

Transit Matters Meeting Minutes & Public Hearing

Date: December 11, 2018

Time: 6:15 PM

Location: NTS Admin Building (11 Riverside Street)

In Attendance: Camille Pattison, John Savage, Kristi Gillette, Sara O'Neil, Kelly Ehrhart, Deborah Booley, Marsha McFarland, Mason Twombly, Louise Dobens, Ron Doucette, John Cusson, Tracey Brackett

Meeting called to order at: 6:17 PM

By: Camille Pattison

First Order of Business: Camille introduced herself and encouraged all to do the same. Attendees were reminded that to better accommodate attendees varying schedules NTS will continue to choose different options for times and locations for Transit Matters Meetings. We will post as meeting times and locations are determined.

Public Hearing Proposed Changes to the Route 8 Commence: 6:19 PM

Camille: Explains history of the situation. DHHS moved from the Pine Street Extension relocating to Whipple Street. This relocation posed a big inconvenience to passengers as the new location was chosen in an area without access to a bus route. Passengers needing to get to DHHS now have to either take a taxi or take the Route 8 to the nearest stop and walk to this popular destination. NTS received feedback from social service agencies that there is great need for a route to get people out to DHHS. The Mayor's Office also received complaints. Based on the feedback received, NTS tried to work with the property owner to get a bus stop located on the property, however we could not come to agreement with the property owner. As an alternative solution NTS has tried to get a bus stop as close as we could on Whipple Street to provide access to DHHS. The proposed stop would be located on the edge of Whipple Street allowing passengers to be dropped off and then walk to the back of the property. To further accommodate this new route, NTS worked with DPW to make some alterations to the circle at the end of Whipple Street by making the circle smaller and eliminating a few parking spots.

Open Public Comment period: 6:22 PM

Camille: Reads MaryEllen McKay's comment into public record.

Here is a brief synopsis of the events that have led up to this necessary and needed change:

- *In July I attended a meeting at the Arel Manor where Mayor Donchess was speaking.*
- *Numerous constituents reached out to me after this meeting to complain about having no bus stop close to the Nashua DHHS Building on Whipple Street.*
 - *The current bust stop is a mile away from the Nashua DHHS.*
 - *Individuals with Disabilities, the Elderly and Families with young children cannot easily navigate a walk of this distance. In fact, for most of the above listed populations it is nearly impossible.*

- *People living on a fixed income cannot afford a taxi to take them as this is not a normally budgeted monthly expense for them.*
- *Trying to find a ride on the City Transit can be quite difficult and arrangements need to be made in advance of the needed ride and this information is not always available. Also, there is no known return time so the individual(s) would be left without a ride home in most instances.*
- *Myself, Senator John Reagan, David Clapp, Facilities Manager for the building, Sarah Marchant, from the City of Nashua, and Thomas Nowicki, representing the property owners, met and discussed options.*
- *Several options were proposed and the City DOT and the owners met and determined the options presented were not optimum.*
- *The City, through Sarah Marchant, the Nashua DOT and the property owners then met, site walked and developed the plan that is before you this evening.*
- *This proposed change was emailed to the original group members for their comments and review also.*
- *This issue has been in discussion and planning since July. The residents who need this option have truly waited a very long time for resolution.*
- *The City, the building owners, the facilities manager, Senator Reagan and myself along with Nashua Housing Authority Commissioner Thomas Monahan believe this plan will be extremely beneficial to the City and its residents who truly need this support.*

On behalf of myself, Senator Reagan and Commissioner Monahan, I want to thank everyone involved who has worked so diligently to bring this need from a request to a reality. It has been our sincere honor and pleasure to have worked with each of you to achieve this goal.

We are hopeful this adjustment to the Route 8 bus schedule will be granted the final approvals necessary to implement these needed and necessary changes.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or need any further information about this issue.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration in this matter.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Representative Mariellen J. MacKay*

Kristi: Explains outreach initiatives taken to speak to the public about the changes. Kristi went to Gatewood Manor (one of the areas most affected by the change) on 11/27/2018 from 11:30am-1pm and set up a table to talk with residents explaining that service will be reduced from once every 30 minutes to once an hour to accommodate the new stop. A lot of positive feedback was received. Many residents go down there for DHHS and BEAS and considered it as more than an even trade. A lot of residents had been going down there in their wheelchairs. Not a great option in the winter months. Kristi also went to the Continuum of Care meeting on 12/5/2018 and announced that there would be a public hearing on service changes to accommodate a new stop at DHHS. Everyone at the meeting clapped because they all have clients affected by the need for service.

John Savage: Explains the current route 8 and proposed changes. There will be a minute or two difference with the bus arriving out at the Nashua Mall but not enough to significantly change the schedule. Most impacted are those at Gatewood Manor and Will St. but they will still be serviced once an hour and will have the option to walk a block to get the inbound stop.

Deborah: Says she's glad this is being paid attention to. She is unable to walk and had a meeting with her case manager, who was unable to help her. She is glad the stop is closer, but concerned in winter about snow and ice clearing. Who will be maintaining that?

Camille: DHHS is located on private property so that will be taken care of by the property owner. Other than a small snow bank that may form from road plowing, passengers can expect the road will be cleared and paths should be maintained by the property owner.

Marsha: Explains she is self employed and it is difficult for her case manager to get her there. This puts strain on her as business visits aren't covered by her insurance to get her there.

John Cusson: When they decided to relocate, why did they go there? Why not choose the old court house?

Group: Possibly limited parking?

Public Comment Period closed: 6:33 PM

Camille: Announces that NTS is trying to time the Route 8 changes to roll out with the new Walmart service. Camille explains that NTS is waiting for FTA to approve the funding. We are expecting to roll out the changes near the end of January or beginning of February.

