

The City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina convened for Committee Discussions on Monday, April 1, 2024, at 6:09 p.m. in Room 267 of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center with Councilmember Ed Driggs presiding. Council members present were Dimple Ajmera, Tiawana Brown, Renee Johnson, Lawana Mayfield, James Mitchell, and Marjorie Molina.

**ABSENT:** Mayor Vi Lyles, Councilmembers Danté Anderson, Tariq Bokhari, Malcolm Graham, and Victoria Watlington.

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**Councilmember Driggs** said this is an informal session. We'll get a presentation on the CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System) budget, and we'll hear from Committee Chairs all here in room 267. The Mayor and the Mayor Pro Tem are traveling tonight, so I will be conducting the orchestra. My name is Ed Driggs and I Chair the Transportation and Planning Committee and Development. The first thing we will do is introductions.

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### **ITEM NO. 1: COUNCIL COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS**

**Councilmember Driggs** said I think we'll move ahead with the Committee report outs [inaudible].

**Councilmember Ajmera** said okay. So, report out for the Budget Governance and Intergovernmental Relations Committee. At today's meeting we had Councilmember Mayfield and Councilmember Mitchell and Councilmember Brown joining us virtually. We had covered three agenda items. First, we worked on our performance measurement. That was just a follow up from our conversation at the Retreat. So, you will see at some point staff is planning to bring comprehensive policy measures so that we can all see comprehensively what each committee has approved, but for our committee, we looked at goals for City services and how do we compare our costs with other cities comprehensively. We also looked at our investments in our SEAP (Strategic Energy Action Plan) especially our fleet and energy consumption, and then total cost of City services comparison to peer cities. So, those are our performance measurements that we have approved. Councilmember Mitchell had provided feedback on sharing collaborations with our partners at federal, state and county level. So, that would be something good to share with our constituents. So, I don't know how we can include that as part of our dashboard, but that is something Julia is looking into. Julia Martin with the City Manager's Office. So, that's on performance measurements. Anything I missed Committee members on that before I move on the next topic?

Okay. The second item we had was a presentation from Stormwater and Water. As you know, this is just our annual presentation as part of the Budget process to ensure that we continue to provide clean and safe water. Both of those are enterprise funds which means they are not subsidized by property tax dollars. Revenue covers all expenses from both of those enterprise funds. For Stormwater, the focus continues to be on mitigating flood risks through projects that are designed to increase capacity as well as preventive maintenance. Back in 2018 when Mr. Driggs was Chairing this Budget Committee, we had a billion-dollar backlog in our Stormwater and there has been some policy changes. As a result, there is no waiting list right now. I think just tremendous. Also, they are taking a proactive approach to investing in our Stormwater system. They're installing cameras. So, you can actually see and they're taking proactive maintenance approach to addressing Stormwater. So, maybe that's the reason some of us are not getting as many Stormwater calls as we used to, but I think that's certainly a sign that we are heading in the right direction. So, there is a financial modeling for 10 years into the future like we do every year to ensure financial liability and because of that, where we had to take in inflation and other factors of cost increases, there is an increase of 3.7 percent that will be proposed as part of the Budget for Stormwater and that equates to about 53 cents per month on average for single family customers. Our committee requested some additional information based on Councilmember Mayfield's

feedback on residential versus commercial Stormwater rates. Currently it's all the same. So, it's based on square footage. So, we would like to see if we can look into legal as well as legislative framework for this change in methodology. That's on Stormwater. Any questions on Stormwater?

Mr. Driggs said Chair, I'll just make an observation. For one, there's no waiting list as such, however Stormwater does prioritize projects that are reported to them. So, there is a triage sort of thing which means you don't necessarily immediately get service. On the other hand I think what's remarkable from what my constituents have told me is, the urgent stuff is attended to within hours. It's amazing how quickly they show up. The other thing I wanted to note also from my district is there are a lot of complaints that are referenced in terms of the 10-year storm and the 50-year storm is a little out of date in the sense that we're getting 10-year storms every two years. So, I think it's not a Budget thing, so it's not [inaudible] to this, but I think we really do need to examine whether we are current as far as our assessment of likely rainfall is concerned and like Dave has told me today, that in fact there is federal analysis going on that will inform our future assessment of the needs, the capacity of the system and how we can address some of these areas that seem to keep flooding even though they're technically in spec.

Ms. Ajmera said exactly. I think that's a good point Mr. Driggs. I see Mr. Heath is there taking notes as always. So, that will be part of our followup report. It could be part of our budget Q&A as a follow up Mr. Heath, because Mr. Driggs is right. We need to plan ahead as we are seeing tremendous growth in all districts.

Ms. Ajmera said I just want to highlight one thing for Stormwater. The UDO (Unified Development Ordinance) has certainly provided more tools to our Stormwater staff that we didn't have before. So, now there are over 3,000 some requests that are being reviewed. So, every plan they're having to review, but certainly helps address Stormwater issues that we often hear about. I think that's a step in the right direction because of the tools that are available under the UDO.

**Councilmember Johnson** said one of the things that was mentioned during our Transportation and Planning Meeting, we were presented with this blueprint for Charlotte, which is a great, great resource. I know you'll go over that, but when we were presented with this information, I said that this feels like a direct response to our infrastructure discussion and wouldn't it be nice if all of the departments gave us something like this Mr. Jones. So, Stormwater, if we had this type of aid. The Stormwater status and the blueprint and the different projects. This would be so helpful if we got one of these for Stormwater and C-DOT (Charlotte Department of Transportation) and all of the departments that we could kind of overlay. It would really give us an idea of the cumulative impact and the cumulative needs. So, I think this is a wonderful tool and I would love to see this for Stormwater as well. Thank you.

Ms. Ajmera said for Charlotte Water, again water, stormwater are not really glamorous topics, but it's certainly very essential to everything we do. If you don't have safe and clean water, everything falls apart. So, we have an award-winning water department. I take great pride in drinking Charlotte water. We all got these cups from Charlotte Water today. For Charlotte Water the projected budget includes \$2.2 billion in the capital investment plan over the course of upcoming five years. That's consistent with other water utilities and Charlotte Water, just like other municipalities is facing significant regulatory pressures around PFAS (Per and polyfluoroalkyl substances). I'm sure you've probably heard about PFAS as this lead and foreign chemicals. So, our Water Director, Ms. Angela Charles talked about how it's very expensive to invest in this new technology that we will need to invest in to identify this PFAS forever chemicals. It's in everything. It's in a lot of things. It's in cake. Is that right Mr. Mitchell?

**Councilmember Mitchell** said in lipstick.

Ms. Ajmera said in lipstick and everything you can imagine. So, certainly we are trying to stay ahead of our regulatory requirements. So, that pressure along with inflationary pressures on capital projects has pushed our anticipated rate further. So, we are looking

at about \$4.37 to \$4.55 per month increase, about \$4.50 increase that was proposed by Charlotte Water. Let me put some context behind it. Charlotte Water continues to be one of the lowest nationwide in terms of water rate. I don't have the comparison, but we can pass that on, but you can see how we are doing even though it is an increase. We are still one of the lowest and when it comes to sewer rate, we are somewhere in the middle. So, that speaks tremendously to our financial leadership at Charlotte Water and Stormwater and certainly Mr. Jones.

So, for those of you who are concerned about citizens who can't afford to pay this increase, good news is that Charlotte Water is introducing H2O Foundation. So, they are going to turn this over to another entity so that there is no conflict of interest, but this will leverage our City dollars and private dollars so that we can help our residents who can't afford to pay water bills. I think that's a big step in the right direction because if you remember back in the middle of the pandemic, we had allocated a portion of our federal COVID dollars towards helping residents who couldn't afford to pay their water bill. So, this is good because now we will have other dollars from foundations or private to help with that which is great. Also, this year there is a little bit of change. Now there is a little bit of higher percentage towards operations versus capital. I think that's good because as the City is dealing with the aging infrastructure, pipes, we have to invest more on the operation side to ensure that we are providing safe and clean water that is going to be sustainable, at the same time increasing capacity. So, certainly there is always a debate about how do we balance that, but I think they'll come up with a good plan moving forward. I like that they are investing more on operations. That's all on Charlotte Water. Any questions on Charlotte Water before I wrap it up?

**Councilmember Molina** said I have a quick note just for the City Manager. Angela and her team actually took me on about a three or four hour tour of all of these facilities and I think it's important for us to note that we provide water resources for the entire County and when we say this as a City function, that it's being successful, I think it's something to say that this enterprise fund, this self-functioning enterprise fund has the capacity to actually do a multi-city and countywide operation at the level that they do. I just want to shoutout that team because they took me to the northern portion of our facilities where I saw the stormwater operation, I saw our water treatment plant, I saw just a number of things and I highly recommend it. I don't know how many of our colleagues have actually done that. When I met Ms. Gentry from the airport the other day, I kind of felt as Council members, we really don't get to touch our departments in the way that we would like to. We make a lot of abstract decisions without actually that touch point of understanding the inner workings of each department, but it was beneficial to me to have that touch point with that particular department and even when I hear this now. It's kind of tangible for me and I told Ms. Haley she can hold me to it. I'm going to go spend some time at the airport just to kind of see what you guys are doing over there because I'd love to, as we continue those conversations, have that understanding, that actual tangible understanding of the work that's being done at our different departments across the City. So, shoutout to Angela and her team for the great work.

Ms. Ajmera said I think that's a good point because we did bring that up. Charlotte wastewater treatment plant was one of my first visits back when I was elected in 2017. Certainly, it's a very educational experience and I highly recommend that. I know Councilmember Brown, we did bring that up because that's in her district.

**Councilmember Brown** said everything is in my district.

Ms. Ajmera said so, yes, I highly recommend that. Speaking of District Three, the airport is in her district. We couldn't get to our airport presentation, but it will be rescheduled at a later time, maybe at one of the briefings. We just didn't have enough time. So, that's it. At our next meeting, we will be discussing criteria for the financial partners' process. I know we had a very robust conversation at our last Budget Workshop. So, based on that feedback, we are taking that feedback, and we will discuss some criteria so that we are being consistent in our grants as we work with financial partners moving forward. That's all I have.

Mr. Driggs said so, Ms. Molina you talked about touch. Did you actually touch the end product of the wastewater treatment plant?

Ms. Molina said oh no.

Mr. Driggs said I did. So, you go there it's this huge mound and the little bacteria, it's pretty much odorless, it's not toxic. You can pick it up.

Ms. Molina said so, they took me to this really cool facility that they have tours at for babies that babies can kind of walk through. It's like a science museum. Do you know which one I'm talking about?

Mr. Driggs said I don't know that.

Ms. Molina said it's close to Huntersville. You have to ask Angela about that. They took me there and it showed the entire process of what our wastewater goes through in order to cleanse it so that it can be reused. So, I think they gave me kind of the PG version of what they showed you, but that's pretty cool.

Mr. Driggs said we have a great track record and are AAA rated still.

Ms. Johnson said it's good to hear about the H2O Foundation for individuals who can't afford their water bill. I'd like to hear more about that, but I'd also like to just put a plug in for individuals who've had a water leak or some catastrophe if you will. So, I have a constituent right now and she has a \$1,400 water bill because there was a leak that the HOA (Homeowner Association) is responsible to pay and they're not paying it. I know our City does a great job with crediting the bills and everything, but this is something that the home owner is responsible for. So, I think as we're looking at the H2O Foundation, if we would allot some funding for when things like this happen. So, it's not just income based but it's all relative if you have a \$1,400 water bill. So, I just wanted to make sure that we're not restrictive as far as income levels. Thank you.

Ms. Brown said I was on the call with Stormwater, and I was very impressed with the H2O nonprofit organization for our leaders to think in that capacity for people that are underprivileged or maybe going through a time or a challenge and need to have some assistance in that time. That to me was just amazing. One thing that I really was concerned about, it's in my district. So, I'm going to be signing up to go on a tour because I think it's very important to be on the ground understanding all moving parts and components when it comes to the work that they do. Their presentation today was just amazing. It's hard work. I know it's hard work. I can see that it's hard work. I mentioned to them on the call on Sunday, I said a few things on Sunday. I don't know how good it is to be out in Charlotte moving around on a Sunday. One of the water hydrants was hit by someone on South Tryon Street and they kept going. So, they tore up the water hydrant but our truck was on site. They were attending to it immediately, but the people just kept going. I didn't see the actual hit but I knew what happened because of all of the bricks that were all over the place and the water was just going wild. So, they really have a challenge, hard work to do, but one thing concerned me and some of the Committee members also, I didn't hear it mentioned tonight. I think the businesses get charged the same amount per square footage as people that own their home. We wanted to look into that and I just wanted to bring that up and make sure that that stays at the top because that's very important.

