

Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Access Advisory Committee

Wednesday, June 1, 2022

5:30 PM

Meeting called to order at 5:32 PM

Attendees:

CapMetro Employees: Chad Ballentine, Peter Breton, Kevin Conlan, Suzie Edrington, Roberto Gonzalez, Julie Lampkin, Andrew Murphy, Andrew Skabowski, Johnathan Tanzer, Emmanuel Toutin, Edna Parra, Dottie Watkins, Belinda Wilson

Committee Members: Estrella Barrera, Andrew Bernet, Glenda Born, Audrea Diaz, Otmar Foehner, Mike Gorse, Paul Hunt, John McNabb

Public: Awais Azhar, Johnathan Jones

Welcome / Introductions / Call to Order

Chair Paul Hunt

CapMetro Update & Moving Forward

Dottie Watkins, Interim CEO

Dottie Watkins: Thanked the committee for the work being done and reaffirmed the importance of providing accessible fixed bus services and reliable MetroAccess service.

Public Communications

Audrea Diaz raised an issue where the call center staff incorrectly stated the final time to book MetroAccess rides. Since the fixed-route Night Owl lines qualify for the 3/4ths boundary, that should guide MetroAccess service for some riders during later hours.

Paul Hunt requested a presentation on qualifying services that work with paratransit, and which do not.

Reminded members to always file complaints for similar issues.

CapMetro Staff confirmed that boundaries are separated by time of day, and that Night Owl services qualify for the 3/4ths boundary. Commuter and light rail services do not qualify under the 3/4ths of a mile policy and Staff will investigate the issue. CapMetro is pushing to formalize the training regimen for call center staff, and they are also looking to replace the current booking system software, which should help staff overall and help those that use paratransit to book trips more easily. Staff will also come back with a description of how paratransit hours match over to fixed-route services.

Glenda Born shares that the Greyhound Bus Station has moved, as it is no longer at 916 E Koenig Ln, but at 363 Shady Ln. She asks staff to make sure that the call center staff knows this.

CapMetro Staff will have a road supervisor go out to that location and do a site evaluation and update the location file. The station is a part of the East Side Bus Plaza (ESBP), and Staff shares some of the history of the ESBP, and that Capitol Area Rural Transit System (CARTS) welcomed Greyhound to move their stop to that location. They explain why the change was sudden, outlined the current CapMetro service to ESBP, the pros of Greyhound moving the station, and that CapMetro is updating services to reflect the change.

Paul Hunt recounts a recent positive experience with MetroAccess, shares that he heard that time changes were still occurring, and that he is still getting on-board violations.

Chad Ballentine promises to look into the time-changes and asks Chair Hunt to expand on the on-board violations. **Suzie Edrington** adds that she heard about the on-board violations and thinks that it was a dispatcher

that made a mistake when trying to optimize trips. Roberto Gonzalez has been re-training the call-center staff on that topic.

Community Advisory Committee Recruitment

Awais Azhar, Community Advisory Committee Chair

Awais Azhar explains that the Access Advisory Committee has a permanent seat on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and the seat is unfilled, which means that the CAC is looking for a replacement from the Access Committee. The CAC focuses on looking at the anti-displacement efforts and other equity efforts of Project Connect. The CAC must follow the Texas Open Meetings Act, which requires a quorum to meet. Currently absences from the Access committee and the Customer Service Advisory Committee (CSAC) which impacts ability for CAC to meet quorum.

CMTA Fiscal Year 2023 Proposed Budget

Kevin Conlan, Deputy Chief Financial Officer

Kevin Conlan outlines the calendar and explains that the sales tax growth and job growth of the Austin-Round Rock MSA is encouraging. Revenues from fares will have fare capping and Equifare built in. Federal grants and freight railroad revenues are also taken into account. Expenses for the budget are based on August service plan changes, include the average annualized pay increase for employees, new position requests by the senior management team, and the strategic plan initiatives considered in the budget preparation. The cost of fuel remains stable over the next fiscal year estimated at \$2.40/gal.

