



MINUTES

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

December 13, 2022

Allen Cornell called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Present were:

Commissioner Members:

Allen Cornell (Chair)
Judith Davis (Vice Chair)
Ron Skotz
Michael Dyer
Robert Love
Claudia Barber
Christine Wells

Staff:

Jason Quan, RTA
Shawn O'Meara, RTA
Preston Reed, RTA
Rushad Dastur, RTA
Bruce Gartner, Howard Co.
Carrie Anderson-Watters, Howard Co.
Astamay Curtis, RAC Chair

Other:

Will Sutton, KFH
Fred Fravel, KFH

1. Welcome – Allen Cornell

2. Astamay Curtis Service Award – Allen Cornell

3. Open Public Comment Period – None

4. Interim RAC Representation – Jason Quan

- Larry May is temporarily serving as the Interim RAC Chairperson until an official vote is made for the RAC Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

5. GM Report – Jason Quan

- Human Resources
 - Recruitment efforts continue for various RTA positions – both administrative and operational, with a continued emphasis on CDL drivers.
 - CDL training classes will resume in January 2023.
 - RTA recently hired Ms. Stephanie Cooper, Recruitment Specialist to assist in the recruiting process.

- RTA extended a verbal offer to Mr. Ryan Mayers for the Planning and Special Projects Manager position. Mr. Mayers verbally accepted the offer.
- Operations
 - Fixed-Route ridership trended up 22% - due to season changes and the Free-Fare campaign.
 - Paratransit ridership numbers are above last year's fiscal numbers (pre-Covid); the Free-Fare campaign did little to increase paratransit ridership – ridership is slowly coming back.
 - ◆ This year, RTA focused the Free-Fare campaign more on getting people to come back to riding RTA buses to help boost ridership numbers back to pre-Covid levels. Hence, RTA did not have many discussions about a Free-Fare Holiday campaign for Christmas.
 - ◆ RTA's Free-Fare campaigns are paid by subsidy funds.
 - ◆ Free-Fare campaigns are gaining much traction with other local transit organizations.
 - November's service changes have rolled out and have been well received by RTA passengers and operators.
 - RTA will be closed Christmas and New Year's day, with a reduced schedule on Christmas Eve.
 - The 11 new fixed-route buses are in final production, including waiting for specific parts to arrive in transit per the international supply chain challenge. We anticipate having all the buses ready by late Winter or early Spring.
 - Nine new paratransit buses are scheduled to be delivered in early January.
- On-time Performance
 - On-time performance lingers around 74-75%; the goal for the upcoming year is to be in the low 80's, if not higher.
 - ◆ More buses and operators should help assist in this goal.
- Maintenance
 - Buses have been winterized for the colder weather.
- Road Call Summary
 - RTA's road calls strategy is to repair and remedy all maintenance issues on-site. This approach reduces the amount of downtime and is cost-saving (tows are expensive). While RTA will not be able to avoid road call tows, keeping tows around 5 - 10 is a feasible number.

- Power issues on electric buses are sporadic. This current quarter we have three electric buses, and at one point, they were all down due to power issues. At the date of this meeting, two are in service. We have noticed that they run for a while, and problems occur. We have ordered new battery modules, which are under warranty. There are also smaller batteries that go down.
- Planning & Outreach
 - RTA's Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) Project is ongoing, as RTA seeks to meet a 95% accuracy rate for FTA validation. To help expediate the process, RTA is searching for vendors who specialize in APC validation.
 - As part of RTA's Automatic Stop Announcement pilot program, RTA has successfully installed the hardware on one vehicle, allowing us to study its various programming capabilities. To complete the pilot program, RTA will install the Automatic Stop Announcement hardware on a second vehicle to monitor and compare its success. Once the pilot program is complete, RTA will install the hardware on all vehicles. The hardware allows for an audio and visual LED display of oncoming stops (LED display also allows for public service announcements). The hardware, in conjunction with other RTA hardware, allows for real-time updates/information in the system.
 - The RTA Transit App continues to gain subscribers, as it has proven to be a valuable resource for riders, with over 3,700 unique monthly users in November 2022.
 - RTA plans to finalize its new routes 405 and 505 servicing Ellicott City and Catonsville, which will be possible if we reach our goal of increased CDL drivers this Spring.
 - RTA will review the progress of its recent service changes in Laurel and Prince George's County.
 - RTA is planning for possible upcoming snow events that could impact its services.
- Safety
 - RTA had nine accidents - five preventable, four non-preventable, and three workers comp injuries in the 2nd quarter.
 - ◆ The '*one-passenger incident*' was not a vehicular accident. However, for no apparent reason, a passenger fell unconscious. When this occurred, the bus operator stopped the partially full bus. An ambulance transported the passenger to a hospital. RTA did not learn of the cause of the incident.
 - ◆ One of RTA's buses engine caught fire on its way back to the RTA base. There were no injuries, as the bus operator quickly extinguished the fire. There were no passengers on board. Typically, such a bus (ENC, year 2017) has about 300,000 to 400,000 miles.

