

MINUTES

Concord Kannapolis Area Transit Commission

December 21, 2023, 8:30 am

Rider Transit Center

MEMBERS:

Mayor Bill Dusch-City of Concord
Dianne Berry- City of Kannapolis
Darrell Jackson- City of Kannapolis
Betty Stocks-City of Concord
John Sweat-City of Concord

OTHERS:

Dennis Brown-Cabarrus Reentry Program
Bob Bushey-Cabarrus County Transportation Service
Andy Christy- Rider Transit
Phil Conrad- CRMPO
Mayor Darrell Hinnant-City of Kannapolis
Pam Hinson-City of Concord
Craig Meeks-Rider Transit
Wilmer Melton- City of Kannapolis
Obdulio Oden-Transdev
Charles Ratliff-Cabarrus County Transportation Service
David Rhew-NC Public Transportation Association
Joshua Smith-City of Concord
Paige Tamaro-City of Concord
Jaime Tippet Poe- Rider Transit
L.J. Weslowski- Rider Transit

Call to Order, Quorum, and Approval of Minutes

Mayor Dusch called the meeting to order at 8:30 am, declared a quorum.

No individuals were present for public comment.

Mr. Weslowski introduced Mr. David Rhew, Director of the North Carolina Public Transit Association and Mr. Dennis Brown the Director for the Cabarrus County Reentry Program.

Mayor Dusch requested a motion to approve the minutes of the Concord Kannapolis Area Transit Commission meeting from 10/26/2023.

Mr. Jackson made a motion to approve; Ms. Stocks second. Minutes approved unanimously as presented.

Cabarrus Reentry Program and Transportation

Using a PowerPoint, Mr. Brown presented.

Mr. Brown discussed the Reentry Transportation Simulation that took place on 10/25/2023 from 8:00am-12:00 pm where 25 individuals participated in different scenarios in the lives of individuals in reentry to the community. In the debrief session, participants requested that Elected Officials either sponsor or take part in the next Transportation Simulation, which we hope to take place in early spring 2024.

Mr. Brown discussed the importance of the transportation for individuals in the Reentry program to training classes or to employment. Rider Transit provided transportation to several individuals from May 2023-September 2023.

Mr. Weslowski stated that he was able to attend a graduation ceremony at the detention center and stated that several of the participants were overwhelmed to see so many members of the community supporting them and cheering for them.

Mr. Weslowski stated that from May to September, 60.42 hours of service were provided at a cost of \$94.24 per hour including fuel, with an overall cost of \$5,694.00 of local funds only with use of a minivan from the City of Concord fleet department.

Ms. Stocks commented that the cost of the program is significantly less than the cost of incarceration.

Mayor Dusch agreed that the cost per person is well worth the service.

Recommendation/Action: Review and consider extension of Cabarrus County Community Reentry Program Transportation to training classes and employment.

Ma. Stocks made a motion to extension of Cabarrus County Community Reentry Program Transportation to training classes and employment. Mr. Jackson second. Unanimous.

Mr. Weslowski stated that we will continue the program in February and will then put in the budget for the next fiscal year for review.

Mayor Hinnant asked if Rowan Cabarrus Community College covered the cost for training.

Mr. Brown stated that they do cover the cost of all classes.

Mr. Weslowski provided another brief recap of the Transportation simulation and clarified that there is an ask for the Transit Commission and Elected Officials to sponsor the next Transportation Simulation.

Mr. Brown agreed that they would like the entire community to be involved with significant support of the Transit Commission and all Elected Officials.

Rider Bus Stop Amenity Project Update

Utilizing a PowerPoint, Mr. Christy presented.

Rider Transit has almost completed the contract for M.H. Graves for the construction of 19 bus stops.

This will bring us to 46 stops or 17% of total stops amenitized. The national average is 10%.

Upon conclusion of the project, approximately 30% of stops will be amenitized.

Several site designs were shown as examples of what construction is occurring.

Mayor Dusch asked about criteria for choosing the 19 stops.

Mr. Christy stated that it is based on ridership. If any stop averages six or more riders per day qualify for seats and ten or more riders per day qualify for shelters.

Mr. Weslowski stated that the first 19 of the 51 are sites that we are able to build on at this time without right of way requirements.

Mr. Jackson asked what amount of square footage is required for this project.

Mr. Christy stated that the first 19 stops did not require any private square footage. These are all in the right-of-way. The remaining stops require very little square footage. The average is two-four feet back from the right of way line and less than 100 square feet at most. Telex is working on an update on the process with property owners.

