

February 21, 2012  
Meeting Minutes

**Transportation Policy Advisory Committee  
Public Transportation Sub-Committee**

**Members Present:**

Jennifer Kretovic, Chair  
Dick Lemieux  
Ruairi O'Mahony  
Steve Henninger (Staff Representative)  
Ed Roberge (Staff Representative)  
Laura Aibel (Staff Representative)

**Members Absent:**

Brent Todd  
Ken Hazeltine  
Kim Murdoch

**Others Attending:**

Ralph Littlefield  
Kevin Curdie

**I. Call to Order/Introductions**

Ms. Kretovic called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the January 17, 2012 meeting were reviewed and approved.

**III. Public Comments**

Mr. Curdie reviewed written comments he had prepared for the meeting. His comments are attached to the minutes for the record.

**IV. Referrals**

There were no referrals this month.

**V. Updates**

- i. Driver Feedback Meeting – Ms. Kretovic, Mr. O'Mahony, Jim Sudak and Ralph Littlefield attended the meeting on January 28, 2012. Attached are draft notes submitted by Mr. O'Mahony.

In addition to reviewing the notes from the meeting, Mr. Littlefield mentioned Mr. O'Mahony and Mr. Sudak contacted Manchester Transit Authority about providing afternoon service between Concord and Manchester. The cost to provide this additional run would require an \$8,000.00 local match with the 5307 funds. Mr. O'Mahony spoke to some large Concord employers about providing the funding for this service.

Mr. O'Mahony suggested he have CNHRPC's system planner, Dean Williams, work with CTAA when CTAA returns to retime the routes. Dean rode the system for the boarding and alighting study and knows the system intimately.

A discussion followed regarding the staffing of future boarding and alighting studies. CNHRPC can coordinate the studies, but doesn't have the budget to provide data collecting staff. Mr. Littlefield thought CAPBMCI might have people, if they were trained.

- ii. Quarterly Report – Ms. Kretovic said the draft report will be circulated via email for approval. City Council is particularly interested in the final outcomes of the Saturday service trial.

**VI. Discussion**

- i. CAT NHDOT/CITY Grant Application & Budget Review- Ralph Littlefield distributed CAT's NHDOT request for FY2013 funding application. Ms. Kretovic said she spoke with the City Manager, Tom Aspell about using this same format when CAT submits a funding request to the City. Mr. Aspell said okay.  
The application includes the same level of service from FY2012. There is a 10 week Saturday service trial again. The travel trainer funding may be switched from 5311 to 5316 or 5317.  
Mr. Roberge asked for detail on the revenue sources. The farebox revenue is included in the operating budget.  
Somebody asked what it would cost to have a free fare system. Mr. Littlefield responded the additional local match would be \$118,000 for a total of \$243,000.

**VII. Old Business**

- i. Ridership Reports – Ridership reports were distributed, but not discussed.
- ii. Other Old Business

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

- i. CAPBMCI/CAT Staffing Update – No update.
- ii. Other New Business –
  - 1. RESERVED- New development and Capital Improvement Projects – No update.

**IX. Adjournment**

**MOTION** to adjourn was made, seconded and carried.

Written comments submitted by Kevin Curdie 2/21/2012-

Greetings, I have several comments and concerns regarding public transportation in Concord. I realize another budget year is approaching and it in part has spurred some of these thoughts.

To start on a bright note: I observed during the week of February 13-17 that the smaller bus being used for the Crosstown Route had the name "Crosstown" in its 'window' in the front!!!

For one, the bus stop on North Main Street by Franklin Street, outbound, is still in the same location it has been since I have been riding. I recalled it being talked about as an less than safe location as a stop and if I remember correctly it was approved to be moved from that area to a location further south, in the area of the Washington Street intersection(?). Another summer and fall have come and gone and it has yet to be moved. I am reminded of the hazard of its current location when I've recently ridden the Penacook Bus and the driver stopped to pick up a rider (whom it turned out wasn't waiting for that bus!). It was later in the day and traffic was 'busy'. The driver as you all know has to cross 2 lanes of traffic to get back to the traffic lane they need to be in to continue its route north.