Ms. Ajmera said I did bring that up.

Ms. Brown said did you bring that up? Okay, I missed that. I'm sorry. Councilmember Ajmera did a great job. She brought it up, I just forgot it or didn't hear it. We want to make sure that we're being as fair as we can be with that because water is a necessity for everybody. So, some of the things that they brought up and they presented was their ask is for us to support them, but as a Council we have to make sure that things that our constituents bring to us that are very concerning and important like water leakage like Councilmember Johnson said, and then the cost. That we actually implement that and

make sure that's at the forefront when we're deciding on what we're going to do and how we're going to allocate the funds. That's all I have. Thank you.

**Councilmember Mayfield** said this will be a very short report. I do want to thank our colleagues. Unfortunately, Dr. Watlington is not feeling 110 today but she was able to preside over our meetings virtually. I want to thank our colleagues on the Committee, Councilmember Tiawana Brown, Ajmera as well as Reneé Johnson. We had a very robust conversation. We only had two items that we were discussing today. Our community safety framework referral, where we received an update, and I was really excited because Dr. Alexander at UNCC (University of North Carolina at Charlotte) was in attendance today. So, there's been quite a bit of data research. We know Dr. Watlington and other colleagues really want us to look at the metrics and see how we're moving forward with really addressing the issues in community. So, they were able to bring some metrics. Everything today for our committee was just for information and discussion. I will open the door for my colleagues to add a little bit if they would like, but we really were able to get into our evidence-based programs and looking at how our partners out there are attempting to do the work. We also had some recommendations like myself and Councilmember Johnson reiterated what we brought up last month regarding the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) report on social norms and the impact of social norms, not just community norms which we are looking at and encourage that we look further in how our partners are addressing the needs around our community and also recognizing that we have a number of award winning programs right here in Charlotte that we can look at uplifting, as well as looking at our youth programs. We have a great presentation that I'm not going to go through all of it. It can be shared. Staff can send this out to full committee of our different highlights, but just as a quick snapshot, we're looking at City of Charlotte and CMPD (Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department) programs, Mecklenburg County, which is our biggest partner and will continue to be our biggest partner in attempting to address our violence preventive programs as well as the work at the Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Services and Juvenile Crime Prevention. This can be shared with all of Council. I will open to see if my colleagues, Councilmember Brown, Johnson, Ajmera to [inaudible] the way if you had anything you would like to add.

Ms. Johnson said I just want to say that we received it. It was a great presentation and there was a lot of data that was adopted from UNCC. We have a presentation what's working in other cities, there's a list, and on this list, there's nothing that says more institutions. We received a lot of data that 99 percent of the youth have history of mental illness. There was a lady there from the University of Denver that can validate what I always talk about brain injury, up to 87 percent of individuals who are criminal justice involved have some history potentially of head injury. So, I would like to really seek transformational justice and respond according to the data and not have a predetermined solution and then try to squeeze the data to meet that solution. I think we're seeing that there's a need for less than a cookie cutter approach, a trauma informed approach and we cannot keep doing the same thing and expect something differently. This is our chance to be Charlotte. So, I really would like to see us follow the data and try something different for these youth. Earlier, I quoted Fredrick Douglas and I'm going to get it wrong because it's not in front of me, but it's easier to build strong youth than to repair broken men. So, I think this is our opportunity. We always talk about upward mobility and changing generational cycles or breaking generational curses, this is an opportunity to put our funding and our policies where our mouths are. Thank you.

Ms. Brown said so I just want to say that I'm very happy and blessed to be in this environment with staff that really want to execute what our youth concerns were from the town hall. Got a lot of positive feedback from that and having an array of youth, very talented youth from all walks of life, from being born in economic challenged environments to those that parents are making probably six or seven figures from Sedgfield Middle School to the Palisades to Ardrey Kell, Harding High School, in my district, Phillip O. Berry in my district, Southwest Middle School in my district, Olympic High School in my district. I like the fact of what Councilmember Johnson said. We have really got to make sure that we dig deep into our grassroots efforts and some of the boots that are on the ground that may not be visible because they don't have the

resources or they don't have the data to bring to our attention, but they're actually doing the work. There's a lot of phenomenal organizations out there and I guess we would have to be their mouthpiece and their vocal point for them to know exactly what we need from them to get them involved. Then if we can match them up in our search with people that have been doing this work for a long time and have all of the data and all of the infrastructure that we're looking for so that we can fund them. My challenge would be that the justice involved individuals that we are reaching out to them when we do our listening sessions so that some of the concerns and issues that happen with violence, we don't miss those. It's going to be very important as I always say, to have them in the room. I would like to see us doing a magnitude of support and resources around mental health.

When we look at some of the crimes and some of the violence that we see in our youth, we know that when you can get so angry that there is a disconnect with the brain as Councilwoman Johnson was saying. I know that if we continue to involve every component from the business aspect to those that are involved, to our grassroots efforts, to our staff, collectively we could come up with a resolution. With some of the things that they brought in this evening in discussion, the one thing that really stuck out to me was that they were going to focus on doing the listening sessions in all the Corridors. I think that's very important, but as we listen making sure that we are building a plan of action that's going to include exactly what they're asking us to do. I always say those that are simply closest to the problem are going to have multitude of solutions and I'll be remiss if I would say that all of those talented and amazing young people that were in my meeting, my youth town hall, that we have got to make sure that we heard them. We can go back, and we can listen to the youth town hall. It's recorded. It's playing again tomorrow at 12:00 p.m., April 2, 2024, at 12:00 p.m. on the City government channel. We want to just make sure that we are taking head to what they said. There was a reason why we brought the youth in the room, and I learned so much from them. So, I'll defer from that, but I really like the staff executing a plan of action, but it is of great urgency and it's needed like yesterday. So, the sooner the better. Thank you so much.

Ms. Mayfield said so, where it was noted from my fellow committee members, for us, next steps are going to be the stakeholder feedback, the community feedback, insights from the youth engagement starting with the youth that were engaged at Councilmember Brown's youth town hall as well as I believe our youth through GenerationNation and then staff will be looking at drafting some recommendations to bring back for full Committee and to quickly go over. Again, just informational, I will say a Home For All, we only had about 20 minutes for that discussion. That's a much longer conversation. So, we are going to have information that is brought back to us, but to just give a snapshot for all of Council as well as those that are watching right now, there was a framework that was identified through community. What we did was we asked the United Way to be the holder of the information because it was called the Home For All framework. Out of that framework, there were around 99 recommendations that were whittled down to try to identify those recommendations that aligned with City priority as well as what came from the group that was convened by Michael Smith, of Charlotte Center City Partners and was co-chaired by Gene Woods of Atrium Health as well as Kathy Bessant who was then with Bank of America. So, we asked for United Way to step in to help lead. What they were able to do was identify four priorities for FY (Fiscal Year) 2024 to 2028. I'm just going to give the highlights. Those that are unsheltered who are our people reimagining how we support households on the path to housing stability, prevention, invest, and strategies to keep people housed, production, grow production of shelter in all forms of affordable housing and what is affordable. If you work in our City, you need to have access to quality housing.

So, our progress to date on that. Looking at property provider recruitment and retention. There's a couple of asks in here by close of FY2024. There are some dollar amounts. We as a committee have additional questions on some of the dollar amounts that were allocated. That was presented to us. Mr. Manager, I'm going to go ahead and let you know it's not the final request of funding that's going to be coming towards you because we have some questions as a committee. We do have an anticipated funding need.

Some of those funding needs actually overlap with some of our current partners. One of those partners being Crisis Assistance Ministry. Myself and some of my committee members, we did not feel a need for funding that we have for Crisis to now be under an umbrella. Would they have to go through the United Way? That's a very different conversation versus us looking at if we need to increase the funding with Crisis identifying metrics and knowing what they are doing and making sure that it's adhering to our goals, whether that is in subsidy funding really around eviction prevention and critical home repair where they have been at the forefront, and also with our partner Habitat For Humanity that has stepped up. Also looking at how do we identify more partners to come. She Built This City has been doing amazing work. That's a partner that we should have at the table for when we're looking at critical home repair and other opportunities versus us funding completely United Way for them to then look at. We can't do everything but there are some partners we already have that we need to look at what their requests, if any, are and how those requests align. This right here, I misspoke earlier when I was giving a report out. I said it was around \$20 million. It's \$12,300,000 that's being requested from the City in partnership with the County, keeping in mind the County's ask is around \$14,300,000, close to. So, how do we continue to partner but also making sure that we are streamlining this process to address the needs that we have identified? They have a work plan. They're looking at piloting a number of additional initiatives, but most importantly we have the public private partnerships that have been identified. Again, thankfully this was just information today. So, it is not about making a recommendation to full Council. We will get another update from committee. Now I will open the door for my colleagues to add anything that I may have forgotten trying to do the condensed version.

Mr. Driggs said good report.

Ms. Johnson said that was a great recap Councilmember Mayfield. I'm impressed, thank you. I had a question for Mr. Jones. So, one of the initiatives that United Way mentioned was source of income and identifying more landlords to accept vouchers and it made me think when we enacted the Source of Income Discrimination Ordinance. We were going to track developers who weren't compliant with accepting vouchers, and I wanted to know if that was a piece that was being proposed that we were going to give to United Way or are we indeed tracking that. Is there a process where individuals can report if they're running into landlords or developers who aren't accepting source of income discrimination because that was one of the important aspects of that discrimination, to hold folks accountable. So, I wanted to know if A, if that's something that we're proposing that was going to be transferred to United Way and B, if we're actually tracking that currently. Thank you.

**Shawn Heath, Assistant City Manager** said thank you. So, the short answer is no, nothing that was discussed today would in any way relate to the Source of Income Protection Policy that was passed by Council, which of course focuses on City-supported affordable housing on a go forward basis to ensure that members of the community with vouchers are not discriminated against when they're seeking housing in City-supported units. So, everything that was discussed today would be separate and distinct from that. If anybody in the community has concerns about access to City-supported housing as a voucher holder and whether or not the property owner is adhering to the source of income protection requirement, there's information on the City's website with Willie Ratchford's organization which really manages all of the fair housing related complaints for the City.

Ms. Johnson said so, it's under community relations?

Mr. Heath said correct, yes.

Ms. Johnson said you said City-supported projects. It's any project that was assisted by the developer. So, that's not really City-supported. It's not subsidized if you will or is it?

Mr. Heath said well, the policy was very specific. City-supported housing can come in different shapes and sizes. The most obvious one would be Housing Trust Fund support

for providing X million to a developer for a Housing Trust Fund project then that would be in scope for that particular policy, but all of the naturally occurable affordable housing in the City of Charlotte that does not receive City support would not be subject to that policy. So, that's why the property provider recruitment and retention recommendation discussed today from a staff's perspective is very attractive because we're trying to find ways to expand that network of landlords that are willing to accept voucher holders.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, for a resident who feels they've been discriminated against, their best way is to go through this City of Charlotte Community Relations Department to report that?

Mr. Heath said yes, or anything that would fall under that broad umbrella of fair housing, the best place to start is community relations, correct.

Ms. Johnson said thank you.

Mr. Heath said sure.

