



**WACCAMAW REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY  
d/b/a THE COAST RTA  
REGULAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
Wednesday August 30, 2023  
12:00 PM**

**Board Present:** Katharine D'Angelo  
Darrell Eickhoff  
Lillie Jean Johnson  
Marvin Keene  
Elijah Metherd  
Bernard Silverman  
Randal Wallace

**Staff Present:** Brian Piascik, General Manager/CEO  
Ron Prater, CFO  
Candace Brown, Senior Planner/Special Projects  
Ann-Martin Buffkin, Board Liaison  
Lauren Morris, Director of Strategic Communications

**Visitors:** Robert Pawlowski

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the 2023 meeting schedule was provided to the press at the beginning of the 2023 fiscal year, stating the date, time and location. In addition, notice of this meeting was provided to the press and stakeholders, stating the date, time, and location on August 30, 2023.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Keene called the meeting to order at 12:03 PM and welcomed everyone. He also asked for a moment of silence for Dr. Sheehan and family for their loss.

**INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Dr. Keene gave the invocation, then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL/ANNOUNCEMENT OF QUORUM:** Roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** A voice vote was taken; no nays being heard; the agenda was approved unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** A voice vote was taken; no nays being heard; the minutes were approved unanimously.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS:** Dr. Keene greeted and introduced Robert Pawlowski.

Robert Pawlowski introduced himself and expressed his condolences to Dr. Sheehan and family. Mr. Pawlowski thanked the Board for inviting him to the July 2023 board meeting. He stated it was a pleasure to be here in person. Mr. Pawlowski stated the route changes the Authority implemented were disappointing as it is important to offer this service to tourists and citizens. Mr. Pawlowski reiterated the importance of having/gaining support from state elected officials and how important transit is for everyone.

**SERVICE/PAC COMMITTEE:** Mr. Piascik began the Service/Pac committee update by stating that Coast RTA has had several meetings with our vanpool provider and several employers who are excited about coordinating vanpools among their employees. He stated we are holding back on a press conference until we have a van. He stressed the importance of having the van as once it gets out, we expect we will be busy. The Board will re-visit vanpool discussion in 6 months (February 2024).

Mr. Piascik stated that it has been a slow summer regarding entertainment shuttles. It appears that marketing has changed; for example, visitors are no longer stopping at the hotel's front desk to check in. We must change our way of advertising to market our services. Ridership in July 2023 was considerably lower than the prior July. Mr. Piascik does not think this is a tourism issue, but rather a lack of ridership from entertainment shuttles. Mr. Eickhoff and Mr. Silverman rode the North Myrtle Beach shuttle the week of August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and stated they were the only passengers riding at that time as it was the middle of the day. Mr. Eickhoff stated that when he saw the North Myrtle Beach Entertainment Shuttle that same evening, he was surprised by the lack of riders. Mr. Eickhoff complimented the driver and the trainer of the shuttle and how well they communicated and worked together. Mr. Silverman stated he feels one issue with the entertainment shuttles and all our routes is frequency. He stated riders want to be picked up frequently and not have one hour waits. Mr. Piascik stated that the last portion of August, the North Myrtle Beach shuttle was allowed to go into Barefoot Landing, and we were able to wrap poles that provided better advertisement. With these two additions, he hopes there will be an increase in ridership next year. Mrs. Morris stated she hopes to also do airplane advertising for next year in hopes of expanding marketing for the shuttles. She also hopes to get information in pre-planning packages at resorts so that tourists will know the resort has an entertainment shuttle that services them.

Mr. Piascik reported that fare revenue in July 2023 was approximately \$41,000, which is not bad considering our reduced fare. Tap is running about 17% of ridership. Mr. Silverman stated he would like to discuss fare boxes in the near future.

An update on Kimley Horn illustrated trip data that came from cellphone and credit card data and showed travel patterns. The illustration breaks our region up into sub areas. Mr. Piascik has a meeting with Kimley Horn in the following week and hopes for Board participation in this meeting. Kimley Horn is close to providing our fare structure results. Additionally, Kimley Horn is in the process of developing a financial plan model.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:** Mr. Silverman began the finance committee update by recapping what was discussed at the last finance committee meeting. He stated the 6-year plan update is needed but we will wait for the GSATs study for guidance and then work on that plan. The July 2023 financials and the budget revision were discussed. The budget revision has no additional revenue lost and no expenses changed, it simply smooths out overages and shortages. The budget was recommended to be approved and voted on at today's meeting. On the income statement for July 2023, the big change is in office supplies and legal. Those two categories have been changed to reflect the cost of the IT changes. Mr. Piascik showed a slide of budget revision that displayed altered line items that totaled the same amount of FY2023 original budget. Mr. Prater suggested adding a revenue line to the 12-month rolling expense trending graph to track revenue as we are expenses. Mr. Piascik stated there will be a FY2024 budget revision sooner rather than later. Mr. Piascik will be meeting with Horry County on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2023 and will notify them of the budget revision.

**Resolution:** Resolution #AUG2023-10 – Approval of FY2023 Revised Budget. A voice vote was taken; no nays being heard; the resolution passes unanimously to approve the FY2023 Revised Budget.

**COMPENSATION COMMITTEE:** None

**AD HOC COMMITTEES:** None

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:** Coast RTA will be rescheduling its' 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration to September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, from 10am to 2pm due to inclement weather. Mr. Piascik invited all the board members. The plan is to have the celebration and then the September 2023 board meeting.

Board expense report procedures were tabled until next meeting (September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023). There is a new report for the board members to use and will be ready and available at that meeting.

The Board asked for nominations for vice-chair for next term. Mr. Eickhoff nominated Mr. Silverman as incoming vice-chair, seconded by Ms. Lillie Jean Johnson. No other nominations were made. A voice vote was taken; no nays being heard; Mr. Silverman was appointed unanimously.

**GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:** Mr. Piascik began the General Manager's report by providing an update on Hurricane Idalia and our operations. As of 11am, we should feel the affects by 8pm this evening. Georgetown County will get impacts before Horry County. As a result, we do not want to operate buses in winds over 35/40 mph. Coast will discontinue service today in Georgetown County at 6:30pm. Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach, and Conway will be suspending service at 8am August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. All doors in Conway will be locked manually and sandbags will be in place. The forecast is calling for 6-8 inches of rain on the coast and more than that inland. Coast will not begin service Thursday morning until 10am, although this may change depending on how the weather goes overnight. Drivers will report at 9am and maintenance at 7am. We have given notice to news agencies as well as put updates on our app and social media outlets.

Bluejeans update. We have had lots of technical issues, specifically, Bluejeans does not work well with apple products. Verizon is not supporting Bluejeans anymore; therefore, we will be replacing Bluejeans with Teams. Additionally, we will be providing new iPads to the Board members, and all of this will be managed by Bmore. Teams installation is scheduled for September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

The split operations lease has been signed and the deposit and first month's rent has been made. The owners have agreed to add ventilation, expand a doorway, and add sprinklers as well as possibly adding one office to the office space. We will be splitting those costs. We should start moving in late September 2023, early October 2023. There will be changes in the Conway building to spread out a little. We will still be fueling, probing, and hosteling here in Conway. We are looking at purchasing a more permanent lift so that we can lift 3 vehicles. Dead-head costs have not been determined but with only being 3.3 miles away, costs shouldn't be too much.

We should have clearance on the parcel on Grissom Parkway in the next 45-60 days, and then we can proceed with the transaction of purchasing the lot.

5310 Grant update. GSATs just released that there is money available for transit (nearly \$1 million). Mr. Piascik will ask for six dual wheel transits and feels confident we will get at least four. There will be a resolution for the Board to approve in order to go after this grant (should be in September 2023 or early October 2023). The money will be available in January 2024 and hopefully will get the transits before summer 2024.

Coast RTA kicked off the FAIR program. This program will help figure out how to get the unbanked to use the system by providing a debit card. During the pilot program, riders will only be able to use the debit card on transit; however, in the future, the plan would be that riders could use the card on other things. We have talked with a local credit union that would like to set up new accounts. Mr. Piascik will show slides during the next Service/PAC on FAIR program. Visa is on board and is very serious about being a key player. This should be a boost to our tapping system. We were chosen for the pilot program because we are the only transit authority with full implementation of a tap system, and we are the right size.

Mr. Piascik stated that he anticipates an across-the-board increase in wages which will increase our entry rate for drivers, which will hopefully help with driver shortages. Mr. Piascik stated that we are not doing a great job in finding out why our employees are leaving so we will be working on that. Mr. Eickhoff stated that we are not competitive enough when it comes to pay. Mr. Piascik pointed out that one of our advantages over the school system is if we are down drivers, we have supervisors that can step in and continue the route.

**FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:** Mr. Eickhoff stated that Congress voted on raising the debt ceiling this year and proposed a \$2.3 billion reduction for transportation. He asked how that would roll downhill and affect us. Mr. Piascik answered by saying we would be impacted in the formula.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** None.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** None

**ADJOURNMENT:** There was a motion by Mr. Eickhoff and a second by Mr. Metherd to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Keene adjourned the meeting at 1:45 PM.