

# FINAL

## TRANSIT ADVISORY BOARD MEETING October 28, 2024

### TAB Members Present

Allison Bickers  
James Darden  
Walter Kolis  
Connor Manthey  
Ken Marlin  
Cherie Newton  
Forrest Shealy  
Thomas Shibley  
Jeff Souther  
Matt Stigall

### TAB Members Not Present

LaSandra Boykin  
Mark Riggans

### Cobb County and Others Present

Drew Raessler, DOT  
Morgan Simmons, DOT  
Theo Letman, DOT  
Marcia Lankford, DOT  
Mark Lambert, DOT  
Eric Mercier, DOT  
Matt Bristol, Transdev  
Earnesha Scott, Transdev  
Audrey Brown, ATU Local 732  
Jamorris R. Brice, Public Guest

### **I. Call to Order:**

**Chair Allison Bickers** called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with a quorum of TAB members present.

### **II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**September 23, 2024 TAB Meeting:** **Chair Bickers** requested approval of the September meeting minutes. **Mr. Stigall** made a motion and **Mr. Shibley** seconded to accept the September 23, 2024 meeting minutes as submitted. All TAB members present, except **Mr. Shealy** who abstained, voted unanimously to approve the September 23, 2024 meeting minutes as submitted.

### **III. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Chair Bickers** opened the floor for committee reports.

**Mr. Manthey** reported that he collected feedback from the Ridership Committee members, as related to the metrics in the operational reporting template. Once collect, Mr. Manthey met with DOT staff to review and determine the best way to incorporate the comments. Revenue data is not requested by TAB to be tracked currently until the breeze card data is available. The Ridership Committee will meet on the TAB regular meeting off months at 6:30 p.m., depending on the availability of the committee members.

**Mr. Stigall** requested for DOT to make some of the metrics to be made public and accessible.

**Ms. Simmons** responded that any information presented at the TAB meetings will be accessible to the public, once TAB approves the reporting template.

**Mr. Manthey** reported that, per DOT's request, he provided all the ridership feedback received from the committee to **Ms. Simmons** and **Mr. Lambert**.

No other committees provided committee report or indicated if they met.

### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

**Secretary Souther** stated that a second draft TAB Annual Report for 2023 was emailed to TAB members for them to review and provide suggestions/changes/edits. No responses with comments were received from TAB members. Chair Bickers requested a motion to accept the 2023 TAB Annual

Report as written. Mr. Kolis made a motion and Mr. Stigall seconded the motion to accept the 2023 TAB Annual Report as written. There were no questions and all TAB members present voted unanimously to accept the 2023 TAB Annual Report as written.

## V. PUBLIC COMMENT

**Ms. Simmons** read the guidelines for public comment.

**Ms. Audrey Brown**, a representative of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 732 for CobbLinc union members. **Ms. Brown** stated that the union has been against the Flex Service being replaced by the Microtransit Pilot Program and that six union operators were displaced. **Ms. Brown** made a correction that in the Microtransit Pilot Program, those drivers are not Amalgamated Transit Union workers.

## VI. DOT DEPARTMENT UPDATE

**Via Paratransit Software** - **Ms. Simmons** reported on the launch of the Via Paratransit Scheduling Software which give customers more ability to schedule rides and see the transit activity in real time. Staff communicated with existing customers through various communication mediums regarding the change of the Paratransit software, to include a new app to book trips, along with training.

**Program and Project Status** – **Ms. Simmons** provided highlights of programs and projects, reporting on the **AVL Upgrade** with implementation underway; **Paratransit Scheduling Software** with implementation on 10/22/24; Bus Shelter upgrade with a kick-off scheduled for early November; the **KSU Student Pilot Program Agreement** approved by the BOC on 10/22/24 and transportation access to the students to begin next semester; the **Microtransit Pilot Program** with full implementation of the service on 10/29/24 and the ribbon cutting at the Silver Comet Linear Park on 10/31/24; the **Security Guards RFP** process is underway and the **Security Camera Upgrade RFP** is underway as well. Both the Security Guards and Security Camera projects are with Legal for review/approval. **Ms. Simmons** reported on the site selection for the Marietta, Cumberland, and South Cobb Transfer Centers.

**Mr. Stigall** asked if there is any public record or information about how the sites are scored.

**Mr. Raessler** stated that the general scoring sheets and criteria can be provided to TAB. The specific site selection cannot be advertised until the FTA has reviewed the site selections and provided comments. **Mr. Raessler** explained the process of site selection and its coordination with the FTA environmental process, prior to publicly identifying the location.

**Mr. Stigall** inquired if the rider experience could be heavily considered.

**Mr. Raessler** said the rider experience, the operational impact, proximity to hospitals, crosswalk/sidewalk access, etc., are factored into the decision for the selected site.