I also have my concerns about the proposal to add a bus stop to the Crosstown route to include a stop for the new location of the Friendly Kitchen. It has nothing to do with the stop per se, but more the route itself; the time that might be involved with people either entering or off the bus, how is that going to impact the timing? I will assume there is going to be people getting off to go to the kitchen and there will be a stop on the inbound route to pick up riders, perhaps on Commercial Street? I mention this in light of the timing as it current is, rather 'tight'. The late afternoon/evening is the time frame I have concerns about; the Crosstown bus has riders who transfer to the Penacook bus for one thing. I have seen this person get off the Crosstown at the Franklin St stop a number of times in an effort to catch the Penacook bus as it is now. The Crosstown does not always get to the State House stop in time for the transfer (and the driver doesn't seem to like to radio ahead to ask the Penacook driver if they can wait a few extra minutes). In fact I have observed the Heights bus leaving the State House stop while the Crosstown bus was approaching, which I was trying to catch (the driver didn't hear me ask them to please call the other bus to wait when we were coming onto North Main St heading towards the downtown!) I'm not the only one this has happened to, that I know of.

I also have wondered about a couple of former stops that still have signage but no longer serve as bus stops (see attached pictures). One being on South Main Street across from Thompson St (by the Kennedy Building) and the other is actually a bus stop sign on Storrs St that has never actually been a stop that has been used (it's on the street near Market Basket). I would have thought that at least the metal signs might have at least been removed or bagged. I also still don't understand after what, two years or so of there being no signage at the Storrs Street Plaza for the times of the bus there, there is a sign. Don't get me wrong, I just wonder how the property owner was finally gotten to allow it. Perhaps the same can be applied to the Wal Mart stop.

I have concerns over the missing signs with the route times that are still missing and in some cases have been missing since shortly after the 'new' schedule times were posted. The idea that there real signs are going to be put up, that somehow makes the lack of signs OK? And the continued lack of signs is OK in the mean while? I am hoping the 'new' signs are going to perhaps face the side people will approach the stops from, instead of facing the street.

This is something I have noticed, as it has been winter and it does get dark early. At the State House stop there use to be a street light very close to the bus shelter. It was damaged during an ice storm, what 2 years ago or so. It was not fix, but rather removed and since that area, which includes a crosswalk has darken. Part of my concern with that is when it is dark during the winter months and there is snow and ice under foot, it can be a challenge to board the buses. The part about the crosswalk is there are folks who exit the bus quickly at times to cross the street to make it to the outbound Penacook bus. Cars don't tend to travel slowly in that area for some reason, at least that I have observed.

I would also like to share something I just became aware of; something called a single ride pass. I had seen on a number of occasions a rider board a bus and hand the driver a slip of paper the size of a transfer slip. I had often thought, that the heck, that's not allowed to be used here. I am referring to someone boarding at stop like Shaws on the Heights. Or on Industrial Park Drive for a couple of locations.

Now I find out there is another 'free' way to ride the bus? Gee how I do get one. I guess there are several different places to get them from. I didn't really ask, I was more amazed I guess than anything else. And speaking of free rides; I've noticed one more than one occasion students boarding at the NHTI don't have the 'right' sticker on their student ID. I thought I recalled they paid a fee when they sign up for school? In fact I have noticed a few of these students giving the driver a hard time when they asked to see their ID, both front and back. When it was noticed they didn't have the correct color sticker the driver would tell them they needed to get the right one or they had to pay \$1.25, to which a few students would say to the driver; "You know me, I ride every day". I also didn't realize a valid student ID gets you a ride period, whether you are just riding into town or actually going to school. I guess that is my bad, I assumed it was only able to be used for trips to school. What a great deal for whatever they are paying is all I'll say. And to round this out, I have concerns with the use of the smaller buses. It is hard to board them and get to a seat when you have bags in your hands (and not whack anyone as you try to squeeze by as you try to get to a seat). For myself, I am glad when I see one of the Orion's on the road. It's easy to board and easy to get to a seat. The flat bottom setup is, to me, the most user friendly bus going. Unlike the Trolleys when their steps and narrow area by the top of the steps, with the fare box right there. Again, anyone with bags or a small shopping cart it can be a challenge to board. I realize the small buses are spares for the most part, I'm just saying they have their limitations.

