

# WINSTON-SALEM TRANSIT AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Cark Campbell Transportation Center Training Room  
100 W. Fifth Street, Winston-Salem, NC

## MINUTES

THURSDAY; JANUARY 25, 2018

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### PRESENT:

#### **Board Members**

Robert Garcia, Chairman  
Keith King, Vice Chairman  
Regina Streed  
Jack Fleer  
Ruth Carter

#### **WSTA Staff**

Art Barnes, General Manager  
John M. Ashford, Asst. General Manger  
Verylen Crawford, Operations Director  
Robin Kirby, Finance Manager  
Tina Carson-Wilkins, PR & Marketing  
Tikiha Alston, ADA Coordinator &  
Customer Service Manger  
Teika Holloway, Admin. Assistant

#### **Others**

Toneq´ McCullough, Transportation  
Director  
Dewey Willard, Accounting Services  
Manager  
Sheldon Johnson, Sr. Financial Analyst  
Brenda King, DOT Finance Manager  
Morgan, Simmons, City Planner  
Claire Stone, Transit Rider Advocate  
CAT's

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#### **Meeting Opened: 4:02 pm**

Chairman Robert Garcia greeted everyone and welcomed them to the January 25, 2017 meeting. He said there are no resolutions needing approval; only information items are on the agenda.

Chairman Garcia announced that Dr. Trae Cotton will be stepping off the Board. He went on to say he was hoping that Dr. Cotton would be in attendance; but since he is not, Chairman Garcia

said he would like to discuss giving Dr. Cotton a little something from the Board as a token of appreciation. Mr. Barnes agreed. Chairman Garcia went on to say the Board certainly will miss Dr. Cotton; he was given a fantastic opportunity in Tennessee. Mr. Barnes stated Dr. Cotton's opportunity is in Chattanooga, Tennessee, more specifically. Chairman Garcia said that Dr. Cotton has been a great Board Member and he is sure that he will do big things in Chattanooga. He told the members of the Board to send Dr. Cotton an email if they would like to wish him well and say goodbye.

### **Resolution Approving the Minutes for the October 26, 2017 Board Meeting**

Chairman Garcia asked that the Board take a moment to look over the minutes for the October 26, 2017 Board Meeting minutes if they haven't already done so.

**Dr. Jack Fler stated when it is appropriate he move that the minutes be approved. Chairman Garcia said there is a motion to approve the minutes for October 26 meeting; is there a second. Mrs. Regina Streed seconded this move to approve. WSTA's October 26, 17 WSTA Board Meeting minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.**

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Claire Stone- Stated at the last meeting it was requested that she provide complaints in advance (they already has been). The rider's issues have been emailed to WSTA staff and they respond. Ms. Stone stated she then compiles them. A section of the handouts distributed by Ms. Stone contains this compilation, as well as, the CAT's minutes. It was stated in the last meeting that riders do not get responses from WSTA staff; but, they do. Ms. Tikiha Alston and other staff will either call or write a letter to the rider that had the complaint; not just a copy of the email. Ms. Stone stated she has not had any rider indicate WSTA does not respond to complaints. She mentioned she was telling Ms. Alston there has been fewer complaints lately.

Ms. Stone said she primarily wants to talk about the handout concerning the 'no show' policy. She went on to say 'no show' policies are complicated; but, the 2 aspects on the front of the handout are the most important. The 3 or more points are like a baseline and the top of it is 15% of the trips. If the rider took 60 trips in a month, they could possibly get 3 or more points with 15% of 60 trips being 9 trips that would have to involve something. The process is restarted quarterly (every 3 months). This sounds lenient; but, when you have a policy like this in place, people are concerned and do not want to get 'no shows'. Ms. Stone feels WSTA will benefit from this.

After directing everyone to the bottom of the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of the same handout, Ms. Stone read an excerpt from the minutes of the last Board meeting.

*According to Mr. Roderick Cockerham, (Para-Transit Director) WSTA averages about 20-30 "No Shows" a week with a maximum of 60 per week.*

She then stated Transdev reported to Greensboro that there were 270 'no shows' in December 2017. In WSTA's report from Transdev, 'no shows' are reported as 1,463 for December 2017. Ms. Stone said WSTA has been told by contract staff that 'no shows' average about 250-240 a month approximately (or somewhere around there). Ms. Stone stated she want to know why there is such a huge difference. Mr. Barnes asked if the 1,463 annual. She said she did not think so; the December 2017 Trans-Aid Board Report is attached to the handout. Ms. Stone said she has been telling WSTA for a long time she didn't believe this was correct; she is trying to get this listed as a ratio.

Ms. Stone said the last thing on her list is the speaker to the Board should be moved permanently before the vote. WSTA had a speaker at the last meeting expressing his fixed route concerns and WSTA had a vote about a fixed route modification before this person was allowed to speak. She said this is the third time that this has happened. This is illegal because the meeting is part of the public hearing process. Ms. Stone said she already has a letter on this topic going to the City Manager's office. She said she going to keep on telling WSTA this and WSTA should know she is not going to give up on this one. The speakers to the Board should be coming before the votes so that anyone who shows up and happens to want to speak about the vote will have a change. Thanks.

Chairman Garcia thanked Mrs. Stone for her comments and asked if there were any questions from the Board. There were no questions.

### **Information Items**

***Business-40 Mitigation Proposal***-Mr. Barnes said Ms. Morgan Simmons will give a presentation on this proposal that will provide a little bit of a background. He stated just about everyone knows BUS 40 is going to close down this November. There has been a lot of work done in regards to that going back a year and a half or so. Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) and Winston-Salem Department of Transportation both submitted proposals to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that were combined into one package. There are several components to the packet on WSTA's part—Park and Ride, Marketing, Guarantee of Ride Home. Mr. Barnes then turned the floor over to Ms. Morgan Simmons.

Ms. Simmons greeted everyone and stated she was going to give the highlights of the Traffic Mitigation Plan proposed to North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), as well as, to FHA.

The 1.2 mile section of US 421/Business 40, that runs through downtown, will experience major reconstruction and modernization. This project is divided up into four segments noted as A, B, C, and D. Segments B and C will impact transit the most because there will be complete closure during these construction periods. The Mitigation Project Team developed goals to hopefully ease the impact caused by the reconstruction. Strategies to meet these goals were categorized as follows: Congestion Management, Marketing and Communication, Incentives to Not Drive.

WSTA's congestion management strategies for minimizing congestion within the traffic relief zone (TRZ) consists of increased frequency in routes, WSTA express buses, and the rehabilitation of 18 buses in the current fleet in addition to additional buses on reserve. A cost analysis was done and it was determined that it is more economical to rehabilitate the buses that are being used minimally verses the cost of leasing buses. Chairman Garcia asked if the rehabilitated buses part of the fleet. Mr. Barnes answered by saying yes, they are minimally used spares that were purchased in 2000 and 2002. Ms. Simmons added that by rehabilitating the buses will add life to them. Vice-chairman King asked, other than coming from the Mall to straight down, where will the express buses be coming from. Ms. Simmons stated they will be coming from the different park and ride lots which hopefully can be located at the three Wal-Marts, a shopping Plaza on Robinhood Road as well as a couple of other locations being reviewed. Chairman Garcia asked if permission has been given for the use of these locations. Ms. Simmons stated this is currently being worked on these locations are just proposals at the moment. Mr. Barnes said he spoke with authorities at Hanes Mall and they are very enthusiastic about it. He went on the say that he expects that the others would be as well. He can't imagine

they wouldn't be; the express buses would be bringing people (most of which have discretionary income) to their shopping centers. Ms. Simmons shared that even though the spare buses were being rehabilitated, a line item was included in the mitigation plan for the leasing of two Fixed Route vehicles and 5 paratransit vehicles. Vice-chairman King asked how long it would take to acquire leased buses if the need arise. Ms. Morgan Simmons said it would take about 6-8 months. To this Vice-chairman King stated, we would need to know within the next month if we will need to lease buses. Mrs. Barnes stated WSTA is on a very short timeline with all of this. Chairman Garcia asked Mr. John Ashford if it was a short timeline for rehabilitating the buses as well. Mr. Ashford responded with yes; a very short one.

Ms. Simmons moved on to discuss incentive strategies. As an incentive not to drive, staff proposed free transit transportation via Fixed Route service; however, due to regulation, free transportation would also have to be offered for Trans-Aid service as well. This incentive was favored the least. The mitigation team wants to entice people to utilize Transit. Therefore, another incentive is to offer a taxi service program to the participants of the Park & Ride Lots. The question was proposed if an individual had an emergency what would they do. A program was created to provide direct access to Park and Ride lots in the case of an emergency three times a year for the two year closure period (6 times total). The service will be initiated by calling the call center and requesting it.

WSTA will market its mitigation services via its website, radio, newspaper, social media, and bus signage. Just as Ms. Simmons indicated earlier about several lots being impacted by the BUS 40 closure, several bus stops will be impacted as well. There are several bus stops that will be reachable; therefore, they will not be served. Different signs will be placed at each of these bus stops informing passengers of this lack of service. Signage will be used to Marketing will be done prior to, during, and after the closure. Travel training sessions will be available to the public at designated locations throughout the community. During the morning and evening of the first week, there will be at least one person will be at each Park & Ride Lot and at least three people at the Transit Center (clearly identified with 'Can I Help You?' shirts and employee ID), available to assist passengers with navigating the routes.

