

Princeton

400 Witherspoon Street □ 1 Monument Drive
Princeton, NJ 08540

Public Transit Advisory Committee

MINUTES – August 14, 2014

The Public Transit Advisory Committee met in the East Conference Room of the Monument Municipal Building of Princeton, NJ at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, August 14, 2014.

Attendance

Present were: Marvin Reed, chair; Nat Bottigheimer; Fay Reiter, director of social services, Princeton Community Housing; Cheryl Kasternakes and Joan Lockwood-Reck of the Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association; and Don Mayer-Brown and Chris Knigge of the Engineering staff.

Ridership

Joan reported on July “FreeB” ridership and on-time service:

- Ridership on the Commuter Route in July hit 1,105 passengers, an average of 52.6 riders per day, compared to 1,070 the previous month, a daily average of 51.0. The 2013 July average was 30.9 riders.
- The mid-day Neighborhood Mid-Day Route carried 1,922 passengers in July, an average of 73.9 daily riders. In July 2013 there were 1,786 passenger trips in July.
- Equipment ran somewhat better in July but still required the use of the older back-up vehicle when the newer “FreeB” required maintenance attention.
- On-time service (94%) remained about the same for the month.
- On six days Neighborhood Service exceeded 90 passenger trips. Ridership hit a high of 104 passenger trips on Tuesday, July 29 and a high of 102 on Friday, July 18. Lowest day of the month was Thursday, July 31 with only 56 passenger trips.

Up-Grading the System

Don Mayer-Brown reported that he has begun drafting bid specifications for purchase of a new jitney vehicle for the FreeB service. The municipality will be asked to solicit alternatives for municipal purchase as well as vehicle-included operations.

Discussion followed on seating configuration which reconfirmed a preference for some face-to-face seats as well as for several rows of front-facing seats. Grab bars and poles should make it possible to accommodate a few standees when necessary. A couple of lift-up seats should make it possible to accommodate wheelchairs.

Serving the Downtown

Chris Knigge, from the Engineering Department staff, presented an alternative concept for displaying “FreeB” service as a single, continuous schedule. This, it was noted, might attract more downtown employees to park at the Harrison St. Shopping Center and take the “FreeB” to and from their jobs.

Committee members said the proposal was worthy of further testing, but not as a substitute for separate schedule for the Neighborhood Day-Time, Route which has targeted residents of the senior and affordable housing sites.

It was suggested that revisions be tried with less spaces used for a map and more space used for larger schedule times.

Coordinated History Celebration, September 27

Kip Cherry, coordinator of the Princeton Area Six-Site Celebration Committee, presented a proposal for providing “FreeB”-style transportation to link various Princeton sites where coordinated activities will take place to celebrate New Jersey’s 350th Anniversary on Saturday, September 27. She noted that in 2008 the “FreeB” was used to link the Battlefield, Battle Monument, and Morven for those marking the Anniversary of the Treaty of Paris, which ended the American Revolution.

She said that her Committee is seeking to enlarge the loop service linking Morven to the Battlefield to also include the Updike Farm (on Quaker Rd.), Bainbridge House (on Nassau St. & Washington Rd.), the Public Library and Princeton Cemetery (Witherspoon and Wiggins Sts.), Drumthwackett (Stockton St.), and Rockingham (between Kingston and Rocky Hill).

The Committee noted that the “FreeB” now provides residential service on Saturdays and should not be taken out of regular service for special events. It was suggested that the municipality might arrange with Stout’s Transportation Service, which includes special event pricing in its contract for operating the FreeB.

In discussion, the Committee stressed the importance of having an adequate number of vehicles deployed so that transit pick ups can be accomplished at least every half hour and especially to be able to return riders to their points of origination before the end of scheduled service.

It was suggested that further details be worked out with the Municipal Administrator if that municipality is able to arrange the service.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 11, 2014 at 9:30 am at the Monument Municipal Building.