**JP BUS STRIPING copy.eps**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Riders’ Advisory Council**

**September 9, 2021**

**In Attendance:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Riders / Public**  Astamay Curtis  Marlene Hendler  Larry May  Jacquie Sentell  Durteha Smith | **RTA Staff**  Andrew Johnson  Cole McCarren  Jason Quan | **Partner Staff / Commissioners** |

1. **Approval of May 13, 2021 meeting minutes**

The May 13, 2021 meeting minutes were approved without requiring any edits.

1. **RTA Announcements**

* COVID-19 response updates
  + RTA is still disinfecting all vehicles and facilities nightly with hospital-grade disinfectant in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, following all local and state guidelines for mask usage, etc.
* Fall service change update
  + Public comment period closed in mid-August and changes now are formally approved by Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Commission
  + Significant service changes originally planned for July, and then September, have been delayed due to operator staffing challenges (nationwide bus operator shortage)
  + Tentatively planned for November pending a successful hiring push throughout September and October
    - RTA is hosting a Job Fair at the end of September
* New buses update
  + 11 new ENC transit buses have been delayed between 4-6 months due to supply chain issues, so RTA expects 11 new transit vehicles to be delivered late 2022 as opposed to early 2022.
  + 6 new Paratransit Toyota Camry vehicles will go in to service within the next couple months
* Bus crowding information / new technology
  + New passenger-facing data will go live on trip planners (Google Maps, Transit App, etc) this fall
    - Hopefully will help people returning to bus transit services feel a bit more comfortable
  + Upcoming on-time performance improvements to bus
    - Software is being deployed next week to show operators how early/late they are running their route, and we expect it to make service more predictable and consistent day-to-day
* Upcoming September 24th Meeting on Carl’s Court bus stop
  + 4:00 PM at the George Howard Building, Columbia/Ellicott room
  + Jason gave some background on the Carl’s Court bus stop in Ellicott City that serves the local Walmart and Ridge Road.
    - Described situation regarding some pushback about the stop from some nearby residents of a senior community, and why RTA believes the stop’s current location to be the best option regarding upcoming service expansions in Ellicott City and adding the 505 connection to Catonsville
  + If you would like to participate in

1. **RAC Announcements**

* Applications will be sent out as usual with this set of minutes

1. **Public Comment**

* Astamay brought up the new Howard County Public Schools student pass program and the bus driver shortage, and asked what the impacts on ridership have been
  + Cole and Jason advised that no major impacts to bus ridership have been seen yet, but will keep monitoring situation - crowding on buses is not a common issue now and this program does not change how many drivers are out on the road
* Astamay asked how the aforementioned program is being funded
  + Jason shared it is a partnership between the school system and the county’s Office of Transportation
* Duretha asked questions about paratransit transportation options in areas like Fort Meade
  + Jason directed Duretha to Victor Jimenez, RTA’s Mobility Manager
* Astamay asked about the new route 405 and 505
  + Cole replied that digital versions of the maps presented during the service change proposal process will be available online the month before the service change takes effect.
  + The PDFs available at transitRTA.com/fall2021 should look better on a large screen, but the ability to see more detail will come later once stop locations and exact turns are finalized
* Astamay asked if paper bus schedules will ever begin to be distributed again
  + Jason advised that the only hesitation has been pandemic-related and RTA wants to encourage people looking at electronic versions of the files instead of riders potentially handling schedules on the buses / putting them back and providing opportunities for the transmission of germs
* Astamay asked why the bus stop was moved 20 feet south on Rogers Ave from Oak West Dr
  + Cole advised that the change was made in preparation of the new 405 alignment, where the driver will sometimes turn left directly after serving the stop
* Larry asked for a complete list of all the bus stops and the matching stop codes for texting the SMS/IVR system
  + Cole noted he will include that list in the email with this meeting’s minutes
* Larry informed staff that the partitions between riders and drivers can make it difficult to hear called-out stop requests on cutaway vehicles without functioning stop-request pull cords (or on vehicles without the stop request features at all)
  + Jason said staff will talk internally about what can be done in the meantime while vehicle replacements are being processed
* Larry asked if the Blandair Park stop should be receiving bus service
  + Jason informed that the bus stop does not have service and the shelter should have been removed – the 407 service in that area was consolidated after additional stops were added along Kilimanjaro Rd closer to a walkpath that leads to Blandair Park
* The group had a conversation about the general bus service hours systemwide and what is planned to come back with restorations to service that have been on pause since the pandemic began
* Jacquie asked for updates on wheelchair access / curb access at Mall in Columbia’s bus hub
  + Jason and Andrew explained difficulties regarding the schedules and what should be happening / needs to happen regarding second lane parking and radio communication between drivers when an ADA passenger requires use of a vehicle lift/ramp
* Jacquie asked about concerns she had seen about the MVA in Beltsville and 302 service being removed from that location with the proposed service changes
  + Cole advised that 302 bus service effectively only serves the MVA currently at times that it is closed, just by nature of the US 1 branch of route 302 that operates weekends only
* Jacquie asked about paving / concrete plans of the popular bus stops down by Towne Centre Laurel
  + Jason advised that the City of Laurel would be the body that controls that right of way and would ultimately have the decision to improve those stops, and that RTA can communicate that feedback to them
* Jacquie asked about snow policies and voiced her concern where drivers let them off in areas that make it difficult to alight a vehicle
  + Jason advised that allowing drivers to decide where around a stop they may stop poses a challenge since bus stops are the safe locations that have been selected and vetted by staff as where they should be stopping – it would be better to focus efforts on who is responsible for clearing the adjacent sidewalks that should be clearing around the stop.
  + We can look in to who exactly is responsible for removing snow at the bus stop that serves the Savage Library.

1. **Adjournment**

**Future Meeting Dates:**

Next Commission Meeting –

Tuesday, September 21st, 2021, 1:00PM ([meetings.transitRTA.com/CMTMC](https://meetings.transitrta.com/CMTMC))

Next RAC Meeting –

Thursday, November 11th, 2021, 6:00PM ([meetings.transitRTA.com/RAC](https://meetings.transitrta.com/RAC))

Frequently used acronyms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| RTA | Regional Transportation Agency |
| RAC | Riders Advisory Council |
| TDP | Transit Development Plan |