

Triangle Transit Authority Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes

November 28, 2007

Board Room, 68 T.W. Alexander Drive
Research Triangle Park, NC

Board Members Present:

Bill Bell (arr. 1:39 p.m., left 3:10 p.m.)
Anne S. Franklin
Alice Gordon
Bob Hinshaw
Sig Hutchinson

Jeff Merritt
Ellen Reckhow (arr. 1:11 p.m.)
William G. Smith
Bill Strom (left 2:20 p.m.)
M. Carter Worthy (arr. 2:05 p.m., left 3:23 p.m.)

Board Members Absent:

Kenneth Spaulding

Nina Szlosberg (excused)

Staff Present:

Amy Armbruster
Laurie Barrett
Michelle Dawson
Saundra Freeman
Damien Graham
Wib Gulley

David King
Mitchell Lodge
Greg Northcutt
Brad Schultz
Juanita Shearer-Swink
John Tallmadge

Chair Sig Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. He noted that Nina Szlosberg is attending a Raleigh Chamber planning meeting on a trip to Charlotte for the new rail system.

I. Adoption of Agenda

Action: On motion by Franklin and second by Strom the agenda was adopted. The motion was carried unanimously.

II. Recognition

A. Board Recognition

Chair Sig Hutchinson presented to Alice Gordon a framed historical photograph from Orange County. He thanked Gordon for her leadership as Chair of the Board of Trustees for the past year. Gordon thanked the Board, saying it was a team effort.

B. Introduction of New Hires

General Manager David King announced the following new bus operators: Felicia McMichael-Renwick, Part-Time Customer Service Representative; Stephanie Minker, Employer Outreach Coordinator; and Mitchell Lodge, Accounting & Financial Reporting Administrator.

Reckhow arrived.

C. Announcement of Promotions

None.

King reported that the Orange County Disability Awareness Council recently recognized four TTA employees for outstanding in service to disabled community: Carolyn Wallace, Roxanne Evans, Samuel Whitney and William Robinson.

King then presented two *Above and Beyond Awards* for outstanding customer service and performance during TTA's special service to the North Carolina State Fair in October: bus supervisors Tammy Romain and Pearl Waite. Hutchinson thanked on behalf of the Board all of these employees for their service.

III. Public Hearings

None.

IV. Public Comment

Chair Hutchinson recognized Graham T. Olive Jr. who said he is disgusted with cutbacks in TTA's service, saying last month he was at the bus transfer center at 6:30 p.m. bus catching a bus and the building was locked up, preventing him from accessing facilities. He said he recently heard John Tallmadge speak to the DATA Board about plans to extend service to Johnston, Alamance, Chatham and Granville counties and asked how TTA could do that if it can not upgrade service within the existing three county area.

William "Bill" King commented that he appreciates TTA's service as an occasional rider, but finds it lacking as well. He said he looks forward to expand weekend service, because he has been stranded in Chapel Hill a couple times because service stops early on Saturday. He also complained that the buses are limited to two bicycles on the racks and bikes are not allowed inside the buses. He suggested facilities at the transfer center and other locations where people could storage their bikes. King also pointed out that directional signs are needed for the bus transfer center.

Action: On motion by Strom and second by Reckhow the Board asked that staff provide a response to these comments to the Operations & Finance Committee or Board of Trustees. The motion was carried unanimously.

V. Consent Agenda

Action: On motion by Strom and second by Smith the consent agenda was adopted. The motion was carried unanimously.

The following consent agenda items were approved:

- October 11, 2007 – Work Session Minutes;
- October 24, 2007 – Regular Session Minutes;
- October 24, 2007 – Closed Session A Minutes; and
- October 24, 2007 – Closed Session B Minutes.

VI. Presentations

Bill Strom introduced Steve Spade, director of Chapel Hill Transit (CHT). He said the town, and partners Carrboro and UNC, are fortunate to have Spade. Strom noted that Spade came to Chapel Hill from Iowa, directing a similar sized system there. He said the community's enthusiasm for transit service is admirable and use is growing. He said the system just this fall added hybrid and articulated buses to the fleet, which has created a lot of excitement. He said TTA should expect the same "buzz" when its new fleet arrives.

Spade offered his respect of TTA and its staff. He said he appreciates being in a community and region that is supportive of and embraces transit at the policy level.

Spade presented some informational sheets on Chapel Hill Transit and the articulated bus, which are attached and hereby made a part of these minutes.

Gordon asked how the articulated bus helps service. Spade replied that it increases capacity without increasing labor costs, saying about 70% of the cost of operating a bus is the driver. He said since adding the articulated bus, daily hours of service have been reduced by 12 with an increase in capacity. He said as more performance data is gathered, the hope is that costs are reduced and ridership, up on the routes served by articulated bus.

Gordon then asked if additional articulated buses would be purchased. Spade answered that he felt Chapel Hill's system could support a fleet of ten to 12 articulated buses based on current ridership.

