

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

**OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the November 5, 2008, Meeting  
Southside Conference Room

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Rick Jacks, Citizen

\* Chair

**STAFF PRESENT**

E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer  
Steve Blaska, Director of Operations  
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration  
Jacque Tjards, Manager, Purchasing  
Gordon Howell, Manager, Planning & Grants  
Don Reimer, Manager, Facilities & Maintenance  
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications  
Mark Curtis, Manager, Customer Service  
Anne Irmer, Rideshare Supervisor  
Mike Tool, Safety Officer

**GUESTS**

None

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairman Munson called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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

3. **MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 1, 2008, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

Mr. Pinkerton noted that a correction was needed to the item regarding the approval of the Scope of Work for a Mystery Shopper. He said that the vote should have been 8:2 with one member abstaining (instead of 9:2). He also asked if a portion of the cost of the Mission and Green transit center was a grant. Ms. Meyer said \$2.9M was a grant. Mr. Pinkerton asked if postponing the decision to move forward on this project was by Board action. Ms. Meyer said it was, and it's on the Board agenda for their November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

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

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF TWENTY-TWO (22) FIXED ROUTE COACHES – DISCUSSION**

Mr. Blaska noted that a correction was made to the original document and the new information was distributed to the Committee members at the start of the meeting. He gave a brief overview of a handout regarding STA's Fixed Route Coach Replacement Strategy, noting that it had been updated. Mr. Blaska said that there is a requirement to sustain a fixed route vehicle replacement schedule which prioritizes coaches that are past retirement, addresses the challenge of increased ridership, and responds to the current funding environment. STA's Plan calls for replacement of sixty-six coaches over the next six years. The proposed 2009-2010 Capital Replacement Plan will identify \$8,873,957 to fund the purchase of twenty-two vehicles. Mr. Blaska said that staff has found an intergovernmental purchase agreement that is very favorable in cost and delivery for STA.

Ms. Kelly arrived at 1:39 p.m.

Mr. Blaska explained that there would be a delay in replacement of the 1997 coaches by one year in the overall Plan due to STA's financial situation projection; however, it is critical that the coaches that were received between 1990 and 1994 be replaced because they have over 600K-800K miles on them.

Mr. Blaska said the twenty-two vehicles recommended for purchase include ten 40-foot diesel powered coaches (in 2009), three 29-foot hybrid electric trolleys (in 2009), and nine 40-foot diesel powered coaches (in 2010).

Mr. Blaska showed a slide of what the new trolley replacement vehicles would look like. He said that the current trolleys used for downtown shuttle service are actually a truck chassis with a specially constructed body, and there

have been operational and maintenance issues with this design. The new 29-foot trolleys would be a regular Gillig coach with appliqué, so there would be operational, maintenance, and longevity benefits, as with a regular coach.

Mr. Blaska said that staff explored both Gillig and New Flyer purchase opportunities, but Gillig offered a better purchase price and New Flyer could not deliver the required number of coaches using one contract.

Mr. Munson asked what the cost would be for the appliqué. Mr. Blaska responded that trolley appliqué would cost approximately \$50K per coach. Ms. Meyer noted that the cost savings from Gillig allowed STA to order hybrid electric 29-foot vehicles, but the cost of making them look like trolleys would be an additional expense. Mr. Blaska added that the coaches to be purchased would actually cost less than the coaches which were purchased for delivery in 2008 because this is part of a 700 bus consortium bid, and by ordering now for 2009 and 2010 delivery, they would not incur any CPI calculation. The total cost for this package is under the amount originally projected in the budget.

Ms. McLaughlin arrived at 1:43 p.m.

Mr. Munson commented that some time ago discussion occurred regarding trolley replacement, and he was under the impression that the trolley design would not be utilized in the future for downtown service due to the additional cost for that vehicle design. He said he would not be willing to support the additional cost and felt that trolley appliqué would be frivolous given the current economic condition. Ms. Meyer said she would have to refer back to the minutes of the Board meeting where trolley design was discussed to determine exactly what had been said.

Mr. Smith said he agreed with Mr. Munson, and that riders didn't care what the bus looked like as long as it got them where they're going on time. Mr. Rolwes commented that he felt that the use of a signature vehicle is important because it reminds people that they can park at the Arena and take the trolley to access the downtown core, rather than trying to park downtown. Extensive discussion ensued regarding the use of trolley look-alikes for downtown shuttle service.

Ms. Myers interjected that this discussion is basically about "branding" of the vehicles, and ridership numbers from these signature vehicles appear to support branding the vehicles.

Because there is a time component for consideration of this purchase, Mr. Blaska asked the Committee to approve the purchase of the coaches, with discussion and decision about trolley appliqué for the 29-foot coaches tabled until a later date.

**Mr. Munson said he would like to hear a motion which says the Committee approves the purchase of all the buses, without approval of the purchase of the trolley appliqué.**

**Mr. Smith moved to recommend the Board, contingent upon approval of the 2009 Capital Budget, approve the inter-governmental purchase of twenty-two fixed route coaches, technical training, and spare components from Gillig Corporation for a sum not to exceed \$8,873,957, and approve the disposal of up to twenty-two coaches. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

6. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF TWENTY-SEVEN (27) 15-PASSENGER VANPOOL VANS – DISCUSSION

Mr. Blaska explained that the vanpool program continues to be in high demand and ridership is up 36.7% year to date. Staff recommends expansion of the program, and the purchase of ten expansion vans and replacement of seventeen vans are reflected in the Transit Development Plan update.

Funds to cover this purchase are designated in the draft 2009 Capital Budget. A funding source for purchasing vanpool vans is currently available through the Washington State Purchasing Contract, and a Washington State Grant will fund the purchase of five of the ten expansion vans.

Mr. Blaska noted that ten vans scheduled for replacement will be retained for an additional year to help expand the program. He reviewed the Vanpool Expansion Plan with the Committee, noting that staff plans to submit a grant for twenty-five more vanpool vans in the next biennium, which would cover five in late 2009 and twenty in 2010-2011. Mr. Blaska commented that challenges exist regarding the state grant cycle and the type of vans which will be available through the state grant, and said that there is a narrow window in which to place an order and get into the production cycle with the manufacturer. If for some unexpected reason the state grant did not fund an additional five vans, STA would pay for them with local funds.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board approve the purchase of twenty-seven ((27) 15-passenger vans (ten expansion vans and seventeen replacement vans) for a total cost of \$699,748.78, utilizing the State of Washington General Administration contract. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

7. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR SUMP PUMPING SERVICES – DISCUSSION

Mr. Blaska explained that STA operates nineteen in-ground sumps at the Boone Avenue and Fleck Center facilities. Regular pumping is required, and waste material must be analyzed for proper disposal. Our current contract will expire on November 30, 2008. Staff advertised several times for bids for this service, and Safety-Kleen Systems of Plano, Texas, who is our current service provider, was the only bidder. Safety-Kleen is proposing a price which is \$0.43 below the current price of \$1.17 per gallon for the first year because they can now ship the waste to Oregon for disposal instead of to Chicago as they had been doing. Staff has determined this price to be reasonable and fair.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board award a contract to Safety-Kleen Systems, Inc., of Plano, Texas, for sump pumping services for the next five years for an annual estimated cost of approximately \$16,500 for the first year, a 2.7% increase in the second year, a 2.6% increase in the third year, and increases in years four and five to be tied to the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Ms. Meyer noted that there would be a 2009 Budget Workshop beginning at 2:45 and asked Mr. Blaska if he could finish his Committee presentation prior to that time. Mr. Blaska responded that he would review highlights of Item 8 – Third Quarter 2008 Performance Measures and entertain questions regarding Item 9 – 2020 Transit Downtown Plan, but he did not plan to cover them in depth.

8. THIRD QUARTER 2008 PERFORMANCE MEASURES - RESULTS – INFORMATION

Mr. Munson asked the Committee if they had any comments or questions about the Performance Indicators. He said that staff should be commended for the great work they are doing in this area because the numbers are very good. He added that he has heard lots of positive comments about STA, and especially about the friendliness of the drivers.

Mr. Blaska noted that the state is late in publishing 2007 data, and an assumption of a 3% increase for cost per revenue hour, cost per passenger, and passengers per revenue hour was used when comparing STA to other transit properties. Staff expects that STA will perform even better than indicated when the final numbers are available for comparison.

Ms. Meyer commented that October showed a ridership increase of 24.5%, and year-to-date ridership is up approximately 20%.

9. 2020 TRANSIT DOWNTOWN PLAN – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that included with the Committee packet was a copy of the presentation he gave to the Board at their last meeting, which asked them to consider two of five options: provide downtown service out of the Intermodal Center, or continue service from The Plaza, with proposed operational and physical changes to that location. He said that staff recommended that STA continue operations from The Plaza, with operational and physical changes to that location, and asked if anyone had any comments.

