



MINUTES

Meeting of the Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Commission (CMTMC)

September 26, 2023

Allen Cornell called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. Present were:

Commissioner Members:

Allen Cornell (Chair)
J. Davis (Vice Chair)
Ron Skotz
Robert Love
Michael Dyer
Victor Weissberg

Staff:

Jason Quan, RTA
Cole McCarren, RTA
Shawn O'Meara, RTA
Gabrielle Tibbs, RTA
Ronaldo Joanis, RTA
Ryan Mayers, RTA
Preston Reed, RTA

Commissioners Not Present

Samuel Snead
Christine Wells

Jurisdictional Staff

Kevin Thornton, Prince George's Co.
Carrie Anderson-Watters, Howard Co.

Presenter(s)

Will Sutton, KFH Group

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1. WELCOME – Allen Cornell (Chair)
 2. OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – None
 3. COMMISSION MINUTES – Allen Cornell (Chair)
 - J. Davis moved to approve the minutes.
 - Approval of the minutes was seconded by M. Dyer.
 4. NEW RTA AGM – Jason Quan
 - Jason introduced Mr. Cole McCarren, the new AGM.

5. GM REPORT – Jason Quan

a. Human Resources

- Ms. Lakita Massey started as our new Parts and Facilities Coordinator.
- CDL Training classes are scheduled with our Safety and Training Manager, Rushad Dastur, handling training duties until the end of October. We will restart formal classes restart in January 2023. RTA will hire any qualified candidates outside of a formal class if any are found.
- Mr. Cole McCarren is the new AGM. Mr. McCarren was a previous RTA employee several years ago, as the Planning and Special Projects Manager.
- The HR Manager, Gabrielle Tibbs, will exit the RTA on October 2nd. She will continue to aid in the search for an HR Manager until one is found.
- Current vacancies:
 - Administration – 1
 - Call Center – 0
 - Drivers – 22
 - Operations – 7
 - Maintenance – 5
 - Safety – 2

b. Operations/Service

- FY 2023 Ridership – 787,004
- FY 2022 Ridership = 603,074
- FY 2021 Ridership = 323,376
- FY 2020 Ridership = 575,978
- FY 2019 Ridership = 751,434
- Route 505
 - Started on July 9
 - July ridership (3 weeks of service) = 2,589
- Route 405
 - Started on July 9
 - July ridership (3 weeks of service) = 1,860
- The RTA received one (1) new bus in August.
- Anticipating the arrival of another bus by the end of September.
- Union negotiations are currently in progress.
 - M. Dyer asks what the union negotiation process is. J. Quan answered that it includes internal discussions and agreements among RTA management; then, members of the union must ratify the three-year agreement.

c. Maintenance

- RTA's maintenance performances played a major role in RTA's on-time performance.
- Maintenance issues involved AC, brakes, and emissions. AC issues occurred on both the older and new vehicles. Brake issues occurred mostly in the older fleet. Emissions issues were high among the new vehicles.

- RTA has experienced serious emissions issues with the recently purchased new buses from the bus manufacturer ENC (Eldorado National-California). The vehicles are covered by a warranty that covers the cost of repairs. In addition to the emission issues, there is a backlog to get replacement filters due to supply-chain issues.
 - A. Cornell wanted to know what seemed to be the issue causing the outbreak of emissions failures in the new vehicles. R. Skotz suggested that we contact other bus manufacturers to see if this is normal.
 - J. Quan noted that RTA has spoken to the ENC manufacturer regarding the issues, and while ENC is quick to respond by sending mechanics and parts for the repairs, it does not negate the impact made on RTA services.
 - A. Cornell wanted to know if we had any recourse against the manufacturer for the downtime. If not, he suggested that we should have recourse for future such happenings.
 - J. Quan said that RTA does not have any recourse available to it because the procurement process of the buses is handled by the State of Maryland - preventing RTA from having any power to negotiate or address such matters. The bus contract that is coming online will have more than one vendor (i.e., Gillig and Maguire).
 - A. Cornell asked, "What is the average cost of a new fixed-route bus?" J. Quan answered, "\$500,000", noting that the recent new buses were closer to \$400,000. The life cycle of these buses is 12 years and 500,000 miles, which, when approached, makes the vehicles eligible for replacement.
 - R. Skotz inquired about the possibility of bus refurbishing when the vehicles reach eight years of ownership. J. Quan does not recommend the refurbishing of the ENC vehicles, which can cost \$70,000 to \$100,000. J. Quan noted that the vehicles are medium-duty, and it is not a sound financial decision to pay the cost for a rebuild. If it were a Gillig (which is considered a 'workhorse'), he would consider it.

d. Planning and Outreach

- Howard County Transit Development Plan (TDP) is nearing completion.
- Automatic Passenger Counter (APC): RTA has been approved and certified to report APC data to the National Transit Database (NTD).
- Automatic Voice Annunciator installation and testing of both visual and audio communications for every RTA stop have been successfully tested on two RTA vehicles.
- C. McCarren commented that the RTA bus operators report that passengers are providing positive feedback. The bus operators themselves are pleased with the annunciator system, as it eliminates the need for them to shout the stops.

- RTA's Free-Fare student passes partnered with Howard County as a pilot before being implemented in all the RTA jurisdictions (Anne Arundel County, City of Laurel, Northern Prince George's County, Howard County).
 - J. Davis inquired if, during the Free-Fare campaign, we had experienced unruly behavior by teenagers on RTA buses. J. Quan noted that at the Columbia Mall bus loop, there was a brief time of wayward behavior by teen riders, but the mall recently instituted a policy that youth 17 and younger must be accompanied by an adult after 4 p.m. Since then, the behavior has been under control.
- RTA has participated in numerous community outreach activities at high schools, colleges, and direct ridership interaction.
 - J. Davis believes that such community engagement has had a direct impact towards increased ridership.
- A. Cornell inquired if we saw a bump in ridership during Ride-Free Day, held September 22–24. J. Quan noted that it was too early to gauge the results.

e. Safety

- The first quarter of FY2024 saw a spike in RTA vehicle-related accidents.
- RTA has experienced seven preventable vehicle accidents, eight non-preventable accidents, and two workers compensation injuries during the quarter so far.
- Preventable Vehicle Accident Summary:
 - The RTA operator attempted to merge into the left lane as the other vehicle attempted to speed up, resulting in contact.
 - The RTA operator tried to pass the other vehicle and turned in front of the other vehicle too soon without clearing it completely, resulting in contact.
 - RTA operator was turning around in an empty parking lot when they turned too sharply around a lamp post, resulting in the rear of the bus making contact with the base of the lamp post.
 - The RTA operator-in-training got too close to the curb and made contact with it, resulting in a flat tire.
 - RTA operator tried to service a passenger stop at an angle, with the other vehicle parked in front of them. As the RTA operator departed from the stop, their tail-swing made contact with the front of the other vehicle.
 - RTA operator was making a right turn when they got too close to the passenger side, resulting in the rear tire and surrounding area of the bus making contact with the guard rail.
 - RTA operator got too close to the passenger side curb as they were trying to pass a tractor-trailer on their driver's side, resulting in contact with the curb. This caused a flat-tire and a bent rim.
- Non-Preventable Accident Summary:
 - Other vehicle side-swiped the RTA vehicle.
 - Other vehicle drove into the driver's side of the RTA vehicle.

- Other vehicles tried to go around the bus at a passenger stop and did not clear the bus completely before merging into the bus's lane, making contact.
- Other vehicle's mirror made contact with the bus while it was parked.
- Other vehicle reversed into the RTA vehicle.
- Other vehicle rear-ended the RTA vehicle.
- Other vehicle side-swiped the RTA vehicle.
- Other vehicle t-boned RTA vehicle.
- J. Davis asked if any of the bus accidents resulted in a bus being totaled or permanently put out of commission. J. Quan answered that of the preventable accidents, none resulted in the bus being totaled or put out of commission. Although, one of the preventable accidents is pending the adjuster's review for such a determination (reference to the accident when an RTA operator was making a right turn when they got too close to the passenger side, resulting in the rear tire and surrounding area of the bus making contact with the guard rail). This accident involved a new RTA vehicle. All the non-preventable accidents were not the result of RTA.
- J. Davis asked if, when a bus is severely damaged due to an accident, does the RTA repair the bus? J. Quan answered that repairs depend on the severity of the accident (i.e., dent[s], damaged parts, etc.). If it is a minor accident, the RTA might forego repairs so as not to interrupt service. If, however, the accident results in severe damage, such as a series dent or mechanical parts/performance, the RTA gets it fixed.
- J. Davis followed up on an earlier matter she brought to the table at the last CMTMC Meeting, Sept. 26th, regarding WMATA's '*Better Bus Initiative*', which has a proposed route that goes from Greenbelt station to Laurel and mirrors a similar route as RTA. J. Davis sent the initiative to the CMTMC committee via email to raise awareness and initiate communications between RTA and WMATA or similar routes. J. Davis would like to know the status of such communications. <https://wmata.com/about/board/meetings/board-pdfs/upload/3A-Better-Bus-Initiative-Update.pdf>
- J. Quan and R. Mayers responded, mentioning that such communications - initiated by R. Mayers - have occurred, with WMATA being made aware of the duplicated routes, and promising to follow up with Ryan regarding further planning and strategy on the matter.

