

CHARLESTON AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (CARTA)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
September 18, 2024
Meeting Notes

A Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) Board of Directors meeting was held at the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) in the Barrett Lawrimore Conference Room located at 5790 Casper Padgett Way in North Charleston, SC at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 18, 2024.

MEMBERSHIP: Brad Belt; MaryBeth Berry; Joe Boykin; Mike Brown; Daniel Brownstein; Reggie Burgess; William Cogswell; Dwayne Green; Will Haynie; Brandon Hudson; James Lewis; Pat O'Neil; Christie Rainwater; Herb Sass; Michael Seekings; Ed Sutton; Jimmy Ward; Robert Wehrman

MEMBERS PRESENT: MaryBeth Berry; Joe Boykin; Daniel Brownstein; Dwayne Green; Brandon Hudson; Michael Seekings; Ed Sutton; Jimmy Ward; Robert Wehrman

PROXIES: Craig Harris for Brad Belt; Ron Brinson for Reggie Burgess; Robert Somerville for William Cogswell; Chief Gebhardt for Christie Rainwater; Jerry Lahm for Herb Sass

OTHERS PRESENT: Stephanie Maher (WeDriveU); Josh Steele (WeDriveU); Patrice Gilliam-Miller (WeDriveU); David Bonner (Transit Consultant); Morven MacLean (WSP); Elissa Smith (HDR); Ryan Bauman (HDR); Mila Buzhinskaya (HNTB); Daniel Brock (HNTB); Jeff Baxter (Cityvolve); William Hamilton (Best Friends of Lowcountry Transit); Representatives of the Exchange Club of Charleston: Carl Schultz; Duncan Townsend; Tim Smith; John Osborne; Gary Catterton; Frank Shorter; Paul Freebern; News Media Personnel; Additional Interested Parties

STAFF PRESENT: Ron Mitchum; Andrea Kozloski; Robin Mitchum; Sharon Hollis; Matthew Spath; Megan Ross; Kim Coleman

1. Call to Order

Chairman Seekings called the CARTA Board of Directors Meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. followed by a moment of silence and a quorum determination.

2. Consideration of Board Minutes: August 21, 2024 Meeting

Mr. Boykin made a motion to approve the August 21, 2024 Meeting Minutes as presented.

Mr. Green seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Financial Status Report – Robin Mitchum

Robin Mitchum, Deputy Director of Finance and Administration, presented the financial status report for the period ending July 31, 2024. She noted that, overall, the agency remains in good shape and ended the month with unexpended funds of \$4,229,726. Ms. Mitchum provided information on the following activities for FY24 thus far:

Revenues:

- Farebox is the fares collected on the revenue vehicles.
- Passes & Mobile Ticketing are bus pass fares sold to customers.
- Local Contributions are funds received for shelter and bench construction.
- Federal Revenue includes operating for the year-to-date. Federal Revenue is recorded as eligible expenditures are incurred.
- State Mass Transit Funds are operating funds available as match to Federal 5307 operating funds.
- Insurance proceeds are a result of accidents.
- Sale of Assets are the proceeds from the sale of nine MV-1s, five Amerivans and a 1996 New Flyer.

Expenditures:

- Retiree Benefits include the cost of retiree insurance.
- Supplies include office, facility maintenance and rebranding supplies.
- Printing includes costs of printing route brochures, passes and labels.
- Automotive is the cost to service the 2018 Ford F-150.
- Postage is shipping fees.
- Dues/Membership is CARTA's membership with Transportation Association of South Carolina (TASC) and the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce.
- Office Equipment Rental includes the monthly battery lease for the electric buses and property taxes on the equipment rental.
- Office Equipment Maintenance (OEM) includes GMV Sycromatics, GMV Digital Signage, Genfare Support, Swiftly real time passenger predictions, Swiftly GPS Playback, Swiftly on-time performance, Swiftly run-times, RCN NetCloud Essentials and NetCloud Advanced for mobile routers and other IT services.
- Rent includes the Ashley Phosphate Park & Ride lot, Dorchester Village Shopping Center Park & Ride lot, Leeds Avenue lot lease from Dominion and document storage.
- Communications is the cost of phone, internet and radio services at the facilities and on the buses.
- Utilities include electric and water at the SuperStop, Melnick Park & Ride, the Radio Shop at Leeds Avenue and the charging stations at Leeds Avenue.
- Advertising is Beach Reach outreach.
- Auditing is the cost of the FY23 GASB 75 Actuary and Audit.
- Custodial Services are the cost of janitorial services at the Melnick Park & Ride location.
- Pilot Ride Program (CARTA OnDemand) is customer transportation cost for same-day service through independent rideshare.
- Electric Bus Master Plan is to transition CARTA's diesel bus fleet to all-electric buses.
- Other Professional Services include the bus wash inspection services and appraisal services.
- Shared Contract Services (IGA & Management) is the extensive services the BCDCOG provides to CARTA.
- Fixed-Route Service is the cost of fixed and commuter service provided by National Express Shuttle and Transit.
- Money Transport is the cost of the armored guard service to transport cash deposits to the bank.
- Security Services are contracted security service provided at the SuperStop by the City of North Charleston Police Department.
- Vehicle Maintenance is the cost to maintain the fleet.
- Facility Repair & Maintenance is the cost to maintain facilities.
- Operating Fees & Licenses include credit card transaction fees and vehicle title and registration fees.
- Insurance includes the cost of liability insurance provided by the Insurance Reserve Fund. The insurance policy renews on January 1st and this is the majority of the expenditure for FY24.
- Paratransit is the cost of paratransit transportation provided by National Express Shuttle and Transit.
- Interest is the interest on the Melnick Park & Ride loan.

