# TRANSIT SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Meeting Summary**

**Thursday, January 9, 2020**

**TSAC Members Present:** Krissy Oechslin, Charlotte

Terry Lansdell, Charlotte

Walt Horstman, Matthews

Daniel MacRae, Charlotte

Patrick Paige, Mecklenburg County

Heather Seagle, Davidson

David Snyder, Cornelius

Sherri Thompson, Charlotte

**CATS/City of Charlotte Staff:** Pamela White,Reggie Arrington,Celia Gray, Patrick Hoskins, Bruce Jones, Erin Kinne, Brian Nadolny

***Meeting Time 4:00-5:30 PM***

# Call to Order

Chair Krissy Oechslin called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

# Approval of December 2019 Meeting Summary

Krissy asked for a motion to approve the meeting summary from December 2019. Patrick Paige made a motion to approve the summary with changes: revising some statements that were attributed to him, but that he did not say. Terry Lansdell seconded the motion to approve the summary with changes. The meeting summary with changes was approved unanimously. Patrick said he would identify the specific statements to staff, so they can be correctly attributed.

# Public Comment on Agenda Items:

Eric Zaverl, Urban Design Specialist with Sustain Charlotte, spoke in support of shared bicycle-bus lanes, which CATS and CDOT are piloting on 4th Street, between McDowell Street and the Charlotte Transit Center. He provided a handout to the committee members. He stated that by increasing the prevalence of these lane types, travelers within Charlotte would have the potential to change 51% of short car trips (under three miles) to bike or transit. He noted that the challenge will be keeping the lanes open for bicycle and bus use and that continued enforcement is key. Eric concluded his remarks by encouraging CATS to continue increasing the availability of these lanes.

Terry commented with a reminder to contact 311 to participate in the survey on issues like this.

Patrick commented that he has seen a lot of obstructions, such as parked cars, in the bike-bus lane.

# Information Items

# CATS 2020 Objectives

Celia Gray began her PowerPoint presentation by explaining that, in 2016, CATS CEO John Lewis announced that CATS’ focus on customer service would include incorporating oversight of CATS TRAX into its goals. CATS TRAX monitors a variety of metrics for four strategies-- Customer Satisfaction, Financial Stability, Employee Success, and Community Impact-- and presents them in a Scorecard which shows actual performance compared against performance goals. For each of the four strategies, business activities and efforts are evaluated and assigned points, with the goal of reaching 100%.

Celia displayed the Aggregate Scorecard, showing all four strategies’ performance scores for the first quarter (Q1) of fiscal year 2020 (FY20). CATS’ Overall Performance Score was 94.3 points out of 100 for Q1 FY20.

Walt asked if Q1 is July through September. Celia replied yes. CATS TRAX’s quarterly reporting reflects the City’s fiscal calendar, which begins July 1st.

Walt asked, regarding the Overall Performance Score, if it’s calculated through simple addition, meaning that CATS could earn a very low score in one metric and “make it up” with a high score in another metric. Celia responded yes. Looking at the individual metric scores that comprise the Overall Score is important to understanding CATS’ performance during the quarter.

The next slide focused on the Q1 FY20 scores for the Customer Satisfaction category. For Customer Satisfaction, CATS earned 29.2 out of 30 points in Q1. Celia stated that the first two metric types—Overall Customer Satisfaction and Net Promoter Score—are derived from survey questions, and the other two—On-Time Performance and Ridership—are based on quantitative tracking conducted by CATS. Within those metric types, data for Fixed Route, Rail, and Paratransit services are tracked and points are allocated for each metric.

Walt asked for more details on how the Net Promoter Score is calculated. Celia replied that it corresponds to the survey question regarding how likely a customer is to recommend CATS services to others; responses of 9 and 10 are considered “promoters” and increase the score; responses of 0 through 6 are considered negative and decrease the score.

Celia’s next slide showed the details of the Net Promoter Score and Overall Customer Satisfaction, expressed in bar graphs. She noted that Overall Customer Satisfaction declined slightly in Q1, but Net Promoter Score has remained high. She explained that a third-party contractor conducts the surveys on-site. CATS provides them with ridership numbers per route, and they conduct a proportional distribution of surveys based on that. She clarified that survey participants are current riders. Input from non-riders, former riders, etc. are not captured in these waves of surveys.

Patrick asked Celia to clarify the phrase “waves of surveys,” which she had used in describing the survey process. Celia clarified that it refers to each survey that is conducted; surveys were conducted in February and October 2019. STS surveys are conducted once per year, in February.

The next slide showed the On-Time Performance levels and Ridership levels. Celia commented that On-Time Performance levels remain consistent; rail ridership continues to increase. She noted that STS does not rate increased ridership as a performance goal, but they do track ridership.

Walt asked if the customer impression of On-Time Performance is accurate. Celia replied that customer impressions were on the next slides. Customer satisfaction with On-Time Performance increased for bus and decreased slightly for rail in the latest survey. On-Time Performance continues to be the most important element to Fixed Route and Light Rail customers.

Celia’s next slide focused on the Q1 FY20 scores for the Financial Stability category. For Financial Stability, CATS earned 29.0 out of 30 points in Q1. Overall, CATS had strong financial performance in Q1.

The next slide showed Operating Costs per Vehicle Revenue Hour and Customers per Revenue Hour. Celia stated that Fixed Route operating costs per revenue hour have been reduced while maintaining the same level of customers per hour; both have increased for Rail.

In the next slide, Directly Generated Revenue trends were displayed. Directly Generated Revenue has trended upward generally over the past year. Walt asked for some examples of Directly Generated Revenue. Celia confirmed that it is separate from fare revenue. It includes fees for placing advertising and vending machines at CATS sites, for example.

Krissy asked for the definition of Revenue Service Hour. Reggie responded that it refers to the time that a vehicle is running on its route and accepting passengers.

Walt identified an error in the Customers per Revenue Hour chart. Celia noted it and said she would provide the corrected calculations to the committee.

The next slide, Access to Key Destinations, showed that access has trended upward since the baseline, but has remained consistent the past three quarters due to no major service changes. Celia noted this is an Envision My Ride goal.

Terry asked for confirmation that the Airport bus will not be an electric bus when the service changes occur in February 2020. Reggie responded, yes, that is correct. Patrick Hoskins added that several bus-service priorities will be implemented as Envision My Ride Part 2 tactics to improve performance, such as the Bus Only Lane Pilot.

The next several slides covered Celia’s presentation of Tactic Milestone Highlights, including: upgrading four routes (5 Airport, 16 South Tryon, 8 Tuckaseegee, and 27 Monroe Road) in February 2020; run time improvements for light rail and bus; Bus Priority initiatives; amenities improvements; and the Real Time App.

Celia clarified that amenities include bus stop shelters, benches, trash cans, and accessibility improvements. She said there is a capital request for upgrades included in this year’s budget.

Terry asked if the budget allocation for rail amenities is split out from bus amenities, or if they are combined. Celia responded that each capital project budget includes the amenities for the project. Once we are in Operations, bus and rail amenities fall under the Facilities budget.

Krissy stated there will be an ADA-accessibility presentation coming up at a future meeting, and it will include more details on amenities improvements.

Celia provided updates on the North Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects. New services utilizing the I-77 Express Lanes will start in February 2020. The North BRT Planning Study will kick off in Spring 2020. Full BRT project characteristics will include: coach buses with amenities such as wi-fi; stations with Direct Connects along the alignment; and new park and ride opportunities.

The Hambright Park and Ride is in the Planning phase and staff are optimistic about CATS receiving grant funds for the project. Brian Nadolny explained that the Hambright Park and Ride will provide additional capacity for Express Service and for carpools and vanpools utilizing the I-77 Express Lanes.