Bell arrived.

Spade stated that in April 2006 the agency conducted a fleet analysis and made several recommendations:

- Increase fleet size from 83 to 99 buses;
- Establish a bus modernization program to maintain an average fleet age of seven 7 years (replacing 8-10% of the fleet each per year);
- Move away from standard floor to low floor bus technology, which is easier and quicker for boarding passengers, enabling greater mainstreaming of the disabled community;
- Move from the 35 feet to 40 feet standard bus size (16 new 40 ft. buses delivered this year) and experiment with 60 feet buses (3 now in the fleet); and
- Look into the use of alternative fuels and experiment with hybrid-electric technology (3 delivered this summer).

Spade also said that CHT has introduced real time passenger information and lighting in some bus shelters and added new shelters and amenities at stops in hopes of stimulating ridership.

Reckhow commented that streets have to be designed in a way to handle transit with pullouts, transit stops, crosswalks, and medians.

Franklin asked if CHT had experienced any technical problems with the real time passenger information system. Spade said that it is a challenge to keep the information accurate, which requires that the drivers stay logged on.

Merritt asked about ridership when the university is not in session. Spade responded that ridership falls off about 25%, but with summer sessions, it starts to spike again and summer service is only reduced by about two night trips. Merritt then asked about operations or safety issues with the articulated buses. Spade said initially there was some reluctance of operators to drive the articulated buses, but once trained some of the higher seniority operators prefer them. He added that the public would stop and watch the bus go by and seemed fearful of its size, but people seem to have gotten used to them now. Spade added that the biggest challenge has been the width of both the 40 foot buses and the articulated buses on streets.

Gordon then asked Chapel Hill's experience with the fare free system and the cost recovery ratio before going fare free. Spade replied CHT carried approximately 2.6 million annual passengers and had annual revenue of \$1.2-\$1.5 million before going fare free. He said at least that much additional revenue was gained in federal and state revenues due to increased ridership. He said service increased about 20% when the system went fare free. He said the fare free system put a lot of pressure for much more frequent and expanded service. He said there is additional maintenance when a buses regular load increases dramatically as well.

Reckhow asked about CHT's bike policy. Spade said CHT does not allow bicycles inside the buses for liability reasons. He said most insurance companies are not willing to cover if an incident occurs. He said there are bike racks that can hold four bikes but there are maintenance issues associated with that as well as visibility issues for the driver.

Worthy arrived.

VII. General Business Agenda

A. Items Removed from Consent Agenda

None.

B. Personnel Committee Report

No report.

C. Planning & Legislative Committee Report

Ellen Reckhow noted the minutes in the packet and reported that two major items were discussed: TTA's re-branding and possible advertising. She said the Committee did not have a firm recommendation, but agreed that some level of advertising on the exterior of buses would be appropriate. She said the Committee raised questions and asked staff to look at the pros and cons of advertising, which is included in the packet.

Reckhow also said the Committee discussed service expansion policies.

1. Triangle Transit Brand and Bus Wraps

Reckhow presented the total estimate for re-branding at \$234,000. She said only \$60,500 is include din the current year's budget, leaving a shortfall of \$173,500. She said staff has offered advertising as a way to reduce that gap.

Worthy asked how the \$173,500 would be financed without advertising. Armbruster replied that the internal Committee continues to work with the Finance Department on that answer. She said possibly some of the elements of re-branding would have to wait until the next fiscal year. Armbruster said the down side to that strategy is that there is one opportunity to roll-out the new brand and the new buses will create a tremendous amount of buzz. She said the recommended plan and budget is the most conservative that staff feels appropriate to do it right.

Worthy stated her concern with introducing a new brand and advertising at the same time, saying it could dilute the brand message.

Strom asked that the Board excuse him due to another meeting he has to attend. He added that he regrets not being able to vote against advertising. He said he felt much more harm than good can come from the negative image of a wrapped bus. Strom also said that he would like to hear from the finance officer regarding the budget before making a decision and felt that the Operations & Finance Committee first should make a recommendation regarding the budget.

Action: A motion was made by Smith and second by Merritt to defer any action until after the December 6 Operations & Finance Committee meeting.

Strom left.

Worthy said she was against a full wrap, but she would consider more limited applications of advertising.

Reckhow commented that the Committee grappled with the same issues, but Committee members did not have a problem with the much smaller advertising on the back of the bus. She also said the Committee felt using this advertising for wireless Internet sponsorship could be a good strategy.

Merritt then added that he felt the report was thorough and presented well and showed that staff had investigate and researched the issue. He commended and thanked staff for the good work.

Smith commented that a new brand and advertising should not be introduced at same time

Action: Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

Action: On motion by Reckhow and second by Franklin the Board excused Bill Strom from the meeting. The motion was carried unanimously.

Gordon then asked about the tagline. She said that she felt that the Board should look first at the mission statement before selecting a slogan.

