

Cape Ann Transportation Authority
Board Meeting
May 21, 2024
9:30am

Attendance: Mayor Greg Verga, Mitchell Vieira, Gil Frieden, Stephen Crane, Joe Domelowicz, ADA Representative Jay Smiledge, Board Counsel Liz O'Connor, Eddie Marques, Felicia Webb Administrator, Jackie LaFlam

Called to order by Mayor Verga at 9:30am

Public comments, None

Approval of Minutes

Mitch Vieira, Motion to approve CATA March 6 2024 minutes

Seconded by Joe Domelowicz

All in favor

Felicia introduced Eddie Marques as no longer an intern and has joined CATA full-time as our Transit Program and Compliance Manager.

Public Transit Agency Safety Plan

Eddie explained the details of the safety practices that will be implemented to meet the new federal guidelines. The plan calls for annual reviews of the safety performance measures and also updates to improve the safety practices. CATA oversees operations for fixed route and demand services in all five communities.

Gil had a few questions about parts in section 4

Joe Domelowicz, Motioned that CATA Advisory Board accept the Public transit Safety Plan, including the performance measures and targets dated December 2023 as presented May 21, 2024.

Seconded by Mitch Vieira

All in favor

Fixed Route Service Improvements

Felicia explained the improvements to fixed route services which would also include an expansion in the ADA Complementary Paratransit. CATA would introduce the evening service and Essex Extension first, followed by the East Gloucester/Rockport via Lanesville, and then Sunday service last.

Evening and Sunday Service

This route would operate between Rockport and Gloucester. The route would serve Eastern Avenue, Rogers Street, Washington Street, and Gloucester Crossing. Weekday and Saturday service would begin ~5:50am at Rose Baker Senior Center and end ~9:05pm at Gloucester Crossing, Sunday service would begin ~8:35am at Rockport Market and end ~7:05pm at

Gloucester Crossing. CATA will evaluate the service over a 12-month period to gauge performance. If the route is successful (i.e. people use it), CATA would incorporate this service into our permanent fixed route service. If the service is not successful, CATA would look to make adjustments or alter the service to better meet customer needs prior to ending the service.

Approval of Evening and Sunday Service

Mitch Vieira Motion to approve the year-round evening and Sunday service in Gloucester and Rockport as proposed May 21, 2024

Seconded by Joe Domelelowicz

All in favor

Good Harbor Express

This route would run “express” from Stage Fort Park to Good Harbor Beach. Depending on traffic and passenger volume, the Saturday dispatcher has sent an additional bus to SFP to provide express service to the beach over the past several years. The proposed Good Harbor Express bus would be advertised as such and would be scheduled to run in addition to the Stage Fort Park Shuttle. If successful, CATA would incorporate the service into our regular summer services.

There was a general discussion about overcrowding at the beach and an Express bus contributing to additional crowding.

Essex Extension

CATA would extend the current West Gloucester route into Essex to provide a regular connection from Essex into Gloucester. The time required for this extension already exists with an adjustment of the West Gloucester and Magnolia timetables. Once into Essex, the route would turn left on Martin. There are two options to turn around to return to Gloucester. The first option is right on Winthrop, right on Western, and right on Main. The second option is left on Martin, left on Shepard, and turn around in the parking lot near Memorial Park. The first option would be better for future expansion and provides closer service to the Essex Housing Authority. The second option would be better in terms of an easily identifiable pick up/drop off point.

Approval of Essex Extension

Gil Freiden, Motion to approve the Essex Extension with the second option to turn around, as proposed May 21, 2024

Seconded by Stephen Crane

All in favor

East Gloucester/Rockport via Lanesville (Crosstown Connector)

This route would operate from Rockport to East Gloucester via Lanesville. The route would allow for hourly service along CATA’s existing Lanesville route, improved service from Rockport to Halibut Point and Gloucester Crossing, and improved service to Rocky Neck. The best routing for East Gloucester would be East Main, left on Mt. Pleasant Ave, left on Highland, and right on East Main. The other option would be to go around the entire back shore, but that will take more time and CATA does not normally see passengers along that section of route.

This route would be funded through the MassDOT Transit Innovation Grant. Continuation of the service would be dependent on identification of a funding source.

Mayor Verga stated this would be good for the residents on Mt. Pleasant Avenue to Highland St. and could be adjusted if needed.

Approval of East Gloucester/Rockport/Lanesville Route

Mitch Vieira Motion to approve the East Gloucester/Rockport via Lanesville as proposed May 21, 2024.

Seconded by Joe Domelelowicz

All in favor

Felicia is still working on improving the schedules and they may need some adjusting for the fixed route improvements.

Jay was concerned with the shortage of drivers. Felicia mentioned we are gradually implementing the service and won't add new service unless there is appropriate staffing. The operating company may need to reach out to the Authority for help with training. Ridership is a lot better now.

FY25 Proposed Budget

FY25 Budget Expenditures

Felicia explained all the changes that are include in the FY25 budget. The budget is higher than the revised 2024 Transit budget, by \$463,512 This budget will allow CATA to provide for the changes in fixed route, dial a ride, the Beverly Shuttle, seasonal routes and complementary ADA. We also are including year-round evening and Sunday service in Gloucester and Rockport. There are two grants included for expansion of On Demand and the Cape Ann Works program. This budget will allow CATA to mange expansion as well as a large capital project over the next several years.

