

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

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the May 4, 2011, Meeting
Southside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane *
Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley
Mike Brewer, Citizen
Ann Campeau, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen
Tim Dompier, ATU 1015
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598
Judy Cassell, AFSCME 3939

MEMBERS ABSENT

Amber Waldref, City of Spokane
Rick Jacks, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Nan Kelly, 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
Lynn Holmes, Assistant Director of Finance
Don Reimer, Manager, Maintenance & Facilities
Jacque Tjards, Manager, Purchasing
Denise Marchioro, Manager, Paratransit Services
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications
Mike Toole, Assistant Manager, Safety & Security
Jan Watson, Executive Assistant & Clerk of the Authority

GUESTS

None

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 APRIL 6, 2011, COMMITTEE MEETING - CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL

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

Ms. Kelly arrived at 1:34 p.m.

4. PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS

None.

5. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR SIX (6) FIXED ROUTE COACHES – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Blaska explained that six Fixed Route coaches exceed the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) minimum service life guidelines of 12 years and/or 500K miles, and are slated for replacement in 2012. Staff has found a competitive bid opportunity with Metro RTD of Akron, Ohio, from which Spokane Transit is eligible to procure coaches through an inter-governmental purchase agreement. The current unit pricing is \$554,639 (not including sales tax), and while delivery is not anticipated until mid to late 2012, this price will be locked in. The 2011-2016 Capital Plan has identified \$2,640,294 in local funding and \$1,266,200 in federal funding to purchase and "hybridize" the coaches.

Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board approve the inter-governmental purchase of six (6) 40-foot hybrid-electric coaches from Gillig Corporation for the contract amount of \$3,634,011 (including sales tax), and approve the disposal of up to six coaches. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR MOBILITY TRAINING AND OPTION FOR PARATRANSIT ADA ELIGIBILITY IN-PERSON ASSESSMENT – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Blaska explained that mobility training is designed to assist seniors and disabled persons who are able to be trained to use the Fixed Route bus system rather than use Paratransit services some or all of the time. STA has funded mobility training since 2005 with successful results. The current mobility training contract with Paratransit, Inc., will expire in July 2011. The annual cost of the travel training program is approximately \$236K, but the program more than pays for itself in cost avoidance with an estimated savings over the past five years (2006 - 2011) of more than \$2.1M. The new contract includes an option to provide in-person assessments (IPAs) for eligibility determinations, and a pilot program completed in 2010 indicated that the program was well received. Approximately 50% of Paratransit applicants received an IPA during the pilot program, and, of those individuals, approximately 35% of the participants were found to have more capabilities than were communicated through the paper application process. While the annual cost for IPAs during the pilot program was approximately \$212K, the annual cost avoidance savings was approximately \$858K. If the contract is

approved, IPAs would begin in July 2012. Cost avoidance savings over the contract term is anticipated to be approximately \$3.4M. Mr. Blaska added that these combined programs are the primary mechanism used to control demand for Paratransit service.

Three responsive proposals were received and reviewed by an Evaluation Committee. Our current contractor, Paratransit, Inc., was not only the lowest bidder, but also scored highest on all evaluation criteria.

Mr. Brewer moved to recommend action by the Board of Directors to approve an award of contract to Paratransit, Inc. to continue to provide STA with a mobility training program which will promote independent travel among individuals who are elderly and/or disabled effective July 1, 2011, through June 30, 2016, and to approve the option for Paratransit ADA eligibility in-person assessments for approximately 50% of Paratransit applicants from July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2016, at a total cost of \$1,523,008. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Mr. Blaska thanked Ms. Campeau for her service on the Evaluation Committee. He also noted that this is one of the programs that is eligible for, and supported by, special needs grant funding from the State of Washington.

7. FIRST QUARTER 2011 PERFORMANCE MEASURES - RESULTS – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that Fixed Route ridership is up slightly year-to-date, and March ridership was the highest it has been in the past few years. Paratransit ridership is slightly lower than last year, and this may be related to severe weather in February, the reduction of some programs for those individuals who use Paratransit service, and the recent fare increase. The Vanpool program is beginning to recover as those groups that disbanded during the economic slump are being recreated and new ones are being added.

Fixed Route cost per revenue hour is \$106.30, which is 78.3% of the urbanized average. Paratransit cost per revenue hour is \$67.99, which is 78.6% of the urbanized average. Goals for both are to constrain operating costs per hour of service to no more than 94% of the statewide average for urban systems.

Passengers per revenue hour went up for Fixed Route to 28.1. Following the 3% service reduction in September 2010, this is the first indication where you can see that reducing those revenue hours formerly used for non-productive service is having a positive effect. Paratransit passengers per revenue hour is the best in the state, with 2.85 passengers transported per hour of service.

Fixed Route cost per passenger is \$3.78, which is 70.7% of the urbanized average. Paratransit cost per passenger is \$23.48, which is 58.3% of the urbanized average. These numbers are a result of higher ridership combined with efforts to keep operating costs down.

