

**MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2021  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
GRTC TRANSIT SYSTEM**

Members Present: Benjamin P. Campbell, Chair  
Gary Armstrong, Vice Chair  
Eldridge Coles, Secretary/Treasurer  
George P. Braxton  
Ian Millikan  
Daniel K. Smith

Others: Bonnie Ashley, General Counsel  
Julie Timm, Chief Executive Officer  
Sheryl Adams, Chief of Staff  
Adrienne Torres, Chief Development Officer  
John Zinzarella, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer  
Tim Barham, Chief of Transit Operations  
Tony Byrd, Director of Maintenance  
Anthony Carter, Director of Risk Management  
Emily DelRoss, Director of Scheduling and Planning  
Carrie Rose Pace, Director of Communications  
Rob Taggart, Director of Information Technology  
Tonya Thompson, Director of Procurement  
Von Tisdale, Executive Director of RideFinders  
McGregor Sheppard, Capital Improvement Program Manager  
Nick Britton, Michael Baker International  
Jessica Alvarez, Foursquare

The meeting of the Board of Directors of the GRTC Transit System, Old Dominion Transit Management Company (ODTMC), and RideFinders was called to order at 8AM, September 21, 2021, by the Chair, Mr. Campbell. To protect the safety of meeting attendees, this meeting was conducted through electronic communication means pursuant to and in compliance with City of Richmond Ordinance No. 2020-093, adopted April 9, 2020. This meeting was open to participation through electronic communication means by the public and closed to in-person participation by the public. Necessary GRTC Administrative Staff and presenters assembled electronically for this meeting, and all GRTC Board of Directors participated by videoconference via RingCentral. A quorum was present.

Ms. Timm introduced Joe Dillard, GRTC's Director of Equitable Innovation & Legislative Policy. Mr. Dillard joins us from HRT and has a background with diversity, union negotiations, legislative affairs policy and has become an expert in transit.

Public Comments - For the benefit of all attendees, Ms. Carrie Rose Pace explained how to participate in public comment at Board Meetings.

Video and audio of Board Meetings are streamed live online and recorded for later viewing at GRTC's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/user/ridegrtc](https://youtube.com/user/ridegrtc). Board Meeting notices, agendas and packets are available at GRTC's website [ridegrtc.com](https://ridegrtc.com) by clicking on Stats & Reports in the top navigation bar and selecting the first option in the drop-down menu, Board Reports. Citizens are welcome to provide their comments in writing in advance to [carrie.rosepace@ridegrtc.com](mailto:carrie.rosepace@ridegrtc.com). The person responsible for receiving comments in writing is Carrie Rose Pace, Director of Communications. All written comments received via email prior to 5:00 p.m. on the day preceding a meeting will be provided to all members of the Board the night before the meeting and will be included in the minutes of the meeting. During the Public Comments portion of the agenda, Carrie Rose Pace will read all comments received by the submission deadline, following the two-minute speaking time limit normally observed in Board Meetings.

Public Comments - There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes – Mr. Millikan motioned to approve the August 17, 2021, Board meeting minutes, Mr. Braxton seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Development and Engagement Report – Adrienne Torres, CDO

RideFinders Wins Award from Association for Commuter Transportation in Social Marketing Category – Von Tisdale

RideFinders is the recipient of the Association for Commuter Transportation 2021 National Best Social Media Marketing Award in the Category of Marketing and Outreach for the “Celebrate Earth Day, Every Day” Clean Air Campaign. This is one of the four (4) categories that recognize concepts or campaigns that were designed to educate and inform a specifically targeted audience about their commuting options, the impacts of transportation on the environment, transportation planning, and other related topics and concerns. The winning campaigns demonstrated a high level of creativity and originality, and showed measurable results that included increased audience engagement, increased brand awareness, mode shift, or significant behavior change.

