

Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, Inc.

Meeting of the Board of Directors

January 27, 2022 | 4:00pm via Zoom

Attendees

Board Members: Bridgette Brady; Jennifer Dotson; Dan Klein; Laura Lewis; Ducson Nguyen; Frank Proto; Gary Stewart; Denise Thompson; Lisa Holmes

TCAT Staff: Susan Brock; Julie Ellis-Grove; Gian Fountain; Taylor Hessler; Raymond Lalley; Colleen Marsh; Patty Poist; Megan Pulver; Madlyn Schafer; Mike Smith; Phil Smith; Pamela Torelli; Scot Vanderpool; Matt Yarrow; Erik Amos; Jenn Jennings

Public Attendees: Charles Van Loan; Tom & Laura Colbert; Tyler Nearing; Linda Woodard; Clair S.; Andrew Sullivan; Ameen Moheed; Melony McCurry, Peter Bowman; James; Mathew Evangelista; Bart Selman; James Liebherr; Mike G.; Therese Stewart; Evan Morrison; Timothy Mount; Kathryn Kvasnica; Erin Cuddihy; Michael Koplinka-Loehr; 'owner'; 'patron'

Call to Order

Chair L. Lewis called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

On a motion by J. Dotson, second by L. Holmes, Chair L. Lewis then opened the public hearing for major service reductions proposed in the Transit Development Plan (TDP). The routes with major service reductions were routes 30, 36 & 37. She said today's hearing is not the last opportunity for public feedback on those proposed cuts. The deadline for submission of written comments is the end of business on February 11. Public attendees were then asked to speak in the order in which they joined the meeting.

Charles Van Loan- "We live on White Park Road. Although some of the board members haven't seen our letter, we did send it in yesterday. Let me just mention a couple of the high points. It's all about route 83. The final report which came out did not mention the new version of the 83. It just has this loop through the fraternity area back to campus via Thurston. And then on the 7th you emailed the Cayuga Heights office that the loop had been changed and will now continue up onto White Park Road and then loop back to campus via Triphammer. So our concerns have nothing to do with ridership; we appreciate the attention you are paying to that, this is all about street width. The buses are 9 feet wide, our street is 18 feet wide and also has parking after 11am. If you do the math you can recognize that that can create a major problem. Our recommendation is that instead of using White Park Road as a cut through, you simply continue on up The Parkway to Northway, which you currently use as a cut through, and head back to Triphammer that way. We note that all your routes in Cayuga Heights are on roads that have double lines. That's a signal that the road is wide enough to handle this kind of traffic. Triphammer is 27, The Parkway is 21, Highland is 24, our street is 18 with parking. We can have vehicles parking on our street that can literally block the buses. A delivery truck can be sufficient to actually block the bus, so our question to you is, you made a rather sudden change, and I'm wondering what the rationale was for using White Park Road for the cut through."

Chair L. Lewis said staff or board members would respond to questions once members of the public have had an opportunity to speak. She thanked Mr. Van Loan for being succinct and requested commenters limit their comments to three minutes, if possible.

Tyler Nearing – “I had a comment about, I notice that there were some notices up about cutting service that already has been cut due to the pandemic, on route 36 to Ludlowville. I currently live on the route 30 and use that pretty regularly multiple times a week, and that obviously is a heavily used route. But I did use to live in Ludlowville, and I can tell you that if we are planning to long term have regular service to Ludlowville, which looks like that is the long term plan, I don’t see why we would be cutting it off permanently. It seems like we’re setting ourselves up for failure to not get any regular ridership out to that area.”

Tom Colbert - "I’m kind of just watching....I appreciate the opportunity, and I’ll be very succinct by saying that my comments are fully reflected in the letter sent by all of the residents along White Park Road and I believe you have received that, is that correct? [Chair L. Lewis says “Yes.”] So very succinctly, and again I appreciate this opportunity, those are my considerations and my concerns. In fact, there was a village trash truck going up the street this morning on its collections and there was no way I could’ve passed him in a car and so I just don’t believe this is appropriate for the street, and I thank you for the opportunity to say so."

Linda Woodard (Village of Cayuga Heights Mayor) - "I’m here because White Park Road is in Cayuga Heights and I know that it was told to us very late in the game, which I think is unfortunate. I appreciate the situation that TCAT is in, that they need to provide ridership where the riders are, but I don’t think that White Park is the appropriate road to go down. I’m not sure what is, but it’s going to be, as Charlie and others have said, very difficult a lot of times for the bus to get through and I hope that people take that into consideration. Thank you."

