



# WINSTON-SALEM TRANSIT AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MINUTES  
THURSDAY; DECEMBER 19, 2024

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**PRESENT:**

**WSTA Board Members**

Keith King, Chairperson  
Jeanette Lawson-Jackson, Vice-Chairperson  
Latonya Wright  
Willie Clark, Jr.  
Suneel K. Parvathareddy  
Sarah Morath  
Dr. David Wren

**City Staff**

Kelly Garvin, Assist. Director of DOT  
Tia Ramsey, Financial Manager of DOT  
Sherry Mosser, Transit Contract Manger for DOT

**WSTA/RATP DEV, USA Staff**

Levine Hedgepeth, Assist. General Manager of Safety, RATP Dev  
Brandie Peterson, Director of Marketing and Community Engagement, RATP Dev  
Lisa Sides, Assistant Operations Manager, RATP Dev  
Teika Holloway, Administrative Assistant, RATP Dev

**Other Attendees**

Melvin Brown, WSTA passenger  
Erica Palmiter, Public Art Project Planner, City of Winston-Salem

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**Meeting Opened:** 4:08 pm

Chairperson Keith King called the December 19, 2024, Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) Board Meeting to order. He greeted everyone and thanked them for their time.

**Safety Message** (Mrs. Jeanette Lawson-Jackson, Vice-Chairperson & Mr. Keith King, Chairman): Vice-Chairperson Lawson-Jackson began her safety message by saying, “Tis the season to be shopping!” She said this weekend’s traffic is going to be horrendous. The mall and other shopping centers are going to be crowded with holiday shoppers. Please be aware of your surroundings and remember where you parked your car. Do not leave packages where they are visible; place them in your trunk. Vice-Chairperson Lawson-Jackson advised everyone to enjoy these last few days because this weekend is going to a mad rush. She then turned the floor to Chairman King by asking him to share his Amazon suggestions.



Chairman King said Amazon has lockers in various locations throughout the city and he thinks they are wonderful! You choose the options to have your packages shipped to a locker and you use you the app on your phone to unlock it when you go to retrieve your packages. This eliminate packages being left on your porch to be stolen by porch pirates.

**Welcome and Introductions of New WSTA Board Members:**

Dr. Suneel K. Parvathareddy-Chairman King introduced WSTA’s newest Board member, Mr. Suneel K. Parvathareddy. He welcomed him and gave space for Mr. Parvathareddy to share a little about himself.

Dr. Parvathareddy thanked Chairman King for the opportunity to speak. He said he is the Chief Medical Officer at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist (AHWFB) Wilkes Medical Center, but he is a resident of Winston-Salem. He stated that his interest in serving in any capacity, but he is seen patients that have issues with transportation for medical and social events. They have no way to go but, have some place to go.

Dr. Parvathareddy said there is not much to say about him. He comes from another country; however, this is his country now and he has been here for 19 years and wants to do whatever he can to help serve his community.

**Public Comment (limited to two minutes per speaker):**

None.

**Action Items:**

**Approval of the September 26, 2024, WSTA Board Meeting Minutes:**

Chairman Keith King gave the members of the Board a few moments to review the meeting minutes from the September 26, 2024, WSTA Board Meeting.

Board Member, Dr. David Wren moved to approve September 26, 2024, WSTA Board Meeting Minutes. Board Member Willie Clark, Jr. seconded his move.

**Following a vote by the members, the Board approved the September 26, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes.**

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**Informational Items:**

- a) **Winston-Salem Transit Authority’s Route Study** (Kelly Garvin, Assistant Director of Winston-Salem DOT): Mrs. Kelly Garvin said the WSTA Route Study document included in the meeting packet is formalizing the route changes being proposed. Mrs. Garvin presented this information to the Board at the September 26 Board meeting. The only change is the results of the public’s participation has been added to the presentation. The results show that the majority of those providing feedback are in favor of the proposed route changes.

