

MINUTES
PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY BOARD
February 2, 2022
9:00 a.m.
FRED Operations/Training Building (Bowman Center)
11710 Main Street
Fredericksburg, VA 22408

Effective January 20, 2021, Executive Order 13991 requires a face covering to be worn while inside City of Fredericksburg facilities – even if you have been vaccinated. A face covering is generally a cloth, bandana, or other type of material that covers an individual’s mouth and nose.

Members in Attendance: Rev. Lawrence Davies, Chair
Leigh Anderson, George Washington Regional Commission
Brandon Brown, Stafford County
Jan Erkert, Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce
Kim Lett, disAbility Resource Center
Ian Ollis, Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Alexander Owskiak, Stafford County
*Kathy Sandor, University of Mary Washington (*Participated through electronic communication in accordance with City policy*)
Dr. Roy Weinstock, Community Representative
Rodney White, Spotsylvania County

Staff Present: Jamie Jackson, Director/FRED
Aidan Quirke, Deputy Director/FRED
Glenn Jenkins, Operations Manager/FRED
Craig Reed, Policy, Planning & Compliance Manager/FRED
Sharon Sullivan, Assistant to the Director/FRED
Wayne Wright, Procurement Specialist/FRED

Others Present: Tamara Banks, Healthy Generations Area Agency on Aging
Jennifer Falknor, Healthy Generations Area Agency on Aging
JoAnna Roberson, George Washington Regional Commission

Members Absent: Paul Agnello, Spotsylvania County
Mark Haines, Germanna Community College

The meeting was called to order by Rev. Davies on February 2, 2022, at 9:04 a.m. from the FRED Operations/ Training Building (Bowman Center).

Public Comments: There were no public comments received in advance of the meeting nor any presented at meeting.

Adoption of Minutes – December 1, 2021: Upon motion by Ms. Erkert and seconded by Ms. Lett, with all members concurring, the December 1, 2021 PTAB minutes were approved as submitted.

Report of Director of Public Transit

a.) FRED Transit Projects and Initiatives

Mr. Quirke advised that the second round of interviews for the selection of a consulting firm to complete FRED’s Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) was held in December. From those interviews, a consultant was selected. FRED is expecting a TSP project launch to occur in March or April 2022. More information will be forthcoming and provided to PTAB members as it is available.

Mrs. Jackson advised that as a result of \$750,000 in funding revenue being allocated to FRED from GWRC, FRED is looking to finalize the Radio Communications and Emergency Management System project. This project will allow FRED to connect to the Stafford County tower. This will provide an enhanced radio communication system. The current service being utilized by FRED will be discontinued in the near future so FRED will need to find a new provider. The Radio Communications and Emergency Management project will, for the first time, provide coordination with emergency 911 systems in the region and provide better safety tools to drivers and passengers in case of an emergency. The security project will also allow radio access to the City of Fredericksburg's EMS system. Mrs. Jackson stated this project is continuing to move forward and the PTAB committee will be kept apprised of the on-going process.

Mrs. Jackson stated the marketing and rebranding project continues to move forward and FRED is close to receiving the final draft plan. Once finalized, the draft plan will be forwarded to the Partnerships and Marketing sub-committee members for reference and discussed at a later PTAB meeting.

Mr. Quirke reported that FRED has recently hired two new interns who will be working on compiling data for the fare free service that will begin on February 28th. Both interns are from PTAB agencies representation – one from University of Mary Washington (UMW) and one from Germanna Community College. He stated that FRED has secured contracts for both external and internal advertising on FRED buses from the following companies – City of Fredericksburg Department of Parks & Recreation; Germanna Community College and State Farm Insurance.

Mr. Quirke advised the fare free service grant was awarded by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) for \$300,000 that provides revenue for the next two years. FRED was one of three transit agencies who was awarded the grant monies. Charlottesville and Fairfax transit agencies were also awarded the same grant to provide fare free service.