This campaign maximized the focus on sustainability initiatives that included increasing educational awareness of and encouragement of implementation of “green” commuting such as biking, walking, and teleworking. In addition, “green” environmental actions such as recycling, and waste management were emphasized. Various social media platforms (website, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram) were utilized to showcase RideFinders’ staff executing the green strategies, providing useful tips, and encouraging individual participation in challenges. The campaign resulted in some beneficial new partnerships, and impressive social media statistics.

Update on Microtransit Study – Adrienne Torres, Nick Britton, Jessica Alvarez

A micro-transit study was identified as a regional priority during the development of the FY2022 Regional Public Transportation Plan. The Board of Directors authorized GRTC to contract with Michael Baker International and Jarrett Walker and Associates to complete the micro-transit study. Two of the consultants are with us today to give a detailed presentation and they are

Nick Britton, with Michael Baker and Jessica Alvarez with Foursquare. They reviewed in detail the goals and objectives of the Richmond Region Micro-Transit Study which are listed below:

1. Existing conditions: Analyze the current landscape of existing micro-transit demand and service provision in the region.
2. Project and analyze future micro-transit demand in all nine jurisdictions in the Richmond region.
3. Best practices, case studies, and alternatives: Explore possible micro-transit approaches and strategies to address current and future mobility demands. These can be innovative in nature.
4. Outreach: Engage all nine jurisdictions in the Richmond region through a thoughtful conversation about the current and future mobility needs of residents, visitors, employers, and employees with a focus on equity.
5. Improve capacity, understanding, and coordination between current and future micro-transit providers, stakeholders, and relevant decision-makers.
6. Operational challenges and opportunities
7. Recommendations and next steps.

#### Regional Public Transportation Plan Update – Adrienne Torres

The GRTC Board of Directors authorized GRTC to contract with Michael Baker International and Jarrett Walker and Associates to develop the FY2023 Regional Public Transportation Plan at the July Board meeting. This plan will build off the work that was completed during the development of the FY2022 Plan. It includes coordination with PlanRVA, all jurisdictions within the region, as well as reviewing relevant plans to identify enhancement priorities for transportation in the region. GRTC's current regional network will be a base for the plan. The scope takes a strategic look at financial scenarios to understand the long-term financial environment and to ensure the plan is robust and sustainable. The scope includes the review of GRTC's current service standards and performance metrics set in the TDP to confirm they will support the plan after implementation. All these elements will provide a clear vision and executable regional public transportation plan for implementation in FY2023.

GRTC held a kick-off meeting with the consultants at the beginning of August. Next steps include financial analysis, and stakeholder coordination with the jurisdictions to discuss service enhancement and capital prioritization. Work from the micro transit study being completed in parallel will also be referenced in the plan.

#### Operations and Maintenance Report – Sheryl Adams, COO

##### Operating Performance – Tim Barham

- The on-time performance for fixed route for August is 66.16%. There was a schedule change with our new booking that went into effect September 12.
- Absenteeism rate is down to 16.73% for August, due to Operators with long-term illnesses and workers' comp returning to work.
- Lost trips for August went down to 967 and operated over 98.20% of scheduled trips.
- Customer Complaints: 34 Valid complaints; most are late buses or the bus did not show.

- On-time performance for specialized transportation was 87.01%. This is a concern and First Transit will be bringing a subcontractor on board to help with capacity that has been affecting the on-time performance.
- Specialized Customer Complaints: 23 Valid complaints; most are late rides.
- Currently, we have 254 full-time Operators and 20 part-time Operators. Six Operators are in training that will be graduating over the next few weeks. A new class will start the first of October. Since March 2020, we have hired 46 Operators and held nine classes. In 2019, we had a total of nine classes. During the period of March 2020 – August 2021, we lost 59 Operators, 34 Operators left through resignations or retirement. We are losing more people than we are hiring and this is the reason for the challenges with operations.

#### Ridership Performance – Emily DelRoss

Total fixed route ridership for the month of August is 698,532 and the local fixed route ridership for August is 550,293, compared to July we are up approximately 1% and comparing it to August 2020 we are up 9%. We are within 3% of our pre-COVID ridership numbers.

