

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
April 29, 2021

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on April 29, 2021 at 12:00 pm in the Mass Transit Training Facility. The following were present:

Attendees:

Alexis Ehrhardt, Chairperson	Inez Rodenburg, Dir. of Information Technology
Anna Kautzman	Stephanie Lovely, Parks & Recreation
Judy Keesee	Marc Adelman, Transportation Services Director
John Moody, Vice-Chairperson	Lisa Bivens, Senior Administrative Assistant
Ralph Price	Steven Hennessee, State Project Mgr., participated
Earl Reynolds, Deputy City Manager	in the meeting via Zoom

The Transportation Committee meeting, held on April 29, 2021 was called to order at 12:12 pm by Chairperson, Alexis Ehrhardt.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Approval of Minutes

John Moody made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2021 meeting as presented. Ralph Price seconded the motion, all members in attendance were in favor and the motion passed.

Review of Monthly Ridership Reports

Marc Adelman commented that the pandemic has influenced multiple transit operations. Fixed route ridership decreased 34% for the period, July 2019 through March 2020 compared to the same timeframe last year. He explained that one reason for this decrease could be related to seating limitations since only 12 passengers can be onboard simultaneously due to the pandemic. However, Reserve A ride Ridership increased by 33% year-to-date compared to last year. In addition, ridership activity for March 2021 for the Reserve A Ride operation was the greatest in four years. Handivan ridership is down by 21% and senior ridership decreased by 8% compared to last fiscal year for this timeframe.

Review of Financial Status Report

Marc Adelman reviewed the financial status report for the period July 2020 through March 2021 with the Committee. The year-to-date passenger revenue level is under budget by 13.9% (\$220,906 actual/\$256,500 FY21 budgeted). Token sales for July 2020 through March 2021 decreased by 5% (\$65,475 compared to \$68,718 for FY20). Salary and wage expense through March 2021 is 10% under budget primarily due to the job vacancies related to the Division Director's position and full-time driving positions.

Review of Financial Status Report (Continued)

Marc Adelman added that he expects that a new division director will be coming on board the first part of June. In addition, he mentioned that fuel charges through March 2021 are under budget by 22% (\$130,639 actual/\$167,250 FY21 budget). Total operating expenses for the period are under budget by 8.3% or \$196,137. Marc Adelman discussed token sales data and mentioned that token sales for the current fiscal year are on track to hit approximately \$81,000.

Other information shared with the Committee concerned the current employment status situation. Since July 2020, six part-time drivers and eleven full-time drivers were hired. However, thirteen employment separations occurred this fiscal year through April 2021 involving four part-time drivers and nine full-time drivers, which is a net increase of two part-time drivers and two full-time drivers this fiscal year. Presently, twenty-five of the thirty full-time drivers' positions are filled. Marc Adelman indicated that the current turnover situation with drivers does not support any type of service expansion.

Same-Day Service Update

In December 2020, the transit system initiated same-day rides for the Handivan, Reserve A Ride and Senior Transportation operations for eight hours per day based on staff input. Passengers were informed that same-day service was not guaranteed. The primary service objectives with offering same-day rides involve improving customer convenience as well as service efficiency levels by assigning trips relative to cancellations and no-shows. During the Transportation Committee meeting in January 2021, the possibility of expanding operating hours for same-day service was discussed, which was approved by the Committee and went into effect in March 2021. This expansion increased service to 16.5 hours per day (from 8:00 am to 12:30 am). To avoid overwhelming the phone lines by offering same-day service, it was mandated that an online reservation form should be submitted by passengers. Marc Adelman said that he hopes to implement an online booking app to further improve access and convenience for same-day rides for the public. Current service data related to the same-day service was provided to the Committee.

- On average, 6.8 same-day trip requests were completed for the first 28 days of the service was offered.
- On average, 14 same-day trip requests were completed from April 1 through April 24, 2021.
- A total of 722 same-day trip requests were completed, and 79 trip requests were denied during the period December 8 through April 2021.
- Approximately nine percent (8.7%) of the same day requests completed from December 8 through April 24, 2021 were cancelled by passengers.

Same-Day Service Update (Continued)

Marc Adelman said that there is still room for growth for this new service. Alexis Ehrhardt asked whether he felt that everyone knows about the service. Marc Adelman said that a large mailing was completed to passengers and radio advertising was also completed to promote the service. John Moody asked what radio stations promoted the service and Marc Adelman stated WAKG/WBTM. He added that funds are available to accommodate advertising on other radio stations and that he would explore options for accomplishing that objective. Discussion continued.

Marc Adelman stated that last year the Community Transportation Association of America identified special grant funds were available to transit systems to make application to implement same-day service arrangements. At that time, transportation staff completed several conference calls with RouteMatch, Danville’s automated scheduling software company to discuss submitting a grant request. However, a sense of uncertainty existed whether Routematch could modify their existing app for same-day rides to allow dispatchers to assign same-day trips effectively. In addition, RouteMatch was unable to participate in the grant process since proprietary information must be released if a grant was approved. As a result, a grant application was not submitted.

Marc Adelman said a few weeks ago he reached out to Inez Rodenburg, the Director of the city’s Information Technology Department to see if an app could be developed for same-day service. Ms. Rodenburg indicated that there may be a possibility to use Microsoft’s online booking app to support same-day ride requests that is available at no charge. Transit staff suggested incorporating a vehicle tracking system so passengers could locate their vehicle when completing a request and to also make available a credit card payment option for customers to access. Inez Rodenburg was present during the meeting and reviewed the online booking app with the Committee. The Committee discussed naming the app and online reservation form as Danville Transit Online Reservations.

State Input regarding FY22 Proposed Operating and Capital Assistance Funding Levels

The City of Danville recently received input from the Commonwealth Transportation Board regarding Capital Grant requests that were submitted in February 2021 to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation for FY2022’s budget. The state approved a request to purchase four buses in FY2022 but did not approve the Automated Voice Announcement units for the buses.

CAPITAL GRANT FUNDING REQUESTED IN FEBRUARY 2021

SIX (6) BUSES AND AUTOMATED VOICE ANNOUNCEMENT UNITS FOR FIXED ROUTE BUSES. THE INITIAL PROJECT BUDGET IS IDENTIFIED BELOW:

PROJECTED FEDERAL FUNDING	\$601,690
PROJECTED STATE FUNDING	\$120,338
PROJECTED LOCAL MATCH REQUIREMENT	<u>\$ 30,085</u>
TOTAL FUNDING	\$752,113

State Input regarding FY22 Operating and Capital Assistance Funding Levels (continued)

CAPITAL GRANT FUNDING RECOMMENDED BY STATE - 4 BUSES

FEDERAL AID	\$350,177
STATE AID	\$ 70,038
LOCAL MATCH REQUIREMENT	<u>\$ 17,509</u>
TOTAL FUNDING	\$437,524

It was originally estimated that Danville Transit would receive \$1,609,920 in federal operating aid for FY22. However, the state recommended \$1,727,894 in operating aid for this fiscal year. Marc Adelman said he was very uncertain about what funding level to expect for state operating assistance so a figure of \$500,000 was identified originally for the FY22 budget. However, the state recommended \$543,135 in aid. Marc Adelman said the transit system is extremely dependent on federal and state operating aid. While cash fares have increased over the years, it has not compensated for wage rate adjustments and other operating expense increases.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 pm.