Mr. Reed provided an overview of FRED's FY2023 operating budget (see presentation). The budget expenditures include funding for the following five categories: Personnel and Benefits; third-party maintenance; fuel; telecommunications and utilities; and ADP equipment and software. Mr. Reed stated the largest expense for Capital Items in the FY2023 budget includes six (6) replacement buses; one (1) service vehicle and Automated Passenger Counters (APCs).

Mrs. Jackson stated the CARES Act funding revenues has been great for the region and localities, allowing the impact of operating costs to be reduced the locality funding allocations during FY2022.

Committee Reports:

1.) Mission, Goals and Objectives

Dr. Weinstock stated that the committee met in January and included in the agenda packet is a report of mid-year activities FRED completed during first half of TY2022. Dr. Weinstock asked for committee comments and questions on each goal and activity. There were no changes requested from PTAB members on any of the goals and objectives and provided unanimous consent for the sub-committee to proceed with moving forward with future reporting.

2.) Services to the Underserved

Ms. Lett advised the Services to the Underserved sub-committee met in January and requested updates on items of concern that were expressed at the December PTAB meeting. The follow-up items are as follows: Goal A.12 for the installation of FRED transit shelters and/or benches related to the Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) at designated locations throughout the service area; the accessibility of bus stops becoming a priority item; the identification of ownership, liability, maintenance and required modifications to meet ADA conformity; and development of a statistical quantitative and qualitative database for tracking deviated routes.

Mrs. Jackson advised that Goal A.12 in regard to FRED transit shelters and/or benches is a specific item of follow-up with the TSP consultant. Once this information has been developed in regard to the TSP development, this information will be provided to PTAB members on an on-going basis.

Mrs. Jackson also relayed a FRED bus stop inventory re-cap on ADA compliance regulations is also a priority for the consultant in the development of FRED's TSP. Currently, most FRED bus stops are not ADA compliant. However, most of the existing FRED bus shelters are in compliance.

In regard to data collection for deviated routes, Mr. Jenkins relayed this has recently occurred as the result of FRED hiring a full-time Dispatcher at the FRED Operations and Training facility. He stated the data collection process is a new procedure being implemented at FRED. The preliminary data calculations will be provided to PTAB members at the upcoming April 6th PTAB meeting.

3.) Partnerships and Marketing

Mrs. Erkert advised there were no official report for today's meeting; however, the sub-committee did meet in January to discuss ways FRED could promote the upcoming fare free service and the expansion of Saturday services. The sub-committee requested that FRED provide flyers, brochures, information, etc. in both English and Spanish versions. Mrs. Jackson advised that FRED currently is working to provide these materials. The sub-committee also recommended that FRED utilize as much social media outreach as they can and likewise for PTAB members to provide outreach on locality websites, etc. Both Mr. White and Mr. Owsiak advised that information on the hour earlier start times for designated routes and future Saturday services have been advertised on Spotsylvania and Stafford County's website and social media platforms. In addition, Mr. White and Mr. Owsiak stated they would also request locality staff to run announcements about the fare free service options that will begin on February 28th. Mrs. Erkert asked that FRED staff contact Mr. Scott Shenk with The Free Lance-Star, to run another article about FRED's recent changes. Members consented that each agency/representative would also provide information on their local social media platforms and websites.

Currently, FRED routes are referred to as a letter and number route (ex. S5) and for the general public, just having a route number may be confusing to the citizens who wish to utilize FRED services. Mrs. Erkert asked if the schedules could also include the name of the route in addition to the route number. Mr. Quirke advised this is also something in the new scope and with the new re-branding updates that is being addressed and evaluated as part of that project.

4.) Operations and Oversight

Mr. White advised there was no report for today's meeting and the sub-committee will be meeting prior to the April 6th meeting.

Mr. Jenkins reported that FRED ridership has seen a slight decline from comparisons this year to last year. The decline in ridership is partially attributed to the colder temperatures as people have been staying inside and not riding transit, not scheduling deviations, etc.

Mr. Jenkins stated that FRED received awards in four of the five regional parades they participated in for Christmas. The FRED float theme this past year was Candy Land.

Mr. Jenkins added that other than the VRE feeder routes, no other FRED routes have been fully suspended. However, there are routes that have been modified. FRED is still six (6) full-time operators down and the hiring process is an on-going process. The shortage of transit operators is not exclusive to only FRED, however other transit agencies and companies are facing the same issues. FRED has looked at hiring non-CDL licensed operators; however, this proved to be an unsuccessful effort recently. Mrs. Jackson stated that even with FRED being short of operators, this has not majorly affected any service routes. FRED has tried to augment service with supervisors running routes on a daily basis and part-time operators are working extra hours to ensure routes/schedules are maintained. An updated ridership report will be forwarded to PTAB members after conclusion of today's meeting.

Healthy Generations Area Agency on Aging (HGAAA) Trainer Report

Ms. Banks advised that due to weather restrictions, no Travel Training sessions were scheduled in January. Travel presentations occurred at a local hotel; Kidney Care facility; Goodwill and Big Lots. Ms. Banks stated that Big Lots was very interested in receiving brochures and fare information so they can distribute to their employees who have limited transportation options. Travel Talk continues to run on the 2nd and 4th Mondays at 2:00 p.m. The next topic of discussion will be Transit Funding.

Ms. Banks stated she has completed her school requirements and is now a Certified Travel Trainer. She is working on updating the current travel training manual and will focus on the new FXBGO! rebranding efforts from FRED. A draft copy of the training manual will be submitted to FRED for review and comments in April. The comments received at HGAAA in regard to the upcoming fare free options have been very well received by the community.

New Business:

Mr. Reed provided an update for the Fare Evaluation (see packet). As it pertains to the fare structure, FRED's passenger fare remains \$1.25 for each boarding. Passengers can still purchase a monthly pass for \$50.00 and annual pass for \$250.00. The VRE feeder bus fare is \$1.75 and \$60.00 for a VRE monthly pass, once the feeder routes resume. There is no transfer fare required. FRED did not change its fares in any of the following fiscal years to include: 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020 or 2022. Even though ridership has continued to decline from its peak in FY2012, as a result of COVID, transit agencies nationwide have experienced ridership decline. Over the last five fiscal years this has resulted in an overall decline of 63%. However, ridership appears to be recovering slightly for the first six (6) months of FY2022.

Mrs. Jackson stated that in response to COVID-19 and with the unexpected support of CARES Act funding revenues, FRED is going to implement a Zero Fare, also called "Fare Free" service option that will begin on February 28, 2022. The fare free service option will continue to be reviewed annually and will be contingent on funding received from CARES Act, TRIP Grant, and/or locality support. The transit fares have not changed; however, they will be at zero cost to the customer.

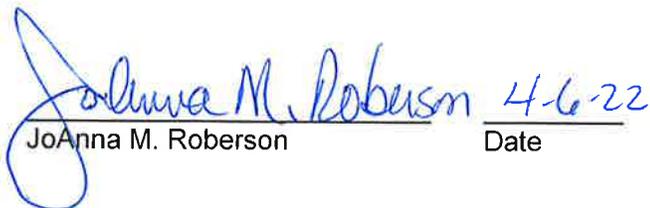
Announcements:

Rev. Davies thanked PTAB members for their attendance at today's meeting and for their continued participation for support of FRED Transit. He expressed his appreciation for the thorough respective sub-committee and agency reports that were provided at today's meeting.

Next PTAB meeting – April 6, 2022 (In-Person – FRED Operations/Training Building – Bowman Center)

Adjournment – The February 2nd PTAB meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.

Approved by the Public Transit Advisory Board


JoAnna M. Roberson 4-6-22
Date