

Arlington Transit Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

March 12, 2019

7:00 p.m.

Ellen M. Bozman Government Center

2100 Clarendon Boulevard

“Cherry” and “Dogwood” Conference Room

TAC Members Present:

John Carten
Conor Courtney
Deidre Grant
Erika Chiang
Herschel Kanter
Richard Price

Attendees Present:

Pierre Holloman (staff)
William Jones (staff)
Tim Roseboom (staff)
Jamaal Schoby (KFH)
Will Sutton (KFH)

Call to Order

- John Carten opened the meeting at 7:01 pm.

Introductions

- Pierre Holloman introduced Jamaal Schoby and Will Sutton from the Knapp, Fravel, Hosen Group (KFH).

Public Comment

- No public comments submitted, no speakers from the public.

Approval of Meeting Notes from

- January 15, 2019 meeting notes were approved unanimously.

WMATA Budget Update – Tim Roseboom

- Tim Roseboom noted that WMATA’s proposed FY2020 budget includes several changes to fares and fees. Within the proposed FY2020 budget the 1-day unlimited combination rail and bus pass will decrease in cost from \$14.75 to \$13.00. The proposed FY2020 budget also includes a 3-day unlimited combination rail and bus pass for \$28.00 and a 7-day systemwide rail and bus combination pass for \$58.00. WMATA is looking to add unlimited bus to the existing monthly Select Pass. Regarding Metrobus fares, the proposed FY2020 budget decreases the cost of the 7-day regional bus pass from \$17.50 to \$15.00. The proposed FY2020 budget also include several rail service changes including extending every Yellow Line train to Greenbelt and eliminate the Silver Spring turnback with all Red Line trains going to

Glenmont. Mr. Roseboom noted that WMATA plans to vote on the full FY2020 budget on March 28, 2019.

- Mr. Roseboom noted that WMATA has reached an agreement with the Local 922 union. Moreover, WMATA's FY2019 budget will be amended to fund Local 922's labor agreement and additional capital investments. Regarding the additional capital investments, there were several changes with the FY2019 capital program including but not limited to: change in project schedules, the award of a design build contract for the Potomac Yard Metrorail station, platform reconstruction program fully scoped, and an acceleration of WMATA's Office Consolidation Program. Mr. Roseboom stated that WMATA recently purchased a building near the L'Enfant Plaza Metrorail Station which WMATA noted will save them in cost over the long run. WMATA's existing headquarters building is dated and will require \$10M to bring the building up to code. WMATA is also looking to establish an office in Northern Virginia with sights on Alexandria near the Eisenhower Metrorail Station.

Arlington Zone-Based Demand Response Flex Service Guideline - Jamaal Schoby and Will Sutton (KFH)

- Pierre Holloman introduced Jamaal Schoby and Will Sutton from KFH and noted as part of Arlington's FY2017-FY2026 Transit Development Plan, a concept of a flex service was included to provide coverage to areas in Arlington where fixed route bus service was either not productive and/or lacking. Mr. Holloman noted that Arlington was awarded a grant through the Council of Government's Transportation Land-Use Connections Program to evaluate demand response/flex/microtransit. KFH was awarded the contract to review various demand response/flex/microtransit models from around the country and to develop a guideline on how demand response/flex/microtransit could be implemented in Arlington.
- Jamaal Schoby noted that KFH has identified six case studies of regulated demand response transit programs for this effort. KFH will use the six case studies to develop lessons learned and best applications to demand response transit within its guidance to Arlington. Mr. Schoby described e-Hailing demand response/microtransit as being the utilization of a vehicle smaller than a bus which are not on a fixed route nor fixed schedule through a smartphone app which operate within a geo-fenced zone to and from various locations including but not limited to curb to curb service, to transit stations, to designated bus stops, and to virtual bus stops.
- Models of demand response/microtransit which KFH are studying include 1) Publicly Regulated and Operated Microtransit and 2) Publicly Regulated and Privately Operated Microtransit. With the Publicly Regulated and Operated Microtransit Model, the public agency provides oversight and vehicles and either creates a smartphone application or works with a private entity to create a smartphone application. With the Publicly Regulated and Privately Operated Microtransit, the public agency utilizes the services of a private entity to provide vehicles and a smartphone application while the public agency provides oversight.
- The six case studies which KFH identified include: 1) the City of West Sacramento, CA, 2) Alameda-Contra Costa Transit, 3) the City of Arlington, TX, 4) Dallas Area Rapid Transit, 5) Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority in Austin, TX, and 6) Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority in Tampa, FL. All six are different in terms of how they are operated, manage, and the how microtransit is delivered. Microtransit provided by the City of West Sacramento, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, and the City of Arlington, TX are still in operation today. The HyperLink microtransit service provided by the Hillsborough Area Regional

Transit Authority was terminated in July 2018 due to low ridership and high operating cost and replaced with fixed route bus service. The GoLink microtransit service provided by the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority in Austin, TX was terminated in June 2018 as it was only a 1-year pilot. The Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority is currently undergoing a procurement for microtransit with an anticipated relaunch of the program in June 2019.