Ms. Brown said I echo Councilmember Johnson when she said that Councilmember and Vice Chair Mayfield did an excellent job on recap because we had a lot of information. It was intense in there, all important. I want to go back to our youth framework and making sure that when we think about solving the problem for our youth, that we really look into the Youth Violence Prevention Centers because its evidence based and it's led by the community and they can have their input. It has a structured way for anybody that's impacted to contribute. So, that's going to be something that I'll be having a focus on there. Mr. Heath said something very important and near and dear to me as I go into detention centers and speak to those that are justice involved. Our youth has been out of reach. They have been dispersed. I think those are County funds. I'm almost sure those are County funds because of Mecklenburg County Detention Center. Although I don't like that word detention, I like it better than jail and I also would like to see our youth within reach so that some of these grassroots organizations that were able to connect with them can still be able to connect with them, that we can take faith-based organizations, ministers. I know you're heading up something with the faith-based organization in housing. They can come directly out of that, be qualified for that stream that you're doing, that new project that the Mayor has you doing. I would really love to see that come back. When our youth gets dispersed outside of our reach, then it's out of our control. Something that's like out of sight, out of mind, and they're out of sight right now. They're not really out of mind because there's a passion and we care about them. I don't know what's going to come of that but that did have my radar up and I wanted to make sure that if that happens and we can get those children back within our reach, we have our hands on them, we can show up in court for court support, grassroots organization efforts could be there. We could allocate the resources and the funds along with the judges, the DA (District Attorney), there's just so much that we can do, but with them not being within our reach, within our scope because they're out of Mecklenburg County, it makes it difficult for some of the parents that are economically challenged to be able to get there to support their children. The grassroots people that really want to support them going back and forth to court, they're right here in Mecklenburg County. That would be a huge impact on some of the things that we're trying to do with our youth. I just wanted to say that really did raise a positive awareness with me if that can happen. I know it's just conversation, it's just information, let's put that on record as well, but it's something that I'm favorable in. So, I'll yield to that.

Ms. Ajmera said thank you. So, a couple of things. I had a lot of questions on a Home For All. We didn't get through all of it. So, I'm going to sit down with Katherine to go over all my questions, but I can tell the Committee's consensus to Councilmember Mayfield's point is that we are not onboard yet. There's lots of outstanding questions about how that's going to work. So, when they presented a Budget for FY2025, by each line item, I felt like so much was vetted without Council's input. I had 18 questions. I got through about eight or nine of them. So, maybe after 18 questions, once I get responses, I might be onboard, but it's a lot to have to get through before Mr. Jones' presentations on May 6, 2024. The other think I also want us to be mindful of is when we look at our youth



crime, youth violence, we are not going to get recommendations on that until our May 6, 2024, meeting and that's on the same day as when Mr. Jones will be doing his presentation. So, I will put this out there. There are programs that have shown early results, like Alternatives To Violence, hospital-based intervention and then there was a youth diversion program. These three programs, I have seen data on and performance metrics on that have shown success and I would like us to prioritize that as part of the FY2025 budget. I did share that with staff. I don't know what they'll bring up, but we just need to be nimble as Budget requests may come in after the presentation is done because addressing youth violence or just addressing crime in general has to be one of our key priorities, that has always been. So, I just want us to be mindful that there is some flexibility, Mr. Jones, that you'll somehow find funding even after a Budget is approved to ensure that these recommendations are funded. Thank you.

Ms. Johnson said I just wanted to clarify because last week Councilmember Ajmera, you were saying that there shouldn't be any surprises in the Budget. So, when you say we should be flexible, are you saying that you would support an opportunity if we made some changes?

Ms. Ajmera said so, that's different than financial partners. We're not talking about financial partners. These are the recommendations that staff will be presenting in May 2024. That's separate from what we fund, financial partners through our Budget. Our financial partners is a completely separate process where they formally apply. They started submitting applications back in September or October of 2023. Then, staff had reviewed all their applications. They compiled their mission statement. They got their budget. To Councilmember Mayfield's question, how much of it is going to operations and all that. So, that's very different than the recommendations. The recommendation is like a program like Alternatives To Violence or a hospital-based intervention. Am I saying that right? Some of those programs. They are very different. This is going to require a big lift from the City. You're talking about millions of dollars because ATV (Alternatives To Violence), we had allocated \$3 million, I don't remember the amount.

Ms. Johnson said thank you for that clarification. That's all. Thank you.

**Marcus Jones, City Manager** said to Councilmember Ajmera's point, this isn't something that's new. As early as last October 2023 we talked about what was happening with crime and youth. So, we then started to talk about the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) interest dollars, if there was something that Council wanted to do, we would be nimble. So, as the Budget is produced or at least proposed that turns over to you by May 6, 2024, we would be tone deaf not to have some level of allocation for crime and for youth.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

Mr. Jones said what it may be, should be more informationally based, evidenced based. So, we clearly intend to have some allocation for these priorities for the City.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. So, that's separate from the financial partners to Ms. Johnson's question?

Mr. Jones said correct.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

Ms. Brown said so, I heard what Councilmember Ajmera said when it comes to the programs. I know you said ATV, which I'm happy to know that we're going to be still supporting ATV. For our FY2025, I would like to see our youth leading the prevention for their programs, and we have evidence based to support that, and they'll be able to have their input and it's structured around specifically those that are impacted. So, I would say those that are justice involved as well as those that have been on the other side of the person that's justice involved. Bringing all of them together to connect to see how we could leverage the two relationships with the solutions. We tried that and it really

works in the work that I do. Bringing the person that has been offended and the person that was offending that person, bringing them to the table to get those solutions from each person and it works. We have to be very intentional because all eyes and the spotlight really is on this Council. We cannot do the same thing that we've been doing. We have to do something strategic, something very different. It has to involve the community, it has to involve the youth, the leaders, it has to. There is no other way for us to move forward with trying to make sure that we contain our youth and help them to the best of our ability, keeping in mind that mental health is going to be one of the top focal points because a lot of times they're doing things that they're not really sure because their mind doesn't allow them to think in a way that is straightforward. That's something that as I've been talking to people, getting feedback from different organizations, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, but as you know, one of my students said the teachers are not teaching. The guidance counselors are not guiding. So, we have got to make sure that in the back of our mind we hear our youth. I might sound like a broken record, good, maybe somebody will listen. Thank you.

Ms. Molina said I think this will be very brief, but I'm listening to Councilmember Johnson and Councilmember Brown and what I hear is an intergovernmental perspective. So, I hear mental health which isn't a clear deliverable for us and I hear justice involvement which has a touchpoint for us. Look, I don't disagree with that needing to be an emphasis but what I would hope, especially as a body and being clear about the deliverables, the hard services that we offer to our community. That when we start to talk about the intergovernmental overlap, I know Councilmember Brown, you already have some strategic relationships in the community where you can leverage some of that intergovernmental focus because again it's in my opinion in order for something like what you guys are saying that are problems in our community to really be successful, we have to make sure that we deal with the inevitable portion of that, that's intergovernmental.

So, health and human services is not something that we house but once our officers have a touch point with that human being and they need mental health services, then inevitably we have this kind of intergovernmental focus where we have to have a specific stakeholder involved that can manage that particular process from a mental health perspective. Then additionally with the justice involvement, especially with the youth, they're going to touch the school system, they're going to touch our sheriff department, which are both Mecklenburg County function. So, like I said it's just in my opinion in order for us to be successful, the Council will do our part and I think we have the members here that are prepared and ready to take that focus, but I think more importantly it's going to require strategic partnerships for ultimate outcomes. That's just my addition in listening to what you guys are saying, which I'm encouraged by your passion, and I think it's overdue. I just hope that our partners at our school system and our County, and I'm sure they are. Actually, I can speak specifically for the East side. We've done an intergovernmental town hall. We're going to do another one and that's really just leveraging those opportunities where they have access to their peers to kind of concurrently ask for the things that can overall help the East Side in general.

So, like, I can come to you guys as my peers, as my colleagues and talk about the deliverables that the Council can offer, but then they can take from that what the deliverables are. Let's stay hypothetically for the school system or for the County Commission to their partners and their colleagues to ask for something that can concurrently affect the overall nature of what we do. So, I just want to add that because what I'm afraid of, because that's what happens a lot of the times when our community members hear us, they see you. You're passionate, but then there's this drop off because there's services that we don't take care of as a City function and they're things that aren't a direct deliverable that don't get handled. So, I just want to put that plug in there and let them know that I can speak for myself in saying that what you're saying is very important. It's impact that we do need to pay attention to, but there's an intergovernmental focus that's inevitable and I know who your County Commissioner is and yours and I know they both would be ready to be at the table to partner with you and make sure that our services are concurrent for the outcomes necessary.

Mr. Jones said to Councilmember Molina's point, there is a structure that both the County and the City received, approved back in 2019, Violence As A Public Health Crisis. It was right before the pandemic. It's five pillars. It is that intergovernmental approach. Things like Alternatives To Violence, we've partnered together, we've leveraged federal funds. So, I think what we'll do is make sure that in an upcoming packet, we get that out to you because we do believe that there's a good structure in place. A lot of times, the teams between the City and the County are working weekly together on these things. So, I think there is this great opportunity for us to partner in places and spaces which are unique to us and do it in a collaborative way.

Ms. Molina said yes, thank you [inaudible].

Ms. Johnson said so, you're right and additionally my position was we received a presentation today about what we are going to do with the public dollars. So, this presentation, it was evidenced based and nothing in the presentation indicated that we should build more institutions or fund more institutions. So, that's what I was saying. I heard on the news today that we were going to be discussing building the detention center and that was brought up at the end of the meeting. So, what I don't want to see is this predetermined outcome and the evidence not match that, but we're trying to fit that to match what the desire is. This is an opportunity to support transformational justice and we know that this cookie cutter approach has not worked. The criminal justice system is broken. We heard the presentation. Ninety-nine percent of these youths suffer from mental health. So, the answer is to lock them up? No, the answer is not to lock them up. So, that's what I'm saying. So, yes that's a County function, but these are public dollars that we have the opportunity to provide the stewardship. So, I'm saying let's look at what we're seeing and this is an opportunity. There was a report that says this is the number one City to move to and we're just this great City. Sixty-four percent of the leadership is women of color, and a broken criminal justice system affects our husbands and sons and brothers and cousins at a higher proportion. So, it's up to us in these roles to really ask the tough questions and make different decisions to really address the root cause and maybe make some changes in our community.

Ms. Molina said well Ms. Johnson I'll just add that passion is power. There's no such thing as power without passion. So, words are words but words are activated with passion and that's what you have. That's why you drive that conversation because that's what you do every day. So, my point wasn't to denote any of your personal work, it really was to make sure that we have the money and the resources that inevitably need to connect with your work and your passion so that they can be successful.

Ms. Johnson said right, but as a City also not just a nonprofit or a grassroots organization. This is an opportunity to look at the data and proceed effectively. Thank you.

Ms. Brown said I'm going to be brief because this is something that's near and dear to me. I want to be crystal clear on the intergovernment piece and what our scope is. I understand that we also talked about collaboratively bringing everybody to the table. So, this is also an opportunity for us, our great staff, [inaudible] she did have some wonderful things when she came in and so did Mr. Heath for us to be able to say this is what we're offering from the City perspective and this is what the Council members would like to see happen. Even though it might not be in our scope, our partners as a County as we're collectively trying to move together and move forward. Keep in mind this City's safety is not just for the City Council. It may not be under our scope for certain dollars to be allocated into the areas where we want them to go, but this is a very serious concern that is everybody's concern. So, I don't see anyone not being onboard with whatever infrastructure we build and present for our county, schools, parent, grassroots, leaders, everybody collectively. I'm not giving anybody a pass. This is for all of us to move forward. If there's something that we can't do, we have to be transparent. We have to be clear that the community knows what we're doing behind closed doors and how we're trying to move forward to address this very, very serious concern that we have, not just on your crime but in crime all over in the City. So, we can sit here and say what we don't have, we know what we don't have. What do we have? What can we do? I

want solutions. I want to know what can we do. How can we move forward and how can we put our best foot forward as a community, as 11 members on this Council that were elected by our constituents? How are we going to move forward showing them that we are trying to do something? If our hands get tied, then everybody can step in and untie the hands and move forward together as a team. That's what we're going to have to do to address and attack this, intergovernment or not, funds available or not. Doing nothing is not an option. We have to do something.

