

# Princeton

400 Witherspoon Street □ 1 Monument Drive  
Princeton, NJ 08540

## Public Transit Advisory Committee

MINUTES –October 16, 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, October 16, 2014.

### Attendance

Present were: Marvin Reed, chair; Fay Reiter, director of social services, Princeton Community Housing; Susan Hoskins, executive director, Princeton Senior Resource Center; 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 Hamblett, Carol Golden and Mary Bechler.

### Transportation To/From Mercer County College

Marvin opened the meeting with a continuation of the discussion from the previous meeting regarding the difficulties students face in commuting from their homes in Princeton to their West Windsor classrooms while attending Mercer County Community College.

He reported on his interviews with:

John Simone, assistant dean for student services, MCCC, and

Cheryl Kasternakes, director of the Mercer Co. Transportation Management Association.

He noted reviewing with them three alternatives previously discussed with the Committee for improving transportation to and from the College's West Windsor campus. These included:

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.

[Students from Hightstown have on their own arranged such a reduced-fare system with local Hightstown taxi drivers. Cheryl, it was noted, would assist in establishing such a Princeton-MCCC program similar to that which her TMA establishes for employees of local corporations.]

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.

[Marvin referred to the NJ Transit Bus Routes #606 and #619 which intersect along State St. in downtown Trenton between Calhoun St. and the Clinton Ave. R.R. Station, enabling riders from Princeton to reach the West Windsor MCCC campus by changing buses in downtown Trenton.

Joan pointed out the N.J. Transit program for 25% discounts on monthly fares for college students

Marvin pointed out a similar connection from the #606 Princeton route via a change at State and Broad St. in downtown Trenton to the MCCC shuttle that goes between the college's Kearny campus to the West Windsor campus. This is express service free for MCCC students saving some time as an alternative to the #619 service.]

3. A "FreeB" Extension – adding an additional "FreeB" route making two or more loops per day.

[Marvin pointed out that this might work using additional reconditioned equipment which the municipality is acquiring. (See below). But, there would be added cost for a driver unless there were cutbacks in other "FreeB" service. Any added municipal cost (as much as \$50,000 per year) would require action by the Council.

Such an additional route might run from the Princeton Shopping Center through downtown past the new Dinky Station and to the MCCC West Windsor campus by way of either Edinburg or Quakerbridge Road. It was estimated that either route would take about 40 minutes, cutting in half the time required for either the #619 or Kearny Campus shuttle connection.]

The 101 mentors agreed to seek a meeting with the Mayor and Marvin to explore these possibilities in order to find a solution that might be financially feasible based on donor or municipal funding. A possible meeting with a number of students to discuss typical course load and daily schedules was also suggested to see if there is an efficient pattern of coordinated transportation that might work.

## Ridership

Joan reported on September "FreeB" ridership and on-time service:

- -- Ridership on the Commuter Route in September jumped to a highest-ever total of 1,176 passengers, an average of 56.0 riders per day, compared to 965 the previous month, a daily average of 46.0. The 2013 September average was 37.0 riders.
- -- Ridership for the Mid-Day Neighborhood Route dropped slightly, carrying 2,910 passengers in September, an average of 76.4 daily riders. That's 298 more passenger trips than in September 2013.
- -- On-time service (98%) was slightly better for the month.
- -- Highest day of the month was Friday, September 5 – a total of 99 passenger trips.
- -- Lowest day of the month was Thursday, September 11 – a total of 64 passenger trips.
- -- Busiest stops were Redding Circle (with 354 passenger trips) and Elm Court (with 307 passenger trips) for September.

## Up-Grading the System

Marvin reported that, in conversations with Mayor Lempert, County Executive Brian Hughes offered for \$1 to donate to the Princeton "FreeB" program a jitney vehicle that had been used in the County

T.R.A.D.E. senior transportation program. It has 157,944 miles on it and a good service record. It may be good for another 50,000 if serviced regularly by our Public Works mechanics.

It has a wheelchair lift, which will make it better to use as a back-up vehicle than the other back-up vehicle currently on hand. It has a regular gasoline engine, not diesel like other "FreeB" vehicles.

The Mayor has agreed to accept the vehicle. It will be possible when combined with our two existing vehicles to schedule more down time and preventative maintenance, hopefully reducing wear-and-tear all the way around.

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.

#### **"History Day" – September 27**

Don reported that arrangements had been made to provide two circulating jitneys to move visitors from site to site of the local organizations which have combined to celebrate the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of New Jersey on the weekend of September 27-28. Joan reported, however, that our Stout drivers only carried 18 passengers during the weekend.

#### **Hi-Tops – November 2 Half-Marathon**

The Hi-Tops Teen Health organization is sponsoring its annual Half Marathon Run on Sunday, November 2. The organizers of the event have requested use of the "FreeB" vehicle to follow behind the pack of runners to pick up any exhausted stragglers who may be having difficulty continuing to run.

Since the event is on a Sunday it does not interfere with the regular "FreeB" schedule. Stout's Transportation will be asked to provide a driver for the morning at the normal rate provided in the municipality's contract. HiTops will be asked to provide a volunteer to ride the "FreeB" vehicle that morning to attend to any picked-up passengers.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, November 13, 2014 at 9:30 am at the Monument Municipal Building.