Claire S. - "I was attending just to listen to learn but I will comment, I hadn’t seen a proposal and I was trying to get it on your website today and the site doesn’t seem to be working right, because on the various pages, I was on the page for the new proposals and it didn’t have any real content, and I kept clicking the button for the TDP and it just circled me back to that page all the time. I even went on the contacts page and there was no real content there, just kind of the framework that seems to be standard on your pages. So I was hoping somebody would look at that sometime so that I can actually see the proposed routing."

Ameen Moheed - "Hi, I am Ameen Moheed. I was more concerned about the 31-41 bus, that the route was changed I believe a few months ago, and that’s the one I am going to talk about. I travel from Maplewood Drive down to the vet school every day, and I have been taking the bus for 15yrs now, and the route was suddenly changed and what used to take me 10 minutes now takes at least 40-50 mins and I have to take 2 buses to get me to the vet school. My proposal was to have the bus continue down Campus Road and come right down and take all of Tower Road if possible. I understand why it was changed because it was going over the one lane bridge and maybe that was the reason why. But that one small change will make a lot of difference not just for me, but for quite a few people working at the vet school, working at the BTI, and working at CALS. That will just make a huge difference for us if that small change is made. I put it down in an email and sent it to you, so you probably have that."

Peter Bowman - "Thank you all very much for this, and I will say quickly I second or third, I am a resident of White Park Road and just want to reiterate everything Charlie said and that was said in the memo. And also especially today, for instance, right outside my driveway there was a person parked, which they are allowed to do, and the width of the road is significantly diminished because of the snow. Given the length of the winter, I think that's something that needs to be taken into consideration, so while we're using 18ft as the width of the road we also need to consider the operative width in the winter time, which is significantly limited. Thanks."

Mathew Evangelista - "Yes, thank you, I am also attending because I am interested in the change in route 83, we live on White Park Road and we were signatories of the letter. I would just reiterate the main concern is the narrowness of the road, and that it's hard to believe that the buses will be able to get through on a regular basis. There are no proposed stops on White Park Road in the new routing, so to extend it as Charlie Van Loan has suggested and go down Northway would make a lot of sense to me. So I just wanted to put in my support for that change. Thank you."

Bart Selman- *[audio is poor for this commenter]* "I am also a resident of White Park Road, I just want to support again the statement that Charlie made. I am concerned about the width of the road. I'm also on the corner of the road and there's a bit of ...getting out of my driveway, it's actually quite tricky, so I'm also concerned about the danger created....buses on such a narrow road.... I'm more concerned about the physical danger of getting out of my driveway and things like that.... It's all related to the width of the road... limited, it's coming around the corner, visibility issue. So I hope safety is taken into account. Thank you."

James Liebherr - "Yes, I live on the corner of White Park and Triphammer on the north side of the street, and I have direct experience with TCAT buses coming down White Park in that when you had paving in the village this past summer, you ran a bus from Triphammer south onto White Park. Within a day at least 6 feet of the lawn at my corner was filled with double track rear bus tires, because the drivers could not negotiate the street. I complained, TCAT sent a man with a pickup truck, a rake, and some grass seed, and unfortunately it was just before a drought so nothing took and the corner is still fairly trashed. Now you're going to be going the other way, and this corner won't be implicated. However, I feel you'll probably do the same thing on the southwest corner of White Park and Triphammer because you are going to have to negotiate that. So that's #1. I have a question though, if a snowplow comes down our street and hits a mailbox, it's on us, it's part of their job, they aren't liable. If you come down our street and you hit one of our rural mailboxes which are right along the street, whose liability is it? Will you send a man to fix our mailbox or is it on us? Thank you."

Evan Morrison - "Hello, I am just sharing the same sentiments as Ameen Moheed for the 31-41 bus. Thank you."

Timothy Mount - "So I must admit this is a bit mystifying to me, I don't know why White Park Road comes up all the time but I am a real advocate for restoring the 30 to its original run down The Parkway. Cayuga Heights put a lot of money into improving the roads on East Upland and the Northway so they take buses. I don't know why that isn't continuing."

Kathryn Kvasnica - "I would like to hear a little bit more about the route 37, and I don't know if this really would change or not but if it allowed, the elimination of service north part, would allow for an additional couple of routes to go through the Springbrook Apartments, that would be really appreciated. Right now, residents can walk to the Warren at Farrell bus stop, but a lot of the times, early mornings or in the

afternoon/evening, it is very dark and traffic is a big concern for safety. Since it only goes through the apartment complex a couple of the runs, I do not know if that timing adjustment would allow for some of those additional ones to do the loop that it does for other times. So that would be my comment. Thank you."

