

**Savannah Mobility Management, Inc.**  
**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, December 11, 2014**  
**Savannah, GA**

The meeting of the Board of Directors of Savannah Mobility Management, Inc. convened on Thursday December 11, 2014 at CAT Transit Center, 610 W Oglethorpe Street, Savannah, GA. Chairman Marc Friday welcomed all present and called the meeting to order at approximately 8:35 AM.

The following directors were present:

- Bob Coffey (Vice Chairman)
- Marc Friday (Chairman)
- Joe Marinelli
- Jody McIntyre
- Dr. Chadwick Reese
- Scott Snipes (Secretary/Treasurer)
- Charlie Brazil
- Chris Crane
- Mark Dana
- Veleeta McDonald

The following director was absent from the meeting:

- Patrick Graham

The following guests were also present at the meeting:

- Nick Helmholdt, Incoming Administrator, SaMMI
- Howard Helmken, Administrator, SaMMI
- Ramond Robinson, Chief Development Officer, Chatham Area Transit
- Craig Brown, Special Services Coordinator, Chatham Area Transit
- Marija Bumgarner, Tourism Coordinator, City of Savannah
- Terry Koller, Director of Railroad Operations, Coastal Heritage Society
- Jack Bussert, General Manager, River Street Inn
- Melissa Yao Hille, Chief Experience Officer, MY Agency Savannah

The chairman reported that a quorum of board members was present. He introduced Veleeta McDonald as a board member representing the City of Savannah.

Melissa Yao Hille presented the progress of the website update to the board. She showed a draft of the new website. Joe Marinelli asked what the current traffic to [www.connectonthedot.com](http://www.connectonthedot.com) is and if we should consider alternative URLs for the website. Marc Friday responded that he did not have the Google analytics for the site on hand, but that many website visitors found the site using a search engine. Melissa said that she would be willing to research some alternative URL options that are available. Joe Marinelli also asked that the words “air transportation” be changed to “airport transportation” and he asked that a new photo of the front of the Savannah Visitors Center be used to reflect the current signage. Chad Reese asked what “park smart” was. Veleeta McDonald responded that it was information about the downtown parking infrastructure.

Melissa Yao Hille proceeded to present a plan for digital marketing campaign. The proposal cost was listed at \$12,000 for a campaign in the spring of 2015 (mid February to mid May). The campaign would lead to 1.4 million impressions. Joe Marinelli asked how long the work would take. Melissa said she would be able to begin design work in January and launch the campaign in February.

The board gathered for a moment to take a photo for the website.

### ***Governance***

**Upon a motion made by Jody McIntyre and seconded by Chris Crane, the minutes of the September 18, 2014 Board of Directors meetings were approved unanimously.**

The chair noted the minutes from previous management committee meetings which were included in the board packet. He then asked Chris Crane to present the report from the Nominating Committee.

Chris Crane stated that after meeting in November, the committee found that all elected members wished to retain their seats for another term, leading to no changes in board composition. He stated that the committee had nominated Jody McIntyre to fill the role of board chair.

**Upon a motion made by Bob Coffey and seconded by Veleeta McDonald, the board slate proposed by the Nominating Committee was approved unanimously.**

### ***Financial***

Howard Helmken summarized the financial statements provided in the board packet for the fiscal year through October, 2014. He pointed out that there was an \$18,732 positive budget variance for net income forecast for the year. He then introduced the POR Fee Revenue summary page. He stated that the existing Smith Travel occupancy percentage may no longer be a useful metric because of the increase in hotel room inventory. Howard provided a brief history of the use of the Smith Travel history. He said that there has been a 4% increase in the year-to-date POR Fee revenues compared to 2013.

Bob Coffey presented the request made by GIMTCA to increase funding for the water ferry from 40% of POR Fee Revenue to 44%. He stated that the trade center authority has continued to support the water ferry service through deficit spending. He said that the preliminary budget guidance provide by CAT indicated that the operating costs would be \$100,000 over the previous year. Bob Coffey said that on behalf of the trade center authority and in response to the letter presented by the SaMMI Chair he was modifying the request to the \$50,000 year end distribution.

Howard Helmken introduced the proposed 2015 budget. He stated that the following new factors influenced the budget development: money for capital projects has been accrued – or is very close to its accrual target; the request for additional revenue to the Convention Transportation Fund; and the request for additional funding to for the water ferry from GIMTCA. He stated that the rationale for the proposed budget was to address the short term needs of funding partners in the coming year but to examine the funding in a more comprehensive manner as a full group. Howard explained each line of the budget in detail.