I have been attending these TCAP meeting for a while and am somewhat frustrated at the pace of change. I have a hard time recalling when something has happened, for the better. There has been talk about permanent signs, bus shelters, locations of stops, timing regarding transfers, a contest to design a color scheme for the buses, uniforms for the drivers, including an ID for the driver, lack of A/C during the summer months, snow removal during the winter, people being left at the bus stop, poor lighting at the stops. I realize things don't happen overnight and for the most part understand the need to have a plan, but gee... And I really don't know how to address this, but while at the State House bus shelter on Tues February 14<sup>th</sup>, I noticed something, well, rather gross. Someone had vomited in front of the shelter, right in front of some of the seats. I observed several people who approached the shelter to wait for a bus who noticed it and moved away from the shelter (you couldn't sit, trust me). My question, whom would someone contact/call, to clean it up? Not something I would want to step in (and a few people did before they noticed it).



Bus Stop sign on Storrs St in front of Market Basket



Sign for Trolley Stop on South Main St.



Location of former Street Light Pole by the Bus Shelter on No. Main and Park St.



Sidewalk in front of 240 North Main St. (winter of 2010-11)

As you can note from this picture the sidewalk along North Main Street was not plowed as of 31JAN11

**Concord Area Transit  
Driver Feedback Focus Group**

**DRAFT from Ruairi O'Mahony**

**Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup> 2012**

The Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) carried out a comprehensive Boarding & Alighting study of both the old and new route systems of Concord Area Transit (CAT) in November, 2011. The results of this study, which compared the route profiles and operations of both systems revealed a number of issues. Specifically, the new route system seemed difficult for both riders, and drivers to navigate. Part of this was due to unfamiliarity with a new route system, yet a number of key findings were reported in the study such as difficulty with schedule adherence, problems with the downtown pulse transfer system and a drop in ridership.

As a follow up to the Boarding & Alighting study, CNHRPC facilitated a focus group discussion with the CAT Drivers to further build upon the issues identified in the study and to get a better understanding of how best to address the current problems with the system.

The focus group was conducted in a relaxed, informal setting. Conversation jumped from topic to topic, with numerous topics addressed at different points throughout the discussion. The findings below are presented in summary format, and grouped together by topic. Focus group audio is available upon request.

### **1. Heights Route - General**

- a. Each of the drivers on the Heights route noted that the schedule is too tight in the PM and too spaced out in the AM. When increased afternoon traffic is combined with a schedule that is too tight the drivers find it “impossible” to stick to the PM schedule.
- b. Heights routes drivers noted that the PM Heights routes are on average 30 minutes behind schedule each day.
- c. The number of runs on the Heights route is also identified as being problematic. With the new system in place, the Heights route completes seven (7) runs in the afternoon. This is compared to six (6) on the old schedule. Drivers say that it is unrealistic to stick to this number of runs.
- d. Drivers have noticed a significant drop in ridership on the Heights route, both amongst once “regular” riders and infrequent passengers. Feedback received from riders/ex-riders is that the timing of the schedule is unrealistic and the transfer system downtown does not work with the current route profile.

### **2. Heights Route – Specific Issues**

- a. Leaving the State House stop to the St. Johns stop, there is not enough time to get through the Storrs Street plaza and back to Eagle Square. This is exacerbated if a rider using a wheelchair gets on or off at any of the stops on this route segment.