Armbruster noted the need to have a tagline for promotion items that will be needed in March.

Worthy then suggested waiting one month to allow TTA's outside consultants to take a look at the options and get their feedback. Board members were asked to submit their personal rankings of the four taglines.

Action: On motion by Worthy and second by Gordon the Board asked that staff work with TTA's outside consultants on the tagline with a Board vote in December. The motion was carried unanimously.

D. Operations & Finance Committee Report

No report.

VIII. Other Business

A. General Manager's Report

David King highlighted the following items in his report:

- TTA set a new all-time ridership record in October of almost 88,000 riders.
- A synopsis of the STAC process and some of the discussion/thoughts being generated: The Phase I regional rail project is seen as a failure and therefore some feel no part of it should be considered going forward. A new project should have scalability, which was one of the difficulties of the Phase 1 project. Bus on fixed guideway proposals are being pushed forward as a way to scale a project. Commuter rail is being heavily considered, although it is less effective in changing land use. Several smaller projects would allow a better spread of resources around the region. King then said that neither criteria for selection and prioritization nor funding have been determined.

Bell left.

- Spoke to Triangle Tomorrow.
- Is working on an extension of the agreement with NCR.
- Attended the ceremonial opening of Charlotte's light rail system
- TTA is co-sponsoring a DBE/MBE Conference today with RDU and NCDOT to inform the minority business community about the opportunities in government.
- The Transportation Commission for the 21st Century has been appointed and held two meetings. Nina Szlosberg is a part of the group. He added that interim recommendations may be made in the Spring dealing with gap funding for the NCTA with and longer term recommendations to the next governor.

Action: On motion by Gordon and second by Franklin the Board voted to excuse Bill Bell. The motion was carried unanimously.

Hutchinson then asked permission to take an agenda item out of order due to Carter Worthy needing to leave. He then presented her with a framed historical photograph of a bus on Fayetteville Street in Raleigh in recognition of her service on the TTA Board since 1991. Worthy noted that her new offices will be located in a building shown in the photograph. She shared a gift with Board members and encouraged them to continue to fight and promised to be an advocate alongside.

Worthy left.

B. General Counsel's Report

General Counsel Wib Gulley then highlighted several items from his written report and discussed a conflict of interest issue with TTA's outside counsel, Parker Poe Adams and Bernstein with that and the public official role of one of senior partners at PP has, Charles Meek. He explained that the two have mutually agreed to terminate the relationship over the next couple of months due to a senior partner's role as Mayor of Raleigh. He said an RFP would be issued for a replacement as soon as possible.

C. Chair's Report

Chair Sig Hutchinson offered the following report:

- Attended at the ribbon cutting for the light rail system in Charlotte.
- Attended the Rail~Volution conference.
- Participated in a Transit Vision 2050 Webinar sponsored by APTA.

D. Board Member Reports

1. CAMPO TAC Representative

Anne Franklin reported that no action was taken by CAMPO.

2. DCHC TAC Representative

Alice Gordon reported for Bill Strom that DCHC received information about a TTA-commissioned seven year travel demand management plan. She said the plan was approved, but there was no identification of funding. She also said TTA replacement buses and routine capital items, and TTA planning assistance tied for top priority on the regional priority list. She noted a copy of the DCHC MPO report, which is attached and hereby made a part of these minutes.

3. Regional Transportation Alliance (RTA) Representative

Chair Sig Hutchinson noted that the RTA Annual Meeting is tomorrow.

4. Rail~Volution Conference Reports

Conference reports from Sig Hutchinson, Jeff Merritt and Ellen Reckhow are attached and hereby made a part of these minutes.

E. New Business
None.

IX. Closed Session(s)

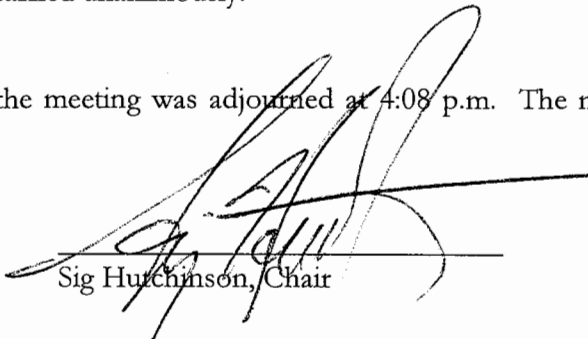
A. Property Lease: Bus Transit Facility Negotiations

Pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11 (a) (5) To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease.

Action: On motion by Franklin and second by Hinshaw the Board adjourned into closed session for the purpose of and pursuant to the General Statute listed above at 3:55 p.m. The motion was carried unanimously.

X. Adjournment

Action: On motion by Merritt the meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m. The motion was carried unanimously.



Sig Hutchinson, Chair

Attest:



Michelle C. Dawson, CMC
Clerk to the TTA Board