Mayor Verga asked if there was a time limit to spend the COVID relief funds.

Felicia responded with no, those funds are available until gone however CATA should use those funds before regular federal funding.

Operating Expenses

CATM negotiated a collective bargaining agreement with the Teamsters and this is the last year of that CBA. The wage for operators increased by 4% and mechanics increased by 5% for FY25.

The additional year-round service will require additional dispatch hours. CATM also added vehicle cleaners to allow for coverage during the additional expanded service hours. The attendants line item also includes a Lead Attendant who will be responsible for managing the staffing at the Rockport Shuttle.

Administration Expenses

The CATA Administration consist of an Administrator, a Transit Program and Compliance Manager, an Administrative Assistant/ Customer Service position, and a part time Manager of Special Projects. We are not funded through the operating company. CATA normally includes the five-year capital plan, as approved by MassDot and included in the State Transportation Improvement Program, in the board packet at the budget meeting. In the 2025-2059 five-year capital plan, CATA received a significant amount through the MPO Transit Transformation program. Included is vehicle replacements, building rehabilitation and maintenance programs, and the implementation of a cashless fare for ADA and DAR. We have additional capital for paving, support vehicles and small replacement vans. The capital projects will be managed internally by CATA and funded by federal and state programs.

The Boston MPO has approved a seat on the MPO board to be shared by CATA and MetroWest RTA with a rotation schedule between both RTAs. It will take about 4-6 hours of staff time a week assuming meeting remain remote, with additional time at the beginning to become familiar with the processes.

In lieu of a higher wage increase, CATA has allotted five additional vacation days as well as two more personal days for CATA staff in FY25. There is a 6% increase in medical, 4% in dental as of January 1 2025, along with the pension liability expense

FY25 Budget Revenues

Federal Funding Sources

The 5307 funds for 2022-2024 are allocated for preventive maintenance and small capital projects.

CATA received funding from the CARES Act, CRRSAA and ARPA and has utilized 80% of the funding and the rest will be used during FY25. They are allowed to be used for loss of revenue and operating expense.

State Contract Assistance

CATA is assuming level-funding at FY24 levels and has include FY25 Try Transit for a December 2024 Fare Free event.

Local Operation Assistance

By law the local assessments were increased by 2.5%

MassDOT Grant Funding

MassDOT is funding FY25 Dialysis Service at 50%

MassDOT also awarded CATA with two Innovation Grants for Cape Ann Works, focusing on employment transportation, as well as funding for an expansion of On Demand service. CATA is included an estimate of one-year operating funds in the budget and we're waiting to hear on reallocating capital funds into operating on these projects.

Misc/ Other revenues

Farebox revenue is estimated on FY24 actuals and should increase due to ridership with the new services.

CATA is projecting revenue with DMA work for MART.

The Beverly Shuttle was renewed in the fall of 2022.

CATA has partnered with the City of Gloucester Health Department to provide for the Cape Ann Seniors on the Go Program

Approval of FY25 Budget expenditures of \$5,026,254

Mitch Vieira, Motion to approve CATA FY25 Budget

Seconded by Joe Domelowicz

All in favor

Approval of FY25 Budget Revenues of \$5,026,254

Mitch Vieira, Motion to approve CATA FY25 Budget

Seconded by Joe Domelowicz

All in favor

Jay asked if raises were for the operating company?

Felicia responded there are wages increases for CATA administration as well as non-covered operating company employees. CATA and CATM are two different entities. There are programmed increases for bargaining unit employees as included in the collective bargaining agreement.

Jay also said if we needed any volunteering to teach anyone about our programs, ADA, On Demand, or Dial A ride he would be glad to do it.

Felicia said she would reach out to him when she was ready to implement that.

Gil had a question on Page 3 about fare free event, he wanted to promote some projects in Essex with pre-paid fares. He said it seems like an easy thing to do.

Felicia said it is doable. The sponsor would give CATA \$2000 for a weekend, all fares are then pre-paid, and CATA's effort is minimal.

Mayor Verga said it makes sense to discuss the fare free projects at a future meeting.

Jay Smiledge asked about improvements to the bus shelters.

Felicia responded that we have an improvement draft on new shelters but would have to work with the municipality about the seating. We have also reached out to Senator Tarr about putting

bus signs on National Grid Poles. Mayor Verga referred CATA National Grid to speak to about the signs on the poles.

Capital Plan

Stephan Crane asked the definition of the Capital Plan.

Felicia said Capital is building, vehicles, preventative maintenance and long-term projects.

CATA Updates

Ridership is going well and increasing.

Felicia explained about the Karsan eJest Electric Mini Bus we have for a couple of weeks.

Stephen Crane asked the cost difference. It is about \$250,000 for the Karsan bus and a normal 16 passenger bus is \$125,000, a 29ft Diesel bus is about \$600,000, and an electric bus would be in the range of \$1M.

Gil wanted to know about maintaining them. Felicia said there is less maintenance for the electric bus.

Joe said he would like to see the eJest bus run through Hamilton for the Seniors.

Mayor Verga motioned to adjourn at 10:35am

Seconded by Gil Freiden

All in Favor