



WINSTON-SALEM TRANSIT AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Clark Campbell Transportation Center Training Room
100 W. Fifth Street, Winston-Salem, NC 27101

MINUTES

THURSDAY; February 27, 2020

PRESENT:

Board Members

Robert Garcia, Chairman
Keith King, Vice-Chairman
Jack Fleer
Willie Clark Jr.

Donna Woodson, General Manager
John M. Ashford, Asst. General Manger
Robin Kirby, Finance Manager
Tina Carson-Wilkins, PR & Marketing
Tikiha Alston, ADA Coordinator & Customer
Service Manager
Jackie Settle, Mobility Management Supervisor
Verylen, Crawford, Director of Operations
Carol Patrick, Operation’s Data Analyst
Teika Holloway, Administrative Assistant

Public

None

WSTA Staff

City Staff

Toneq’ McCullough, Director of Transportation
Elizabeth Coyle, DOT City Planner
Dewey Williard, Accounting Services Manager
Amber Cottrell, Senior Financial Analyst

Meeting Opened: 4:04 pm

Chairman Garcia greeted everyone in attendance. He apologized for his absence at the last Board meeting; and, thanked Vice-Chairman King for stepping in on his behalf.

Safety Message

Ms. Donna Woodson read the safety message aloud.

Safety Message—Reduce your speed and increase your following distance; it is safer to leave yourself a way OUT!

Ms. Woodson said she chose this message because of the inclement weather status. Any time there is inclement weather, Operators are told to “Leave yourself an out;” and, “Increase your distance between you and the vehicle in front of you so that you have time to stop if necessary.

Also, the safety meeting is currently being held next door. Ms. Woodson stated this safety message actually goes with this month's initiative. With that being said, Transdev had put out a video on safe following distance that is being shown at the safety meetings.

Mr. Garcia asked if everyone know a good way to determine a good following distance? He shared if you are at a stop sign and there is a car in front of you, you wait until that car passes the stop sign on the opposite side and count (1 one thousand, 2 one thousand) before proceeding.

Public Comment:

None

Approval of the January 30, 2020 Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Garcia told everyone there were a few minor changes made to the agenda after it was emailed.

Before Chairman Garcia gave the Board a moment to review the minutes from the January Board Meeting, Teika Holloway informed that Ms. Tikiha Alston was mistakenly left off the list as being present at the January Meeting. Chairman Garcia then gave the Board a moment to review the minutes for approval.

Dr. Jack Fleer moved to adopt the January 30, 2020 WSTA Board Meeting Minutes. Vice-Chairman King seconded his move. The January 30, 2020 WSTA Board Meeting minutes were approved.

Resolution Approving WSTA to Participate in National "Get on Board" Transit Day Fare-Free Promotion

Ms. Woodson told the Board this resolution is being presented on Behalf of the citizens of the City of Winston-Salem. Staff is requesting that WSTA follow suit as was done last year. WSTA's first time participating with HiTran, Greensboro Transit Authority (GTA), and P.A.R.T. was in 2019. The National get on Board Day will be held on April 16. It will be a fare-free day for all public transportation including Trans-Aid.

Chairman King asked would this be promoted. Ms. Woodson said yes and; Mrs. Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins shared the different avenues that will be used to promote the event. Chairman Garcia then asked how would WSTA's bottom line revenues be affected. Ms. Woodson said the bottom-line revenues would not be affected that much. She apologized for not including the numbers from last year; but, she does remember the increase in ridership was not as significant as it could have been. This is due to the decision to participate being made so close to the event date. It left very little time for advertising. Ms. Woodson feels there will be an increase in ridership for 2020 being there is more time for advertising. She also stated she will provide the numbers that show the effect on the bottom line for 2019.

Chairman Garcia asked if the cost incurred was a write-off. Ms. Woodson confirmed that it is

Dr Flear moved to adopt and Vice-Chairman King seconded his move. The Resolution Approving WSTA to Participate in National “Get on Bard” Transit Day Fare-Free Promotion was approved unanimously.

Resolution Approving New Membership to WSTA’s Pension Program Committee

Ms. Woodson began by saying she is unsure if any of the Board Members remember the last time, they approved participation of membership in then 401K.Pension Program. However; the WSTA board has to approve new members of this committee prior to them serving as committee members.