#### Safety Performance – Tony Carter

- There were 37 external events during the month of August, up from 28 in July.
- There were 23 non-preventable events during the month of August, up from 18 in July.
- There were 14 preventable events for the month of August, up from 10 in July.
- There was an increase in accidents for the month of August. The type of accidents were left outside mirrors, where other vehicles tapped the outside mirrors of our buses. A lot of this happened in construction areas with lane reductions.
- There were zero passenger incidents with Specialized Transportation in August.
- There were eight traffic incidents with Specialized Transportation in August; five were preventable and three were non-preventable. The five preventable were minor accidents with fixed objects where the bus hit a sign or tree branch.

#### Maintenance Performance – Tony Byrd

For the month of August there were 5,654 miles between road calls, up from 4,651 in July. Our preventive maintenance (PM) for the month of August was 58%, below our goal of 80%. We have budgeted for 35 technicians and currently we are 11 technicians short; therefore, we are focusing primarily on PM's and State inspections.

With a spare ratio of 20%, currently 31% of the fixed route fleet (31 buses) and 31% of the paratransit fleet (33 vans) are out of service for parts and repairs. This is up from last month which was 21%. Service is now being impacted due to low manpower and the ongoing unavailability of parts.

GRTC continues to clean and disinfect the entire fleet daily. Our bus stop power washing will start the first of October.

Ms. Timm stated that even though we are improving on miles between road calls, it is still below the KPI, which for a 12-month running average we tend to run 7,000 miles between road calls.

## Financial and Administrative Report – John Zinzarella, CFO

### June Financial Report and Preliminary Year End – John Zinzarella

Source of Funds – This item details GRTC self-generated funds and optional subsidies (local, state, and federal). Revenues are unfavorable versus budget by \$1.25M or 23.72% because of timing of spending and submission of expenses for federal reimbursement versus budget assumptions \$1.1M.

Operating Expenses are favorable versus budget by \$267k or 5.39% because of:

- Unfavorable labor expenses of \$71k because of the operator and maintenance pension expense associated with the COVID Bonus payments offset by favorable headcount versus budget in transportation and equipment and facility maintenance groups and higher than budgeted vacancy factor in the general and administrative groups.
- Favorable purchased transportation service of \$74.0k because of actual demand differing from budgetary assumptions.
- Favorable purchased services of \$149.3k because of timing of building maintenance versus budget calendarization.
- Favorable materials and supplies of \$104.7k because of timing of purchases versus budget calendarization.

### Recent and Upcoming Procurements – Tonya Thompson

There were no procurements between meetings requiring the Board Chair's authorization.

No projects were added to this month's upcoming procurements list; however, staff made budget adjustments to some of the projects during the planning phase (listed below).

- The BRT Expansion Study budget has been adjusted from \$200k to \$1,030,000.
- The Dedicated Lane Study has moved from TBD to \$460,000.
- The Facilities Master Plan project is now \$880,000 from \$300,000.
- The Neighborhood Transfer Center Study's budget has decreased slightly from \$200,000 to \$180,000.

### FY2021 Favorable Balance Designation – John Zinzarella

Based upon our unaudited draft financial statements for the twelve months ended June 30, 2021, actual operating revenues exceeded actual operating expenses by \$511,388 creating a favorable fund balance from Fiscal Year 2021 Operations. GRTC Management desires to designate this Fiscal Year 2021 Favorable Fund Balance to supplement the Adopted Fiscal 2022 Operating Budget.

Staff is requesting that the Board of Directors authorize the GRTC Chief Executive Officer to include the Fiscal Year 2021 Favorable Fund Balance as an additional funding source incremental to the Adopted Fiscal 2022 Operating Budget. GRTC Management will report back to the Board of Directors the proposed programs to be funded with the Fiscal Year 2021

Favorable Fund Balance. Mr. Armstrong motioned to grant staff's request, Mr. Smith seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

### Chief Executive Officer's Report – Julie Timm

- A. Vaccine Mandate – President Biden has stated that there will be a vaccine mandate for all employers who have greater than 100 employees. The Occupational Health Safety Administration has been directed to come up with temporary standards on how that would be applied. We are watching this and unless there are court rulings, we expect this to be official in the next couple weeks and we will have a vaccine mandate at GRTC in that same period.
  
