



**NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF MPOs  
TRANSIT WORKING GROUP  
September 13, 2023  
Teleconference  
11:00 PM – 12:30 PM**

**MEETING NOTES**

**1. Participating**

- A/GFTC – Jack Mance
- BMTS – Scott Reigle
- CDTC – Carrie Ward
- DCTC – Mark Debald
- ECTC – Courtney Dunn
- GBNRTC – Matthew Grabau
- GTC – Charlie Rieck
- ITCTC – Jay Lambrix
- NYMTC – Carl King
- NYSDOT – Tom Vaughn
- SMTC – Mario Colone
- UCTC – Brian Slack
- WJCTC – Sarah Freda
- WJCTC – Barb Cadwell
- Tompkins County – Frank Doldo
- TransPo – Chris Titze
- TransPo – Scott LeVine
- UAlbany – Catherine Lawson
- UAlbany/AVAIL – Erik Krans
- Planning4Places – James Levy

**1. Introductions**

M. Colone opened the meeting.

**2. Approval of meeting notes.**

The March meeting notes were approved.

**3. Shared-Use Transit Software Project (SCI) – Close-out Discussion/Presentation**

Team members from Avail and Transpo Group presented an overview of the project and the findings/recommendations. The presentation included a discussion of the four case studies and the Playbook. In general, it was found that each software product has value for transit planning but none of them do everything and each has technical limitations. For sharing across the state, a lead agency would be required to manage the software – one has not yet been identified. Project documents, including the meeting presentation, are available on the NYSAMPO website at <https://www.nysmpos.org/shared-cost-initiative>. A copy of the presentation will be sent to the Working Group with the meeting summary email. The team will be presenting on this effort at the NYPTA conference on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

**4. NYSDOT Updates**

Tom noted that letters are going out for 5310 and 5311 has been finalized. There will be a new 5310 solicitation this fall, likely after the NYPTA conference. NYSDOT would like to talk with MPO staff about how to streamline the evaluation process and STIP records for TIP amendments coming out of the MPO process and working their way through NYSDOT and FTA process. NYSDOT is working on developing a microtransit program.

## 5. FTA Updates

No Report

## 6. MPO Updates

Mark noted that the Dutchess County Public Transit was awarded a \$450,000 (\$500,000 with the match) grant to study electrification and how routes tie into equity issues and vulnerable populations. He has asked if any of the MPOs would be willing to share their thoughts about the deployment of EV buses in their areas or topics that we should include in a planning scope of services. While fleet and facility needs will be assessed, they are looking for any thoughts on unexpected items others have encountered that they should be aware of for such a study.

Courtney noted that there is an RFP out currently for the Elmira region through the same funding program. The RFP asks consultants to determine if Electrification is the direction to head or if some other option should be considered. The operator did an internal review and found that electrification would be a 2:1 replacement which is generally not feasible. They are hoping for a more realistic option.

Carrie mentioned that there is a challenge on the garage side of these changes related to lack of space. Also, in the Capital Region, drivers are assigned to a particular route, but the buses go out as they are available, so it is hard to ensure a particular but goes on a particular route.

Mario discussed the CENTRO Exploring Tomorrow's Transit (ETT) program (see <https://smtcmpo.org/centroett/>). This is a public input focused effort to learn more from the public about needs, wants and desires of the community related to the transit system. SMTC has undertaken many outreach activities and has over 1,000 responses to a survey. Open houses were held in April and May. Once the project is completed, SMTC will end their effort, but the CENTRO work will continue. It is anticipated that BRT will come about in the region in the next 2-3 years along with an expansion of the bike and e-scooter share program. CENTRO is also starting an on-demand PILOT program in Rome that will likely expand to Onondaga County in a few years.

Carl discussed the Integrated Corridor Management Study being done by NYMTC along several highways. This work looks at how to make travel along highways flow better. There are discussions underway to identify how to extend the program into New Jersey where there is a significant amount of new development taking place. NYMTC is working with NYSDOT and other agencies, including PANYNJ. NYMTC is also doing a Decision Support System (DSS) program trying to automate control centers so that VMS, detection devices and cameras can be better linked. There is also an EV effort underway at the Bronx Hunts Point Terminal Market. This effort is looking at retrofitting trucks that currently idle at the market to keep food refrigerated, with units that eliminate the need to idle.

Jay asked if there is still a conversation going on in NYS about converting transit fleets to hydrogen. He sees a big question needing to be discussed about the potential investment in hydrogen buses as it appears that trends show less interest in hydrogen and instead

considering EVs. Mario noted that CENTRO is heavily invested in CNG but is looking at hydrogen fuel cells. Jay noted that sourcing hydrogen is an issue/consideration for this discussion.

Charlie noted that RGRTA has three hydrogen fuel cell buses on order to be delivered in 2024. He does not know how they plan to source hydrogen but will look to see if there is any information on this. They anticipate installing fueling stations at the yard. Jay stated that he is concerned that investments in hydrogen buses may be problematic if EVs are seen as the future option and are more economically viable options. Charlie noted that the decision to invest in hydrogen fuel cell buses was done because the agency is experiencing EV range reduction issues, particularly with the heat or a/c is on. These issues have forced RGRTA to use EV buses on shorter routes – operational issues developed with the need to charge buses every few hours.

## **7. Work Plan Update**

Jim discussed the Work Plan. It seems like we are meeting the work plan goals but if anyone has any items they want to focus on, or a separate item to consider, please let us know.

## **8. Other Items**

Nicole McGrath provided the NYSAMPO Directors with an FHWA Office of Planning September updates email that Jim shared with the Working Group. The email contains information that might be of interest. A copy of the email is attached.

## **9. Action Items**

For the next call: Find a presenter to discuss hydrogen buses and/or NCDOT presentation.

The remaining meeting for 2023 is scheduled for December 12.