The Pension Committee is structured to include one employee from each department to serve as a voting member. All voting members must be a participant in the plan. Currently representation is missing for Trans-Aid and Fixed Route departments. WSTA’s Pension Committee seeks Board approval to add Ms. LaTia Brown—Fixed Route Operator and Ms. Fran Carter—Trans-Aid to become voting members of the Pension Committee as representatives of their respective departments.

Chairman Garcia asked, by being representatives for their departments are they responsible for reporting back to their colleagues. Yes; Ms. Woodson explained that after meetings are held the information will be dispersed back to the respective departments

With that being said, Dr Flear moved to adopt the Resolution Approving New Membership to WSTA’s Pension Program Committee. Vice-Chairman King followed with a second move. The Resolution was passed unanimously.

Old Business:

New WSTA Board of Directors Update-Ms. Woodson stated that she spoke with Mrs. Linda Barnes two days ago; she advised that there are three potential members expected to be appointed to the WSTA Board of Directors. The Mayor’s office will be presenting the candidates to City Council for approval in the March meeting. If approved by City Council, she expects the new members to attend WSTA’s April Board Meeting.

Chairman Garcia asked if the Board would receive a bio on the potential members. Ms. Woodson said once they have been approved, she will ask if she can get their bios to send out to the Board. Chairman Garcia said that perhaps plans can be made to stay after the Board meeting to welcome them and speak with them off record.

New Business:

Introduction of New Safety Manager (Mr. Dexter Vines)-Ms. Woodson reminded the Board that December 31, 2019 was Mr. Bradley Smith’s (WSTA’s former Safety Director) last day. The position was posted and several applicants applied. There was an interviewing panel of three in person and Transdev’s Regional Safety Director participated by phone. Once the interview process was completed, WSTA hired and is very proud to introduce Mr. Dexter Vines as WSTA’s New Safety Director. Mr. Vines was given space to tell the Board a little about himself and his professional background. Mr. Vines is a native of Greensboro, NC with 26 years’ experience in transportation. Mr. Vines said he is glad to be apart WSTA.

Mitigation Bus Service Update—Ms. Woodson said this is just a verbal update; she is sure that everyone knows by now that Salem Parkway is open. When Business 40 initially closed down the state gave permission to add additional routes—mitigation routes—to assist with assumed traffic congestion. The construction of Business 40 is complete and Salem Parkway has reopened ahead of scheduled! The additional mitigation routes were originally approved to be operated through the Fall of 2020. Since the project has ended early, the state was contacted for approval to continue operating the mitigation routes supported by the state. NCDOT has permitted both WSTA and PART to continue the operations of the mitigation routes until June 30th at the latest. All invoicing related to the mitigation routes has to be completed prior the end of the fiscal year.

Staff has met and analyzed the routes and the performance of the routes so a recommendation can be made to City Council. WSTA wants the Board to be informed of what is being planned for the March Public Works Committee Meeting. WSTA will update the City Council on the performance of the mitigation routes. Staff’s recommendation is to end the mitigation routes on May 30, 2020. This allow time to get all the billing and invoicing in to the state before the end of the fiscal year. WSTA is not sure if Council will approve the recommendation. Several citizens are requesting the routes continue beyond June 30th to continue the 30-minute frequency of those routes. WSTA does understand this desire; but there must be a funding source, and the ridership data to support the request. The recommendation will be presented to the Public Works committee during the March 17, 2020 meeting.

There were a couple of routes that were successful in ridership, one of which is Route 80. Route 83 is a route that already had a high ridership rate prior. Although the express route did not have much, WSTA is going to recommend that if funding is found beyond the mitigation project, to allow for a 30-minute service on Route 83. The final route WSTA would recommend 30-minute frequency on would be Route 103. The increase in ridership on this route warrants this service.

Ms. Woodson said would be happy to share this information with Board to allow them the opportunity to look it over it as well.

Chairman Garcia mentioned all the planning ahead, and meetings that took place before Business 40 shutdown were executed without a hitch. He said that he takes his hat for a job well done. He also said he was speaking with Mr. John Ashford—Maintenance Manager and Assistant General Manager—in regards to his great Maintenance record, even with the old buses (17) that had to be restored before being put back in circulation and ran like champs.

Chairman Garcia went on to say that some of the one-way streets downtown are going to be turned into two-way streets. He asked if this was being considered before a decision is made on eliminating routes. Ms. Woodson asked Mr. Verylen Crawford if any of the buses we need to be rerouted with these changes. Mr. Crawford said a couple of buses will be affected by First Street conversion. However, Transit can benefit from Liberty Street as two-way by being able to go both ways. Mr. Crawford asked if First Street would be widened as well. Ms. Toneq’ McCullough stated there would be to widening of streets.

Dr. Fleer asked Ms. Woodson about her plan to recommend Route 103 have a 30 min frequency. She confirmed and Dr. Fleer stated this is one of the most frequent things he hears. Having more routes with 30-minute frequencies is one of the main subjects he hears being suggested as an improvement for transit services. He went on to say he doesn’t know if it is justified financially;

but apparently it is one of the things that contribute to wait time and time spent on the bus. Dr. Fler asked how many routes are there that run on a 30-minute frequency. Ms. Woodson said, currently there is only one—Route 87—outside of the mitigation routes. Ms. Woodson stated WSTA is aware of the benefit of having 30-minute frequencies and is looking at the Route performance over a period of time. Evaluating performance over time will allow WSTA to make cost efficient changes in service that can be supported by ridership data. After this, and analytical review will be done to identify the trends of performance and or ridership. This process would provide staff data to estimate the benefit of 30-minute frequencies for routes specific to time of day, peak times etc. This is a process that WSTA is evaluation but, consultants will be hired assist with making any service decisions moving forward.

Before moving on to the Staff Reports, Dr. Fler stated he understood there was a limitation on the number of packages a passenger may carry on the bus. He asked that this be confirmed. Ms. Woodson did confirm this to be true by stating there is two-bag limit; and, went on to explain why this policy is in place to address safety concerns. She stated that you have consider the liability for those handling the bags. For example, a Trans-Aid rider may have more bags then they can carry safely; then the diver is put in the position of having to assist the passenger and maintain the passenger's bags. This heightens the possibility of the driver and/or passenger getting hurt or injured. One must also take storage in consideration. If the passenger cannot maintain possession of all their bags and place them on the floor, this also creates a safety concern. The bags can be placed in the isle, items can roll out; and, etc.

However, the two-bag limit policy has been relaxed. WSTA knows there are a lot of passenger that have issues with getting around to take care of their essential needs such as groceries. The two-bag limit causes them to have to make several trips to get the things they need. The operators are aware of this. WSTA is working on revising the riders' guide. Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins and Ms. Tikiha Alston are assisting with this process, there will be modifications to the current Trans-Aid Riders' Guide as well as a separate guide for Fixed Route.

Dr. Fler asked how the passengers were being notified of the policy's relaxed state. Ms. Woodson said has not been advertised. When the passenger shows up with four bags, for example, the operator will not turn them away; however, the driver will ask them to consolidate the bags into two if possible and ask that they maintain their bags at all times. Dr. Fler confirmed by stating the driver has that discretion. He then asked how long it will be before the new policy will go into effect. Ms. Woodson explained after the rider's guides are created and or revised, we have to have a public hearing process to comply with FTA and Title VI regulations. Dr. Fler asked if all this would take about six months. Ms. Woodson said this could possibly be a six-month process.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (added to the agenda)-Ms. Woodson distributed a flyer she received from Transdev about the Coronavirus. She stated she knows everyone has heard about this virus by now. WSTA has put posters and distributed information for its employees' safety. Ms. Woodson feels the flyer is a good tool to share with Members and meeting attendees. The flyer covers how the virus is transmitted, it's symptoms, preventive measures, and treatment.

Staff Reports:

- ***Operation's Monthly Data Presentation by Carol Patrick***-Fixed Route ridership showed a decrease which is normal for the winter months. Also, the amount of rain we have had the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020 may have possibly contributed to the decrease in ridership.

Fixed Route's on time performance appears to be on the rise. WSTA has hope of continuing this trend. Chairman Garcia asked what is the industry standard for on-time-performance. Ms. Woodson explained that it depended on the city and its layout; however, over all it hovers between 92 and 95 percent. Ms. Woodson shared that on-time performance targets vary in some larger states with mass transit such as Georgia, New York and DC. It can average between 85 and 89 percent due to the tremendous amount of traffic.

Trans-Aid had a dip in ridership the month of December 2019 but came back up in January 2020. Again, this dip in ridership could have been caused by a lot of rain during the month of December. Trips per passenger hour is at 3. It is great to average at least 3 passengers per hour although it doesn't seem like a lot. Ms. Patrick stated Trans-Aid transported a lot of wheelchairs the month of January. Ms. Woodson added this had a tremendous effect on Trans-Aid's on-time-performance. It takes time to load and unload the wheelchairs, safely secure them, and strapped down and unstrap them. With that being said, when the wheelchair passengers increase, on-time-performance decreases. Dr. Fler asked if on-time-performance rate for Trans-Aid is the same as it is for Fixed Route. Ms. Woodson answered due to the nature of the passengers—even if they are ambulatory—it is not. She would have to find out what the system average is if one exists.

Ms. Patrick reported the total number of accidents is down lower than it has been in a very long time. There was a total of six accidents the month of January, all the accidents reported were in Fixed Route—three preventable and three non-preventable (none for Trans-Aid or Maintenance).

Ms. Patrick exhibited a chart the showed extremely high phone calls the beginning of the year in 2017. This was during the time there was a drastic change in bus routes. As the year went on the calls leveled off. There were also changes routes in 2018 (mitigation routes); however, they were not as drastic as the changes in 2017. **Currently 97 percent of phones calls are being answered which is A-W-E-S-O-M-E!!!!**

Chairman Garcia asked how much communication is done via internet. Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins said she and Ms. Tikiha Alston receive about 4-5 electronic messages a day from people that complete the information request form on the website.

- ***Fixed Route and Trans-Aid Operations Reports: October 2019, November 2019, and December 2019***-Chairman Garcia noted that Fixed Route's accidents are down. Ms. Woodson stated she and Staff believe the contributing factors in getting the accidents down are: having monthly safety meetings instead of quarterly, changing the layout and structure of the meetings, giving operators more data, having hands on sensitivity training, having visitors come in and give outside training, and in general giving more awareness to safety and

making is less fearful (making it fun). Hopefully the number will continue to trend down. Chairman Garcia asked about the Funding Source acronyms.

NS-No Show

CL-Canceled Late

CD-Canceled at the Door

The Funding Source Report is Monthly not year-to-date.

- **Maintenance Report: October 2019, November 2019, and December 2019**-No notable changes.
- **Finance Report Update: October 2019, November 2019, and December 2019**-Mrs. Robin Kirby pointed out the months of December and January fell a little below bar as far as Operations Expenses for Trans-Aid. The actual outflow of expenses exceeded the revenues for Trans-Aid. This is concerning. This is due to some revenues that have not been collected. One in particular is EDTAP Funding that is delayed. Overall WSTA's financial state is in good standing.

Chairman Garcia asked what miscellaneous revenues consisted of. Ms. Kirby apologized for not having a complete list of miscellaneous revenues on hand. She said it consists of things like refunds, strap metal payment, and over payments. She said she will provide more detail regarding this category at the next meeting.

- **Marketing Reports: October 2019, November 2019, and December 2019**-Mrs. Carson-Wilkins stated she is excited to announce the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Public Art Commission created a flyer soliciting artists for bus shelters. The flyers were distributed heavily throughout the City.

There will be a workshop held at the Clark Campbell Transportation Center in the Training Room on Tuesday. The hope is that people will come to the workshop to learn not only about bus shelter artwork project; but, upcoming projects as well. The bus shelter project is a competition and all will not qualify.

Upcoming Calendar of Events:

Safe Bus on display at the NC Transportation Museum
WS Public Art Commission Bus Shelter Artist Workshop
National Professional Transit Operations Appreciation Day
WS/FC Schools Transition Fair (MOTIVATE)
National Get on Board Public Transportation Day
Earth Day
WSTA Employee Safety/Service Appreciation Day
WSTA's 16th Annual Accessible Festival Mardi Gras Party

The meeting adjourned at 5:00p.m.

Transcribed by: Teika Holloway

March 2020