



The COMET COVID - 19 Ad-Hoc Subcommittee 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 **Wednesday, October, 28, 2020 at 3:15 P.M.***

Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority
COVID - 19 Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Friday, October 30, 2020 -12:00 P.M.
3613 Lucius Road, Columbia, SC 29201 - Conference Room A

Members Present:

Colonel (R) Roger Leaks, Jr., Chair*
Lill Mood*
Derrick Huggins*

Guests Present:

Corey Gagnon, General Manager, RATP Dev
Joe Sanchez, Asst. General Manager/Operations
Manager, RATP Dev

*indicates participation by phone

Members Absent:

None

The COMET Staff Present:

John Andoh, Executive Director/CEO
Pam Bynoe-Reed, Director of Marketing
Leroy DesChamps, Director of Administration Operations/COO
Alexis Feliciano, Transit Traffic Checker
Tanisha Gibbons, Customer Experience & Contract Compliance Manager
Eric Harris, Planning & Development Specialist

1. CALL TO ORDER
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 Ms. Mood and seconded by Mr. Huggins to adopt the agenda.

Approve: Huggins*, Leaks*, Mood*

Absent: None

Motion passed

Mr. Huggins requested a roll call of the staff present and those who are absent.

3. MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 16, 2020 MEETING

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Huggins and seconded by Ms. Mood to approve the minutes as distributed.

Approve: Huggins*, Leaks*, Mood*

Absent: None

Motion passed

4. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Update of The COMET Operations, Vehicle Cleaning, Food Delivery, Testing, COVID-19 Policy

Mr. Sanchez stated that the food service is continuing. He added that from October 16 to October 30, 2020 they have delivered an estimated ninety-one (91) deliveries meals totaling for the month of October two hundred and ten (210) deliveries.

Mr. Sanchez informed the Committee that the day before the meeting, the staff participated in COVID testing with Lovelace Family Practice. Mr. Gagnon confirmed that participation has been successful, but they cannot force all staff to participate. Ms. Mood asked if data could be provided regarding the percentage of those who have tested at each time. Mr. DesChamps estimated that about fifty-five (55) were tested and he would try to get the data to have more accurate numbers. Conversation ensued regarding testing numbers, temperature checks and frequency of testing. Mr. DesChamps confirmed the upcoming dates for 2021: January 5th and 6th, February 2nd and 3rd, March 2nd and 3rd.

i. DART Office Space and Social Distancing

Mr. Andoh explained that concern has been expressed about the number of The COMET Customer Experience and DART office personnel in the DART office space. The number of employees that is based out of this office is listed below:

- Dispatcher (3) - work between 4:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m.
- Reservationist (3.5) - work between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
- Road Supervisor (2) - intermittently between field and office
- Customer Experience Coordinator (1) - work between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.



- Customer Experience Representative (3) – work between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Andoh stated that staff has sought an opinion from the City of Columbia Fire Marshall to determine what is the maximum occupancy of the space. He continued that the new cubical walls were purchased to ensure that each employee is separated by a wall, however, they are not necessarily six feet apart from each other unless the middle cubicle space is not used.

Mr. Andoh informed that we would like to get feedback from the Committee regarding this office space if there is a need to make further changes to ensure more social distancing. Options could include moving staff to COMET Central, have some representatives work from home with remote access to do reservations and answer calls through the telephone.

Ms. Gibbons confirmed that the City of Columbia Fire Department determined that only six (6) people should be in the office at any given time. She stated that we may need to investigate a different schedule and maybe reconfigure with the six (6) feet distance rule. Ms. Mood discussed the workload and the capability of working virtually and possible ways to protect the staff. Mr. Andoh tasked the staff to work on this topic and bring proposals/ideas to the next meeting.

ii. Masks on Buses

Mr. Andoh explained that we have been receiving complaints regarding the masks on the buses. He added that per policy if a rider refuses to wear a mask after being told by the driver, the bus will be parked and wait for the passenger to exit the vehicle. He requested some feedback regarding masks. Ms. Gibbons asked the Committee if they recommend going back to supplying masks on the buses? She confirmed that the main issue is removing the masks once on the bus. Ms. Mood suggested that the drivers have a small supply of masks for passengers that don't have masks. Mr. Huggins concurred with Ms. Mood.

Mr. Andoh explained the action plan: continue with rule of mask mandate, signage very visible, announcements periodically, bus operator support and empowerment to follow the policy. Mr. Gagnon mentioned a bus monitor to help the drivers maintain a safe environment. The Committee discussed the issue and an internal campaign to encourage riders to keep those closest to them safe.

iii. Social Distancing on Buses (CDC vs. WHO)

Mr. Andoh explained that we have received feedback from the riders regarding the distancing on the bus. He added currently we follow the World Health Organization model (three feet). He did confirm that he has reached out to other transit areas to see what they are doing.

Col. Leaks inquired about the costs. Mr. Andoh explained that he has reached out to



the vendor for a sample to test. He further added that we can do a cost analysis. Mr. Huggins inquired about what neighboring states are doing. Mr. Andoh confirmed that this is an emerging issue and not all neighboring states are doing the same. Mr. Andoh agreed to do research on the sneeze guards and continue to take our stand based on the World Health Organization standard.

D. Resumption of Fare Collection

Mr. Andoh reminded the Committee that since March 17, 2020, The COMET has been fare free due to concerns associated with fare collection. To address the deficit in fare collection, The COMET is using CARES Act funding to pay its operations and maintenance contractor, so there is no financial implication to The COMET.

There has been concern regarding the number of homeless persons riding The COMET buses and there is a public perception that The COMET could be the catalyst of the movement of homeless persons throughout the service area. The resumption of fares could ensure that those who need essential travel can obtain it at a price, stated Mr. Andoh.

Mr. Andoh stated that it is estimated that the driver barrier project should be completed by mid-December 2020. The Finance Committee should review fare collection once the barrier project is completed and to review revenue impacts to determine if the fare free should continue until the end of the State of Emergency or if fare collection should resume upon the complete installation of the barriers.

Mr. Andoh explained that should fare collection resume, The COMET should provide a 30 day period to customers to prepare for fare collection, allows The COMET to resume armored car service, reactivate Passport and Token Transit, ensure all fareboxes on the buses are working and ensure all vendors have passes to sell. Notices on social media, websites, buses and press releases to the newspapers will be important. In addition, Soda Cap Connector will begin a new fare based on previous Board action.

Ms. Mood agreed with Mr. Andoh's outline of the plan outlined. The Committee discussed the plan in further detail.

B. Update on Vehicle Cleaning (this item was skipped)

Ms. Gibbons updated the Committee on the cleaning issues. She confirmed that it stated that the pressure washer was fully repaired in 2018 however, it is operating at 80 - 85% capacity. Mr. Gagnon confirmed the repair is a piston. Ross and White, the manufacturer of are coming out to see if the piston can be repaired.

Ms. Gibbons verified that the blowers to dry the vehicles are fully operational as of October 27, 2020. In order for the bus wash to operate properly the bus needs to



Prepared by:



Paige Jernigan, Administrative & Customer Service Specialist

Approved by:



Allison Terracio, Secretary