Kelly: Shared frustration that the roll out date of Walmart keeps getting pushed back.

Camille: Explained lengthy process of getting all of the paper work in and change in staff at FTA, has caused delays. FTA needs to submit the changes to be approved by Department of Labor, but this may take 3 weeks with the holidays. Aiming for Jan 21st rollout date or beginning of February.

Marsha: Asks if a stop will be added in the Aldi Plaza on Amherst St.

Camille: Unfortunately, there is no room in the time table to accommodate a stop at Aldi.

Kelly: Asks about adding a stop at the Cotton Mill. Loft 34 is over there too it would be a good place for a stop.

Camille: A stop at Cotton Mill or Loft 34 is something to consider in the future.

Public Hearing closed: 6:36 PM

Transit Matters Meeting Regular Agenda

I. **Old Business:** Minutes distributed from last meeting.

II. **New Business:**

a. **Polar Express**

Camille: On Dec. 2nd NTS hosted our first Polar Express Trolley Ride. 90 tickets were sold and the event sold out within 48 hours. Feedback was received that the event was really popular and people would be looking for more opportunities to attend. NTS will be looking into creative solutions to expand the event for next year maybe by adding a few additional trolleys. Overall the event was a great success and attendees really enjoyed it.

b. **Holiday Circulator**

John Savage: Holiday Circulator begins tomorrow (12/12). This free service has run in the past and provides a connection route near Pheasant Lane Mall to alleviate scheduling issues with heavy traffic. The goal is to increase service to keep the bus closer to being on schedule. Shoppers can also park in front of Royal Ridge Shopping Center and hop on the bus to get to other plazas and not have to wait in traffic. The Holiday Circulator will run from 12/12-12/21.

Kelly: States that on Black Friday she was stuck in traffic on the bus for over an hour.

John Savage: The goal of the Circulator is to keep the 6 and 6a on time and to assure that no one misses the 6 or 6a heading back inbound.

Deborah: Do they shortcut the route?

John Savage: Yes. Once the area starts to get congested with traffic, it might be difficult to get an idea of when the bus is coming, but passengers can always call dispatch.

Camille: New signs designed for the Holiday Circulator are posted at the appropriate stops. Note that 2 bus stops on-call only. You will need to call dispatch if you're at one of those stops.

c. **New Vans going into service**

Camille: Our new vans have arrived and are going into service. We've had a few issues with their arrival, but are slowly getting them into service. The first is going into service tomorrow for SVTC. Additionally, the new vans will be going on the Downtown Connector and Walmart routes.

d. **Update on new drivers**

John Savage: New driver Lillian is starting service this week. She drove for LRTA has a lot of experience. She is one of the best driver candidates we've ever hired.

Deborah: States that on one of the trolleys an elderly man was struggling up the stairs and she was appalled that the driver did not help him.

Camille: The best thing to do in that situation is to call NTS as soon as it happens with specific information so staff can address it immediately and implement training to address it.

John Savage: We appreciate you offering to help the passenger, but note that people have the right to refuse help.

e. **Winter Service Implications**

John Savage: Snow banks will soon be forming and we train our drivers to safely pick up passengers. If your stop is blocked by a snow bank, please go to the nearest cleared cross street near the bus stop. Our drivers are trained to be on the lookout and will stop for you. If they are not stopping, please contact us. It becomes more challenging downtown to determine which pedestrians want the bus and which are just walking. Recently we've received calls that people had a driver drive by them. We have cameras on buses and sometimes the pedestrians aren't at the stop or not at the stop on time. Construction was a big challenge this fall. The nature of construction is that the city is not certain when contractor will be closing the road. We are not finding out until last minute. Difficult to get notices up on bus stops. We encourage people to sign up for alerts. We will keep alerts updated up to the minute. That is the best way to stay current with what's happening systemwide.

Kelly: States that at the stop near Riverside Barbeque, she sometimes has to flag them down.

John Savage: That's a difficult intersection because the driver needs to get over to the right lane.

f. **Additional Comments and Questions**

Marsha: What is the downtown connector?

John Savage: It's our new route that connects Crown St. Park and Ride to stops along Canal Street and back to transit center. It then does the loop back to crown street stopping at the library, post office and court house. A stop has also been added at the corner of Crown and Arlington Streets to assist passengers getting to Corpus Christi. The nearest bus stop previously was further away on the route 7.

Camille: Our new phone system rolled out just before Halloween. We ran into a lot of issues. If you've experienced issues calling us it was because of that issue. If you continue in the future to have trouble getting through on the phone system, please let us know.

Group: No one has had issues contacting.

Deborah: The new phone tree is an improvement.

John: Inclement weather notices will now be at the beginning of the phone tree so that no one has to go through all of the options.

Kelly: Are the stage 1 and 2 snow deviations new?

Camille: They were implemented last year. It was difficult in previous years to keep up with the plowing and vehicles were getting stuck or getting into accidents. If there is a blizzard warning then we do shut down service. We will put out a notice as soon as we can to make sure no one gets stranded. Once service is open no passengers will ever get stranded. We keep staff on dispatch and a few drivers in the event a blizzard warning is called after service begins for the day.

Meeting locations – In the winter when the days are short meetings in downtown are preferred.

Maintenance

When you hit the stop buttons - 217 and 223 - you can't see the stop requested signs.

Ron Doucette: Explains he needs the ramp lowered to access the bus. At Arel Manor today the driver did not kneel the bus.

Dartmouth Hitchcock - interior scroll is not correct.

Meeting Ended at 7:12 pm