Next, Celia provided an update on the City’s preparations for the 2020 Republican National Convention (RNC), which will be held in Charlotte, August 24-28. Staff from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) recently tested the security of some of Charlotte’s systems that will be instrumental for this event. During the RNC, light rail and bus service will be impacted, including the need for bus route detours. It is considered an all-hands undertaking for CATS. A full-scale exercise will be conducted in April.

Krissy asked if the Transit Center will be relocated during the RNC and if the relocation site is known yet. Celia replied, yes, it will be relocated, and the site has not been determined at this time.

Next, Celia stated that public involvement will begin soon for the Silver Line and Rail Trail and the adjacent Transit Oriented Development (TOD) plans. The MTC approved a refined version of the alignment for the Silver Line. A preliminary bus/rail integration plan will be required for station planning. It will include opportunities to revise the bus plan. TSAC input will be sought.

Brian Nadolny provided an update on Charlotte Gateway Station. The steering committee has developed its shortlist of three firms to develop the site. Selection of the Master Developer will take place in Spring 2020.

Celia began the update on the Regional Transit Engagement Series involving the MTC and Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) by stating that a consultant, HDR, has been hired to assist with the next phases: “How to Connect Existing Systems” and “Initial BRT/Commuter Rail Concepts.”

Patrick asked what are the expected outcomes of this engagement series? Bruce responded that these communication efforts will help generate support for dedicating funds in the other counties that are being considered for regional transit. HDR’s role involves recommending transit services and on-demand services that will work throughout our region.

Next, Celia provided an update on the Ballantyne Rapid Transit Study. The MTC approved concepts for light rail to Ballantyne and BRT service to Ballantyne Corporate Park when the I-485 Express Lanes open. This year’s initiatives will include continued coordination with Ballantyne on rezoning to preserve the adopted light rail corridor and updating the Regional Transportation Plan to include extensions in light rail corridors.

For the final topic in her presentation, Celia let the group know that a Blue Line Extension Before and After Study will be conducted to compare the actual outcomes to the predicted outcomes regarding: project scope; capital cost; transit service levels; O&M costs; and ridership. An origin-destination survey scheduled for calendar year 2020 (two years after the BLE opening) will analyze changes in bus and rail ridership patterns compared to the before survey conducted in 2013. Celia asked if there were any additional questions.

Daniel asked how the Key Destinations (for Access to Key Destinations) are determined or defined. Celia said that CATS’ Operations Team selects the destinations.

Daniel asked what participants in the customer surveys cited as their reasons for dissatisfaction. Celia responded that this information was captured by the third-party consultant and they can give a presentation on the results. Larry will provide TASAC members with the last wave of surveys for STS, Bus, and Light Rail.

# CATS Service Change Process

Pamela White introduced this item by explaining that service changes take place three times per year and include minor and major changes.

The parties involved in the Planning Committee include individuals from Safety & Security, Marketing, BOD, STS, Service Development, Scheduling, Maintenance, and Customer Service.

Pamela explained that the process to add service takes eight months of planning. Discontinuing service involves twelve months of planning. During both processes, staff evaluate various factors within the area and about the users in the area.

In the early months of the process, they meet with the public and with established organizations, such as neighborhood associations, to discuss proposed changes and receive feedback.

Shortly after, staff consult with drivers on the logistical impacts of proposed changes. They also consult with CATS’ Civil Rights Division on impacts and considerations related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Patrick Hoskins delivered the next portion of the presentation. The next step in vetting the proposed changes is to bring the issue to TSAC with the public comments received and other input received to date. The topic is then presented to the MTC, about three months before the proposed change. Around the same time, the changes are entered in the databases for customer information and printing. Signs are posted on bus stops regarding the service changes no less that 90 days before the effective date.

He said that eight weeks before the effective date, drivers’ work assignments are generated to reflect the changes. Maintenance is also notified. Seven weeks out, utility locates for new stops are ordered; turn-by-turn directions for drivers are updated; and announcements are programmed.