The public was asked questions that were pointed and direct in nature as an attempt to gauge their feelings regarding the City’s vision for the near future and the not so near future of public transportation. Questions such as: “Will you or someone you know benefit from the return of night



*service?”*, “*If you ride route 110, which is planned to be eliminated in early 2025, will the alternative routes (visible in the presentation) be helpful to you?”*, and “*Once the real-time information system is up and running, are you more likely to get bus arrival information for your route by (a) By calling the WSTA phone number. (b) By texting. or (c) By using an app on your phone?”* These questions and more were posted on both the City’s and WSTA’s websites in addition to social media sites in the form of a survey. Hard copies of the survey were placed in the lobby of the TC for those wanting to do a written survey and some were given to city liaisons for public distribution. Mrs. Garvin said, we are all aware that the required public hearing was held.

Mrs. Garvin said a *Title VI Analysis* was done to determine if the changes that are being made to the routes are disproportionately affecting a segment of the population being served or will there be a positive impact. Mrs. Garvin was happy to report all the changes being made are likely to increase ridership and expand trip making opportunities for people going from their homes to jobs.

The public was asked to express their feelings about technology being added to the vehicles and cashless pay options. Positive feedback was received for these inquires, also. These findings will be presented to Council and public hearings will be held before the second phase of changes go into effect.

Chairman King asked Mrs. Garvin if 50 percent of the surveys distributed were returned. The answer was no; Mrs. Garvin said in her experience with public outreach, it is never expected that all public transportation riders will respond. In this situation, more responses than she anticipated were received; however, it is not abnormal to not receive responses from every transit rider.

Dr. Suneel Parvathareddy asked there were any plans to extend the outreach to additional feedback. Ms. Garvin answered, this survey has closed, and these changes, proposed by the city, were adopted by Council. There will be other surveys when the next phase of changes and updates go in effect. The purpose of the changes and updates is to increase ridership. This data will be monitored closely to see if they did have a positive effect as surveys predicted or instead a negative effect.

Dr. Wern asked if any feedback has been received regarding the new company—RATP Dev, USA—took over August 1. Mrs. Garvin said there has not been any mentionable changes implemented on the Fixed Route side of operations since RATP Dev, USA took over. There have been notable changes implemented on the Trans-AID side. Some re-training and educating of the staff and the public on the purpose of Trans-AID and how it should be utilized. The previous scheduling software was outdated and lacked the ability for rides to be scheduled in an efficient and effective manner.

**Although the Route Study was moved from an action item to an information item, Chairman King did request a motion. Ms. Latonya Wright made a move that was followed by a second move made by Vice-Chairperson Lawson-Jackson. Following a vote by the members of the Board the Winston-Salem Transit Route Study was approved.**

**Ecolane** (Brandie Peterson, Director of Marketing & Community Engagement): Ms. Peterson reiterated Ms. Garvin’s statement about the old scheduling software being outdated. She said it was on its



last leg was not giving any valid data. Approximately six hundred trips a day had to be put in manually which is not always effective and leaves plenty of room for error.

Ecolane is the software that RATP Dev has worked with at other locations, therefore, its capabilities are well known. Ms. Peterson gave a live demonstration of how the software works. By-law, passengers can be on the vehicle during a pickup for two-hours starting at the time they are picked up to the time they are dropped off. A lot of passengers are not happy about this. Sometimes the only way to get their trip scheduled is to put them in a slot that requires longer transport time. She stated this is not what they are used to because they are used to using the service like Uber.

Ms. Peterson said this new software gave them valuable information about the fleet and manpower. It also showed a significant increase in on time performance. She said they went from approximately six hundred trips a day to approximately four hundred trips a day to not over work the operators. Dr. Wren asked if the passengers are given an estimate of how long they can expect to be on a vehicle. Ms. Peterson said it depends on if it is a trip for an appointment. An appointment trip can have a pickup time that is an hour before the appointment time. It is the trip back home that may take longer. Also, it difficult to give true estimates due to unforeseen issues. Chairman King asked does these trips included trips to places like Walmart. Ms. Peterson said yes. ADA laws require paratransit to transport passengers anywhere a non-disabled person can go within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile. Times can be negotiated for trips of this nature; however, medical, work, religious and educational trip times cannot be negotiated. Staff has collaborated with clients one on one to explain the new scheduling process and encourage them to book early for greater availability. A trip can be booked as early as seven days in advance. The client can easily take advantage of this for most doctor appointments.

