

Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, Inc.

Meeting of the Board of Directors

March 24, 2022 | 4:00pm via Zoom

Attendees

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

Absent: Gary Stewart

TCAT Staff: Erik Amos; Susan Brock; Julie Ellis-Grove; Gian Fountain; Taylor Hessler; Colleen Marsh; Curt Parrish; Patty Poist; Megan Pulver; Madlyn Schafer; Gina Lord; Mike Smith; Phil Smith; Pamela Torelli; Scot Vanderpool; Nate Wells; Matt Yarrow

Public Attendees: Ever Stokes, Meghan Guerra Lyons, Kate Shanks-Booth

Call to Order

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

Board Member Items

There were no Board Member items presented for discussion.

Public Comment

Public comments were given by Ever Stokes, the program coordinator of youth employment service at the Ithaca Youth Bureau, and Meghan Guerra Lyons, at Tompkins County Youth Services, to voice their support for the Free Youth Pass Program that would be voted on later in the meeting.

Ever Stokes said teens are diverse in terms of what they need and barriers they face for employment, but a barrier most face is access to transportation and mobility. This is an opportunity to remove that barrier. The costs of lost opportunities for youth because of lack of transportation over the course of their childhood/adolescence are insidious and compounding and can be really negative. Teens are at a point in their lives where they are trying to achieve more autonomy and independence from their family of origin as they prepare for what's next, and that can be hard to deal with if it's hard to get anywhere. Ever said They feel grateful to live in a community with such a robust transportation system, and the free youth pass is a really great important first step of many to get the youth in our community more mobile. Ever thanked the Board.

Megan Guerro Lyons oversees the municipal youth services program which allows our rural communities to have youth development programming. This transportation issue is present for their programming and is a challenge for the families and their participants. The free youth pass up for consideration with TCAT would resolve so many issues that they have and would help the youth in Tompkins County immensely, along with their families. She thanked the Board for its consideration of the free pass.

Approval of minutes

A motion to approve minutes from the February 24, 2022 meeting made by B. Brady, seconded by F. Proto. The minutes of February 24, 2022 were approved unanimously with a vote of 8-0-0.

Chair's Report

Chair L. Lewis delivered a brief chair's report. She commended TCAT drivers and staff once again for all of their great work during the winter storms, and getting passengers where they need to go. Chair Lewis also expressed approval and appreciation of the statement, "The State of TCAT", composed by General Manager S. Vanderpool, which gives insight into all the work TCAT has done throughout the pandemic.

GM Report

General Manager S. Vanderpool delivered the February Systems reports. He noted a significant increase in rural route riders, as well as an overall increase in ridership in 2022 over 2021, with ridership steadily increasing to get closer to pre-pandemic numbers. There were 51 missed trips in February, compared to the 239 missed trips in January. The majority of trips in February were missed due to inclement weather conditions.

Fuel costs are still steadily rising; in December diesel fuel cost \$2.62/gal and has risen to an average of \$3.35/gal in February and has since risen even more. Cost of parts has been steady at around \$35,000.

There were 8 collisions in February, the majority of which included a bus striking or sliding into a parked vehicle. A Memorandum was sent out to the drivers on Feb. 11 addressing this trend. It was also noted that it was a mix of electric and diesel buses involved, and type of fuel was not a determination of the incidents.

In Human Resources, TCAT is down to 65 full time operators and 8 PT operators. S. Vanderpool introduced the new Temp. Recruiter, Gina Lord, and informed the Board of the new class of operators starting on April 4.

Chair L. Lewis asked for a refresher on how long it takes for the new operators to get out on the road. The response from TCAT staff is around 8-9 weeks and this includes all the classroom training, acquisition of CDL's, if needed, and practice out on the roads in the latter half.

IT has been working on getting Zoom set up in the large and small conference rooms. This would allow hybrid meetings to take place. F. Proto raised a question about the concerns of potential cyberattacks and asked if TCAT is prepared. G. Fountain responded that TCAT has multiple backups that occur frequently through the day to keep information safe and secure.