- b. The current schedule does not allocate enough time to enter and exit the Bus Station on Stickney Avenue.
  - Not as much of an issue on the inbound run as the bus can make right turns on red stop lights.
  - Outbound is extremely problematic. The schedule from Eagle Square to Stickney Avenue allows three (3) minutes on average. Drivers report that from the red light stop on Loudon Road to enter and exit Stickney Avenue takes “around” nine (9) minutes.
  - Timing is obviously problematic here. It does not account for crosswalks, four (4) sets of traffic lights and heavy traffic in the afternoon.
- c. The Stickney Avenue stop is potentially important in terms of connections. However, drivers don’t see this importance day to day. On average one (1) or two (2) riders per week.
  - There are fourteen (14) scheduled stops at Stickney Avenue in the afternoon.
  - The bus is scheduled to enter and exit Stickney Avenue twice in the space of fifteen (15) minutes on the schedule. Ridership does not support this frequency and it does not tally with scheduled arrivals from other providers at the Bus Station.
  - Drivers would support a type of demand response approach to the Bus Station on Stickney Avenue.
- d. Transfers are problematic on the Heights Route. The Heights Route regularly misses the transfer with the Crosstown Route by seven (7) minutes on the third run of the afternoon i.e. departing Walmart at 2:32 PM. Heights drivers identified the specific problem here. When the outbound trip arrives at Walmart at 2:20 PM, the driver has to wait for twelve (12) minutes. It therefore misses the State House transfer with the Crosstown Route and potentially forces riders to wait for over an hour for the Crosstown Route to return.
- e. Driver shift changes are problematic. Dispatch has had to send out another vehicle, because due to the unrealistic schedule it is impossible to complete a regular shift change.

### **3. Crosstown Route – General**

- a. Both drivers and riders have stated that the Crosstown Route is too long. The length of the route makes it uncomfortable for riders and is also problematic in terms of making connections with the pulse system.
- b. Since the implementation of the new system, drivers have noticed a decrease in the number of New Hampshire Technical Institute (NHTI) students using the system. The new stop times do not match up well with student schedules at NHTI.
- c. Ridership is poor on the entire Fort Eddy Road loop. Riders are still confused about the differences between the Crosstown and Trolley schedules.
- d. Drivers feel that it would be better to target heavily used stops and specific employers on Fort Eddy Road rather than trying to stick to the existing unrealistic schedule.
- e. Goal should be to cut Crosstown Route to one (1) hour – drivers & riders.

### **4. Crosstown Route – Specific Issues**

- a. The schedule allows ten (10) minutes to get from NHTI to Franklin Street. On average this segment of the route takes five (5) minutes.
- b. The Concord Hospital to Eagle Square trip frequently runs late. However, drivers note that this is because they are forced to wait for up to five (5) minutes at the State House stop to stick to the scheduled times. If the schedule was more realistic, the Concord Hospital to Eagle Square run would be on time.
- c. When running ahead of schedule, drivers are often forced to wait at individual stops and at the State House to fall back on time – aggravating to riders. Comment echoed by complaints received at dispatch.

- d. The Market Basket stop on Fort Eddy Road is extremely dangerous due to high traffic volumes and poor pedestrian facilities. Therefore, it is not heavily used. Drivers report that riders specifically avoid this stop and go to Market Basket on Storrs Street instead.

#### **5. Penacook Route – General**

- a. Penacook drivers estimate a 60% drop in ridership since the new schedule was put in place. Exact figures quoted: “From 85-115 riders per day to 40-65 riders per day”.
- b. The bus is often empty from the State House all the way outbound to Briar Pipe. It is also frequently ahead of schedule.
- c. Unrealistic scheduling was also heavily mentioned by drivers. In terms of the three (3) new routes it has been least affected so far, however, drivers predict that once roadwork recommences along Fisherville Road that the system will be unable to operate effectively, and will have no chance of making the pulse connections downtown. Drivers note that the schedule is extremely tight as it is, at 20 minutes to get from Briar Pipe to the State House.

#### **6. Penacook Route – Specific Issues**

- a. No riders use the 6:03 AM stop at the State House. Drivers think that the route begins too early. This wasted resource could be applied elsewhere in the system later on in the day.
- b. The Briar Pipe stop is problematic.
  - Drivers spend a total of one (1) hour and forty-nine (49) minutes waiting at the Briar Pipe stop during the AM runs.
  - As Briar Pipe is Private Property, riders are not allowed to wait on/off the bus at the stop. Therefore, riders are forced to wait at Washington Street exposed to the elements. This is extremely problematic in the winter months and similarly in the summer months due to temperature extremes.
- c. The last outbound run on the Penacook system leaves Eagle Square at 5:30 PM, making it unattractive for people working in downtown Concord. They can’t make the 5:30 schedule as many potential riders don’t get out of work until 5:30 PM. If they cannot use the system in the PM, they won’t use it in the AM.

#### **7. Pulse System – Observed Problems**

- a. Each of the three (3) routes has problems sticking to the pulse system.
- b. The driver’s breaks are designed to take place on the spokes of the system i.e. the furthest outlying stops on each route i.e. Briar Pipe, Walmart. This is problematic. Drivers think it would be better to have breaks downtown where there are facilities and potential quick economic opportunities for both riders and drivers alike i.e. restrooms, coffee, lunch spots.
- c. Given that the downtown transfer system does not work effectively as designed, riders have queried drivers about transferring at different points e.g. US Post Office on Loudon Road.

#### **8. General Observations**

- a. Each of the drivers noticed a drop in ridership since the route changes took place. Dispatch echoed this saying they had received many calls from people who can no longer make the system work for them e.g. rider lost second job due to unreliability of the schedule.
- b. Drivers feel that the new route system is unresponsive to their customer’s needs, and that the old system actually worked better for connections.

- c. Since the Boarding & Alighting Study was completed, drivers have noticed a significant drop in ridership. They state that a section of frequent riders couldn't make the new system work for them and had to stop using the system – People who used to be regular riders stated that they would be willing to wait longer and be guaranteed a ride than put up with the service cuts prevalent in the new system.
- d. CAT Dispatch is going to track all complaints received by phone from the date of the focus group.
- e. Drivers have received complaints from riders that the buses seem too cluttered due to the amount of postings in regard to service changes/announcements.
- f. Drivers feel the best way to move forward is to revert to the old Penacook and Heights routes and adapt a new Crosstown route that would better fit in with the old route profiles. Breaks should be located downtown.

**CAT DELIVERABLES:**

These reports are expected to show real progress on work your organization is doing. We anticipate some projects will experience slower than expected progress, setbacks, unexpected glitches, or other matters simply need to take priority.

**Monthly**

- 1. Ridership Report
- 2. Quick Report

If relevant, this can include updates to the following:

- Program Goals
- Communication Plan (website can be included here)
- Fundraising
- Items related to bus stops, bus shelters or bus signage
- Items related to overall Route/System operations
- Saturday Service
- Volunteer Driver Program
- Mid-State Council
- New Projects/initiatives/etc.

**Quarterly**

- 1. Productivity Reports
- 2. Bullet point report for inclusion in the TPAC/TPAC-PT Quarterly Report to City Council (this can easily be compiled and updated from the monthly Quick Reports and add whatever else you feel important for Council to know)
- 3. Updated Timelines on Program Goals/Communication Plan/Fundraising Plan (for TPAC-PT subcommittee)

**Annually**

- 1. Budget Detail & NHDoT - 5311 Application
- 2. Any other transit related NHDoT Grant submissions (5304, 5310, 5317, etc.)

3. Grant Application to City (prior to submission to the City Manager)
4. Productivity Report and Peer-to-Peer Review

For the purposes of these reports, progress related to programs directly supported by City contributions should come first, i.e. the Fixed Route, Paratransit and Senior Transit Service. We encourage CAPBMCI to include the other programs secondarily.