Mr. Weslowski stated that we could lose some stop improvements if the landowners are not agreeable or based on financial components.

Rider Transit Operations Staffing Challenges

Mr. Weslowski presented using a PowerPoint.

Transit staffing challenges are everywhere. Mr. Weslowski provided several examples, including Seattle and Boston and data from a survey of transit agencies across the nation including what positions have staffing shortages and why do you think your agency is experiencing staffing shortages.

Rider Transit's service provider, Transdev, is struggling to maintain enough personnel to keep service running properly each day, particularly Bus and Paratransit Operators. This has affected service on one or two days in September and October including in November, 14 of 29 days, 69.5 hours of lost service and in December, 12 of 20 days, 57.5 hours of lost service.

This issue is becoming a national crisis not just in Transit, but in many Transportation sectors. 10/4/23, local Rider and Transdev staff met with Transdev Corporate staff. At that meeting, Rider requested Transdev put together a proposal to address the employee shortage in our system and as of 12/21/23, we still do not have that proposal to vet and to discuss locally.

Mayor Dusch asked if there is anything that the two cities need to be doing.

Mr. Weslowski stated that there is nothing at this time, but to be prepared that there will be an ask for additional funding and that we are trying to get that to the City Managers, Mayor Dusch and Mayor Hinnant, and the Transit Commission as able and appropriate.

Mayor Dusch asked if it is money or other things.

Mr. Weslowski stated that it is mostly money.

Mr. Oden stated that Paratransit operators start at \$12.84 and top out at \$14.13.

Mr. Weslowski stated that CCTS operators start at \$17.50 without experience and can start out at \$19.00 with experience.

Mr. Oden stated that Fixed Route operators start at \$16.87 per hour after going through training at \$13.71 and top out at \$18.75.

Mr. Bushey stated that CCTS also has a \$2500 sign on bonus.

Mr. Weslowski stated that CATS operators start at \$23.00 per hour for Paratransit operators and \$22.00 per hour for fixed operators. Cabarrus County School Bus Operators \$18.23 per hour.

Mayor Dusch asked if we are unable to do this because of our contract.

Mr. Weslowski stated that it is because of the cost. We will have to get approval to spend high six figures to \$1 million.

Mr. Weslowski stated that our senior mechanic, who has been here for 18 years, makes \$20.50 and the City of Concord pays \$ 42.00 per hour.

Mayor Dusch asked that staff get to them as soon as we receive the information and about the starting pay at McDonalds.

Mr. Oden stated it is \$18.00 and Subway is \$21.00.

Mr. Brown asked about the qualifications for driving a bus.

Mr. Oden stated that the bigger buses for fixed route require a CDL and some of the Paratransit vehicles do, but for the most part they do not.

Mr. Weslowski stated that we do not CDL train our operators because we will train operators and then they will leave because of the very low pay compared to everyone else in the region.

Mr. Jackson stated that we need to see the financials and the big picture to make an accurate decision.

Mr. Melton asked if we are not getting anything from corporate because there is not anything in it for corporate financially and that is likely low priority because of this.

Mr. Oden stated that he also provides feedback to Transdev corporate daily to get the information. He also stated that he is actively working on recruitment and retention, but he needs assistance from Transdev corporate because the passengers are the one who are suffering.

Mr. Weslowski stated that our one tool in our toolbox is Liquidated damages which we utilized last year, but if we choose to do that they will likely walk away from the contract and then staff will need to do an emergency procurement.

Mr. Rhew stated that he on behalf of the NCPTA will reach out about serving the people of North Carolina.

Mayor Dusch stated that he would appreciate Mr. Rhew speaking with Mr. Weslowski and proceeding as they agree.

Mr. Conrad asked if we are obligated to utilize Transdev for all services.

Mr. Weslowski stated that we are allowed to utilize other agencies if they are unable to provide service, but it is unlikely that another agency will be able to recruit if they (Transdev) are not and a replacement company will cost more to do the service.

Mayor Dusch stated that the bottom line is that there is information that we need, and we need to do whatever we can to receive it.

Ms. Berry asked the cost of the contract.

Mr. Weslowski stated that the overall annual cost is \$3.226 million overall including employee wages and benefits.

Mr. Bushey asked if we could bring the operations in house if Transdev walks away from the contract.

Mr. Weslowski stated that we would be able to take everything in house except the operators and the General Manager, but we do not have a facility for them to work.

Mr. Bushey asked what would happen if there is not a contractor that would bid on the project.

Mr. Weslowski stated that we would have to find a contractor, or we would potentially have to shut down.