**Ms. Newton** inquired about access to the Paratransit building and the Transit HQ building when the Marietta Transfer Center is relocated.

**Ms. Simmons** stated that DOT would follow up with information about access to the Paratransit building and the Transit HQ building.

**Ms. Shibley** asked how the KSU student free ridership will be tracked.

**Mr. Letman** stated that the farebox will be used to track the ridership by way of a button specific to KSU and is programmed on the equipment. **Ms. Simmons** clarified that the KSU student pilot program will be monitored and tracked regularly by both KSU and DOT staff.

**Vice Chair Marlin** inquired about the confidence in the ridership data due to previous problems with data accuracy and what is the added value for CobbLinc. **Ms. Simmons** said accurate information will be available due to a significant amount of the system will be up and running (in reference to new fareboxes and the CAD/AVL system). With the student ridership activity being tracked, projections

of how much money is needed for future years can be made and the pilot program could open the door for other opportunities with KSU. **Mr. Raessler** added that the system will be digital, and the funding is a total of \$100,000.00 annually, at \$2.00 per student per trip. The pilot program is for students only and not faculty and staff.

**Mr. Shealy** asked if there any new routes for the KSU pilot program.

**Ms. Simmons** stated that Routes 10, 40, and 45 are the routes negotiated for the pilot program. The Route 10 is for the KSU Marietta Campus.

**Ms. Kolis** shared that Emory has a small pilot program with MARTA for 100 Emory students.

**Microtransit Update – Ms. Simmons** reported that the launch for the Microtransit Pilot Service is on 10/29/24 and the ribbon cutting is on 10/31/24.

**Ms. Shealy** inquired if there is a concept of operation for a Microtransit model for vehicle ownership and employment of drivers, etc., and the budget for the service.

**Ms. Simmons** stated that those items were covered in the RFP. The vendor for the 2-year Microtransit Pilot Service is Via Mobility, a turnkey service that will provide the vehicles and the manpower.

**Ms. Newton** would like to ensure that the Microtransit operators are ADA trained and expressed concern with drivers not picking up riders with guide dogs.

**Ms. Simmons** stated that the Microtransit service will be an Uber-like service for public transit and the operators must be ADA compliant.

**Mr. Lambert** added that he will provide **Ms. Newton** with a copy of Via's training materials.

**Vice Chair Marlin** asked if there is a set of FAQs available as a tool to highlight information.

**Ms. Simmons** stated that there will be ongoing availability of materials, information, will be made available via the website, marketing, communication, travel training, and videos, etc.

**Ms. Simmons** informed **Mr. Darden** that reservations would be made by phone or app. Service will be monitored to address customer complaints. The standard fee is \$2.50 and payable via the app. Transfers are handled via a rider's phone and the driver will press a button.

**Mr. Raessler** stated that the total cost for two years is not to exceed \$2,218,501.36, with a one-year option not to exceed \$1,120,217.04, and funding available with Federal (\$887,400.00 at 40%), State (\$665,550.00 at 30%), and Local (\$665,552.00 at 30%) grants.

**Vice Chair Marlin** inquired about the size of the Microtransit Pilot Program area compared to Flex.

**Ms. Simmons** stated that the Microtransit service area is larger than the Flex Service Zone area. **Mr. Raessler** added that the service area includes Austell.

**Chair Bickers** encouraged TAB members to go the CobbLinc Go webpage on the County's DOT website for more information about the Microtransit Pilot Service.

**Mr. Raessler** informed TAB members that he sent the link to the CobbLinc Go webpage and that much information requested is covered, including information regarding service dogs.

**Ms. Simmons** commented to **Mr. Stigall** that the new branding of CobbLinc is ongoing and that the old CCT bus signs will be removed in Austell.

**Ms. Simmons** said there is no voucher system for the Microtransit service. **Mr. Raessler** added that the Microtransit service is much cheaper than the voucher program system.

**CAD/AVL Update – Ms. Simmons** reported that the upgrade is well underway with the delivery of all the equipment. Both systems will run at the same time until the new CAD/AVL system is fully loaded and operational. **Mr. Lambert** described the training module on the bus (bus interface board) used by the drivers that will be controlled by the CAD/AVL system.

**MSPLOST – Ms. Simmons** reminded TAB that MSPLOST is on the November ballot and stated that many educational efforts had taken place at several venues and businesses.

**Vice Chair Marlin** commented that the MSPLOST materials were exceptional and very helpful.

**Operational Review – Ms. Simmons** reported that the goal of the Ridership Report is to provide trends over time and to assess the routes to develop recommendations for adjustments if needed. Per TAB's request, terms were added to the report. **Ms. Simmons** provided the ridership data for July to September 2024 compared to July to September 2022 ridership numbers.

