



Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

**MINUTES OF THE
CAPE FEAR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
November 21, 2019
Mr. Beck Smith, Chairman, Presiding**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Beck Smith, Chairman
Mr. Steven Kelly, Vice Chairman
Mr. Andrew Koepfel, Secretary
Mr. Jonathan Barfield
Mr. Don Betz
Mr. Fred Gainey
Mr. Paul Lawler
Mr. Caylan McKay
Ms. Anne K. Ryan
Ms. Michelle Winstead

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Laura Padgett

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Albert Eby, Executive Director
Ms. Megan Matheny, Deputy Director
Mr. Joe Mininni, Director of Finance & Administration
Ms. Vanessa Lacer, Mobility Manager
Mr. Cliff Rode, Paratransit Manager
Ms. Kathy Williams, Customer Service Supervisor

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Noel Fox, Craige and Fox PLLC, Attorney
Ms. Dianne Hall, Contractor General Manager, First Transit
Mr. Jeremy Smith, Contractor Assistant General Manager, First Transit
Mr. Matthew Daniels, Maintenance Manager, First Transit

GUESTS PRESENT

Ms. Tracie Barnhill, Citizen
Mr. D. Brian, Citizen
Mr. Stephen Bried, Citizen
Mr. Jack Clifford, Citizen
Mr. Terrance Dewberry, ATU 1328
Ms. Lindsay Gabe, Citizen
Ms. Alex Guarino, WECT
Ms. Tiara Martin, Citizen
Ms. Sherita McCullers, ATU 1328
Mr. Ricky Meeks, Citizen
Mr. Bill Nevill, Citizen
Mr. Tom Pacelli, New Hanover County Senior Resource Center
Mr. Noelle Powers, Citizen

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Secretary - Wave Transit

Mr. David Rhew, NCPTA
Mr. Bijan Salehi, Citizen
Ms. Shannon Schaible, Citizen
Mr. Nancy Schilling, Citizen
Mr. Chris Hawkins, Citizen
Ms. Sylvia Schwartz, Citizen
Ms. Antoinette Smith, Citizen
Ms. Sheran Shorter, Citizen
Ms. Sonya Stillmock, Citizen
Mr. Mike Kozlosky, WMPO
Ms. Abigail Lorenzo, WMPO

CALL TO ORDER

- Mr. Smith called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm
- The meeting began with a moment of silence followed by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance

RECOGNITION OF MILITARY VETERANS

- Mr. Smith recognized active and former military veterans in attendance and on behalf of the Authority thanked them for their service
- Mr. Smith presented the proclamation supporting military veterans
- The proclamation was unanimously adopted

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- Mr. Smith opened the public comment period on the reduction in service
- Mr. Smith recognized Mr. Eby to present comments received by Authority staff
- Mr. Eby read three public comments received via email, fax and USPS regarding the proposed changes
- He provided an update on the circumstances that lead to the Authority's current financial state and the service reduction resolution leading to the public hearing
- Mr. Eby provided a reminder that the public comment period is an opportunity for citizens to provide statements to the board and is not intended to be a question and answer session
- Mr. Eby stated that the reduction in service was necessary to respond to a significant reduction in revenues in FY 2020
- He requested that respect be demonstrated on behalf of all individuals to ensure each comment is heard as we move through the process
- Mr. Meeks stated he spoke at the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners and the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) Board meetings in support of public transportation and Wave Transit
- He stated the importance of public transportation in the community was relayed to the Board of Commissioners during the meeting
- Mr. Meeks stated many are reliant upon public transportation as they cannot afford a car, are unable to drive, may have lost their license, or are students who may not have access to a car
- Mr. Meeks thanked the board members and Wave Transit operators for their service
- He concluded with a statement that he is a citizen who rides the buses, supports Wave Transit and will continue to advocate for public transportation
- He is not in support of the proposed service reductions
- Ms. Schwartz stated she has a full time job and relies on the bus system to get to work
- She stated Wilmington is not a 9:00 am to 5:00 pm town
- Ms. Schwartz stated she works evenings and varying hours, as is the case for employees in the retail industry

