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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 October 9, 2019 -12:00 P.M.  
3613 Lucius Road, Columbia, SC 29201 - Conference Room A**

**Members Present:**

John V. Furgess, Sr  
Transdev  
Carolyn Gleaton  
County  
Skip Jenkins\*  
County  
Colonel (R) Roger Leaks, Jr., Chair

**Guests Present:**

Jackie Bowers, Operations Manager,  
Katherine Cason, Lexington  
Sara Fleming, Lexington  
Larry Gabaldon, Interim General Manager, Transdev  
Zane McGhee, Engineer, Davis & Floyd  
Merritt McNeely, Project Lead, Flock and Rally  
Todd Warren, Project Manager, Davis & Floyd

**Absent Committee Members:**

Derrick Huggins  
Lil Mood  
Geraldine Robinson

*\*Indicates participation by phone.*

**The COMET Staff Present**

John Andoh, Executive Director/CEO  
Paige Jernigan, 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, Leaks,

**Absent:** Huggins, Mood

**Motion passed.**

## 3. MIDLANDS TRANSIT RIDERS ASSOCIATION UPDATE (Verbal)

No representation

Mr. Furgess expressed concern regarding the representation of Transdev staff. Mr. Gabaldon stated that Ms. Bowers is on her way up to join the meeting. Mr. Furgess asked what other representation should be present. Mr. Gabaldon stated that he, Ms. Bowers and Ms. Gibbons could all attend. He added that Ms. Gibbons will be out of the office for a couple of days. Mr. Furgess asked who fills in during Ms. Gibbons absence? Mr. Gabaldon stated that no one fills in during her absence. Mr. Andoh confirmed that contractually the General Manager is the only one who should be in attendance and it is his discretion on who attends the meetings. Col. Leaks asked if Mr. Gabaldon is prepared to answer questions. Mr. Gabaldon replied that he would do his best.

## 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.

None

## 5. MINUTES FROM September 11, 2019 MEETING

### **Motion:**

A motion was made by Ms. Gleaton and seconded by Mr. Furgess to approve the minutes from the September 11, 2019 meeting.

**Approve:** Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks

**Absent:** Huggins, Mood

**Motion passed.**

## 6. MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **A. DISCUSS PREVIOUS MOTIONS FROM 2017 TO PRESENT.**

Mr. Furgess inquired about the Long-Range Plan Consultant. Mr. Andoh confirmed that the Long-Range Plan Consultant is the County of Government (COG) Consultant.



Mr. Andoh reviewed the motions listed on Page 14 and Page 15.

- 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. An app, two park and ride lots and operational funding to be provided. Kick off meeting was September 11, 2019.
- Develop Streetscape Plan for Harden & Taylor Streets, plus SuperStop - Davis & Floyd refining concept and working with SCDOT and City on next steps.
- Remove Executive Director from any and all negotiations from selecting a General Manager with Transdev - Closed
- DART ADA Service Area Boundaries - Must present mobility programs and soon as possible to Service committee and Board of Directors. (5310 Grant)
- Review no eating and drinking policy - Will be discussed at this meeting today.
- Review Impact to Paratransit Service Prior to Fixed Route Changes - Awaiting approval from City of North Augusta City Council.
- Review Marketing Plan - Service Committee requested to review Marketing Plan.
- Review Fare Free Pilot in Service Committee - Service Committee requested to review Fare Free Pilot to understand impacts.

Col. Leaks wanted a review about the "no drinking or eating" motion. Mr. Andoh stated Transdev is working on a 90-day plan that will be reported back to the Board after the time period to determine the policy.

Mr. Furgess asked about the DART ADA Service Area Boundaries. He was unclear why it is showing up on two different areas of the agenda. Mr. Andoh explained that there were two motions made and one was made to study the issue and the second is to come back to present the mobility programs funded by 5310 grants.

## 7. 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 August with a goal of one (1) or less per month. Mr. Gabaldon stated that we implemented the "pulse" system along with service changes and two (2) new reflex routes.

Mr. Gabaldon stated that On Time Performance- Fixed route is at 50%. He added that the Safety Meeting attendance was 85%. He mentioned that they covered topics such as Active



Looking-On the Road, fatigue management, customer service, route schedule, and vehicle compartments, and storage.

Mr. Gabaldon spoke of the reports that have not been submitted to The COMET. He stated that they are working on the rolling twenty-four (24) month annual reports from 2014 (beginning of the contract) to present and these will be ready for Mr. Andoh on October 10, 2019. He continued that he is also correcting the Ridership Reports, quarterly's and monthly reports due to inaccurate data.

Mr. Gabaldon mentioned that the inaccuracy is primarily due to information not being captured in Clever Devices. Mr. Andoh asked about the ability to get Transloc information and Mr. Gabaldon stated he would investigate Transloc. Mr. Furgess stated his concern on the major service change and the impact on the on-time performance percentage. Mr. Gabaldon stated that the inaccuracy is the result of Clever Device not reporting correct information. Lol. Leaks asked who is responsible for the Clever Device reporting. Mr. Andoh stated that he will get the information to Transdev for updating the service changes in Clever Devices. Mr. Gabaldon explained the pull-out system from the departure at COMET Central.

Mr. Andoh presented a dashboard for Key Performance Indicators.

- Fixed Route On Time Performance
- Paratransit Pick Ups
- Mean Distance Between Failures
- Customer Complaints Per Ten Thousand Passengers
- Passenger Accidents and Injuries
- DBE Compliance

Mr. Andoh explained the goals per contract: On Time Performance for Fixed Route goal- 92%, DART goal - 95%. He then explained the Key Performance Indicator Results. He noted that Fixed Route declined from last year, DART on time performance dramatically declined, Vehicles/Passenger Accidents declined, Miles Between Road Calls increased, Complaints per ten thousand passengers increased, Unlinked Passenger Trips declined, & DBE Compliance showed no change.

Mr. Andoh discussed the Mystery Rider Results. He summarized the contents: Safety Related - increase, Reliability Related - increase, Friendliness - increased, Cleanliness & Comfort Related - decline, Planning/Service Requests Related - no change, Other - decline, Totals - increase.

Mr. Andoh explained that there was a promotion (half fare) last year that will make the numbers decline. Mr. Andoh stated that Transdev will be presenting an Action Plan to correct the discrepancies.



- Active Correction Action Plans: Safety, Genfare Reporting and Usage, DART Trapeze, DART On Time Performance, 50 Point Operational Issues, National Transit Database, Vehicle Cleaning and Fixed Route On Time Performance.

Finally, Mr. Andoh reviewed the Key Position Status for Transdev. Ms. Gleaton inquired about the phone system. Mr. Gabaldon explained that they are in the process of hiring more staff to remedy the issue of long holds. Col. Leaks mentioned a live person answering the phone. Mr. Gabaldon stated he could investigate that possibility. Mr. Andoh added that staffing is the key to this problem.

## 8. RIDERSHIP REPORT

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

## 9. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

### A. Passenger Amenities Program Update

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

Mr. Warren stated that Davis & Floyd have developed a list of all stop locations that would be easily permitted within SCDOT right of way. These locations have been submitted to Transdev for recommendations of more stops based on ridership need.

Mr. McGhee framed that DBF held a pre-bid conference on September 19, 2019 for the new SuperStop project located on the Columbia Place Mall property. ADS was the low bidder and contract documents are currently being drafted to officially award the project.

### B. Marketing Plan

Mr. Andoh introduced Ms. McNeely from Flock and Rally. Col. Leaks stated that the Committee has reviewed the marketing plan, so it is not necessary to go into too much detail. Ms. McNeely stated that she understands that there are several questions so she will be brief. She added that The COMET marketing plan is different from other marketing plans. She mentioned that the plan is intentionally vague to allow room for flexibility.

Ms. McNeely added that since The COMET has not had a marketing plan since 2002, the strategy of the first year of the contract will be primarily setting the foundational tools. Messaging guidelines, website and social media, etc. She continued that general awareness is important and that is their main goal.

Col. Leaks asked if Ms. McNeely if she had read the Strategic Plan? She stated yes. He asked what the focus of the Plan and she stated increasing ridership. Col. Leaks asked where the data came from for the plan. Mr. Andoh referred to the Listening Sessions and the feedback.



Col. Leaks stated that the number of attendees at the Listening Sessions is not representative of our service area.

Ms. McNeely stated that general awareness is a great step to increase ridership. Mr. Furgess mentioned the term "target" in the plan. He asked who is the target audience? Ms. McNeely and Mr. Andoh referred to Page 54. Mr. Andoh continued that the current audience is Transit Dependent Riders and Choice Riders.

Mr. Furgess expressed concern that most of the plan is focused on Lexington area marketing. Ms. McNeely explained that Lexington is just one portion of the plan and a large focus is in Richland County. She added that the plan casts a large net. Col. Leaks stated that the plan needs to be very specific.

Col. Leaks asked how well Ms. McNeely knows Richland County and Eastover. Ms. McNeely stated she knows it well. Col. Leaks continued that she needs to know the demographics, culture, etc. He continued that not much input was given by the Board. Ms. McNeely added that radio advertising is being broadcast in the Eastover and Orangeburg area.

Mr. Andoh asked what would the Committee like to see in a Marketing Plan? Col. Leaks stated that the plan states Richland and Lexington counties. Mr. Andoh stated that the plan is a regional approach to promote general awareness in both counties, our service area.

Mr. Furgess mentioned that the plan refers to the Marketing & Public Information Manager at The COMET. Mr. Andoh stated that the position has been filled and the new person will begin next week, and they will work in conjunction with Flock & Rally to implement the plan. Mr. Furgess stressed that the Marketing & Public Information Manager should be meeting with Committee members and Board to gather the information that is presented in the plan.

Col. Leaks asked Ms. McNeely what are Flock and Rally going to do exactly? Ms. McNeely stated that they will implement this plan. *CO change occurred.* She added that she has over fourteen (14) years' experience and her firm is known for excellent work. She mentioned that the State Fair is one of their clients and this year they have sold more pre-sale tickets than they have ever sold before. She assured the Committee that she and her team will do everything they can to support The COMET.

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to recommend sending the Marketing Plan back to the Board for further discussion.

**Approve:** Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks

**Absent:** Huggins, Mood

**Motion passed.**



### **C. Fixed Route Impacts on Paratransit**

Mr. Andoh referred to Page 87. At the request of the Board of Directors, staff discussed fixed route service changes and their impacts on paratransit service. Based on the current DART Policy as defined in the DART Rider's Guide The DART service area is comparable to the area served by the regular, fixed-route bus system and conforms to minimum requirements set by the ADA. DART customers can access the same areas as a person using the fixed-route bus system. The service area is a corridor which extends 3/4 of a mile around each fixed route. The areas for traveling can vary depending on the time of day and day of the week. Not all areas are always available.

He continued that The COMET also provides flex routes within the service area. Flex routes are geographic zones where service is available on a call-ahead basis and the bus comes to a customer's door. Flex Routes are like ADA paratransit (DART) service but are open to anyone within the zone. There is a premium fare for Flex service. Customers are delivered either to destinations within the Flex zone or to a location where they can transfer to fixed route service or DART. Transfers from Flex to DART are free. The DART service days and times of service are based on the fixed-route bus system. DART customers can access the same areas on the same days and at the same times as a person using the fixed-route bus system. Remember, DART provides an equivalent level of service, not additional service, over The COMET fixed-route transit system.

Mr. Furgess mentioned that in the past that paratransit could travel as far as needed. He has been getting complaints on the paratransit side. He suggested that those who were picked up in the past should still be serviced regardless of the mile rule. He added that we need to think about moving out into more rural areas. Mr. Andoh replied that additional costs will be incurred, and the discussion will be a much more global discussion. Mr. Andoh added that the Council of Governments grant would provide transportation to those that aren't in the service area.

Mr. Furgess suggested taking the time to study and look at the issues. His concern is the Penny. Mr. Andoh stated he is not advocating leaving people behind and the whole system still relies and functions on grants, like the mobility grant. He added that he doesn't want to burden the Penny so he is urging staff to seek out unique grants to creatively serve. Mr. Andoh concluded that if we change the paratransit route, he wants to clarify that this will affect our cost and we will have to purchase more vehicles. He mentioned that we will have a report for the next meeting.

### **D. Free Ride Proposal**

Col. Leaks requested more information on the free ride proposal and is concerned on how it will be perceived by the public. Mr. Andoh stated that Clemson, Chapel Hill and Rock Hill are all



fare free. Rock Hill runs four (4) paratransit buses and eight (8) fixed. The COMET runs forty-seven (47) fixed route buses and nineteen (19) paratransit vehicles. Mr. Andoh stated that the information is being gathered and analyzed. He stressed it is a gamble, but the more passenger miles you get, depending on the rest of the country, determines the amount of federal funding. He stated if you remove the barrier of the fare box, the ridership should increase. He added that he is waiting until November to see what the revenue stream looks and this will not be a rushed decision.

Mr. Furgess suggested a Plan B to give free rides during Christmas. Mr. Andoh thought it was a great idea. In November, Mr. Andoh will have more information for the Committee.

#### **E. Downtown Shuttle Statistics in the Southeast**

Mr. Andoh stated that at the request of Mr. Anderson, is going to provide an update regarding downtown shuttles in the Southeast. He added that according to his findings with the help of, the Soda Cap Connector is operating as it should be in comparison to other downtown shuttle services in the southeast.

Size does matter. Median daily weekday ridership for downtown circulators at agencies with a service area population under 500,000 (a proxy for size of downtown) was 450. There are other definitions of success other than ridership, but small cities (like Columbia at 134,000 in population) can anticipate limited ridership for a downtown circulator.

#### **F. Special Service Request - Gervais Street Bridge Dinner**

The COMET received a request from Soda City to provide shuttle service at the Gervais Street Bridge Dinner on Sunday, October 20th, 2019. The shuttle would operate from 2:30PM - 4:30PM and 8:00PM - 9:00PM. The service would be free, and 2 buses would operate - one on both sides of river. We will use the cutaway buses for this service.

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.

The service will cost The COMET \$750.00 to operate based on a rate of \$75.00 per hour and will cover the Transdev operating rate, plus fuel based on 6 hours of service. As a trade for providing the service, The COMET will get four days at Soda City Market to display a bus and provide transit information in November and December, as well as sponsorship and name recognition at this event.

Col. Leaks asked about if we are going to continue offering our services for free. Mr. Andoh explained that the charter policy and special service policy.

#### **Motion:**





A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms Gleaton to approve the Special Service Request - Gervais Street Bridge Dinner

**Approve:** Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks

**Absent:** Huggins, Mood

**Motion passed.**

**10. Motions Period** *(The Committee cannot take action on items not on the agenda)*

None

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

None

**12. ADJOURN**

**Motion:**

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

**Approve:** Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks,

**Absent:** Huggins, Mood

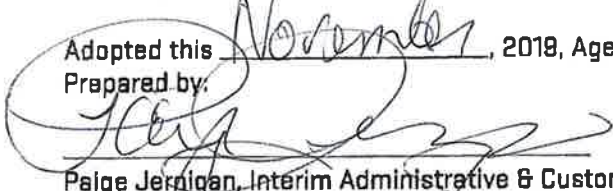
**Motion passed.**

The meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m.


**CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

Adopted this November, 2018, Agenda Item \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by:

  
Paige Jernigan, Interim Administrative & Customer Service Specialist

Approved by:

  
Andy Smith, Secretary