**Mr. Darden** voiced concern about using 2022 as the baseline for ridership reporting data and expressed his dissatisfaction with the Ridership Committee meeting time. **Mr. Darden** asked if TAB members voted to use 2022 as a baseline for ridership data. **Chair Bickers** stated that a vote was not needed. **Mr. Darden** stated that he sent an email requesting a meeting time of 6:00 or 6:30 and that he could not meet at 5:00 p.m. and that, for the record, he thought it was disrespectful and that no attempt was made to accommodate his meeting time request. **Mr. Manthey** stated that he sent multiple emails and that the best availability was 5:00 p.m. **Mr. Darden** stated that he will send an email to his commissioner about everything occurring with TAB from January to currently.

**Vice Chair Marlin** requested order asked that the discussion of **Mr. Darden's** concerns be tabled and discussed after the meeting.

**Ms. Simmons** provided the operational overview of the Local and Rapid Services, Circulator Services, Commuter Services, Demand-Response Services, Vehicle Load, Revenue Per Route, Revenue Per Passenger, On-Time Performance, and Accidents, Complaints, and Compliments for July to September 2024 vs. July to September 2022. Per TAB's request, DOT staff adjusted the Vehicle Load information by separating weekday, Saturday, and Sunday by mode type (Local/Rapid vs. Circulator).

**Mr. Lambert** explained the ridership data for Route 10, stating that the particular bus had all seats filled with a significant amount of standing after a Brave's game ended around 10:00 p.m. on Sunday night. At any one moment across the system, six were the least number of people on the bus.

**Vice Chair Marlin** requested DOT to provide the numbers that are acceptable giving the standard of deviations above and below the mean on a weekly basis for Route 10.

**Ms. Simmons** indicated that the service standards approved by the FTA are used for determining the vehicle load. **Ms. Simmons** read the CobbLinc Service Standards for vehicle load that has been approved by the FTA. **Mr. Raessler** said looking at having indicators on some frequent basis would be useful.

**TAB members** discussed what data and/or metrics are needed to determine how the routes are performing, stating that a better resolution would be to compare Route 30 to Route 25, and to show where is there more ridership on one route vs. another route. **TAB members** stated that a simpler metric, with less information, is needed showing the number of riders divided by the number of routes. **TAB members** questioned what TAB is to do with the numbers and what action will be taken and what Resolution will be made. **Chair Bickers** stated that the Ridership Committee would need to offer feedback and come up with a Resolution.

**Mr. Raessler** clarified that TAB's desire for significant details with the data reports, but also wanting the data to be concise and digestible is a challenge. Maybe a system review rather than a route review would be more meaningful.

**Vice Chair Marlin** asked how TAB can communicate to the public the efficiency and success of how the system is performing to justify an \$11 billion MSPLOST.

**Ms. Simmons** responded to the concerns of using 2022 as the baseline and indicated that the operational template is to establish a baseline and determine if 2022 is the baseline that should be used moving forward. The goal is to collect enough information to establish the baseline, which staff has provided a path forward of this process. **Mr. Raessler** stated that DOT cannot provide what is acceptable ridership and agreed that DOT needs to establish a baseline and see the baseline increase year over year and to have periodic reviews of the system and to make modifications, as needed.

**Ms. Simmons** asked for patience from TAB and asked **Chair Bickers** how TAB wants DOT to move forward with the operational reporting template.

**Vice Chair Marlin, Chair Bickers, and other TAB members** discussed what is a successful transit system and the recommended benchmark to be developed by mid-2025 and that this will take time.

**Vice Chair Marlin** added that DOT staff has provided information with the operational reporting template on an exceptional basis compared to what TAB received previously and with an understanding of how well the system is performing. **Chair Bickers** reiterated that this is going to take time and she thanked **Mr. Manthey** for volunteering to organize the feedback from the Ridership Committee. **Chair Bickers** added that **TAB members** should approach one another graciously and in good faith and to discuss issues in a respectful manner.

**Ms. Simmons** - Due to the extensive exchange regarding Vehicle Load (as well as the 2022 benchmark), DOT staff was unable to report on the remainder of the operational report and skipped straight to the Recap and Proposed Report Deliverables slide, which includes a listing of proposed deliverables and the frequency in which they will be provided.

**Travel Training and Outreach Events** - **Ms. Simmons** reported that no trainings were completed since the last meeting.

**Upcoming Agenda Items** – **Ms. Simmons** reported on the anticipated agenda items, to include the Security Guard and Security Cameras, as well as the Transit Advertising Contract Award.

#### **A. NEXT MEETING/ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, **Mr. Stigall** made a motion, **Vice Chair Marlin** seconded, and the TAB meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m. The next TAB meeting is November 25, 2024.

November 25, 2024

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Approved