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**Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority  
Service Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, February 10, 2021-12:00 P.M.  
3613 Lucius Road, Columbia, SC 29201 – Conference Room A**

**Members Present:**

Ron Anderson\*  
Dev  
John V. Furgess, Sr.\*  
Carolyn Gleaton  
& Floyd  
Skip Jenkins\*  
Lill Mood, Chair  
Allison Terracio

**Absent Committee Members:**

Al Koon  
Geraldine Robinson

**Guests Present:**

Robert Smith, Senior VP of Operations, RATP  
  
Charles Gossett, Midlands Riders Association  
Zane McGee, Staff Civil Engineer, Davis

*\*indicates participation by phone*

**The COMET Staff Present**

John Andoh, Executive Director/CEO  
LeRoy DesChamps, Director of Administration & Operations/COO  
Tanisha Gibbons, Customer Experience & Contract Compliance Manager  
Paige Jernigan, Administrative & Customer Service Specialist

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

Ms. Mood called the meeting to order at 12:01  
A quorum was present at the opening of the meeting.

Ms. Mood explained that she'd like to move item 6D of the agenda to directly under item 6A because it puts two things together, where we might need to take an



action. She said she'd like to move Item 6C(c) up to above 6C(a) and make it the first item under Section 6C, due to not wanting Mr. Kuhn to sit through a lengthy discussion that may not involve him. She said she'd like to defer items 6C(d) and 6C(e) to the next meeting, in order to keep today's meeting at one hour.

## 2. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

### **Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Terracio to approve the agenda with the changes that Ms. Mood requested.

**Approve:** Anderson\*, Furgess\*, Gleaton\*, Mood\*, Terracio\*.

**Absent:** None

**Motion passed.**

## 3. **MIDLANDS TRANSIT RIDERS ASSOCIATION UPDATE**

Mr. Gossett explained that it's just status quo right now, getting the normal number of complaints on the Facebook page, which Mr. Andoh is often very good about pursuing. Mr. Gossett said there is not anything out of the order or any issues. He said he thinks things are going well, all things considered, with the pandemic.

## 4. **MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Mr. Andoh explained that the first item on Page 3 is the long-term service plan for service in Richland County. He said we are waiting to schedule a workshop with the Board to discuss the proposed service concepts. He said the next item is to develop a plan for park-and-ride service. He said that once the service concepts have been refined as part of the short-range transit plan and comprehensive operational analysis, this portion of the project would begin. He said the last item is a streetscape plan for Hardin and Taylor, which has been done, and the last piece of this project is to construct the best shelters, and we are waiting for those shelters to be delivered.

Ms. Mood said that at our last meeting, we had an excellent presentation from the planning consultants, and the Committee was eager for the Board to have that information, before they must come to some decisions about this plan, and so that is what the workshop will be about.

## 5. **RIDERSHIP REPORT**

Ms. Mood said we do not have reports available, and in the RATP Dev written report, the latest data is for November. She asked whether this is related to some of the IT problems, and if we can just take those up under item C in that discussion, rather than have a separate discussion. She asked if the main problem of not having ridership reports is a challenge with the data system?

Mr. Andoh explained that, no, there have been some errors in the ridership reports presented, and we have sent those to RATP Dev to correct. He said we have finalized July, August, September, and October, but we have not received



November back from them, as of yet. He said he sent a reminder to them on Monday.

Mr. Anderson asked if we can see the months that have been finalized. Mr. Andoh said we can present those next month. Ms. Mood said we'll ask for all the reports that have been finalized, to be placed on our March agenda. She asked Mr. Andoh for more details on errors in the data.

Mr. Andoh explained that the data comes from Genfare which comes from bus operators putting the counts inside Genfare fare box, and then the data gets put into a spreadsheet.

Ms. Mood asked whether the contractor staff takes the data from the fare box and puts it on a spreadsheet. Mr. Andoh said that is correct. Ms. Mood asked how it is determined, that there is an error in that. Mr. Andoh said, for instance, it could be if the hours were not put in properly, or the days were not counted properly, because it is all formula driven.

Ms. Mood asked how it would be known if the hours were not put in properly. Mr. Andoh said we know that, based on the days that were put into the spreadsheet. Ms. Mood asked whether this is hours beyond the usual service hours put in, or not enough hours, or what. Mr. Andoh explained that because the spreadsheet is formula-driven, if you put the wrong days of the week, then it affects the overall calculation of the hours, which affects the calculations for passengers per hour and subsidy for passengers.

Ms. Mood asked if we're checking the data that's entered against a formula that says, this is what would be expected. Mr. Andoh confirmed that that is correct.

Ms. Gleaton asked whether drivers are supposed to count every passenger, since no fares are being collected, and are we keeping an accurate account of that. Mr. Andoh replied that, yes, we are. Ms. Mood and Mr. Andoh confirmed that that goes into the fare data, even though we're not charging fares.

## **6. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Route 92X Future (moved from 6.D)**

Mr. Andoh said this was discussed at the Finance Committee earlier this morning, and they deferred action, pending what the Service Committee would like to do. He said that 92X is a specially funded route that was created in January 2019 to connect COMET Central with Amazon and Nephron along the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Extension. He said the route was initially funded four ways, at 25% each, of the net operating costs. He said that in February 2019, Amazon dropped out of the funding, due to concerns that they did not feel they were getting value from the route. Nephron continued to fund the route for two fiscal years thereafter, and on January 21, they gave notice that they will not renew a partnership with The



COMET, due to lack of performance data to validate the effectiveness of their employees riding this route.

Mr. Andoh said that based on the upcoming fiscal-year, 2021-2022 budget, if the costs continue to be borne by Richland and Lexington Counties, staff is recommending a 50/50 split with the contribution of FTA Section 5311 funds, to compensate the 50% match. He said the reason we are recommending this split is because this was a unique route when it was created. He said 95% of the route miles are in Lexington County, however, 85% of the boarding's are from Richland County. He said that over the course of those two (2) fiscal years, on Page 43 is the route performance, which has been very stellar, compared to some of our other express routes that are operating in the system, which is why staff would recommend continuation of this route, absent Nephron funding.

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess to move this funding and this issue to the full Board and let the Board send this issue back.

Ms. Mood asked whether Mr. Furgess is suggesting we cease discussion of this issue now, or make a recommendation to the Board, that they refer this to the Service Committee. Mr. Furgess said this may be one that the Board would like to delete. He said he keeps hearing about funding, and this was one that was leveraged with Richland County funds, so maybe the Board would want to look over. Ms. Mood asked Mr. Furgess if his main concern is whether the Board is fully supportive of the split between the two counties, and Mr. Furgess confirmed that that is correct.

Ms. Mood asked Mr. Andoh how long this route has been in operation, and Mr. Andoh replied that it has been two-and-a-half fiscal years. Ms. Mood asked whether the funding has always been divided between Richland and Lexington, and whether we initially had contributions from Amazon and Nephron. Mr. Andoh replied that that is correct. Ms. Mood pointed out the split between Richland and Lexington is not a new thing, and Mr. Andoh said that that is correct, and added that this was approved by the Board in October 2018.

Ms. Mood asked whether Mr. Furgess still wants to delay making any recommendation to the Board. Mr. Furgess replied, yes, because all this does is increase the funding from Richland County, and Ms. Mood agreed with that. Mr. Furgess said the funding leverage for the grant money was Richland County funds, so it is total Richland County funding and grants, and so the Board needs to review. Mr. Furgess suggested we probably have several of these routes.

Ms. Mood asked Mr. Furgess if he is making a motion that we refer this to the Board, to approve the use of Richland County funds before we proceed. Mr. Furgess said he is saying the Board should understand it, and the Board can send



it back to Service, but the Board needs to understand the funding part of it.

Ms. Mood said she would tell the Board that when we began this route, which was requested by Amazon, several years before we could get it started, it only ran for about three months, before Amazon decided they did not want to support it. She said it is hard to predict what the impact of a route will be in three months.

Ms. Mood said that on Page 42 of the packet, there is a chart showing zero ridership for Nephron since last April. She said that since we have been operating fare-free due to COVID, and because we have made the changeover in the contract, there may have been some miscommunication with drivers about how to count people who are Nephron riders. She said her understanding from Mr. Andoh is that riders who are going to Nephron hold up their Nephron ID cards in the back, so the driver can count. She said those counts have not made it into the information, so Nephron is deciding not to support the route, since it does not show any ridership to Nephron. She said we cannot go back and fill in past months, but we should still know how many riders are going to Nephron because they may want to return to supporting the route, if they see that it is providing service to them.

Ms. Mood asked if Mr. Bell and those from RATP Dev could tell drivers to count the number of riders who get on or off at Nephron. She pointed out that we have very good ridership numbers for our express routes, and that our fare box ratio is extraordinarily high because people are paying to ride the bus, even if their employers are not participating in the funding. She said she does not want to us to lose a popular and very useful route. She said she could take a summary of this to the Board, if we want to act on the motion just made by Mr. Furgess.

**Motion:**

Ms. Gleaton seconded Mr. Furgess' prior motion to move this funding and this issue to the full Board and let the Board send this issue back.

**Approve:** Mood\*, Gleaton\*, Furgess\*

**Oppose:** Anderson\*, Terracio\*

**Motion passed.**

B. Passenger Amenities Program (moved from 6. A.)

Ms. Mood suggested that since Mr. McGee's entire written report is in the packet, that we just ask questions instead of hearing the full report, and Mr. McGee agreed.

Ms. Mood asked whether some projects cannot be completed yet because components have not yet arrived, and Mr. McGee said that is correct. Ms. Mood asked if that is a larger problem of the supply chain, generally, and Mr. McGee said that is correct. He said it is about three months' lead time between ordering and arrival of shelters.



Mr. Anderson asked how many shelters are deployed at this point, how many are on order, and how many we will end up with. Mr. Harris said that data is currently being compiled. He added that there are about twenty-five (25) proposed locations for our next order, and about twenty (20)- thirty (30) locations for the current order that is getting ready to come in.

Mr. Anderson asked how many shelters are up? Mr. Andoh replied that we have constructed seventy-five (75) shelters in the last two years.

Mr. Anderson said that when the original plan was laid out in 2018, the number was not that high. He asked whether we have the capacity to do around one hundred (150) shelters. Mr. Andoh said the Board set a goal of one hundred and seventy-five (175) in three (3) - five (5) years. He said we have received funding from the COG, our current STA funding. He said we have pursued CTC funding from both counties and CDBG. He said we are on target to reach one hundred and seventy-five (175) by the end of the third year.

Mr. Anderson asked whether there are shelters on both side of Beltline or just one. Mr. McGee said there are two. Mr. Andoh suggested taking a look at the corner of Plowden and Beltline. He said there's a makeshift shelter that seems to be kind of in someone's yard, at the corner, where the bus makes a hard right onto Plowden, when it's going south on Beltline. Mr. Andoh said he would have Davis and Floyd investigate it.

Ms. Mood referred to Page 5, item called "Unresolved Issues," where it says that all stops on North Main Street that fall within the current Penny projects have been put on hold by Richland County. She asked if they'd have to finish the roadwork, before we can restart erecting the shelters. Mr. McGee said that's correct, and that we had five shelters that we had submitted to the DOT. He said the DOT gave a verbal okay to the site plans, but they just wanted to coordinate with Richland County, since that project was active. He said Richland County will not approve anything, until they are finished with their project. Ms. Mood said we would not want to put up shelters and then have them damaged by the rest of the work that must be done. Mr. McGee said the DOT should be finishing that project in spring or summer of this year, so we'll submit back to the DOT at that point.

Ms. Mood asked about the first bullet under "Pending Items," where it says 466 Edmund Branch Stop is ready for construction and awaiting The COMET approval for construction to begin, and whether that is something we need to follow up on. Mr. McGee said he believes that those have been approved, but that Mr. Harris could verify that, for sure. Mr. McGee said this report is a snapshot as of last week, and that these projects could have moved forward since then. Mr. Harris said those stops have already been approved.



Mr. Furgess said he noticed that we have deleted the motion period from this.

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to ask the Board to eliminate all Soda Cap Connector routes until the end of the pandemic.

Mr. Furgess said all we're doing is running empty buses all over Columbia, and that we're getting no profit or PR out of it.

Ms. Terracio said this seems like a big decision. She asked if we could or should amend the motion to have staff consider the implications of discontinuing Soda Cap and then come back with options for us. She said maybe one of the routes could still run, if not all of them. Ms. Gleaton concurred.

**Substitute Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Furgess and seconded by Ms. Gleaton to instruct staff to look at the implications of discontinuing the Soda Cap routes or investigate options for partially discontinuing it throughout the pandemic.

Mr. Furgess accepted this motion as a recommendation to the Board.

**Approve:** Mood\*, Anderson\*, Terracio\*, Furgess\*, Gleaton\*

**Motion passed.**

C. University Service Update (moved from 6.B)

Mr. Andoh said that on January 11, 2021 University Service went back into full session with a minor reroute on Route 20 to the spring format, which goes to Union. He said that other than that, ridership is low on those routes just because of the pandemic and many of the students doing classes online. He said any operational challenges in relation to the service are being worked through with our contractor, and staff is meeting with the university on a monthly basis, just to make sure services are meeting their expectations.

Ms. Mood said she noticed in the RATP Dev report, that the supervisor for the University services is in training now.

Mr. Sanchez said the USC operations supervisor is currently out in the field training as he must retake the Commercial Driver's License Test (CDL). Mr. Sanchez stated that he took his CDL test, and during his testing, he hit a cone and failed the test, so he will retest next week.

Mr. Sanchez confirmed that they are monitoring the service, even checking the major timepoints and have been in frequent communication with university. Mr. Sanchez said they are activating and handing out tablets to the USC operators.

Ms. Mood asked if any committee members had questions for Mr. Sanchez or Mr.



Bell. Hearing none, she asked Mr. Andoh if he is meeting monthly with the University. She asked if RATP Dev has a representative that goes to the meetings with the University. Mr. Andoh said we are getting ready to start having RATP Dev attend the meetings.

D. RATP Dev. Operations

a. Solutions for Transit and Data Analytics (moved from 6.C.c.)

Deferred to next meeting.

Mr. Andoh and Ms. Mood agreed that Mr. Andoh will only discuss data analytics today. Mr. Andoh said Solutions for Transit will be presenting next month.

Mr. Andoh referred to Page 16 of the packet and said that in the past, our previous contractor had a series of systems that they provided to The COMET to track data, but The COMET didn't own or control those systems, so we had to rely on the contractor to share that information with us.

Mr. Andoh said that while we were undergoing the procurement for a transit operations contractor, we obtained quotes from two (2) providers to give us data analytics, Solutions for Transit and TransTrack, and we ended up with Solutions for Transit. He said the intent of Solutions for Transit is to be a data repository and to hold all of the operational data related to the performance of The COMET transit system. Mr. Andoh said their system has a series of checks and balances, where they reconcile various information sources and compare the information from those sources, to ensure data accuracy.

Mr. Andoh said that in the case of operations, ridership from Genfare ends up going into Solutions for Transit, as well as the miles reported on the driver vehicle inspection reports. He said they also track customer complaints in the system, as well as safety incidents related to accidents and passenger accidents on the vehicles. He said we track miles between road calls in the system, and that's data that comes from the maintenance module. He said we track on-time performance, as it ingests data from Trapeze and Clever Devices.

Ms. Mood asked if having accurate data means reconciling the data that gets put in, and whether the system can do that? Mr. Andoh confirmed that that is correct.

Ms. Mood asked if anyone has questions? She asked if Mr. Andoh wanted to comment on how well that's going, and whether RATP Dev representatives have anything to add, regarding the matter.

Ms. Gibbons said her use of the system is pretty easy and accurate for use. She said that as we look at the data, the data is more of schedule data and by FTA and the contract. She said the contract of RATP Dev has to put in actual data. She said we must report actual data to **NTE**. She said she's noticing more schedule data than actual data, which is revenue hours, run times, start and end mileage.





She said the system is pretty accurate, as long as errors are corrected in a timely fashion, if there are any.

Mr. Anderson asked whether we're converting to this, or if we already have this. Mr. Andoh said we've had this since June 2020. Mr. Anderson said the data that it feeds into comes from multiple places. He asked if that is what we are replacing? Mr. Andoh said we are not replacing those systems but rather integrating those systems into this data management system, so that, when we are getting our data, instead of pulling it from multiple reports, we are pulling it from one system. Mr. Anderson asked when that integration is scheduled to be complete. Mr. Andoh said that integration was completed in July 2020. Mr. Anderson asked if that includes the fare box data. Mr. Andoh said the fare box data integrates into Solutions for Transit. Mr. Anderson asked if all our data problems are operational at the beginning of the system, basically where people are not entering it where it is supposed to be. Mr. Andoh confirmed that is correct.

Mr. Anderson said he would like RATP Dev. to come back with a written plan to go back and correct what needs correcting over the last nine months and to get it correct, going forward. Ms. Gleaton concurred.

Ms. Mood said the fact that we will be looking at some of the results of that integration in terms of what the ridership data would give us, at our next meeting, a way to both consider what that plan looks like from Mr. Andoh and RATP Dev together, and then where we are with that, in terms of what it looks like with the output data, ridership being one of the examples.

Mr. Anderson said it sounds like there are two problems, one being that the integration is done, but that in the process of the integration, it is normal for data not always to land where it's supposed to or show up correctly, so we'll have to scrub everything from the transition to this point, to get it all to work. He said someone will have to sit down and get all this squared away. Ms. Mood concurred. Mr. Anderson said the second problem is with people inputting the data at the very beginning, so we don't continue to replicate bad data. Mr. Anderson said the plan needs two parts.

Mr. Anderson said RATP Dev is doing most of this, and it should be straightforward, and that our staff should agree that it can be implemented. He said it should have a timeline limit. He said he's reasonable and doesn't expect this all to be fixed tomorrow, and that it will take some time to straighten out.

Ms. Mood asked if Mr. Andoh and Mr. Bell understand what Mr. Anderson is asking for? Mr. Bell said he does, and that he appreciates the opportunity to be able to speak today. He said he knows there has been a lot of talk regarding SFT, and that we have put forth a dedicated staff, to try and resolve some of the challenges. He said there needs to be a meeting of the minds, in order to rectify



what is a difference between the manual input and the automated input. He said there are some inherent challenges with the system that he thinks can be resolved over time, but right now, it definitely calls for a meeting of the minds, to accomplish what the agency and the Board would like to see.

Mr. Anderson said he does not think we need to get in the middle of the meeting of the minds. He said he thinks people need to sit down and come up with a plan that is reasonable and has timelines that everyone considers achievable, and then bring that back to us next month. Mr. Bell agreed. Mr. Andoh said we have been wanting to have this meeting, and that we've just been waiting for RATP Dev to have this meeting, so we'll send another request for that meeting and make that happen.

Ms. Mood said she'll look forward to the outcome of that at our next meeting.

b. On-Time Performance (moved from 6.C.a)

c. Customer Complaints Status (moved from 6.C.b)

Mr. Andoh said that in relation to the on-time performance, the contract discusses two metrics for on-time performance, one for the fixed-route system and one for the paratransit system. He said the fixed-route system uses Clever Devices presently and the goal is 85%. He said we define an on-time trip as buses departing zero (0) minutes early to no more than five (5) minutes late. He said the current Clever Devices system which is called Digital Recorders, which is really a system that Clever Devices bought back in 2012, basically tracks on-time performance based on the timepoint of when a bus, through GPS, passes that point. He said it generates a monthly report that tells us, collectively, what the system is performing.

Mr. Andoh said challenges that cause that system not to record are the following. One, the bus operator doesn't log in. Two, a bus operates on a route that has not been programmed with the most current data. Three, the digital recorder is just not working. He said this system has been in place since 2010, and the most recent system of purchase in 2017 was the fleet of the thirty-one (31) buses that were delivered. He said he understands that our contractor has been working with Clever Devices to mitigate some of those issues. He said we just got a report yesterday, that fifty (50) of the fifty-eight (58) buses have been updated with the most recent programming. Mr. Andoh continued to explain that once the remaining eight (8) get updated, we are hoping that we should start to see some more accurate reporting if drivers are logging into the system and all the digital recorders are working.

Mr. Anderson said our staff and RATP Dev need to come up with an achievable plan, something both parties agree can be done, and bring it back with achievable timelines. He said he understands that we do not have on-time performance because the equipment that collects the data does not work, for many reasons,



and it sounds like we are moving in the right direction. He said we should figure out what is the goal line, how we are going to get there, and how long it is going to take, and then report back in a month.

Ms. Mood referred to the RATP Dev report on Page 71 of the packet. She said that on the page about performance measure reporting about the weekly scheduled meetings with Clever Devices, it looks like that series of bullet points are really the kind of elements that need to be examined with both the technical people as well as The COMET staff and RATP Dev staff, to come up with some strategies and solutions for each one of these bullets. She asked if her interpretation is correct.

Mr. Bell said it is correct, and he thinks Mr. Andoh and his team have started to address a lot of the challenges that we've had with Clever Devices, and that although we're still working with Clever Devices, the information we're providing is getting us prepared for that transition to Strategic Mapping. He said there will most likely be a strong improvement with Strategic Mapping.

Ms. Mood asked whether we will still be dealing with Clever Devices when we go to Strategic Mapping? Mr. Andoh said we will not. He said we bought a system that integrates with multiple things on the buses, and we needed to replace Clever Devices and other systems that just weren't giving us the satisfactory performance that we were looking for. He said transition will start in March and should be fully integrated by April.

Ms. Mood referred to the list on Page 71, where it says, review timepoints, how they're established, where are they, how many there are, if stops are not placed properly, then the result is an inaccurate reading, and if every stop is a timepoint, there may be too many. She asked whether those questions will be resolved in the transition to Strategic Mapping.

Mr. Andoh said he thinks these are questions RATP Dev has of us, so we will work with them to answer those questions. Ms. Mood said that on the report, it's what they've been trying to deal with in scheduled meetings with Clever Devices, but since they'll be out of the picture, she just wants to be sure that those get addressed, in whatever the new Strategic Mapping system is. Mr. Andoh said that when we have that meeting with their team, we'll give them responses to these questions. He said some of these questions are historical, and we'll explain the process of how timepoints were established. He said all the timepoints are shown in our bus schedules.

Ms. Mood asked for an update at the March meeting, of where Mr. Andoh is, in that transition process. Mr. Andoh agreed.

6.C.d (deferred)



6.C.e. (deferred)

**7. TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT**

Ms. Mood asked Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Bell if they have anything to add, on top of what has already been discussed in this meeting. They said they do not.

**8. ADJOURN**

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Mood to adjourn.

**Approve:** Mood\*, Anderson\*, Terracio\*, Furgess\*, Gleaton\*

**Motion passed.**

*The meeting adjourned at 1:02 P.M.*

CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

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

Prepared by:

\_\_\_\_\_Frances Von Korff\_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paige Jernigan, Administrative & Customer Service Specialist

Approved by:

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