Ecolane comes with a global positioning system (GPS) allowing the vehicles to be tracked in real time. It lets it us know the exact location of the vehicle, if the operator deviates from the route the system deems to be best. In some cases, because the operator has longevity with the company and has transported the passenger more times than they can count, the operator does know best. For example, the operator may have deviated from the route the GPS gave to arrive on the correct side of street for the residence. If this was the case, this can be corrected in Ecolane by editing the client's profile so that the best route for arriving on the correct side of the street will be chosen. This sort of thing can be monitored for improving the efficacy of the system. The good news is this capability can be used across the board. If a call is received from a passenger inquiring about the location of their bus the customer service representative (CSR) can access the system and get the location in real time. Another remarkable thing about this scheduling system is it factors in time for loading and unloading passengers. The amount of time it takes to board and un-board depends on the number of passengers and the type of disability they may have. It takes longer for multiple persons to board and un-board than it does for one person. It takes longer for a wheelchair passenger to board than it does for a passenger that is ambulatory. If a passenger needs extra time for boarding and un-boarding (for any reason) an edit can be made in their system profile to accommodate. This improves scheduling and has a positive effect on, on-time-performance. Dr. Wren asked is



the editing process done manually or is data collected from stops, over time? Ms. Peterson said yes, and no. Data can be collected to improve the route; data cannot be collected on the passenger. When ADA does their qualifying assessment, they make note of things like this. When a newly qualified person is added to the system, adjustments are made. The adjustments are monitored for a while to be sure they accurate adjustments. They can be tweaked if needed.

When the passenger is picked up from their home and being transported to a location, it is considered a drop-off. Drop-offs have a hard, set time for the passenger to be at this location. A pick-up is when the passenger is being picked-up from a location and being transported home. It is during this time when the passenger may experience being on the vehicle up to two-hours. This information is in the handbook that is issued to the passenger upon approval for paratransit services. Paratransit passengers are accustomed to calling in to make a reservation giving a pickup window to the reservationist. We ran into a problem with an agency we will refer to as company A. Company A has the most employees that utilize Trans-AID. They all start work at 7 am. The client is used to being picked-up at 6:30 am. Ecolane knows that it takes seven minutes to get from the client's house to company A. The Trans-AID vehicle may arrive to pick them up at approximately 6:45 am. This makes the client nervous. To combat their nervousness, they will attempt to schedule their trip to arrive at Company A at 6:30 am, but they do not want to be picked up at 5:30 am to make this happen. Things like this are the reason people file complaints related to waiting.

Ms. Peterson said for the clients with telephone service gets an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) call the night before their trip and another one during the time it takes to get to the client's home.

Managers can now monitor every area of the transit operation in one location: the maintenance of vehicles, alerts, and scheduling. It allows Ms. Peterson, Mr. Michael Rosson, Ms. Lisa Sides, and any other manager that has access to look at the same thing in real time. This helps with communication among those responsible for operations running effectively.

Chairman King asked what would happen if there was a drop-off, a pickup, and another drop-off; would you do the first drop-off, then the pickup and continue with the second drop off? Ms. Peterson said the system is designed so that the operators are headed to the garage at the end of their shifts. This may mean the operator will a pickup, pickup, drop-off, drop-off, or any other combination that ends up being the best schedule to ensure this happens.

Earlier it was said the new scheduling software is a huge change for the clients. This is a huge change for the operators too. The operators were used to servicing individual areas; the new system has them going all over the service area. When Dr. Wren asked Ms. Peterson what the main thing would be she would like to see happen, in addition to the new software, to make Transit better. Ms. Peterson said two words—operators and vehicles. Mrs. Garvin added WSTA is severely behind on the vehicle replacement schedule. There is a constant search for funding sources to supplement the costs. Winston-Salem DOT and RATP Dev, USA management have been in conversation about vehicles that do not require a CDL. It is hard to retain employees with CDLs. The next fleet of vehicles to be ordered for Trans-AID



will not be the big block ones we have now; they will be ADA accessible without requiring the operator to have a CDL. This will broaden the hiring field for Trans-AID operators and hopefully assist with operator retention.

- b) **UMO App** (Kelly Garvin, Assistant Director of Winston-Salem DOT): Mrs. Garvin reminded everyone that she mentioned this application. Since then, a proposal has gone before the Public Works Committee and was approved. This application (app) allows the rider to track the bus in real time, plan trips, and, pay on the app. One of the key features of UMO is, it is a decentralized payment option meaning passengers will not have to go to a specific location to purchase a pass neither do they have to be sure they have a dollar to pay on the bus for a trip. Another key feature is UMO is used regionally. High Point (Hi-Tran), Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (P.A.R.T.), and Greensboro Transit Authority (GTA) all uses this app. The passenger types in their final destination and UMO will give detailed information about this specific trip like the closest stop, the time to be at the stop, when and where to transfer to a different bus line, such as PART, and how much the trip will cost with the option to pay all on one app.

UMO will be presented to City Council in January for approval; after, negotiations and the initiation contracts will begin. Dr. Wren asked Mrs. Garvin if she is confident, it would get approval? She said yes; usually when something passes unanimously at the Public Works Committee meeting, it passes at City Council as well. Provided all goes well, Dr. Wren asked when beta testing will start. Mrs. Garvin said hopefully it will be launched this spring. Dr. Wren then asked if this would cause a fare increase. Ms. Garvin said no. Chairman wanted to know if this meant there would be no merchant fees charged for the service. Mrs. Garvin said we will pay fee, but the passenger will not see any additional costs on their end. Dr. Wren asked if the assumption is by increasing ridership and more efficient payment options will make up the difference? Mrs. Garvin stated we hope so; not necessarily make up the difference. The way the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) works is they look at numbers, if we have an increase in ridership, there is a greater chance of increasing funding from the FTA. Dr. Wren asked if WSTA is the only transit in the region that does not have the mobile app. Mrs. Garvin said both GTA and P.A.R.T transitioned a couple of years ago. Ms. Peterson said she could speak on this because she was at GTA when they transitioned. She said GTA started using the app with RATP Dev, USA. Beta testing is not needed; there a go live date when the app becomes available, you download it and begin to use it. It is an organic process versus a shockwave. Passengers will still the old option available. Those with the skillset can use the app and those without can be taught to use it if desired.

Dr. Wren asked if GTA's ridership increased. Mrs. Garvin said she can get this information and provide to the Board; but she presumes it did increase.

- c) **WSTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Update** (Mr. Levine Hedgepeth, Assistant General Manager of Safety): The PTASP is based on the requirements of the FTA. It is a document that details a public transportation agency's Safety Management Systems (SMS). FTA adopted the principles and methods of Safety Management as a basis for enhancing the safety of public transportation in the US.



**Staff Reports:**

- *Operations-Lisa Sides, Manager of Operations:*
- *Marketing-Brandi Peterson, Director of Marketing and Communications:*
- *Safety-Levine Hedgepeth, Assistant General Manager of Safety:*
- *Maintenance-Reginald Arrington, Assistant General Manager of Maintenance:*

*To request a hard copy of any of the documents, reports, data, etc. mentioned in the minutes for the December 19, 2024, WSTA Board Meeting, please contact: Teika Holloway at 336.793.3294 or [teika.holloway@ratpdev.com](mailto:teika.holloway@ratpdev.com)*

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**The meeting adjourned:** 5:19 p.m.

Transcribed by: Teika Holloway

January 2025