



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 Angela Jacobs at [ajacobs@thecometsc.gov](mailto:ajacobs@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 **Thursday, March 25, 2021**.

**Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority  
COVID-19 AD-HOC SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
Friday, March 26, 2021 - 12:00 PM  
3613 Lucius Road, Columbia, SC 29201 – Conference Room A**

**Members Present:**

Derrick Huggins, Chair\*  
Lill Mood

**Guests Present:**

Maurice Bell, RATP Dev  
Dennis Franklin, RATP Dev\*  
James "Skip" Jenkins\* (Advisory Board Member)  
Joe McKelvey, RATP Dev \*  
Ron Sweeney, RATP Dev\*

**Members Absent:**

John Furgess, Sr.

*\*indicates participation by  
phone*

**The COMET Staff Present:**

John Andoh, Executive Director/CEO  
Leroy DesChamps, Director of Administration Operations/COO  
Pamela Bynoe-Reed, Director of Marketing & Community Affairs/PIO  
Tanisha Gibbons, Interim Customer Experience & Contract Compliance Specialist  
Angela R. Jacobs, Interim Public Information Specialist & Board Clerk

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

Chairman Huggins called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.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 Chairman Huggins to adopt the March 26, 2021 agenda.

**Approved:** Mood, Huggins

**Absent:** Furgess

**Motion passed.**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 5, 2021 MEETING**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Chairman Huggins to approve the February 5, 2021 minutes.

**Approved:** Mood, Huggins

**Absent:** Furgess

**Motion passed.**

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 12, 2021 MEETING**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Chairman Huggins to approve the February 12, 2021 minutes.

**Approved:** Mood, Huggins

**Absent:** Furgess

**Motion passed.**

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 12, 2021 MEETING**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Chairman Huggins to approve the March 12, 2021 minutes.

**Approved:** Mood, Huggins

**Absent:** Furgess

**Motion passed.**

**6. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

**A. Update of Executive Orders:**

Mr. DesChamps informed the Committee that on March 8<sup>th</sup> the Governor issued an additional Executive Order and on March 23<sup>rd</sup> extended the order for another 15 days. He stated that The COMET continues to operate under their COVID-19 policy with the requirement of masks, social distancing, and street operations. The COMET continues to follow protocols issued by the current administration and the CDC which requires wearing masks on all public transportation. There is continuous communication with transit operators on mask requirements so they are prepared to address any issues with ridership. Ms. Mood asked if the City of Columbia's mask requirement would help support The COMET's requirements and asked if modified routes will continue due to COVID. Mr. DesChamps stated that current service levels will remain the same.



Mr. Andoh reminded the Committee that the Board voted for permanent approval of the service levels in September. He said service levels are being reviewed and, in the future, if there are significant increases in demand to warrant additional services on some the routes the matter would come back to the Service Committee. For clarity, Ms. Mood stated that enhanced Saturday and Sunday routing began with COVID and the schedule is permanent until the Board takes an action to change it. Mr. Andoh confirmed that the service level change was permanent as of the September 2020 Board meeting.

**B. Update of The COMET Operations**

Mr. Bell reported that although detailing numbers were good, the total number of vehicles detailed was 342 including 400 fogging and daily cleaning is at 1236. The challenge faced with detailing is the wash bay and the vendor was asked to conduct another assessment to improve the results of the vehicles. The assessment has taken place and there will be a noticeable improvement in appearance, especially in the wheel department based on assessments made and services added. He reported that food deliveries for February were discontinued on February 19<sup>th</sup> with a total of 30 deliveries during that month. Regarding COVID vaccinations, he stated that TCS reported having five (5) vaccinations of three (3) reservationists and two (2) supervisors and six (6) drivers. Currently, operator numbers show that only supervisors are taking advantage of the vaccinations and they are working on updating the total numbers.

**C. Update of Testing and Vaccination of Employees**

Mr. DesChamps reported that The COMET is continuing to work with Lovelace Family Medical to provide COVID-19 testing at The COMET administrative building, but the challenge is the limited number of staff available to administer testing. The next date scheduled testing is Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 11 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. which was pushed back due to testing staff availability. Mr. DesChamps said they are continuing to emphasize that staff gets get vaccinated. Nearly half of the administrative staff have been vaccinated or have received the first shot and some have had the Johnson & Johnson one-shot vaccine. The COMET will continue to offer testing at The COMET Central kiosk on Wednesday through Friday with the same hours of 7:00 a.m.-noon and 2:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Chairman Huggins reminded Ms. Bynoe-Reed that Mr. Furgess had inquired about having possible vaccination points at the Transit Center and asked if there were any updates on this. Ms. Bynoe-Reed stated that on Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup> she emailed Regina Brown, Community



Relations Manager, and Cassandra Waddell, Supervisor of Chronic Disease Prevention at Prisma Health about mobile vaccination sites and received a response on Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> that Prisma discussed the possibility of a pop-up mobile vaccine clinic at The COMET Central with the leadership team present but they would not be able to commit to that at this time. Ms. Bynoe-Reed was also informed that Prisma would be condensing all their vaccination services to be done at Gamecock Stadium. Ms. Bynoe-Reed reached out to DHEC and was given a list of providers with the vaccines. Ms. Bynoe-Reed asked the Committee's permission to reach out to Gerald Israel, Chief Pharmacy Officer at BCBS, to assist with contacting some of the pharmacies like CVS and Walgreen's to see if they would be interested in having a pop-up site at The COMET Central. Mr. Huggins thanked Ms. Bynoe-Reed and asked if there were other questions. Ms. Mood added that these providers are also under staff limitations to administer vaccines and are trying to recruit volunteers, so it appears that the efforts make vaccinations at the transit center is a work in progress and Mr. Huggins agreed.

**D. Update of Vaccination and Impacts to Public Transit**

Mr. Andoh said vaccination efforts, as discussed by Ms. Bynoe-Reed, would continue. We are still at Phase 1-B and have already provided notice to all The COMET employees about their ability to obtain the vaccination and RTAP has done the same. He said we are in discussions with Lyft and Uber to partner on accessing donations from different agencies to transport people to vaccinations as we prepare for Phases 2 and 3 and this will add to the mix of free services to those who would like to get the vaccination. Mr. Andoh reported that with resumption of fares coming on April 12<sup>th</sup>, a process will be worked on internally for riders to demonstrate that they still have unemployment so they can continue to receive free access to vaccination transportation via The COMET and DART. The Board will be kept apprised of this.

Mr. Andoh informed the Committee that he has been participating with the APTA Staff Operations Committee in relation to COVID-19 and there are some transit agencies that are offering an incentive bonus to encourage their employees to receive the vaccination. He asked if the Committee is interested in pursuing something similar that could potentially be covered by the American Rescue Plan Act funding that we are anticipated to receive for the Columbia urbanized area which is approximately \$9.2 million. Chairman Huggins asked if there was a precedent that other agencies are offering the same incentive and Mr. Andoh replied that there are other transit agencies across the country that are incentivizing with money to ultimately achieve a 100%



vaccination rate. Mr. Huggins asked Ms. Mood if she had any thoughts on it and she asked Mr. Bell if he thought incentivizing would make a difference in the number of employees who would agree to be vaccinated or if many already want the vaccination. Mr. Bell stated that several employees want the vaccine anyway but there are others not as interested and stated that incentives always help under these circumstances and we could see an increase of about 20 to 30% of those wanting to receive the vaccination based on the incentives.

Ms. Mood stated that she does not have any objection to the Committee exploring what the details of incentivizing would look like. Chairman Huggins stated that he had no objections and asked Mr. Andoh to proceed but with caution and to properly notify the full board so they are informed of what the Committee is considering, and commended Mr. Andoh's work on the effort. Mr. Andoh agreed that the full board would be informed. Ms. Mood asked if there is data on the number of free rides to vaccinations being given. Mr. Andoh replied that data exists as it relates to DART but obtaining the data for The COMET system is a bit more difficult, but a mechanism will be in place by April 12<sup>th</sup> to better track the data on The COMET system. Mr. Andoh asked Mr. Bell to update the Committee on the transportation numbers. Mr. Bell asked Mr. Dennis Franklin to share the data with the Committee and he reported that a total of 72 trips have been completed with 46 from Christopher Towers, 22 from Ensor Forest and 24 trips are scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup> from Christopher Towers. He added that Ms. Bynoe-Reed is currently working with other public entities which could possibly lead to scheduling another mass group.

Mr. Huggins stated that he appreciated Mr. Andoh's and RATP Dev's staff working very hard and being very informative to this Committee. He also stated that the Committee has shown action and commended Mr. Andoh, Ms. Bynoe-Reed and Mr. Bell for their work.

**7. ADJOURN**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Mr. Huggins to adjourn.

**Approved:** Mood, Huggins

**Absent:** Furgess

**Motion passed.**

*The meeting adjourned at 10:19 A.M.*



CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_, 2021

Prepared by:

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Angela R. Jacobs, Interim Public Information Specialist & Clerk to  
the Board

Reviewed by:

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Approved by:

*Christopher Lawson*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher Lawson, Secretary