*COMET Board Meeting minutes are prepared and presented in summary form, audio recordings of the meetings are on file at the COMET.*

**COMET BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**December 10, 2015**

**Members Present: Guest Present:**

**City of Columbia**  Ron Anderson Rick Morgan, McNair Law Firm

Brian DeQuincey Newman David Irwin, Mauldin and Jenkins

Derrick Huggins Walter Durst, MTRA

Hampton Miller, Chernoff Newman

**Forest Acres** Jake Broom Rick Silver, Chernoff Newman

Jackie Bowers, Transdev

**Lexington County** Lill Mood Larry Livingston, Transdev

Rebecca Conway, Lexington County

Sandra McKinley, Transdev

**Richland County** Kelvin Washington Chuck Statler, Derrick, Stubbs and Stith

Mac Bennett Ben Mauldin, CMCOG

Derrick Breun, Transdev

Jerry Bowers, Transdev

**Rich. Co. Leg. Dele.** John Furgess David Lewis, Citizen

Robert Morris Darin Black, Transdev

**Absent Board Members:**

Skip Jenkins

Debbie Summers **COMET Staff Present:**

Joe Neal

Robert Schneider, Executive Director

\*Denotes Participation by Phone Missy Lawlor, Administrative Coordinator

Daphne Givens, Finance Manager

Rosalyn Andrews, Staff Accountant

Pamela Middleton

Brittany Higgins

Tiffany James

LeRoy DesChamps

Samuel Scheib

Virginia Goodson

Da’Veda Sistrunk

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Brian DeQuincey Newman called the meeting to order at 12:03 PM.

1. **DETERMINATION OF QUORUM**

A quorum was present at the opening of the meeting.

1. **INTRODUCTION OF ATTENDEES**
2. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**A motion was made by Brian DeQuincey Newman and seconded by Lill Mood to approve the agenda with the following changes.**

* Move item 5 - Approval of the November 10, 2014 Meeting Minutes to 15A.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

1. **APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 27, 2014 MEETING MINUTES**

**Item Moved to 15A.**

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1. **MIDLANDS TRANSIT RIDERS ASSOCIATION**

Walter Durst of Midlands Transit Riders stated that there are three (3) stops that need to be added and that there are no temporary stops at Springtree Apartments, Sequi State Park and the Kroger. Mr. Durst also stated that the MTRA was honored by Richland County Council for their work with the buses. Mr. Durst also mentioned that there is going to be less parking near the Colonial Life Arena and that we may want to take a look at expanding in that area. The MTRA will also be meeting with their attorneys and should have new By-Laws by January.

1. **COMMENTS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS**

Ms. Manning – Ms. Manning thanked everyone for listening and taking the time out to put the route back at Sandhills. Ms. Manning stated that she is now able to get to work and that her boss is now giving her more hours now that she has transportation.

Mr. Morris thanked Ms. Manning for her tenacity.

Ms. Riley – Ms. Riley thanked everyone for doing what they did with the Sandhills Route.

1. **REVIEW OF FISCAL YEAR END INDEPENDENT AUDIT**

David Irwin with Mauldin and Jenkins CPA, LLC discussed with the Board the Fiscal Year End Audit. Mr. Irwin stated that they gave a clean or unmodified opinion for this audit. He stated that the audit went extremely well and thanks Daphne and her staff for a job well done.

There was discussion of the Financial Statements, Income Statements and Assets.

Chairman Brian DeQuincey Newman thanked the staff for their hard work.

1. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT**

Bob Schneider stated that staff has been working on the following:

* Awards – Mr. Schneider stated that the COMET received two (2) awards. The awards was from Able, SC and The Salvation Army.
* Ridership Report for October – Mr. Schneider stated we are having some very exciting trends. We have a 26% to 27% increase in ridership over last year. Mr. Schneider stated that we are well on track for setting great ridership numbers.
* Shelter Installation – Mr. Schneider stated that the contract for the shelters has been signed and we are now moving forward. He also stated that the signs will be taken down and the new ones will go up.
* Launch of 55x – Mr. Schneider stated that we have launched the 55x and that response has been very good. He stated that 670 people have tried the route in just over half a month. Mr. Schneider stated that the staff rode the route with Ms. Dixon, County Council Member. Mr. Schneider stated that he credits operations for getting things off the ground.
* Holiday Season – Famously Hot New Year – Mr. Schneider has been working with Famously Hot New Year and we are planning on operating the “Love Train” on a holiday service plus route 30.
  + We are closed Christmas Day and New Year’s Day.
  + Updating the Winter Plan – We are getting our press releases updated and getting prepared in case of winter weather.
* Stuff A Bus – Mr. Schneider stated that we are holding two (2) dates for Stuff A Bus. This is a complete staff effort. Mr. Schneider stated that if you would like to volunteer to please see Missy Lawlor.

1. **REVIW OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Daphne Givens reviewed with the Board the Financial Statement for November.

1. **REPORT OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR PROPOSED ROUTE CHANGES**

Bob Schneider stated that a Public Hearing was held on November 24, 2014 on the proposed changes to route 11/12, 34B, 201, 401 and the addition of route 88 crosstown.

Bob Schneider gave a recommendation to implement all route changes, as presented, with the exception of 201 Rosewood and develop an alternate solution. Mr. Schneider stated that these changes could take effect as early as January 5, 2015.

