Multimodal Transportation Commission
10/30/2025 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
ACTION MINUTES

These action minutes are intended to provide the reader with an overview of the committee meeting and actions taken during the meeting.

For detailed information on this meeting, please refer to the meeting recording video, also located on the commission webpage, or contact Lucy Crown with any questions.

Present: Jack Igelman (Chair), Kenny Amstrong (Vice-Chair), Joseph Chesler, Bill Loftis, Elyse Marder, Randy Warren, Cate Ryba, Joshua "Josh" Jones, and Micah McLain.
Non-Voting Commission Members Present: Jared Wheatley (P&Z)
COA Staff: Jessica Morriss, Ashley Haire, Hayley Burton, Lucy Crown, Anna Sexton, Nicole Byrd, Nicole Hart, Matt Holloway.
Community Members: Adam Rosen, Holland Youngman, Mike Figura, and Danielle Avostegui.
Absent:
Council Liaison Present: Maggie Ullman

QUORUM: Yes

Meeting start: 3:30 pm
Meeting end: 5:23 pm

AGENDA ITEM	ACTION
Welcoming of Members, Staff, and Public: New members: Josh Jones and Micah McLain.	Heard at 3:31 pm
Approval of the agenda	Heard at 3:38 pm Motion: To approve 10/30/2025 agenda Motion made by: Cate Ryba Motion 2nd by: Joe Chesler How motion carried – all in favor, motion passed.
September 25, 2024 Minutes – Review and Approval	Heard at 3:39 pm Motion: To approve 09/25/2024 minutes Motion made by: Cate Ryba Motion 2nd by: Kenneth Armstrong How motion carried-all in favor motion passed.

Public Comment

Adam Rosen-Board Member of Connect Buncombe/Community Member	Heard at 3:41 pm Adam spoke in support of the Rhododendron Creek Greenway, which connects the Hominy Creek Greenway to Talmadge Street in West Asheville. Community support has been overwhelmingly positive following a survey and a meet-and-greet, with specific assurances that the project will not require taking private property and will pass through the armory. The Friends of Hominy Creek Greenway, a trusted partner, are prepared to assist with its construction and maintenance.
	Heard at 3:44 pm
Mike Figura-Community Member	Mike, a nearby resident, reported on the proposed Rhododendron Greenway Connector He noted that current access to the Hominy Creek Greenway is hazardous. A survey of 350 residents (75 online responses) and an in-person forum (30 attendees) indicated overwhelming community support, with minimal opposition.
	Heard at: 3:48 pm
Holland Youngman-Community Member	Holland Youngman, a West Asheville resident, stressed the project's critical safety benefits. She noted that current access to Hominy Creek Greenway via Brevard Rd. is hazardous, citing her own incident of being run off the road and a friend being struck by a vehicle, resulting in a broken arm. She concluded that the project is essential for both connectivity and providing safe access, which will help prevent further pedestrian and cyclist injuries in the area.
	Heard at: 3:50 pm

New Business

Transit Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA)-Jessica Morriss with the City of Asheville; Presenting and gathering Commission feedback on the two transit network concepts

Jessica Morris with the City of Asheville began presentation that was put together by Jarrett Walker and Associates; the consultant for the Transit Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA).
The COA focuses on the tradeoff between **ridership** and **coverage** goals, stressing the importance of maximizing access. Public engagement and survey results were discussed. A draft network will be presented to Council for feedback in **February 2026**, leading to a final report. The full presentation is available here.

Heard at: 4:17 pm

- Joe Chesler inquired what brought about the establishment of our existing network.
    - Jessica Morriss explained that the current transit system is primarily the result of the 2017 Transit Master Plan (TMP) and its initial recommendations. In January 2020, the first phase of the plan was implemented, which involved a 25% increase in service, more frequent service on specific routes, and extending the route along New Leicester Highway.
- Randy Warren expressed that the City has barely scratched the surface with step one of the Transit Master Plan and inquired what the overlap in those is.

    Jessica Morriss explained that the current study (COA), constrained by the operational budget, complements the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) by assessing the balance between maximizing ridership and expanding coverage within existing resources. The COA will also add a financial analysis, missing from the TMP, to clarify

real costs and necessary trade-offs.

- Please note the video sound was going in and out during Bill's discussion/question so the following is what could be extracted from the recording. Bill Loftis inquired if there had been any analysis yet on these two concepts and how they would be reflected on the planned Asheville? He commented that many low-income neighborhoods would fall off the routes.
    - Jessica Morris explained that the comprehensive plan (comp plan) presents a tricky balancing act, supporting both the "ridership concept"—fewer, higher-frequency routes in dense, walkable areas—and the goal of providing broader transit access to less central, further-out neighborhoods.
- Cate Ryba inquired if there are additional options that people are requesting that will cost more money; will that be presented in May of 2026 in time to do budget planning for the following year?
    - Jessica Morris clarified that while they are working to align the plan, any monetary changes would not appear until **FY28** due to the budget cycle, noting that costs continue to rise. She emphasized the need to keep the discussion on the **right balance for Asheville** separate from the financial realities.
- Elyse Marder inquires to see if there is opportunity if we were to go with the ridership concept now and see more and more people are using it and then funding would increase for the service that a lot of people are using and then we would see additional funds put in that we could start easing more of the

Floor opened to discussion/questions in regards to the COA presentation:

coverage back in?

- Jessica Morriss states “I wish I could say yes but it would be a no, because our fares are only a small portion of our costs. Transit is always heavily subsidized. “
- Council Liaison Maggie Ullman noted the study was funded by unspent money from a failed county transit agreement. She emphasized that successful transit requires significantly more funding (like a county quarter-cent sales tax, estimated at $18M/year, which lacks support). She also agreed that an on-time, reliable service with strong community support is vital to compel external investment and partnerships.
- Jared Wheatley reported that since the last meeting, the City Council has aligned the comprehensive plan, land use, and incentives with the "ridership concept" routes. They reduced residential parking requirements near transit access, changing project thresholds for large-scale multifamily development and diverse housing types on commercial corridors (Tunnel Rd, Hendersonville Rd, Patton Ave). This aims to create a more interwoven and financially resilient plan by encouraging adaptive reuse on existing commercial parcels over greenfield sites.

- Micah McLain inquires if we have hard numbers going from the coverage to ridership concept with current ridership do we know how many regular bus riders loose coverage?
  - Jessica Morriss stated that the next step is to create the draft network. Council's direction is

crucial: they may choose to optimize the network with no service cuts, or they may opt for a "baby step toward ridership," which would require service reductions. Staff will then present the specific impacts (additions/reductions) and associated ridership data. Existing bus ridership data is currently available by route, stop, and time of day.

- Maggie Ullman states “On November 18th she will be part of the council discussion regarding the COA and would love to hear thoughts from each MMTC board member on whether they are leaning toward ridership or coverage.
    - Jack Igelman states “If members are comforatable doing that as you’re commenting please feel free to share where you are on this concept spectrum.
- Randy Warren asked if adopting the higher-ridership transit model would lead the Transportation Department to prioritize investments in pedestrian and bicycle facilities to increase access to the transit network, and if this integrated non-motorized transportation approach is currently being implemented.
    - Jessica Morriss could not confirm drastic changes to Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs), but noted a changed transit network might shift priorities since the GAP plan uses transit access as a criterion. She raised the question of whether to prioritize other modes (pedestrian/bicycle) in areas that lose transit service under a ridership model.

    - Randy Warren strongly advocates shifting city finances to prioritize transit and non-motorized networks over motorized transportation. He believes the city must be bold and plan for the future. He would be "much more for the higher ridership model" if the city commits to expanding the bicycle and pedestrian network to improve access; otherwise, he cautions against going too far in that direction.

- Cate Ryba asks whether there has ever been any discussion of trying the ridership model for 6-12 months to see what happens. She leaned towards the Ridership scenario but thinks a middle ground is what would be best.
- Joe Chesler, a ridership advocate, believes the ridership model is optimal. In his opinion, it does not lose coverage but shifts the user experience from a long wait (30-45 minutes) to a short one (15 minutes), even if it requires a slightly longer walk to the central corridor routes. He notes these central corridors still serve outlying areas and align with user destinations, such as markets and jobs.
- Jack Igelman mentions he feels like he heard in one presentation that we had about an eight if it's a scale of like 1 to 10 an eight towards coverage. Is that accurate or do we even have a sense of where we are now? Did I hear that right that we are currently an 8 out of 10?
    - Jessica Morris "we are currently like a 60/40 (60 ridership/40 coverage).
- Joshua Jones "Maggie asked about philosophy, what's your philosophy about the bus system? I do think that based on what you just showed that

the ridership model would probably be better because you're making less changes to your system and that creates less turmoil, less volatility. If that plan came before all of this that they were talking about from what 2020 is robust enough and its set up so that you can take and add routes you should probably just keep that system and start working off of it. I agree with what Maggie said earlier with where you get taxes and stuff to help with that. I would go with the ridership model for sure.

- Randy Warren commented that the local bus service to the airport is currently impractical, almost as if it "doesn't exist" as a viable option for them. he describes issues with infrequent and unreliable bus schedules (now only every 90 minutes), leading him to use a more expensive Uber service, despite his desire to use public transit. He suggests a higher frequency service.
    - He argues that current low Bill Loftis states "If you want a good transit system you need focus on frequency and that's what the ridership does. The data we saw today, it looks like the lower income households are going to be severely affected by the ridership model because they don't have as much access. They have worse access in ridership than in coverage. Low income persons near transit goes from 35% in the existing world to 59% are not within. The people you see riding this system are those that cannot afford a car. If we had ridership, we probably would have different people on the buses.
- Elyse Marder's view on the concepts is that she definitely leans toward ridership but also recognize that with the ridership concept I'm still a 3 minute walk away from a bus stop and

I also have a car so I am not dependent on transit so I recognize that, I also think that while I lean ridership it would be helpful for me to have a third data point that actually showed what a 50/50 concept looked like because she understands the two extremes right now. If she had a 50/50, it would help her refine whether I lean more towards a 50/50 model or high ridership because she knows she is somewhere in the middle.

- Bill Loftis shares it's hard for him to imagine us not needing a hybrid draft. If all we did was say concept one or two and you went down either of those roads, you're going to miss something. For example: "if you could find a variation of these two concepts where you covered all the legacy neighborhoods, that might occupy 12 out of 18 routes but then you had ridership elsewhere and you could pilot, that might be a more appropriate answer for council to consider.
    - Jessica Morris states "I think that our existing network.
    - Bill Loftis states "no because you don't have any 15 minute routes.
    - Jessica States "we can't hit all of the legacy neighborhoods, all of public housing because our community is so spread out and low income.
    - Bill states "you may not be able to get all of them I am just saying is if some hybrid model comes along where we can get almost there but not quite and you still entertain some ridership concept at the end of the day that's going to have to be done which Jessica states would require additional resources.
- Kenny Armstrong states "I am consultant and his firm is a sub consultant to Jarrett Walker on this

plan so he will be neutral and not vote. But it's hard to me; the ridership concept is like if you could design a system from scratch like if we don't have transit, what would we build? That's kind of what I would build. It's hard to away from the people that depend on it for a lifeline. I will leave it at that."

- Jack Igelman summarized the public's deep concerns regarding potential bus service cuts in areas with high dependency on public transit and lower car ownership rates, emphasizing equity considerations. The main points Jack highlighted were:
    - **Equity:** Residents in low-car-ownership neighborhoods rely heavily on bus services, making the potential loss of access a major equity issue.
    - **Service Elasticity:** Bus ridership is highly responsive to service quality. Infrequent or unsafe service is considered ineffective.
    - **Importance of High Standards:** Key service aspects include frequency, the condition of vehicles, cleanliness of bus stops, and adequate pedestrian facilities.
    - **Opportunity Costs:** Long wait times (e.g., 90 minutes) impose a high opportunity cost on riders, translating to lost wages and reduced time for family, education, and other essential activities like preparing healthy meals

  Jack stressed that the equity issue is complex and linked directly to providing a high standard of frequent and reliable service. Key conditions for this approach include:
    - **More Resources:** The speaker emphasizes the need for increased resources and wants

	the council and city to receive this message, acknowledging the trade-offs involved in policy decisions. ○ **Complementary Facilities:** There is a desire for more supporting pedestrian infrastructure, which aligns with existing city planning efforts. ○ **Incremental Change:** The speaker suggests a gradual, incremental shift towards the ridership model over time, rather than a radical overhaul of the current system (such as the "two lines" concept). This incremental approach is seen as a way to move towards the aspirational goal without disrupting the entire system at once.
	Heard at 5:10pm
Motions/Other Actions Not on Agenda	Motion: “"In supporting the fulfilment of the Transit Master Plan, the MMTC recommends that Council direct staff to seek a hybrid system model that leads toward the ridership model and that Council continues to find more funding sources to expand transit and safe streets for people to walk to the stops safely." Motion made by: Elyse Marder Motion 2nd by: Joe Chesler How motion carried – vote was 8-1 Voted in favor: Jack Igelman, Joseph Chesler, Joshua Jones, Bill Loftis, Elyse Marder, Micah McLain, Cate Ryba, and Randy Warren. Abstained from voting: Kenny Armstrong 5:12pm
Working Group: Appoint two MMTC members for each of the following: A: Traffic Calming Policy	Heard at: 5:13pm Anna Sexton shared an overview of

B: Smith Mill Creek Greenway

the traffic calming policy:

- Advertised an RFP back in August for a consultant to propose on updating our current policy, we are currently in the process of going to council and anticipate having some sort of advocacy working group and that would be what members of the MMTC would help with. It would be a public facing.
    - Elyse advises that there is a high need for traffic calming and that the current policy is very burdensome on the residents and makes a case for the need for the traffic calming. She advocates that when the group is being formed to also include NAC representation as well
    - Micah McLain and Randy Warren were appointed members of the Traffic Calming.

Lucy Crown shared an overview of the Smith Mill Creek Greenway and asked the Commission for two volunteers to be on the project working group.:

- Joe Chesler and Joshua Jones were appointed members of the Smith Mill Creek Greenway.

Future Agenda Items:

Heard at: 5:18pm

Currently advisory boards are meeting on an as needed basis through June 30th, 2027. At this time there is not a date set for the next MMTC meeting but members advise they would like to meet again to discuss the Transit COA before it goes to Council in February that we meet again so we could plan to meet in late

	January/early February would be our target for a meeting. Lucy also mentioned it will be time to update the Commission's rules and procedures.
Adjournment	5:22pm