



*The COMET Service Committee Meeting minutes are prepared and presented in summary form, audio recordings of the meetings are on file at The COMET and are part of the approved minutes. If you would like to hear the recording from the meeting, please contact Paige Jernigan at [pjernigan@thecometsc.gov](mailto:pjernigan@thecometsc.gov)*

*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. **The COMET complied with the notification of this meeting on Friday, December 6, 2019 at 3:15 p.m.***

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

**Members Present:**

John V. Furgess, Sr  
Carolyn Gleaton  
Skip Jenkins\*  
Derrick Huggins\*  
Colonel (R) Roger Leaks, Jr., Chair  
Geraldine Robinson

**Guests Present:**

Pam Baker, Burr, Foreman and McNair Law Firm  
Katherine Cason, Lexington County\*  
Larry Gabaldon, Transdev, General Manager  
Zane McGhee, Engineer, Davis & Floyd  
Tanisha Woodson, Transdev, Human Resources

**Absent Committee Members:**

Lil Mood

*\*Indicates participation by phone.*

**The COMET Staff Present**

John Andoh, Executive Director/CEO  
Brittany Higgins, Mobility Management Specialist  
Paige Jernigan, Administrative & Customer Service Specialist  
Dr. Arlene Prince, Director of Regulatory Compliance and Civil Rights Officer

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM**

Col. Leaks called the meeting to order at 12:04 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, Huggins

**Absent:** Mood

**Motion passed.**

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

Mr. Jerry Frances was in attendance but wasn't prepared to speak.

**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 November 13, 2019 MEETING**

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to approve the minutes.

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

**Absent:** Mood

**Motion passed.**

**6. MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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

Mr. Andoh summarized the motions.

- DART ADA Service Area Boundaries discussion
- Appoint Transdev Key Personnel
- Fare Free Pilot

**7. TRANSDEV OPERATIONS REPORT**

Mr. Gabaldon was asked about the letter sent to Transdev employees regarding Mr. Livingston. Mr. Gabaldon stated that The COMET sent the letter, Mr. DesChamps. It was explained that it is a security issue and since he is no longer employed with Transdev, he should sign in. Col. Leaks suggested discussing later.

Mr. Gabaldon reviewed the Operations Report. He stated there were four (4) preventable accidents.



Events:

- Provided Shuttle service for Soda City Friends Gervais Street Bridge Dinner
- Provided Shuttle service for the Swamp Festival
- Provided Shuttle service for the South Carolina State Fair
- Richland Library's Halloween Stroll

Ms. Gleaton suggested Mr. Gabaldon bring to the attention of the drivers to not allow profanity on the bus. Mr. Andoh passed out the Key Performance Indicators for review.

**B. RIDERSHIP REPORT**

Mr. Andoh reviewed the Ridership Report.

Boarding's

- October boarding's of 252,984 were down from 252,638 in 2018. Mr. Andoh explained that the difference is due to the Gamecock Express. He added that we are down 16,231 on Fixed Route based on the amount of buses we received for Gamecock Express. Mr. Furgess requested the Year to Date numbers. Mr. Andoh stated that he would get those numbers to the committee.

Col. Leaks inquired about the Blue Bike system. Mr. Andoh stated that he has scheduled a meeting with Blue Bike to discuss whether it is worth continuing. He added it's costing \$70 thousand.

**9. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

**A. Passenger Amenities Program Update and Bus Shelter Design**

Mr. Andoh introduced Mr. McGhee from Davis & Floyd to give an update on the recent projects and update regarding the passenger amenities program. Col. Leaks recommended a stop and moving stop #467 to another location. Mr. McGhee took notes and they will investigate.

Mr. McGhee added that they have completed permitting for three (3) shelters in the past month and received approval from the City of Columbia for three (3) new locations. These sites are currently being reviewed for compliance with the Lexington and Richland county CDBG funding requirements. He added as a result of the CDBG funding requirements, an environmental assessment will be required for these sites prior to construction. Davis and Floyd have started these assessments but are anticipating this process to last several months.

**B. Implement Pilot Mobility Management Programs**

Ms. Higgins, the Mobility Management Specialist, outlined the program for the committee. She stated that the intent of this program is to allow people with disabilities and seniors 65 years old or older, that live in Richland and Lexington Counties, and outside of The



COMET service area the ability to travel within the Columbia Urbanized Area. Ms. Higgins explained the the Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement Program and the Taxi Voucher Program.

Mr. Furgess asked why we are getting involved because Columbia is inundated with these type of programs. Ms. Higgins explained that we ultimately can service people that are not in the flex area for pickup. Mr. Andoh explained that currently sixty-eight (68) cases outside of the service range have contacted The COMET for services.

Mr. Andoh referred to Page 31 and explained the cost structure with local match and 5310 reimbursement. He added that those other mobility companies are serving a unique audience. He added that we are filling a void, not competing. If no one call, no service is needed.

Ms. Gleaton mentioned a program at the Governor's Office for \$50 thousand. Mr. Andoh stated that we are waiting on the Council of Governments to send the contract.

Mr. Andoh said this would be a one (1) year pilot. He then explained the Healthcare Access Pilot Program. He stated that The COMET received a grant from FTA last year to implement a health care access service that would increase access to coordinated healthcare services in Columbia, helping passengers schedule and book trips, plan ahead for picking-up prescriptions, follow-up appointments, and other vital appointments via computer, phone call or app. Staff is determining the best way to provide this service in partnership with Feonix Mobility, however, it may be a combination of Lyft/Uber, DART vehicles, LogistiCare, non-profit shuttles and/or taxis. The service would be available seven days a week between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., in time for people to access medical appointments and to visit the pharmacy. The service area for this program would be the entire Richland and Lexington Counties.

Mr. Andoh continued that Staff has identified a need for public transit service in the Spring Valley/Pontiac area of Richland County. This area has multiple residential, shopping, recreation, medical and employment opportunities that are underserved by fixed route transit. Staff is unsure if fixed route transit service is the appropriate level of service at this point, so the proposed implementation of a microtransit service might make sense to test the potential for public transit demand in this area.

Microtransit, which employs smaller buses, is designed to provide transit service in areas that lack the population to sustain regular bus routes. Passengers could call for a ride or use a special app to enter pickup and drop-off locations, a passenger count, whether a



wheelchair or other mobility device was being used and a pickup time. The app also showed the bus location and estimated arrival time.

Mr. Andoh explained a need to expand Route 47. He added that most recently, there is one person who lives in the white area that wants transit service via Route 47 (which is a combination of Dial A Ride Transit and fixed route service) strict ADA requirement (being a deviated fixed route service) by allowing the general public to request deviations, the Board of Directors can amend the service area of Route 47 to serve this area.

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to recommend to the Board implementation of the proposed mobility management programs in January 2020.

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

**Absent:** Mood

**Motion passed.**

**C. Fare Free Program Service Impacts**

Mr. Andoh reviewed Page 33-49. He added he is not asking for a decision, this is simply informational. At the May 2019 Board of Directors meeting, staff presented a proposal to the Board of Directors to consider a Fare Free Program which would allow for the implementation of a one-year pilot of free transit service to the entire community.

He continued that the City of Kansas City just allocated \$8.6 million dollars to allow all of its bus routes in the City limits to be free on the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority bus routes starting in January 2020. The Intercity Transit Authority in Olympia, Washington just allocated \$3.3 million dollars of its local sales tax revenue to make all its transit routes free. Each of these transit systems that have implemented a zero-fare transit system have seen a 25 to 35% increase in passenger trips as a result of a free transit program as well as a corresponding increase in FTA funding.

He reviewed the free programs subsidized by Third Parties. He then reviewed the list subsidized by The COMET.

- o Personal Care Attendants on DART vehicles
- o Famously Hot New Year shuttle services after 8 p.m.
- o Youth 15 years old or less
- o Children 39 inches or less
- o Soda Cap Connector Routes 1, 2, 3 and 4
- o Freshman Freedom Passes for University of South Carolina, Columbia College, Benedict College and Allen University



- o DART riders on The COMET fixed route buses
- o Santee Wateree RTA Transfers
- o Fairfield County Transit System Transfers
- o The COMET employees
- o The COMET contractor employees with Transdev and TCS per union agreement
- Donated bus passes to non-profit groups, Board Members and for customer service matters

Discussion continued regarding ridership. Mr. Furgess suggested a special date free ride system, like Christmas, etc. The committee agreed that this was a great idea.

Three options were discussed: Option A) Fare Free Pilot, Option B) Limited special date fare free, Option C) Summertime sale. Mr. Andoh stated that next month he will have a budget breakdown of the implications of Fare Free.

#### **D. Review Request for Transdev's Paratransit Manager**

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to recommend to the Board the acceptance of Transdev's choice for a new General Manager, April Platts.

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

**Absent:** Mood

**Motion passed.**

#### **E. Special Service Request - Famously Hot New Year's**

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to approve the Famously Hot New Years event.

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

**Absent:** Mood

**Motion passed.**

#### **10. MOTIONS PERIOD**

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, Huggins, Leaks  
Absent: Mood  
Motion passed.

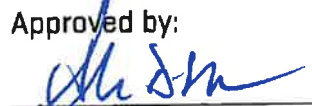
The meeting adjourned at 1:43 p.m.

CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Adopted this January 2020, 2019, Agenda Item \_\_\_\_\_  
Prepared by:

  
Paige Jerrigan, Administrative & Customer Service Specialist

Approved by:

  
Andy Smith, Secretary

