johnson will look into the software needed to integrate with the current software to announce stops. In the interim, drivers will announce the major bus stops, destinations and/or intersections.

Several riders shared their comments and concerns regarding the customer service provided by the drivers. Andrew Johnson advised that an additional eight hour session on working with the public has been added to the new driver training. If customers have issues they need to contact the 1-800 phone number, to voice their concern. To provide proper follow up, Andrew has requested that the rider provide the bus number, the date and the time of the occurrence.

Mike Dyer asked if the personal information of the rider submitting the negative complaint is protected. Cristin answered that the caller can provide any name and email address with the complaint, however the phone number is provided via caller ID. The personal information of the rider making the complaint is not shared with the driver. Sue Poole suggested adding a disclaimer to the consumer email regarding the confidentiality of the complaint received.

When experiencing inclement and cold weather, efforts will be made to provide top of the hour access for riders to wait on the first bus until time for pullout at Columbia Mall. This accommodation will be based on supervisor availability.

Representatives are still needed to represent Anne Arundel County, Prince George's County and the City of Laurel. A request was made to the seated commissioners to assist with involvement from their counties for representation across the RTA jurisdictions.

Cristin Tolen added a public comment period to today's agenda as well as for future commission meetings. A sign in sheet will be provided at all future meetings.

3. General Managers Report (29:04)

Cristin Tolen gave the November/December 2018 General Manager's report (see attachment).

There was discussion regarding the December 13, 2018 TDP Public Hearing. Based on feedback provided at the public hearing adjustments were made to the proposal and presented to Howard County Executive Calvin Ball for approval. The approved TDP will have an implementation date of either April 28th or May 5th.

The Whitecoat Waste Project advertising settlement has been resolved. It was noted that RTA followed the lead of MTA with the advertising policy denial and also the settlement of the lawsuit.

The Route 504 (Odenton to Fort Meade route) schedule was revised to address the revised MARC train schedule effective in November 2018. New schedules were distributed to Odenton Station and Ft. Meade.

Rider inquired as to notification methods in providing rider alerts when a bus is out of service. Some riders do not have access to the RTA website or Smart phones. **Cristin responded that attempts are made to send supervisors out on the route to provide transportation to the riders effected by the service interruption.**

Rider suggested a feature available through Twitter to send a tweet and text to the RTA Twitter account to be disbursed to the riders. Rider is concerned that the RouteShout 2.0 app is unreliable. Can there be an option available on the phone line, with the option to hear current bus outages? **Sue Poole advised that when we post a tweet it automatically posts to the RTA website. There is an upgrade available on RouteMatch, for RouteShout 2.0, that will text alert. Bus stop locations can be designated with an identification number for texting issues to riders. Calls go out automatically to our Mobility riders and riders registering through our system to receive notifications via text. We will continue to explore more effective ways to communicate service information to our riders.**

Chris Eatough requested that Cristin review the terminology for accidents and preventable accidents, as noted in the GM Report.

Rider commented that the 1-800 taped line needs to be monitored for responses and information provided to callers from the Customer Service representatives. **Cristin explained that based on comments received, RTA is reviewing the options on how to best address the customer service aspect. One is to monitor the 1-800 phone calls by randomly reviewing the phone calls to access how the customer service representative is interacting with the caller. A program to provide companywide customer service training is also an option. The utilization of mystery riders would provide insight as to the customer service level provided by the drivers.**

Rider asked how the received complaints and disagreements are accessed. Is all the data available to make an assessment? Some riders are not receiving a follow up call when placing a complaint. When requesting a phone number for Howard County Office of Transportation, the caller was told that the customer service representative didn't have the information. **Cristin explained that all complaints are logged in and summarized in a data base. With the recorded line, there is access to the incoming complaint phone call. Once all pertinent information is available, including a follow up phone call to the rider, the driver is provided the opportunity to explain what transpired resulting in the complaint. Working within the internal departments, efforts continue to better train and educate staff.**

Currently the customer service department receives 300 – 500 calls per day. The approval of the TDP includes additional staffing positions for the Call Center, with the expectation of additional incoming phone calls to the 1-800 phone number.

To alleviate confusion and educate the public on the upcoming changes, a detailed marketing plan and timeline is being created. Providing information on the buses and website, along with working with the local organizations and libraries, outreach efforts are a priority. Upon implementation of the changes, staff will be available out in the field to assist riders with the changes.

4. November/December 2018 Financial Report (1:18:08)

Suzanne Brown provided an overview of the November/December 2018 Financial Report.

There was discussion regarding reduction in ridership. Andrew Johnson noted that there is an average of 9,000 riders a month that meet the qualifications and are eligible for the free certified rider fixed route service. It was noted that the free ride program on fixed route has not had an impact on the demand for Mobility service. It was suggested that statistical route information would be helpful to illustrate the routes experiencing a decline in ridership.

5. RTA Inclement Weather Plan Process (16:43)

Andrew Johnson provided an update on the RTA Inclement Weather Plan process. The policy covers all elements beginning with the initial projected forecast for imminent inclement weather. The forecast will be assessed with follow up meetings beginning 72 hours prior to the event and continuing throughout the weather event.

Andrew provided an overview of how the weather event information is received (MATOC, NOA, MDOT, State Highway and approximately 20-30 additional transit facilities within the Metro Region), along with the factors for determining the need to delay transportation services. If the forecasted weather event is catastrophic, a decision will be made within 24 hrs. of the event. During a snow storm, three safety teams monitor three separate sectors of the service area. An overall visual assessment and determination regarding adjustments to the services times, based on current and forecasted road conditions, is made by Andrew Johnson. Determining a delay in service is additionally made after conferring with County groups, based on primary and secondary road clearing.

Any decisions impacting service are communicated to the public within 15 minutes via RTA email blast (including TV, Radio, Malls and BWI Airport), Twitter, RouteShout 2.0, the RTA website, County Public Information Officers of the four jurisdictions (PIO) and the 1-800 Customer Service phone messaging. The RTA Call Center is staffed during all weather events.

A contractor provides snow removal at the priority bus stops in the region. The secondary bus stops in Howard County are provided snow removal by the Howard County Department of Corrections. This includes concrete pads on the secondary routes within Howard County.

6. Transit Development Plan Implementation Status (1:33:44)

Chris Eatough presented the proposed TDP route changes (as approved by the Commission) to Howard County Executive, Calvin Ball. The proposed TDP route changes have been approved (as recommended by the Commission) with a tentative implementation date in late-April 2019. Recommendations were made by Howard County Executive Calvin Ball to ensure a strong outreach plan is implemented to educate all on the upcoming route changes and frequency improvements.

7. Other Business (1:36:15)

J. Davis noted that this is the first Commission meeting with attendance from riders sharing their experiences and issues related to the services provided by RTA. To maintain an organized business meeting, future Commission meetings will require a sign-up sheet with the concern/topic listed and a time limit of 3 minutes per speaker.

Astamay Curtis, RAC Chairperson, provides a synopsis of the RAC meeting and any issues/concerns received between RAC meetings. As a courtesy, we need to be cognizant that the issues/concerns presented by the riders are not being repeated from the report that Astamay has already presented.

8. Adjournment (1:38:15)

Future Meeting Dates:

Next Commission Meeting – Tuesday, February 26, 2019, RTA Administrative Office, 1:00PM
RAC Meeting – March 2019, 6:00PM, Date and location to be confirmed

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40PM.

Acronyms

AAC	Anne Arundel County
PIO	Public Information Officer
PGC	Prince George's County
RTA	Regional Transportation Agency
RAC	Riders Advisory Council
TDP	Transit Development Plan
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
MATOC	Metro Area Transit Operations Center
MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation