



WINSTON-SALEM TRANSIT AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

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

MINUTES

THURSDAY; April 30, 2020

PRESENT:

Board Members

Robert Garcia, Chairman
Keith King, Vice-Chairman
Jeanette Lawson-Jackson
Willie Clark Jr.

Public

None

WSTA Staff

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, Operations' Data Analyst
Teika Holloway, Administrative Assistant

City Staff

Toneq' McCullough, Director of Transportation
Elizabeth Coyle, DOT City Planner
Brenda King, DOT Finance Manager
Amber Cottrell, Senior Financial Analyst

Meeting Opened: 4:14 pm (Held Virtually)

Ms. Donna Woodson started the meeting by conducting a roll call. She then turned the meeting over to Chairman Robert Garcia.

Chairman Garcia greeted everyone and said he hopes that everyone is doing well. We are all experiencing things in our workplace and home life during the COVID-19 pandemic; but we pray that we will all come out of this for the good at the end. He said it was good to hear everyone's voice although he couldn't see everyone. He asked that everyone excuse any technical glitches that may transpire during the meeting. He reminded everyone to mute their phones to eliminate any background noise or speaker feedback.



Safety Message

Chairman Garcia said the safety message during the COVID-19 pandemic has been to take care of yourself and your loved ones. He said it seems as though a lot of people have deemed themselves experts regarding COVID-19. They feel they can go visit their friends and loved ones without wearing a mask and social distancing.

As his safety message, Chairman Garcia asked that we all keep in mind the “Stay at home” rule, social distancing, wearing masks in public places, washing our hands frequently, and sanitizing heavily used surfaces often.

Chairman Garcia thanked Ms. Donna Woodson for the work she and her team have been doing. He then asked if everyone heard about what happened at the Greensboro Transit Authority (GTA). If not, he would take a moment to recap what happened. There was no one that had not heard about it. Without going into specifics and details, Chairman Garcia expressed GTA was experiencing some serious issues. After reading reports and seeing it on television, Chairman Garcia stated he believes the issues were settled and that GTA responded as soon as possible.

He said Ms. Woodson did an excellent job putting things in place in the event something like that happened at WSTA. He advised that measures were already being taking for COVID-19; but more is being done.

Public Comment:

None-Via advertising, the public was asked to call 336.727.2648 to get conference call information. No calls were received.

Action Items:

Resolution Approving Remote Participation in Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) Meetings

City code for the City of Winston-Salem changed on April 6, 2020 allowing Boards and Commissions to meet remotely. This approved ordinance amendment establishes the procedures which must be met in order for members to participate in meetings remotely. Staff is requesting the WSTA Board of Directors to approve remote participation for WSTA’s Board and Committee meetings.

Mrs. Jeanette Lawson-Jackson moved to approve remote participation in WSTA Meetings. Vice-Chairman Keith King seconded the move. Remote participation in WSTA Meetings was approved.



Approval of the February 27, 2020 Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Garcia gave the members of the Board a minute to review the minutes from the last WSTA Board meeting.

Mrs. Jeanette Lawson-Jackson moved to adopt the February 27, 2020 WSTA Board Meeting Minutes. Vice-Chairman Keith King seconded his move. The February 27, 2020 WSTA Board Meeting minutes were approved.

Resolution Approving the City Manager to Sign in Approval of a Change Order for Additional Construction Services with APAC Thomson-Arthur Inc.

On January 30, 2020 the WSTA Board of Directors approved a change order for the resurfacing of the parking lots at the Transportation Center and the Administrative Building. During construction additional design work that would satisfy safety concerns identified. One concern is the removal of some islands in the bus lot at the Administrative Building. This additional construction requires another change order in the amount of \$141,312.00.

WSTA staff is requesting the WSTA Board of Directors to authorize the City Manager to approve a change order for this additional construction.

Vice-Chairman Keith King moved to adopt and Mrs. Jeanette Lawson-Jackson seconded his move. The Resolution Approving the City Manager to Sign in Approval of a Change Order for Additional Construction Services with APAC Thomson-Arthur Inc. was passed

Resolution Approving WSTA's Transportation Center Code of Conduct for the Clark Campbell Transportation Center

The Clark Campbell Transportation Center located at 100 West 5th Street is a public facility of the City of Winston-Salem. WSTA is responsible for providing the general public with safe and reliable transportation services. WSTA also is responsible for providing the public with a facility that is clean, free of disorderly conduct, and illegal activities.

WSTA's staff is requesting the WSTA Board of Directors to support and approve the Clark Campbell Transportation Center's Code of Conduct.

Vice-Chairman Keith King moved to adopt the Resolution Approving WSTA's Transportation Center Code of Conduct. Mrs. Jeanette Lawson-Jackson followed with a second move. The Resolution was passed unanimously.

Resolution Approving WSTA's Ban Policy for the Clark Campbell Transportation Center

The Clark Campbell Transportation Center located at 100 West 5th Street is a public facility of the City of Winston-Salem. WSTA has the responsibility to provide the general public with safe and reliable transportation services. WSTA is also responsible for providing access to Winston-Salem Transit Authority services and other public transportation services defined as Fixed Route, Paratransit, and Vanpool services whether operated by Winston-Salem Transit Authority or any governmental agency, firm or corporation contracting with the Winston-Salem Transit Authority.



The ban policy WSTA is proposing has been reviewed by the City Attorney's office to ensure it is in compliance with the City ordinance codes and also to ensure that it will hold up in court.

Vice-Chairman King asked what is the process for those that may feel they were banned wrongfully. Ms. Woodson responded by saying an appeals process is included in the policy. If a person wishes to appeal their ban, an email and phone number is listed in the policy to start the process. The person is given this information at the time they are banned. Appeal Hearings are held at 11:00 am every third Thursday of every month. The banned person may bring witnesses to speak on their behalf. A committee then decides if the appeal is granted or will remain in place.

WSTA's staff is requesting the WSTA Board of Directors to support and approve the Ban Policy for the Clark Campbell Transportation Center and all WSTA/City of Winston-Salem vehicles.

Vice-Chairman King moved to adopt the Resolution Approving WSTA's Ban Policy. Mrs. Jeanette Lawson-Jackson followed with a second move. The Resolution Approving WSTA's Ban Policy was passed.

Before moving on to 'Old Business,' Chairman Garcia asked Ms. Woodson how satisfied was she with the current security company. He was interested in knowing if she is satisfied with what the security company is doing to ensure that security is in place for the public, WSTA employees, and the Transportation Center (TC) in general; and if they are doing what needs to be done at a level sufficient to what they are being paid. Ms. Woodson said there has been issues with North State's security services they provide. She said WSTA has met with them regarding the issues on numerous occasions. Since those meetings, their service has improved. The officers are more visible, and they do more to enforce the policy for illegal activities. There is still room for improvement. With that being said, their contract was only extended for one year. This gives WSTA the option to bid for a new company if needed.

Chairman Garcia stated when dealing with a security company, a lot of the time, people do not take security officers seriously, especially if they do not see a city police officer onsite. Ms. Woodson agreed with his statement.

Winston-Salem Transit Authority's Expressive Activity Policy

Ms. Woodson said there is another policy included in the meeting packet as an information item. WSTA's Expressive Activity Policy is a new policy; its purpose is to regulate the time, place, and manner of expressive activity at the Clark Campbell Transportation Center. Ms. Woodson, along with the City's legal department created this policy.

Ms. Woodson asked Board members to please take some time to review this policy. It will be openly discussed at the next Board meeting. If you have any questions or concerns prior to the next meeting, please feel free to email them to Ms. Woodson. After discussion, WSTA staff will ask the Board for its approval to adopt this policy.



Old Business:

➤ **National Get on Board Transit Day:**

The National Get on Board Transit Day was canceled nationally due to COVID-19. When free transit trips are promoted ridership increases. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) COVID-19 guidelines require social distancing. Increased ridership has a negative impact on creating social distancing.

➤ **Responses to Board Member's Requests at the February Meeting:**

Ms. Donna Woodson-In response to Chairman Robert Garcia's request regarding the 2019 National Get on Board Transit Fare-Free Day, Fixed Route transported 8,893 passengers on April 25, 2019 which indicated a 229 passenger increase from the previous Thursday. Trans-AID transported 794 passengers on April 25, 2019 with an increase of 77 passenger trips from the previous Thursday.

Mrs. Robin Kirby-In response to Dr. Fleer's request to define miscellaneous revenues, the following are some examples: warranty claims, ATM fees, donations, rebates/refunds, garnishment fees, etc.

➤ **Update on WSTA's Suspension of the Two-Bag Rule for Transit Riders:**

The decision to suspend the two-bag rule was made in March as it relates to getting essential needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were several passengers and one citizen, (Serina Horner) that was committed to assisting the riders with the two-bag rule by asking WSTA to take another look at this rule. This rule limits passengers' ability to provide food for their families. In an effort to do everything possible to help people be able to feed their families with less stress as possible, the rule was relaxed.

Chairman Garcia noted it was Ms. Serina Horne, a student in high school, that was very active in getting this rule relaxed. She has also asked that it be reconsidered in the future. Ms. Woodson said Ms. Horner will be attending one of our Board meetings to discuss her project further when we are allowed to have in person meetings again.

New Business:

Triangle/Triad Real-Time Bus Information System Announcement-This item was put on the agenda as an FYI for the Board.

Currently WSTA is using Nextbus as its real-time bus information system. The state is looking into having a Triangle/Triad Real-Time Bus Information System. Representatives from each transit have been participating in conference calls discussing each agency and information needed to provide this service. If all transits can get on one large system, it will minimize the costs for all properties involved. Currently PART, High Point, Davidson County, Greensboro, and Burlington are a part of this process. Winston-Salem and Raleigh have now joined the conversations. The original start date was for the fall of 2020; however, due to COVID-19 it has been delayed and the conversations have stopped until further notice.



Chairman Garcia asked if this will be a renewing of the system we now have. Ms. Woodson answered this will replace the current real-time system we now have (Nextbus). One of the benefits that WSTA and the Raleigh transit system will have will be the ability to see the pros and cons once the other transits have the system. When all of the bugs and kinks are worked out a decision can be made to get on board with the program or not. Ms. Woodson assured Chairman Garcia that she will keep the Board informed of the pros and cons of joining the system.

WSTA's Ridership Report of Shelter Overflow Assistance-During the months of December through March, WSTA provided transportation to overflow shelters in Winston-Salem. Ms. Woodson is a member of the Housing Coalition and one of her team members works at a mediation center that assists with shelter overflow provided by churches and other locations willing to house the homeless overnight. They were having issues with transportation and asked if WSTA would be willing to assist in this capacity. WSTA agreed and transportation was provided with a Trans-Aid van.

Ms. Woodson said she wants to keep the Board informed of the things WSTA does in the community. The Housing Coalition and the homeless truly appreciated this gesture of kindness from WSTA.

COVID-19 and CARES Act Informational Update-On March 27, 2020 President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Under this Act the Federal Transportation Authority (FTA) awarded WSTA with twelve million, three hundred eighty-nine thousand, nine hundred seventy-six dollars (\$12,389,976.00). Ms. Woodson sent information to the Board informing how this money would be allocated—the purchase of PPE, COVID-19 planning, capital operating expenses, all expenses in relation to COVID-19. She said wanted to keep the Board up-to-date on the use of these grant funds.

Chairman Garcia asked if WSTA was having any difficulty securing PPE and other supplies needed to combat COVID-19. Ms. Woodson said it has been a bit of a challenge. In the beginning WSTA had difficulty acquiring gloves; however, Mr. John Ashford found a vendor that was able to supply them. All though many supplies are on backorder; WSTA was able to get masks and hand sanitizer. Due to high demand the federal government relaxed some of its requirements relating to purchasing.

Some of the funds were used to acquire temporary shields for the buses to help with social distancing between the passenger and driver. Permanent shields have been ordered and will be installed once received.

Chairman Garcia asked if WSTA was using a different cleaning method than normal to clean. Ms. Woodson said additional staff was hired through a temp agency to clean. The first cleaners hired were placed in maintenance to assist with cleaning and sanitizing the buses at night in preparation for service the next day. Additional cleaners were hired from the same agency and were placed at the TC to clean the buses in between pullouts.

Chairman Garcia asked if the same was being done within the TC. Ms. Woodson said yes; but those cleaners were hired by Property Maintenance and not WSTA. She said Property Maintenance increased the staff at the TC to allow for deep cleaning and sanitizing. Every other seat has been blocked for social distancing, the walls are being wiped down, the bathrooms are



being cleaned several times during the day. Ms. Woodson stated the TC does look a lot cleaner thanks to the efforts being made to make it clean, safe and sanitized.

There were no further questions from the Board; but Ms. Lawson-Jackson stated it sounds as though a great job is being done to keep everyone safe.

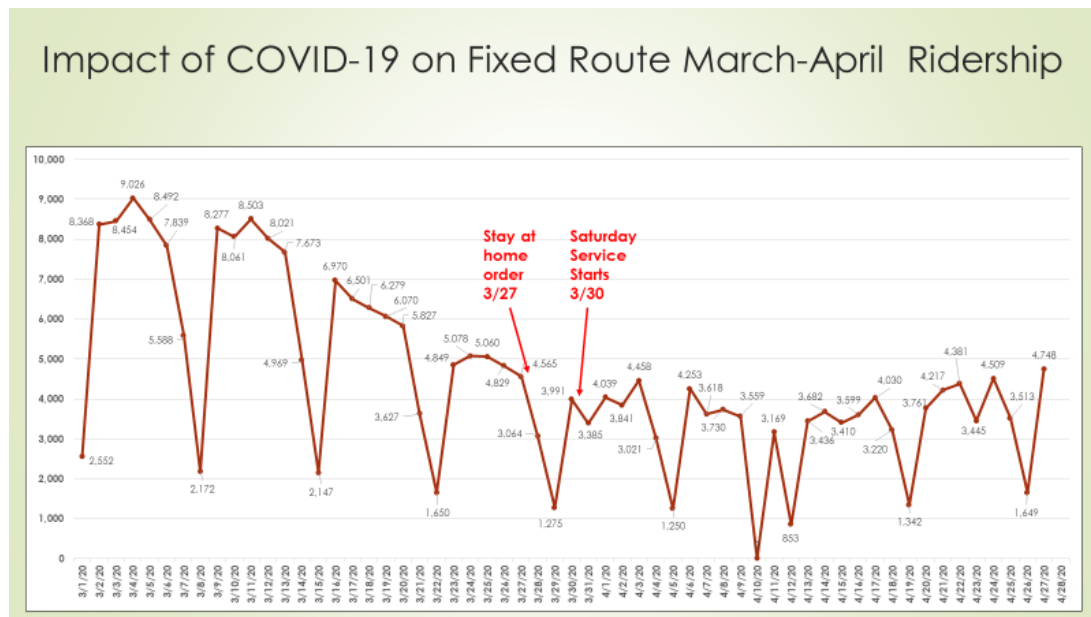
WSTA's Safety Success-March 2020 was Accident Free!!!-Ms. Woodson felt it was important to let the Board know about this achievement because of the challenges in the past. Accidents has been as high as eleven accidents in one month. Several months ago, staff composed an action plan to address the safety concerns and to minimize accidents. Ms. Woodson wants the Board to know the plan has been successfully trending in the right direction. In January there were only four preventable accidents and in February there were only two.

Chairman Garcia extended his congratulations to the operators and suggested some form of celebration after the pandemic is over.

Staff Reports:

