

Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, Inc.

Special Meeting of the Board of Directors

August 17, 2022 | 3:00pm via Zoom

Attendees

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

TCAT Staff: Erik Amos; Susan Brock; Julie Ellis-Grove Taylor Hessler; Patty Poist; Megan Pulver; Mike Smith; Scot Vanderpool

Public Attendees: Robert Lynch; Genesis Li; Bruce; Ron; Brian Shumon; Barbara Logan; Jeremy Thomas

Call to Order

The meeting began at 3:02pm.

L. Lewis informed attendees that there were public comments on Monday, August 15, at the public hearing, and that it was not necessary to allow public comments at Special Board Meetings. Through the morning of August 17th, there were a total of 54 written comments presented to the Board. There is one action item, the resolution for proposed service changes that meet a 20% route reduction threshold. She thanked all board members that were able to be here for the Special Board Meeting as a follow up to the Special Board Meeting and Public Hearing on Monday regarding service reductions. She also thanked the Board Members that acknowledged the need to consider all public comments before voting on the resolution. The Board takes all comments into consideration before making decisions. She reiterated that the decisions on service reduction are regrettable to make and are necessary. In making these decisions, there was consideration to ridership on all routes, both urban and rural. She reiterated what S. Vanderpool had commented during the hearing, that we don't want one community impacted more greatly than another. The impact from COVID has impacted our driver and mechanic shortages. TCAT has a very active HR recruitment program and has experienced parts delays and supply chain issues. She stated, "We are as a Board and as a staff at TCAT looking at, all the time, at conditions of our staff. We have implemented a retention bonus, paid attention to shortening shifts, and some decisions about facility improvement where possible. Again, the reductions are temporary and will go into effect with the fall service that begins August 21, which is why it is important for the Board to attend the meeting today."

L. Lewis presented the action item for the meeting, **Resolution 2022-09 Approval of Major Service Reductions for Fall Service 2022**. She made the motion to move the resolution and D. Klein seconded. B. Brady responded first, asking, given the volume of public feedback in the graduate student group at Maplewood apartments regarding the reduction of frequency for the 82, she asked if it was possible for TCAT to at least keep the 15-minute frequency during the beginning of the day, around 8:45-9:45am?

Service Analyst E. Amos responded by saying the only way to achieve this would be to free an entire bus during this peak time, which is peak time everywhere, and so there isn't a feasible option at this point. The Route 51 does service a stop 3-4 minutes from the Maplewood community that could also be utilized. He said it's obviously not the same, but it's something.

Assistant General Manager M. Smith hopes as TCAT gets more operators online over the next few months that we can, if we can, add in frequency and at least provide additional service during peak times. Whether it just be backing up buses on the routes or adding in an additional run if possible. A lot of these decisions will come down to dispatch and making sure we have the vehicles available. We have multiple classes scheduled over the next couple of months which should provide an opportunity to put some service back in where we can.

Chair Lewis said it was mentioned on Monday, how the TCAT staff have been enormously flexible and resilient throughout COVID and as we're facing shortages in drivers and parts, but it is encouraging to hear the willingness to continue to be flexible, should conditions change and improve for TCAT, so that there may be consideration of some changes.

J. Dotson also said, it pains all of us to pass a resolution like this, but if the other option is that scheduled buses do not appear...that's worse. Planning for this seems like the responsible, though reluctant choice and I really appreciate and expect from the TCAT staff, that should we be able to restore service in any way, of course we would do that in the most targeted and effective way. I have seen it time and time again...as the HR committee chair on the board, I'm seeing 'added recruiter; actively recruiting for all these positions;' it's not for lack of trying, this is an industry-wide issue.

B. Brady commended E. Amos and the team in regards to Routes 90 and 92, saying, even though ridership is very low, the implications to safety for the small populations of students is important, so thank you very much for that restoration.

F. Proto added, it goes without saying that the staff certainly is trying to accommodate and be flexible...I'm sorry I was unable to attend Monday. He asked about Route 11, remembering one comment from South Hill regarding Serendipity; concerns about staff getting to work, and asked if there was any potential for accommodation for those folks. E. Amos said it's the same situation with peak hours and not having enough buses. F. Proto says he does not envy E. Amos's task and thanks him.

L. Lewis reiterated that, this isn't something we relish, but we want people to have predictable schedules rather than having buses not show up, and we hope to make changes in the future.

D. Klein left the meeting before voting occurred. The resolution passed unanimously with a vote of 7-0-0 as follow:

RESOLUTION 2022-09

Approval of Major Service Reductions for Fall Service 2022

WHEREAS, Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, Inc. (TCAT) is considering service reductions due to an unprecedented shortage of bus operators, as well as a shortage of parts due to international supply-chain issues, both of which are negatively impacting the national transit industry, and

WHEREAS, TCAT's Policy on Public Notice for Fare Increases and Major Service Reductions defines a "major service reduction" as a reduction in service to a distinct geographical area or corridor by 20 percent or more; the Policy requires TCAT to provide a minimum public comment period of 30 days and to hold a public hearing before TCAT Board approval of any major service reduction, and

WHEREAS, to maintain service reliability, TCAT proposed major service reductions on Routes 11, 13, 20, 82, 90 and 92 starting with its Fall service period effective August 21, 2022, through January 21, 2023, and

WHEREAS, TCAT sought public feedback through a press release, which was published July 14, 2022, on its web site and widely disseminated on July 14, 2022 to local and social media; through a legal advertisement in the Ithaca Journal published July 15, 2022; and via signs posted on all buses and key shelters, and

WHEREAS, the Board has considered all public comments, including those provided during its virtual public hearing on August 15, 2022, and

WHEREAS, after the advertisement of the public comment period and public hearing, TCAT updated its proposed changes to Routes 90 and 92; those changes to Routes 90 and 92 no longer meet the major service reduction threshold of at least a 20% reduction and consequently do not require Board approval, and

WHEREAS, under TCAT's current Fall 2022 service proposals, those routes with proposed changes that meet the major service reduction threshold are Routes 11, 13, 20 and 82,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board approves the aforementioned major service reductions to Routes 11, 13, 20 and 82.

Adopted by the TCAT Board of Directors this 17th day of August, 2022.

Next Meeting

The next regular Board meeting will be August 25, 2022.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:17pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Taylor Hessler, Recording Secretary, October 27, 2022.