



**NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF MPOs  
TRANSIT WORKING GROUP  
December 14, 2021  
Teleconference  
11:00 PM – 12:30 PM**

**MEETING NOTES**

**1. Participating**

- AGFTC – Jack Mance
- BMIS – Scott Reigle
- CDTC – Carrie Ward
- DCTC – Mark Debald
- ECTC – Angela Wood
- GTC – Alexander Kone
- HOCTC – Barb Hauck
- ITCTC – Jay Lambrix
- NYCTCC – Carl King
- NYSDOT – Barbara Cadwell
- NYSDOT – Tom Vaughn
- OCTC – Jessica Ridgeway
- SMTC – Mario Colone
- UCTC – Brian Slack
- Ulster Co. Dept. of Envr. – Nicholas Hvozda
- NYPTA – Robert Zerrillo
- AVAIL – Catherine Lawson
- AVAIL – Adam Tobey
- AVAIL – Erika Corsi
- AVAIL – Erik Krans
- Creighton Manning – Dan Berkowsky
- Sam Schwartz – Dora Miketa
- Transpogroup– Chris Titze
- Planning4Places – James Levy

**1. Introductions**

M. Colone opened the meeting.

**2. Approval of meeting notes.**

The September meeting notes were approved.

**3. Presentations**

a. NYPTA Year-End Update. Robert Zerrillo

Bob presented a year-end update presentation discussing the general impact on transit from COVID and current state of transit in NYS. Ridership and revenue were both down in 2021. Generally, service is in the 60-80% range of pre-pandemic levels. Downstate ridership is lagging because of a decrease in business travel. It is likely to be a few years before service returns to normal levels. Weekend ridership is coming back faster than weekday in many places. The recent NYS Comptrollers report covered challenges for regional authorities. If ridership lags, additional revenue will be needed.

The current status of transit was summarized as follows (details are provided in the presentation slides which were distributed to Working Group members):

- Transit systems have filled the gap needed for school bus driver shortages. Systems are pulling drivers off the public bus system to ensure kids can get to school.
- Structural operating deficits remain

- Changing ridership levels and patterns
- Growing capital needs plus additional cost to transition to zero emissions vehicles
- Federal Infrastructure Act provides increased resources, but still a significant capital funding gap.

A question was asked about how providers are addressing the driver shortage. Bob noted that the main issue is getting people to apply. CDTA has been very proactive in advertising for new drivers and not waiting for applications to come in. Other issues include a very slow bureaucratic process to get a permit, apply for a CDL and take the exam. There are discussions ongoing with the Governor's Office to try and help solve the problem by trying to explore ways to make permit tests easier to take and reduce the waiting time required to take the permit test. Regarding the CDL license, it is actually a 3-part test where applicants have to have knowledge about engines and other elements related primarily to truck driving that bus drivers don't need to address. Bus drivers for school and public systems don't do maintenance on a vehicle. Jay noted that it seems the focus is on expensive and labor intensive high-tech solutions and stated that focus should be on investing in high-frequency autonomous-capable train networks with safe bike networks that feed into those networks. This type of system could help make transit systems more resilient to market disruptions and technological innovations. These are relatively low-cost solutions that do not require as much labor for operations and technologies also exist and are proven and reliable.

b. UCAT Bus Fleet Electrification Report – Brian, Nick Hvozda and Dan Berkowski.

Brian and Nick provided an overview of the project. The UCAT Electrification Study was initiated by the Ulster County Department of the Environment. A unique approach to study the issue of electrification was identified in the UPWP several years ago. Ulster County received a NYSERDA grant through a PON to undertake the project. A significant component of the project was completion of the document which is transferrable to other providers. Ulster County has approximately 35 vehicles in fleet, including hybrids and clean diesel. With the VW settlement funds, UCAT will have three new vehicles to deploy next year. One challenge with electric buses in Ulster County is topography. There are a lot of hills and rural areas.

Dan presented on the Electrification Report. The project was authorized to proceed in 2019. CME partnered with SSE (Chicago) office and Sage (electrical engineer). The goal was to determine the feasibility of full electrification of the UCAT fleet. The presentation covered the main focus areas of the Study: To determine how best to deploy the initial fleet (three 35-foot buses), understand implications for facility operations and costs, plan for incremental implementation of electric buses, and developing a phased capital expenditure plan to begin to identify funding and improvement milestones (details are provided in the presentation slides which were distributed to Working Group members).

c. NYSAMPO Shared Transit Analytics Update – AVAIL, SSE & Transpogroup

Tasks 2.1 and 2.2 are Market Analyses. A market assessment was conducted in the Fall of 2021 to better understand transit planning software usage at the metropolitan

planning level, as well the challenges agencies confront in procuring and/or using transit planning software packages. 21 survey responses were received. The next step is to put together a process to guide pilots. The project team includes the UAlbany visualization lab (AVAIL), SSE & Transpogroup. While the survey was underway, the team at AVAIL tested a number of different types of software. The focus of this effort is to work with the MPOs to think about future needs and future projects that could be part of a PILOT under this SCI. There are recommendations for two types of software: Open Source Transit Planning Software (Very powerful with lots of features but complicated - will get assistance to do this in the PILOT) and Proprietary Software which hasn't been tested as deeply as desired for this project, but utilizes software already being used by transit agencies. For PILOT projects, the project may work with agencies already using software to undertake a planning exercise that would be of use to all MPOs. The team has gone through a robust and thorough review of software packages. The project is at the point of putting out an open call for PILOT projects. The project will be testing different "instances". May be a case where MPO is running an exercise or may be more of a hands-off approach where the consultant team does the work. Next steps include developing the PILOT process including how to create the open call for applications and develop goals and key performance indicators that should come out of the PILOT. *The tech memo and the presentation were distributed to the Working Group after the meeting.*

#### **4. NYSDOT Updates**

Tom discussed the 5310 program. It is about 10 weeks out from being released. There are supply chain issues that are making prices increase. NYSDOT is trying to finalize prices for the application. There is no 5310 funding in the CARES Act. These funds were included in the CRRSAA (2021) and ARP (2021). Regarding COVID funding, approximately 62% is allocated to NYMTC with 12% to rural areas. Webinars detailing the program are likely to come out in January 2022.

The Mobility Services RFI is in process with an estimated release date in late January. NYSDOT staff will reach out to MPOs regarding mobility issues. If there are any questions, please contact Tom or Jim Davis.

#### **5. MPO Updates**

None

#### **6. Work Plan**

Jim noted that there are the Best Practices Toolkit (which will include Corridor Transit & Land Use Strategies) is underway but that will likely extend into the Spring before being finalized. It is being coordinated with other website update efforts currently underway. If there are any thoughts on focus areas or items to include, please contact him at [jlevy@planning4places.com](mailto:jlevy@planning4places.com).

#### **7. Other:**

There is still an opening for Co-Chair. If you are interested, please contact Mario at [mcolone@smtcmpo.org](mailto:mcolone@smtcmpo.org) and Jim at [jlevy@planning4places.com](mailto:jlevy@planning4places.com).

The next meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2021 at 11:00am.