Mark Dana asked how the Express Shuttle cost impacted the budget. Howard Helmken explained that the city pays one half of SaMMI's monthly operating cost and that CAT provides service from 7am to 11am at no charge to SaMMI or the city.

Chris Crane asked where the proposal from Melissa would fit into this budget. Howard stated that it would fit into line 91, the System Branding and Identity Study.

Scott Snipes asked where the \$50,000 allocation to the trade center authority was listed. Howard Helmken stated it was on line 83, "SITCC-Water Ferry."

Howard stated that at the time when the CTF contribution was at 25%, the Express Shuttle was not operational.

Mark Dana asked Bob Coffey if the water ferry is in service on days when the trade center has no events and what it facilitates on those days. Bob stated that it does run on the approximately 31 "dark days" on the trade center's annual calendar. He stated that the users were either tourists or guests at the Westin. Mark Dana asked if the operational cost of running the water ferry could be quantified for those days. Chad Reese stated that the ferry riders use the service to reach the Westin on "dark days." Mark Dana asked if the Westin should cover the cost of operations on these days. Joe Marinelli stated that the water ferry has become a part of the attraction of visiting Savannah, and that it would be difficult to quantify the number of Westin guests on any particular day. Jody McIntyre said that all visitors and residents have access to the ferry and that she has witnessed people parking at the Marriott for the sole purpose of "riding the ferry". Bob Coffey stated that the Westin currently contributes \$25,000 toward water ferry service plus a higher POR fee than other hotels. He stated that there have been discussions with management at the Westin regarding changing the cost sharing structure for the water ferry service. He further stated that the trade center has considered several ways to contain operating costs. An analysis of cutting late night service back 4 hours did not yield sufficient savings to substantially reduce the operating deficit due to the large portion of fixed costs. Veleeta McDonald stated that the city occasionally encourages visitors to park at the trade center and use the water ferry for large events that stress the city's parking facilities.

Joe Marinelli addressed the CTF line items in the proposal. He stated that CTF commitments through about 2020 would not be sustainable with current funding levels. He said the reason for this is the success of the program in attracting new and returning business. He stated that his group will have to be more conscience of commitments made in the coming year, which may impact convention booking numbers in future years. Scott Snipes said that the Visit Savannah group wants assurance that funds will be available in future years. Joe Marinelli stated that the variables regarding new hotel rooms on Hutchinson Island and expansion of the trade center may favor a broader examination of how to fund convention transportation. He stated that this issue is critical to Savannah's competitiveness on a national scale. Howard Helmken stated that there may be a need for the funding model to be revised to address changes in the market. Bob Coffey stated that he believes that a closer look at the overall structure of the POR is needed. He said that Atlanta is examining the Savannah POR model for rental credits and convention transportation. Marc Friday said that he understands the importance of the CTF and its role in the local economy. Mark Dana asked what the dollar figure of the difference between the request and the amount in the budget. Joe Marinelli said that he was not concerned about the 2015 commitments for funding. He said that he consulted with Howard and Marc a year ago regarding the concern for meeting future obligations. Howard Helmken stated that in 2014 the fund will expend nearly \$100,000 more than it received in contributions; however that 2015, there are fewer commitments in place. Scott Snipes said that the discussion preceding the formal request originally considered asking for a higher amount, above 30% of the POR fee revenue. He said that without the CTF, Savannah would not be competitive with cities like Orlando, Tampa, Nashville, and others. Jody McIntyre said that the initial study that led to the CTF identified other critical elements such as rental credits. She said that the

availability of transportation at all times – not just during large events – was a fundamental element to competitiveness in this field.

**Bob Coffey made a motion to remove from the table the request presented by Visit Savannah to increase CTF contribution. The motion was seconded by Joe Marinelli. The motion was unanimously approved.**

**Bob Coffey made a motion to approve the proposed 2015 budget. The motion was seconded by Jody McIntyre. The motion was approved by a vote of 9 to 1. Scott Snipes opposed the motion.**

***System Ridership***

Nick Helmholdt presented the system ridership figures for the year to date.

YTD Comparison thru November; 2014/2013						
	Passengers		Passengers/Day		% Change	
	2014	2013	2014	2013		
<b>Express Shuttle</b>	156,913	75,892	474	229	+106.2%	
<b>Water Ferry</b>	703,774	659,446	2,120	1,998	+6.7%	
<b>Streetcar</b>	28,088*	5,797**	460*	276**	n/a	
*2014 streetcar out of service January - May						
**2013 streetcar out of service March - December						

Mark Dana asked how the ridership is counted on the Express Shuttle. Chad Reese responded that it is counted manually by the operator using an electronic farebox.

Marc Friday introduced Terry Koller and thanked him for his efforts regarding the streetcar.

***Program Elements***

Marija Bumgarner from the city of Savannah presented an update on the City Hall Landing Shelter project. She stated that a draft MOU was shared with SaMMI the prior day. She said that the city’s goal is to have the shelter completed by St. Patrick’s day. Joe Marinelli asked if he could see the conceptual drawings for this project. Mark Dana asked what the budget was for this item. Howard Helmken stated that SaMMI is planning to contribute \$145,000 and that the trade center authority will contribute \$30,000 and that CAT will contribute technology integrated into the shelter. He said that the cost projected by the city was approximately \$200,000.

Nick Helmholdt presented an update on wayfinding projects. He described the 12 new dot Express Shuttle signs installed throughout downtown.

Terry Koller presented an update on the streetcar performance. He said that the work performed on the wheel assemblies has made the vehicle much more reliable. He stated the need for a second streetcar to improve system reliability and operating coverage. He also stated the need to recruit and train a new operator. He informed the board about the limitation to training due to constrained railway availability.

Veleeta McDonald added that the high density of pedestrians and vehicles on River Street presents challenges for operating the streetcar in mixed traffic. Joe Marinelli said that he remembered conversation about a second streetcar some time ago. Terry Koller said that the city purchased a PCC style streetcar, however it was not able to accommodate the powertrain used in *dottie*. He said that the Coastal Heritage Society owns two smaller original Savannah streetcars which use a single truck. He said he believes that these streetcars could use the propulsion system used in *dottie*. Chad Reese said that he is working to identify the funding to rehabilitate the older streetcars. There was some discussion about the costs of rehabilitation versus purchasing new streetcars. Charlie Brazil said that the difficulty in acquiring parts for older chassis has made it challenging for his business to rehabilitate older vehicles.

Nick Helmholdt presented an update of the Convention Transportation Fund activity. He stated that the commitments on the fund in 2015 are comparatively light compared to recent years, however, fund commitments are predicted to grow beyond the contributions from SaMMI through 2018. Chad Reese wondered if CAT would be an appropriate entity to consider for the ground transportation from the Savannah airport to their hotel. Joe Marinelli said that part of the challenge is that groups rarely all arrive at the airport at the same time and that many groups that meet in Savannah are state association groups with large numbers of drivers. He said that he believes that the reason that there isn't an alternative option is that the volume and consistency does not justify the need for a business to fill the gap.

**Mark Dana made a motion to add the discussion regarding the CTF funding model to the agenda of the next SaMMI board meeting. The motion was seconded by Charlie Brazil and approved unanimously.**

Joe Marinelli suggested that the chair appoint a small task force of two to three people to advise and consult with Melissa on the marketing efforts.

Mark Dana stated that he sees a need to improve ridership by marketing through partners and stakeholders in Savannah. Marc Friday said that he did not disagree with that and that he believes the discussion will pan out at the next meeting when the results of the Express Shuttle ridership survey are presented.

### ***New Business***

Nick Helmholdt presented the proposed 2015 board and management committee meeting calendar. Joe Marinelli asked what guidance the bylaws provided on the number and frequency of meetings. Nick said that the bylaws state that a minimum of three scheduled meetings should be held each year. Bob Coffey said that the board may want to reconsider the frequency of board and management committee meetings. He asked if the chair might want to consider appointing a committee to examine the bylaws of the organization – especially regarding the frequency of meetings, the role of the management committee, and terms for elected officers. Mark Dana agreed and said that the group may consider combining the roles of the board and the management committee. Howard Helmken stated that the board should also consider the ability to achieve a quorum for all scheduled meetings. Chad Reese stated that the chair could appoint sub groups to address pressing matters between board meetings. Joe Marinelli suggested going from four to six meetings in 2015. Jody McIntyre said that she thought a meeting was needed before March. Howard and Bob provided some historical context for the role of the management committee and its structure within the organization.

**Charlie Brazil made a motion to hold six board meetings in 2015 on February 19, April 16, June 18, August 20, October 15, and December 10. The motion was seconded by Chad Reese and approved unanimously.**

Marc Friday announced that this meeting is Howard Helmken's official final board meeting. He said that Howard brought his insights, wisdom, level headedness and friendship to the SaMMI group. He further expressed that the board will never be able to repay the many years of effort that Howard has put into SaMMI. All board members and guests rose in applause to congratulate and thank Howard for his dedication.

Howard expressed his confidence in the future of SaMMI's efforts and his enjoyment working with this program from its earliest beginning.

***Adjournment*** – There being no further business to come before the board, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:35AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Nick Helmholdt, Administrator  
For the Secretary