As no one else wished to make a public comment, on a motion by F. Proto and second by D. Klein, Chair L. Lewis then closed the public hearing at 4:25 pm, and asked for responses from Board members or TCAT staff. Assistant General Manager of Transit Development and Planning, Matt Yarrow, gave an overview of the general process of the Transit Development Plan (TDP) and the reasoning and research that went into the route changes. The development of the TDP occurs about once every 10 years, and TCAT contracts with an outside consultant to help. TCAT spent about a year and a half working on the plan, and there were several periods for public engagement throughout the process. This past TDP process has not gone like others, primarily due to Covid, which hit just as TCAT was starting the project. TCAT had to adapt to the new conditions. There is another planning process (separate from the TDP process) that occurs three times/year, because TCAT has three service periods/year. Approximately 3 months before a service change, TCAT gathers input that has come in, talks to drivers and staff, and looks at constraints during the service period. During the Covid period, constraints include obtaining bus parts and maintaining active drivers. That has forced TCAT to make changes it would not make under normal circumstances. Pre-Covid, maximum service ran at 41-42 buses. This past fall it was 33 buses, and the number has decreased to 31 this spring. Some changes are to accommodate riders the best way possible, given those constraints.

After moving the 30 to Pleasant Grove and Jessup, TCAT heard from people in the southern part of Cayuga Heights, particularly apartments, fraternities, sororities and program buildings in the vicinity of the Highland and Lakeland stop, in particular Highland and Country Club, and just north of Jessup Road on Triphammer as well. The change was made on the 30 because it was a recommendation that was coming up in the TDP, and also because TCAT was concerned about capacity on North Campus. The 30 is a frequent route, with 15 minute service 7 days/ week. TCAT really needed that capacity to come through North Campus. The ridership generated along the Highland/Parkland/Northway corridor, while there is some, definitely does not require that frequent 15 minute service. That left a void in the southern part of Cayuga Heights, so the Route 83 change was an attempt to remedy that situation. TCAT has one bus dedicated to that route that does a loop every 30 minutes. That is all the resources TCAT has for this. That is why TCAT decided on White Park. With the resources TCAT has, running the bus all the way to Northway would break that half-hour allotted time to run a trip. TCAT does not blindly run on a street that has not had regular transit traffic before. Operations staff ran a full-size bus there, Matt and TCAT's Safety and Security Manager went there to evaluate the flow and width and look at the turns. The bus routing calls for one-way traffic only on the route 83, so the buses are not going both directions, like they are on a lot of nearby roads that have much higher bus traffic. Feedback Matt got was that White Park Road was feasible from an operations perspective.

Re: the 31/41, the Transit Development Plan calls for that route to go downtown, at least on certain trips. TCAT will continue to look at that route and the request for direct service to Tower Road as that route evolves.

Re: the 37, pre-Covid ridership was fairly low north of Lansing Town Hall and the Lansing schools areas. TCAT did run trips to the far north park-and-rides last spring and averaged 1 rider or less/trip. It is worth

considering service to Ludlowville, but there has not been much ridership from there in the past. If there is evidence of interest, he would like to see that. Re: safe access to the 37 near Springbrook Apartments, TCAT tries to avoid too many route deviations in the middle of a route where a bus leaves the main corridor, does a loop and then comes back, but he will look into the request because it raises a safety issue.

J. Dotson left the meeting at 4:30pm, during M. Yarrow's explanation.

General Manager Scot Vanderpool said the proposed changes are not a done deal, and that TCAT would take a good hard look at all the comments, which have been recorded. Chair L. Lewis said people could also submit written comments.

Assistant General Manager of Operations and Maintenance, Mike Smith, addressed the question posed by James Liebherr. He emphasized that TCAT operates differently than the county and other municipalities when it comes to accidental property damage. He stated "any time there is property damage that is essentially on us, it would either go through insurance or we would take steps to replace anything, if anything were to happen."

Board member D. Thompson commented as well. "I am a board member, but I am also the off-campus living manager here at Cornell University. I would like to say with regards to the proposed 83, what I'm hearing from a lot of the fraternities and sororities and the program houses, and from many parents is that this 83 would definitely fill a need for that community to be able to transfer to and from Cornell campus safely. Whether it goes up that road or goes a different route, the 83 at some level will help the students, whether they're undergraduate, graduate, or professional and of course some staff as well. Thank you."

Chair L. Lewis informed the public that TCAT has a Transit Service Committee, as one of its many committees, and all comments will be taken into consideration. She thanked those who have written to TCAT as well as those that spoke during the public hearing.

Many of the public then left the meeting and the board moved to the next agenda item, Board member items.

Board Member Items

D. Klein had questions he would like addressed, at a later date, about the Transportation Agreement, particularly concerning the Lease. He wanted to make sure the Board and TCAT were aware of the email he sent out and he would like more context and explanation, for future discussion.

Public Comment

Member of the public, Michael Koplanka-Loehr, who due to work arrived at the meeting after the close of the public hearing, expressed his comments about the TDP during the Public Comment portion of the meeting, stating, "a quick comment that the Lansing routes, routes 36 and 37, have been truncated since last summer and have caused hardship, but we understand given Covid and given low ridership why that is. This public hearing is to consider continuing that in the possible 10-year cycle and I hope that you will consider adding in those lengthening routes past the Lansing High School north on bus route 36 and past the Town Hall on bus route 37, because there are a significant number of Lansing residents who use the bus. I know it is periodic for some given the nature of Covid and they are working at home but it is essentially extremely important if not essential for people to have access to those

routes. I know that ridership might only be one consideration you can give when you're considering route planning, but I hope you'll take into consideration access. I know there's possibility for on-demand, but that is more quixotic, I guess I would say, in terms of being able to access it. Good to see so many familiar faces and thank you very much for taking these comments this late in the game."

Approval of minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of December 02, 2021 made by D. Thompson, seconded by F. Proto. The minutes were approved unanimously with a vote of 8-0-0.

Chair's Report

L. Lewis gives her first report as the 2022 Chair. She expressed delight in seeing so many members of the public weighing in during the public hearing and comment period. "Let me just say a few things. First, we are about to enter the third year of impact from the pandemic, and that cannot be minimized. The impact to all of us and our community; getting to meetings; getting to work; getting to school. That is far more challenging now that we are still feeling the impact of the pandemic. I will want to give a special thanks to Dan Klein, who was the board chair throughout 2021, a year filled with uncertainty and unpredictability, both in terms of our ridership, in terms of our drivers, mechanics, dispatchers. All those staff members at TCAT who are not able to work remotely. In this year ahead of us, we have still responses to the TDP and implementing changes as a result of that. We have facility improvements that are necessary. One of the things we had been discussing as a board, prior to the pandemic was, our Planning Committee, chaired by Dan Klein, had been looking at other facility locations. That has been put on hold for the time being, but nonetheless there will be the need for some facility improvements on Willow Avenue and there is a list; we will be looking at those improvements that are most critical, what will have the highest priority and allow TCAT to continue to serve the travelling public. There are also workforce challenges that we have been facing and will continue to face, both in terms of recruitment and retention of staff. Our HR department has done a wonderful job of going to job fairs. We are in relatively good shape, actually, in terms of our drivers. We've been able to recruit and retain drivers, and we hope that continues throughout 2022. We do have a commitment to our riders, and so I'm very glad to hear a number of commenters at today's meeting. It has been my experience, that we don't often have as many people showing up to our board meetings for commenting during our public commenting section, so it is very good that we hear from the public and we have every interest in balancing the needs of the public with the capacity for service that can be provided by the TCAT staff. One of the highlights, I believe, of the past year is the addition of electric buses. Both in terms of meeting sustainability goals; this is something that TCAT as an organization cares greatly about, and that is reducing our carbon emissions. We have a commitment to our urban riders, our non-urban riders, there is a significant number of our community residents who commute into the city to work, to shop, to go to restaurants, now that we are able; some of us, to return to shopping and restaurants in our community. So, it has been a very busy two years and especially in 2021, a very busy year filled with some uncertainties that are significant, both in terms of financial impact as a result of the pandemic and what we have been talking about, the impact on our riders; and I really commend Dan Klein for leading us through this past year. So, thank you so much to the past chair, Dan Klein. I am looking forward as I hope our whole board is, to a productive 2022 ahead of us."

GM Report

TCAT General Manager S. Vanderpool delivered the GM and systems report to the board. He highlighted some of the goals for 2022. One of TCAT's goals is to get to a place where we are better prepared for the challenges that arise. TCAT has been great at being reactive, in part because of the great people. But being reactive is not sustainable and we are working on being proactive, and better prepared for all the

projects, grant work and challenges. An ongoing discussion in the TCAT facility is the balance of organizational capacity versus the service that is provided. There are many factors that are keeping TCAT from operating at its best including a shortage of drivers; a shortage of parts that are taking buses off the roads; along with a generational shift in the hours drivers are willing to work versus the hours needed for TCAT to operate and serve the public. TCAT needs to think differently and come up with an approach that increases stability, better retention, and better staff support mechanisms.

Systems Report

Ridership

In December 2021 TCAT provided 184,435 rides, compared to 262,617 in December 2019. The full year comparison is a 50% decline from 2019 to 2021. However, our ridership numbers only started to pick up once Cornell went back into session for the fall of 2021. Despite the poor start of 2021, TCAT is hovering around 70-75% of 2019's numbers from August through December.

Operations and Maintenance:

PM inspections are at 70% and brake pulls are at 90% for December 2021. Cost of parts was down to \$38,297. There were 46 missed trips in December; a significant increase due to a combination of driver call outs and buses being down. There were 8 roads call in November and 8 in December.

Safety

In total, the number of collisions and incidents for 2021 was 48. Aside from 2020 where service was severely cut, 2021 has the lowest collision report in TCAT history. In 2018 there were 75 incidents and in 2019 there were 62. A notable improvement and accomplishment that hopefully continues on a downward trend.

J. Dotson rejoined the meeting at 5:00pm.

Human Resources

We currently have 71 full-time operators and 7 part time operators. TCAT currently has 129 total employees. A loss of just 3 bus operators; one a retirement, one a move, and one was a change of position to a mechanic. HR continues its search for bus operators, a bus handler, and a temporary recruiter.

Marketing and Communications

December 2021 Accomplishments include: updated TDP and Tconnect webpages; created TDP system map for urban / downtown routes; designed poster announcing TDP public hearing; wrote and distributed press release and legal ad to publicize Jan. 27 public hearing on service changes to routes 30, 36 and 37; wrote and distributed press release about winter holiday service; produced Winter holiday posters for buses and shelters; started discussions with Tompkins Weekly/WPIE and Ithaca Times regarding advertising in the new year; began gathering documents for FTA Triennial Review; continued working on maps for January service change; ADA paratransit coordination: 6 ADA applications reviewed, 5 half-fare applications processed.

Information Technology

The December Milestones included: facility camera server is complete; Maximo critical patches; cloud backups and local backups setup; facility camera monitoring in dispatch has been setup; removed old equipment from dispatch area; completely replaced previous backup solutions; corrected network issues; installed a new switch in the server room strictly for the camera system; fixed DNS issues;

cleaned up the domain controller; disabled old emails; PCI compliance; deployed GTFS for the new schedule; updated our firewall. Current projects are: Increasing computer security across TCAT; finish setting up cameras at Green Street; looking for an Anti-Virus replacement; create an incident response plan; documentation of IT resources on internal Wiki continuing; technology roadmap; Avail, RideLogic, TSI, and Maximo Support; continuing to train new IT help – John Greer; continue to document everything and create SOPs; improve admin. wing WIFI coverage; create a new and improve IT policy/policies. Future projects include: new database and reporting tools and technologies; build internal programming and development resources; better remote work options; considering VDI for remote users; explore bringing website hosting in house; transition to Office 365.

Action Items

A verbal motion was made to accept the Board Committee assignments and committee chairs selected by Chair L. Lewis. The motion was moved by L. Holmes and J. Dotson seconded. The motion passed unanimously with a vote of 9-0-0. This will be referred to as **Resolution 2022-01**.

Committee Reports

- **Audit Committee** – The Audit Committee did not meet. F. Proto made a statement to make sure the board was aware that there will be a noticeable increase in the cost for the 2021 audit that might need to be adjusted for in the budget. B. Brady stated that from a Budget committee perspective, \$2,000 is not a huge deal, and it would be an unnecessary and lengthy process to find a new firm, and this amount is below the threshold needed to be brought up to the board for approval. None of the other board members objected to keeping with the same auditor and F. Proto was thanked for his update.
- **Executive Committee** – The Executive Committee met on January 19 and discussed the Triennial Review, Grant update: GM S. Vanderpool elaborated on updates for the Low-No grant and the NYSEDRA Clean energy grant that TCAT is currently working toward. The executive committee also discussed the VW Settlement and electric bus procurement. TCAT has signed a letter of intent with Proterra for five new electric buses. A TDP update, and the bus operator situation/service reduction.

D. Thompson left the meeting at 5:16pm.

- **Budget Committee** – The Budget Committee did not meet. B. Brady did give an update on ARPA funding that will be used to buy electric buses.

G. Stewart left the meeting at 5:19pm.

- **Human Resource Committee** – The Human Resources Committee did not meet.
- **Planning Committee** – The Planning Committee did not meet.
- **Transit Service Committee** – The Transit Service Committee met on January 26 and discussed the changes for the TDP.

D. Thompson rejoined the meeting at 5:24pm

Next Meeting

The next regular Board meeting will be February 24, 2022.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:25pm, on a motion by B. Brady, second by D. Thompson (8-0-0).

Minutes respectfully submitted by Taylor Hessler, Recording Secretary, February 24, 2022.