



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.

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, March 6, 2020 at 3:15 p.m.

**Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority Service Committee
Wednesday, March 11, 2020-12:00 P.M.
3613 Lucius Road, Columbia, SC 29201 - Conference Room A**

Members Present:

John V. Furgess, Sr
Carolyn Gleaton
Derrick Huggins*
Al Koon
Colonel (R) Roger Leaks, Jr., Chair
Lil Mood
Geraldine Robinson

Guests Present:

Pam Baker, Attorney, Burr & Forman
Larry Gabaldon, Interim Transdev, General Manager
Zane McGhee, Engineer, Davis & Floyd
April Platts, Interim Paratransit, Operations Manager

Absent Committee Members:

Skip Jenkins

**indicates participation by phone*

The COMET Staff Present

John Andoh, Executive Director/CEO
Leroy DesChamps, Director of Administrative & Customer Service Specialist
Eric Harris, Planning & Development Specialist
Paige Jernigan, Administrative & Customer Service Specialist

1. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Col. Leaks called the meeting to order at 12:18 P.M.
A quorum was present at the opening of the meeting.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion:

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



Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks, Mood

Absent: Huggins

Motion passed

3. MIDLANDS TRANSIT RIDERS ASSOCIATION UPDATE (Verbal)

No representation

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

No representation

5. MINUTES FROM the February 12, 2020 MEETING

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Mood to approve the minutes from February 12, 2020.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: none

Motion passed

6. MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A. DISCUSS PREVIOUS MOTIONS FROM 2017 TO PRESENT.

Mr. Andoh summarized the motions.

- Service Committee development of long-term service plan
- Service Committee to work with South Carolina Department of Transportation to develop a plan for Park and Ride Service
- Streetscape plan for Harden & Taylor
- Review impacts to paratransit service prior to fixed route service changes
- Plan for encouraging people to vote and use public transit
- Terminate Security and Police Contracts
- Approve Safety Policy

7. TRANSDEV OPERATIONS REPORT

Mr. Gabaldon reviewed the Operations Report. He stated there was one (1) preventable accident. He confirmed that they held a Safety Meeting on January 16, 2020. Topics: Safely Securing Passengers & Mobility Devices, Conflict & Aggression and SAFE PLACE.



Events:

- Special Service - Provided bus at Midlands Tech. Airport campus to promote new Pass Program
- Route 97 (Batesburg/Leesville) went into effect January 23rd.

Ms. Mood asked about the on-time performance and the fact that that number usually falls below 50% and now the report shows 88% - 90%. Mr. Andoh explained that TranLoc and Clever devices need updating, therefore the data we are given is inaccurate. As a result, drivers are doing manual reports (sample) and they are based only for buses at The COMET Central, not the whole transit system.

Mr. Andoh added that a new Intelligent Transportation Vendor will be awarded, and the reports will be more precise. Currently the system is relying on cellular data, 3G that is out of date. Mr. Andoh anticipates nine (9) months for updates and more accurate reporting. This will allow our new proposed vendor time to adjust to the new system and ensure it is functioning properly.

Ms. Mood asked about the Disadvantaged Business Enterprises report. Mr. Gabaldon explained that the information technology system was down therefore the reports were not available at print time. Mr. Gabaldon did confirm that the system is back up and working properly.

Mr. Andoh did note that we terminated the mystery rider program, Influence, LLC. Due to performance issues. So, at this point we do not have a mystery rider program. Mr. Huggins asked the amount of the liquidated damages on a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise deficiency. Mr. Andoh stated \$100,000 thousand.

Ms. Mood asked for clarification and expressed concern on the total number of Road calls/Swap Outs/Repair in the Field. Mr. Gabaldon explained, and Mr. DesChamps confirmed that there is oversight over the Calls/Swap Outs/Repair in Field.

8. RIDERSHIP REPORT

Mr. Andoh reviewed the Ridership Report.

Boardings

- January boardings of 231,099, an increase of 3,125 boardings
- Flex Route boardings increases by 2,680 Dial A Ride Transportation decreased by 168 boardings.

Mr. Andoh noted that the weekend boardings need to be studied as he feels we have too many buses during that time. Marketing or fundamental changes need to be made. Mr. Furgess mentioned again that keeping the beginning time and end time the same and



perhaps adjusting the number of trips in between would help our numbers. Mr. Andoh agreed and mentioned the Automatic Passenger Counters and how this will improve the efficiency issues.

Mr. Huggins left the call at 12:50 p.m.

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 regarding the passenger amenities program. Mr. McGhee verified that Davis and Floyd have provided Transdev with the overall review of all bus stops. He added that the Automatic Passenger Counters, when they become available at the end of the month, this will provide more insight into which stops within the system need to have a shelter.

Mr. McGhee mentioned that they are noticeably complete with the Columbia Mall Superstop and currently have a few items remaining to be done with construction. He added that they continue to move forward with the Taylor and Harden Street Improvement project. He also informed that they have not received any response from Benedict College regarding this project. As a result, they anticipate sending the plans to the South Carolina Department of Transportation and the City of Columbia Landscaping Department for their respective reviews.

Mr. McGhee continued that they have completed permitting for one (1) shelter in the past month. The primary focus in the past month has been on finalizing the environmental review for the two sites funded by the Lexington County Community Development Block Grant. He stated that they have also been following up with easement requests that are still pending.

B. Termination of Police and Security Services

Mr. Andoh stated that in July 2018, the Service Committee recommended to the Board of Directors an improvement plan to change the perception of The COMET bus riding experience and the issues at Laurel and Sumter Streets, known as COMET Central. The Board of Directors approved this plan at its August 2018 Board of Directors Meeting. As part of the plan, the following actions was approved by the Board of Directors and staff implemented such actions:

- Add potted plants from City Center Partnership
- Strengthen Security enforcement with Transdev
- Develop a passenger code of conduct for riding transit and transit center based on South Carolina law.
- Fund City Partnership to Increase use of ambassadors
- Increased security at facility
- Hire Columbia Police to patrol buses, bus stops and transit center.



In October 2018, the Board of Directors approved the Rules of the Road to provide enforcement action for the police and sheriff patrolling on behalf of The COMET based on South Carolina Law.

The FTA requires that The COMET spend at the minimum 1% of its urbanized area, Section 5307 funds on security projects. Mr. Andoh added that In November 2018, Board Member Ms. Dickerson made a request to also include police protection on routes operating in Richland County, outside the City of Columbia. As of March 1, 2020, the following police and security protection is in place:

- Columbia Police Department Central
- City Center Partnership
- Richland County Sheriff
- Cayce Police Department
- Transdev

Col. Leaks expressed concern with the randomness of the security officers riding the buses.

Mr. Andoh reported that there have been eleven (11) court cases, sixty-eight (68) arrests, violations, citations. He added that if we were to hire our own security firm, they would not have any arresting power. Discussion continued regarding security and the amount of time that it takes for the dispatching of police officers to arrive at the scene. Mr. Andoh explained that employing the local police is advantageous when it comes to response time.

Mr. DesChamps stressed the importance of having visible security to provide peace of mind to our riders and others in the community. He continued that we must be proactive in our approach and security is priceless.

Discussion continued regarding the security presence on the buses and the perception of the community. Ms. Gleaton expressed her support of the security on the buses.

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Mr. Furgess to table the discussion of Police security on the buses.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks, Mood

Absent: Huggins

Motion passed.

C. Promoting Election Day and The COMET

Mr. Andoh explained that to get more people to exercise their right to vote, The COMET is offering free rides to all voting stations within The COMET's existing routes in the Midlands.



He explained that The COMET not only wants to offer free rides to the people of the Midlands, it also wants to spread the message that it is important that people take advantage of the power of their own voice.

Ms. Gleaton suggested marketing to the churches and Ms. Mood mentioned the League of Women Voters should be included also. Mr. Andoh agreed.

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded Ms. Gleaton to offer free rides to voters in November.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks, Mood

Absent: Huggins

Motion passed.

D. Study Fixed Route and America Disability Act Paratransit Implications

Mr. Andoh summarized the fixed route impacts on paratransit. He explained the current Dial A Ride Transportation Policy as defined in the Dial A Ride Transportation Rider's Guide:

"The Dial A Ride Transit service area is comparable to the area served by the regular, fixed-route bus system and conforms to minimum requirements set by the American Disability Act. Dial A Ride Transit 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.

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 American Disability Act paratransit (Dial A Ride Transit) 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 Dial A Ride Transit. Transfers from Flex to Dial A Ride Transit are free. "

The Dial A Ride Transit service days and times of service are based on the fixed-route bus system. Dial A Ride Transit 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, Dial A Ride Transit provides an equivalent level of service, not additional service, over The COMET fixed-route transit service."



No action taken.

E. Blue Bike Update

Mr. Andoh stated that the Staff recommends that the Service Committee recommend to the Board of Directors to restructure the Blue Bike partnership or terminate the participation in the Blue Bike program.

Mr. Andoh summarized that at the October 2018 Board of Directors Meeting, the Board of Directors authorized participation in Blue Bike based on addressing the first mile/last mile connection for The COMET passengers.

To date, the Staff's assessment of Blue Bike ridership and the service is dismal at best. A total of eighteen (18) The COMET passengers have used the system since December 2018. He added that the new The COMET branded stations were not installed until late September 2019 and the project is still not completed.

Mr. Andoh explained that because The COMET's contract and the Blue Cross Blue Shield contract is different, there has been conflict over what value The COMET is gaining out of this partnership. He suggested not terminating the contract but paying only when the bikes are used which would cost The COMET \$6.00 daily to ride.

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Mood to that the Service Committee recommend to the Board restructuring of the Blue Bike agreement or start the process of termination if unable to restructure.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks, Mood

Absent: Huggins

Motion passed.

10. MOTIONS PERIOD *(The Committee cannot act on items not on agenda)*

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Mood to recommend to the Board approval of the St. Patrick's Day shuttle.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks, Mood

Absent: Huggins

Motion passed.

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

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Col. Leaks to enter Executive Session.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks, Mood



Absent: Huggins

Motion passed.

Service Committee entered Executive Session at 1:40 p.m.

Motion:

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

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Leaks, Mood

Absent: Huggins

Motion passed.

Service Committee exited Executive Session at 1:55 p.m.

12. Adjourn

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded Ms. Gleaton to adjourn the Service Committee meeting.

Approve: Furgess, Gleaton, Huggins, Leaks, Mood

Absent: None

Motion passed.

Adjourned Executive Session at 1:55 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Adopted this April, 2020, Agenda Item _____

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paige Jernigan', is written over a horizontal line.

Paige Jernigan, Administrative & Customer Service Specialist

Approved by:

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

Andy Smith, Secretary