

Spokane Transit Authority
1230 West Boone Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99201-2686
(509) 325-6000

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the February 6, 2008, Meeting
Southside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Richard Munson, City of Spokane Valley*
Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane
Allan Gainer, City of Cheney
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Mike Brewer, Citizen
Ann Campeau, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Guy Smith, ATU 1598
Dennis Antonellis, ATU 1015
Steve Pinkerton, AFSCME 3939

STAFF PRESENT

E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer
Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance & Administration
Jacque Tjards, Manager, Purchasing
Molly Myers, Communications Manager
Gordon Howell, Manager, Planning & Grants
George Hanrahan, Manager, Information Systems

GUESTS

None

MEMBERS ABSENT

Nan Kelly, Citizen

* Chair

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Munson called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Introductions were made. There was no correspondence requiring the Committee's attention.

3. **MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 9, 2008, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

Mr. Brewer moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO THE GFI GENFARE (GFI) CONTRACT – DISCUSSION**

Mr. Plaster explained that over the past fifteen months GFI farebox systems have been installed on the fixed route coaches. Notification was recently received that US currency will soon be changing, and the current bill validator will not accept the new currency without first being upgraded. GFI has proposed an option to upgrade the fareboxes to the next version of the bill module which will allow upgrades to the farebox software to be done via "memory stick" at the agency rather than returning the units to GFI. The cost of the upgrade is \$380 per unit, if ordered by January 31st, but GFI has agreed to extend this discount pending approval by STA's Board of Directors. Mr. Plaster said that 178 upgrades are needed for a total cost of approximately \$73,458, plus a contingency of 10% for a total cost of \$80,803. This is approximately 2.2% of the original total project amount, and will increase the project budget from \$4,025,000 to \$4,105,803.

Mr. Gainer inquired about unit adaptability and the cost of upgrades in the future. Mr. Plaster said that as bills change, software to upgrade the memory stick will become available, allowing staff to continue upgrading the fareboxes in house. He said that there will be labor costs, but there would be more costs involved if you needed to pull out the fareboxes and ship them back to the factory each time an upgrade was necessary. This project replaces the unit in the farebox which validates the bills, and it is more cost effective for that to happen at STA rather than at the factory.

Mr. Pinkerton asked if there was a cost analysis for this one modification. Mr. Blaska responded that he didn't have the exact figure, but it was about \$90 per farebox to upgrade. He said that part of the contract was that new bills could be accepted, but before this module was developed, you would remove the bill validator and return it to GFI for the upgrade and pay for labor, shipping, and handling. The cost of this one change would have been approximately as much as the cost of this memory stick upgrade, but the upgrade will enable the fareboxes to accept future currency changes following a software upgrade to the memory stick. Mr. Driscoll asked how many passengers pay using cash. Mr. Blaska responded that approximately 24% of riders use cash, over 50% use passes, and the remainder is transfers. Mr. Blaska also noted that this upgrade would move the sensing eye closer to where the bill enters the unit, allowing bills inserted to be more readily accepted by the unit.

Mr. Gainer moved to recommend the Board approve amendment of the GFI Genfare contract via change order and the project budget by an amount not to exceed \$80,803. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. APPROVAL OF SCOPE OF WORK FOR HIGH CAPACITY TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING SERVICES – DISCUSSION

Mr. Plaster explained that the scope of work was distributed prior to the start of the meeting. He said that in order to move forward in the preservation of the high capacity transportation (HCT) corridor, the firm of David Evans and Associates, who worked on the light rail project for STA, was approached to assist with real estate coordination. Mr. Plaster said that Ms. Meyer and he were recently engaged in discussions with the City of Spokane about lack of meaningful recognition regarding the light rail corridor alignment and development issues. He said it became apparent that flexibility was needed to engage additional transportation engineering resources to coordinate the needs of a developer, street planning, and the community's vision of HCT. A request for qualifications would go out and an engineering firm would be selected, task orders would be forthcoming as needs are identified. Once identified, any task order above CEO authority would go to the Board for approval. Mr. Plaster noted that \$5M had been set aside in the 2008 budget for high capacity transportation corridor preservation and it was important to perform due diligence to identify appropriate real estate acquisitions.

Mr. Munson expressed concern that the \$5M was set aside for land acquisition and not for engineering studies. Mr. Plaster reiterated that only a portion of those funds would be used for professional services and the remainder is the funding source closing approved real estate transactions. Discussion ensued regarding use of the \$5M as a funding source. Ms. Meyer noted that STA does not currently have the expertise on staff to identify which real estate parcels would be needed for this HCT corridor. Mr. Munson said he felt that further discussion by the Board was needed regarding these funds.

Ms. McLaughlin moved to approve the Scope of Work as presented and authorize staff to release a Request for Qualifications for engineering services related to HCT, upon further review by the Board. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Mr. Brewer volunteered to assist with the evaluation of proposals submitted.

7. RECOMMENDATION OF NEW OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR 2008 – DISCUSSION

Mr. Blaska said that everyone should have received a copy of Mr. Rolwes' application via mail recently, and that staff is asking for a unified stance from this group for Mr. Rolwes' inclusion on the Operations and Customer Service Committee.

Mr. Blaska noted that there is no designated number of members for the Committee, but with thirteen members, it would provide an extra person to call on to get a quorum of seven for the meetings. He noted that Ms. Cole and Ms. Mager recently resigned from the Committee, and that is why solicitation continues.

Ms. McLaughlin moved to recommend the Board appoint Andrew Rolwes as a citizen member of the STA Operations and Customer Service Committee effective March 1, 2008, through December 31, 2009. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

8. SYSTEM RIDERSHIP ASSESSMENT – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said this would be an end of the year assessment and noted that ridership was up 12.2% in 2007. He said that there is a balance between ridership and effectiveness (passengers per revenue hour). Different routes are expected to have different levels of productivity, and high frequency core routes and commuter express routes would have a higher passengers per revenue hour count than the local suburban and rural intercity routes. STA has a ridership goal of 22 passengers per hour of service, which is a system-wide goal and it does not necessarily mean every route will carry that number of passengers per revenue hour. Mr. Blaska noted that at year end, STA surpassed this goal by transporting approximately 23 passengers per revenue hour. Trends noted included:

- Largest growth was on High Frequency Core & Local Urban (frequent) routes;
- Fastest growth was on Local Suburban and Rural Intercity routes, but still lower effectiveness;
- Growth was relatively flat on Central Shuttle;
- Commuter Routes saw mild growth (except for the Valley Limited).

Mr. Blaska reviewed the highlights by region:

- South: an overall ridership increase of 10.5%, high frequency urban and core routes were the strongest; lower frequency on urban routes;
- West: Route 66 (Cheney/EWU) showed solid growth, as did Medical Lake (1.63%) and the West Plains (28.6%) routes.
- North: High frequency core Routes 20, 23, 24, and 25 showed a 17.6% increase in ridership and Route 33 showed a 16.5% increase. Route 30 (Francis) showed a 4.7% ridership increase, Route 31 (Garland) showed a 16.7% ridership increase, and Route 33 (Wellesley) showed a 16.5% ridership increase. Route 22 (Northwest Boulevard) showed a 2.9% ridership increase, and the new North Express ridership is yet to be determined.
- East: Routes 91, 95, and 32 (Valley Mall/SCC/North Spokane connecting with the Valley Transit Center and Millwood) showed a 24.6% ridership increase. Route 72 and 74 (connecting Liberty Lake, the Valley Mall, Mirabeau and downtown) showed a 9.8% ridership increase, and Route 90 (a high frequency core route) showed a 12.1% increase in ridership.

Mr. Blaska noted that future service enhancements will be aimed at the commuter market.

9. 2008 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska commented that there are relatively few changes from 2007 in the Performance Measures. Changes included that safety will be measured in Accident Free Days, and the measure of severity of an accident has not been determined within the industry. Ridership goals for 2008 include an increase of 4% for Fixed Route, an increase of 3% for Paratransit, and an increase of 30% for Vanpool. One important addition for 2008 will be a “Mystery Shopper” who will be assigned to ride the buses and ensure that established customer service standards are being met by all coach and van operators.