6. FY2023 CLOSE OUT FINANCIAL SUMMARY – Shawn O'Meara

- For complete covering of the FY2023 Financial Forecast, please see the attached RTA FY 2023 Forecast.
 - R. Skotz wanted to know what the *Depreciation Expenses* include. S. O'Meara answered that it is for all RTA assets (e.g., vehicles, furniture, etc.)

- A. Cornell inquired as to why the RTA total expenses were \$2.2 million less. S. O'Meara explained that it was a direct result of three operating categories:
 - *Personnel Expenses* were below budget due to industry hiring challenges. Shawn has noticed that July's and August's RTA financials reveal that RTA is trending in the right direction regarding hiring.
 - *Fuel Cost* decrease
 - *Maintenance Repairs* due to the recent purchase of new buses; however, it is largely due to the forecasted budget for battery replacement for RTA's electric vehicles. A. Cornell asked if RTA has a 'replacement fund' for the batteries, or do we simply absorb the cost? S. O'Meara answered that it is built into the maintenance budget.

7. RAC UPDATE – Ryan Mayers

- R. Mayers will work with RTA Marketing to design a marketing plan to assist in recruiting RAC members, with the goal of growing membership to a minimum of five.
- A. Cornell encouraged such efforts, stressing the importance of such external involvement and input.
- The last RAC meeting, September 14th, did not meet the quorum; however, notes were still taken. The RAC chair and vice chair retired from the position due to employment opportunities.
- The next RAC meeting is scheduled for November. During the absence of a chair and vice chair, Ryan will handle such roles.

8. TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT (TDP) PLAN UPDATE – Will Sutton/KFH Group

- For a complete review of the RTA TDP, please see the attached informal RTA TDP presentation prepared by the KFH Group. The TDP is a five-year, short-range plan:
- Allen asked, "What is the process for the formal approval of the RTA TDP plan?"
- J. Quan explained that once the plan is developed, a resolution is put before the Howard County Council for approval.
- A. Cornell inquired if the RTA TDP becomes a part of the general Howard County plan. Carrie answered that it is a separate plan, but it is helpful to look at both at the same time.
- W. Sutton gave a summary of the RTA TDP goals, which include key destinations targeted for improvements or new services:
 - Expanded options to the BWI Airport
 - Providing a more direct connection to Elkridge, Maryland.
 - Reaching the major metropolitan areas of DC and Baltimore and making connections to those rail stations
 - Going to Fort Meade and NSA for employment opportunities
 - Reaching Maple Lawn, where the Applied Physics Laboratory is
- For a complete review of the RTA TDP, please see the attached informal RTA TDP presentation prepared by the KFH Group

9. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING – Jason Quan

- The next CMTMC meeting will be held December 12, 2023, 1 p.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT – Allen Cornell

- The meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m.

Next Regular Commission Meeting – Tuesday, December 12, 2023, 1 p.m.

RAC Meeting – <https://www.transitrta.com/rac/>

Acronyms & Meanings

CMTMC	Central Maryland Transportation & Mobility Commission
TAM	Transportation Association of Maryland
KFH Group	Consultants to the the transit industry
RAC	Riders Advisory Council
RTA	Regional Transportation Agency
TDP	Transit Development Plan
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
MTA	Maryland Transit Administration
ENC	Eldorado National-California bus manufacturer
NTD	National Transit Database
APC	Automatic Passenger Counter