- As part of their research, KFH is analyzing the population and employment densities and land use patterns of the cities and counties included in the 6 case studies. KFH is also examining the size of the service, how reservations and payments are being made by individuals without a smartphone and/or who are unbanked, the walking distance to a designated or virtual stop, how microtransit is serving as a first mile and last mile connection to fixed-route bus and rail facilities, fares and fare structure, and the wait time between the request for a vehicle and the arrival of a vehicle for each of the 6 case studies. In looking at population densities in Arlington, the northern part of the County is the lowest as compared to the entire County. In terms of transit dependent populations, there are higher concentrations along the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor, Columbia Pike, and various neighborhoods in the southern part of the County. KFH is also examining how microtransit meet compliance with Federal Civil Rights laws including but not limited to Title VI and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- It was noted that County staff has tasked KFH with conducting research on how others from around the country are implementing service and performance standards as well as measuring customer satisfaction with microtransit. From preliminary research, Mr. Schoby noted that the primary users of microtransit are low-income and middle-aged persons, that many microtransit programs have had less than 10 boarding per revenue hour, many programs have seen an increase in registered and active users each month, and based on some customer satisfaction surveys, quite a few utilized Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft before using a microtransit service. Some general lessons which have been learned include: agencies can expect dismal ridership at the beginning of a program, agencies will need to adjust service parameters based on customer demand, technology can lead to greater efficiency and on-time performance, and small geo-fenced zones limits a person's travel and forces transfers; moreover, in such cases people have elected to take TNCs or other modes for a one-seat ride. Based on preliminary research, microtransit has worked in low-density and low-demand areas, in areas which had low productive fixed-route bus service, for first and last mile connections, and early morning and late evening service to accommodate various work shifts. KFH plans to provide the County with is final research and a guideline for implementing demand response/flex/microtransit by May 31, 2019.
- The TAC had numerous of questions and comments regarding this subject. The TAC inquired how microtransit fit in with paratransit service, how is microtransit working in larger cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and Oakland, if there is price surging in microtransit due to congestion, and how was microtransit being marketed with the 6 case studies? The TAC also held a discussion on what are the benefits of providing productive bus routes on corridors and providing microtransit to handle areas where transit coverage is limited and/or where there is low density. There was some thought that transit ridership particularly bus would increase if there was more frequent and reliable service on busy commercial corridors, but transit cannot leave behind connections for neighborhoods to and from such commercial corridors. The TAC also noted that microtransit shall be accessible to everyone and will need to factor in individuals without smartphones and the unbanked. The TAC also noted that it would be a benefit to be able to link SmarTrip to pay fares and to obtain transfers on

a smartphone application for microtransit; however, not necessary if microtransit was implemented in Arlington.

ART Service Update – William Jones

- William Jones noted that staff continues to work with National Express, the contractor responsible for operating and maintaining ART, on maintenance issues, reliability, and on-time performance. Mr. Jones stated that National Express is still recruiting and training operators in an attempt to be fully staffed. National Express has raised its pay and has offered bonuses in order to recruit more operators as ART is competing against other transit agencies in the District, Maryland, and Northern Virginia for operators and bus technicians. There has been an improvement in terms of vehicle availability; however, some buses have been put into service without working destination signs. Mr. Jones mentioned that the County has issued liquidated damages to National Express for every missed trip. Mr. Jones noted that staff is working on issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new ART Operations and Maintenance Contract.
- Mr. Jones stated that at the May 2019 TAC meeting, staff will provide an update on where ART stands on performance.

STAR Service Update – William Jones

- William Jones mentioned that the number of complaints regarding Red Top have gone down and that Red Top, Diamond, and the STAR Call Center have been working together to provide quarterly training to STAR vehicle operators. The quarterly training was recently implemented to ensure STAR vehicle operators are aware of ADA, customer service, sensitivity, and how to assist passengers with various size wheelchairs. In terms of ridership, the numbers have trended down in FY2019 for STAR. Mr. Jones noted that staff will provide an update on STAR's FY2019 performance to the May 2019 TAC meeting.

Additional Items from Committee Members and Staff

- Herschel Kanter noted that the Commission on Aging is soliciting comments from commissions and committees on making Arlington an age-friendly community. Mr. Kanter noted that he could do a short presentation on this item at the May 2019 TAC meeting.
- Pierre Holloman noted that a new website will soon roll out for ART during the first or second week of April 2019. Mr. Holloman noted that the site is being designed to be mobile friendly and will include a new section on transparency and accountability which will include performance data on ART and STAR.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 pm.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 14, 2019.