Ms. Meyer noted that particular enhancements are not included in staff's recommendation to stay at The Plaza. Until an engineer is hired to provide input on the types of changes that are needed, no recommendation for change will be forthcoming. Mr. Munson asked if there was a timeline on this project. Mr. Blaska said there will be a public hearing at the November Board meeting, and the Board will be asked to make a decision at their December meeting. In addition, he will present the recommendation to the BID Board at their next meeting, and Ms. Meyer and Ms. Myers have scheduled public outreach meetings to make sure everyone has an opportunity to provide input.

Mr. Blaska commented that The Plaza serves two functions: first, as a center for transit activity, and second, with the open space, art work, and waterfall, it is an indoor public park. Having this building used as a public park is inconsistent with the purpose of a transit center and encourages non-productive activity; therefore, the thrust of the changes would be to use the space only for productive transit activities. Ms. Meyer noted that the changes would include providing line-of-sight for Security on the first floor. Mr. Munson said that he felt it would be cost effective to provide office space on the second floor. Ms. Meyer said more discussion is needed, particularly regarding what would happen with the current art work throughout The Plaza.

10. DRAFT 2009-2015 TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN – INFORMATION

Mr. Howell said that the state requires an annual update of the Transit Development Plan. The focus of the plan is to identify the capital improvements plan, identify historical and prospective estimated service levels, and to serve as a planning reference guide. Assumptions made include: continuing to maximize FTA Section 5307 funds for preventive maintenance revenue; increased fuel costs; forecasting negative or zero growth over the next two years for sales tax revenue; ridership growth rates are expected to be moderate in future years, and to sustain current

service levels and fund essential capital projects in 2009. Mr. Howell reviewed some of the capital projects including: funds to replace the oldest revenue vehicles; begin the Smart Bus project with on-board cameras in 2009; expansion of the Rideshare van fleet (contingent on state funding); and enhancements to the Downtown Center. He concluded his presentation by reviewing the timeline which includes a public hearing on November 20<sup>th</sup>, final discussion with the Operations and Customer Service Committee on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, and presentation to the Board for final consideration and adoption at their December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

11. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer noted that there is a new \$40M grant program in the state of Washington called the Regional Mobility Grant, which focuses on reducing congestion on high-frequency corridors. STA competed for grant money in the first biennium, but was not selected at that time. STA competed in the second biennium and was awarded \$2.9 for the Mission and Green project, which will be discussed at a later time. Because of the dramatic impact on transit agencies with decreased sales tax and increased gas prices, the Washington State Transit Association (WSTA) is going to recommend to the Department of Transportation and the Legislature that for one biennium, the full \$40M grant be distributed to agencies using a formula. All agencies in the state would receive money as a “bridge” to better times. Ms. Meyer said this was hotly debated at the last WSTA meeting. Ms. Meyer said she thought there was a lot of merit in distributing the funds in this manner, although cities and counties would not be eligible. STA is planning to apply for grant money under this program.
- b. Ms. Meyer informed the Committee that
  - Sound Transit (Pierce, Snohomish, and King County) passed their \$17.9B measure to expand light rail, commuter trains, and bus service. This will be achieved by raising the sales tax.
  - California voters approved \$10B to partially fund a bullet train to connect San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego.
  - Honolulu voters approved \$5B for an elevated light rail train.
- c. Ms. Meyer said that last month the Task Force asked staff to look into the Climate Action Team as a potential source of funding. The Climate Action Team report is due to the Governor on December 1<sup>st</sup>. While there is a general consensus that there isn’t more money for transportation, it is likely that in their effort to reduce dependence on foreign oil and improve our air quality there will be a recommendation and transit will be included in that recommendation. However, there is no funding at this time.

12. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. Third Quarter 2008 Operating Indicators (*Steve Blaska*) - as presented.
- b. Third Quarter 2008 Safety and Loss Summary (*Mike Toole*) - as presented.
- c. September 2008 Operating Indicators (*Steve Blaska*) - as presented.
- d. Community Outreach and Involvement (*Molly Myers*) - as presented.

13. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

None.

14. COMMITTEE MEMBERS’ EXPRESSIONS

None.

15. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2008, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

16. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chairman Munson adjourned the meeting at 2:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant