

MINUTES OF THE  
CAPITAL AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY  
BOARD RETREAT MEETING via ZOOM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 2021; 4:00 P.M.

**PRESENT:** Nathan Triplett, Chair  
Dusty Fancher, Vice Chair  
Shanna Draheim, Secretary/Treasurer  
Dion'trae Hayes  
Mark Grebner  
Robin Lewis  
John Prush  
Jennie Gies  
Derek Melot  
Doug Lecato  
Phil Deschaine

**ABSENT:** Jack Schmitt

**ROLL CALL:** All present except for Jack Schmitt who was absent.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Bradley T. Funkhouser, Andrew Brieschke, Lolo Robison, Jim Frendt, Roger Garza, Dan Goodemoot, Marshea Brown, Dan Hodges, Matt Oudsema, Norm VanAlstine, Craig Frazier and Tina Orlando

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Triplett called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. He thanked the Board for their time and the CATA staff for all their hard work in organizing the Board Retreat.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Bradley T. Funkhouser welcomed everyone and started off the retreat by introducing first speaker, Roger Garza, Director of Operations.

**DEPARTMENT TRENDS AND UPDATES:**

**OPERATIONS:** Roger Garza, Director of Operations, gave an overview of his department including his staff and work force. In 2020, CATA hired and trained two (2) new operator classes. The current operator head count is 245. Operations also promoted a CATA Street Supervisor to the position of MSU Street Supervisor and an operator to the position of Street Supervisor.

CATA and ATU worked together and signed Memorandums of Understanding during the COVID pandemic. There was a 100% volunteer-operator workforce which stepped up to provide service. COVID-19 presented many challenges, however; CATA and ATU worked together to provide safe service.

CATA's system ridership for FY 2020 surpassed \$7 million trips. Fixed routes provided 4,432,615 and paratransit serviced 237,685 trips. Operations implemented work assignments known as "work grouping" which saved CATA \$546,000 in overtime costs.

Community Partnership included: State of Michigan's *2020 Be Counted Census* campaign, Lansing's Women March, City of Lansing's Emergency Management personnel, Ingham County Health Department, Peckham and "essential employees".

Dion'trae Hayes inquired about partnering with communities.

Bradley Funkhouser replied free rides were given to nonprofit organizations.

Roger Garza stated CATA will respond to all first responders' requests for rides.

**PARATRANSIT:** Craig Frazier, Manager of Paratransit presented his overview of paratransit department's staff and ridership service. Most paratransit workers have been working from home during the pandemic.

Paratransit provided 33,814 curb to curb rides for essential needs during the pandemic. All paratransit services including Spec-Tran, combined total was 237,685. Paratransit coordinated with the IGHD to provide 55 trips to COVID-19 test sites. They also established vaccine runs for 385 residents. Paratransit represents CATA on the CACS Policy Council and the Tri County Office on Aging Advisory Council. They coordinate with the Foster Grandparent Program and with the Disability Network Capital Area to monitor CATA's ADA certification contract. Paratransit continues to improve out-county services, improve efficiencies and develop partnerships in the community.

**MAINTENANCE:** Dan Hodges, Director of Maintenance gave his overview of his department. He stated that due to COVID-19, CATA was presented with a number of challenges including daily disinfecting and installing barriers.

Accomplishments in 2020 consist of ordering 15 new Nova buses, receiving 12 new Champion cutaway buses, 25 new Dodge minivans, one (1) 30-foot shopping bus and one (1) new service truck. All used buses and service trucks that had exceeded their useful life were auctioned off.

In 2021, the Maintenance department plans to receive 15 new 2020 Nova buses, eight (8) new Champion cutaway buses, 14 new Dodge minivans, six (6) large buses with emission-friendly engines using a Congestion Air Quality (CMAQ) grant. They also plan on ordering three (3) large electric buses.

Doug Lecato thanked Dan for his hard work during the pandemic.

Jennie Gies inquired about the number of buses that still need to be updated or replaced.

Dan Hodges stated that CATA is catching up to the TAMM plan and he expects that there will approximately 5-6 large buses, 8-12 Champion cutaway buses and 10-15 minivans purchased every year.

**MARKETING:** Lolo Robison, Director of Marketing and Customer Experience, gave her overview of the department's projects. Key accomplishments in customer experience include service skill training and certification, How to Ride CATA videos and 360-degree virtual tours. The department also implemented a Rider Alert project.

Community Partnerships included: Capital Region Housing Collaborative, human trafficking awareness which received a public safety initiative grant, participated in World Equality Day and initiated the installation of ballot boxes

The department hired two (2) Marketing Specialists, promoted a Marketing Assistant to Marketing Manager and promoted a Customer Experience Assistant to Customer Experience Supervisor.

The Marketing department responded to COVID-19 by creating a COVID-19 action plan and task force to implement Governor Whitmer's Executive orders and Mask Mandate. Security was expanded to all CATA locations and public access was closed.

Strategic goals include continued support for neighboring transit initiatives such as public education for millage, social media, training; website content management – initiated and ongoing. Transit advertising and rebranding will continue to be researched in 2021. Free rides to veterans will continue in 2021 and CATA will celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2022.

Shanna Draheim expressed her love for her CATA mask. She also inquired about CATA's rebranding.

Lolo Robison stated that due to finances as a result of COVID-19, CATA has decided to hold off on rebranding the CATA logo. There have been discussions and she will present a timeline in the future.

John Prush expressed his appreciation for CATA's partnership with MSU and thanked Lolo and her team for their contributions.

Doug Lecato inquired about advertising on buses.

Lolo Robison replied the advertising project is being scoped out.

**HUMAN RESOURCES:** Marshea Brown, Director of Human Resources started with the year in review. Ms. Brown hired a Human Resources Generalist and Assistant. Job descriptions were also updated and will continue to be updated every five (5) years. Thanks to Employee Navigator, employees are now able to manage their benefits online.

Key accomplishments in the department for employees include: access badges, annual flu shots, COVID-19 vaccination clinic, Veterans Day-recognition of veteran employees and service incentives for ATU and administrative staff.

To help protect employees from COVID-19 the Human Resources department implemented screening and temperature checks provided by the Bright Star Medical Staffing. CATA purchased automated temperature kiosks and practiced COVID-19 safety protocols such as mandatory facemasks and social distancing at all times.

Vaccination registrations for Phase 1B, Group B: frontline essential workers were initiated on January 4, 2021.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act, FCRA will continue through March 31, 2021. Hazard pay and employee telecommute will also continue until further notice.

Future plans include updating the Basic Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), hiring a retiree medical agent to manage our retirees' pension and benefits. The department will also update the Administrative Employee Guidebook and vacation policy for the administrative staff.

Diversity Equity & Inclusion Task Force had their first meeting on June 25, 2020. The meetings are open to all CATA employees through Zoom. The goal of the task force is to promote employee awareness and increase representation among CATA's workforce. CATA is a dynamic workplace and is dedicated to diverse training for all employees.

Doug Lecato inquired on the CATA badges.

Marshea Brown stated that HR collaborated with facilities to create the badges.

Dion'trae Hayes commended Marshea Brown on her work with HR and the DEI.

**FACILITIES:** Norm VanAlstine, Manager of Facilities gave his report on facility upgrades including security and hiring skilled employees to bring work projects back in-house. CATA also received many energy saving rebates from Board Water & Light (BWL) by implementing LED light conversion at the CTC and Gateway.

Facilities will continue to focus on community partnerships for keeping bus stops and shelters safe and clean.

In response to the pandemic, facilities developed a response team to execute best practices. The team supplied PPE and disinfectants to buses and CATA buildings. Signs were installed to promote awareness and reduce building capacities.

Upcoming plans include increased security and software upgrades at the CTC and Gateway and replacing roofs and HVAC units at CTC and Tranter.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:** Dan Goodemoot, Director of IT gave his accomplishments over the past year which included Trapeze v.19 and fareboxes being upgraded.

COVID-19 shifted employees from primarily working on desktops to laptops to support a more flexible workforce. Technology was deployed to support additional call center staff to work from home while kiosks for temperature readings were stationed for employees to use before entering the building.

IT will continue to update CATA's technology by implementing contactless payment, Microsoft 365, Transit Master Software, MPSCS-radio system and cameras on buses.

Doug Lecato inquired about cyber security.

Dan Goodemoot stated that CATA has systems in place to ensure security. When Microsoft 365 is installed, CATA will be even more secure since the software provides its own security.

John Prush inquired about bus badges for MSU riders.

Dan Goodemoot replied that riders could be provided with a similar chip that is used in the CATA badges or a smartphone id that could be used to provide contactless payment.

Phil Deschaine inquired about the mobile application for Paratransit riders.

Dan Goodemoot stated that now that Trapeze v.19 has been installed, CATA is in the testing phase. Once testing has been completed, CATA will be ready to release the application to the public. He anticipated 3-6 months before the project will be ready.

Doug Lecato inquired about new finance software.

Dan Goodemoot replied that the finance software was updated in November and will continue to be used until a replacement is found.

**PLANNING & DEVELOPEMENT:** Matt Oudsema, Director of Planning discussed the reduced service timeline in response to the pandemic. Free fares were issued yet ridership was highly impacted and fluctuated between 33% to 55% decline. MSU routes saw a 99% decline in service due to online classes.

CATA received \$18.3 million in CARES and \$16.2 million in CRRSAA that was directed to payroll and operations of public transportation systems.

Planning will continue to work with Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT); Automated Bus Consortium, City of Lansing; Bus Stop Improvements, MSU; Bus Stop Shelter Solar Lighting Project and Non-Profit Organizations; Mikey23.

**SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS:** Matt Oudsema reported on service changes and service options for FY 2022. He then presented charts to showcase the outcomes.

Dusty Fancher thanked Matt for his report and expressed her enthusiasm to see the east-west connector return and really appreciated the connections made along the way.

Derek Melot inquired about fixed route service reduction compared to other transit agencies. He also requested the number one (1) challenge with creating more solar shelters.

Matt Oudsema stated that CATA's reduction in service was effected even more so than other transit agencies due to our partnership with MSU. He also mentioned that the biggest challenge with building more solar shelters is keeping the charge so they remain lit.

Shanna Draheim echoed Dusty's remarks regarding the east-west connector.

Doug Lecato inquired about the impact of service reduction related to the funding CATA receives from the federal government.

Matt Oudsema noted that CATA submits annual data to the FTA. The FTA has stated that they will accept 2019 or 2020 ridership data, therefore; CATA's will submit the best data results in hopes of receiving the same funding.

**FINANCIAL PLANNING/PROJECTIONS:** Jim Frenedt, Director of Finance reported on the department's highlights including the promotion of Anita Detwiler from Accountant II to Finance Manager and former Finance Director, Pat Lemon to Manager of Financial Compliance. He also stated most of his team has been working remotely in accordance with State of Michigan's guidelines.

Jim Frenedt presented financial charts to compare historical performances, FY 2021 budget vs. actual revenues and FY 2021 budget vs. actual expenses. He stated that CATA's CARES AND CRRSAA grants have really given CATA the ability to improve and expand operating services.

Property taxes are estimated to increase to 2.5%-3% as well as federal and state revenues.

Salaries and wages are projected to be up by 3%, fringe benefits up by 7.5%, fuel expenses up by 2% with overall expenses projected to be up by 3%.

Expanded service is projected to increase by \$100,000 per year while service offerings are expected to decrease slightly for 2022 and then gradually increase over the next four (4) years.

Bradley Funkhouser summarized a very unique past year. CATA managed to provide service while following COVID-19 safety regulations. Other transit agencies had significant layoffs yet; CATA has been very cautious on spending. The grants CATA received are specific and can only be used in certain areas.

Doug Lecato thanked Brad for his leadership and the CATA staff for their presentation and hard work over the past year.

Shanna Draheim stated CATA has done a remarkable job this past year and expressed her enthusiasm on future investments.

Phil Deschaine appreciated cutbacks yet expressed his concern towards seeing empty buses and the negative image it presents.

Mark Grebner acknowledged Meridian Township's generous millage that was awarded to CATA. He also commented on the unknown future and the need to use the resources that CATA has been granted responsibly.

Dusty Fancher recognized all the counties that support CATA. She also commented on empty buses and believes that CATA is a service that needs to stay flexible.

Chair Triplett thanked the Board for their time and CATA staff for all their hard work.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**CLOSING REMARKS:**

Bradley Funkhouser commended the CATA staff and their role in providing transparency. He also thanked the Board for their continued support.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There was no further business. Chair Triplett adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shanna Draheim  
Secretary/Treasurer

Tina Orlando  
Recording Secretary