10. DECEMBER 2007 AND YEAR END OPERATING INDICATORS – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that Fixed Route finished the year with 9,436,662 rides provided. This is a 12.2% increase over 2007, a 22.7% increase in the last two years, and a 25.7% increase since 2004. He said the largest growth was in adult ridership, and the Student Pass and discounted Youth Pass have both proven to be successful. Paratransit provided 506,710 rides, which is a 2.6% increase over 2007, a 9.3% increase in the last two years, and an 11.4% increase since 2004. Growth has been going to contract service, and there has been success with the special use vanpool and mobility training programs. Vanpool provided 166,996 rides, which is a 1.9% increase over 2007, a 28.9% increase in the last two years, and a 63% increase since 2004. In 2007, the Vanpool Program obtained twenty additional vans mid-year, and a new fare structure was implemented. Mr. Blaska noted that Adult Pass sales have shown growth while VIP Pass sales are down slightly since those pass users are asked to show identification. Youth Pass sales had been flat, but increased when they were discounted in September. The Student Pass program has been expanded and continues to grow as staff looks for new opportunities for implementation. The Employee Sponsored Bus Pass continues to look for growth opportunities, and more adult passes may need to be ordered for the program. Also, City Ticket Pass sales increased when the parking meter fares increased.

Ms. McLaughlin asked how many riders were transported per day. Mr. Blaska replied that the average number of riders per weekday is approximately 32,000.

11. DRAFT 2009-2015 TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN TIMELINE – INFORMATION

Mr. Howell explained that the Transit Development Plan (TDP) is a document required by the State of Washington which outlines the capital improvement plan over the next several years, discusses service levels, types of service to be provided, future Park and Rides and other amenities, and acts as a reference guide. He reviewed the TDP timeline, noting that the draft version is anticipated to be on display to the public on March 25th, there will be a Public Hearing on the TDP on April 17th, and a recommendation for adoption of the TDP will go to the STA Board of Directors in May.

12. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer said there was supposed to be a Board workshop that day which included a presentation by Nelson/Nygaard on their analysis and recommendations regarding improving The Plaza and staying at that location as a central transfer facility or abandoning that property and moving to the Intermodal facility. Nelson/Nygaard’s subcontractor who was responsible for making the photo simulations were not ready for that deadline, so it is anticipated the workshop will take place on or about March 6th.
- b. Ms. Meyer said a meeting was held with the Department of Transportation regarding the North Spokane corridor and their plan for right of way for high capacity transportation, and what was learned was that they provided for thirty feet between the two freeways. Ms. Meyer said that she thought the rail would run on one of the decks of the freeways, but they are separate through much of the corridor. Northbound is one bridge structure and southbound is another bridge structure, and that gap of air space in between is where high-capacity transit is envisioned. She said she asked if that meant the whole structure would have to be built to run rail above ground, and the response was yes. She said it was new information for a lot of people. The DOT will provide the thirty feet, but it is air space they are providing. The land below it is being preserved to build on, so there is room for a rail system to be built between the two freeways, and HCT is envisioned to run at the same grade that traffic will. Ms. Meyer noted that there are no provisions for stations in this corridor.
- c. Ms. Meyer said the Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC) will meet on February 13th. They have been working on a fare structure evaluation, but they will take a break from that to hear STA’s presentation on the sales tax reauthorization and staff anticipates that the CAC will make a recommendation to the Board.
- d. Ms. Meyer said she and the Mayor of the City of Spokane rode the hybrid bus. The Mayor was impressed and interested in this technology.
- e. Ms. Meyer said she wanted to give kudos to the Paratransit division because the snow conditions have such a negative impact on the smaller vehicles they use. The drivers provide door-to-door service and have to leave the van to escort the passengers to and from the vehicle. Last week, rides were prioritized because of the snow emergency conditions, and transport was provided to those individuals needing rides for medical and emergency trips. Some rides were provided to assist people going to work, but the number of trips was reduced from an average weekday of

1,800 rides to approximately 400-500 trips. In addition, drivers doubled up in the vans to better assist passengers walking over snow and icy terrain.

Mr. Gainer left the meeting at 2:50 p.m.

- f. Ms. Meyer also commented that she was very proud of the efforts of the Supervisors during the snow conditions, because they were out digging out buses to keep them moving.
- g. Ms. Meyer thanked Ms. Van Dort for her hard work on the Committee packet and the meeting minutes each month.

13. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. Community Outreach and Involvement – as presented.

10. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

None.

11. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

Ms. Campeau commented that she watched Ms. Myers on a community access Comcast presentation and said she did an excellent job answering questions about STA.

Ms. McLaughlin said she wanted to thank Ms. Myers who, at the request of a Council member, gave a presentation on how to use the new trip planner feature on STA's website.

Mr. Munson thanked all the bus drivers who worked very hard to keep everyone moving during the recent adverse weather conditions.

12. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5 2008, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

13. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chairman Munson adjourned the meeting at 2:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant