

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

**OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the March 2, 2011, Meeting  
Southside Conference Room

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane \*  
Amber Waldref, City of Spokane  
Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley  
Rick Jacks, Citizen  
Mike Brewer, Citizen  
Nan Kelly, Citizen  
Tim Dompier, ATU 1015  
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598  
Judy Cassell, AFSCME 3939

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Ann Campeau, Citizen  
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen  
David Driscoll, Citizen

\* Chair

**STAFF PRESENT**

E. Susan Meyer, CEO  
Steve Blaska, Director of Operations  
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration  
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning  
Mike Toole, Assistant Manager, Safety & Security  
Mike Hynes, Transit Planner

**GUESTS**

Jim Fitzgerald, Coach Operator/ATU 1015  
Brandon Betty, UDDA  
Ben Foxworth, Citizen

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair McLaughlin called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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

3. **MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 2, 2011, COMMITTEE MEETING - CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

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

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

Mr. Brandon Betty, Program Manager for the University District Development Association (UDDA), gave the following report to the Committee:

*"I am here to speak on behalf of the UDDA's board of directors to discuss a specific proposed route change affecting transit service inside the University District boundaries. That proposition is to increase frequency to the Riverpoint Campus on Spokane Falls Boulevard and student-oriented services along Hamilton Street via routes 26 and 28.*

*"As designated by the City of Spokane, the University District is a targeted area for development because of the nature of services provided in the district, as well as its physical proximity to other strong employment centers and neighborhoods. To ensure the fluid movement of people between those services and neighborhoods, the University District Strategic Master Plan specifically calls for improved frequency and access to the area.*

*"Understanding that implementing routes 26 and 28 will require the elimination of the current transit route along Sharp Avenue, we are confident that Gonzaga University and the Logan Neighborhood will continue to benefit from routes 25, 90, and 91, as well as the proposed routes 26 and 28.*

*"The transition from the Sharp Avenue route to the Mission Avenue route will increase walking distance by two blocks for those whose destination is the Gonzaga University Campus. However, the walking alternative for those students waiting for less frequent service to the Riverpoint Campus via route 29 from the STA Plaza in downtown is significantly longer and filled with major pedestrian barriers such as long city blocks and major arterial intersections. Ultimately, increased frequency and access to additional areas of the University District is most in line with its Master Plan.*

*"Therefore, in keeping with the UDDA board's purpose to uphold the University District's vision of increased connectivity and pedestrian safety, this specific proposed route change is both consistent with, and complimentary to, the goals of the University District Strategic Master Plan as it relates to STA service within the University District."*

Mr. Betty thanked the Committee for their time and invited questions. No questions or comments were forthcoming. Chair McLaughlin thanked Mr. Betty for his report to the Committee.

Ms. Kelly arrived at 1:38 p.m.

5. SEPTEMBER 2011 SERVICE CHANGE: FINAL RECOMMENDATION – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Otterstrom explained that staff is asking the Committee to recommend the Board of Directors approve phase 2 of a three-phase service reduction required to align expenses with reduced resources. The 2011 Budget assumes a 7% reduction in Fixed Route bus service beginning September 18, 2011. Mr. Otterstrom reviewed a graph of the sales tax revenue gap, noting that more than two-thirds of STA's funding comes from sales tax revenues. The estimated decrease in forecasted sales tax revenue between 2007 and 2015 is approximately \$97.3M. He also reviewed a projection model of STA's Sustainable Plan.

A public hearing was held on February 16, 2011, and more than 40 individuals came forward to provide input on the upcoming service reductions. Mr. Otterstrom reviewed comments received regarding several route changes, noting where input resulted in an adjustment to staff's original recommendations. Other public comments included:

- letters of support for Riverpoint service on Routes 26 and 28;
- a letter from Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1015 requesting service be retained on Route 31 and preservation of Route 26 on Sharp as well as the current system-wide level of service;
- a petition to preserve service to the Valley YMCA;
- a letter from a Paratransit customer who will be impacted by the loss of Route 95;
- emails requesting continued service to Medical Lake hospitals; and
- concerns regarding segment elimination on Route 43 (Adams Street near Huckleberry's).