L. Lewis redirected the conversation back to the idea of hybrid meetings. She informed the Board that the Governor's emergency executive order allowing meetings to be held virtually was extended from March 17, until April 15, and that TCAT's Bylaws allow for hybrid meetings. It has been unclear if the executive order will be extended beyond April 15, but Chair Lewis explained, "given that Cornell has moved their alert system to a yellow alert, we know that COVID is still in our community and that prompts some people to be far more comfortable with virtual meetings rather than in-person meetings, but it is very good that we have the resources necessary to do hybrid."

Chair L. Lewis presented **Resolution 2022-04 – Adoption of Free Youth Pass Program**. Moved by D. Klein and seconded by B. Brady. L. Holmes stepped away from the meeting before voting occurred. The Resolution passed unanimously with a vote of 7-0-0 as follows:

**Resolution 2022-04
Adoption of Free Youth Pass Program**

WHEREAS, the TCAT, Inc. (“TCAT”) Board of Directors recognizes the importance of having youth become regular public transportation users, and

WHEREAS, TCAT supports youth having affordable transportation options to participate in before- and after-school programs, school events and employment opportunities, and

WHEREAS, creation of a year-round free youth pass program would increase youth ridership, and

WHEREAS, promoting transit use among youth and educating them on trip planning and use of transit apps is a great way to form the transit users of the future, and

WHEREAS, TCAT has teamed up with Tompkins County Youth Services and Ithaca Youth Bureau’s Youth Employment Services to craft the program and coordinate outreach to youth, and

WHEREAS, TCAT has had conversations with several local school district superintendents and anticipates reducing impact on TCAT staff by distributing passes through the districts, and

WHEREAS, TCAT’s analysis of current youth ridership shows that there is capacity on commonly used routes and trips, and

WHEREAS, TCAT’s current program allows free fares for youth ages 5 years and younger, and half-fare for youth ages 17 to 6 years at a cost of \$0.75 per single ride; \$30.00 for fall and semester passes; and \$50.00 for summer fun passes, and

WHEREAS, TCAT has analyzed the financial impact of introducing the free youth pass program and found it to be minimal with annual youth fare income accounting for approximately \$30,000 or less than 1 percent of TCAT’s overall fare revenue, and

WHEREAS, the loss of fare revenue that will occur due to adoption of the free youth pass program will be partially, if not mostly, offset by increased ridership, which will bring in State Transportation Operating Assistance associated with increased ridership, and

WHEREAS, both TCAT’s Transit Service Committee and Executive Committee reviewed the program and recommended it to the Board of Directors for consideration,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the TCAT, Inc. Board of Directors hereby establishes a year-round free youth pass program eliminating all fares for youth ages 17 to 6 beginning with TCAT’s summer 2022 service period, effective May 29, 2022, and be it further

RESOLVED, that fares for youth ages 5 years and younger shall continue to be free.

Adopted by the TCAT, Inc. Board of Directors on this 24th day of March, 2022.

L. Holmes returned to the meeting. Chair Lewis thanked Ever, Meghan, and Kate for their help with the program and said the resolution will help create the next generation of TCAT riders.

Chair L. Lewis presented **Resolution 2022-05, Adoption of the Title VI/LEP Program**. D. Thompson had stepped away from the meeting sometime before voting. The resolution was moved by L. Lewis, seconded by B. Brady, Resolution 2022-05 was unanimously approved with a vote of 7-0-0 as follows:

**Resolution 2022-05
Adoption of Title VI/LEP Program**

WHEREAS, as a subrecipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding, TCAT, Inc., and its paratransit contractor, Gadabout Transportation Services, Inc., are required to adhere to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a

WHEREAS, TCAT, Inc. and Gadabout conduct their services without regard to race, color and national origin, in accordance with Title VI, and

WHEREAS, as a subrecipient of FTA funding, TCAT, Inc. and Gadabout are required to comply with Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), which directs agencies receiving FTA funds to ensure passengers have meaningful access, inclusive of language translators, to services and information that TCAT and Gadabout's paratransit operations provide, and

WHEREAS, TCAT, Inc. and its paratransit contractor widely distribute information to their customers regarding their rights under Title VI, and

WHEREAS, TCAT, Inc., in 2015 created its first Service Standards and Policy Plan, which is required by the FTA under Title VI, and

WHEREAS, the intent of the Service Standards and Policy Plan is to ensure that TCAT, Inc. (and its paratransit contractor) are serving the entire community fairly across all neighborhoods despite the performance of any given bus route, and

WHEREAS, at its May 24, 2018 meeting, the TCAT, Inc. Board adopted TCAT, Inc.'s Title VI and LEP Plan dated May 24, 2018, and

WHEREAS, TCAT, Inc. has prepared a 2021-2024 update of its Title VI program to ensure that the level and quality of TCAT's fixed and on-demand routes, and of its contract paratransit services via Gadabout Transportation Services Inc., are in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the TCAT, Inc. Board adopts TCAT, Inc.'s Title VI/LEP Program 2021-2024, with an effective date as of the FTA's concurrence with Tompkins County's FTA Title VI Civil Rights & Environmental Justice Program 2022 Submission

Adopted by the TCAT, Inc. Board of Directors on this 24th day of March, 2022.

Committee Reports

Audit Committee – The Audit Committee did not meet.

Executive Committee – The Executive Committee met March 16, and discussed Utility demand charges, State of TCAT message, Grant Update, IT Roadmap update, On demand service, MOU and Transportation Agreement. GM S. Vanderpool highlighted some other points including TCAT signing a utility bill integration contract, and setting up an on-site meeting with Proterra technicians to evaluate and improve TCAT's overall infrastructure and for the electric buses.

Chair Lewis appointed Board members F. Proto, D. Nguyen, and D. Thompson to the Cornell fare MOU committee with GM S. Vanderpool as a resource. The committee will work with Cornell on the MOU, which is due to expire June 30, 2022.

L. Lewis also elaborated on the Transportation Agreement, due to expire October 9, 2022. She recommended a resumption of the Transportation Agreement meetings of the underwriters to look at the Transportation Agreement. D. Klein noted to the Board that TCAT is also a signatory of the Transportation Agreement and wondered if they would also be represented at the meetings. Chair Lewis responded that S. Vanderpool will be participating in the meetings, as well as S. Brock, as TCAT's attorney.

Budget Committee – The Budget Committee met on March 22 and decided that Board budget reports will be looked at on a quarterly basis instead of monthly. They reviewed the new financial modeling tool and discussed emergency reserves to cover expenses during times of disruption of cashflow, such as during the pandemic.

Human Resources Committee – The HR Committee met on March 22, and discussed the strain of staff fulfilling multiple roles and ongoing recruiting efforts. J. Dotson encouraged the Board members to support TCAT staff in any way they can. The committee also talked about upcoming open houses, attending job fairs, both in person and virtual.

Planning Committee – The Planning Committee is still on a hiatus.

Transit Service Committee – The Transit Service Committee met on March 9, and discussed spring service, summer planning, the Electric Mobility Grant, the low-no grant and Zero-Emission Fleet Transition plan, the Youth Fare Program and the TDP, coordinating with the city on a transportation survey.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be April 28, 2022.

Executive Session

J. Dotson made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Collective Bargaining Negotiations; motion seconded by F. Proto, vote 8-0-0. The Board entered Executive Session at 5:05pm.

At 5:22 pm, the Board came out of Executive Session (motion by F. Proto, seconded by B. Brady, vote 8-0-0).

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:23 pm. Moved by B. Brady, seconded by D. Klein.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Taylor Hessler, Recording Secretary, April 28, 2022.