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Per SC Code of Laws, Title 30, Chapter 4, Section 30-4-80 - All public bodies shall notify persons or organizations, local news media, or such other news media as may request notification of the times, dates, places, and agenda of all public meetings, whether scheduled, rescheduled, or called, and the efforts made to comply with this requirement must be noted in the minutes of the meetings.

**Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority Service Committee
Wednesday September 11, 2019 -12:00 P.M.
3613 Lucius Road, Columbia, SC 29201 – Conference Room A**

Members Present:

John V. Furgess, Sr
Skip Jenkins
Derrick Huggins
Colonel (R) Roger Leaks, Jr., Chair
Lil Mood

Guests Present:

Jackie Bowers, Operations Manager, Transdev
Katherine Cason, Lexington County
Sara Fleming, Lexington County
Larry Gabaldon, Interim General Manager, Transdev
Tanisha Gibbons, HR Manager, Transdev
Frannie Heizer, Burr, Foreman, McNair Law Firm
Bill Jordan, AECOM
Marsha Johnson, Midlands Transit Riders Association
Zane McGhee, Engineer, Davis & Floyd
Patrick Tyndall, AECOM
Scudder Wagg, Jarrett Walker and Associates (via teleconference)

Absent Committee Members:

Geraldine Robinson

**Indicates participation by phone.*

The COMET Staff Present

John Andoh, Executive Director/CEO
LeRoy DesChamps, Director of Administration & Operations/COO
Brittany Higgins, Travel Trainer
Paige Jernigan, Interim Administrative & Customer Service Specialist



1. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Col. Leaks called the meeting to order at 12:01 P.M.

A quorum was present at the opening of the meeting.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to adopt the agenda.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

3. MIDLANDS TRANSIT RIDERS ASSOCIATION UPDATE (Verbal)

Representative arrived after the item on the agenda. This agenda item was moved.

4. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

- COMMENTS MUST PERTAIN TO ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA. THE BOARD CANNOT COMMENT.
- INDIVIDUALS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE BOARD MUST SIGN UP PRIOR TO THE CALL TO ORDER.
- COMMENT TIME LIMIT - TWO (2) MINUTES PER PERSON.

Mr. Elijah Fredrickson came up to speak on behalf of the customers. He mentioned that he is not a fan of the new system and hopes it smooths out soon. He added that there is not a lot of overlap at night. Mr. Frederickson explained that if a bus is running late, it is an inconvenience to have to wait an additional hour for the next ride. He mentioned an incident involving the route 501 in which he was unable to catch. He closed by expressing concern for the drivers and the employees at COMET Central being treated poorly and being disrespected. He asked for consideration to go back to the old system.

4. MINUTES FROM AUGUST 14, 2019 MEETING

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Mr. Huggins to approve the minutes from the August 14, 2019 meeting.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 3, 2019 SPECIAL MEETING

Motion:



A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Mr. Huggins to approve the minutes from the September 3, 2019 special meeting.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

5. MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A. DISCUSS PREVIOUS MOTIONS FROM 2017 TO PRESENT.

Mr. Andoh stated that there are six (6) items on the list but we will take care of two (2) of those items today.

- Motion to direct staff and Service Committee to develop a long-term service plan primarily in Richland County - Consultant selected, and project is underway.
- Motion to direct staff and Service Committee to work with SCDOT to develop a plan for the Park and Ride Service - Consultant selected and project is underway.
- Develop Streetscape Plan for Harden & Taylor Streets, plus SuperStop - working with City and SCDOT on next steps
- Remove Executive Director from any and all negotiations from selecting a General Manager with Transdev - Process approved by the Board on August 28, 2019
- DART ADA Service Area Boundaries - Will be presented at October meeting
- Review no eating and drinking policy - Will be discussed at this meeting today.

Mr. Furgess asked about the removal of the ED from any and all negotiations from selecting the GM with Transdev. Col. Leaks reminded Mr. Furgess that the language was changed, and it was approved by the Board at last meeting.

6. TRANSDEV OPERATIONS REPORT

Mr. Larry Gabaldon referred to Page 16 for the Transdev Operations and Safety Monthly Report. Mr. Gabaldon stated that two (2) Preventable Accidents occurred in June with a goal of one (1) or less per month. Mr. Gabaldon stated that operations provided transportation for sixteen (16) Fireflies baseball games, the Route 93X went into effect, and transportation to the Tomato Festival. Mr. Gabaldon added that Mr. Mikos was doing a great job with fleet maintenance.



Ms. Mood requested more information on the preventable accidents. Mr. Gabaldon explained that an operator struck a fixed object which was a vehicle and it was due to improper scanning. Ms. Mood inquired about the process after a preventable accident occurs. Mr. Gabaldon explained they complete an incident report and decide the plan of corrective action by retraining the drivers. After this is completed, the operators may be put back into service.

Col. Leaks expressed his concern about the safety of the Bluff Road bus stop. He added the buses, "zip by" so fast and he worries about an incident occurring. Mr. Andoh stated that some of the bus drives aren't logging into Transloc. He added, often they lose connection and he expects it to be remedied as soon as possible.

Mr. Furgess would like the report to be shortened after Mr. Andoh reviews. Mr. Andoh stated that he could develop a report of key performance indicators. Col. Leaks requested this to be discussed further at the next Service Committee Meeting. Mr. Huggins agreed with Mr. Furgess and Mr. Andoh and he suggested a dashboard.

7. RIDERSHIP REPORT

Mr. Andoh stated that the Ridership Report is not ready, it will be presented at the next committee meeting.

8. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Passenger Amenities Program Update

Mr. Andoh introduced Mr. McGhee from Davis & Floyd to give an update on the recent projects and update regarding the passenger amenities program.

Mr. Furgess asked about the film on the new shelters. He specifically wanted to know about the ability to see through each shelter. His concern is safety and the ability for our riders to have a clear view to their surroundings. Mr. Andoh explained that the film he is referring to will be places for advertisements. Mr. Huggins agreed with Mr. Furgess and suggested a field trip to determine shelter visibility.

Mr. McGhee stated that seventeen (17) shelters have been installed. Mr. McGhee mentioned that they have requested additional ridership data for all existing routes. He added that they have developed lists of all the stop locations and voiced it should be easily permitted within SCDDOT right of way.

Mr. McGhee framed that D&F held a pre-bid conference on August 22, 2019 for the new SuperStop project located on the Columbia Place Mall property. This project was issued for Bids on August 1, 2019 and they have set a bid opening date for September 13, 2019. He mentioned that



they are still awaiting a permit for the sites that they are currently are under review from the City of Columbia. Mr. McGhee let the committee know that Davis & Floyd has been informed that permits were ready for approval, but they have not been provided at this time. Ms. Gleaton inquired about the garbage cans at the bus stops. She specifically is concerned about the Taylor stop. Mr. Andoh stated that he will work with ADS to ensure garbage cans are installed.

Mr. Andoh did confirm that the grant received for benches must have a 51% or greater lower income based on census data. Col. Leaks expressed concern that the grant restrictions will provide sites lacking in participation and or ridership. Mr. Andoh explained that he understands his concern but due to grant restrictions they must put the shelters within grant criteria.

B. Eating and Drinking Policy within Rules of the Road

Mr. Andoh reminded that in October 2018, the Board of Directors adopted the attached "Rules of the Road" which allows passengers to eat and drink on the buses. At the August 2019 Board of Directors meeting, Mr. Furgess made a motion to "Discontinue eating and drinking on buses immediately." The Chair directed the Service Committee to review this request and provide a recommendation to the Board on this issue. Mr. Andoh mentioned that it is not uncommon to allow food and beverages.

Mr. Andoh explained the purpose behind allowing eating and drinking on buses is to make public transit attractive to the community, accessible and convenient for current and new users and reduce bus operator and customer conflicts regarding the interpretation of "eating" or "drinking" on the bus, which was occurring in the past. The rule allows bus operators to focus on safety. It is common for people to eat on intercity buses, trains and airplanes. In addition, more public transit agencies are less rigid in their eating and drinking rules to reduce conflict between customers and bus operators as well as encourage more people to try out public transit.

Mr. Andoh reviewed the official policy:

- Eating and drinking is permitted if you properly dispose of the waste from eating or drinking. All drinks must have a hard top that is secured to the cup.
- Consuming or possessing unsealed alcoholic beverages is not permitted on public transit vehicles under Federal law.

As with any policy in place it must be managed. Transdev is responsible for the overall cleanliness of the transit buses, as well as detailing the buses and providing pest control services for the facilities. Transport Care Services has the subcontract for the cleaning of the buses, including the detailing. The COMET is responsible for paying for pest control for the buses and the service is managed by Transdev. Between March 2019 and July 2019, the



cleanliness quality of the buses declined due to lack of oversight and staff vacancies. Furthermore, the pest control services were not being monitored properly. This resulted in dirtier buses and pest infiltration.

Transport Care Services has prepared an action plan that is awaiting Transdev approval to be implemented.

There were seventy-one (71) vehicles when this contract was entered into. Now there are ninety-five (95), however, the number of utility has not changed, since 2015.

Transdev is managing the pest control process with Palmetto Exterminators. The Maintenance Manager is increasing the oversight of the pest control. Staff is of the opinion that banning food and drink on the buses will not resolve the cleanliness and pest problem on some of the buses. The impacts of banning food and drink on the buses will result in more complaints. Mr. Andoh added, it may deter new customers from wanting to use The COMET, as it is common that commuters like to drink coffee and have breakfast while travelling.

He continued to explain other impacts that are created by banning food and drink on buses. Not only that, this relates to the extreme temperatures that may warrant drinking to stay hydrated in the summer months. This relates to a baby, diabetic passenger, a dialysis patient or a person with a disability needing to eat a snack to stay healthy during the trip. All these variables is why banning eating and drinking on the bus will not provide value to our customers.

Mr. Andoh reiterated that since the allowance of eating and drinking on the buses, there have not been complaints. The complaints have related to the overall cleanliness of the buses, as well as the pest issue as a result of lack of daily cleaning, twice a month detailing and lack of consistent pest control services which is now being addressed by Transdev and monitored by The COMET.

Mr. Huggins suggested an action plan or a trial period to see if the issue improves. Mr. Huggins added perhaps follow up with a report in three (3) months and provide a final report in six (6) months.

Mr. Furgess stressed that our image of passengers eating on the bus is negative. He restated his concern. Mr. Huggins asked for Ms. Bowers input. She explained that food has been allowed on the buses but with rules being applied, example closed lids, etc. Ms. Johnson added that intoxicated riders simply should not be allowed to ride. She urged that dirty, wet, smelly, etc. passengers should be denied boarding. Regarding the food and drink policy, Ms. Johnson stated most riders respect their drivers. Ms. Higgins mentioned an incident that occurred with a driver and a diabetic passenger.



CD change occurred.

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to recommend to the Board the implemented actions steps outlined in the action plan: increase personnel, increase in cleaning, increase in pest control and report back to the Board on the effectiveness of the change.

Mr. Huggins amended the motion to state that it has been brought to the Board's attention that medical issues during long routes, temperature, hydration, etc. may impact the decision on the implementation of this policy.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

C. Route 61 Service Changes

Based on a complaint from a bus operator, Route 61 – Shop Road was modified on August 2019 to no longer serve Eastway Park, Starlight and Bluff Estates Neighborhoods. The bus simply remains on Bluff Road. ReFlex Route 47 – Eastover/Gadsden and ReFlex Route 62 – Hopkins was re-routed to serve those areas on this date. Mr. Andoh assured the Board that this is being corrected at this moment.

Mr. Andoh expressed to improve access to these neighborhoods, additional bus stops are being added on Bluff Road @ Avalon, Eastway, Palmland and Dell in both directions for those in these neighborhoods.

In relation to Routes 47 and 62, the bus stops in the Starlight and Bluff Estates neighborhood remain and are served by these routes.

As Mr. Andoh explained during the Service Committee workshop in August 2019 and at the Board Meeting in August 2019 and September 2019, the changes to these routes would be done in communication with the neighborhood. Meetings were held in Starlight and Bluff Estates three times between October 2018 and April 2019 to discuss these changes with an understanding, but not opposition. One difference between Route 61 and ReFlex routes, is that ReFlex routes can go door to door, which provides better access for seniors. Route 62 provides better access to VA Medical Center, Walmart, grocery stores along Garners Ferry Road and provides a connection to The COMET routes at Crowson SuperStop.



Transdev and staff are meeting with elected officials in the area to present details on service changes and ensure that there is clear understanding of what was implemented as it appears mis-information is occurring. In conclusion, service levels increased in Lower Richland.

