

## MINUTES

### WORK SESSION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY

April 9, 2020

12:24 p.m.

#### **Board Members Present**

Roberta Abdul-Salaam  
Jim Durrett  
Roderick E. Edmond  
William 'Bill' Floyd  
Roderick A. Frierson  
Jerry Griffin  
Freda B. Hardage  
Alicia M. Ivey  
Russel McMurry, P.E\*  
John "Al" Pond  
Rita A. Scott  
Christopher S. Tomlinson\*

#### **Staff Members Present**

Jeffery A. Parker  
Rhonda Allen  
Luz Borrero  
Wanda Dunham  
Collie Greenwood  
Kevin Hurley (Acting)  
Melissa Mullinax  
Elizabeth O'Neill  
Franklin Rucker  
David Springstead  
Heather Alhadeff  
Gina Major  
Santiago Osorio  
George Wright

Also in attendance Executive Director Paula Nash; Sr. Director Bill Bailey (Acting) Manager Nancy Joseph; Manager MARTA Board of Directors Rebbie Ellisor-Taylor; Also in attendance, Abebe Girmay, Courtne Middlebrooks and LaTonya Pope.

Others in attendance were Robert Highsmith of Holland & Knight and Mike Cellino of Cisco.

#### **Approval of the Minutes of the March 12, 2020 Work Session Minutes**

On motion by Mr. Pond seconded by Mr. Durrett, the minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 9 to 0, with 11\* members present.

#### **Chair's Report**

##### *Upcoming Meetings*

Thursday, April 30, 2020

\* Russell R. McMurry, P.E. is Commissioner of Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT); Christopher S. Tomlinson is Executive Director of Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and are therefore, non-voting members of the MARTA Board of Directors

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- Planning & Capital Programs Committee – 9:30 a.m.
- Operations & Safety Committee – (immediately following Planning)
- Business Management Committee – (immediately following Operations)

Thursday, May 14, 2020

- Work Session – 12:00 noon
- Board – 1:30pm

### **General Manager/CEO Report**

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Mr. Parker addressed MARTA's on-going response to the COVID-19 virus. There were concerns and questions related to the Rashad Richey Show raised by Dr. Edmond a few days ago. A woman on the show, who identified herself as a MARTA Bus Operator spoke of issues while operating a MARTA bus. It is important to know that MARTA Police have no record of a call coming from an operator that fits the description of what this individual spoke of. It is anticipated that the woman's story was not completely true or was over exaggerated. It also is important to communicate to staff that the Authority continues to implement several steps to operate MARTA buses safely for customers and employees. Several weeks ago, at the request of the ATU, rear door boarding was implemented. This was done to protect MARTA employees as well as patrons. MARTA was one of the first agencies in the country and the first agency in the region to implement this procedure. In addition, staff strategically placed direct buses and service to reduce overcrowding, implemented operational procedures where operators should notify bus dispatch prior to overcrowding, allow operators to stop passengers from boarding buses if the bus is full and change the head sign to indicate the bus is full. The operator would by-pass patrons at the bus stop and notify dispatch to send a direct bus to that bus line. This would ensure bus operators service passengers in a safe way. These actions and procedures have been implemented to promote social distancing on MARTA buses and it is critically important for the safety of employees and customers.

It is recognized that the number of Authority's employees sick rate has increased and the availability of bus operators would decrease. The MARTA Board would continue to receive updates regarding safe distancing and significant service reductions in the upcoming weeks. It has been thirty-eight days since the Authority first heard reports of the COVID-19 virus in Georgia. The first cases were in Fulton County and were connected to overseas travel. Since then, the world changed overnight. The State of Georgia now has over 10,000 cases with 370 deaths; over 430,000 cases in the US. One in ten workers have lost their jobs, amounting to 6.6M job loss and countless businesses have closed. The federal government has granted a \$25B package to help

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stabilize transit. It is anticipated that \$300M would directly come to MARTA via a grant program. As all may know, the people of the Atlanta region are hurting. MARTA currently have fourteen employees who have self-reported or who have medically tested positive for COVID-19. Additionally, one hundred and eighty-three employees (183) are in self quarantine due to exposure to these employees. It is anticipated this number would increase. There is no doubt that this virus is affecting MARTA, the employees who work here as well as MARTA's customers.