Capital Expenditures:

- Rolling Stock is the purchase of ten 2023 Voyager Vans.
- Bus Facilities/Charging Stations is the Leeds Avenue charging infrastructure.
- Bus Shelter Construction/Bench Install is the installation of shelters and benches.

- Security/Cameras & Equipment is the purchase of cameras, access control equipment and AVL equipment.
- Facilities Construction is the Leeds Avenue parking lot repairs and Shipwatch Square engineering.
- Capital (IT, Facility Repairs, Maint.) is Genfare equipment and driver shields.

Ms. Mitchum reviewed the activity of the OnDemand Program as of July 31, 2024. She noted that the FY24 total cost is at \$246,104 at 93% complete. The Board of Directors received the Financial Status Report and the OnDemand Program Activity Report as information.

4. FY25 Proposed Budget – Request for Approval – Robin Mitchum

Ms. Mitchum presented the FY25 Proposed Budget. She provided detailed explanations of line-item changes in Revenues, Expenditures and Capital Expenditures. Ms. Mitchum stated that the FY25 Proposed Budget was initially approved during the June 2024 CARTA Board of Directors meeting and noted that the final adoption of the FY25 Budget was approved by all member governments during their respective Finance Committee and Council meetings. The budget will continue to be monitored to ensure revenues and expenditures remain aligned. Ms. Mitchum noted that any recommended revisions will be made to the Board of Directors as necessary.

***Mr. Brinson made a motion to approve the FY25 Proposed Budget as presented.
Ms. Berry seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.***

5. HOP Service Reinstatement – Request for Approval

Ron Mitchum, Executive Director, discussed the Reinstatement of Hospitality on the Peninsula (HOP) Service. He noted that staff is aware of a lot that could potentially accommodate parking for individuals who utilized the previous HOP route. The property is located on Concord Street at the corner of Market Street. This parking lot is currently accessible by Route 211. Two different stops are within 400 feet of this location. Mr. Mitchum stated that staff recommends that the Route 211 service be modified to extend hours to reflect the previous HOP service. If approved, the additional service could potentially cost an additional \$300,000 yearly. Mr. Mitchum addressed questions and comments.

***Mr. Brownstein made a motion to approve the Reinstatement of HOP Service as presented.
Mr. Boykin seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.***

6. Discount Fare Policy Revision – Discussion

Mr. Mitchum discussed the Discount Fare Policy. He stated that staff is requesting approval to update the Discount Fare Policy to reflect that public sector employees pay \$1.00 for a one-ride fare. Mr. Mitchum noted that Daniel Brownstein, Board Member and Councilman for the Town of Mt. Pleasant, will discuss the matter further. Mr. Brownstein stated that he supports the fare reduction for public sector employees as many are on a lower-tier pay scale. Mr. Brownstein noted that the reduction in the one-ride fare would assist many public sector employees financially and could possibly have a positive impact on CARTA's ridership. It would give the member governments the opportunity to offer the transportation incentive to assist public sector employees with transportation while building on CARTA's ridership. Chairman Seekings stated that perhaps member governments could subsidize the remainder of the fare in order to offer free rides to those who are employed by the member governments. Mr. Brownstein noted that he would explore the matter further and work with staff. Chairman Seekings stated that the matter will be placed on a future Board Meeting Agenda for further discussion. The Board of Directors received the Discount Fare Policy Revision discussion as information.

7. Downtown Transit Study – Request for Approval

Mr. Mitchum discussed the Downtown Charleston Transit Study Plan. He noted that in June 2022, CARTA was awarded Route Planning Restoration Program funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to develop a downtown restoration plan to improve ridership and service quality post-pandemic. Mr. Mitchum reviewed the stated goals of the Plan which are: develop a strategy for improving transit in the Charleston Peninsula; build new ridership; regain ridership lost during the COVID-19 pandemic; modernize infrastructure; enhance service frequency; access reliability and coverage. Staff worked with a consultant team throughout the project. The final Plan was presented during the stakeholder group that was maintained throughout the entire planning process. Additionally, the final Plan was presented to the public during a lunch webinar, at an open-house at the County Library in Downtown Charleston and to the Transit Riders Advisory Committee in June. Mr. Mitchum noted that, with Board approval, this will allow staff to begin working with partners to develop an implementation plan. Engagements with stakeholders will continue. The partners include the City of Charleston, MUSC, College of Charleston, etc. Due to the level of changes within the Plan, staff will be responsible for facilitating Title VI meetings within the Peninsula to allow for more public comments. Mr. Mitchum addressed questions and comments.

***Mr. Boykin made a motion to approve the Downtown Transit Study as presented.
Mr. Wehrman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.***

8. Lowcountry Rapid Transit Project – Update – Sharon Hollis

Sharon Hollis, Principal Planner and LCRT Project Manager, delivered an update on the Lowcountry Rapid Transit (LCRT) Project. She discussed the Project Highlights regarding the 21.3 mile infrastructure investment. Ms. Hollis noted that 19 battery electric buses will facilitate more than two million annual trips on the line and roadway and bike/pedestrian improvements will support safer, more efficient travel. She discussed the advanced technologies making the system more reliable and comfortable including stoplight signal prioritization, WiFi equipped buses and stations, interactive station maps, updated wayfinding and corridor lighting and off-board fare payment. Ms. Hollis stated there will be three Park & Ride stations and the service will run from Ladson to WestEdge which will be a 70-minute end-to-end travel time. She noted that there will be 10-minute weekday service during peak and daytime hours, 21-hour service during the week and 20-30 minute service on weekends. The service will connect CARTA and TriCounty Link transit services. Ms. Hollis reviewed public engagement from 2018 up to now stating there have been 180+ stakeholder meetings, four rounds of public and virtual meetings, 1,700+ events with local communities, organizations and businesses and 66,000 direct mailings. She noted that there are 3,700+ people on the email list with 30+ e-newsletters delivered. Ms. Hollis discussed the Project Timeline noting that the project is currently in the engineering phase and that construction should begin in 2027. She discussed the next steps and addressed questions and comments. The Board of Directors received the LCRT Project Update as information.

9. Project Updates – Ron Mitchum/Staff

Mr. Mitchum discussed the Project Updates report regarding the following Project Updates: Service Planning Initiatives; Downtown Route Study; US 52 BRT Study; CARTA OnDemand (noting that the number of users continues to increase); Shelter Improvement Program; Shipwatch Square Transit Center (noting that the project team for the NEPA process began developing materials for the public open house on September 17th, the project team for A&E Design began advancing design development, staff continues to respond to requests resulting from public/stakeholder meetings and another public meeting was held on September 17th at the Keith Summey Library adjacent to the transit center site); Transit Oriented Development Study (noting that the project team is finalizing deliverables received in August, staff continues with outreach at community events, an online meeting will be held in the Fall and the BCDCOG was awarded a Phase 3 grant for \$1.2 million to continue development of affordable housing plans and neighborhood plans to be procured/initiated in Fall

of 2024 upon completion of Phase 2); LCRT; Dorchester Transit Signal Priority (TSP) Pilot Project; Mt. Pleasant Street Park & Ride (noting that staff continues to address TRC comments and the SCDOT is reviewing the plans); Fairgrounds Park & Ride; O&M Facility; and Mobile Ticketing Sales and Use (noting that mobile ticket sales totaled \$29,850, which is a 30.8% increase in sales revenue over August 2023, the upgrade was well-received by customers and bus operators). Mr. Mitchum addressed questions and comments. The Board of Directors received the Project Updates Report as information.

10. Ridership Report – Megan Ross

Megan Ross, Transit Planner, presented the Ridership Reports as of August 2024. She noted that passenger trips totaled 182,087 and there were 10.6 customers per service hour (10.6 last month). Ms. Ross stated that overall ridership comparing August 2024 to July 2024 decreased by 3.4%, overall ridership comparing August 2024 to August 2023 decreased by 4.7%, and overall ridership comparing 2024 YTD to 2023 YTD increased by 5.3%. It was noted that the decrease was primarily due to the tropical storm and flooding. She stated that Tel-A-Ride ridership for August 2024 was 4,753 (a decrease of 2.8% when comparing 2023 YTD to 2024 YTD). Ms. Ross discussed the OnDemand trips for August 2024, noting that the total ridership was 3,173 passengers between both Uber and Lyft. The trip cost averaged \$11.86, higher than July's average of \$11.55 and 40% of the overall rides were from Tel-A-Ride passengers. Ms. Ross addressed questions and comments. The Board of Directors received the Ridership Reports as information.

