

Transportation Committee
Regular Meeting Notes (same as Minutes) – FINAL
Monday, May 22, 2017 10:00 AM
Legislature Chambers

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Michael Lane	Chair	Present
David McKenna	Vice Chair	Present
Glenn Morey	Member	Present
James Dennis	Member	Present
Peter Stein	Member	Absent
Catherine Covert	Clerk of the Legislature	Present
Joe Mareane	County Administrator	Present
Fernando de Aragon	ITCTC Director	Present

Call to Order

Mr. Lane, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Comments from the Public

There were no members of the public present.

Minutes Approval

April 24, 2017

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Glenn Morey, Member
SECONDER:	David McKenna, Vice Chair
AYES:	Lane, McKenna, Morey, Dennis
ABSENT:	Stein

Chair's Report

Mr. Lane reported a letter was sent to the Department of Transportation by Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, following the visit to their facility in April that includes a concise confirmation of the discussion that took place during that meeting.

Comments from Committee Members

There were no comments from Committee members.

Uber Operations in Upstate New York

Uber Operations in Upstate (ID #7054)

Mr. Dennis stated he has followed news regarding Uber and Lyft operating in the Upstate area and is supportive of it provided the drivers follow regulations including a valid driver's license, valid insurance, and have no prior driving while intoxicated record.

Mr. Morey agrees with Mr. Dennis and stated this area attracts people from all over the world and is viewed by some as an international hub. Uber and Lyft are used worldwide and if we want to continue to attract these people there is a need to support these operations.

Mr. de Aragon said there are a number of unknowns regarding how this will work in a smaller urban area like Ithaca. It may not be as big of an option as it is in larger cities and the operations may behave differently with the college.

Mr. Dennis stated when viewing the market in this area there are 100,000 people, during some peak weekends there are more, and the Uber operators will know what they are getting into and in a very short time; it will be driven by the market itself. He added that the price point will be of interest because people know what taxis charge and if the Uber rides begin to be less expensive they may choose them instead.

Mr. Morey inquired if anyone from Ithaca City Council has expressed any type of support for this. Mr. Dennis stated Mayor Myrick is one of the five Upstate mayors who have expressed support and uses it when he is in other cities.

Mr. Lane explained the legislation was recently passed at the State level allowing Uber and Lyft to operate Upstate and there is a Bill to fast-track State regulations and guidelines regarding this. A recent article in the Ithaca Voice points out that it is questionable if local municipalities can regulate the transportation network company (TNC) operations or if it needs to be regulated at the State level. He would like to approach this methodically and consider the taxi situation.

Mr. Lane spoke of a past visit from Julie Holcomb, Ithaca City Clerk, regarding the licensing of taxis being done at the County level instead of the City. Her concerns included the time involved and the fact that the agreement only provided control of the taxis in the urbanized area and the taxis charging higher rates in rural areas due to lack of control. At that time the County was not interested in taking on those responsibilities. There have been issues related to taxis at the Airport and the taxi companies have complained about regulations involving the Airport but Mike Hall, Airport Manager, has made some changes and reported things have improved.

Mr. Lane would like to hear the taxi company's concerns with TNCs and the new regulations. Under the new legislation there is an opportunity to opt out but in this area it can only be done at the County level. He spoke of Westchester County currently reviewing their opportunity to opt out since it does not have the authority to regulate per their requirements.

Mr. Lane stated this needs to be discussed at the County level and to have a public hearing. He agrees there may be members of the public excited about this but the best interest of the public safety needs to be considered. He also said the size of the City needs to be looked at in regard to sustaining the TNC business and consideration of the impact this may have on taxi companies and the possibility of them being put out of business with the TNC operations in this smaller community.

Mr. de Aragon stated this will be market driven and does not know if the market will be

supportive of it:

Mr. Lane said the TNCs are taking the rides for the high-traffic times and that may impact the taxi services as that is a prime time for them to provide their services. He also believes it may be a hit or miss for this area. All the facts need to be discussed to come to the best decision for the County.

Mr. Dennis spoke of waiting for the New York State and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to set up the regulations. Mr. Lane thinks the second Bill is supposed to expedite that process.

Mr. Dennis agrees this is in need of further discussion and input and asked what the public hearing would be pertaining to and if this would be a local law. Mr. Lane stated the public hearing would be regarding the County's decision to opt out and stated it could be done through this Committee.