- She spoke to the impact a six hour reduction in Saturday service will have on those, including herself, who do not work a traditional 9:00 am to 5:00 pm job
- Ms. Schwartz stated she was unaware of the organization's financial challenges and is more compassionate after realizing Wave Transit does not want to reduce service
- Ms. Schwartz stated she is not comfortable with private transportation options such as Uber and asked if raising the rates would help Wave Transit's financial situation
- She stated she is aware that some customers might not be able to afford the increase but posed the question for consideration
- Ms. Schwartz expressed gratitude for the buses and for the opportunity to provide comment
- Mr. Bried stated he has been utilizing Wave Transit since 2011
- He said he spoke with Commissioner Barfield previously and voiced his concern over the recent decision to withdraw support from Wave Transit
- Mr. Bried stated that an accident over 30 years ago left him permanently disabled and spoke to the challenges he has experienced as an individual with a disability
- He stated a lack of affordable housing options for low income individuals has forced him to live in a nursing home
- Mr. Bried stated he is able to access activities that provide an outlet, such as fishing, through the County's Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance Program (EDTAP)
- He expressed his opposition to a reduction in service hours and requested City and County decision makers to put themselves in his position
- Ms. Powers stated she is one of the co-directors of 350 Wilmington, a local climate activist group
- She thanked the board for the opportunity to comment and Wave Transit's appreciation for their passengers
- Ms. Powers stated volunteers from her organization conducted over twenty passenger interviews regarding the impact of service reductions
- She stated that when asked about the service reductions, the majority of passengers interviewed responded that more public transportation is needed, not less
- Ms. Powers presented comments from select interviews
- She stated passenger Laquita Smith rides the bus daily to both of her jobs and her children use the bus to get to school and afterschool programs
- Ms. Smith stated a reduction in service hours would have a significant impact on her ability to get to work
- Ms. Powers stated Amid relies on Wave Transit on a daily basis to get to work
- She stated that Amid would not be able to get to work on Saturday mornings by 8:00 am if service hours were reduced
- Ms. Powers stated passenger Damien Evans often takes two to three buses to reach his final destination; however, he is grateful he does not have to walk everywhere as the bus is his only means of transportation
- She confirmed that copies of the transcripts and voice recordings from the interviews conducted by 350 Wilmington will be provided following the public hearing
- Mr. Dewberry stated he is in attendance on behalf of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1328 Union which fully supports the Authority
- He stated he is appreciative of continued efforts undertaken on behalf of the Authority but expressed labor and public safety concerns
- Mr. Dewberry requested that a notification stating "*Assault on a public transit operator will result in persecution to the fullest extent of the law, under the North Carolina General Statutes 14-33-C7*" be installed on all fixed route vehicles
- He reported that bus passes are being sold to passengers without valid identification and that issues with vehicle fare boxes are ongoing
- Mr. Salehi requested that transit services be extended to Masonboro Loop Rd. as this area has experienced significant growth over the past few years

- He stated he resides in the area and must travel roughly 2.5 miles to the nearest bus stop
- Mr. Salehi stated he is unable to drive due to a disability and travelling long distances to the nearest bus stop is not always feasible
- He confirmed that private transportation alternatives, such as Uber, are typically cost prohibitive
- Mr. Hawkins stated he has a better understanding and appreciation of Wave Transit's financial situation
- He inquired about the certainty of New Hanover County's vote to withdraw support from Wave Transit
- Mr. Hawkins inquired about the communications that have occurred with New Hanover County in response to comments and concerns expressed by some members of the County Commission
- Mr. Clifford stated he depends on public transportation and spoke highly of the reliability and convenience of the bus service
- He stated he would not know what to do without Wave Transit as he uses the bus for medical and personal reasons
- Mr. Clifford asked that transportation services continue, without interruption, as the bus is a lifeline for many folks, including himself
- Ms. Smith stated the buses seemed to run more efficiently five or six years ago before routes were changed
- She stated she is 65 years old and has difficulty walking long distances to access a bus stop and expressed the need for more covered shelters and upgraded passenger amenities
- Ms. Smith stated that the great customer service demonstrated by bus operators carries a lot of weight with passengers
- Ms. Shorter stated a reduction in service hours would create undue stress and worry for her and her family members as access to vital medical services, work and school would be compromised
- She said she is advocating on behalf of herself and her neighbors unable to attend the meeting
- She highlighted the impact a reduction in service hours would have on low income individuals in the community
- Hearing no further comments, Mr. Smith thanked everyone for their attendance and comments
- Mr. Smith closed the public comment period

CONSENT AGENDA

- Mr. Smith presented the November 2019 consent agenda for approval
- Mr. Betz made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented
- Ms. Ryan seconded the motion and the motion carried

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Mr. Smith stated the committee did not meet
- Mr. Smith recognized Mr. Eby to provide an update on local funding
- Mr. Eby said a supplementation appropriations request was made to the City of Wilmington, New Hanover County, Brunswick County, Town of Leland, Town of Navassa and Town of Carolina Beach
- He stated the total amount requested from the above noted jurisdictions was \$250,000 from the City of Wilmington, \$57,000 from New Hanover County, \$5,500 from Brunswick County, \$9,500 from the Town of Leland, \$2,350 from Town of Navassa and \$1,800 from the Town of Carolina Beach
- Mr. Eby confirmed Brunswick County voted to table the request until December, the Town of Leland denied the request, New Hanover County denied the request and responses from the City of Wilmington, the Town of Carolina Beach and the Town of Navassa are pending
- Mr. Smith recommended a local funding ad hoc committee be created to ensure this item receives the appropriate attention and continued discussion to address the financial challenges for the current fiscal year and beyond

- He appointed Mr. Barfield, Mr. Lawler and Mr. Betz to the committee which he volunteered to chair
- Staff resources include the Executive Director, Deputy Director, Director of Finance and Administration and counsel
- He stated that board members may be asked to provide input during the meetings from standing Authority committees

