

GRTC Transit Advisory Group.

5:30-7:30, Thursday, Jan 19, 2017

City Hall 5th Floor Conference Room

Minutes

In Attendance.

Celia Yette, Danny Plaughner Jessica Reveley, Samuel Davies, Paul Jez, Nicholas Smith

Carrie Rose Pace, Garland Williams, Isaac Wright, Monica Carter, Tim Barham, Amy Inman

Start Time

5:35 PM

Public Comment

- Amy Inman, the Senior Administrator for Multimodal Transportation and Strategic Planning, spoke briefly about the importance of transit to the city and the BRT and Richmond Transit Network Plan.

Approval of Minutes for October 20

Mr. Smith apologized for the last minute delivery of the minutes. As such, there were a few technical corrections to make to the minutes, so Mr. Smith will review those.

Mr. Plaughner, seconded by Ms. Reveley, **moved:**

That the minutes be tabled until the next meeting on April 20.

This motion was approved unanimously.

Review of the Richmond Transit Network Plan

Mr. Williams gave a presentation of the draft Richmond Transit Network Plan (RTNP), which was unveiled to the public on Tuesday, Jan 19. The proposed network is based on 8 months of planning and review, which included public meetings and surveys at the meetings, on board buses, at the transfer center and online. The consultants started by asking about values and trade-offs that city residents and GRTC users wanted, such as how much focus should GRTC have on frequency (how often a bus comes) and coverage (how many places a bus goes), which often leave a tradeoff on a fixed budget. This led to various concepts, which led to another round of consultation, and then this final draft plan.

The new system is proposed to have a number of frequent routes, which would come every 15 minutes from 7 am to 7 pm Monday to Saturday, and other routes would run every 30 or 60 minutes. After 7 and on Sundays, routes would generally run at 30 or 60 minute frequencies. There are many details at www.richmondtransitnetwork.com.

Mr. Davies asked about the need for a transfer center and when it would be used. Mr. Williams responded that it was a needed item for GRTC.

Mr. Plaugher asked about late service on weekends, which ends at midnight, while weeknight service ends at 1, and wondered if people would be riding late on the weekends. Mr. Williams suggested that ridership generally drops off dramatically in the late evenings. Mr. Plaugher suggested that many workers at late night would be restaurant and bar workers, who would work later on weekends. Mr. Williams talked about how adding service there would mean reducing service at other times, assuming a fixed budget.

Mr. Davies asked again about whether the transfer plaza was something that was worth pursuing for just the evening hours and Sundays. Mr. Smith mentioned the Transit Mall idea, such as in Seattle and Portland, Oregon, where all the buses line up in one block and people transfer there. Mr. Williams mentioned issues with lining them all up and finding a restroom facility.

Mr. Smith mentioned the how the plan includes various future improvements listed in the plan if more money is available, and how the committee could express its opinion on those if it so chose.

Ms. Reveley said that in the west end just across the Henrico border, it may make it harder for some people to go in. As well, there is the large commercial district in the city at Three Chopt and Patterson that many city workers and residents go to. Mr. Williams said that Henrico is going to be starting a review of its network over the next year that should be finished by Dec 31, 2017.

Ms. Reveley asked about the implementation timeline, and whether the RTNP would enter into service along with the BRT. Mr. Williams stated they would begin simultaneously. He further noted that it takes about 9 months to implement a new service, but their goal is to implement the RTNP and BRT simultaneously.

Ms. Reveley asked if there had been progress since the last TAG meeting with the issue of difficulty downloading pdf forms from the GRTC website. It is still unclear why this is continuing, so Ms. Rose Pace will discuss it with Zeb in the IT department to see what can be fixed. They do also get requests from IT for live and public GTFS data.

Mr. Williams handed out a potential new number suggestion for new routes, as keeping the old route numbers could be confusing. Mr. Plaugher suggested possibly following Amtrak's model of having odd routes be one direction and even routes be another, but Mr. Williams suggested that using the N/S or E/W directional but not list branch numbers (a,b,c) might be easier.

Mr. Davies asked about the app, and how it computes where the bus is. Ms. Rose Pace said the scheduling software, communicates with the app, but the data for the bus and traffic is from the prior

day. There was a wide-ranging discussion about how the assumption that a bus will be there when it isn't confuses some people. A preference was to at least say that the bus position was an estimate, so people understand what data they are getting. Mr. Smith also mentioned how if GRTC puts their transit data, GTFS, online, free 3rd party apps will automatically make their bus tracking app apply to that system.

Ms. Yette asked what the next 10 years hold for the customer experience. Mr. Barham said that besides BRT and the RTNP, there is also ride sharing, autonomous vehicles and changing preferences with demographic groups, such as retiring Boomers, and Millennials, who care about being able to get data on their phones, who have both expressed a preference for transit. Multi-modal connections between high speed rail, biking, walking, ride share, transit will be a huge change from the old model of taking one mode of transportation for one trip. This could also affect employees, and might shift people into more customer service roles, but there was a general consensus that there will be many changes and surprises in the future.

Mr. Barham said various people had been looking at the process of applying for reduced fare passes to try to streamline it. GRTC gives out free photo ID cards for those who do not have one. There was also discussion about students riding on the bus, and if the Richmond Public Schools considers moving to trying to use GRTC instead of school buses. There would have to be a lot of review of potential challenges, including safety, operations (peak time), and budget. RPS did have its students use GRTC buses decades ago, but no longer, and if they reached out to GRTC they would have that discussion.

There was also the issue with the trouble of downloading pdfs. It is still unclear why this is continuing, so Ms. Rose Pace will discuss it with Zeb in the IT department to see what can be fixed. They do also get requests from IT for live and public GTFS data.

Mr. Barham spoke about smoking and litter at bus stops, and reiterated its policy against littering and smoking on board, at GRTC bus stops and on GRTC property. Mr. Williams talked in detail about which stops get amenities and where stops are located (i.e. spacing between stops). He said that this is being reviewed and will be more thoroughly applied to its system. He added that a full review was done to see what amenities were missing at each stop and they now know what needs to be done to bring all stops up to ADA standards. Costing is being developed.

Mr. Barham said drivers were reminded about distracted driving policies to ensure drivers are focused on driving and customer service.

Mr. Barham mentioned riding for free, that CARE customers ride fixed service for free, and there are 17,000-18,000 such trips per month. Children 5 and under, on-duty first responders and GRTC staff all ride for free, but they are counted for statistical purposes.

There were generally supportive thoughts about holding the meeting at City Hall. Mr. Plaugher asked about maybe doing one meeting at Main Street Station, possibly with a tour. Ms. Rose Pace said she would look into it.

Mr. Smith asked given that more transfers are likely to be taken and many people may go from a one-seat ride to a transfer, about standardizing the fare for one trip price instead of two (\$1.75 and \$1.50). Mr. Williams said that they are looking at it, and that that will be on the radar going forward. However, City Council controls fares by ordinance in the city (and the counties in the counties).

Ms. Yette asked about differing fare systems and structures. Ms. Rose Pace said there is a chart for the structure, and that smart cards are coming. Mr. Williams added that new structures will be a challenge to implement, but that they understand the need for simplicity.

Ms. Rose Pace said artwork for the smart cards are moving forward.

Mr. Davies asked about whether there was a bill to give GRTC the authority to hire people to enforce off-board fares on the BRT. Ms. Rose Pace said those bills are now in the House and Senate: HB 1931 (patron: Betsy Carr), and SB 1172 (patron: Rosalyn Dance). Many committee members said they would contact their elected representatives to support the bills.

Mr. Plaugher said there is a transit advocacy day at the General Assembly this coming Monday, Jan 23, starting at 10 a.m. on the 5th floor with a advocacy session and then meeting with legislators, with a reception afterwards at Main Street Station for those who register.

Mr. Barham said a bill is at Council Monday Jan 23 to pilot allowing CARE customers to use service on-demand via other providers (e.g. taxis, ride sharing) as a voucher 24/7 in Richmond and Henrico. It passed the City's Transportation Committee Jan 17. This would go to Dec 31, and could continue if GRTC determined it was a success.

Mr. Davies, seconded by Mr. Plaugher, **moved:**

That the Committee be adjourned.

This motion was approved unanimously.

The Committee adjourned at 7:28.

The next meeting is Apr 20.