Mr. Lane stated Ms. Holcomb plans to be in attendance at the June meeting and he would also like to invite the taxi operators for their input and comments. He would like to discuss taxi licensing also at the June meeting. There are concerns regarding the statewide regulations being enforced locally and being able to verify if individuals have registered in accordance with State regulations.

Another consideration is the safety of vehicles and this may be an area the County may need to take over as a consolidated services issue.

Mr. de Aragon spoke of background checks and vehicle repair and stated the Car Share program currently does a background check on all their members.

Mr. Dennis is in agreement with Mr. Lane's approach.
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General Discussion (as available)

Airport

Mr. Lane stated Mike Hall, Airport Manager, plans to resubmit the Upstate Airport Competitive Funding application in an effort to ensure the idea for funding airports upstate is not forgotten about by the Governor.

Mr. McKenna reported Mr. Hall has found two refurbished jet bridges but has no further information at this time.

Mr. Lane expressed concern there may be some competition for the Upstate Airport Competitive Funding with Stewart Airport, a former Air Force Base located in Orange County. A new start-up carrier recently expressed interest in basing their facilities there. Mr. Mareane said the facility is large and there have been talks about making it the outlet for New York City by using it to relieve the pressure on the City airports.

Mr. Lane spoke of a recent meeting with President Martha Pollack, Cornell University, and that she expressed interest in the Airport and its importance.

Highways

Mr. de Aragon spoke of an e-mail he received on May 19th from Mark Frechette, Department of Transportation (DOT), regarding background information related to Route 13. The e-mail included a

2011 letter regarding the signal timing in the City of Ithaca, intersection analysis for morning and afternoon peak times, and a signal map of the City. At this time there are no failing intersections according to DOT but they have noted some stressed intersections. DOT is currently obtaining new traffic counts for the intersection of Routes 13 and 366 that will be followed up with a traffic analysis. Mr. de Aragon noted the new Brindley Street Bridge will relieve some congestion in that area.

Mr. Lane inquired about the proposal to narrow the driving lane on Route 79 to incorporate a bike lane. Mr. Dennis stated there has been some opposition and pointed out that the bridge already has been narrowed to incorporate a bike lane. Mr. de Aragon stated there have been discussions about narrowing Route 79 and said the City has received a grant for pedestrian improvements and the plans include improving the pedestrian crossing at the five point intersection along with other work. He stated further information about the project can be obtained from the City of Ithaca.

Mr. de Aragon reported that he has assisted Jeff Smith, Highway Director, by providing him with maps showing the ideas of the bicycle advocates for a meeting Mr. Smith had with them. Mr. Smith is reviewing them and some of their requests will be implemented with some DOT improvements.

Mr. Dennis stated he has been receiving a great deal of communications regarding Dubois Road and has spoken with Mr. Smith. The south end of the road is being worked on first because it is a more heavily traveled portion of the road and there are plans to try to do some temporary work on the northern end of the road.

Mr. Lane stated he stopped to view the work being done on Red Mill Road Bridge and is impressed with it.

Mr. Dennis said he has received compliments regarding Waterberg Road Bridge and spoke of the original opposition to that project.

Mass Transit

Committee members discussed the Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) budget and noted all three partners must be in agreement to equal contributions; Cornell, the City, and the County.

Mr. Mareane said he attended a meeting last week regarding the TCAT budget and funding and discussions included what increase they should be asking for this year and showed different scenarios of what could happen with various requests. Mr. Mareane believes it would be difficult for them to ask for an increase when they have a \$4 million fund balance. TCAT is in good shape financially but are not when it comes to personnel as they have multiple vacancies in all areas. Following an inquiry made from TCAT, Mr. Mareane suggested their annual budget meeting to bring the parties together and not have as detailed of a presentation. He further suggested they need to provide the information about the major decisions and “get to the point” to make the meeting more productive. Committee members were in agreement with Mr. Mareane’s suggestions.

Mr. Dennis stated he is glad to see they have money in the bank but the policy of the Legislature has been a willingness to assist in attaining goals. He supports helping them out in smaller amounts annually versus waiting until there is a need for a larger, more problematic amount. He is also concerned about the unknown support for federal aid to mass transit and the need for leadership at TCAT to provide guidance for the organization.

Mr. de Aragon stated he attended a meeting last week in Cortland to discuss the transportation options involving Tompkins Cortland Community College and there was a number of key parties in

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attendance.

Rail Roads

Mr. Mareane stated he has not heard back from the rail roads but will follow-up again and report back to the Committee.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.