- ◆ RTA holds a higher standard for *'preventable vehicle accidents.'* If our bus operator can avoid it, even though it wasn't RTA's fault, it is a *'preventable vehicle accident.'*

6. FY2023 1st Quarter/Forecast Financial Report & FY2024 Preliminary Budget

Assumptions (see attached) – Shawn O'Meara/Bruce Gartner

- Due to RTA's shortage of CDL drivers and mechanics, overtime hours are high. The new Human Resources recruiter will help fill these shortages, decreasing overtime.
- The high overtime hours for maintenance resulted from many of its personnel being on leave. By law, RTA must always have at least two persons in the maintenance shop during working hours.
 - Maintenance staff starting salary is \$28 per hour.
 - Allen Cornell will look at developing a recruitment relationship with Lincoln Tech in Columbia, MD for mechanics.
- RTA's health benefits: the union has the benefits it offers to union staff, and the administrative staff & management are covered by Kaiser Permanente, which in some cases, the healthcare rates are negotiated by First Transit.
- From last year's budget to the current budget, there was a 5% increase in diesel fuel.
- Diesel fuel costs more than regular fuel - ranging from \$4 to \$5 a gallon. On average, RTA uses 300,000 gallons for diesel and 190,000 gallons for unleaded.
- Bruce: MTA and Howard County are working with a couple of local jurisdictions about needing a funding formula from the State of Maryland. A new funding formula has yet to be released but is forthcoming. There could be a 20% increase in Federal and State operating assistance for Howard County's transportation systems - essentially one million dollars. Such funds would bring Howard County's transportation budget back to pre-covid levels, if not higher. Howard County will monitor this movement closely and communicate with the administration and general assembly, especially influential local members of the finance and budget committees. Thoughts on using the State's increase include restoring previous funding, salary increases, parts, and increasing support to Howard County's jurisdiction partners. It would take the place of the one-time ARPA funding.
 - Judy agrees with Bruce's assumption regarding a possible funding increase at the State level. However, she cautions in assuming similar funding increases on the Federal level due to the changes in the House. She notes that members of the Internal Majority want to pull back some of the Federal grant funding they think is being wasteful and adding to inflation. Judith suggests contacting the congressional or senate person that Howard County deals with to get a better feel of the situation.

- Ron noted that on a State level, there will be dramatic changes that would favor public transit as a result of Maryland's new legislative administration.
- Allen suggested also using some of the increase for a free-fare campaign - to increase ridership.

7. RAC Minutes – Larry May

- Astamay: “What is the projection for the future to provide services as people are aging?”
 - Bruce: RTA's mandate is to prepare for projected ridership increase due to anticipated rising demographic changes, including the recognition of paratransit services for a growing aging population.
- The CMTMC would like to have a second member appointed from Anne Arundel transit team to serve as a backup for CMTMC meetings.

8. Presentation of the RTA’s 2023 Transit Development Plan (see attached) – KFH Group

- Outside of the RTA services, Howard County has been in discussions with Montgomery County's partnership jurisdiction that operates the "FLASH" bus services along Route 29 corridor. Both counties are interested in extending the existing service from Burtonsville to downtown Columbia, with potential stops in Maple Lawn and the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab. Howard County has partnered with them on Greg's request, which has yet to move with the Federal government due to different challenges in getting Federal funds which Howard County has earmarked to purchase four electric buses that would allow for the extension of peak period services. Congress is likely to make a continuing resolution (CR).
Howard County is also working with Montgomery County on the logistics of making stops in the three locations (Columbia, Maple Lawn, and Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab), which an engineering firm will handle fundamental planning and design work. In this situation, Howard County would pay Montgomery County to operate the services and own the buses - similar to how Anne Arundel and Prince Georges are paying Howard County to run lines out from their counties from Central Maryland and downtown Columbia.
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) discussions have been along the Route 29 Corridor. Montgomery County has successfully gotten dedicated lanes, etc., for Route 29 Corridor, which is due to be completed in five years. Such accomplishment serves as motivation for Howard County's long-range plan.
- Prince George’s County is piggybacking off of the WMATA Study.
- RTA has plans to send out service alerts through the RTA mobile transit app with a message and link to the TDP Survey.

- During RTA’s free-fare campaign in September, there was substantial growth in ridership, specifically with the Howard County Community College students and Greenbelt and Laurel residents.
- Larry May, noted that there isn’t a convenient transit connection between RTA and Baltimore or BWI Airport, for which there are significant job centers (i.e., Amazon, etc.) for lower-middle-class residents.
 - ◆ Bruce noted that there are two related proposed/ordered plans that all of Baltimore’s jurisdictions, including Howard County, are participating in. One such proposal is the “East-West Priority Corridor Transit Plan” – a Red Line which the Maryland Transit Administration initiated with seven proposed alternatives connecting areas of Howard County, Baltimore, and the East-side of Baltimore County with Ellicott City, Essex, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Social Security Administration. In addition, if a rail solution connection is not a part of the transit mode to Ellicott City, there is a reference in the proposal for more frequent or improved high-quality bus service connections so that Howard County residents can take advantage of the increased connections. The other significant corridor study is the Baltimore Metropolitan Council MPO of Columbia to the BWI corridor. It is very close to finalization.

9. Review of RAC meeting minutes from Dec 1, 2022 (see attached) – Larry May

10. Next Commission Meeting (March 28, 2022)

11. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm.

Next Regular Commission Meeting – Tuesday, March 28th, 2023, 1:00PM
RAC Meeting – (meetings.transitRTA.com/RAC)

Acronyms & Meanings

AAC	Anne Arundel County
ENC	El Dorado National California is an American manufacturer of heavy-duty transit buses
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
KFH Group	Consultants to the the transit industry
PGC	Prince George’s County
RAC	Riders Advisory Council
RTA	Regional Transportation Agency
TDP	Transit Development Plan