

**MICHAEL GOLDMAN**

CHAIR

**DONALD G. DRUMMER**

VICE CHAIR

**COUNCILMEMBER ERIC OLSON**

SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Wednesday, September 20, 2023**

**9:30 AM**

**WSTC Bi-Annual Commissioners Meeting Minutes**

|  |
| --- |
| **Commissioners in Attendance** |
| Mr. Mike Goldman, Chair |
| Mr. Donald Drummer |
| Mr. Eric Olson |
| Mr. Tom Hucker |
| Mr. Raymond J. Briscuso, Jr |
| Mr. Drew Morrison, Designee for Sec. Paul Wiedefeld, Maryland Department of Transportation |
| **Staff in Attendance** |
| Mr. Drew Morrison, Acting- Director, Washington Area Transit Office |
| Ms. Tammy Cooper |
| Mr. Sara LeBarron |
| **County Representatives in Attendance** |
| Ms. Semia Hackett, Prince George’s County |
| Mr. Christopher Conklin, Montgomery County |
| Mr. Gary Erenrich, Montgomery County |
| Mr. Charlie Scott, WMATA |
| **Public in Attendance** |
| Mr. Bill Orleans |

# Call to Order

# Chair Goldman called the meeting to order at 9:37 AM and a quorum was met.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

A motion to approve the agenda was presented by Chair Goldman and approved unanimously.

# Recognition of Board Actions

* 1. **Budget**

An email request was sent to all commissioners by the Director of the WSTC for approval of the FY2024 WSTC Administrative Budget. The budget was voted on by all commissioners and unanimously approved.

* 1. **Officers**

An email request was sent to all commissioners by the Director of the WSTC to elect the new officers effective July 1, 2023. The new officers are Chair Michael Goldman, Vice-Chair Don Drummer and Secretary-Treasurer Eric Olson. All officers were elected unanimously.

* 1. **Minutes**

An email request was sent to all commissioners by the Director of the WSTC for approval meeting minutes; our bi-annual meeting on December 14, 2022, the special meeting held on January 30, 2023, regarding acceptance of the WSTC FY2022 financial audit, and the special meeting held on May 25, 2023, regarding the WSTC office move. All the above meeting minutes were unanimously approved by the commissioners.

# Public Comment

* 1. A pre-submitted comment was received via email by Mr. Douglas Garland, Jr., from Prince George’s County. Mr. Garland, Jr. has requested additional bus service in the Marlton and Rosaryville neighborhoods consistent with the school bus service that is currently provided. Per Acting Director Drew Morrison, WSTC will coordinate with Prince George’s County for a response.
  2. Commission. Mr. Orleans made a comment for the Commission. He expressed concern that there are still no printed Metrobus timetable schedules. With Better Bus being pursued and routes being changed, WMATA wants everyone to use the app instead of the printed schedules. He stated WMATA should continue with printed schedules as there are some people who do not have access to the app. Also, requested continuing public forums to discuss the Better Bus and other issues with transit. Lastly, he would like to be put on a mailing list to be informed of upcoming notices of future meetings.

# Amendment to WSTC By-Laws

# Discussion of potential changes to WSTC By-Laws regarding the WMATA Permanent Director

The current WSTC By-Laws, last amended in 2015, need to be updated to reflect changes in law passed in 2018 and Administration policies related to the WMATA Principal Director appointment. These changes were divided into two potential amendments which were for discussion only with no action taken.

**Potential Amendments:**

**Amendment 1:**

Section II, Paragraph 2 of the By-laws currently reads:

The Governor shall appoint two (2) members with the advice and consent of the Senate of Maryland. One member shall be a resident of Montgomery County and one member shall be a resident of Prince George’s County. The Governor’s appointees shall serve as the Commission’s appointees to the WMATA Board of Directors.

Consistent with current Maryland law, Staff recommends that Section II, Paragraph 2 of the By-laws be amended to read:

The Governor shall appoint two (2) members with the advice and consent of the Senate of Maryland. One member shall be a resident of Montgomery County and one member shall be a resident of Prince George’s County. One of those appointees shall serve as a Commission appointee to the WMATA Board of Directors and a Principal Director. The other Commission appointee to the WMATA Board of Directors and Principal Director shall be the Maryland Secretary of Transportation, or the Secretary’s designee.

**Amendment 2**:

This Amendment would clarify the period of appointment of a Commissioner as a Principal Director to the WMATA Board. The term of this appointment could be either two years or four years. Section II, Paragraph 2 would be further amended to read:

The Governor shall appoint two (2) members with the advice and consent of the Senate of Maryland. One member shall be a resident of Montgomery County and one member shall be a resident of Prince George’s County. One of those appointees shall serve as a Commission appointee to the WMATA Board of Directors and a Principal Director. *The Commission appointee to the WMATA Board of Directors shall rotate every two/four year between a Montgomery County resident and a Prince George’s County resident, with the term of the new Commission appointee to the WMATA Board of Directors commencing on July 1 of the third/fifth year following the commencement of the current Commission appointee to the WMATA Board of Directors.*The other Commission appointee to the WMATA Board of Directors and Principal Director shall be the Maryland Secretary of Transportation, or the Secretary’s designee.

During the December Commissioners meeting, a proposal will be presented regarding amending the By-Laws. This will be an action item.

# WSTC Update

# Update on WSTC Finances and Internal Matters

1. **FY2023 End-of-Year Financial Position**

In FY2023 WSTC came in $55,000 under budget resulting in an overall 12 percent decrease compared to FY2022. The transit analyst position was filled November 2022 but was vacated in September 2023. The vacancy of the transit analyst position was the main contribution to the decrease in personnel costs. The miscellaneous category exceeded the budget amount mainly due to the transit analyst job posting in the Washington Post.

1. **Office Move**

Legal identified a logistical item requiring WSTC’s new office lease proposal to be voted on in both Prince George’s and Montgomery County’s Council. A letter will be sent to both Councils along with the proposed lease explaining WSTC’s request and expectations. WSTC’s current office lease at 4351 Garden City Drive expires December 31, 2023. Both Councils need to either approve the new lease or approve a lease renewal in the current office space.

1. **Transit Analyst Position**

The Transit Analyst position is currently vacant. WSTC plans to reach out to Morgan State University and University of Maryland planning programs to identify candidates and welcome support from our commissioners during the selection process.

# 

# FY2024 Washington Area Transit Office / WSTC Work Program

# Work Plan Overview

# A 2024 Work Program has been identified for the Washington Area Transit office and the WSTC staff. The goal is to try to be a think tank for Maryland about Metro like Northern Virginia, assisting with policy questions. Internal initiatives with WSTC be coordinators around asset management, transit-oriented development, in addition to the big public policy questions surrounding the fiscal cliff, the Capital Budget, Better Bus, Blue, Orange, Silver lines.

# WMATA Joint Study Fund

# By using excess funds from WSTC’s budget, WSTC would like to develop a joint study fund to be an on-going source of consulting resources particularly to re-build WSTC’s staff. The goal is to revisit the topic in December regarding what study to focus on in the current fiscal year. One suggestion is focusing on Metro Access since Maryland is the largest funding source. By providing quality service to people with disabilities in a way that can manage the long-term cost curve. Another major topic suggestion is focusing on WMATA issues, specifically the fiscal cliff. WSTC Staff are advancing this work plan as the goal is to always have a work plan to move forward and for it to be responsive to jurisdictional interests.

# Policy and Program Updates

# MWCOG Convenings

# WSTC Staff are part of the Metro Washington Council of Government Convenings with the chief administrative officers. WSTC Staff will be getting detailed information from WMATA on the financial picture and that will allow WSTC to work with partners across the jurisdictions to dive into that in the coming weeks.

# County Engagement

# Bi-monthly meetings have been established with Montgomery and Prince George’s County’s. In the opposing month, meetings will be held with the corresponding county to discuss topics that are not ready to be shared with the other County.

# Better Bus Network

# WMATA will be providing an update in the coming weeks on the future Better Bus network implications for the bus subsidy formula. As WMATA learns more, they will coordinate with the commissioners and the counties with a potential path forward.

# Secretary Wiedefeld NVTA Presentation

# The Chair made mention of Secretary Wiedefeld’s upcoming presentation to the NVTA in Falls Church, Virginia on September 29, 2023, 7:30am.

# County Conversations

# Prince George’s County / DPW&T

# Ms. Semia Hackett discussed current and upcoming projects in Prince George’s County. Regarding their transit transformation, they are partnering with WMATA with the Better Bus network redesign. They have identified our core values of equity, sustainability, and innovation. The five-year transit vision plan is underway; the battery electric plan is moving forward and hope to have this finished by the end of the year. They are planning for a fall service change that will be effective December 4, 2023. By making sure their app is operable and updated, the vendor is cleaning bus stops regularly to ensure cleanliness and availability as scheduled. Four of the eight targeted routes show significant improvement in the past 90 days. Two routes that were at an on-time performance of 72%, are now at 82%.

# As part of the Zero Emission Transition plan, they have started transitioning to battery electric buses, implementing additional charging infostructure, and conducting their feasibility study for their microgrid system. Anticipating the transition being completed and released by the end of the calendar year.

# They have a new Chief of Operations and are developing a marketing team that is specifically for transit and interacting with residents. For their fall Service change, some of the targeted areas are weekend service efficiencies, making sure needs for Saturday service are being met.

# They are re-launching their taxi operations and taxi investigators are back in their field inspecting the public taxi system. The focus is on on-time performance, and we are completing a total refresh of their Title VI program. Ridership is up from pre-covid numbers of about 78%.

# They are working with vendors and highway teams to identify which bus stops would need shelters and benches. A six-month study will be conducted to figure out which bus stops need these amenities. Funding for the study has been identified.

# Mr. Christopher Conklin discussed current and upcoming projects in Montgomery County.

# Zero Emissions plan is in the implementation phase and have procured the first one hundred Battery Electric Buses. The actual grant application for bus and bus facilities for the hydrogen fueling has been submitted to the FTA. Starting to consider whether reuse of renewable natural gas from the Piscataway Waste Treatment Plant can be part of the clean program for Montgomery County but no decisions have been made. There has been a significant reorganization of staff and management of our transit division and will be appointing a General Manager of Transit, which is a significant administrative change. Rather than being a division chief within the department instead of being an appointed position, this should be completed before the end of this calendar year. Our ridership recovery has been quite robust over the last half year up to about 55 thousand passengers a day, from a low of about 20 thousand.

# On October 9, 2023, there will be an Industry Day for progressive design build proposers for the 355 BRT Project, that is from Germantown to Rockville. MCDOT will be seeking proposals and awarding that contract in early 2024. Fridays are Fare Free day, among other promotional activities that the county is doing for Car Free Day.

# Regarding the contracts for 100 battery electric buses, currently there are 14 in service.

# MCDOT is behind the 2027 goal but have 10 years to reach the ZERO emissions.

# In the Burkeville depot a microgrid with battery backup grid connection has been set up which can serve 70 vehicles with the potential of 130 vehicles. The larger Gaithersburg depot will be able to serve 50 vehicles with installation of the microgrid there in addition to fueling 13 to 25 hydrogen vehicles with that microgrid. The third depot in North Bethesda is a leased facility and MCDOT is actively working to move out of the location as it is not possible to convert the location into zero-emission operations.

# WMATA FY2025 Fiscal Cliff

Charlie Scott discussed current issues regarding WMATA.

* + 1. The latest national database figures show that WMATA regained the number two spot for rail riders in the country. Implemented a new fare structure on the metro rail eliminating the off-peak fare for the midday riders and going with a more uniformed fare throughout the day. The federal relief of $561 million is using up most of the remaining federal and covid relief funds that were available to us and other transit systems across the country.

WMATA’s highest rail ridership since covid, September 19th, 2023, was 432,000, in addition to seeing a healthy bus ridership as well. In the last week, we had multiple days, where the total combined exceeded 800,000.

The physical cliff WMATA is facing partly due to the depletion of the federal relief funding in FY2024. There is still a structural deficit in the range of 700 to 750 million. The state local subsidies were basically flat during FY20, FY21 and FY22 even when legislation allowed an increase of at least 3 percent plus any other exceptions from the 3 percent cap. Now the accumulative effect of giving a credit of 135 million, plus the 3 percent inflation on that 135 million over the last few years the subsidy level would have been another 196 million raked into the existing subsidy level. That is part of the 750 million, also inflation has impacted the bargaining agreements. Around FY29 or FY30 time frame, for when WMATA will have no more compacity to issue new debt, based on the 500 million, there will be a deficit in the capital program. WMATA just issued our 8000 Series contract, that leads to Hitachi Rail building a manufacturing facility in Hagerstown. The is economically benefit the whole state of Maryland.

1. **Good of the Order**
2. **Closing Remarks** 
   * 1. Drew Morrison noted that WSTC will hold the second meeting of the year in December. There are a couple of action items, discussed today, that will be acted on in that meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:13a.m.

1. **Executive Session**

A recorded vote was taken to enter Executive Session at this time under General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b)(1) and (13). The vote was unanimous.