Ms. Mood asked about the communities affected and if they have been contacted. Mr. Andoh confirmed.

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Huggins and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to take these changes to the Board.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

9. Transdev Key Personnel Proposal

Defer to the end of the meeting.

E. Short Range Transit Plan & Comprehensive Operational Analysis Project

Mr. Andoh introduced Mr. Wagg from Jarret Walker and Associates and Mr. Tyndall from AECOM. Mr. Wagg commented that the staff would work with CMCOG and The COMET to collect and organize the data identified in the RFP to support the analysis of existing demographics, ridership, and transit system characteristics.

The Consultant will work with CMCOG and COMET staff to collect the following data

- Latest GTFS feed of all routes and services.
- Stop and route shapefile associated with GTFS.
- Farebox data on ridership by routes (and by stop if available).
- AVL data by trip for route speed and on-time performance.
- Origins and destinations for DART trips over the past 6-12 months.
- Historic data for past 3-5 years on systemwide and route by route ridership and revenue hours.
- Any ridecheck or previous survey data from The COMET or DART services in past 3-5 years.
- Annual budget and/or CAFR documents for last 3-5 years.
- Current Title VI policies regarding service equity analysis.
- Most recent FTA Triennial Review for The COMET and CMCOG.
- Existing bus and non-revenue fleet inventory for The COMET and DART.
- Regional travel demand model TAZ data on population and employment and trip tables.



- Existing local and regional land use and transportation plans.

Mr. Wagg stated that they will build an interactive web tool to explore existing ridership patterns (at the stop level if possible) alongside demographic conditions. The data will also be provided to CMCOG, The COMET, and other partners in a GIS-compatible format. Existing speed and reliability data are critical to understanding the existing system and where traffic and other issues are affecting transit operations. Mr. Wagg and Mr. Tyndall would work with The COMET to collect Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) data for a six-month period. The data will need to be enough to analyze speed distributions for each route. If there are gaps in the data, we can work with CMCOG and The COMET staff to investigate alternative data.

Mr. Wagg presented a case study with samples from Richmond, Virginia Transit. Mr. Tyndall mentioned that they would be surveying riders. Mr. Huggins asked where DESA comes into play and stressed the importance having proper representation. Mr. Tyndall stated that DESA will be involved in the implementation of the survey.

Col. Leaks thanked the gentlemen for the presentation.

F. Special Service Request – SwampFest

Mr. Andoh stated that The COMET received a request from South East Rural Community Outreach (SERCO) to provide shuttle service at the Congaree SwampFest at Congaree National Park on Saturday, October 5, 2019. The shuttle would operate from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and serve stops along Route 47 using one bus. The service would be free. These services comply with The COMET's special service policy and are not considered "charter" as they utilize existing The COMET route alignments and bus stops, they are open to the general public and they are advertised broadly as transit service. In addition, no fare is being collected and no monetary contribution is being provided.

Mr. Andoh explained that the service will cost The COMET \$450.00 to operate based on a rate of \$75.00 per hour and will cover the Transdev operating rate plus fuel based on six (6) hours of service. He added they will cover the cost of the passenger fares.

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to approve the South East Rural Community Outreach (SERCO) to provide shuttle service at the Congaree SwampFest at Congaree National Park on Saturday, October 5, 2019.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins,
Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.



10. MIDLANDS TRANSIT RIDERS ASSOCIATION UPDATE (Verbal)

Ms. Johnson spoke about the traveling that Mr. Andoh has done. She added that she is looking forward to a new transit center. Ms. Johnson added that the signs need to be cleaned up. She said that Anderson Road still has a bus stop, that is a route that is not used anymore. She expressed concern about the pink seats in the shelters. She suggested refiguring Comet Central, making more wheelchair accessible. She closed with thanking all for the ability to call in from any bus stop location.

11. LEGAL/CONTRACTUAL/PERSONNEL (may require executive session)

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Col. Leaks to enter Executive Session to discuss contractual negotiations.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

The Board entered Executive Session at 1:55 p.m.

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to exit Executive Session.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

The Board closed Executive Session at 2:30 p.m.

12. ADJOURN

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to adjourn.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Adopted this October, 2019, Agenda Item _____

Prepared by:

Paige Jernigan, Interim Administrative & Customer Service Specialist



Approved by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Andy Smith, Secretary