11. Executive Director's Report – Ron Mitchum

Mr. Mitchum stated that if CARTA plans to continue to operate the Beach Reach service, he has an opportunity to purchase a trolley bus to use as the Beach Reach shuttle. He presented slides that depicted a trolley that could potentially be used for the Beach Reach shuttle. Mr. Mitchum discussed the trolley and costs in detail, noting it is a 2022 and that the interior would be better suited for beach-goers. He noted that the trolley could perhaps be used for other events, such as Christmas Parades, etc. Mr. Mitchum and staff will conduct due diligence such as inspections to ensure the trolley would be a good purchase for the service if there are no objections from the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors had no objections to Mr. Mitchum's recommendation of purchasing the trolley. Mr. Brownstein mentioned the possibility of getting a working group together to discuss exploring further options of extending the Beach Reach service to other local beaches. Mr. Mitchum addressed questions and comments. The Board of Directors received the Executive Director's Report as information.

12. Other Business, If Any

There was no further business to discuss.

13. Public Comments, If Any

There were three Public Comments that were recorded and noted for the record.

- Carl Schultz (35-year member of the Exchange Club of Charleston): Mr. Schultz expressed his concerns regarding the Fairgrounds property and the parcel of land that CARTA plans to utilize as well as concerns regarding legal fees and the non-profit organizations that the Exchange Club supports.
- Duncan Townsend (Officer of the Exchange Club of Charleston): Mr. Townsend expressed his concerns regarding the Fairgrounds property and the parcel of land that CARTA plans to utilize as well as concerns regarding a recent article in the *Post & Courier*.
- William Hamilton (Best Friends of Lowcountry Transit): Mr. Hamilton congratulated the Board regarding the overall increase in ridership. He expressed his concerns regarding student ridership, the DASH route and people not being aware of the service that the DASH route provides. He also expressed his concerns regarding the Fairgrounds.

14. Executive Session – Legal Matters

*Mr. Brinson made a motion that the Board of Directors convene into Executive Session.
Mr. Boykin seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
Non-Board Members, Guests and Non-Essential Staff Members were excused.
Mr. Lahm made a motion to reconvene the Board of Directors meeting.
Chief Gebhardt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
Chairman Seekings reconvened the Board of Directors meeting noting that no action was taken
related to legal matters discussed during Executive Session.*

15. We Drive U Contract Amendment – Request for Approval

Chairman Seekings requested a motion to approve the We Drive U Contract Amendment.

*Mr. Brinson made a motion to approve the We Drive U Contract Amendment.
Mr. Lahm seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.*

16. Board Comments, If Any

Joe Boykin, Board Member and Charleston County Councilman, discussed an unfortunate and unsavory exchange that occurred at the Board Meeting table just prior to the start of today's Board of Directors meeting. Mr. Boykin stated that Carl Schultz, with the Exchange Club of Charleston, approached him and inquired what are we going to do about the Fairgrounds property issue to which Mr. Boykin replied you all need to negotiate in good faith. Mr. Shultz stated that that time has passed since you all sued us. Mr. Boykin stated he will not comment on the matter during pending litigation. Mr. Schultz asked Mr. Boykin if he voted in favor of CARTA obtaining the property to which Mr. Boykin replied yes. Mr. Schultz stated there will be repercussions to which Mr. Boykin inquired what he meant by that statement. Mr. Schultz stated that he and the Fair will do whatever necessary to kill the Charleston County Transportation Sales Tax Referendum. Mr. Boykin noted that the referendum is a stand-alone matter and separate from the LCRT project. Mr. Boykin felt that Mr. Schultz's remarks were highly inappropriate and threatening. He wished to caution other Board Members and those in public office. Mr. Boykin stated he wished to make it clear that Mr. Schultz has made a threat that should a campaign begin with the Fairgrounds against the transportation sales tax referendum, that Mr. Schultz made it clear what is behind their motivation and that they will go through any links to get their way.

17. Adjourn

Chairman Seekings thanked the Board of Directors for their continued dedicated service to the Board and the communities they serve. He stated that no one in public office should be subjected to such threats and inappropriate behavior. Chairman Seekings stated that he is proud to serve as Chairman of the CARTA Board of Directors and believes that the Board, staff and others have risen above and beyond to make the largest public transportation project in history for the state of South Carolina to happen. The LCRT project is very much needed in our region for everyone in our community, including the members of the Exchange Club. Chairman Seekings thanked the Board, Executive Director Mitchum and the staff and noted as Chairman that he would stand behind them with is full support and to let him know of any other inappropriate actions directed to any of them. There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Seekings adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Coleman