Mr. Otterstrom gave an overview of the summary of impacts, noting that the final recommendation anticipates an estimated annual savings of \$2.9M and a reduction of 29,500 hours in annual Fixed Route platform hours. Four Paratransit customers will be directly impacted by service reductions. Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Otterstrom concluded with an overview of major implementation tasks which need to be accomplished prior to September 18<sup>th</sup> if the Board approves phase 2, noting that some tasks will require coordination with other jurisdictions. He added that there may still be some minor changes to the final recommendation prior to presentation to the Board.

**Mr. Jacks moved to recommend the Board approve the September 2011 Service Change Final Recommendation, as amended.**

Ms. Waldref said she would like it to go on record that she has concerns about cutting Route 31/Garland. She asked if staff could take another look at the proposed changes to that route prior to a final recommendation to the Board. However, she said she would support the motion.

Mr. Dompier commented that based on figure given at the February Board meeting, STA has roughly \$44.5M in unrestricted money, and he felt STA should provide service. He said STA would be missing a "golden opportunity" because with gas prices going up, more people would be using the bus. In 2008, people voted to remove the sunset clause in an attempt to preserve service, and he felt the Board needs to do that. He said he feels the public wants STA to use the money to provide service.

Ms. Meyer responded that STA does not want to make the proposed reductions, but believes it is the prudent thing to do. Ms. Meyer asked Mr. Blaska to give an overview of the projection showing where STA was when the economy began to slump and STA realized that the cash position was going to change because of declining sales taxes. Mr. Blaska said that it is important that people understand why the service changes are being proposed. He explained graphs of the sales tax revenue gap, the projection model (using the current baseline) and the sustainable plan. He noted that even if the economy began to recover next year, STA would not return to 2007 sales tax revenue levels until early 2016, a nine-year period of reduced revenue that will never be recaptured. Therefore, it is important that STA "lives within our means," and based upon the sales tax it now receives, that requires developing a sustainable service plan which includes service reductions.

**The motion was seconded and passed 8:1.**

Ms. Meyer introduced Judy Cassell to the other Committee members as the new representative from the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 3939. [Ms. Cassell is replacing Phil Ridenour as President of that union.]

6. DRAFT 2011-2016 TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Otterstrom explained that the legislative authority of each municipality and each regional transit authority is required to prepare and submit each April a six-year Transit Development Plan (TDP) which includes the current calendar year and the ensuing five years. The TDP is one of a series of plans that is built upon the goals, principles, and policies contained within *Connect Spokane: A Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation*.

Mr. Otterstrom briefly reviewed a summary of the changes made to the draft TDP since it was presented to the Committee at their February 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. He also reviewed the timeline, noting that a public hearing will be held at the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, with submission of the TDP to the Spokane Regional Transportation Commission and Washington State Department of Transportation scheduled for March 31, 2011.

Chair McLaughlin inquired why rolling passes had not been included in the fare structure portion of the TDP. Ms. Meyer said that was an oversight and would need to be included in the final document prior to Board approval.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board adopt the 2011-2016 Transit Development Plan, as corrected. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

7. QUALITY COUNTS! - YEAR END PROGRAM REVIEW – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska explained that in May 2009, the Board approved a “mystery shopper” program to review the customer service performance of Spokane Transit employees. Employee groups included in the program are executive staff, managers and administrative staff, Fixed Route coach operators, Paratransit van operators, customer service representatives, Paratransit reservationists, and security personnel. The objective of the program is to measure how well STA provides service to its customers, as well as to provide an opportunity for performance feedback for employees.

Of approximately 995 surveys completed, the overall score for professional and courteous interaction with the public was 4.74 (the goal is 4.5 or better). Mr. Blaska gave special commendation to two individuals who scored an excellent on multiple shops: Fred Kelso, Paratransit Reservationist, and Lonnie Olson, Customer Service Representative. He also commended those coach and van operators who scored an excellent on multiple shops: Jim Fitzgerald, Ron Simmons, Carl Hansen, Curtis Froscheiser, John Rabe, LeeAnne Sheldon, Mike Kunder, Pete Peterson, Rob Howard, and Dan Padon.

Mr. Blaska gave a detailed overview of the top routes shopped, and the shops by time and day of the week for both Fixed Route and Paratransit.