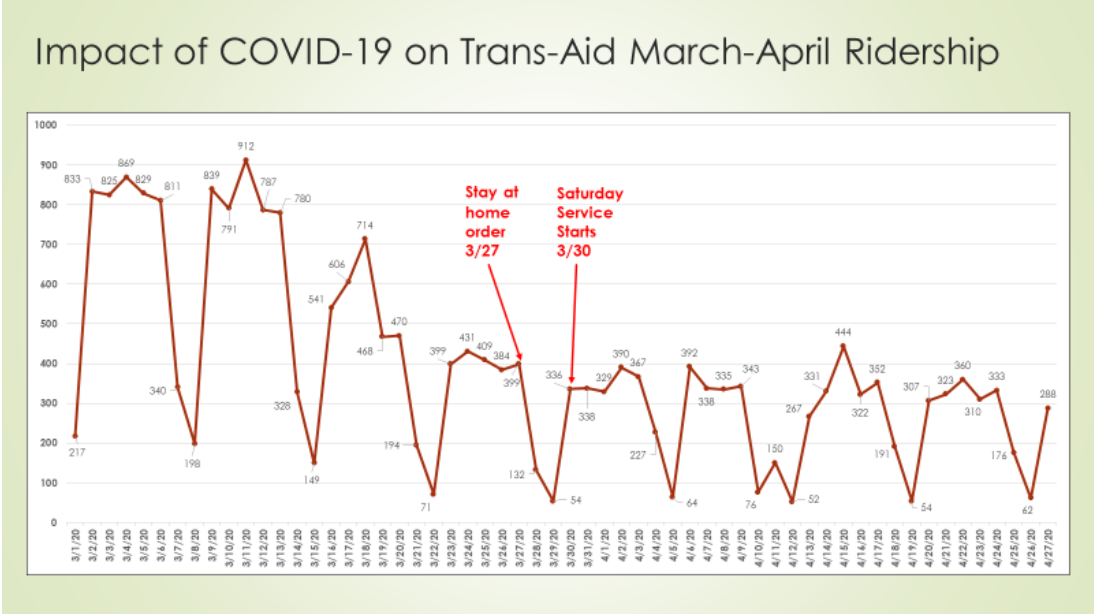
- **Operations' Monthly Data Presentation by Carol Patrick**-Ms. Woodson stated since the meeting has already lasted an hour, and everyone has copies of the operations reports, Ms. Carol Patrick will only display and speak about the information related to the impact COVID-19 is having on ridership thus far.

Ms. Patrick stated there are a lot of numbers on the graph; however, she would like for everyone to focus on the trend rather than the numbers. She stated the beginning of March everything was great. As things started to come out about COVID-19 the third week in March, ridership began to go down. The fourth week in March; the stay at home order went into effect and after that Saturday service started. The month of April ridership was very low. The impact has been tremendous. Ridership went from approximately 9,000 a day to approximately 3,000 a day for Fixed Route.

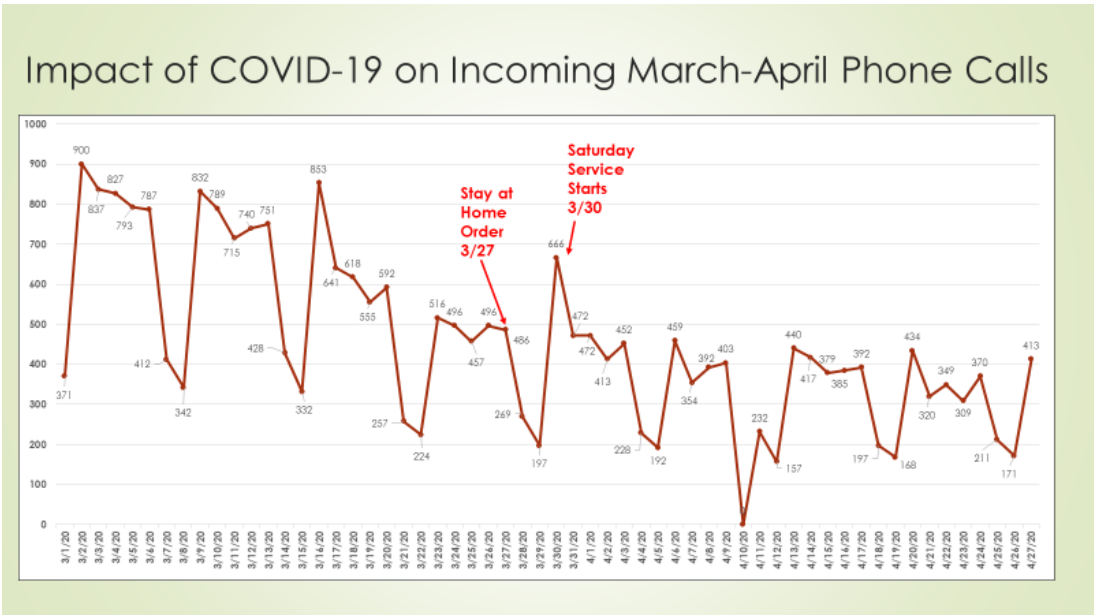




Ms. Patrick displayed the graph for Trans-Aid and it too showed a tremendous impact on ridership. Like Fixed Route, ridership started off good the beginning of March with 800 to 900 trips a day. When the stay at home order went in effect on March 27, 2020, ridership dropped to approximately 400 trips. Currently Trans-Aids ridership is around 300-400 a day.