Glenda Born asks for clarification on fuel prices and why they are so low compared to current prices.

Kevin Conlan explains spot pricing and how CapMetro participates in future positions when the market is favorable and for budget stability. During the pandemic, fuel prices dropped, and CapMetro bought futures which stabilized the price they pay at a lower rate than the current price.

E-Fleet Buses

Andrew Murphy; Director, Vehicle Maintenance

Andrew Murphy outlines the new electric buses on order. There are 66 total, which will be delivered around December of 2022 to July of 2023. All buses are 40ft, with a seating capacity of 32, and with many new features and additions. There are 26 New Flyer and 40 Proterra buses, which range in capacity from 466kWh to 675kWh, equating to a range of approximately 174mi to 252mi. He also outlines the many new features of the buses.

Paul Hunt asks about the range of the buses, and how that may degrade over time.

Andrew Murphy explains that – as a last resort – buses can be switched out on-route, but that most buses can currently run 40% of the blocks, and the longer-range buses that are coming can run about 80% of the blocks. CapMetro has purchased extended warranties on the batteries that allows them to file a claim and have the batteries replaced on any bus which drops under 80% of its original capacity.

Glenda Born asks about reliability during power outages and if renewables would help.

Andrew Murphy explains that CapMetro participates in Austin Energy's Green Choice program, and that CapMetro is working with Austin Energy to get rated as a priority customer during power outages. CapMetro is also looking into joining agreements with Austin Energy or other energy suppliers to ensure electricity availability, as well as making plans to ensure that they are prepared if a minor or major event that impairs electric bus service occurs. He also explains other measures that CapMetro is taking to ensure consistent and reliable service.

Glenda Born also asks about the difference in weights between diesel and electric buses, and **Andrew Murphy** outlines the difference in efficiency and cost-to-operate between diesel and electric buses, and how the weight of the bus may affect those metrics.

Mike Gorse raises a concern about how much or how little noise an electric bus may make, and how that may affect accessibility and safety.

Andrew Murphy asks for input, especially from the committee and the visually impaired members, and explains that there is no current standard for noise making on electric buses.

Mike Gorse, Andrew Skabowski, Glenda Born, Peter Breton, and Otmar Foehner speak about the possibilities, pros, and cons of noise making as well as the potential legislation that may require a standard for CapMetro and others to follow.

Glenda Born asks for clarification on whether the new buses have sensors to prevent passengers from becoming trapped or hit by the doors, and **Andrew Murphy** outlines the technology used for that purpose and adds that it will be used on all new buses.

August Service

Roberto Gonzalez; Director, Service Planning

Roberto Gonzalez outlines the process of changing service and the level of service compared to pre-COVID. The main proposed service changes adjust some route schedules in minor ways, adjust UT and other school routes to reflect the needs increasing for the Fall semester, streamline some routes that go through downtown, and maintain service levels. The Board is scheduled to make a decision as a part of the June Board meeting and the changes are expected to be implemented on August 14th.

Audrea Diaz asks when the E-Bus will come back into service, and what data CapMetro is looking at to make that decision.

Roberto Gonzalez says that nighttime MetroRapid service would come back before the E-Bus, and that they are looking at ridership, community conditions, and staffing availability to inform future changes.

Audrea Diaz asks for CapMetro Staff to make the MetroAccess compatibility with Night Owl service times more readily available, and **Roberto Gonzalez** says that CapMetro is working to train the call center staff on the topic.

MetroBike

Chad Ballentine; VP, Demand Response & Innovative Mobility

Chad Ballentine reports that CapMetro will, pending the City of Austin passing their side of the interlocal agreement, bring the MetroBike project in-house and absorb all the staff from Bike Share of Austin and aim to improve the maintenance and operations of the program. They are also looking to transition the fleet of bikes to completely electric, expand the footprint of the program, and are exploring accessibility options.

Approval of the minutes - Motion to approve by Estrella Barrera / 2nd by John McNabb. Passed with majority – 1 opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:41 PM