

FINAL

TRANSIT ADVISORY BOARD MEETING April 22, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

TAB Members Present

Allison Bickers
James Darden
Ken Marlin
Connor Manthey
Mark Riggans
Forrest Shealy
Jeff Souther

TAB Members Not Present

LaSandra Boykin
Dr. Jaha Howard
Walter Kolis
Cherie Newton
John Noe
Thomas Shibley
Matt Stigall

Cobb County and Others Present

Drew Raessler, DOT
Morgan Simmons, DOT
Theo Letman, DOT
Sean O’Leary, DOT
Eric Mercier, DOT
Audrey Brown, Public (ATU 732)
Jeff Jones, Public

I. Call to Order:

Chair Allison Bickers called the TAB meeting to order at 6:35 p.m., with a quorum of members present.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 26, 2024 TAB Meeting Minutes: **Chair Bickers** asked TAB members if there were any questions or corrections for the February 26, 2024 meeting minutes. **Secretary Souther** questioned if he should be considered present at the February 26, 2024 TAB meeting since he participated virtually.

Mr. Raessler explained that virtual participation could occur twice per year and would not count toward a quorum, but a member would be considered present virtually and could participate in the meeting discussions but could not vote on any TAB business. **Mr. Raessler** stated that he will verify this information.

Secretary Souther recommended a separate category be established for virtual attendance for tracking purposes and to be counted as present for the meeting. With no further questions, **Mr. Shealy** made a motion and **Vice Chair Marlin** seconded to accept the TAB February meeting minutes as presented. **Mr. Manthey** abstained, and all TAB members present voted unanimously to approve the TAB February meeting minutes.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Chair Bickers reported that she received no committee reports. **Chair Bickers** recommended for new members to join the Ridership Committee.

Mr. Darden expressed concern that no committees have met as previously requested.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Bickers opened the floor for new business discussion. **Chair Bickers** asked the TAB “How did the TAB define ‘success’ as it relates to transit and the transit system.” Some suggestions from TAB members were: a community services based • not a government service • greater access to northern Cobb • maximize riders per dollars spent • central to healthcare • regional incorporation • central to community • best system for all riders • ubiquitous access • airport access • financially viable

- everyone using transit • high frequency • central to services • full spectrum of participation • central to education • county-wide access • central to jobs • transparency and accountability to include government services and CIDs • road traffic reduction • major stakeholder involvement/engagement • established farebox recovery goal.

Ms. Simmons stated that DOT should be conducting operational reviews more frequent than every five years and said DOT is currently working toward that. **Ms. Simmons** was responding to questions from the TAB regarding the frequency of operational reviews of the system. **Mr. Raessler** reiterated that DOT will conduct ongoing review and/or health check of the transit system.

Vice Chair Marlin requested data that would quantify the size of the Cobb transit system against other transit systems.

Chair Bickers asked TAB members to share what the role of TAB is to the transit system. Some responses from TAB members were: operation reviewer • community liaison • accountability • provide feedback • provide recommendations.

Ms. Simmons shared that DOT is gathering information/data about what TAB wants. TAB committees were encouraged to meet in advance of the regular TAB meetings to facilitate making recommendations, etc. The exercise that TAB completed was aimed at understanding the type of information and data TAB needs. It was also stated that TAB committees should be meeting in order to allow for the deeper discussions and allow for decisions to be made at the TAB regular meetings.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Audrey Brown, a shop steward of the Amalgamated Transit Union 732, and also a bus driver and expressed concern about non-working fareboxes and that when new fareboxes are installed, her concern is that riders will not pay the fare. **Ms. Brown** stated that she does not allow riders to place money in the black boxes due to her safety, as money is sticking out that riders can see. **Ms. Brown** said she allows riders to ride free when the farebox is not working. **Ms. Brown** also expressed concern that the bus stops are outdated with no lighting that can cause riders to be passed. Routes 40 and 45 are very heavy with standing room due to Must Ministries which poses a danger and several of the riders do not pay. **Ms. Brown** expressed concern about the Marietta Park and Ride lot being closed to prevent people living in their cars to park there but bus drivers park there also. **Ms. Brown** thanked DOT for removing several shelters at the Marietta Transfer Center which eliminated some of the drinking and drug activity at the shelters.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. DOT Department Update

Program and Project Status – **Ms. Simmons** provided a status overview of Division projects to include AVL upgrade • farebox equipment replacement • paratransit scheduling software • bus shelter upgrade • security cameras • KSU student agreement • Microtransit Pilot Project • security guards • and ambassadors. **Ms. Simmons** reported that the goal of DOT is to have a turnkey operation for a vendor to supply vehicles for the Microtransit service. **Mr. Raessler** explained the difference between the Flex Zone service and the Microtransit service and explained the sources of the funding for the Microtransit project.

Ms. Simmons provided a list of the past, current, and upcoming MSPLOST activities. **Ms. Simmons** reported the upcoming Board actions for the MSPLOST as well as meetings with stakeholders and public education. Those actions were 1) Initial Outreach to Municipalities and Stakeholders (Ongoing), 2) ATL Board Action for Referendum Consideration (April 4th), Presentation to Qualified Cities, as per GA Code (April 8th), BOC Intent to Call for Referendum (May 14th), ATL Board Action

consideration of proposed project list (June 6th) BOC Board Action Call for Referendum (June 11th), and Public Education (Ongoing). **Mr. Raessler** reported that DOT has spoken and will be speaking to various Cobb organizations, citizen engagement groups, agencies, and other stakeholders throughout the Microtransit service area educating them on Microtransit and MSPLOST.

Vice Chair Marlin requested that DOT provide TAB with a cheat sheet and talking points to educate and explain to their respective districts on the MSPLOST and the financial cost.

Ms. Simmons suggested that in addition to following up with the requested deliverable, these types of discussions should occur within the TAB committees and she highly recommended that this discussion occur with the TAB Planning and Communications Committee. **Mr. Raessler** suggested that TAB use the www.cobbcounty.org/msplost as a resource for information on MSPLOST.

Operational Review - Ms. Simmons showed raw ridership data and requested TAB members to provide the information they would like to see from the data. TAB members presented examples of ways raw ridership data could be exhibited. This information would be the template provided on a frequent basis. Additional assessments would only be used at the time specific routes exhibited trending declines and other peculiar activity. TAB members were asked to provide feedback on the information provided and will continue providing feedback as the template becomes more refined. **Mr. Raessler and Ms. Simmons** addressed that the requested ridership data information would evolve within the year.

Outreach and Communication – Ms. Simmons reported that DOT attended a Sustainability Forum Expo in April and DOT conducted a Travel Training event in March as well as other events anticipated for April and May.

Upcoming Agenda Items – Ms. Simmons reported that the Security Camera and the Security Lights agenda items are upcoming.

B. NEXT MEETING/ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, **Chair Bickers** adjourned the TAB meeting. The next TAB meeting is June 24, 2024.

September 23, 2024

Approved