WSTA is requesting \$12,867,932 of the \$23,033,886 that is being requested from the combined agencies. After approval from FHWA and NCDOT, WSTA will coordinate with state and regional partners and begin the execution of steps to be taken during the following phases of the reconstruction project: Pre-Closure, Beginning of Closure, During Closure, Approaching the End of Closure, and Closure End. Ms. Simmons opened the floor to questions.

Dr. Fleer said he notice there is a lot of input by Environmental Quality. He is wondering what are the consequences, if any (negative or positive), about using rehabilitated buses in regards to environmental impact. Ms. Simmons stated that considering all of WSTA's buses for the most part are hybrid. This means there may be a positive impact. However, for those that are not hybrid, WSTA will work with the Department of Environmental Quality to do what is recommended. Dr. Fleer then asked for confirmation that all the buses to be rehabilitated are non-hybrid. Mr. Barnes confirmed this to be correct and went on to say there is still a benefit there in terms of reducing emissions. If you get 30 people on the bus and take 30 vehicles off the road, it will still reduce emissions. Some vocally agreed to this.

Chairman Garcia mentioned staffing. To this Mr. Barnes said if you are referring to drivers/operators, in the transit industry it is common to never have enough drivers. One never reaches the point where overtime is not being paid out. It has always been like this the 20 years this year that he has been with WSTA; it has never changed. So there is a good possibility WSTA will be paying a lot of the operators they currently have overtime.

Ms. Simmons asked if there were any more questions. Dr. Fleer stated that he did not have a question; however, he wanted to commend Ms. Morgan Simmons and her staff on this very fine report. Ms. Simmons thanked him and informed this was a joint effort. Ms. Simmons said once this entire ordeal is over she would like to see WSTA retain some of the ridership that was generated by the Bus 40 closure. She shared that when the 85 bridge collapsed in Atlanta, MARTA's ridership spiked. Ever since this happened ridership has been pretty high because people started utilizing a service they hadn't before and realized how efficient that service is. WSTA is hoping to convert some people to become transit riders. Chairman Garcia asked Ms. Simmons will there be a task force other than herself throughout this ordeal. Ms. Simmons answered between City DOT staff, WSTA staff, PART Staff, and IC DOT staff; we are all in it together. Chairman Garcia asked what the projected date of having everything done was. Mr. Barnes responded 2 years (2020).

Dr. Fleer said he knows the process is coming no matter what happens with the mitigation process; but, he is also noticing that there has been a fairly significant drop in ridership for this past year. Have other communities that have experienced these types of issues, have a drop in ridership due to these kinds of interruptions to normal service. Ms. Simmons explained that she is not exactly sure about this. She stated she does not have figures regarding that because a lot of the ridership information she received pertained to the Park and Ride lot. With that being said there is some anticipation of ridership dropping due to the changes being a 'harsh reality' immediately but then increase as people get used to it. Again, Dr. Fleer stated he knows that this has to be done; however, he is just wondering if WSTA should be thinking about what the consequences might be in terms of reduced ridership. Mr. Barnes stated certainly people will not be going anywhere in their cars; so there is the potential that WSTA can work with some agencies to get people on the bus. It may take the same amount of time to get to where they are going; but, certainly they would not be going any faster in their personal vehicles. If WSTA can make it more convenient for them, they can work on their devices, read their papers, and maybe do whatever while being driven to their destinations. This is an incentive. Dr. Fleer asked Mr. Barnes for confirmation that he doesn't anticipate any reduction in ridership. Mr. Barnes confirmed he does not with in normal ridership. He said there is only the potential to go up in ridership with respect to the park and ride lots. If you can get one person on the bus, it is more than what you had. Chairman Garcia asked if the media was going to be onboard so that a lot of money will not have to be paid out for advertising. Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins said she knows the media will be excited about the possibilities of making a lot of money; but, they are going to go where the story is no matter what and this is a really big deal. She went on to say that everyone she has spoken to in the public sector is not looking forward to the closure so she is pretty sure the media will be heavily involved. Mr. Barnes shared there was a Marketing Meeting held yesterday and he really like the theme that accidentally came up—"The End is Near!".

***Request for Information (Volkswagen Consent Decree)***-In September 2015, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a notice of violation of the Clean Air Act to German automaker Volkswagen Group. The EPA has resolved a civil enforcement case against Volkswagen subject to reservations set forth in three partial settlements. These settlements resolve allegations that Volkswagen violated the Clean Air Act by the sale of approximately 590,000 model year 2009 to 2016 diesel motor vehicles equipped with "defeat devices" in the form of computer software designed to cheat on federal emissions tests. The major excess pollutant at issue in this case is oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), and is a serious health concern. (this insert was taken from <https://www.epa.gov/vw/learn-about-volkswagen-violations>).

In December of 2017, a collaborative effort by WSTA, WSDOT, and Forsyth County Office of Environmental Assistance and Protection staff submitted a response to the Volkswagen Settlement Request for Information (RFI).

The response recommended projects, such as the replacement of diesel buses for alternatively fueled buses, to be highly considered for use of settlement funds.

Approximately 92 million in funds will be available to the state of North Carolina for environmental mitigation projects.

In the response, staff provided transit project recommendations, its anticipated emission reductions if funded and its potential impact on future mitigation strategies during the Business 40 Closure (Fall 2018-Summer 2020).

For more information about the Volkswagen Settlement, please visit NC DEQ:

<https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/air-quality/motor-vehicles-and-air-quality/volkswagen-settlement>.

(This information was taken from Ms. Morgan Simmons presentation at the January 25, 2018 WSTA's Board Meeting)

Mr. Barnes explained that this RFI was kind of tied into the Bus 40 Mitigation Plan because it just made sense to do so. He said this was almost a \$15 billion settlement across the country. Approximately \$92 million in funds will be available to the state of North Carolina for environmental mitigation projects. Mr. Barnes also explained that this was a request for information; it doesn't mean that it funds will be awarded. They just want to know how WSTA can use the funds.

**Route 100**-Everyone knows that Route 100 has been discussed frequently in past meetings. WSTA is going to do, at the suggestion of councilmen and staff, is make modifications to this route in order to save it. The route will start at Union Station, go down to Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), make a right onto Rams Drive, go down to Salem Road and make a right or a left. Right now the plan is to make a left; however, Salem College has given some input that could result in a right turn being made. The bus would then go over to Main Street instead of making a left and going to Main Street. The will go by Salem College over to Main Street past the University of North Carolina School for the Arts (UNCSA), down to Silas Creek to Forsyth Community College. The route will then make a right onto Miller Street, go down to Stratford Road to the loop that circles back to Silas Creek. The route will go through Hanes Mall and then reverse going back to Union Station. The logic is that grocery and commercial shopping will be provided for students. The frequency is approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. Although the route is a little long, it is thought to be viable. The route is slated to start on February 25, 2018. Marketing will start for this initiative next week.

**Finance Report**-Mr. Barnes stated he had to make some adjustments to the Finance Report because the figures and the actuals aren't entered as of yet; and, funds are not received from places like the state or feds. There is a deficit of \$134,000 in the operating revenues. The Trans-Aid revenues have a deficit of about \$53,000 after adjustments were made. Transit expenses are \$863,000 to the good. The bottom line is WSTA is \$857,000 to the good at this point in time.

Mr. Barnes asked Mr. Dewey Williard to introduce Mr. Sheldon Johnson to the Board. Mr. Williard reminded the Board that Mrs. Glenda Sears retired from the Finance Department in October. He informed that Mr. Johnson will be filling the position Mrs. Sears vacated.

**Operations Report**-Year-to-date, Fixed Route ridership is down about 24%. Both preventable vehicle accidents and complaints are down. Chargeable complaints are up both for the month and year-to-date. Chairman Garcia mentioned that there was an increase in wheelchair passengers for Fixed Route and a decrease for Trans-Aid. He stated he thought that it would have been the other way around. Mr. Barnes said that he would look into it. Chairman Garcia also stated that there was a decrease in Trans-Aid passengers. Mr. Barnes directed the attention to the Trans-Aid report and said year-to-date still shows an increase; however, the gradual monthly decrease in Trans-Aid passengers is due the \$1 fare that was put into place October 1. Preventable employee accidents are the about the same for both Fixed Route and Trans-Aid while the total number of complaints for both are down.

There are no significant changes on the Maintenance report. However, there was a typo on the Road Calls. In the Dec-17 column the number should have been 100 instead of 120. Chairman Garcia asked Mr. Ashford to explain how the maintenance hours increased year-to-date while the mechanic hours decreased. Mr. Ashford responded utility workers' hours fall under maintenance hours and the amount of vacation taken effects the amount of work hours put in.

Mrs. Carter stated that she was amazed by how many people in wheelchairs ride the bus.

**Marketing Report**-The Marketing report was included in the meeting packet as usual. Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins pointed out some highlights from the report to the Board. This included WSTA's participation in the Wake Forest Baptist Health's I-40 Mitigation Fair that was held January 18, 2018. She gave the members of the Board the same 'goodies' that were given out at the fair. She demonstrated with an orange traffic cone stress reliever in one hand and a WSTA imprinted green suckers in the other while reciting, We don't want you to be stressed out about all the traffic cones you will be seeing soon; use your stress reliever. But, don't be a sucker; take public transportation!

For more Marketing details please refer to the report included in the meeting packet.

**The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.**

Transcribed by: Teika Holloway  
January 29, 2018