Changes for 2011 include:

- shop times for Fixed Route - move more shops to the 7:00 am to 9:00 am and 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm time periods (peak periods)
- failure to call out bus route identification for multi-route stops - shopper to provide exact location where this occurred
- shop days for Paratransit - increase the number of shops completed on Sundays
- shop times for Paratransit – move some shops to evening periods (after 6:00 p.m.)
- adjust the number of shops for Paratransit Reservations and the Call Center

Chair McLaughlin commended Mr. Dompier, Mr. Tonhofer, and Ms. Cassell for the excellent performance put forth by their union members. She said that we are a customer service organization, and it is important that we keep our customers happy. She said the Committee appreciates the good work they do.

8. FOURTH QUARTER/YEAR END 2010 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said he would highlight selected Performance Measures and would answer any questions on others he was not covering [which were distributed with the Committee packets]. Fixed Route ridership saw a decline of approximately 4.0% compared to 2009, which is believed largely to be due to economic factors.

Paratransit ridership has experienced a 0.8% decline in 2010, and thanks to the Special Use Vans program, the goal of sustaining the 2009 ridership level was almost achieved. The Rideshare program showed a 0.6% decline in ridership, but continues to recover with more vans being placed into service.

STA’s goal for cost per revenue hour for both fixed route and paratransit is to constrain costs to no more than 94% of the statewide average for urban systems. STA’s cost per revenue hour for fixed route is approximately 78.2% of the urbanized average at \$107.46. Paratransit cost per revenue hour is approximately 78.3% of the urbanized average at \$71.90.

In reference to Service Effectiveness, the goal for passengers per revenue hour for Fixed Route is 22.0 passengers. STA has exceeded this goal, transporting 25.9 passengers per revenue hour. Paratransit has a goal of transporting 3.0 passengers per revenue hour, and finished the year at 2.92, which is higher than any other transit property in the state.

Cost per Passenger for Fixed Route is approximately 70% of the urbanized average at \$4.16. For Paratransit, Cost per Passenger is 58.3% of the urbanized average at \$24.01. Factors influencing these results include cost containment by STA and consistent ridership figures from 2008 to 2009, unlike other properties where significant ridership losses have been experienced.

On-time performance for Fixed Route was 96.55%, which exceeded our goal of 95%. Paratransit on-time performance was slightly lower at 94.12%. These figures did not include performance on several severe weather days.

Workers Compensation claims were up slightly over 2009. Most of these claims involved employees being injured while assisting people using mobility aids. Safety and ergonomics will be re-addressed in upcoming training sessions.

Preventable accidents for Fixed Route were 0.44 per 100K miles, which is below the standard of 0.5 per 100K miles. Similarly, preventable accidents for Paratransit were 0.68 per 100K, also below the standard of 1.0 per 100K miles.

9. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer said the House passed an extension of the Transportation Authorization bill until September 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Meyer and several other individuals from the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) attended a meeting in Vancouver two weeks ago where the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee heard input on how the new Authorization could be improved. Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler hosted the event. Many of those in attendance came to discuss funding for their individual projects, but Chairman John Mica disallowed input except to solicit ways to improve the Transportation Authorization bill.
- b. Ms. Meyer said the Board of the SRTC has approved the position description for an Executive Director, and several members are working on a proposal to the Board on how the search should be conducted.
- c. Spokane Police Department senior volunteer Gene LaLiberte recently passed away. He assisted STA staff with the local Roadeo for the past ten years, and will be missed by all who knew him.

10. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. December and Year End 2010 Financial Results Summary - as presented.
  - 1) Fourth Quarter 2010 Capital Budget Status Report - as presented.
  - 2) Fourth Quarter 2010 Statement of Net Assets & Federal Grant Reports - as presented.
- b. 2010 Fourth Quarter / Year End Operating Indicators - as presented.
- c. January 2011 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- d. Fourth Quarter/Year End 2010 Safety and Loss Summary Report - as presented.
- e. Community Outreach and Involvement - as presented.

11. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

None.

12. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

Mr. Schimmels noted that he will be in Washington, D.C., for the annual National League of Cities Conference from March 12 - 16, 2011. Ms. Meyer commented that she will also be in Washington, D.C., during that same timeframe to attend the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Legislative Conference, and she expects to provide an update on STA's service reductions and the central city transit project.

13. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2011, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

14. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chair McLaughlin adjourned the meeting at 3:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant