

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
PLANNING & EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY

August 7, 2014

The Board of Directors Planning & External Relations Committee met on August 7, 2014 at 10:31 a.m. in the Board Room on the 6th Floor of the MARTA Headquarters Building, 2424 Piedmont Road, Atlanta, Georgia.

Board Members Present

Harold Buckley, Sr.
Jim Durrett
Noni Ellison-Southall
Kirk Fjelstul*
Freda B. Hardage

MARTA officials in attendance were: General Manager/ CEO Keith T. Parker, AICP; Chief Operating Officer Rich Krisak; Chief of Staff Rukiya Eaddy; Chief Administrative Officer Edward L. Johnson; Chief Financial Officer Gordon L. Hutchinson; Chief Counsel Elizabeth O'Neill; AGMs LaShanda Dawkins (Interim), Ryland McClendon, Terry Thompson and Donald Williams (Acting); Executive Director Ferdinand Risco; Director Lyle Harris; Managers Kelly Hayden and Alisa Jackson; Manager, Executive Office Administration Tyrene L. Huff; Finance Administrative Analyst Tracy Kincaid. Others in attendance Davis Allen, Frederick Askew, Charles Curry, Mark Eatman, Nicolas Gowens, Saba Long, Anthony Pines and Janide Sidifall.

Also in attendance Charles Pursley, Jr. of Pursley Friese Torgrimson, LLP; Andrea Foard of Parsons Brinckerhoff.

Consent Agenda

- a) Approval of the July 9, 2014 Planning & External Relations Committee Meeting Minutes

On motion by Mr. Buckley seconded by Mrs. Hardage, the minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 4 to 0, with 5* members present.

* Kirk Fjelstul is Executive Director of Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and is therefore a non-voting member of the MARTA Board of Directors

Individual Agenda

Briefing – Proposed Bus Modifications for December 2014 Mark Up

Mr. Hayden briefed the Committee on the proposed changes for the December 2014 Service Modifications.

Route 89 – Flat Shoals/Scofield Road – Route 89 will be realigned to assume the Old National Highway (between Godby Road and Jonesboro Road), Jonesboro Road, Londonderry Way, Lancaster Lane and Shannon Parkway segments currently operating by Route 189 – Old National Highway/Union Station on all service days. Route 89 will be renamed *Route 89-Old National Highway/Union Station*. This will enable the higher ridership route (Route 89) to be streamlined allowing for a more direct trip and realign a route that is less frequent (Route 189) into an area that has lower ridership in response to community requests.

Route 140 – North Point/Mansell Road Park & Ride - This is a demonstration project operating to Windward Parkway and Alpharetta City Hall. There is an ongoing discussion with the University of Georgia, Reinhardt College and Georgia Perimeter College to restore service that was removed in 2010. Additionally, there is a new development, Avalon, composed of mixed used, retail, commercial, residential. Avalon is asking to add service along Old Milton Parkway for residents and employees, alike. Proposed service would go to Alpharetta City Hall, connecting to Old Milton Parkway, the colleges and Avalon. The route will connect to #185 Roswell Road. This is a mid-day, weekday route.

Route 143 – Windward Park & Ride. Currently a peak hour service only. This route will satisfy Old Milton Parkway to the universities and colleges. Every second trip northbound in the morning out of North Springs Station will continue to Windward Parkway; with the reverse taking place in the afternoon.

Route 180 – Fairburn/Palmetto – Currently operates from Palmetto on Main Street to College Park every 12 minutes during peak hours. The service has good ridership but not great ridership. MARTA is proposing a frequency increase of 10 minutes from Stonewall Tell location northbound to College Park and a reduction from Stonewall Tell to every 24 minutes.

Briefing – Connect 400 Transit Initiative Update

Mr. Eatman provided a briefing to the Committee on the progress and status of the Connect 400 Transit Initiative.

The Study was initiated in 2011. An Alternative Analysis (AA) was conducted between 2011 – 2013.

Early Scoping - Phase One was completed in the fall of 2013. During the winter of 2014, MARTA selected a Parsons Brinckerhoff-led consulting team to assist with the following project development activities:

- Early Scoping – Phase Two
- New Starts project evaluations
- Selection of a (LPA)
- Environmental review to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Request for entry into Project Development

Early Scoping – Phase Two began on June 23 with the publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register and will end on August 8, 2014. Local elected officials were briefed and three public meetings were held:

- Tuesday, July 8, 2014, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Johns Creek Environmental Campus, 8100 Holcomb Bridge Road, Roswell, GA 30022
- Thursday, July 10, 2014, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. at Georgia State University Alpharetta Center, 3775 Brookside Pkwy, Alpharetta, GA 30022
- Thursday, July 17, 2014, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. at Hampton Inn Atlanta – Perimeter Center, 769 Hammond Drive, NE, Atlanta, GA 30328

As part of Early Scoping - Phase Two, MARTA worked with Kennesaw State University to conduct a statistically valid survey of residents and employees in the GA 400 Corridor. The survey yielded 612 resident respondents and 463 employee respondents. Almost 80% of respondents in both surveys support expansion of MARTA to Windward Parkway. The majority also prefer to see heavy rail expansion.

