



SPC Transit Operators Committee

Meeting Minutes: Sept. 20, 2023

Attendance

Members:

Aaron Sukenik, PDP
Anthony Hickton, CommuteInfo
Ashley Cooper-Brounce, WCTA
Ashley Seman, MMVTA
David Richards, NCATA
David Wohlwill, PRT
John Paul, BTA
Mary Jo Morandini, BCTA
Mavis Rainey, OTMA
Sheila Gombita, WTA (Chairperson)

Guests & Transit Staff:

Ann Ogoreuc, ACED
Betsy Zang, McCormick Taylor
Brandon Leach, PennDOT
Ed Typanski, PRT
Ian Ramsey, WTA
Jason Theakston, Washington County
Jeffrey Devlin, PRT
Julia Cornell, PennDOT
Lynda Conway, CCSPRO
Mark Cassel, Bowman
Nugent Laing, HDR
Sam Plocinski, PennDOT
Seth Davis, PRT

SPC Staff:

Chuck Imbrogno
Dan Bernazzoli
David Totten
Dom D'Andrea
Lillie Gabreski
David Totten
Dom D'Andrea
Russell Singer
Tomas Klevan

1. Introductions

2. Minutes

- a. The minutes of the August 16 TOC meeting were **approved** on a motion by John Paul and a second by Ashley Seman.

3. Transit Participant Updates

- a. Pittsburgh Regional Transit: PRT reported that construction is now underway in Downtown Pittsburgh for the “University Line” Bus Rapid Transit project. Bus routes are now following new routes due to the construction. Beginning 10/1, some routes will be turning around in Oakland with transfers to downtown routes. PRT staff will be on-hand at key stops to assist passengers during the first week. PRT also reported that the first formal steering committee meeting has been set for the Bus Network Redesign planning project.
- b. CommuteInfo: CommuteInfo promoted that National Travel Demand Management Week was underway this week, concluding with Leave Your Car Home Day on Friday, 9/22. Other TDM events were planned for the week.
- c. Butler Transit Authority: BTA updated the TOC on the agency’s newly board-approved succession plan. Under the plan, upon the retirement of John Paul, Kelly Stewart would be appointed General Manager with Tiffany Fosnaught appointed Deputy GM.
- d. There were no other participant updates.

4. PennDOT and FTA Updates

- a. PennDOT’s Brandon Leach reported that the Fern Hollow Bridge Replacement project had been nominated by AASHTO for an American Transportation Award. Voting is now open for the award. Brandon Leach also reported details of the Multimodal Transportation Fund applications. PennDOT will accept applications starting 9/25/2023 and closing 11/13/2023. Information is available at: <https://www.penndot.pa.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/MultimodalProgram/Pages/default.aspx>
- b. There were no further PennDOT or FTA updates.

5. TIP Amendments and Administrative Actions

- a. Butler Transit Authority (BTA)
 - i. Shop Equipment: MPMS# 118133. BTA requested an administrative adjustment to add \$48,618 in state 339 and \$1,620 in local funding in FFY2024 to purchase a replacement pressure washer, scissor lift and tire changing machine.
 - ii. **This action was approved unanimously on a motion by Mary Jo Morandini and a second by Ashley Seman**
- b. Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation (FACT)
 - i. Communication Equipment: MPMS# 114613. FACT requested an administrative adjustment to add \$117,893 in state 339 and \$3,749 in local funding in FFY2023 to replace radios and tablet computers in transit vehicles.

ii. **This action was approved unanimously on a motion by Mary Jo Morandini and a second by Ashley Seman.**

c. There were no further TIP actions requested.

6. Regional Mobile Ticketing Feasibility Study

a. SPC Staff noted that the final report on the Regional Mobile Ticketing Feasibility Study was available for review by the TOC through the SPC drop box links provided in the meeting invite (the link will also be included in the meeting follow-up email). The SPC Policy Committee has requested that staff and the project's consultant team brief them on the report at the 10/23 meeting. Staff also suggested that a working group meeting for interested transit stakeholders might be helpful prior to October 23rd and the TOC agreed. Mary Jo Morandini noted that BCTA and PRT both are using Masabi for mobile ticketing and plan to use bilateral agreements to move toward regional fares; however, the issues are very complex. **SPC staff will organize a working group.**

7. Transit Labor Shortage Research

a. Staff led an interactive brainstorming exercise over an online whiteboard to discuss issues around the national transit labor shortage crisis.

1. Q1: One-word description of workforce status? Challenging; Improving; Precarious; better applicants; "out with COVID"
2. Q2: What are the causes of the labor shortage? Cultural dimension, attitudes have changed. "Panera could match our wages." Difficult, dangerous job. Complicated customer service needs. Retirement. Lack of affordable housing accessible to the job location (garage). Population decline in the region reduced the overall labor pool. Drivers want a 9-5/M-F schedule.
3. Q3: What makes this such a difficult job? Complicated customer service needs for operators, especially in Shared Ride. Potential conflicts with riders. Fare disputes with riders. Difficulty meeting schedules. Shared Ride operators have better relationships with riders, though! Must act as enforcers of rules. The stress of driving a vehicle for 8 hours.
4. Q4: What attempts have you tried at recruitment or retention? Raises. Increasing or offering signing bonuses. Facebook and Instagram ads that are eye-catching with graphics and that emphasize good pay. Bringing Shared Ride wages up to parity with fixed route. Jazz HR. Head signs on buses: "We're hiring!" Billboards on highways to lure truck drivers: "You could be home right now." Presence at festivals and events. Cultivate a supportive corporate culture that works for everyone.

5. Q5: If you could remove any barrier, what would you change?
Cultural change. 9-5 hours. 4/10 workweek/day. Adjustments to substance abuse regulations. Have a good corporate culture.
 6. Bonus Q: Participants were asked to get back to SPC staff with any data they might have about how much money they think it costs to recruit and train one transit operator or mechanic.
8. 2020 Urban Area Maps
 - a. SPC Staff discussed changes to the maps used to define the urban area, due to the results of the 202 US Census. Some parts of the region were removed from the Pittsburgh Urbanized Area, while some other parts were added. These maps are used to calculate funding through the annual sub-allocation process. While factors in that calculation that are based on demographics might not change the formula, factors based on service—including statistics reported to the National Transit Database—would have an impact, following the three-year reporting lag. Staff will distribute the detailed presentation to the TOC.
 9. SPC Staff Updates
 - a. TIP Update Process: Staff thanked the transit operators for participating in the series of 1-on-1 meetings to plan the projects for inclusion in the FFY2025-28 TIP. These meetings are ongoing and will be completed in October. Final project lists are due to SPC by the end of November. Participants can also expect to receive templates for completing the Financial Capacity Documentation requirement. In addition, Public Participation Panel meetings are being planned for this fall.
 - b. There were no other updates.
 10. Other Business
 - a. The next meeting of the TOC will be October 18th, 2023.
 11. Adjournment
 - a. The meeting was **adjourned** on a motion by John Paul and a second by Mary Jo Morandini.