In addition to ridership, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on WSTA’s incoming phone calls. The beginning of March incoming phone calls were around 900 calls per day. Just like Fixed Route’s and Trans-Aid’s ridership, the incoming calls began to trend downward. When Saturday service went into effect, there was a small spike in incoming calls and after that they continued to go down.





The overall impact of COVID-19 is shown in the table below. Compared to March 2019 there was an approximate 14% decrease in ridership and an approximate 53% decrease in April for Fixed Route.

The overall impact of COVID-19 was greater for Trans-Aid. When compared to March 2019 there was an approximate 23% decrease in ridership and an approximate 64% decrease in April.

Impact of COVID-19 on Ridership Overall

Fixed Route	2019	2020	% Change
March	200,369	173,162	-13.6%
April - thru 28th	196,853	93,231	-52.6%
Trans-Aid	2019	2020	% Change
March	19,963	15,454	-22.6%
April - thru 28th	19,844	7,183	-63.8%

Ms. Woodson stated she was given a directive to keep everyone working; therefore, the decrease in ridership for Trans-Aid was handled by adjusting the work schedules of the Trans-Aid operators. The operators were utilized in other capacities as well.

There has been an increase in Trans-Aid passengers frequenting food banks since the pandemic hit. Trips to the Food Bank usually requires passengers to schedule two trips. They would have to wait at least an hour in between these trips to return home. Due to the modifying of schedules, WSTA is now able to provide service to the food bank allowing passengers to get their food and go back home without the hour wait and the requirement of two trips. Trans-Aid operators were also utilized to clean Trans-Aid vans and Fixed Route buses.

With that being said, WSTA is doing a lot of things to not just react to COVID-19 but also to prevent exposure and spreading it. The best way to do this is to maintain cleaning and disinfecting procedures, wearing masks, and social distancing.

Ms. Woodson asked if there were any questions. Chairman Garcia asked if there was a nurse or someone onsite to take temperatures if staff stated they were not feeling well. Ms. Woodson responded by saying we do not have anyone onsite but we have access to the City nurse. If an employee would like to be seen for any discomfort, they have the choice to be seen by the City nurse or utilize United Healthcare providers for any COVID-19 symptoms



for free. (Correction per Ms. Woodson- The city nurse is not an option. Employees must call their medical provider for COVID related symptoms).

Chairman Garcia said that he could not tell Ms. Woodson how much the Board appreciates the job she and her staff have done and are doing during this difficult time. He said he is sorry about what happened to Greensboro yesterday; but, feels it was a bit of a shake up for WSTA to see how they are doing with dealing with this pandemic. He said it sounds like WSTA is doing really well. If possible, perhaps the procedures can be tightened up a bit because the pandemic may last a lot longer than anticipated.

- **Finance Report Update: October 2019, November 2019, and December 2019**-Chairman Garcia stated it is up to each Board Member to view the Finance reports individually. If they see something of concern, to submit it to Ms. Woodson via email.
- **Marketing Reports: October 2019, November 2019, and December 2019** (Report was given after Public Comments were addressed)-Ms. Carson-Wilkins stated the Board Report she submitted this month included an article about how WSTA implemented strategies in February when first informed about all of the issues that were to come with COVID-19.

When the decision was made, about two weeks ago, for WSTA to go fare free, Mrs. Carson-Wilkins and Ms. Woodson had a conversation about the concerns of the operators. In response, a video was produced to explain to our ridership WSTA's plans going forward from April 15th. There are actually two videos. One that engages and includes the operators since they have concerns about passengers riding for free during pandemic. The other is a message from the General Manager, Mrs. Donna Woodson. Unfortunately, the video featuring WSTA's operators was unable to be seen due to technical difficulties. Ms. Carson-Wilkins advised those interested in seeing the video to go to WSTA's website. The video has gotten 8,000 plus views and has been shared with up to 13,000 people at this point.

The report also includes an article about how WSTA celebrated National Transit Driver Appreciation Day.

Before adjourning, Chairman Garcia asked if anyone had any questions or comments. There were none and the meeting was adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Transcribed by: Teika Holloway
May 2020