



Town of Apex Transit Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

February 23rd, 2023

4:00pm-6:00pm

3rd Floor Training Room, Apex Town Hall

Meeting Purpose

The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss the development of a proposed Bus Stop Improvement Policy and process, as well as discuss short-term and long-term goals for bus stop improvements in Town.

Meeting Outcomes

Town staff will review comments from the meeting's discussion and send updated proposed Bus Stop Improvement Policy to TAC members ahead of the next regular TAC meeting.

Attendees

Committee members:

- Linda Barrett
(joined remotely)
- Nick Bryant
- Amanda Bunce, ex officio
- Kurt Pfeifer
- Angela Reincke, ex officio
- Stuart Wagner
- Andrew Werking

Staff support:

- Shannon Cox
- Katie Schwing
- Jenna Shouse
- Lauren Sisson

Guests:

- Councilor Brett Gantt (Apex Town Council) (joined remotely)

Absent:

- Joanna Helms, ex officio
- David Yokum

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Stuart Wagner opened the meeting at 4:04 pm and welcomed the members and guests. There was a round of introductions. The meeting was simultaneously conducted in person and member Linda Barrett and guest Brett Gantt attended remotely. The meeting was also livestreamed to the Town's YouTube page [note: due to audio file corruption, the file is not available for permanent posting on the Town's YouTube page].

2. Bus Stop Improvement Policy presentation – Review from January Meeting

(Informational Item: Katie Schwing, Town of Apex)



Katie Schwing provided a refresher presentation of the item presented at the January TAC meeting introducing the concept of a bus stop improvement policy and proposed timeline. She reminded the group that one main factor driving this initiative is to assist with the identification and prioritization of improvements that could be implemented using funding that the Town applied for through the Wake Transit Community Funding Area program. Katie added that the Town recently learned that this application progressed past the first round of review and will be considered for the FY24 Wake Transit Work Plan, and if approved, the funding would be in place starting July 1, 2023.

3. Short-term and Long-term Goals for Bus Stop Improvements

(Discussion Item: Town Staff, TAC members, and guests)

Katie Schwing introduced the discussion item to gain a better understanding of the TAC's goals for bus stop improvements. She noted this was in response to a suggestion that Andy Werking made at the January meeting. She provided a framework to consider both 1) short-term goals as those with a one- to three-year time frame, and assuming more concrete projects under the current operating conditions, and 2) long-term goals as those with a three-to-five year-plus time frame, that would include more systemic changes, or take potential future conditions into account.

Katie then presented items to consider for improvements and asked the group if the list was complete in their mind or if they had additional ideas.

Added items:

- Nick – Public art (group acknowledged it may need to be funded separately from the other improvements)
- Mr. Gantt – Smart light poles (with wi-fi)
- Stuart – Wi-fi at bus stops
- Stuart – Digital timing board
- Shannon – Mobility hub improvements (restrooms, bike lockers, etc.)
- Shannon – ADA concrete pad

Katie also presented some high-level cost estimates for some amenities (bench, trash receptacle, bike rack, and shelter) and provided rough examples of how they could be distributed based on an assumption of \$200,000 in funding. Any asked if the cost included maintenance – Katie responded that it did not.

Katie shared some photos of other improvements to get some feedback from the group. There was interest in the solar lighting added to the bus stop post illustrated by a stop in Durham. Stuart Wagner wondered if an emergency call box might be a good idea, especially for those without a cell phone. Katie acknowledged that they require connections to a phone line. Amanda Bunce thought it was a nice idea to provide some comfort and security to customers waiting for the bus. She added that in her experience as a transit rider, lighting did make a difference. Nick proposed that the Town could discuss with Police about specific areas that might need more safety features based on feedback they've received.

Katie also asked the group if they thought improvements of accessibility to and from the stops, like bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, lighting, crosswalks, bus pullouts and bump outs should be included in this policy.



The group discussed the possibility of adding a second category for mobility hub improvements, such as the items Shannon mentioned and thought it would be a good idea.

The group discussed the possibility of projects like these to be more expensive than the amenities installation, but that in some cases it may be warranted to use the funding for those types of improvements, but they should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Andy Werking suggested that the policy include a clause to include these types of improvements, but limit their use so that it would not be a detriment to the other improvements.

Katie then presented some discussion prompts to help determine the groups thoughts on the following and Jenna Shouse recorded ideas on the powerpoint slide as noted below:

- “All bus stops should at least have...”
 - Stuart – Sign, lighting, ADA pad
 - Nick – ADA pad
 - Stuart – Wouldn’t want to characterize a shelter as a luxury
 - Andy – Trash can
 - Angela – Comment on the responsibility of collecting trash
 - Stuart – A bike rack is not needed at every stop

Angela Reincke brought up the issue of maintenance over time and needing to have a plan and budget in place to empty the trash receptacles, for example. She mentioned that the Parks and Rec Dept has many trash and recycling bins on the greenways, and that it is a regular task to maintain them, but they’ve determined it is worth the effort. She suggested that the group be mindful of that.

Angela also suggested taking areas into account that might be connections to greenways or pedestrian networks, transfers to other routes, etc, and consider bike racks there.

Stuart Wagner acknowledged that, and also wondered if the expense may be outweighed by the expenses incurred if the trash receptacles are not installed (i.e. dealing with litter, complaints, etc).

Shannon said that the bus route operations funding did include some funding for regular maintenance of the stops.

Brett Gantt asked if having a shelter available at a stop has an effect on ridership. Katie said she had seen some studies reporting a correlation, but the actual amount of ridership gained is not clear. However, it could be pretty safe to assume that having a shelter would have a positive effect on ridership.

Andy added that when talking to people, having a shelter is one of the most preferred items.

The group generally agreed that a bus stop sign, lighting, ADA pad, trash can, and bench should be considered basic improvements that all stops should qualify for. Katie mentioned this can be revisited later in the discussion as well.

- “We should ensure that X amount of riders have...”
 - Andy – Question of rider demographics and trip purposes
 - Katie – Census data and rider surveys



Andy Werking asked about the ability to understand demographic information of the riders at the stop level. He wondered if it makes sense to find the core groups so that the Town could ensure that improvements are provided where needed. Katie mentioned that the Town did not have great data for the route yet, and that there are two typical ways to gather this data: from the Census and from rider surveys. She added that GoTriangle is working on a regional customer survey and that staff was 99% sure that GoApex would be included in that survey, tentatively to take place in late April. This would hopefully provide information at the route level, but not the stop level.

Andy asked if the rider apps would have demographic information about their users that could be used to better understand the ridership. He said he would be fairly certain that any app these days has demographic information of all sorts. Katie said she wasn't sure, but could ask GoCary if they knew of demographic data from Transloc or other apps.

- “We should be spending at least/most...”

Andy asked if there was an industry standard for share of costs spent per rider or per operating budget. Katie said from her recollection it can vary widely by agency and depends on the local context. She said there used to be a rule that at least 1% of operating funding agencies received from the FTA 5307 formula funding program would have to be spent on bus stop improvements. She didn't think that was in place anymore, but that some agencies would spend near that level and some much more. She said she could look into it some more to find out. Andy asked if there is an example agency to use as a “gold standard”. Katie said that she thought Portland TriMet might be a good resource because they are good at recording their projects and initiatives and make a lot of improvements.

The group acknowledged that GoApex is in the “startup” phase and may need more investment now to set a standard for the stops, so the spending should probably not be linear. Andy suggested that this could be reviewed annually by the TAC.

4. Qualification Criteria Discussion

(Discussion Item: Town Staff, TAC members, and guests)

Katie presented the idea of using qualification criteria to identify and prioritize improvements at stops. She reminded the group of an initial process introduced at the January TAC meeting that used a matrix of qualification factors and feasibility factors to prioritize groups of stops.

She then provided some examples of how other transit agencies decide on what stops warrant amenities, including GoRaleigh, GoDurham, Charlotte CATS and GRTC Transit System in Richmond, VA.

Stuart & Andy liked Charlotte's approach for long-term stop improvements. They thought that perhaps now, the Town could focus on short-term improvements, but could craft the policy in a way to graduate to this approach.

Brett Gantt suggested to focus on transfer stops.



Andy again suggested that rider demographics would be important to consider in this process.

Katie presented a list of possible criteria to use and asked the group if they thought anything should be added or removed. She mentioned not being sure about the shade option because it might be hard to measure. Katie also suggested adding population characteristics of teenagers or those with disabilities as factors to consider, based on previous discussion. Shannon wondered if the category of population with disabilities might be covered by the paratransit service. Katie mentioned that not all disabilities prevent people from riding the fixed route service, so that might be a reason to include it. Someone mentioned the term “reliant populations” from the example in Charlotte which included both elderly populations and population with a disability.

The group discussed that these could be used, but the qualification threshold could be low for now, since the service is still in a “start-up” phase. The Town also may have a somewhat limited opportunity to use CFA funding for capital projects now rather than later, if Staff apply and receive funding for a second CFA operating project, the Town’s annual “take” of CFA program funding would be higher with less available for capital projects.

Someone asked about expanding the land use/destinations list to include civic spaces, basic needs, places like Western Wake Crisis Ministries, etc.

Andy asked if we have surveys asking what riders want to see. Jenna mentioned that the GoApex Circulator Study did include outreach about this, and we could review to see what was said.

Shannon posed a question to the group. She noted that sometimes, funding opportunities present themselves that the Town may want to pursue that may not necessarily be the same priority order as our policy. Should we still pursue those projects? Stuart thought that it made sense to try to maximize grant funding opportunities, even if it is not in the policy order. Others agreed.

Nick Bryant asked a question that was prompted by the Raleigh example, in that they have bus stop improvement requirements for new developments on bus routes. He wondered if the next route for GoApex had been identified yet, and if we have started requiring developers to place bus stops? Katie replied that the Town has not identified a second route yet, but we do have the proposed future local routes in the Transit Plan map. Shannon said that staff has been working to identify locations where it makes sense to work with developers to add future stop locations.

5. Feasibility Considerations Discussion

(Discussion Item: Town Staff, TAC members, and guests)

Katie provided a brief explanation of feasibility considerations and noted that challenges could occur at almost every stage of the bus stop improvement process, from identification to installation. She noted the challenges could affect the amount of time and money needed to make improvements.

Andy wondered if it made sense to try to get a ballpark rating for feasibility before stops move to the implementation stage, as was initially proposed in the matrix example. Shannon thought it might be a cost consideration, since this work can be time consuming and would probably require an engineer. Andy then wondered if there could be a short list of the highest priority areas that could be done first, and then if



issues are identified, move down the list. Shannon agreed that could be a practical approach.

Andy made a comment that in his mind, if it got to the point where it would be less expensive to move a stop than try to make improvements in the current location, that could be a marker of a “tipping point” where feasibility should prevent the stop from being improved in the current location.

6. Discussion on Overall Prioritization Method

(Discussion Item: Town Staff, TAC members, and guests)

Katie asked for any final thoughts on the proposed process and discussion items. She asked the group if they were comfortable with the overall idea, if there was anything missing, or if anything seemed overly complicated. Overall, it seemed the group was ok with moving forward with such a policy, with the details to be refined based on the meeting’s discussion.

Katie reminded the group of the next steps and that staff plan to send a draft policy for the Committee’s review prior to the April TAC meeting.

7. Other Business

The next regularly scheduled meeting date is April 12, 2023.

8. Closing

Chair Stuart Wagner thanked the committee members for attending the special meeting, as well as the Town Clerk’s office for the meeting setup. The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 pm.