Identified Issues or Areas of Concern:

- Disconnect between public opinion on transit (mostly for improved service along the GA 400 Corridor) and some local politicians

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- Uncertainty in technology preference (Heavy Rail Transit (HRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT) or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)). HRT remains the first preference but second place is shared almost equally between LRT and BRT
- Uncertainty in alignment along GA 400
 - Neighborhoods in the Northridge area have been very vocal with their concerns and feedback. They prefer an alignment on the west side of GA 400, starting before Spalding Road and transitional back to the east side between the Chattahoochee River and the Windward Parkway area. This proposal would increase project costs, per mode by a minimum of \$100M, but would likely reduce impacts to residents and schools
- Home-Owners Associations (HOAs) and schools adjacent to the Corridor have raised concerns about potential human and natural environmental impacts, as well as traffic impacts
- Identification of a funding source for implementation and construction. Currently MARTA is working to identify possible local funding sources and establishing a financial plan for the project as it moves forward

Next Steps

- Complete Early Scoping Phase Two – Summer 2014
- Conduct conceptual environmental and engineering study – Fall 2014
- Identify LPA with stakeholders – Winter 2015
- MARTA Board approval of SPA - Winter 2015
- Initiate preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) – Spring 2015

Briefing – FY 14 3rd and 4th Quarters Media Monitoring (January 1 to June 30, 2014)

Ms. Jackson provided a briefing to the Committee on media results from FY 14 3rd and 4th Quarters.

The analysis of a news story is based on data provided by MARTA's media monitoring service Vocus, which the Authority began using July 1, 2012. Vocus covers such areas as:

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- Tone
 - Positive – either entirely positive or very few negative or dissenting points
 - Negative – either entirely negative or primarily negative
 - Neutral – purely informational, general mention of MARTA, balance

- Subject Matter – examples include stories about:
 - “Take MARTA”
 - “Ride With Respect”
 - Service Improvements

- Ad Equivalency – what media coverage would cost if it were advertising space

News Themes of MARTA Stories

- Opportunities: Service improvements, return to six-car trains, Moody's bond ratings and FY 15 Budget, Dump the Pump Scavenger Hunt, Buckhead Bridge opening, 35th Anniversary, “Ride With Respect”
- Challenges: snow storms, bus layovers, service delays
- Public Safety: attacks/fights on the system, Breeze Card fraud, 11Alive's “Raise Your Voice” campaign
- Legislative: 2014 Legislative Session, Highway Trust Fund (status) and Federal funding, Clayton County
- TOD Initiatives: Development Day, Dunwoody/State Farm, MLK

Media Coverage Tone and Equivalency

- News by Tone
 - Positive 44%
 - Negative 9%
 - Neutral: 47%
- Positive coverage attributed to: Buckhead Bridge Opening and Service Improvements
- Negative coverage attributed to: fights/incidents on the system and service-related issues

- Total Ad Equivalency – the media monitoring system determines publicity value based on an industry standard

"Ride With Respect" Media Coverage

- News by Tone
 - Positive 52.5%
 - Negative 7.5%
 - Neutral 40%
- Total Ad Equivalency
\$215,324

Stories included:

- Suspensions and curbing untoward "knucklehead" behavior
- HB 264: imposing fines for breaking MARTA laws
- Earned media opportunities from pitches or media inquiries for MPD

TOD and Development Media Coverage

- Ad Equivalency Total for Q3 and Q4: \$172,136

Stories included:

- State Farm move adjacent to Dunwoody MARTA Station
- TOD announcements: King Memorial

Overview of Accomplishments

- Pitched story ideas for TV, print and digital media pitches about MPD recruitment and safety efforts, Development Day, Buckhead Bridge opening, 35th Anniversary
- Hosted quarterly media briefing with CEO/GM and SMEs – gained positive coverage on: "Ride With Respect", service enhancements, impact of 2014 Legislative Session
- Secured numerous positive, prominently placed stories on agency's TOD efforts in Atlanta Business Chronicle and Atlanta Journal Constitution and trade publications
- Responded rapidly to negative stories to provide accurate information, including responses to rumors, misinformation about accidents, inaccurate service information, customer complaints, etc.
- Managed a dozen requests from film location scouts to use MARTA property

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Outlook for 2015 - 1st and 2nd Quarters

- Publicize events and news in advance via traditional media and social media platforms to help generate ongoing awareness about MARTA
- Incorporate the Authority and CEO's social media in broader communications strategy and respond to online inquiries in a timely manner
- Continue meeting with AGMs to establish departmental liaisons to the Media Relations staff
- Pitch story ideas and SMEs to industry, local and national publications
- Secure speaking opportunities and media interviews at industry conferences (i.e., Rail-Volution, APTA) for MARTA staff
- Schedule quarterly media briefings with GM and EMT/Senior Staff to build relationships with local journalists

Adjournment

The Planning & External Relations Committee meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Rebbie Ellisor-Taylor
Assistant Secretary to the Board