- B. Considerations for Possible Winter Service Adjustments – Much of the meeting discussed staffing issues with the Operators and Mechanics and the impact that is having service. Ms. Timm stated that when she started at GRTC, the company was down 10-12 Operators and couple of Mechanics but overall service was in a good position. 2020 began in a favorable position compared to transit agencies across the county. GRTC was growing and preparing for operator training class size in the double digits. When compared with transit across the Country, GRTC's position showed favorably as an award winning and solid agency with significant growth in ridership, service, funding, and staff and as an agency meeting objectives to launch as a regional network based on the BRT and the service redesign in 2018.

As such, when COVID hit, GRTC was in a very good position as an agency and in the region to provide service to our riders and was very quickly able to pivot resources and staffing onto new key priorities. Those priorities were to make sure GRTC protected the work force, which meant protecting their health, as well as protecting their jobs. GRTC's 1<sup>st</sup> priority was to protect the ones that work at GRTC and the essential workers that relied on public transportation. The 2<sup>nd</sup> priority was to have the resources available for the maximum benefit of obtaining our essential service where there was high ridership. At GRTC, local bus service ridership only dropped between March of 2020 to May of 2020 by about 20%-30%; however, by time the testing came out in July 2020 ridership had rebounded significantly. With vaccine availability, local bus service is about 3% less than it was prior to COVID. The reason GRTC has been able to maintain the service and reliability this much is because of its starting strength. Ms. Timm wants to make sure everyone understands that this agency and Board are a GRTC family and have really come together.

Throughout COVID GRTC has been managing a reduction in the workforce. Employees have left the workforce to care for family members, because of short-term or long-term illnesses, and some having to take care of their own health and protect themselves from COVID. Recruitment slowed down again and GRTC was not able to attract as many new employees. One of the first things staff did was to realign service, use paratransit drivers to help with express services, and greatly reduce express schedules. Staff also reduced and realigned some low performing routes with low ridership and put resources on those routes with very high ridership. Staff made strategic choices. Where transit agencies across the country were looking to limit the number of passengers on a bus, limit the number of seats available, and reduce their workforce. GRTC chose a different strategy. GRTC chose to go to zero fares to protect operators, to protect the workforce, and to continue to allow people to ride even though that meant higher rider loads on a bus than recommended under COVID conditions. GRTC gave riders free masks and hand sanitizer, cleaned the buses,

and gave people the choice to get on the bus or to find another method to travel. It kept ridership high and kept service and the community protected, and it served GRTC's priority of protecting the workforce.

Marketing efforts were put in place to recruit more Operators and GRTC has seen some class sizes increase above what other transit agencies are seeing because of our marketing efforts. Class sizes have not been as high as needed, and staff found there were employment barriers to people coming to work for GRTC. One of those barriers was DMV. DMV went to appointment only operations and sometimes it would take months before someone could get into the DMV to get a permit or a license. Over the course of 2020 and working with DMV and the State, GRTC now has the capacity in house to both test people for their learners and test for their final. All testing can be done by GRTC eliminating a barrier to hiring that was being experienced

GRTC launched similar efforts to recruit Mechanics. Staff reinstated the Apprentice Program and will have onsite classrooms for training for CDLs, as well as hands on experiences from Apprenticeship into Mechanics.

GRTC used paratransit staff to supplement service needs, including the vaccine vans and voter shuttles. GRTC used UZURV and partnerships with UBER and Lyft to provide supplemental services for evenings and weekends when service was cut short because of a shortage of operators, because of conditions on the street, or because of the State of Emergency. GRTC will look forward to using similar support services this winter.

GRTC has a very strong partnership with the City of Richmond which is greatly appreciated. Staff has been having discussions with City staff to use City mechanics part-time to help supplement GRTC services and to look for other creative ways to keep service on the street.

GRTC is also looking at recruitment and hiring bonuses for new operators and mechanics. Those bonuses for recruitment hires will equate to approximately \$5,000 for new operators and \$8,500 for new Mechanics to be paid out over the course of a year to 2 years to not only recruit but to retain them. Staff is also looking at messaging better with the benefits of being a member of the staff at GRTC. While GRTC has beautiful recruitment videos which get a lot of interest through those advertisements, possible new employees may not realize the full benefits long term to come into the GRTC family. Staff will be making a much stronger push to educate people that employment here is becoming a member of the GRTC family, when they become an Operator here, right now base pay is approximately \$26/hour but that is not where the story ends. They can make that base pay within 2 years of working for GRTC, and they get 11 paid holidays, 12 paid sick days, 1-6 weeks of paid vacations, 85% of their healthcare premiums plus an additional 12 – 15% of pension added on top. Our operators who are making base salary and working a normal number of hours make over \$50,000 a year. Most Operators, because of overtime pay, typically make closer to \$70,000. GRTC has some Operators who work enough overtime to make over \$100,000/year.

GRTC is looking for added Operator Appreciation pay to help current Operators get bonuses. This pay shows them that when they are dedicated to working through COVID, protesting, states of emergency, election, and weather that GRTC will give supplemental pay to help – which also helps with retention.

GRCT is considering launching at a small vehicle program that would allow non-CDL drivers to operate small vehicles around the region, and staff is working with local universities and local partners to recruit a non-CDL workforce.

Service adjustments were made last year and again this September. Although most people will not see the difference or impact September service, it did have a significant impact in creating more workforce opportunities and maintaining frequencies. Staff has been able to do that because of Zero Fares. Fare collections slow down service because during the wait at each transit stop while people pay. Staff adjusted service in September knowing that zero fares will remain for at least the rest of this fiscal year. By reducing and shaving that time off service and reducing layover times, staff was able to put out the same level of services with fewer Operators. The adjustment is not expected to be felt by riders.

The strength of GRTC's position in early 2020 pre-COVID has kept service relatively strong to date. The challenge GRTC has is the need to get the message out that depending on how fall staffing goes, staff may need to look at more adjustments in December. Staff hopes that is not the case; however, staff is preparing for that possibility.

Below are some issues that might impact GRTC over the fall:

- The Vaccine Mandate – over 70% of staff are vaccinated. When the mandate becomes effective some employees will likely quit. While GRTC is making service now and only missing some trips, with fewer Operators, GRTC will have trouble making service.
- Retirements – GRTC has approximately seven Operators that are going to retire this fall.
- The Delta Variant – GRTC continues to have employees call in sick who are catching COVID. Staff is not reporting it out as much publicly as before because the people who are catching COVID here at GRTC are catching it at home from family members. Last year with the holidays there was a peak with COVID and it is not unreasonable to expect the same thing this year.

If GRTC is unable to continue to manage from a position of strength, there will likely be more service cuts in December to ensure service reliability. Any service cuts, adjustments, or realignments will focus on keeping maximum service on the highest ridership areas and will look to use supplemental partners to make sure service throughout this system is covered. It is a matter of raising awareness now and having discussions now so that everyone is prepared should this net loss of staffing continue over the next coming months.

- C. Shareholder's Meeting - October 20, 2021 – The Shareholders meeting was scheduled for October 20; however, we have received formal notice that it will need to be rescheduled.
- D. October Board Meeting Change – October 26, 2021 – The October Board meeting has been rescheduled to October 26 at 8AM.

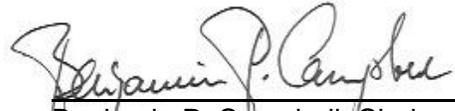
Chairperson Report – Ben Campbell

Very proud of the work GRTC is doing.

Other Business

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:36 am.

APPROVED:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Benjamin P. Campbell, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
October 26, 2021  
Date