It is a pleasure to remind everyone while jobs are being lost throughout the region and the county, leadership has worked hard to ensure not a single layoff has happened at MARTA. While staff continues to share details of COVID-19 with the MARTA Board, a timeline of all activity that the agency has taken on to date related to COVID-19 was discussed. The timeline focuses on three (3) areas: (1) Continuing of Operations, (2) Employee Safety and (3) Customer Safety. With strong lines of internal and external communication as the Authority's backbone, staff is working hard to provide critical transportation service to essential workers of this region.

To protect employees who are sick or affected from the COVID-19 virus, an additional eighty (80) hours of paid sick leave have been provided. New requirements for the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Act have been revised to reflect Family First COVID-19 Response Act, which was approved by the President Trump. It is with great pride to announce that MARTA's staff collaborated with the ATU in developing this policy. This is the first time that a plan was developed collaboratively between a transit agency and a Union. The CDC has sent 250,000 disposable facial masks to assist the Authority during the pandemic. Staff will begin distribution of these masks to MARTA employees who are physically coming to work. There has also been a \$25 incentive provided to the unionized work force as well as employees who are paid less than \$75K a year. This incentive would cover the cost to purchase comfortable cloth masks for MARTA employees.

A phone number has been established to assist essential workers who use the MARTA system. Essential workers would call this line when they are unable to use service due to an overcrowded bus. The phone number would allow bus dispatchers to quickly send a relief bus to that bus line and contact the driver to ensure that the bus is no longer stopping to board additional passengers. While bus operators are instructed to take action if their bus is full, this phone number would also reduce the wait time. The Authority is aware that essential employees need transportation and MARTA is able to provide a safe service for them. The essential phone number would be available immediately, routing calls through MARTA's customer service line. Additionally, it is anticipated that the Authority's workforce would continue to be directly and indirectly

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affected by the COVID-19 virus. Although, the Authority is prepared for an increase in absence, the safety of MARTA employees and customers are always considered. Significant service changes and practices for MARTA buses have been implemented.

MARTA's modified bus service would focus on 39 of 110 routes to ensure that there is enough service to limit ridership on each bus. Customers on the busiest bus lines should expect to see bus service as frequent as five (5) minutes during peak rush hours. Signs would be displayed to ensure passengers are six (6) feet apart and that there are no passengers standing in the aisles. Lastly, it would always be important to encourage MARTA passengers to practice social distancing.

Dr. Edmond said MARTA is currently in uncharted waters. It is obvious that the Authority have thousands of workers on the front line who could potentially be exposed to some capacity of COVID-19. There is little control over it. It is known that there was one incident reported. The Authority's obligation is to simply double down on the policies that was previously communicated to all bus operators. It is important that bus operators adhere to these policies to ensure there is adequate social distancing. This is not the moment to point the finger to blame others. The COVID-19 virus is strange. No one is accustomed to it, but it could be beneficial to continue to promote social distancing.

Ms. Scott expressed support to echo Dr. Edmond. The Rashad Richey interview was sent to her attention via a group of concerned DeKalb County citizens. She received questions from city, county and state elected officials. There were also inquiries from the DeKalb County NAACP and several others regarding concerns with the Rashad Richie interview. Being that she was aware of the social distancing policy, she was able to answer their questions and concerns. She also reached out to ATU to see if they had concerns regarding the interview. The ATU expressed concern that buses and trains were not thoroughly cleaned. There were questions regarding how often the buses were cleaned and the cleaning procedure. In addition, an inquiry was received from Concerned Black Clergy which is a group of Atlanta ministers who assist local communities.

Mr. Parker thanked Ms. Scott for her comments.

### **The MARTA Agency Safety Plan (ASP) Approval Process**

Mrs. Major presented a briefing of the MARTA Agency Safety Plan approval process.

New Agency Safety Plan

- 49 CFR Part 673

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- Safety
  - Management
  - System (SMS)
  - Implementation
- Pillars of SMS
  - Safety Policy
  - Safety Risk Management
  - Safety Assurance
  - Safety Promotion

### **The MARTA Agency Safety Plan Approval Process (High Level Requirements)**

- MARTA Board approval of the MARTA ASP
- Identification of an accountable executive
- Identification of an adequately trained Chief Safety Officer
- Accountability for the four (4) Pillars of SMS
- Protections for employees reporting safety conditions
- Emphasis on data collection
- 21 elements – 49 CFR 659 (Previous SSPP requirements)

### **ASP Approval Date**

- July 20, 2020 – FTA Approval Deadline

### **MARTA ASP Task Force**

- DSQ Task Lead – Manager of SMS
- DSQA Leadership Team
- WSP Collaborative Team of SMEs
- MARTA Stakeholders
- FTA PTASP Technical Assistance Center

### **Iterative Submission Process**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Draft Submission – October 2019
  - GDOT Response – November 2019
  - 134 Open Items
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft Submission – December 2019
  - GDOT Response – January 2020
  - 79 Open Items
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Final Draft Submission – February 2020
  - GDOT Response – March 2020
  - 76 Open Items\*

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### **Challenges**

The agreement between MARTA and GDOT on open items/requirements.  
The allocation of resources (in light of COVID-19).

### **Risks**

The completion of ancillary documents.

### **Final Approval**

- Signature of Approval by the MARTA Board of Directors
  - Freda B. Hardage, MARTA Board Chair
- Signature of Accountable Executive
  - Jeffrey A. Parker, GM/CEO-MARTA
  
- Signature of the Chair of Safety Officer
  - Gena Major, AGM-DSQA

### **Accountable Executive and Board Approval Requirement**

- The ASP must be approved by signature of the Accountable Executive
- The ASP must be approved by signature of its Board of Directors

### **Final Approval & Annual Certification**

- The ASP must be approved by the State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA), GDOT.
- The ASP must annually certify via FTA's Certification and Assurance process, GDOT.

## **Dynamic COVID-19 Balance**

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Mr. Greenwood provided an update on the COVID-19 virus.

### **Challenge – To Predict and Provide**

- Safe service (social distancing, 50% seating capacity)
- For the most number of people (on priority routes)
- With fluctuating supply of operations

### **Objectives for COVID-19 Reduced Service Plan**

- Reduce service coverage based on a set of new priorities:
  - Priority 1 – Medical Facilities (Hospitals and Urgent Care Centers)
  - Priority 2 – Groceries and Major Job Corridors

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- Increase service capacity to account for social distancing
- Be prepared for fewer options
  - Concerns with working under COVID-19 conditions
  - Childcare needs

### **Pre COVID-19 Network**

- Bus network prior to March 30 service
  - (110) Bus routes
  - (14) Hospitals
  - (24) Urgent care centers
  - (127) Grocery stores
  - (22) Job centers & logistics/Industrials hubs

### **Pre COVID-19 Network**

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### **Blocks needed for social distancing:**

- 565 (base)
- 2x: 1,130

### **Recommended COVID Reduced Service Plan**

- High Performing Routes: Top 15% of routes by ridership performance (after March 30, 2020)
- High Priority Facilities: Highest ratio of hospitals, urgent care, supplies/groceries and job corridors

### **Recommended COVID Reduced Service Plan**

- Bus Operating Facilities & Medical Facilities
  - (39) Bus routes
  - (13) Hospitals
  - (9) Urgent care centers
- Supplies, Services and Job Centers
  - (91) Grocery stores
  - (15) Job centers & logistics/Industrial hubs

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### **Next Steps**

- **Implement ASAP:** Upload service plan through IT and bus systems, regulatory review and prepare communications
- **Provide for Emergent Need:** Community circulator buses for emergent needs
- **Double Service:** Monitor doubled service for excess and redirect to other routes

Ms. Ivey asked are paratransit buses sanitized as regular service buses.

