

Teela Wilkerson
Interim Transit Director

James Easterling
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Financial Clerk

Hoke Area Transit Service



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

Hoke Area Transit Service (H.A.T.S) Conference Room
189 CC Steele Road, Raeford, NC 28376

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 18, 2024 – 10:0 a.m. to a.m.

Attendance:

Bruce Hurst – *Chairperson*, Vocational Options of Hoke County
Pat Graham – *Vice Chairperson*, Hoke County Resident
Teela Wilkerson – *TAB Secretary*, Hoke Area Transit Service
Sonya Fairley – Hoke County Health Department
Shaquala Lacewell – Hoke County Health Department
Karen McLean – Hoke County Resident/HATS Rider
Letitia Edens (via TEAMS), County Manager of Hoke County
Becky Morrow – (via TEAMS), County Consultant
Bryan Marley (via TEAMS) – Hoke County Emergency Management
Tammy Chaney (via TEAMS) – Hoke County Dept. Of Social Services
Mary Hollingsworth (via TEAMS) – Hoke County Senior Services

Absent Members:

Rosa Chavis – Children’s Developmental Center
Cathy James – NC Cooperative Extension Services
Brandon Flagg – Veteran’s Administration
Tony Hunt – County Commissioner of Hoke County

I. Call to Order

- a. Meeting was called to order by Bruce Hurst.
- b. Introduction of visitors: Sonya Fairley of Hoke County Health Department, Shaquala Lacewell of Hoke County Health Department, Karen McLean (Hoke County resident who uses HATS for transportation)

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. The TAB members reviewed the minutes from September 25, 2024 TAB meeting.
- b. Motion (Pat Graham): Move made to approve the September 25, 2024 meeting minutes.
- c. TAB Members agreed unanimously.
- d. Motion carried. The TAB meeting minutes from September 25, 2024 were approved.

III. Discussion of FY2025 ROAP Funds Expended as of October 31, 2024

- a. Teela Wilkerson: Included in your packets are the spreadsheets for each program. The program is split into three parts. The EDTAP portion is the portion that we allocate to the eligible agencies for transporting elderly and disabled clients. The employment portion is used to transport people to work. The RGP portion is the general public funds used to transport the general public to places such as stores for shopping, dialysis centers, and other places they request to go within Hoke County. The original amount for EDTAP was \$77,571. We currently have \$46,681.06 unspent funds remaining, with Monarch having \$7,549.32 remaining, Senior Services having \$17,346.03 unspent funds remaining, and the third split we keep within HATS for dialysis patients not covered by an agency has \$21,785.71 unspent funds remaining. We didn't start using the in-house EDTAP funds until September, because we were unsure of the amount of ROAP funds we would be approved for. We usually transfer some of these funds to other EDTAP agencies if they expend their full allocation. For the employment program, we were allocated \$14,603, which the full amount was expended during July. For RGP, we were allocated \$65,673 which were fully expended as of October. For the total allocation amount of \$157,847, there is \$46,681 remaining. Does anyone have any questions about this? (There were no questions)

IV. Discussion of Suggestions for the Proposed HATS Inclement Weather Plan

- a. Teela Wilkerson: Next in your packets is a draft of an inclement weather plan for HATS which was included in your email. The plan is very detailed because it is a templated pulled from NCDOT's website and it was tailored to fit HATS. I was told that it was a little lengthy and to trim it down some. The reason for it being so long is because the template from DOT's website was used. I've included it in today's meeting to seek suggestions from you all and to see what changes you would suggest.
- b. Pat Graham: It covered everything, very detailed. What happens if this happens and who to contact. It mentions who is the first contact, different responsibilities such as the lead driver. It was very detailed about calling the different departments

and agencies involved. It's really detailed about what they have in place in case there is severe weather.

- c. Teela Wilkerson: Bryan, have you had the chance to look at it?
- d. Bryan Marley: I had started reading it. There were some questions I had on it, like the notification part. It states the Emergency Communications Department will be responsible for preparing press releases and contact. That usually goes through the County Manager. For storms or high winds, all that usually goes through the County Manager and we coordinate all that with the Manager and Director of HATS. I don't really have a problem with it. I don't know if the County Manager would like to speak on that. Most of it says things go through the emergency communication person. That would be Jimmy Stewart. But yes, this is something Mrs. Edens would have to decide.
- e. Letitia Edens: We normally try to coordinate and funnel those things out as a unit, not different people funneling stuff out to the media. Jimmy and Emergency Management usually send that out as a unit, so we don't have multiple people funneling things to WRAL and to E911, so that everything goes out at once and our citizens aren't getting multiple calls and multiple messages. So, we'll work that out so that it is done as a unit and not them getting multiple messages from the county, okay?
- f. Bryan Marley: And Ms. Teela, I think for documentation purposes, for having plans in place, it's a good plan. But sometimes it may be necessary to modify plans in the event of an emergency. We funnel everything through the County Manager.
- g. Teela Wilkerson: Okay. That's basically why it was brought up here first. We're not looking for approval today, but for suggestions and what would need to be revised. This is very good input, so we'll know where to go from here.
- h. Bryan Marley: Yes ma'am.
- i. Teela Wilkerson: Do you mind if I meet with you later on this? We can set up a time to meet about it so we can get it revised in the correct way.
- j. Bryan Marley: Yes, no problem. I would be glad to. Once we get it to where it need to me, we'll send it to Ms. Tish and she can review it and make suggestions or say that it's good.
- k. Teela Wilkerson: Does anyone else have any comments on this? (There were no additional comments). My question, as I have in my notes, was what corrections needed to be made to the responsible titles? Because I had also emailed it to Andres, and he told me that some of the titles needed to be corrected. So that was one reason why I wanted to bring it up in this meeting so we could get further info on the corrections needed.
- l. Letitia Edens: I noticed that too, and we'll correct those and get them right to you.

V. HATS Updates

- a. Teela Wilkerson: Back in June, we had a compliance review and there were eight deficiencies. We finally got a report from FTA stating that there are currently no

deficiencies and the compliance review is close; We have a new financial clerk to help with billing and other financial duties, and she has been doing very well. She's able to take my written instruction and handle things correctly, since I'm not able to stand over her and train all day. I've typed out procedures, and she can take those procedures and complete tasks with no problems, by just using my written procedures. Also, I do want to bring up that our customer complaints right now are high for the phone's not being answered again. We are working on that. I'll be interviewing tomorrow, hope to hire at least four drivers. The financial clerk has been covering the front desk also due to the parttime clerks exceeding their hours for the year. I had a driver helping me maintain the vehicles but had to send the driver back on the road fulltime and resume those duties myself. Last week, even I had to go out in the rain to take someone to work because we were low on drivers. Right now, we can only send one vehicle out of town, so once we get some additional drivers the riders will not have to wait so long for the bus. We don't have office staff available to help with out-of-town trips because they're doing routes here in the county.

- b. Bruce Hurst: Teela, once you hire someone, what is the process in terms of how soon the person can start? Would you have them go through a certain type of orientation and training?
- c. Teela Wilkerson: Yes, once selected we send them to get a drug test and DOT physical, which doesn't take long because they can get their physical as a walk-in. Once those things are cleared, they go through orientation with HR and then they complete their online trainings where they learn different things such as how to treat the customers and how to treat ADA passengers. It depends on the driver as to how long the training takes. Some drivers complete them within 1-2 days while others may take a week, but normally it doesn't take longer than a week for online training. Once the online trainings are complete, they'll have the hand-on wheelchair securement training, ride on the routes to train with the senior drivers, then I do an onboard road evaluation with them before releasing them to drive independently. Overall, the process normally takes about 2-3 weeks before they start driving independently.
- d. Sonya Fairley: You said that you can only have one vehicle going out of town. Are you talking about Raleigh or Charlotte or wherever?
- e. Teela Wilkerson: Yes. We always use one vehicle to go to Chapel Hill, Raleigh, and those places. What has been happening lately is that we'll have Durham and Morrisville on the same day that a Chapel Hill trip is scheduled. The driver is having to take people to Chapel Hill, then go to Durham and Raleigh. So that's why we need some more parttime drivers to help with situations like that. Also, we have our other out-of-town vehicle that goes to Moore and Cumberland County on certain days. The same driver usually takes a morning load, bring them back then take a 2nd load for the afternoon. We want to eliminate people that have 10:00 or 11:00 appointments from being picked up at 5:00am to go in with the 8:00am

- appointments. We currently don't have an available driver to bridge that gap anymore.
- f. Pat Graham: Do you all still go to Robeson County too?
 - g. Teela Wilkerson: Yes ma'am, on Fridays only.
 - h. Pat Graham: What about Scotland County?
 - i. Teela Wilkerson: On Fridays. If we have someone that needs to go to Scotland and Robeson Counties on Friday, if we can work it out that one driver would have to go to both of those counties. But that doesn't happen often.
 - j. Pat Graham: Is that why sometimes, when the senior bowlers go bowling on Thursday, sometimes the drivers come back?
 - k. Teela Wilkerson: Yes, because while the seniors are bowling those couple of hours, we schedule them to do part of a route or pick up someone. Sometime James is the one that does both, takes the seniors bowling, comes back and do the schedule, and then goes back and picks up the seniors from bowling. So, we're doing what we can to make things happen. We are getting some complaints, but we want to bridge those gaps as soon as possible.
 - l. Bruce Hurst: If there's anything that we can do as a Board, to offer more support for you, please let us know. If there's anything we can do to support you, let us know.
 - m. Teela Wilkerson: Thank you so much.
 - n. Pat Graham: I don't particularly want to drive the van, but if you need help in the office even as a volunteer. Like you were talking about scheduling and phone calls, can a person volunteer to do that or do they have to be on payroll?
 - o. Letitia Edens: You can volunteer to answer my phones, Ms. Pat. You know I won't turn down a volunteer. We will always accept volunteers.
 - p. Pat Graham: Alright, so just let me know. You have my number. Give me a call and we can see what I can coordinate with you. I do different things, but I do have free time.
 - q. Teela Wilkerson: I'll appreciate this so much. We definitely need some help with the phones. We have a lot of calls coming in with people wondering why the phones are not being answered. Right now, she's the only one answering the phones except on light days when James can stay in the office. Does anyone else have any comments on HATS updates? (There were no additional comments)

VI. Meeting Open for Comments and Suggestions

- a. Teela Wilkerson: The meeting is now open for comments and suggestions.
- b. Karen McLean: As I've stated, my name is Karen McLean and I'm here really honestly on a complaint. On December 9th, I had an appointment in Chapel Hill, I listened to everything Ms. Teela said about her low staff and the method of how they do things. But my only thing was when I went to Chapel Hill which this is my first time in six years of traveling with Hoke Area Transit, I experienced this with a driver. I don't like throwing people under the bus because everybody needs a job

because they got bills to pay. They have obligations. But my thing was the way that when I inquired, I spoke with Ms. Teela, I spoke with Brenda Rozier, I tried to go through chain of command and didn't overstep nobody here with respect because that's the way you do things. I haven't always done it that way, but moving forward, I have strived to do that. People will look at you in a negative way no matter what you present to them. But as I stated, I spoke with Brenda Rozier, I spoke with Ms. Teela. If I would've went up that day prepared with lunch, he would've never heard from me. I had taken my medicine at 5:30. He picked me up at 5:55. My appointment was at 8:15. I got out of my appointment at 9:00. I started calling him to find out what time I was going to be picked up. So that was that phone call. Then I called Brenda Rozier. I called Ms. Teela. Then I called back an hour later to find out what time. When I called at almost 12:00, because my body started feeling some kind of way because I take medicine on an empty stomach. When he talked to me, he said, well the regular Chapel Hill driver said there's a place up the street. I had chemo which had affected my right side, especially my leg. I couldn't walk from that stoplight that far. A lady said it was like a third of a mile. Thank God there was an employee in there that offered me some cheese nips, because I was about to be sick. But when I called the driver, he tried to be funny about it by saying well other people have complained too but nothing can be done. I said, well the only reason I'm calling you is because I'm feeling bad because I'm hungry and I've taken medicine on an empty stomach. If I had known that I would be up there all day, I would have packed lunch. I understand that you are low on drivers, but why would you schedule a person with a 2:00pm appointment with 8:00 and 9:00am appointments, and then everyone has to sit there all day.

- c. Bruce Hust: Karen, so the nature of the complaint is the time you had to wait?
- d. Karen McLean: Yes sir. My appointment ended at 9:00 and I waited until 2:45 for him to pick me up. And when I got on the van, I had misplaced that paper because the lady that was helping me, I left it in her office. Brenda Rozier has the paper now, the paper they have to sign stating that we were there. So when I got on the van the driver asked me for it. I told him I didn't have it. He said I have to have that paper to ride.
- e. Teela Wilkerson: Ms. Karen, about that paper. You know I spoke with you myself about that paper, but I won't go into any details because this is a public meeting. But do you remember what you told me about why you didn't give the driver that paper?
- f. Karen McLean: I also told you that I needed to get back because I had another appointment that day in Fayetteville.
- g. Teela Wilkerson: That right, you did. But it is impossible for a driver to get you to a Fayetteville appointment on the same day of a Chapel Hill appointment when there are other riders who went to Chapel Hill for appointments.

- h. Bruce Hurst: Karen, first of all, as the Chairman of the TAB Board, I want to say that we're sorry about what you have experienced. We're very sorry. Going forward, we will go into a closed session and address this issue more in detail.
- i. Karen McLean: Okay, and I think the experiences from here on out will be much better and your board members and interim director. I was teed off about how the driver spoke to me and acted like he didn't care.
- j. Bruce Hurst: We're going to look into your allegations.
- k. Teela Wilkerson: That is right. We will be looking into your allegations. I will be able to hear everything that was said to you and deal with that driver.
- l. Karen McLean: He wasn't talking to me on the bus. He spoke to me on my phone. It was around 11:40 or something and no one heard our conversation. So that was all I needed to say to you all and thank you for your time and for allowing me to come and inform you of my situation. You know, I'm not saying I am right. The only thing I'm saying is that the system is broken, and somebody needs to revamp it. The policies and procedures are not being adhered to.
- m. Teela Wilkerson: Thank you for your comments. I apologize for the staff not informing ahead of time that you would be in Chapel Hill all day and for what you had to experience as a result due to HATS failure to do so. Again, we will look into your allegations. As I've stated earlier, we are in the process of hiring more drivers to fill in the gaps so the riders will not have to wait so long.
- n. Karen McLean: Have a good day. Thank you for listening. (Exits the meeting)
- o. Teela Wilkerson: I have spoken with the staff and instructed them that when we have appointments spread apart like that with no extra driver to take up the slack, to call the riders and let them know that they will be over there all day so they can make the decision if they would still like to ride with HATS.
- p. Pat Graham: Be sure to document the complaint and everything that has taken place today to keep on file. Take this meeting as a learning experience, it's not personal.
- q. Bruce Hurst: We should put something in place to limit those comments to maybe three minutes and have them to sign up to speak so we'll know ahead of time, like they do with other board meetings.
- r. Teela Wilkerson: Okay. I appreciate everyone's comments and suggestions, and I apologize for keeping you all here so long today.
- s. Bruce Hurst: You're alright. Going forward I think we should have better ways of handling public comments. They should be done at the beginning of the meeting with limited time. That way they can speak and leave and then we can finish our meetings. Also Ms. Teela, there should be a sign-up sheet for the people who wants to speak.
- t. Teela Wilkerson and Pat Graham: I agree.
- u. Letitia Edens: I was going to talk to you about that Teela, okay. This way they could state their concerns and you could respond to them with an answer later. It would give the Board a chance to address it and act on it later as a board, preferable respond to them in writing. The Chairman or Vice Chairman or whoever wants to

send a letter to document for our board what happened and it becomes part of our minutes with something discussing how we want to handle it.

- v. Teela Wilkerson: Yes ma'am, I agree..... Does anyone else have any comments?
- w. Sonya Fairley: Yes. I'm Sonya Fairley from the Health Department. I know Ms. Edwards probably has talked to you about our new program, Healthy Start. I just wanted to come just to let you know that we will definitely follow up with HATS as far as transportation, because we'll have patients that will need transportation to the Health Department for different classes. So, we'll be getting back in contact with you. Here is the flyer. It is for Hoke County residents, moms and dads, moms that are expecting, and the program goes all the way up to 18 months children. While the mom is pregnant and after she has the baby, we'll have classes at the Health Department to help the families.
- x. Teela Wilkerson: That's good. She briefly had spoken with me about the program and does have a contract with HATS for that.
- y. Sonya Fairley: Thank you
- z. Teela Wilkerson: Anyone else has anything? (There were no additional comments)

VII. Adjournment

- a. This meeting was adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

Teela Wilkerson

Signature, TAB Secretary

6/25/2025

Date of Approval of TAB Minutes