Six weeks out, review and proofreading of alerts takes place. At five weeks, drivers bid on work assignments. At three weeks, training of drivers and tagging of affected bus stops takes place.

Krissy asked if performance evaluations are done to monitor the outcomes of the change. Pamela replied that an equitable service analysis is required. In addition, surveys are conducted with customers one-on-one.

Heather asked if other marketing activities take place to announce service changes. Pamela responded that it varies based on the nature of the change and how significant the impacts will be. As an example, with the introduction of the new Express Routes in February, a formal event was held at the Northcross Park and Ride. Typical outreach and marketing initiatives also include social media, news media, and staff presence at fairs and other events. Patrick Hoskins added that targeted direct mailings are frequently used, and they sometimes include offers for free rides, to allow customers to try a new service or route.

Sherri asked when evaluations are typically conducted. Pamela replied that CATS evaluates ridership monthly and they are always open to holding meetings and participating in events to further their efforts. Customers can also provide feedback through 336-RIDE.

Terry asked if CATS still tracks annual performance measures. Pamela responded yes, we do. However, she added, the data’s results can be hard to interpret when so many changes occur throughout a given year.

Daniel asked, if there is an underperforming route, can you track to an individual stop that is contributing most to the underperformance? Pamela responded yes, we can, and we often use that data to make a determination to recommend a service change.

Patrick Paige asked how much of the change process is driven by requirements from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Pamela answered that CATS is allowed to establish most of its policies related to this, and FTA approves them, then tracks our compliance with the adopted policies.

Patrick asked how often changes do not become permanent and what are the common reasons for this to happen. Pamela responded that CATS tracks many metrics related to the changes, but funding availability is usually the key factor in whether a change becomes permanent.

Daniel asked if any temporary event-related route changes have been considered. As an example, he cited service to the PNC Arena in the University area, which can generate traffic congestion during events. Pamela responded that CATS does utilize temporary changes during major NASCAR races, in coordination with the City of Concord, as well as other events that occur on a predictable schedule and have considerable population impacts. Most concert events don’t rise to that level of impact. She added that we have to keep in mind the existing services that private charter companies provide during special events and try not to conflict with those.

Terry remarked that we have to consider the existence of caps on outside-county transit and special-event transit service.

Bruce added that Envision My Ride will include information on additional service for special events, etc.

Pamela concluded this item by stating that more information will be provided soon on public outreach for the upcoming service changes. In addition, you can access the survey on Charlotte Department of Transportation’s web site, at <https://charlottenc.gov/Transportation/PlansProjects/Pages/Plans,%20Projects,%20Reports.aspx>

# Report from the TSAC Chair

Krissy Oechslin introduced this item by stating that MTC did not meet in December.

She let the committee know that, as the new Chair, she is interested in hearing about initiatives that members would like to focus on more in 2020. She said some of the topics she is interested in prioritizing include: upgrades to the fare system for fare-capping, along with other economic opportunity issues; and transit oriented development and its impact on increasing ridership when the BLE is already at capacity during peak hours.

Krissy said that in March the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County will hold an intergovernmental meeting. She asked the committee if there is interest in generating a letter or statement to provide to them. Members expressed interest in doing so.

# Service Issues

Walt asked if road blockages causing increased travel time can be looked into. Specifically, enforcement of no parking or stopping in the bus/bike lane on 4th Street could be better enforced, have better pavement striping, and involve more public outreach. Terry stated that there may be a need for more than just a painted line to demarcate the lane-- perhaps marker posts. Pamela said she will bring these concerns to the Safety & Security Division.

Terry asked if the 77X is required to use the Express Lanes. Reggie responded that not all drivers are using it all the time yet. Some need training. Merging is often a problem.

Daniel stated that right before I-277, it is often hard for buses to merge into the lane they need. Bruce said that beginning in February they should have an easier time due to the new routes, and they will be able to use Direct Connects.

Daniel asked when the Gold Line streetcar is expected to re-open. Pamela answered Spring 2021.

The meeting was concluded and adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

***NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2020***