Mr. Melton asked about consulting with the City of Kannapolis legal team to better understand the regulations.

Mr. Weslowski stated that he has already considered and discussed that, and it may be beneficial to do so to make sure that they are able to accept the pay increase if offered.

Mr. Melton and Mayor Dusch asked that we have legal representation to look at all our options.

Mr. Weslowski stated that he would ask of Mr. Melton and Mr. Smith to facilitate that meeting.

Mr. Weslowski also asked if Mayor Dusch and Mayor Hinnant would be willing to send a letter requesting the compensation information be sent expeditiously.

Mayor Dusch and Mayor Hinnant agreed that they would.

Mr. Smith asked if there is a list of providers doing business in North Carolina.

Mr. Weslowski stated that he does have a list and can provide that.

Mayor Hinnant asked if there is a way to get around this by getting a bonus or supplement instead of going through Transdev, the Union, or North Carolina state regulations, and the Cities would pay a supplement through a separate check.

Mr. Weslowski stated that he is unsure. This is a question for legal representation. The City of Cary does something similar for attendance and safety that gets paid directly to the drivers.

Mayor Dusch stated that it would be better so that the operators know what they are getting. He recommends consulting legal representation.

Mayor Hinnant stated that this is done throughout the state in other sectors, so transit should not be different.

Rider Transit Microtransit Update and Discussion

Mr. Weslowski asked if we should table this discussion based on the interest of time. Mayor Dusch asked if it is pertinent to Rider Transit in the next month or two before the next Transit Commission meeting.

Mr. Weslowski stated that it is not necessarily important other than our budget, but that will be presented to them.

CCX Service Expansion Options

Mr. Weslowski asked if there was an update on the CCX Service Expansion where Mayor Dusch was going to facilitate additional discussions with Eli Lily.

Mayor Dusch stated that Eli Lily would really like us to present options to get employees there.

Mr. Weslowski stated that there are a lot of ways we could go including adding another route and expansion of hours including week and weekdays, and another option would be microtransit to would go to Eli Lily but skip the Cabarrus Dream Center request that was presented earlier this year. Microtransit costs more per hour than fixed route, but it would not have to run all day.

Mayor Dusch asked about the cost per rider.

Mr. Weslowski stated that passenger per hour cost on the Microtransit pilot is approximately \$92.00, but this should come down, but not to the fixed route cost per passenger hour of \$8.00.

Mayor Dusch stated it is about three times greater per person.

Mr. Weslowski stated that is correct. There is an option to discuss pulse transit where there are shifts, but we would still need more vehicles and operators, but we would still need to run all the routes later to get everyone home.

Mr. Brown stated that he is going speak with his contacts about allowing people in the Reentry program trained with CDLs and possibly eligible for hire.

Mr. Oden stated that he is unable to hire individuals with prior offenses, but he has worked with Transdev corporate to allow individuals with minor offenses to be hired.

Mr. Weslowski stated that it would be a great conversation.

Mr. Brown asked for the criteria for hire.

Mr. Oden stated that it really depends on corporate to decide if there is an offense that they would allow.

Mr. Weslowski asked of Mayor Dusch if he would like to discuss with Eli Lily or connect him to meet with someone there to discuss current needs and transit assistance.

Mayor Dusch stated that he can do that and make sure we have a process to discuss with businesses as they come online and that they may be willing to fund some of the transit cost.

Reports/Other Business

- Two replacement hybrid buses – Mr. Weslowski stated that our two replacement buses go into production in June of 2024 and will be delivered in July 2024. This will update all of our fixed route vehicles.
- Next Meeting – February – Mayor Hinnant recommended the fourth Thursday at 8:30 am. Ms. Stocks asked if there could be a later time. Mr. Jackson stated that later is challenging because he is still working. Mr. Weslowski recommended that they discuss and report back.
- Mayor Hinnant discussed the new CCM project of homelessness at the Caremoor property on Kannapolis Parkway and the possibility of transportation to that area. Mayor Dusch stated that that should also include the CCM Brown Mill property. Mr. Weslowski stated that we are actively working with CCM on improving transit at the Brown Mill property (Brown Route)..

- Mr. Christy stated that this December 2023, we are on pace to be one of the highest ridership Decembers that we have ever had.
Mr. Weslowski stated that it is on pace to break 30,000, which is pre-pandemic numbers.

Mayor Dusch requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Berry made a motion; Ms. Stocks second.
Unanimous. With no additional discussion or items on agenda; meeting adjourned at 10:05 am.