PLANNING AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

- Mr. Smith recognized Ms. Ryan to give the committee report
- Ms. Ryan noted a 1.69% increase in fixed route bus ridership for October 2019 as compared to October 2018
- She stated the ridership in October 2018 was compromised by Hurricane Florence recovery efforts which were still underway
- Ms. Ryan reported current advertising inventory for fixed route buses is 70%
- She stated the strength of the advertising program remains strong as contract sales and inventory levels for the new buses continue to trend in a positive direction
- She stated service preparations for the two new trolley vehicles are underway
- She reported an unveiling ceremony for the new trolley vehicle and the revised Port City Trolley Program is planned for 12:00 pm on Monday, November 25th

FINANCE & BUDGET COMMITTEE

- Mr. Smith recognized Mr. McKay to present the committee report
- Mr. McKay stated revenues are below adopted budget levels at \$81,000
- He stated the negative variance under contracted services correlates to the timing and delivery of service to UNCW
- Mr. McKay stated the negative variance under Paratransit contracted services continues to decrease as the fiscal year progresses
- He reported operating subsidies are consistent with the November report
- Mr. McKay stated appropriations received by local funding partners and federal grants received continue to have a positive impact on cash flow
- He stated official notification on the release of the State Maintenance Assistance Program (SMAP) funding is anticipated for January 2020
- Mr. McKay confirmed \$95,000 of the \$132,000 negative variance under the benefits line item is due to an increase in medical insurance premiums and the timing in which they are due
- Mr. McKay reported an increase in capital assets of rolling stock and the downtown transfer facility totaling roughly five million dollars was added to the balance sheet at the close of FY 2019
- Mr. McKay confirmed that a revised FY 2020 budget will be presented to the full board upon receipt of any supplemental appropriations from local funding partners
- He stressed that the full cost of the savings outlined in the Service Reduction Resolution are estimated and further cuts may be required
- Mr. McKay confirmed that the audit report will be presented to the full board during the December meeting

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

- Mr. Smith recognized Mr. Kelly gave the committee report
- He stated a time and date for the WMMTC ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony has been confirmed for 1:00 pm on Friday, January 17, 2020 with a full transition of operations to the new transit center occurring on Saturday, January 18, 2020
- Mr. Kelly presented October purchase orders totaling \$15,811.62:
 - Port City signs for monument and interior signage - \$8,271.32

- Sound Decisions for data displays - \$7,540.30
- The motion was made by committee and no second was required
- Mr. Smith called the question
- The motion carried
- Mr. Kelly stated he found the public comment period to be very moving
- Mr. Kelly stated he feels very fortunate when he hears what members of the community must contend with to meet their basic transportation needs which so many take for granted
- He concluded that public transportation does not make getting around Wilmington convenient, it makes it possible; if the community cannot continue to provide the most basic transit services it would be a tragedy for the community at large

WAVE CONNECT

- Mr. Smith recognized Mr. Gainey to give the committee report
- Mr. Gainey stated the committee did not meet
- He said information on reduced fare transportation offerings under the Wave Transit Honors Veterans Program was disseminated to veterans in attendance at memorial at the National Cemetery on Veterans Day
- Mr. Gainey thanked Mr. Betz for his service as the Chairman of the Veterans Council

STAFF REPORT

- Mr. Smith recognized Mr. Eby to give the staff report
- Mr. Eby stated the transition of non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) under Medicaid to a brokerage transportation model has been suspended by DHHS
- He stated the transition was scheduled to take effect on February 1, 2020 and the Authority will continue to closely monitor for any updates provided by the state
- Mr. Eby recognized Ms. Matheny to provide the remainder of the staff report
- Ms. Matheny stated efforts under the *Did you Know...* public relations campaign are ongoing
- Mr. Barfield suggested Wave Transit focus on human interest stories and the human element of transit focusing on the emotional aspect
- She confirmed outreach and educational efforts for both staff and customers will continue through the opening of the new facility
- Ms. Matheny stated an invitation to the Port City Trolley unveiling event scheduled for Monday, November 25th at 12:00 pm has been shared with stakeholders, partners and the community at large

CONTRACTOR REPORT

- Mr. Smith recognized Ms. Hall to give the contractor's report
- Ms. Hall stated labor negotiations with the union are currently underway
- She confirmed the current absenteeism rate continues to have a significant negative impact on operator overtime
- Ms. Hall stated efforts to reduce operator overtime are ongoing
- Mr. Barfield questioned the effectiveness of a peer management approach to address the issue
- Mr. Smith stated employees might be reluctant to call out if they understand the impact that absenteeism has on their peers
- Ms. Hall stated that the issue is being discussed with union leadership and more stringent disciplinary actions may result
- Ms. Hall said that farebox issues brought up during the public comment period are typically minor
- The card media is affected by humidity, dirt and other impacts
- Switching to a more sturdy medial is being investigated

NEW BUSINESS

- None

OLD BUSINESS

- None

ADJOURN

- Mr. Smith wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and asked for a motion to adjourn
- Mr. Betz made a motion to adjourn the November 2019 meeting
- Mr. Kelly seconded the motion and the motion carried

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

- The next board meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2019 at 12:00 pm in the Forden Station Board Room

Respectfully Submitted,



Albert Eby
Executive Director
/kw/mm