**A motion was made by Mac Bennett and seconded by Lill Mood to support the plan.**

Kelvin Washington asked if this restored the 2010 routes.

Bob Schneider stated that all areas are effectively covered with the plan.

Mac Bennett stated that shelters are covered until Rosewood side of Blossom and wants to know if we are planning to add our amenities to these locations as well.

Bob Schneider stated that we are planning to add in some of those locations.

Kelvin Washington asked that the scope of work for the right of ways be sent to him.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

1. **OVERVIEW OF TRANSIT CENTER OPERATIONS ANALYSIS AND ADA PARATRANSIT EXPANSION ANALYSIS**

(Handout 2– See attached)

Larry Livingston stated that during the last meeting the Board discussed the staging of buses at the Transit Center. Mr. Livingston stated that since that discussion, they have made some revisions and that they are making sure that they are utilizing the space and looking at all the bays and not to affect the businesses near the Transit Center.

Lill Mood asked if the bays that are on the Laurel Street side are on or off the roadway.

Mr. Livingston stated that they are on the roadway.

Ms. Mood asked if the Sumter Street side is pulling into the parking lot.

Mr. Livingston stated that they are still on the street.

Bob Schneider asked Mr. Livingston if this included the new service changes.

Mr. Livingston stated that it does include the new service changes.

Mr. Livingston stated that this seems to be working fine.

Lill Mood asked if this has already been implemented.

Mr. Livingston stated that it has.

Mac Bennett asked how many times during the da there will be more buses stacked.

Mr. Livingston stated that it will be only at peak time.

Derrick Huggins asked how we are going to proceed with a Transit Center, and how long we think it will take to better our Transit Center.

Bob Schneider stated that we are working with the CMCOG with a grant that we are matching. He stated that it could be a multi-year project. Mr. Schneider stated that if we had property it wouldn’t take as long. Mr. Schneider stated that the alternative is to look outside of downtown. Mr. Schneider also stated that the longer version is 3 to 5 years.

Derrick Huggins stated that maybe a few of them need to get together and have a process of what we want and what we are doing. Mr. Huggins stated that we can do great things on paper but we need to follow through.

Lill Mood stated that we need to get the ball rolling on the long term.

Bob Schneider stated that it would be a much easier and better solution to put a drive thru or pull through behind our current center.

Chairman Newman stated that it might be a good idea to appoint a few people to a committee to help with this.

Larry Livingston discusses the 10-Mile ADA Paratransit Review. Mr. Livingston stated that we have to keep in mind, the fleet that we have. He recommends that we go 2 miles to start up and do a six (6) month evaluation period and then decide if we would like to go out further.

Kelvin Washington stated that he liked the plan, but asked if 6 months will be enough time to get the data points that we need. It stated that we also need to market it, so that people are aware of the service.

Lill Mood asked if we did what other cities may have done it will create a huge demand and expense.

Brian Newman stated if we move to a 2 mile buffer do we have the vehicles now to do it.

Larry Livingston stated that we can achieve that, that it will not be that much difference in the vehicles that we are currently running.

Jake asked if this was only limited to Richland County or is this is going to extend to Lexington County.

Bob Schneider stated that we would ask legal counsel to look at this.

Jake Broom asked if we are voting on this today.

Mac Bennett stated that we need to look at all our alternatives and maybe look at how others are dealing with this. He stated that we also need to look at vouchers for family members for those people that are eligible for DART.

Chairman Newman asked if we had the operational cost/Financial Impact.

Larry Livingston stated that we do not have that information yet.

Kelvin Washington stated that the CMCOG needs to be involved, since they have a department dealing with aging, there is some transportation gap issues for people that do not qualify for Medicaid and this could help to fill that gap in the service areas.

**A motion was made Chairman Brian DeQuincey Newman and seconded by Kelvin Washington to direct staff to move forward with obtaining additional information and to evaluate the listed bulletin items and partner with the CMCOG to include but not limited to those other alternative solutions.**

* Option to expand as ADA paratransit vs. option of flex service.
* Clear legal authority to limit expanded ADA paratransit to Richland County.
* Operational cost and impact analysis.
* Regulatory Issues surrounding addition of service and future changes.
* Inclusion from key stakeholders in ADA community (AbleSC, ect.)

**Motion passed unanimously.**

1. **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS (No Discussion Unless Specifically Requested)**

* **Contract Operator’s Report**
* **Fuel Cost/Price Update**
* **News Clippings**
* **Written Comments/Recommendations**

1. **OLD BUSINESS**

None

1. MOTIONS PERIOD/NEW BUSINESS

Kelvin Washington asked what the status of the Rural Transportation Study

Bob Schneider stated that he believes that they have identified a firm and in the process of negotiating with that firm. Mr. Schneider stated that he will give update at the next board meeting.

1. **LEGAL/CONTRACTUAL/PERSONNEL (May Require Executive Session)**

**16A. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 10, 2014 MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was made by Kelvin Washington and seconded by Chairman Newman too defer the approval of the November 10, 2014 meeting minutes to the January 28, 2015 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Bob Schneider stated that a written schedule of the Board Meeting dates for 2015 is included in your handouts.

1. **ADJOURN**

**A motion was made by Kelvin Washington and seconded by Lill Mood to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Brian DeQuincey Newman adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:09 PM.