

BALTIMORE REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION

February 2, 2024
Baltimore Metropolitan Council
10:00 to 12:30 P.M.

MINUTES

The 1st meeting of the BRTC was called to order at 10:00 A.M. by Mr. Don Halligan, lead planning support staff for the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC).

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Halligan called the meeting to order

2. WELCOME AND BACKGROUND

Baltimore Metropolitan Council executive director, Mr. Mike Kelly, welcomed attendees and offered opening remarks. Commissioner Tony Bridges (Assistant Secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation) gave additional background of the commission as a long-evolving process, initiated by the Baltimore Regional Transit Governance & Funding Workgroup. The new commission's role is to review and evaluate policy, budgets, and performance of the region's transit systems.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIR

For an efficient and orderly meeting Mr. Halligan had solicited direct interest and nominations for a chair from the appointed commissioners via email in advance of the first in person meeting of the BRTC. This request was answered with one direct expression of interest and five other nominations all for Commissioner Jon Laria.

Mr. Halligan asked for a motion and second from the commissioners to open nominations for a chair. The motion was made from Commissioner Tony Bridges (MDOT) and seconded by Commissioner Walker (Baltimore County) to close floor



nominations and and approve by a voice vote to elect Commissioner Jon Laria as chair. The vote was unanimous with no abstentions.

4. ROLL CALL & INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Jon Laria, introduced himself and asked members of the commission to introduce themselves. Commissioners, who represented various jurisdictions and sectors such as transportation, education, and community development individually spoke. The discussion highlighted the importance of transit in connecting people to jobs, education, and other opportunities. The BRTC is designed to ensure that such needs are met and to advocate for transit at the state and regional levels. The commission also discussed the need for a stable funding source for transit. Chair Laria asked the group to introduce themselves and asked that they address why they were interested in becoming a member of the Commission. Each member provided some background on who they were and why they were interested in the BRTC.

5. REMARKS FROM THE MTA ADMINSTRATOR

The Maryland Transit Administration Administrator (MTA), Holly Arnold, gave an overview of her role and the agency's responsibilities. This included highlighting the governor's \$150 million restoration announcement, touched upon the financial challenges faced by the MTA and the need for adequate financial investment. Administrator Arnold discussed the successes and accomplishments, discussed growth in ridership post-pandemic and the launch of new services and efforts to improve travel on transit. The newly launched customer experience dashboard was also discussed as one highly visible way MTA is emphasizing accountability to transit riders.

Handout: MTA 101 and MTA Accomplishments

Commissioner Lester Davis asked how should people think about investments and how to view the return on investments from transit? He wondered how the “story is being told about why the investment?”

Administrator Arnold answered that people “can’t afford not to invest in transit”, and stated she encourages others to go out and share that message.

Commissioner Aaron Tomarchio asked about the of an impact is signal timing and synchronizing on trip reliability and should there be other improvements to be examined?



Administrator Arnold answered that MTA's Customer Experience dashboard went public yesterday, can see on time performance by route, and service delivery by route. Ridership by mode and in the future by route. She stated that MTA is looking for feedback on the dashboard, and they desire to keep making it better. She went on to say that MTA works closely with the City team on signalization and they seen improvements and travel time savings by up to ten percent on signals and timing. Prioritizing transit and making a more reliable service.

Administrator Arnold mentioned that corridors MTA has taken on to replace several new signals paid for by MTA and light rail signals paid for by MTA at Howard St.

Commissioner Mike McMillan asked Administrator Arnold if the MTA has looked into other transit agencies to address and improve their absenteeism rate?

Administrator Arnold stated that they regularly meet with agencies across the country and in many different working groups sharing data and best practices. MTA's absenteeism rate has been historically higher than peer's absenteeism rate. Others seem to have a rise in absenteeism being a problem across the board. MTA offers an incentive to create a higher attendance rate.

Commissioner D'Andrea Walker asked what is the MTA's turnover rate and how is the agency churning (in terms of positions)? How has ridership been pre-covid and post-covid?

Administrator Arnold answered that she will provide specific data at a future meeting. Training classes they are losing less people, starting with a group and more are actually staying on higher wages are making a big difference and encouraging others to stay on and selling that point with the opportunity to make a good living with lots of overtime being offered. Have been advertising the 70% of where they were pre covid service. MTA hit less hard than peer agencies, shows the importance of transit in the community. Will provide further information regarding the statistics.

Commissioner Scot Spencer asked if MTA's total asset value include land and how much land does MTA hold? He also wondered how is service measured for Blind/Disabled population of riders?

Administrator Arnold stated that she need to follow up with the Commissioner on an answer regarding the value of the land MTA possesses. She mentioned that they work



closely with National Industry for the Blind for scheduling routes and they help with planning routes. They are able to ride Mobility Service and people who test the system sort of like blind shoppers to ensure the service is working.

Commissioner Simone Johnson asked if MTA's "harder to fill positions" fall into the vacancy rate and what classifications? She wondered what is the agency doing to attract people to these hard to fill positions?

Administrator Arnold stated that the arder to fill positions are the more specialized positions, like those who work in the radio shop and need specific licenses. MTA is working with community colleges in ways they haven't in the past, as well as the union and hiring events to attract candidates to fill these positions.

Commissioner Arjan Van Andel asked if the dashboard provided users with various travel comparisons and the data between competitors for the public and employees to view?

Administrator Arnold stated that she didn't feel that is a good fit for the dashboard because that is more a means to measure agency performance, but a great idea and goal for something to work towards in the discussion for regional transit plan.

REPORTS

6. TRANSPORTATION TRUST FUND & CAPITAL BUDGETING

Mr. Halligan gave a presentation on the Transportation Trust Fund, a special non-lapsing fund created in 1971 to provide funding for transportation needs. Also discussed was the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), Maryland's six-year capital budget for transportation was. It is a key part of the State Report on Transportation sent to the General Assembly and Governor every year. The presentation highlighted the challenges facing the transportation sector, including rising costs, declining revenues, and aging infrastructure.

Handout: Overview of Maryland's TTF & CTP

7. MTA BUDGET

Administrator Arnold of MTA returned for a second presentation on agency budget focused on the operating and capital budgets issues. The presentation touched upon



the proposed operating budget for FY 25, changes to their commuter bus service, and the challenges facing MTA. These included issues ranged from supply chain issues when ordering parts to the impacts of inflation. These also highlighted the impacts of years of deferred maintenance and insufficient staffing levels on their transportation system, and the steps taken to mitigate these issues. The importance of the need for funding stability for system maintenance and repair was also emphasized. The commissioners also discussed the need for more quantitative and qualitative data to understand the scope and scale of a project and requested a comparison of their operating budget to similar agencies. The topic of safety was also raised, with the implementation of cameras on buses and the launch of an anti-harassment campaign.

Handout: MTA Budget Overview BRTC

INFORMATION ITEMS

8. GOVERNANCE OF COMMISSION

Mr. Halligan reiterated that the commission needs to develop bylaws and procedures for operations. BRTC staff are creating a draft set of bylaws for the commission to react to and refine via comments. He asked for that those commission members interested in reviewing drafts to let him know.

9. SCHEDULE AND AGENDA OF YEAR 1

Mr. Halligan presented a draft schedule of future meetings with proposed agenda items for the rest of 2024. There was a discussion of how frequently the commission should meet with the Chair Laria recommending monthly meetings thru the current Maryland legislative session with the next meeting date set for **March 8, 2024**.

10. RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

There was a request to set up a Google Drive or other digital repository for documents to guide and info the BRTC. It was also stated that the BRTC staff are currently working to develop a Locally Owned Transit System (LOTS) primer document for the commission to better understand how local transit outside the MTA interact with the regional transit system.

11. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Two questions were received via the online chat:

- Mel: Question for later, is MTA doing what it can to retain the CDL drivers from cut commuter routes, since CDLs are so scarce and we need to retain drivers where we can? Hopefully they can be moved to core service from commuter service since on time and headway performance in the city isn't great.
 - Administrator Arnold responded that the proposed commuter route cuts are still under review and need to go thru public hearings. Commuter bus operators are contractors, not MTA employees.
- Sue Carlin: Q for Holly - will all coaches/trains be updated with ADA compliant visual stop announcements for Deaf and Hard of hearing riders?
 - Administrator Arnold responded that ADA is not requiring that, but it is something MTA is incorporating in new buses and trains as they purchase them to improve accessibility.

Chairman Laria thanked members for their commitment and passion and discussed future framework and commission work. He asked last words and Commissioner Davis thanked him for stepping up to serve as Chair. Chair Laria mentioned he plans to attend General Assembly hearings on MTA's budget. He called for a motion to close the meeting made by Commissioner Davis and a second made by Commissioner Chavis and ask for a voice vote to close the meeting that was unanimous.

Members

Jon Laria, Ballard Spahr
Luis Cardona, Baltimore Development Corporation
Lester Davis, CareFirst
Scot Spencer, Annie E. Casey Foundation
Dr. Celeste Chavis, Morgan State University
Simone Johnson, City of Baltimore
Aaron Tomarchio, TradePoint Atlantic
Toni St. John, Baltimore Collegetown Network
D'Andrea Walker, Baltimore County Department of Public Works & Transportation
Mike Netzer, CCBC
Markus Moore, City of Annapolis Department of Transportation
Arjan Van Andel, GIRO
Lakey Boyd, Howard County
Tony Bridges, MDOT
Mike McMillan, ATU Local 1300



Staff and Guests

Regina Aris, Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)

Charles Baber, BMC

Cindy Burch, BMC

Tyson Byrne, MDOT

Angie Daniel, Baltimore County DPW&T

Kwaku Duah, City of Annapolis DOT

Erika Falk, MDOT MTA

Chantelle Green, Maryland Transportation Authority

Monica Haines Benkhedda, BMC

Don Halligan, BMC

Jake Schutt, BMC

Ashley Roach, BMC

Victor Henry, BMC

Dan Janousek, MDOT

Zach Kaufman, BMC

Mike Kelly, BMC

Keith Kucharek, BMC

Todd Lang, BMC

Anna Marshall, BMC

Kelly Morrison, CDM Smith

Deborah Price, Baltimore County DPW&T

Michael Scepaniak, Strong Towns Baltimore

Jacob Took, BMC

Blake Fisher, BMC

Sheila Mahoney, BMC

Dan Pontious, BMC

Shawn Kelly, BMC

Bong Delrosario

James Fisher

Mini Molhotra

Nick Henniger-Ayoub

Roxana Beyrahvand

Courtney Mims

Kate Slyvester

James Gillee

Veronica Battisti

Daniel Zawoday



Mel
Meredith Diloia
Isaac Leal
Anna Ellis
Liz Gordon – MTA
Danielle Sweeney
Connor Jett
Sue Carlin
Loretta Shields
Kris Gandam
Andrea Farmer
Elizabeth Koontz
Kimiya Darrell
Asia Williams
Joe Davis – MDOT/MTA
Jonathan Susman
Bpd
Thomas Kirby
Bakari Height
J Lewis
Teresa Millio Birge
Eric Norton
Lyn Farrow
E Wilson
Tecla Kellum
Allison Scott – MTA
J Howard
Gregory Salois
Andrea Sherman
Wayne Morse
Michael Helta
Melisa Einhorn
Ray Biggs II
Talya Kravits