Mr. Brewer commented that he noticed the farebox recovery ratio is 22.7%. He said that for many years it was below 20%, and it is good to see it back up again. Mr. Blaska noted that the recent fare increase is partly responsible for this improvement in farebox recovery ratio.

8. DRAFT 2011-2013 SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom said that this is the first draft of the Service Implementation Plan (SIP) and is required by the Comprehensive Plan to help guide future planning. The context of the SIP is that the 2011 Service Reductions Plan has already been approved, and this document influences subsequent service change proposals. It is also an opportunity to revisit budget projections for out-year service assumptions.

Ms. Meyer noted that the Board's budget guidance included a request to sustain quality (regardless of service level), maintain flexibility (add revenue or reduce service when required), continue with a sustainable plan by avoiding long-term commitments that may not be funded, implement phase 2 of the SIP, and preserve essential capital projects. She reviewed the 2011 adopted budget forecast projection model which reflected STA's planned service cuts, based on an assumption which includes continued sales tax reductions. While the Board has approved the 2011 service reductions, other conditions have changed: the current sales tax trend for 2011 is positive, there is a new contract with Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1015, and STA has received grant awards in the amount of \$3.2M for capital projects and for preservation of service to Medical Lake. These changes will enable staff to recommend to the Board postponement of phase 3 of the SIP for at least one year. Improved economic conditions may mitigate reduction size, and delaying one year allows time for ridership/operations to adjust to major 2011 changes while staff continues to monitor economic conditions while developing a package of service and projects for a growth scenario.

Mr. Otterstrom explained that the Comprehensive Plan states that by April of each year, STA shall prepare a draft SIP to cover a three-year period beginning with the September service change. The plan is to be adopted by the Board no later than July 1 of each year, and it informs the Board and the public of possible service improvements or revisions in 2012 and 2013. There are two sections of the Plan: conceptual service modifications and when they would be implemented, and a route performance report. Mr. Otterstrom reviewed the future service change dates and concluded with an overview

of the Plan approval process timeline, noting that Board action on the SIP will be requested at their July 20, 2011, meeting.

Mr. Blaska added that if STA had not done what it did up to this point, we would not be in a position to delay the 2012 service cuts.

Ms. Kelly left the meeting at 2:11 p.m.

9. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

a. Ms. Meyer commented that approximately 40% of STA's staff members volunteered to support the Bloomsday event. Volunteers included 64 additional Fixed Route coach operators, in addition to the 65 operators scheduled to work on that day. Also, 28 Paratransit operators participated, including 8 vans assigned to pick up incoming ADA-eligible passengers arriving at the Spokane International Airport. Sixteen of 19 supervisors worked the day of the race, all Customer Service staff and most of the Finance staff worked the trade show on Friday and Saturday selling passes, and 26 Maintenance personnel, plus foremen, spread over three shifts, supported the buses during the event. Seventeen additional Facilities and Grounds personnel, plus foremen, set up alternate zones and special service sites, 5 additional Security personnel, all Operations managers plus Vanpool staff also helped out with the event, and 17 other Management/Administrative/Communications personnel volunteered to load buses, sell tickets, and/or distribute customer information materials and products. Information Systems staff assisted with the configuration of laptops to support pre-sold tickets to the trade show. Ms. Meyer said that she felt the community appreciates STA's efforts to support this important event.

Ms. Meyer added that Bloomsday ridership was up 6.5% (22,328 trips) compared to 2010, and regular service on Bloomsday Sunday was up 12.9%. The total allocated cost to provide additional service was approximately \$60K. Ms. Meyer said that Ms. Myers is working to get STA recognized as a Bloomsday sponsor because of all we do to assist in the success of the event.

b. Ms. Meyer noted that there were two corporate teams running in the Bloomsday event, and they chose to be named in remembrance of Paratransit van operator Kevin Lukes, who passed away in 2010. Kevin Lukes Posse 1 came in 4th in the competition, and Kevin Lukes Posse 2 also finished the race.

c. Ms. Meyer said a copy of an article [*Chris Cargill: Efficiency should guide choice of downtown transit plan*] from the April 24, 2011, Spokesman-Review submitted by the Washington Policy Center was distributed prior to the start of the meeting, and she had an opportunity to respond to the article because it contained incorrect information. In response, the article - with corrections - was posted on the Washington Policy Center's website. She encouraged the Committee members to read the article with her comments/corrections.

d. Jim Plaster, STA's Director of Finance and Administration, has announced his intent to retire in October 2011. Mr. Plaster has been with STA for approximately 30 years. A search to fill the position will begin very soon to ensure an overlap with his replacement.

10. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. First Quarter 2011 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- b. First Quarter 2011 Safety & Loss Summary Report - as presented.
- c. March 2011 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- d. Community Outreach and Involvement - as presented.

11. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Blaska congratulated Ms. Van Dort for receiving an "Excellent" rating on an STA Quality Counts! survey.

12. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

None.

13. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 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 2:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant