

Princeton

400 Witherspoon Street □ 1 Monument Drive
Princeton, NJ 08540

Public Transit Advisory Committee

MINUTES – September 11, 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 11, 2014.

Attendance

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

Also present were mentors from the 101 Fund, an ally of the Princeton Public Schools which assists local students in preparing for college, making application, and attending local area institutions, especially Mercer County Community College. These included: Elizabeth Cohen Hamblett, Rita Levy, and Mary Bechler.

Ridership

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

- Ridership on the Commuter Route in August dropped slightly to 965 passengers, an average of 46.0 riders per day, compared to 1,105 the previous month, a daily average of 52.6. The 2013 August average was 33.0 riders.
- For the first time ever the mid-day Neighborhood Mid-Day Route passed the 2,000 passenger mark, carrying 2,180 passengers in August, an average of 83.1 daily riders. In 2013 there was a daily average of 66.7 passenger trips in August.
- Equipment ran somewhat better in August.
- On-time service (96%) remained about the same for the month.
- On seven days Neighborhood Service exceeded 90 passenger trips. Ridership hit a high of 106 passenger trips on Thursday, August 14 and a high of 105 on Tuesday, August 5.
- Lowest day of the month was Wednesday, August 27, with only 66 passenger trips.

Transportation To/From Mercer County College

Marvin called attention to a letter received by the Mayor from mentors in The 101 Fund program, calling attention to the difficulties and costs Princeton students face in attending Mercer County Community College. (Approximately 40 Princeton students attend MCCC, of which approximately 10 to 15 are supported by The 101 Fund scholarships and mentoring.)

The 101 mentors underlined the difficulties MCCC students face in commuting from their West Windsor classrooms to their homes in Princeton. The group asked whether NJ Trenton or Princeton's FreeB shuttles might offer a more direct and less time-consuming connection.

An extended discussion narrowed down to three possibilities:

1. A Ride-Share Program -- in which students with cars receive a small stipend to cover their gasoline and maintenance costs in exchange for transporting students without cars.
2. A Linked-Bus Program – such as using the NJ Transit 606 route to connect to the MCCC inter-campus shuttle in downtown Trenton with a discount on fares.
3. A “FreeB” Extension – adding an additional “FreeB” route capable of making approximately four loops per day. (This new route might also provide mid-day Princeton connections to and from the new Dinky Station opening in November.)

The Committee agreed to continue exploring these possibilities in order to find a solution that might be financially feasible based on donor or municipal funding.

The 101 mentors agreed to set up a meeting for discussions with the MCCC Administration that might include Marvin, representing the Committee, and Cheryl Kasternakes, director of the Mercer County Transportation Management Association.

Up-Grading the System

Don Mayer-Brown reported that he is still 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.

“Shifting to Transit” Study

Marvin called attention to a grant made to the Princeton Future organization which will identify potential markets for local transit and motivate residents to reduce personal automobile use.

“Access Princeton”

Attention was called to the September 18 launching of a new municipal call-center for providing information and reporting incidents to the town's departments. “FreeB” schedules and other transportation information has been provided. In repainting “FreeB” vehicles, the “Access Princeton” phone number 609-924-4141 will be used for routing timetable requests.

“History Day” – September 27

Don reported that arrangements have been made to provide two circulating jitneys to move visitors from site to site of the local organizations which have combined to celebrate the 350th Anniversary of New Jersey on the weekend of September 27-28.

Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to move its meeting date to the third Thursday of the month. The next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, October 16, 2014 at 9:30 am at the Monument Municipal Building.