Mr. Greenwood said yes, all cleaning supplies are extended to all MARTA services including paratransit.

Dr. Edmond said from an aerial perspective, it is important to consider the most effective way the Authority could communicate to MARTA employees. In order to do right by virtue of this pandemic, instructions on how to sanitize and remain safe on a daily basis should be implemented. It is recommended that leadership implement a required training video for all MARTA employees who have contact with the public. Completion of the video could be tracked to ensure that all employees have viewed and understand the procedures to operate in a safe manner. Sending emails or appointing area managers would not have the same impact as a training course. It is extremely important to ensure that communication is in place to keep MARTA employees and passengers safe.

Mr. Parker said a required training course has been implemented and MARTA is well underway in training employees throughout the Authority.

Ms. Borrero said approximately 3,000 MARTA represented and non-represented employees have completed the COVID-19 training.

Ms. Scott asked has there been discussion regarding hazardous pay for frontline employees.

Mr. Parker said there has been discussion with the ATU and update would be provided.

Ms. Abdul-Salaam asked has the policy changed for transporting passengers with symptoms related to the COVID-19 virus.

Mr. Greenwood said the policy for transporting all MARTA passengers has not changed. Leadership has made changes to better protect MARTA's employees under the existing COVID-19 conditions. There has been discussion regarding requirements to transport passengers who suspect they have COVID-19. However, there is a lot of research that



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must be done such as changes to the vehicles, changes to training and changes to personal protective equipment. MARTA is not in a position to commit to provide that service, but staff is implementing changes to keep employees and customers safe.

Ms. Abdul-Salaam asked would the policy change considering patrons that may be non-symptomatic.

Mr. Greenwood said currently the policy remains the same. Being that passengers may be non-symptomatic, it is possible that a passenger who is COVID-19 positive is on MARTA's system.

Ms. Abdul-Salaam asked what is MARTA doing to provide transportation for passengers who need medical transit.

Mr. Greenwood said the policy for Mobility passengers has not changed. MARTA customers have self-selected to reduce the number of trips taken. The Authority is still able to service all customers to their destinations without any new restrictions.

Ms. Abdul-Salaam expressed concern indicating that she spoke with Mobility customers who were not able to get Mobility transportation.

Mr. Parker said the Authority has not changed any policies regarding Mobility or regular service. MARTA has continued to operate with existing policies and procedures following the American Disability Act. There was a change made to decrease the number of customers and operators on a single van. Mr. Greenwood can address and resolve any issues regarding non-availability on Mobility service.

Ms. Ivey said there are companies in the market who have implemented temperature checks. She asked as a transit agency, has MARTA considered the same.

Mr. Parker said implementing temperature checks is a matter the Authority can consider. Human Resources have been aggressive in recording and documenting MARTA employees who call in to advise their sickness. Management have conducted screenings to understand the employee's sickness. Staff could reach out to a few agencies who provide such service and provide an update.

**Series 2020A Fixed Rate Bonds – New Money**

Mr. Hurley provided an update on Series 2020A Fixed Rate Bonds.

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### **New Money Issues**

- Series – 2020A
- Par – \$132,330,000
- Use of Funds – Support Capital Improvement Program
- Term – 27 years
- Rate Mode – Fixed: Pricing April 9, 2020
- Proceeds will be used for regulatory, safety and state of good repair of capital assets
- Bond amortization matches the weighted average useful life of the underlying assets
- Closing and funds flow Thursday, April 23, 2020

### **Board and Executive Team Actions**

- Full Board approves the resolution for the issuance, sale, execution and delivery of the Series 2020A Bonds
- Board Chair executes the resolution for release to the Underwriter to lock in pricing
- Board Chair and Executive Team execute signature pages prior to Wednesday, April 22, 2020 (pre-closing date)
- Bond closing Thursday, April 23, 2020

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### **Adjournment**

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The Work Session of the MARTA Board of Directors adjourned at 1:48 p.m.