Ms. Mayfield said as you can tell, there was a lot of conversation for our two items, but I want to make sure for those that may be tuning in that where I think I could have done better is after doing the community safety framework referral, left a little bit more space for my colleagues to comment on that because a lot of the comments towards the end were directly related to the community safety framework, not the Home For All update. So, identifying the two separate, but Mr. Manager from what I heard, and I hope you heard, one of the biggest challenges with the Home For All update was the fact that what was presented to committee was a visual anticipation of our current Budget. This is what the ask is going to be. I do not believe that there is support for this particular ask, which is why it has been recommended and supported for them to come back for more conversation because the idea of you presenting us a Budget with this isn't necessarily going to go well. Based off of today's conversation, we need to have additional conversation, but I do appreciate the fact that as a collective between community safety framework and a Home For All, there's a lot of concern with making sure that we align this correctly where we're identifying our community partners, we're giving them the support they need, and we're addressing the needs that we have on the ground.

Mr. Driggs said that was robust. I think the passion around this topic is evident and it's an important topic. I hope you appreciate that I didn't weigh in. I was listening and learning tonight. With that I'd like to move on. Vice Chair Mitchell, if you're ready to give the Jobs and Economic Development Report.

Mr. Mitchell said first of all let me thank Councilmember Marjorie Molina, Councilmember Driggs and myself and the Chair for being at the meeting today. We had a great conversation and we started with two things. I'm going to start with the big item. Teresa Smith and Tracy Dodson talked about the state of the hospitality and tourism, which we know is very important for us as we try to move some big projects in our community. So, one thing was clear to us. One out of every nine citizens in our great City of Charlotte belongs to the hospitality and tourism industry, one out of nine. I think that's a fascinating number when you look at growth in our community, where are the jobs. Secondly, leisure and hospitality, it is our fourth largest industry sector. So, once again as we talk about how do we make a difference in our community, we cannot underestimate the fourth largest industry sector. Then we got to where is the money. So, there were three buckets that Teresa brought to our attention, one if the Convention Center and it's broken down into the prepared food and beverage, one percent and then three percent occupancy. Then we talked about tourism fund. So, it's three buckets in tourism. Last but not least, what we don't talk a lot about is NASCAR Hall of Fame which has a two percent occupancy. Tracy educated us on the three projects that we've already funded, and one of course was the Spectrum Center improvements. We just did that recently along with the practice facility. Then one project that we had spent a lot of time on City Manager is the Carolina Theater, about \$2 million that we hope to get good news this summer that it will finally be open. I will say that some of our discussion was centered around all of the City's facilities and I have to give Councilmember Mayfield credit because during the discussion she brought up how many free rentals do we get per our agreement with our partners.

So, Tracy, I remember the first three. I remember the Spectrum Arena, we get 12 days, then we touched on the Bank of America Stadium was five and then I cannot remember about the Mecklenburg County because we did the \$3 million turf and I know there's some free rental days as a part of those facilities. Councilmember Molina you said it best, language is very important, words are important. So, I'm going to make sure I categorize it correctly. We had an outstanding guest in Vinay Pate who represented

CRVA (Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority) Board of Directors, and he gave a great presentation. I think he was excited in the direction we're going. Here's one thing I think for all of us in our conclusion that had to be reinforced to all of us. The State of North Carolina said that we can only collect the revenues that it invests in hospitality and tourism events. I remember when I was a young Council member when I first got elected, I heard about this pool of money and the first thing I raised my hand to say was, "Can I use that on more police officers? Can I use those funds on affordable housing?" So, for us colleagues around this table, it was great. They reiterated once again that the State statute only allows us to use the collected revenues for hospitality and tourism. With that, acting Mayor I conclude my report and I'd like to open it up to Councilmember Molina and acting Mayor for your input.

Mr. Driggs said very good summary. I was there. I appreciate it.

Ms. Ajmera said thank you. I'm glad Councilmember Mitchell reinforced about how that revenue can be spent for tourism, specifically, because I read recently about lawsuits in the Outer Banks where it was challenged how tourism revenue was being used. So, we have to be very mindful of that. Mr. Baker, I think it would be worthwhile if you could just give us a one-minute summary of how those towns are being challenged in the Outer Banks area.

**Patrick Baker, City Attorney** said in terms of?

Ms. Ajmera said how the tourism dollars were used and how they were being challenged.

Mr. Baker said so, basically, you've got a certain level of authority and when you exceed that authority that's where you get in trouble, that's where your lawyers can be a little conservative when you get anywhere close to the line because we don't know exactly where the line is. Ultimately, if the local government exceeds your authority, not only do you get dinged for that but it's a loser-pays statute. So, not only would we lose the case and have to undo whatever deal we agreed to with the money that we weren't supposed to use, but we would also have to pay the attorney's fees [INAUDIBLE] the one bring that as well.

Ms. Ajmera said so, there was a reason. I'm not sure if you are aware, but I read it recently. It was as recent as just a week ago or 10 days ago where tourism dollars were used not according to the State statutes, and they were challenged. There are a lot of stipulations now, but I think we need to be very mindful based on that recent lawsuit. We have always been very conservative in terms of ensuring that we are complying with State statutes. I don't think there's ever been a question about it, but certainly that's another reminder, that lawsuit that I read about recently.

Mr. Driggs said so, Ms. Ajmera it wasn't my impression that we were talking about violating the terms of the authority we had, so much as seeking greater authority and the reference was to Asheville and in Asheville, as we learned, the local hospitality industry joined with the City in requesting a different authority from the legislature and obtained it. I don't know how good that comparison is just because in Asheville tourism for one is a much bigger part of the economy and two they don't have the sport venues and the kinds of things that you need huge capital amounts for. So, there may be a principle there in terms of the possibility of raising the subject, but my own view is that we would find that that doesn't apply equally here. I just want to be very careful as I was in our meeting to emphasize that we're not going to approach this subject without very extensive consultation with the industry and a collaboration around bringing a suggestion if any to the legislature. I have to say based on my knowledge of legislature and its majority; I don't think it would be well-received.

Mr. Mitchell said now you're talking about short session coming up now.

Mr. Driggs said ever, right? I mean less so in the short session because it's hard to introduce something like that, maybe as a local bill, but generally, I just don't think they

would react well. We do have our sales tax conversation that we're trying to develop with them. I would hate to introduce something that created a difficult environment on a different topic.

Ms. Johnson said so, thank you for saying that. Councilmember Mitchell, I know you said when you were a young naïve Council member, I just want kind of argue any suggestion that this is not any naivety. I understand the funding. I just believe that we should ask that question. If we know that there's a \$1 billion deficit for infrastructure and sidewalk and people are hurting and homelessness is criminalized to some of us, and we're spending \$275 million over here on the Spectrum Center which is just a precursor for more spending, then for me I'm going to ask that question especially when there's a city within North Carolina that did challenge that boundary and work with the hostility industry and the private sector to make those changes. People are hurting in this City and I think that this is okay to ask this question. So, I'm unapologetic about it and I think it's an important discussion. I understand the politics and that's what that is, it's politics and this is a very divisive time in our country and that's unfortunate because there's opportunity for improvement, where the residents don't have to approve a sales tax. There's opportunities, there's other discussions. So, I just want to say that. Thank you.

Mr. Driggs said so, I would just like to point out. I think to dismiss it as politics is unfair. There are parties at interest here, there are economic interests at stake. So, it's a complicated question. It's fair to ask it. I don't think it's naïve to ask it because the public sees large amounts of money being allocated to some of our hospitality things and doesn't necessarily understand the difference between our general fund and our hospitality funds. So, obviously we have an obligation to explain that difference carefully and make sure that people don't get the impression that it's because of some decision of ours that all this money can't just be diverted to those uses. There are legal and commercial and other reasons why we can't cross that line readily. I think there's a burden on us to make clear to the public that we are pursuing the sales tax as a means of creating infrastructure and making investments for everybody's benefit and in fact the sales tax for mobility would create capacity in the CIP (Capital Investment Plan) from projects that are currently being funded there that we could then use for other things. So, I don't think we want the cloud, the pursuit of the sales tax as our primary goal by introducing another topic and again, making life more difficult in our conversation with the legislature. So, I hope you understand that. I'm really just very uneasy about trying to develop that conversation further.

Ms. Brown said I came in on the tail end. So, I'll defer because I don't know what the discussion was.

Ms. Molina said thank you Mr. Chairman and Mr. Vice Chairman. I think you've done a very comprehensive job of the report out of what we actually spoke about. I think it was a few things highlighted that he brought up that I'd just like to echo in the words about the free days and things like that. We've had organizations, I think you said it was North Carolina Central, they had the opportunity to take advantage of our venues as a result of those free days and I love the way that the staff was specific about the buckets because it helps us to make that case to the community when we talk about what these dollars can be spent for. So, there was a level of specificity there and that information is still online for anybody who's interested in taking a look at those hospitality dollars and how they're actually specifically allocated. We cannot spend them on anything else. I, like our Vice Chairman here, when I first came in, even though I understand debits and credits, even though I had just finished a master's degree in business, and I have no idea of the scope of where the money is and what it can be used for. So, I have these inquisitive questions on the inside of me like, "Wow, we can do this. Well can we do that?" So, it is a process, and I admittedly am thankful for our staff being able to route us in the right direction so that we properly understand what we can and cannot do. Another thing, and this is my last thing, it was something that Ms. Dodson brought up today that really was exciting to me about opportunities to really expand possibilities for some of our underserved community members to have access to some of our hospitality venues. We've already done that with the golf tournament that came. We were able to leverage small business owners being a part of that enormous economic

impact of an opportunity and I just love the fact that we're actually taking that initiative to include our community members where we are. I think that's one of the best things that we've done.

So, you know where we actually had the golf tournament, the President's Cup come to Charlotte, Quail Hollow and we had small businesses there being able to leverage that impact and even something as small as allowing children from under served communities to take advantage of some of those things or some things that we mentioned at the meeting today. So, it was a great meeting. I really enjoyed that portion of the conversation. Shout out to Vinay Patel and Mohammad Jenatian who were present. They're always present and open. Also, last thing. We are blessed in Charlotte, North Carolina because our public sector and our private sectors can talk. We can partner. We can leverage each other. That is something when I've gone to places outside of our City, I have people asking me about how do we do this? How do we do that? About leveraging our municipal bonds to do some of the deliverables that are important to our constituents and a lot of that is possible because we have those public and private partnerships. I'm really thankful for that because we provide but/for dollars and really our private institutions and our private partnerships, they really drive a lot of what we're able to do from a Citywide capacity standpoint. So, I'm really thankful for that.

Ms. Brown said so, thank you so much. I said I wasn't going to say anything but as I hear conversation of course, being a part of the Council I wanted to say something. It's our job to make sure that our constituents and the community know what we can and cannot do and we may not be doing as good of a job as we think we are. I'm very active online and I don't like being associated as, "You guys are not doing anything. We need a whole new leadership." So, we can talk about our accolades, what we know, how much we've done. A person doesn't care about what's behind your name, what's in front of your name, what you've done unless, they know you care about them. That's just it. Me being the rookie on the team, I always say that, but I learn and I'm learning and I'm studying, and I just want to do things in a way that is really authentic and transparent whether people like it or not. We have to make sure that when we're in these meetings that we deliver in a way that our constituents know exactly what's going on and that's not always the case. That's not always the case. I know, I'm in the community. Take my word on that. People just don't vote because they've lost hope. That's why the election numbers are so low. So, we can go on and on about the Budget, where we're allocating the funds to, how we're doing it. Unless we do a better job collectively as a team, as a Council, and I'm a member of this Council, to deliver it to our constituents in a way that they understand it, then we're failing.

Mr. Driggs said Ms. Brown, that is not as easy as you might think.

Ms. Brown said it's not as hard.

Mr. Driggs said you've made that point before. I would like to just point out I don't doubt the passion, the sincerity of the commitment of anybody on this Council. I think that we struggle with creating a message that resonates, that has the simplicity that's needed and doesn't distort by oversimplifying. It isn't easy. I've been doing this for 10 years and I don't question my colleague's commitment on the issues you're talking about. Are we 100 percent? No, but do we deserve a failing grade? I just don't believe so.

Ms. Brown said I didn't give us a failing grade. I said we're failing.

Mr. Driggs said just allow me to answer. Can we please move on? This is not a debate.

Ms. Brown said yes sir.

Mr. Driggs said so, is that okay. We're all good?

