

GRTC Transit Advisory Group

5:30-7:30, Thursday, Oct 18, 2018

Richmond City Hall, 5th Floor Conference Room, 900 E Broad, Richmond, Virginia

Minutes

In Attendance.

Members: Sam Davies (Chair), Paul Jez (Vice Chair), Nicholas Smith (Secretary), Adam Lockett, Jessica Reveley, Cody Symanietz, Courtney Vaughan, Celia Yette, Michael Zeevi;

GRTC Staff: Tim Barham, Sheronda Hill, Kendra Norrell, Tyler Girvan, Adrienne Torres

Public: There were about 15 members of the public present.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Davies suggested two additions to the minutes: Approval of the Agenda and New Business. Mr. Davies, seconded by Mr. Smith, **moved**:

That the agenda be amended as noted.

This motion was approved unanimously.

*Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Zeevi, **moved**:*

That the agenda, as amended, be adopted.

This motion was approved unanimously.

Introductions

Each person introduced themselves.

Public Comment

The chair called for public comment.

Members of the public expressed their comments on the GRTC system. Some spoke about how changes had made it more difficult for some people to get around. Two people mentioned evening service on the 87, as it stops running around 7 p.m., and others expressed this concern on other routes that end at 7 p.m. such as the 78 and some of the branches of the 1 and 2 in Southside. Another said she was not happy that buses were taken off Broad Street and were far from MCV. One person expressed concern with being

able to cross the street safely to get to Chippenham Hospital, Walmart and other areas. One expressed thanks for service on the 19 all the way to Short Pump, and another expressed appreciation for the one week of free service to learn the new routes. Another appreciated the more frequent service and service out to Walmart on Nine Mile Road. There was concern for buses leaving early, and concern for lack of amenities (shelters and benches) at stops. One person said that 80% of the bus drivers were great, but 20% of drivers were not good at customer service. One person claimed that no one who used the bus was consulted about the changes.

Mr. Barham addressed the TAG and the members of the public about the role of TAG and a general overview of how routing and scheduling decisions are made. He expressed his enthusiasm with the turnout from the public and how he wants to continue receiving input to make the system the best possible for its customers, the riders. Some of the members of the TAG reiterated that appreciation.

The Chair thanked the public for their comments.

The Chair closed public comment.

Approval of Minutes for July 19, 2018

Mr. Smith pointed out a correction to the minutes, that the July 19 meeting approved the April 19 meeting minutes, so the motion on pg 2 should read: *“That the minutes of the April 19, 2018 meeting be adopted.”*

Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Zeevi, **moved:**

That the minutes of the July 19, 2018 meeting be amended as stated.

This motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Jez, **moved:**

That the minutes of the July 19, 2018 meeting be adopted.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Election of New TAG members

Ms. Vaughan, Mr. Symanietz and Mr. Lockett introduced themselves.

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

That the new members be admitted to the TAG.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Election of Officers

Ms. Reveley, seconded Mr. Jez, **moved:**

That Mr. Davies be the Chair of the TAG for the 2018-2019 term.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Davies, seconded Ms. Reveley, **moved:**

That Mr. Jez be the Vice Chair of the TAG for the 2018-2019 term.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Reveley, seconded Mr. Davies, **moved:**

That Mr. Smith be the Secretary of the TAG for the 2018-2019 term.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Richmond Public Schools Pass Program Updates

Due to scheduling reasons, this item was then proceeded to without objection.

Ms. Norrell discussed the new pilot program in which Richmond Public School high school students get a free bus pass. She said 1,300 RPS high school students had passes and they were using them frequently.

Mr. Jez asked how the students were using them. Ms. Norrell said she would only get that information later this month.

Ms. Reveley asked if the ID cards can be used for voter ID. Ms. Norrell pointed out that home addresses were not listed on the ID, and a few people discussed other IDs that didn't have addresses (university ID, passport, employee ID). Ms. Norrell and Mr. Smith said they would check on this with the election registrar.

Mr. Davies asked which schools were using the passes the most. Ms. Norrell said she did not have all the numbers, but that Open High School had the highest percentage, while Armstrong High School had the highest number of students.

Updates pertaining to BRT and RTNP

Ms. Torres presented on the ridership numbers of the BRT and RTNP. She said ridership was very high during the free week, and after returning to a lower number the following week, which is nearly 10,000 above the number before the changes, have been steadily rising since then, including after VCU pass program starts.

A number of questions were asked about details of numbers to clarify things, including where the ridership numbers come from (VCU is fixed-route, non-Pulse ridership; Weekly numbers are using automatic vehicle counters). Mr. Lockett, who is a VCU student, said VCU had pushed the new system, and that a number of people gave up their parking pass with the VCU sponsored bus trips. Many suggested there are many students using the bus.

Ms. Reveley asked if there were any plans for free rides on election day. Ms. Torres said they were running regular weekday service. The mayor has proposed free rides on election day, and City Council is to vote on this on October 22.

Henrico County Service Expansion Update

Ms. Torres discussed the Henrico County service expansion with evening and weekend service on the 7, 19 and 91, half hour service on the 7 and 19 and the extension of the 19 to Short Pump.

Mr. Davies asked about pedestrian safety. Ms. Torres said there are some crossing changes on Broad Street west of Glenside. Mr. Davies asked about who pays for amenities, and Ms. Torres said GRTC does, not the County. Ms. Reveley asked about the extension of service on the 79 past 7 p.m. Ms. Torres said there was no movement on that.

Ms. Torres mentioned that new shelters are coming. She expects them to arrive in Spring 2019. She mentioned some older ones that have changes when stops have been removed. Mr. Smith asked if there would be openings in the top of the glass for ventilation on hot days. Ms. Torres said she would check on that.

Ms. Torres also discussed how Henrico just requires approval internally, but Richmond requires a Location, Character and Extent Review for each site through Planning and Development Review and the Urban Design Committee and Planning Commission, which increases costs and slows down the process.

Chesterfield Route 1 Corridor

Ms. Torres said there were no updates

VCU/VCUHS Pilot Program Updates

Ms. Torres said VCU is working on developing a combo ID that works for its internal system and GRTC by January 1 or the Spring Semester.

Mr. Jez asked about satisfying the contract terms. Mr. Lockett mentioned, for example, wifi on the 5, and how VCU intends to change the campus shuttle so as to use the 5. Ms. Torres said the wifi wasn't included on the 5 for the first contract but could be in the future.

Mr. Smith asked about reliability on the Pulse, and what was part of that contract. Ms. Torres said that GRTC delivers monthly statistics of average, maximum and minimum wait time. Mr. Smith asked if there was a better way to convey this information, as if two buses come together and then another doesn't come for 20 minutes, the average will be 10 minutes but the wait time will usually be longer. Ms. Torres said if VCU was interested in other ways of measurement, they'd be willing to look at that.

Ms. Torres also said that Transit Signal Priority had started on September 16. She said it was still being tested but that it was in use for revenue service. There were a few comments about how GRTC and the City's Transportation Engineer, Mike Sawyer, had said in late September that TSP was not yet working,

but Ms. Torres said that it was in use, though changes will happen. She said GRTC owns the TSP equipment, while the localities own the signals.

Meeting Dates and Locations for 2019

Ms. Reveley discussed how previous meetings at GRTC headquarters were difficult to reach. Many members expressed wanting to go out to various parts of the community to speak with and listen to members of the public, and to locate meetings in a more central place, such as City Hall. After some lengthy discussion, Mr. Davies suggested that the consensus seemed to be that quarterly meetings happen at City Hall if possible, and that TAG members could attend community meetings that Carrie Rose Pace attended or that were organized by others, such as elected officials.

There was also a request to try to get responses to questions asked during meetings by email/web in between meetings so they could be shown to the public earlier and then follow-up questions could happen at the meeting. There was general agreement that that would be a good idea.

Follow-up regarding public comments from July 2018 Meeting

Ms. Torres said service had increased in the Randolph area on the 78, adding evening service and half-hour service during rush hour. In the East End GRTC is proposing changing the 4A/4B service to every half hour starting in January, and possibly using that service time to increase service in the rest of Church Hill. She said they had attended some 7th District meetings held by Council Member Cynthia Newbille. Those changes would go to the GRTC Board on Wednesday, and then there would be two public meetings, including one at the Powhatan Community Center, in the week of November 5.

Mr. Jez pointed out that money is the big concern, and that better service would need more money.

Ms. Yette said she wanted some numbers to explain why GRTC makes the decisions it does, and that she wanted to hold GRTC responsible. She said there was a possibly mistaken perception that the Pulse ruined service for many people, but that there were concerns, such as stop spacing.

Mr. Davies summarized some comments about how the TAG members wanted to effect change, and asked for how changes to stop spacing happened and the positives and negatives of them (walking vs. waiting, amenities at each stop, context-sensitive decisions by neighborhood, etc.).

Mr. Davies asked about iterative changes, and gave the example of Henrico's expansion of the 7 meant the 8 was no longer necessary as a separate route, and that service time was able to go to the 78. She also mentioned aligning shift times to Altria on the 88. She expressed repeatedly the helpfulness of people sending comments to GRTC, to planningcomment@ridegrtc.com and 804-358-GRTC, especially stressing specifics.

Mr. Smith mentioned that the 1 and 2 in particular are suffering serious reliability problems, but other routes too. He mentioned bus bunching, reliability, wait times, on time performance. Many TAG members mentioned seeing issues on other routes, such as the 14. Ms. Torres said that on-time percentage is based on buses not being more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late. She said last month

it was 70%, while the goal is 80% for fixed-route and 90% for the Pulse. She added that the 1B had significant problems, having an on-time percentage of 58%. Various people suggested that needed to be improved, and that working with the localities, operators, scheduling and others to try to identify the reasons for and solutions to these issues.

In the interests of time, Mr. Smith suggested that TAG members submit concerns to him as Secretary and he can compile them and submit them to GRTC with the expectation that they can be looked at and responded to in a written way so as to take up less time at the next meeting and to be able to ask follow-ups. There was general agreement to that.

Ms. Reveley brought up the concern about fare inspectors slowing the Pulse by holding up service, defeating the purpose of off-board payment.

Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Zeevi, **moved:**

That TAG members send their comments, questions and concerns to the Secretary within two weeks after this meeting, and that he then compile them and forward them to GRTC, and that GRTC respond to each point with their investigation into these problems and potential solutions at least two weeks before the following meeting, and that the process be a standing option available at all future meetings.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Adjournment

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

That the Committee be adjourned.

This motion was approved unanimously.

The Committee adjourned at 7:48.

The next meeting is January 17, 2018.