Mr. Driggs said great job. Thank you. So, the Transportation, Planning and Development Committee talked about three topics today. They were all updates. One

was about CATS, one was about mobility and one was about planning. On CATS, the good news was ridership is up. The bridge inspections are almost complete. The only ones that haven't been done are ones that couldn't be scheduled because it involves getting other people to attend and to allow us access to the bridges. No condition was discovered on the bridges that were in any way dangerous to the public. I think that's fair to say Mr. Cagle. The FTA (Federal Transit Administration) report is due out. Apparently, it's complete but hasn't been issued yet. The indications are that it's generally favorable. We'll find out when it's published. The one area where the ridership wasn't up was actually the Gold Line. Good news though about the Gold Line is the headways have been reduced from 30 minutes to 20 minutes. They had been lengthened because of personnel shortage issues and those are now being addressed. So, the vacancies are down by half I understand and we've made very good progress in that area which was one of the ones we identified as requiring our attention. So, I feel really good about the progress that has been made. Mr. Cagle, brilliant job. The City owes you a debt.

On mobility, Ed McKinney talked about the work that he is doing in order to prioritize projects. We know we have 2,000 projects and a big directory of things that have been identified and what Ed has done, if I can paraphrase you Ed briefly is established criteria for assigning priorities to that and grouping them into 17 investment areas around the City which are marked on a map. You can see it if you go on the Committee website. Therefore, putting in place a framework for us to allocate resources. A rational framework, kind of like the [inaudible] and the State so that when people ask us, "Why are you doing this and not that," we can say, "Look, that was the result of a very thoughtful process." Really appreciate the importance and the quality of your work Mr. McKinney. Now of course in that context, the question keeps coming up, "What good does all that do if we don't have money?" I think what we established in Committee today was that's a separate question and that is not a reason not to do what Mr. McKinney has done, and to carry on with that work because when we have resources, we want to know how to deploy them. We have a plan and the plan is that we will pursue revenue from a sales tax. We did talk a bit also about what kind of projects might be feasible within existing sources, smaller projects with high impact and sort of locations that have been identified where a number of small projects can actually result in very tangible outcomes. So, I appreciate that work. I think that was a good report and very good on Mr. McKinney's part and his whole team.

Then finally a Planning update. Ms. Craig is now in the depths of trying to negotiate some changes or work on the UDO emanating from our experience with the petitions that are being filed and the plans that are being submitted. We know that there was a referral last year to look at the N1 Neighborhood Place Type and see whether or not we actually had sufficient specification in there as to what was intended. We saw again the language from the actual UDO. It says, "This is meant to be principally a single family." N1-A is meant to be principally single family, and what we're seeing is a lot of development that involves a heavy bias. So, basically Ms. Craig is now working to kind of align the language with the intent. The plan is it was originally created with a broad brush wholesale kind of document, we're now experiencing all the challenges that come with the diversity of actual place types and trying to achieve our purpose under different conditions in different locations. In that context the area plans are still under development and what she has offered is for one as a result of the referral, a kind of three step process for addressing the N1-As and then separately a small community, higher congestion option when you do affordable housing. So, I think on the most controversial feature perhaps on the recommendations from the referral was that triplexes would be allowed only on corners and that townhouses would be allowed where they weren't before. I recommend to you that you look again on the website at the slides because there's some excellent pictures in there that show exactly what housing types are permitted in each of the N1-A, B, C, D, E and so on. You can see the difference. You just look at them side by side and there's a lot more clarity about what the work means that she's doing. I think we're going to need to discuss this further. I've heard already some pushback from the industry about how the response that she has come up with to the conservation provisions and the overuse of those could eliminate the conservation outcome entirely because no one would build according to those new



rules. We have more work to do, but what she is doing is in the spirit of a living document, trying to adapt that initial rulemaking to our experience. Questions have been raised about whether this constitutes a re-litigation of what we discussed before. Are we now going back to 2.1 and I don't see it that way. I think that what we're really trying to do is we're trying to take departures from what we intended originally and steer them back to where they were supposed to be in the first place. So, I think that's all I'm going to say. I should acknowledge by the way my Vice Chair is Marjorie Molina and the other Committee members are Mr. Graham, Ms. Johnson and Ms. Watlington. With that, I invite any comment.

Ms. Molina said thank you Mr. Chair. I think that was a very comprehensive report out. It's really hard to add anything. You were very thorough. I only would like to add that as we continue the conversation and actually for the community members in East Charlotte, I'm going to do a town hall. I'm going to have our stakeholders out there so we can go over exactly what we went over today because some of those questions are starting to pop up. So, I've taken the liberty to tap staff to say that something. So, stay tuned East Charlotte, that's actually coming, but I love the diagrams that Ms. Craig and her team did today. That makes it so very simple to understand where we were, what's proposed, and where we're going. It can't be more simple than that. The only other thing that probably could be added is an index to understand what the end means or anything like that. So, that team did a really, really good job in simplifying that so that we can attempt to try to disseminate that information to the community members that we represent. Also, I can't speak more highly of Mr. Ed McKinney. He is accessible. He is committed. I am a fan of his work. My community members have reached out to him personally and he is responsive to them. He's used East Charlotte in some of our previously unannexed areas to really highlight some of the extreme needs that we have in what we consider to be the far east parts of Charlotte and I think it's a great example of some of the needs and how they are expressed in being extreme. Like you're saying Mr. Chairman, we have this information, we have to figure out how to pay for it. I think we got a Citywide case study that could help us make that case for why we need that quantitative help. So, Mr. McKinney, him and his team, they did an excellent job. They are actually this time, instead of using just the District Five example, they gave examples from the entire City, and like you said Mr. Chairman he even spoke about some of the smaller projects that are ongoing and have smaller needs throughout the City. So, I'm really delighted at what we have as far as information is concerned. That's going to help us going forward making policy decisions.

Ms. Brown said I really enjoyed listening to your knowledge and your feedback. This is really complex to me and for a lot of people. I see the breakdown in District Three. I know that mobility is for everybody. People want to be able to get around the City effectively and efficiently. So, I'm going to be paying close attention to this, in how we deliver it and how we go out into the community and make sure we get the feedback from the community and that we're transparent and that they're able to understand what we are doing. It looks good, I love the work that Mr. McKinney and his team did, I even love your knowledge of 10 years and how you delivered the information, but everybody hasn't been here 10 years. So, we have to make sure that we have a fair playing ground, that I'm able to go out to District Three to communicate this information effectively and efficiently and as simply as we possibly can, even if it means bringing my colleagues along so that I can deliver this information that's going to be transformative to my people in my district and my constituents. We have a big meeting coming up that's not orchestrated by me but by the community and a lot of community partners are coming through on Nations Ford Road, Arrowood Corridor, they want to see things done. So, this is going to be good to be at my meeting. So, if I can just grab you with your knowledge and your expertise to come along for this, because we all have our lanes. You've given me credit for my lane and what I do. I'm giving you credit for your lane and what you do. It looks really good but we're going to have to actually be able to deliver this in a way that the community can receive it. I would love to have you come along to be able to demonstrate that and to deliver that. So, thank you so much for that today sir, Mr. Acting Mayor. Thank you so kindly.

Ms. Johnson said Mr. McKinney actually went out to make a copy of the UDO presentation for Councilmember Brown because we got some great information in today's meeting. This is what we had, this blueprint and it gives a very great detailed report for all of the areas. So, this was great. The UDO presentation was great as well. I want to say this to you Councilmember Brown. This is complicated information. The original 2040 or UDO plan was over 600 pages and we've asked for simplification. We've asked for that numerous times, so even in today's meeting if you go back and listen to it, we talked about the need for this illustration, and I asked that this illustration along with the details for the Place Types be somewhere on the front of the website. So, you're absolutely right. We talked about that being part of the problem, I believe, why residents are now figuring out how this applies to them. We're all busy. Adults, we're busy in today's society. So, people want to know, "How does this apply to me?" So, it's our responsibility. Communication is two ways. So, it's our responsibility to make this simple enough that our public understands. So, you're right and we all feel that way. Many of us feel that way, that we do need this information to be more simple so that people can understand. It's being presented by planning experts. So, it has to be more clear for us. So, thank you for bringing that up.

Ms. Brown said well I say yes, but I can understand what's in front of me, I just need to get with Mr. Ed and his team to see how we can deliver it in District Three because they have started asking questions about mobility. The leaks get out there, people hear and so I want to be able to deliver the correct information in the correct manner that's effective and efficient for all of us. So, I would like to say I'll yield to you on that and the experts in the transportation. Thank you, Councilmember Johnson, for sharing that information because it is a lot of information and it is complex.

Mr. Driggs said agreed. I'm very happy to help out any way I can.

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## ITEM NO. 2: CATS BUDGET OUTLOOK

**Brent Cagle, Interim CATS CEO** said good evening, everyone. I'll try to get through this pretty quickly, but happy to answer questions either as they come up or at the end. One quick thing before we dive into tonight. Going to go through the current state of CATS, our revenue summary, our operating and capital budget overviews and then really talk about the next steps, but leading with the end upfront. Just a reminder, the CATS budget and how CATS sets our budget is a little bit unique in that we have the Metropolitan Transit Commission that also approves our budget before coming forward as part of the Manager's budget. So, just bear in mind that that process is currently underway, and we have conducted two budget workshops. One in February 2024, one in March 2024 already with the MTC (Metropolitan Transit Commission) and we will be moving in April 2024 to seek final recommendation from the MTC to move our budget forward as part of the Manager's budget for the City Council.

So, a little bit about us. Moving people forward is our mission. Our core values, safety, employee centric, customer focused, equity and inclusion, innovation, sustainability, and excellence. One of the things we thought, these have always been core values, but we really wanted to think through these and state them clearly upfront as we think about CATS moving forward. So, some of the accomplishments, what have we done over the last year. One thing I will note is this time last year as I was setting my first CATS budget, it said there are really three things that we're going to focus on in the current year's budget, safety and security, state of Good Repair which is really how do we maintain our assets, and valuing our employees. So, that is what we focused on. Safety and security we have funded two new security contractors, both with increased spending. We have also entered into agreements to increase training for our operators, specifically de-escalation training. Not that they haven't had that in the past, but we want to have more routine de-escalation training for the operators. That's really a key component of safety and security. We also have our CATS Connect program. This is a program that one of our staff really brought forward to recommend for CATS to rollout and we started to do that. What CATS Connect does is it focuses on assisting persons

in crisis by directing them to available resources from our community partners. What does that mean? Not everyone that is experiencing hardships or crisis, law enforcement or security isn't the answer for every situation. So, it's trying to put resources that aren't security where they're needed and where they fit best.

Then our Ambassador Program. This is really bringing in non-security personnel staff who can assist customers. It's all about customer experience. We do see this sometimes. Customers become frustrated and that frustration can create conflict on board our vehicles. So, it's a way to try to head that conflict off before it even gets there because that, by far, is the best way for us to address safety and security, across the system, to deconflict. The experience is to head off that conflict before it gets there.

State of Good Repair. This is really about our light rail vehicle maintenance and technology system. We have a contract with Siemens. A year ago, we talked about some needed maintenance on the entire light rail vehicle fleet. That work is underway with Siemens. This morning, I reported that the fleet is under contract. Siemens has started the work. We have received back five truck sets for five vehicles, and they are in service. One set is received but still in acceptance testing and then we have another roughly six sets that are in either California or Florida being repaired.

We also talked about last year our bus and STS (Special Transportation Service) bus replacement. We have ordered significant numbers of vehicles. We currently have 71 buses on order and we have 55 STS vehicles on order. Both of those fleets were in desperate need of replacement. So, we have been very aggressive in how we pursue replacements on the fleet. We were also awarded a \$30 million zero emission grant that's allowing us to purchase additional battery electric buses and to invest in charging infrastructure.

We talked last year about our bridge and parking deck inspections. Our bridge inspections as Mr. Driggs stated are nearly complete. We have about six bridges left. We are only waiting on flagging crews. These bridges are in railroad right of ways and we cannot conduct the inspections until we have a railroad approved flag crew to do that. So, we are very close to done on that.

Valuing our employees. We talked about pay increases. It was really all about how we recruit and retain our employees. Last year when we spoke, CATS in general had a vacancy rate of 20 to 25 percent. I'm happy to report that our vacancy rate is right at about 10 percent today. So, a significant reduction in vacancy. I will say there were certain work groups that had vacancy rates far higher than the departmental average. All of our vacancy rates have been reduced significantly through aggressive recruitment and retention programs. One thing that we heard about, and I think they're all directly related, recruitment and retention morale was low. One of the reasons morale was low is we were lacking communication or robust communication tools with our employees. We're not perfect, but we're much better. We spend time in the field talking to staff monthly. I would say that the feedback we're getting is there's always opportunity to do better and we're always looking for that, but we have made significant improvements in talking to staff, letting them know what our values are, what our expectations are, what CATS as an organization is about. So, those have all been successful in my opinion.

So, what are we looking at this year? Micro transit is a new mode that we will be looking to issue and RFP (Request For Proposal) on this year and to rollout later in the calendar year. Better Bus is really taking a look at how we provide bus services and thinking about it in a different way. Not just a hub and spoke but also how we create better connections through mobility hubs and other access points throughout the system, continued investments to safety and security, continuing to focus on our employees, new revenue partnerships. Marketing and education efforts. I will say about marketing and education efforts. One of the things we saw, we had a perception issue. There was a perception that CATS was not reliable in our service. There was a perception that we were not doing our maintenance. There were all of these perceptions about CATS out in the community and we need to get out there and talk about what we're doing today and our commitment to customers and educate people on how to use the system. We find

that a lot. People say, "I just don't know how to use it. It's confusing," and it can be. So, we're talking about how we provide better marketing and education efforts around the services we provide. Technology process and projects and also our Transit Asset Management Program.

Little bit about ridership. Our ridership continues to increase. Right now, year to date FY2023 to FY2024, we're at an 18 percent increase in ridership, all modes. Total where we're at, we are still lower than we were pre-COVID but we're at about 65 percent recovery from pre-COVID which is in line with most transit agencies across the country. Everyone is still coming back from the pre-COVID days.

So, our revenues. Just a reminder, our predominant revenue source is from the half cent dedicated transit sales tax. In FY2025 we are anticipating \$165 million of Article 43 or transit dedicated sales tax revenues. That represents about a 4.3 percent increase over FY2024, and we worked with Strategy and Budget, their economists to develop that forecast. So, another way to look at our revenues is breaking it down. Again, by far the largest area in our sales tax revenues. We also have grants and other agreements. So, in this, the grants are holding steady. I will mention that for FY2025, FY2025 probably represents the last year that we will have the various COVID monies available for spending. Once we get into FY2026, the variety of COVID funding that CATS received during COVID will be predominantly exhausted or very close to exhausted.

MOE is Maintenance of Effort. Maintenance of Effort is the money paid predominately by Charlotte and it represents the cost of providing transit before the dedicated sales tax was passed. So, when you see that \$31 million, there is roughly \$20,000 of that that comes from Huntersville. There is roughly \$200,000 of that that comes from the County and then there's the rest, \$30 something million that comes from the City of Charlotte and that is because it represents the cost of transit, pre-Article 43 sales tax, and that's required by statute.

Then our passenger fares. Our passenger fares we're projecting to be relatively flat. Growth in fares is simply coming from growth in ridership. It has been eight years since we had a fare increase and for FY2025 we are not projecting a fare increase in these numbers.

On the operating side. So, again there are national and regional pressures. The local labor trends have increased our operating cost. The fare revenues have not increased in many years. We have an aging system. We think about the Blue Line. The original Blue Line is about 15 years old now. That's not old, but it's solidly middle aged at this point. So, there are some maintenance things that we have to start doing that we didn't have to think about when it was five years old or six years old, but now you have to start thinking about those things. I'll remind you the Blue Line extension will follow right on the heels of the original Blue Line. So, we are thinking about what we need to do to maintain that aging infrastructure and at the same time, capital costs have risen dramatically with inflation. Then regional growth. Charlotte continues to grow very quickly and that creates demands and need in our region, and sometimes we struggle to meet all of those needs and we know that.

So, next, our operating budget. In any service organization like CATS, the largest single expenditure is personal services or staffing. So, we have about \$147 million in this budget for staffing and we have about \$104 million in operating expenses. I will say our total budget is going up by about \$10 million which represents an approximate three percent increase over prior year. Inside of that, personal services, that represents approximately a 13 percent increase year over year, but total budget is about three.

Capital, and I'll move through this pretty quickly. Key projects in 2025. Bus and rail state of Good Repair. Again, just more of investing in the infrastructure, implementing bus and rail capital improvements. We're continuing that funding FY2025 through FY2029 and the CTC (Charlotte Transportation Center) Redevelopment Project. I will pause here and say the CTC Redevelopment Project, a week ago, when this slide was prepared, the CTC project was on track. Certainly, we were closely monitoring the

project. There are two new developments that occurred on Wednesday and Thursday of last week that I want to make you aware of. One was on Wednesday of last week and we had our budget workshop with the MTC. At the workshop it was clearly stated by the County that one of the funding sources that we had been contemplating for the CTC, that the County had made no firm commitment towards that funding source that is a TIG (Tax Increment Grants), and we had always assumed and we still are hopeful that a TIG would be possible of \$20 million, but that would require a commitment from the County and there is no commitment at this point. The second is as we've been talking to our development partner on the project, they have indicated that just like all capital projects over the last five years, they would expect some inflationary growth in the project cost. So, just as a reminder this project was initially envisioned as approximately \$89 million of public investment. They would anticipate that that public investment to build and deliver the CTC on its current site will be higher due to inflationary factors. So, again, don't have all the answers, late breaking developments, but clearly the project is under further evaluation and as we start to consider our options, more information will come before City Council.

Implementation of projects funded in prior years; we will continue those. The South End Station along the Blue Line is continuing to be funded and will be funded. Hambright Road park and ride, this is a park and ride facility up in Huntersville supporting the express routes that we have coming out of the north part of the County and we also have continued funding for operator comfort stations throughout the network. 2030 Corridor System Plan, we're advancing the plan. We continue to do design and some environmental work on Red Line, Gold Line phase three, and the Silver Line. We have not programmed additional funding beyond what we have already committed though for those projects pending the possibility of future revenue sources.

So, our capital budget expenditures just as a graphic, this should come as no surprise, you can see the blue. The dark blue and the light blue on these, rail is the dark blue and the light blue is BOD or Bus Operations Division. So, again where most of those dollars are going throughout our capital program is in that state of Good Repair towards bus and rail. The gray bar that you see in the 2025 and 2026 is associated with that advancing the plan, the dollars that we've already committed towards possible future projects. With that, just a reminder of the calendar. As I've said we've already had two budget workshops with MTC. We will seek their approval or recommendation for approval of our budget from the MTC later this month and then assuming that MTC approves and recommends the budget to move forward, it will be incorporated into the Manager's budget for full City Council consideration as part of the Manager's budget. With that I will hold for questions.

**Councilmember Mitchell** said Mr. Cagle, thank you sir. One question, in your presentation I didn't see the Gateway Village Project. So, can you just give us an update on the Gateway Village Project?

Mr. Cagle said yes, the Gateway Village Project is a future project and we have a P3 (Public Private Partnership) development partner on that. We continue work on it. That was an oversight on my part. I apologize, but that project continues. We continue to work with the developer as they develop a master plan for our consideration.

Mr. Mitchell said thank you sir.

Mr. Cagle said yes.

**Councilmember Mayfield** said a couple of questions for you Mr. Cagle. As we're talking about potential expenditures, the first experience starts at our bus stops for our bus drivers. So, the Manager and I had a chance to have our monthly meeting. It would be helpful for me while we're looking at potential revenue increase asks, for us to look at consistency in our neighborhoods. Which bus stops, where there is physically a sign versus bus stops that have seating and covering. We have multiple weather conditions. Sometimes in one day we may go through multiple seasons. I have driven by through communities and seen individuals take a shopping cart and turn it on its side in order to

have seating at the bus stop. I would like, Mr. Manager, for us to be looking at that as a consideration versus some of these other funding line items that we may have in here. That is also a health, an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and a safety need when we have high temperatures of over 100 as well as the high winds that we have been experiencing not having a safe location that is consistent throughout the City where we have bus stops. We know where our bus stops are located. So, that should be pretty easy to look at when we look at these pressures. I am specifically just talking City of Charlotte. I'm not talking about the regional conversation. For this conversation, I'm specifically asking for the City. Also, as I'm flipping through this, what I don't see is budgeted versus actuals of real revenue. I see the expenditures in here, I see an operating budget summary with a projection for 2024 and planning of 2025, I see revenue estimates, but the actuals of light rail revenue. The reason I would like to see that is we should definitely see an uptick whenever we have event of Uptown with revenue that is being brought in, but more often than not where there is a report or interview or even when I have taken the rail myself, there are more individuals that are not paying on the rail whereas for bus there is no option. You're not getting on to that bus without paying that fee once you come on. We don't necessarily have a system like D.C. and others. It's more of an honor system, especially along the Blue Line. There's an honor system with getting on and the rail for events, coming to work, whatever. It will be helpful to know our actual revenue versus budgeted and not just this operating expenses and debt service expenses. What is the actual revenue that we are generating on the usage of our light rail?

Mr. Cagle said yes. So, I apologize. We'll provide you the breakout. It's inherent in fare revenues. Fare revenues is bus and rail. So, we can provide you the breakout. We can get you that information.

Ms. Mayfield said that would be very helpful. Thank you.

**Councilmember Johnson** said thank you for the presentation Mr. Cagle. So, we also talked about in the committee meeting, the ability to have the reports available and accessible to residents. Can you just share that with the Council?

Mr. Cagle said sure. This morning at TPD (Transportation, Planning and Development) via email through a variety of conversations, there's been a desire to provide sort of on the website more accessibility or an easier way for folks, the community to find information related to some of our ongoing efforts. Again, as we said this morning Mr. Hunter, who is right behind you, and I have discussed this and we will be working through that to make it available on our website related to the vehicle maintenance and other efforts that we are undertaking.

Ms. Johnson said that's awesome. We also talked about the UDO information being available. So, today was a great day for the residents of Charlotte. So, good. Have you seen this? This is just wonderful. It's a strategic investment blueprint. I was saying to Mr. Jones it would be great if all the departments could give us something like this as far as a breakdown in our district, what the plans are, what that looks like, what the needs are. I think this is just great and it's comprehensive and it's easy to follow and it really helps us. I think it's a direct response to the infrastructure discussion. Speaking of infrastructure and district, I saw I think on one of the slides, was last mile transportation. Micro transit, that's what it was. So, one of the things I said because District Four, we have so many jobs and we also have the Blue Line, it seems like a low hanging fruit to provide a solution to get folks from the train to the research area. So, I wanted to know if that's part of the ongoing and planned initiatives. I just think that last mile solution to the research area and Wells Fargo and all of those jobs could just be a great solution. It would help with traffic on the highways and pollution and just everything. So, is that a part of the plan, that last mile solution? We've been talking about this for a long time.

Mr. Cagle said so, yes. Micro transit, there's not an area in the service region that we have that couldn't benefit from micro transit. It is a new mode. University City as well as the northern and southern regions, all of the regions benefit. So, as we build out the new better bus, micro transit is a piece of that and there are 18 or 19 different micro

transit zones across the entire County everywhere. The first three zones to implement will be in the northern part of the County, Huntersville, Davidson, Cornelius. After that, we will start to look at as revenues allow, continuing to expand micro transit, but the first three are really Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson and one of the reasons for that is we do have financial constraints. We wish we could just add more and more service, but at this point because of constraints, our ability to just increase service is limited. So, we have to be cognizant of what we can provide. In the northern towns there is already a service called the Village Rider and we believe that as we implement micro transit, we will be able to replace the Village Rider with micro transit. So, while it is a new mode, it has a cost savings. They are unique in that way because of the cost savings. Generally speaking, everywhere else that we talk about micro transit, it is just additional service. So, we will be committed to rolling it out, but it will be a very incremental roll out depending on our ability to fund the service.

Ms. Johnson said so, you mentioned P3, which is Public Private Partnership, this might be an opportunity for some of the employers in the University area. I know years ago that they were interested in maybe supporting a shuttle or something for that last mile. That was pre-COVID, but now that folks are getting back to the office, if that's something that you could maybe contact Keith Stanley of University City Partners and meet with the employers and see if there's something that they're willing to contribute to. I think that would just have a huge impact. We have this resource of the Blue Line. If we could just help get thousands of folks to that research area, that would just have a great impact I think on the City.

Mr. Cagle said absolutely.

Ms. Johnson said alright. Thank you. Then speaking of bus routes, how are bus routes determined? Is it simply on ridership level?

Mr. Cagle said no. So, there is an MTC Policy, it's called the MTC-5 and that is the Travel Market's Policy. The MTC sets the MTC Policy, but it divides travel markets into primary and secondary markets. Primary of course being the first area to serve. In primary markets there are five determinants, and they are in rank order. So, I won't waste a lot of time giving you all five, but here are the first two and they're really the most important. The first is need. We serve communities where there's the greatest need and when we think about need, we define that in a couple of ways predominantly where there is a higher concentration of zero car households or one car households. Two, income. So, we look at where areas in the community where incomes are lower. I won't say below poverty or anything, it's just lower income. The reason that's so important is we know that predominantly other than express bus routes, when you talk about fixed route, local service and the light rail, predominant, the riders who ride. A majority of our riders come from zero car households. A majority of our riders make less than \$60,000 a year. Of those, a majority of them make less than \$30,000 a year and a majority of our riders predominantly African-American, but other people of color as well, predominantly African-American. So, that's the majority of our riders and that's true for rail and local bus. It is not true for express service. So, when we think about that and we map out communities, it looks a lot like something we used to talk more about, and you can see this in our network. It looks like Crescent, when we talk about the Crescent, and when you look at our routes, that 's why a predominance of our local routes are serving those areas. So, the first priority in a primary market is need. The second is how do we connect those who need the service, we call the Activity Centers, but let's say jobs, hospitals, grocery stores, to the places they need to go. So, those are the first two criteria in primary markets. Now we also talk about our five transit corridors and other things, but that drives our decision making when we start thinking about where should we have routes, or when we start thinking about are there routes that we need to modify to serve more folks. So, that's the short MTC-5 101.

Ms. Johnson said we can talk offline. There's a bus stop that we've talked about. One of the things I will say is that Councilmember Ajmera and Councilmember Winston and I were a part of the Equity Committee.

**Councilmember Ajmera** said Equity and Governance.

Ms. Johnson said yes, the Equity and Governance Committee and one of the things that we committed to was taking a look at developing our policies and procedures through an equitable lens. So, I would ask that we also consider looking at the bus route planning through an equitable lens as well.

Mr. Cagle said we absolutely will do that, continue to do that and do, do that.

Ms. Johnson said so, when we talk about what Councilmember Mayfield said, the ADA and just those intangibles or those equitable considerations that we need to make.

Mr. Cagle said we can get a list of planned shelter improvements because we do have that list. We can happily get you that list. Again, shelters are like service. We would love to have full amenities at every bus stop. We don't and it would be a long time before we do because of financial constraints, but again, we do have driving overall policies and we can get you the list of where those improvements are planned.

Ms. Johnson said so, when I talk about the equity, also the whole criminal justice piece, I think from a public safety perspective, that might be something that's not a list but that we need to make sure we're considering. Then my last question. The CTC projects. Is that still planned to be underground?

Mr. Cagle said the current concept, yes, is below grade.

Ms. Johnson said okay.

**Councilmember Brown** said it's below ground?

Mr. Cagle said it's below grade, yes.

Ms. Johnson said we need to get an update on that because that was presented last time. Okay. Thank you. That's all I have. Thank you.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. I have two decks in front of me. So, I'm trying to figure out which deck to use for my questions. First let me just thank you Mr. Cagle for your leadership and for prioritizing key investments to restore public trust in CATS. Last year I think all of us when we were on the campaign trail, we got questions asked about CATS' reliability, trust in the system, effectiveness, efficiency. Since you have been brought on board, we have made significant improvements in that, especially when we look at safety and security for our operators and our passengers, making increased investments in our recruitment and retention and also expediting our repairs and capital planning schedule. Kudos to you. I think you have certainly checked off all the key investments that we needed to make to restore our public's trust. I was going through this PowerPoint deck where you have this ongoing and planned activities and this second slide about accomplishments. It's just perfect. It's like a summary, it's like CliffsNotes. I think that this is the type of PowerPoint presentations we should have, like a summary version, CliffsNotes version where you have two slides and if you can tell me what you need to tell me in two slides then we clearly have an issue. So, this is great, but I wanted to sort of dive deeper into the CTC.

Mr. Cagle said the Charlotte Transit Center.

Ms. Ajmera said the Charlotte Transit Center. Yes. What's the latest update on that? I know we were planning based on what we had approved with the Spectrum Center back in 2022 a couple of years ago. Certainly, plans have changed now. So, how does that affect our timeline for the CTC and our investment into the CTC?

**Councilmember Driggs** said so, Ms. Ajmera he did actually comment on CTC funding and the fact that it's still under evaluation. So, you don't need to repeat everything you said before.



Mr. Cagle said yes ma'am. As we said, the County TIG, the County has not made a firm commitment to a TIG on that and that was part of our funding deck if you will, and we know after discussions last week with the developer that it is likely that the project cost will increase. So, we don't have a firm answer today other than to say we continue to evaluate it. Now I will say there is a rezoning moving forward for the property that provides us the ability to continue moving forward with the current concept if ultimately that's the decision. So, actually, City Council will see next week I believe or in two weeks that rezoning request, and we know that we need to move forward with obligating the grant through the FTA. Again, that will take City Council approval. Both of those things are predicated on the idea that the current preferred alternative, so CATS speak, transit speak, is a locally preferred alternative. So, the current locally preferred alternative for the CTC is on site, below grade with private investment above. That continues to be the locally preferred alternative and we continue down that path but there are some headwinds that we need to figure out as we go forward on that project. So, financial challenges that we see there.

Ms. Ajmera said got it. Okay. So, in terms of the timeline, it's still up in the air. We do not know because of some these financial challenges. That's what I hear.

Mr. Cagle said to be determined, yes ma'am.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. CATS is an Enterprise Fund. So, once we approve the Budget, would it go back to MTC? I know we have two MTC and the Council that will be approving the Budget. If you can just walk me through what that process would be.

Mr. Cagle said yes. Via the interlocal agreement that's been in place for 22, 23 years. There is a process that is very unique in our budget. The revenues, because they are Countywide revenues, the MTC was created to represent all of the "members" of the County, everyone who's in the MTC. So, all of the towns plus the County and NCDOT (North Carolina Department of Transportation). So, our process starts in January and we launch our budget process with the MTC. This time for the first time ever, we've done budget workshops with the MTC and we did those in February 2024 and March 2024. February 2024 was the operating budget, March 2024 was the capital budget and the March 2024 meeting was last week. So, in this month for MTC in April 2024, we will take a final recommendation to the MTC for their consideration, knock on wood, their approval. Once they have approved the budget recommendation it is incorporated as part of the Manager's budget for your final consideration.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. So, that'll be before May 6, 2024?

Mr. Cagle said yes ma'am.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. Got it. May 6, 2024 is when Mr. Jones is presenting his recommendations to the Council.

Mr. Cagle said it'll be in there.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

Mr. Driggs said it will be in there. Okay. Not before May 6, 2024, it'll be in the Budget that we'll receive from the Manager on May 6, 2024.

Ms. Ajmera said right.

Mr. Cagle said yes.

Ms. Ajmera said alright, well, that's all I have thank you so much.

Ms. Brown said Mr. Cagle, thank you so much. I really appreciate you, your presentation and especially coming out to the halfway house with us to speak in detail about the bus stop and the needs of the people in that community and what they need.

You and your staff came out and y'all were phenomenal, patient and just showed that you really were concerned about how we want to move forward and addressed all questions and concerns. So, I want to first thank you for that. You came out with no problems. So, that meant a lot to me, Councilwoman Johnson and the other community partners that were in the room. So, thank you so much. So, you said MTC, it has to approve the budget first?

Mr. Cagle said that's correct. Yes ma'am.

Ms. Brown said okay. So, when will you have that budget available that you want to present?

Mr. Cagle said I'm looking up a date right now. We will take it for consideration with the MTC on April 24, 2024.

Ms. Brown said okay. When will we have it? Will we have it shortly after that?

Mr. Cagle said it will be part of the Manager's recommended budget.

Ms. Brown said okay. Alright, no problem. So, that's one of my questions that I had. Your core values. I like your core values that you implemented, safety being number one for every company and blue-collar work which you're doing, employees, all of that. I just wanted to acknowledge some of the things that I saw with my eyes as I was listening to your presentation. I had a question about MOE. Was it More of an Effort?

Mr. Cagle said Maintenance of Effort.

Ms. Brown said Maintenance of Effort.

Mr. Cagle said it's a really weird way to say that's the cost of transit before there was a dedicated sales tax and the State statute. It exists because the State statute, when the new taxes were passed, the statute said all of the new revenues can supplement but not supplant transit. So, any transit that existed before the sales tax, had to continue to be funded through non-sales tax revenues and that generates Maintenance of Effort which is predominantly for Charlotte, which means that Charlotte transit before there was a dedicated sales tax.

Ms. Brown said okay. They had transit before dedicated sales tax and so that goes under the Maintenance of Effort. So, that's what the MOE is?

Mr. Cagle said that's right.

Ms. Brown said you also said in your presentation that there were two workshops. One in February 2024 and one in March 2024, the workshops?

Mr. Cagle said yes.

Ms. Brown said was that for the community?

Mr. Cagle said for the MTC.

Ms. Brown said yes, for the MTC, but how was the turnout for that?

Mr. Cagle said the MTC meetings are livestreamed like these.

Ms. Brown said so, anybody can go back and watch those?

Mr. Cagle said correct.

Ms. Brown said okay. Alright, just wanted to ask that question too. So, moving on down with the questions that I had. You talked about how you determined the need, the zero

to one household and the income factor. I want to get down to the CATS Connect. How effective has that been?

Mr. Cagle said so, it's just starting. It is effective. It is a new program. It is effective. It's modeled after other programs in other cities and other transit agencies. I would say it's effective and it continues to become more effective as we build stronger relationships with nonprofits and County resources who operate predominantly in the social services spaces.

Ms. Brown said I think that's a great feature to have under safety and security. So, I just wanted to ask where it came from, how effective it was. How long has it been in effect?

Mr. Cagle said we started it approximately six to eight months ago. I'd be happy to give you more information. Transit has a program where up and coming leaders, they go through a program, and they visit other transit agencies. So, they pick a project, what do they want to do, and then they go out to other transit agencies, and they talk to them about how they do it. Then they come back with a recommendation about how we want to do it. So, that was my long way of saying that I'm really proud of our staff because our safety and security staff participated in the program. They went out and talked to other transit agencies and came back with CATS Connect for us because transit agencies across the country have realized that certain issues, being unhoused, mental health, addiction, those issues aren't productively served with security. So, it's trying to link folks who need social services or other services rather than a law enforcement response, if you will. So, it's been about six months. It is effective, but it continues to grow.

Ms. Brown said I love that feature. Wherever the research came from, wherever you went to get that model, I would be interested because I know that you said that's something that is effective and it's working, where it came from and how is it working for CATS here in the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. I'm getting down to my last two. Employees, well, I want to piggyback off of Councilmember Mayfield about the bus stops. I want to echo that. That's one of the things on my list. Safety and making sure that we focus on the bus stops in the areas that we choose because of how we're choosing the need, making sure that the bus stops are safe and that they're attended to. So, whatever it takes to get that done, if we could also include that in that. Then so around employees and aggressive retention and recruitment that we've been able to maintain. What was it, under 10 percent you said?

Mr. Cagle said we are just about at 10 percent whereas a year ago we were at 20 to 25 percent total vacancy.

Ms. Brown said okay, so that's a big difference and big increase. So, kudos to that. I really like to see the retention efforts and boots on the ground with employee morale and listening to the employees and their feedback and going out in the community and making a difference with the employees. So, if that's working, then that's something that we want to hold on to. So, with all that being said, thank you for the wonderful job that you're doing, but also because I answer to my constituents when they send in emails, I just want to share something today that came through right around five something. There was a constituent that sent it and she said, "I demand immediate action to address the glaring disparities within our community and our City government. The lack of equality is evident and unacceptable. As a member of our community and participant in City and County government affairs, I was alarmed by a recent presentation from the CATS CEO (Chief Executive Officer). The data revealed that 70 percent of transit riders are people of color, yet astonishingly the transit system leadership team comprises only of 16 percent of people of color. That is one of the six people on the leadership is people of color based on CATS website. This disparity is not only shocking, but deeply concerning. How can a team predominantly detached from the experiences and cultures of the majority of its users effectively plan and provide for our community? The issue transcends beyond numbers. It touches the very core of cultural understanding and representation. When questioned at a community event, CATS staff offered no real explanation, dismissing concerns with vague references to the executive team's

composition. They made it very clear that what I was talking about is the executive team. So, please understand I'm not talking about just any leaders within CATS, this response is inadequate. It reflects a broader issue of systemic neglect. The current leadership does not reflect the diversity of the community it serves, nor does it seem to grasp the importance of cultural insight in decision making. The question then that stands before you Council members is critical. What immediate steps will you take to rectify this unacceptable disparity in representation within our transit systems leadership? The community demands a leadership that mirrors its diversity and understands that the change is overdue. We need leaders who represent us and can genuinely relate to our experiences and challenges. I urge you to take swift and decisive action to ensure our community is led by a team as diverse and vibrant as the people it serves." That's from a constituent.

With all that being said, I know we're 10 percent under. We talked about employee morale, we talked about aggressive recruitment and retention and how effective we've been. So, I just wanted to share some feedback that came in from a constituent, and the email, it came out to all of us, but because I look at my emails and I respond to my constituents, we were on transportation, and I just wanted to share that. So, that is kind of concerning to me. I know it's coming from one person, but I think she's speaking from a broader group, a collective representation of a group of people. So, I'd like to respond to her, this presentation was amazing, and I hope that she can go online and see it, but you know, we have people that don't see what we see when these presentations are here, to my point, that we have to be clear in explaining concise information that we're putting out there. My experience with you and you coming out and doing your job, you're doing an amazing job, but I do want to address the concerns of the constituents when they arise.

Mr. Cagle said yes. Let me answer it this way. It is important for me personally and CATS as an organization to welcome everyone, to be an organization that is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and I believe we are. I believe that we can continue to do better and we have folks dedicated to making CATS even more welcoming. I will also say that I think our leadership team is more than five people and CATS is a very diverse department as are our riders and we are committed to that. I personally am and CATS as an organization is as well, and I would share that sentiment with anyone and everyone who asks.

Ms. Brown said okay. Thank you so much for answering that as openly and honestly as you possibly can. I've been invited over to CATS by some team members. So, I would like to go over and just speak to them and see what their concerns are and what their challenges are. So, I'm committed to doing that and I hope that that's okay because I'll be doing that within the next coming weeks. I would like to give you the feedback that they give to me. It won't be anything that I'll be keeping a secret, but I have been invited over to come and just see the operational side of things by some of your leaders. So, I just want to take them up on that.

Mr. Cagle said yes, the one thing I would mention, not that it makes a difference, but it is important to remember bus operations is provided by a contractor.

Ms. Brown said I understand.

Mr. Cagle said we work very closely with the GM (General Manager) his name is Seyi, to understand what their values are and ensure that our contractors values align with ours.

Ms. Brown said I understand that and thank you for providing that information too, but to what you just said and to your point and to that end, going and getting the feedback and delivering it to senior management team, then they can disperse and use that information to whatever they need to use it for. I think it's important for us to understand and hear the concerns from a different lens and a different scope. So, thank you so much.

**Councilmember Molina** said I just wanted to start by saying thank you Mr. Cagle for stepping into this very tough role. I think what you came into was something that I'm absolutely certain you didn't bargain for, leaving a well-functioning airport before you came over. So, every time I see you I wonder if you still want to come to work.

Mr. Cagle said every day.

Ms. Molina said okay, great. I'm happy to hear that. I actually have a very simple question to start and it's really on the third page of the slide in your vision statement. Is this a new vision statement as a result of your leadership or is this something that CATS has always had?

Mr. Cagle said it is, these are new. Yes, so we thought it was time to look at our mission, to look at our vision and to really refine our core values.

Ms. Molina said I think just my observation, not particularly delving into the details, I think that really in my opinion is where you're going to put your stamp on this work. You've come in. You've stopped the bleeding in a few other places that weren't the result of your leadership. Now this, because I think it's very specific, it leads with safety. It leads with a lot of the deliverables that now we need to concentrate in order to build out a transportation and infrastructure system that is people-centric whether it's our riders or our employees. So, I want to lift that up and say shout out to you and your team because I think that's very strategic. I'm looking forward to now with this new vision, this new mission, specific aligned core values, how we can take this structure and move it forward as far as implementation is concerned. So, I think that's a great start to not keep us here any longer. I had more than one question, but I'm going to bring it right back to one thing that is interesting to me and the first person who pops into my mind when I think about transportation needs is a young man who volunteers on our Bicycle Advisory Board. His name is John Holmes. He is one of the most dedicated people in this conversation that I can think of and I lean on him for his perspective. What does it mean? How do you take a bus? How long does it take you to get from your home to your work? Because he has with a wife and a small child, decided to make a multimodal transportation in his own life a commitment. So, they did the critical mass ride this weekend, they've done a different amount of things. So, I'm always plugging in to now that I'm partnering with my very capable Chair in trying to make sure I understand what the needs of our entire community are, but one that's specific in my area where I represent and the City at large is the bus system.

Again, I think you mentioned a great point, that CATS is not directly managed by the City of Charlotte. We have a subcontractor that handles that work directly and I'm glad that you're in partnership with them. So, I think Mr. Chairman if it's something that would please you, I think the better bus system, I'm really interested in knowing a little bit more about what the vision is for that because I think that's a deliverable that is more of a short term deliverable that if we can work with that contractor to see how we can be strategic about how we take people from point A to point B in an efficient time. I'm sure you guys have thought that out. So, that's kind of an offline item and for the sake of time I would love to hear from you or even have you, with permission from our Chairperson, to present that at one of our meetings, I'd be excited to hear about it.

Mr. Cagle said just for clarity, I'm happy to spend as much time as you'd like going over Better Bus but just for clarity for Council, Better Bus is a better name for Invision My Ride.

Ms. Molina said oh okay.

Mr. Cagle said Invision My Ride is Better Bus. I think it's more clear exactly what the intent of it is. So, I did want to mention that and I was moving through it fast, but as we thought about reimagining and re-envisioning Invision My Ride, we thought it was time for Better Bus.

Ms. Molina said okay. I'm glad you clarified that. I just started having this imagination that was like, "Oh my God, Better Bus." Like, "What are we going to do with this?" My engines are firing.

Mr. Cagle said we're doing the same thing. Better Bus is all about how we rethink the system.

Ms. Molina said okay. So, I'm really excited to hear about how you guys are envisioning that because I think as we think through this like I said with a new vision, a new stamp, a new mission to move forward that says this is CATS, this is what we envision from this point forward and this is how we intend to serve the people of Charlotte and the greater community, I think it says a lot. New vision, new mission, new core values from this point forward notwithstanding anything that's been open ended. Notwithstanding anything that is still the responsibility of us on this leadership body, but understanding that we have a plan to move forward is something that I'm excited about. One that's taken into consideration all of the people that we serve in the City. So, thank you for that. That's all I have.

Mr. Driggs said alright, I want to say quickly for one, some months ago the working group spent several hours at the operations and maintenance center, met quite a number of employees and two overriding impressions were for one, their dedication and professionalism in spite of the turbulence, and two, they all said that things have improved a lot and that they are appreciative of that and of your management. So, that was a big take away from that. I'm going to make a few statements and tell me if I'm wrong. They're not questions. One is people have asked about how the repairs are being funded. My understanding is the repairs are being funded from prior budget allocations that were made for repairs but weren't actually spent and therefore we do not have a big price tag ahead of us in terms of these repairs. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. Cagle said correct.

Mr. Driggs said good, number one. Two, am I right to assume that there are no changes in fair policy or yield planned in the current budget?

Mr. Cagle said correct.

Mr. Driggs said okay. Three, we had a very upbeat report from the new management of National Express for the bus system and I assume that that is still proceeding smoothly and that they are settling in and are favorably impressed as they were with what they've seen.

Mr. Cagle said correct.

Mr. Driggs said okay.

Ms. Brown said I've been living in Charlotte all my life and although as a child I didn't take the bus, my mom did or she walked. My family right now, most of them take the bus, I'm just being honest. Most of them live in District Three and most of them are in areas that are challenged, and they walk to the bus stop, and they get on the bus. So, I hear a lot of stories about the transit. They don't know that CATS is contracted out. So, when we are making statements and people, they send us emails, they may not know it. So, they'll know it now because they hear it here in this meeting, but I think the number one goal is it's us, our reputation that CATS belongs to us. If they're contracted out, we allow that, right? So, it's still our responsibility.

Mr. Cagle said yes. So, I didn't mention that we were contracted out as a way to somehow imply that we weren't responsible, I mentioned that because if you are talking directly to their employees, to a bus operator, you may believe that they work for the City of Charlotte and they do not. Now, that being said, their concerns are real and valid and need to be heard, but our response to their concerns would be slightly different if

it's a contracted employee than if it is a direct City of Charlotte employee. That was my only point.

Ms. Brown said okay, no problem. So, we both agree that their concerns are still valuable and that we can [inaudible] them to where they need to go?

Mr. Cagle said yes, absolutely and we seek their input just the same as we would a City of Charlotte rail operator who is a City of Charlotte employee for example. Because they're unionized, they can't work directly for us because of state law. So, I don't say it to try to say we're not responsible for that, we are. It's a partnership and our contractors should reflect our values and we demand that.

Ms. Brown said yes. So, thank you for the clarification because if online getting feedback, I want people to make sure that they understand that although it's contracted, the City of Charlotte, they do have core values that need to be followed as they would if they were an employee and there's a relationship even though they're unionized because I understand different airport jobs are unionized out. They don't work for American, but all people see is American Airline is responsible for whatever happens at the airport. So, I just want to be clear on when we're giving that information out, that they may be contracted but they're valued as well, and you just clarified that.

Mr. Cagle said yes.

Ms. Brown said okay. We're on the same page.

Mr. Cagle said yes, absolutely. So, again it's not to say that we want don't want to know. It's my opinion that one of the things about the last contract that had to change and will make the new contract more successful is CATS being more engaged with the contractor because we don't know what their issues are if we're not listening. If we're not listening, we can't share that with their general manager who is part of our leadership team, again Seyi. So, that was I think fundamentally in my view, maybe it wasn't the only issue, but it was a major issue with how CATS approached the prior contractor. They sort of said, "You're the contractor, you do your thing, and you deal with your employees," we're saying, "We're all in this together," and there may be a different employer but we're all in this together to provide a needed service to our community.

Ms. Brown said thank you Mr. Cagle. I think my first impression of you was when you came out to the halfway house, and you did an amazing job. So, I don't have any concerns at all with that, but I do want to address the needs of the constituents as they arise and as I went through your presentation, I gave you all the accolades for what I thought was very good for employment, for the benefit of the company, for morale moving forward, and the infrastructure as it needs to be, but sometimes there's tough questions that we just have to answer and we have to pull out. So, thank you so much for that.

Mr. Cagle said I understand.

Ms. Brown said being very professional and moving CATS forward in a positive manner. So, thank you. I just want you to know that my first impression of you, you're doing a very phenomenal job and you're an amazing person.

Mr. Cagle said thank you.

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### **ITEM NO. 3: CLOSED SESSION (AS NECESSARY)**

No closed session occurred.

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## ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Mayfield, seconded by Councilmember Ajmera, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.



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Ariel Smith, Lead Clerk

Length of Meeting: 2 Hours, 47 Minutes  
Minutes completed: November 12, 2024