

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

PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the April 3, 2013, Meeting
Southside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mike Allen, City of Spokane*
Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane
Rhonda Bowers, Labor Representative
E. Susan Meyer, CEO (Ex-officio)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley
Art Kulibert, City of Medical Lake

* Chair

STAFF PRESENT

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Lynda Warren, Director of Finance
Steve Doolittle, Director of Human Relations
Mark Curtis, Manager, Customer Service & The Plaza
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications
Don Reimer, Manager, Maintenance & Facilities
Lance Durbin, Supervisor, Paratransit Services
Jan Watson, Executive Assistant and Clerk of the Authority

GUESTS

None

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Allen called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Introductions were made. There was no correspondence requiring the Committee's attention.

2. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

3. **COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORT**

None.

4. **COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

A. **MINUTES OF THE MARCH 6, 2013, COMMITTEE MEETING**

The Committee could not take action in the absence of a quorum. This item will be re-submitted to the Committee for approval at their next meeting.

5. **COMMITTEE ACTION**

A. **Board Consent Agenda**

1. **APPROVAL TO AWARD ADDITIONAL VAN GRANT VEHICLE**

Mr. Blaska explained that STA's current policy allows for the award of up to ten vans per year. Twenty-five applications for vans were received, and scoring was based on demonstrated community benefit, total number of annual trips, clarity/quality of application, coordination of services, and ability of the organization to maintain service. Top scorers included Family of Faith Community Church, Fulcrum Institute, Spokane Housing Ventures, West Central Community Center, Rainbow Connection Daycare, Merrill Gardens/The Academy, South Hill Senior Living, Community Vision, Northeast Youth Center, Cheney Care Center, and World Relief. Staff is requesting the Board approve an exception to policy to award one additional van this year so we are not in the position of discriminating between applicants that scored very close. There are an adequate number of vans available to be retired to support this exception to policy.

Mr. Blaska recognized Paratransit Transportation Supervisor Lance Durbin for his work on the van grant program.

The Committee could not take action in the absence of a quorum. Those members present concurred by consensus with staff's recommendation to approve an exception to policy to award one additional van grant vehicle in 2013.

2. WASHINGTON STATE PARATRANSIT/SPECIAL NEEDS GRANT PROGRAM

Mr. Blaska said that staff is recommending consolidation of all grant funding received under the Washington State Paratransit/Special Needs Grant program so it may be applied to help meet overall Paratransit costs. Current projects initiated under the Paratransit/Special Needs Grant include the Student Pass Discount; Special Use Vanpool Program; Mobility Training; and the Paratransit In-Person Assessment Program. The other projects that were initiated under the grant program will no longer be tied to the availability of State funding. The Special Use Vanpool Program, Mobility Training, and the Paratransit In-Person Assessment Program have proven their value to the organization and the community. They will be reviewed and compete for renewal based on STA's internal budget process. The Student Pass Discount will be evaluated as part of the Board's process for reviewing STA's fare structure. This change institutionalizes the ongoing status of the important initiatives that were originally tied to the State grant funds; streamlines the grant award and accounting process; and retains the total grant money received by STA. Staff is submitting this action in order to clarify and gain approval of the ongoing status of projects originally tied to the Paratransit/Special Needs Grant program, and recommending that grant funds be used to help meet overall Paratransit costs.

The Committee could not take action in the absence of a quorum. Those members present concurred by consensus with staff's recommendation to approve the consolidation of all Paratransit/Special Needs Grant funding to help meet overall Paratransit costs and apply the normal STA budgeting process to guide decision making for other projects formerly tied to this grant.

B. Board Discussion Agenda

No items were presented this month.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. SEPTEMBER 2013 SERVICE REVISIONS – DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Otterstrom presented the highlights of the draft recommendation for the September 2013 service revisions, noting that further analysis is still required to solidify whether the changes are feasible. He reviewed the routes under consideration for revised schedules, noting that minor adjustments have been made to the original preliminary proposal in response to feedback from the public. Included are revisions related to Plaza operations, notably a change to convert Zone 10 to a drop off only zone to reduce passenger crowding near the street corner. Proposed weekend schedules for Cheney routes include a 15-minute shift to resemble night service and accommodate Plaza zone adjustments. Other changes relate to Spokane Community College where staging activity would be modified to reduce confusion, improve service delivery, and address safety concerns. A public hearing is scheduled for April 18th, and a final recommendation for service changes will be presented to this Committee in May, with Board action to be taken at their May 16th meeting. If approved, changes would become effective September 15, 2013. More information is available on the STA website.

B. PLAZA UPDATE

Ms. Meyer said that she met with City officials including Spokane Police (SPD) Chief Frank Straub and Downtown Spokane Partnership (DSP) President Mark Richard regarding heavy pedestrian traffic on Post Street and discussed the possibility of reopening the former smoking area on Wall Street and expanding to Post Street. Chief Straub indicated that he does not support the idea of reopening that section of Wall Street for that purpose, and in response to STA's request to expand to Post Street, he said that Post Street is a concern that the City needs to address, not STA. Chief Straub added that he is not taking the idea of the expanded commission off the table, but would prefer to try something else first. SPD will work with the DSP in hopes of finding funding for police interns to assist during the summer months. The DSP will continue to work with the City to find more ways to expand police presence in the downtown area. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Blaska discussed some of the challenges concerning heavy pedestrian traffic on Post Street. Estimates from rider surveys indicate that only a small portion (12%) of the pedestrian traffic represents STA bus riders. STA will work with the City to partner in a solution to this issue which could include camera upgrades at the Plaza, enhanced police presence, and possible system modifications to minimize bus dwell time.

Mr. Blaska also reviewed the history of the building of the Plaza, and the role it plays in our community. He said there is a misperception that public transportation in Spokane is not widely used, but facts show otherwise. STA provides approximately 11M trips annually, which is the third highest bus ridership in Washington State. Statistics show that STA is also the most efficient and effective of all urban systems in the state, and ridership has grown over 40% in the last seven years. Downtown is the largest concentrated destination point with approximately 11,700 bus boardings each day. 48% of bus riders wait on site at the Plaza for less than five minutes before boarding; 76% are on site less than 15 minutes; and 88% are on site less than 30 minutes. In addition, vehicle traffic on downtown streets is 32% below 1982 counts.

The most recent Community Survey indicates that at least 67% of the community has used public transit at some point in the past. A majority of our citizens (66%) agree that STA will play an important role in the region's future transportation needs.

Mr. Blaska outlined how STA contributes significantly to regional traffic system efficiency, noting that forty-two downtown businesses participate in the Employer Sponsored Bus Pass Program and approximately 25% of City employees used this benefit in 2012. In addition, approximately 450 drivers park at the Arena and take the bus to work downtown to preserve parking for customers in the downtown core.

Mr. Otterstrom discussed several alternatives that were explored prior to the December 2008 Board decision to approve maintaining the Plaza in its current location and explained how moving the Plaza out of downtown would be a fundamental costly change in STA's strategic direction and counter to a long and deliberate decision-making process.

Mr. Blaska concluded the presentation by noting that transit service has a significant role in Spokane's long-term vision and service to downtown is fundamental to the entire architecture. STA will continue to study alternatives as how to best serve downtown prior to designing a comprehensive transit system plan.

C. BLOOMSDAY SUPPORT

Mr. Blaska gave a brief overview of the support STA provided for Bloomsday in 2012, noting that support efforts for 2013 will include:

- 70 Coach Operators/28 Paratransit Operators/16 Supervisors
- information published by STA's Communications department
- Customer Service/Finance staff working the Tradeshow
- 26 additional Maintenance staff prepping buses
- 17 Facilities & Grounds staff to set up alternate zones
- 5 additional Security personnel
- Operations Managers/Vanpool staff/other administrative personnel to direct special service or load buses and sell tickets
- 70 additional coaches will support express service from Valley Mall, Ferris High School, Northtown Mall, Cheney, and the West Plains
- Two special runs on Saturday, one for elite runners and another for people with disabilities; and
- Sweep vehicle to pick up runners who are unable to finish the course

7. CEO REPORT

- A. Ms. Meyer said that STA has been working with McKinstry regarding the benefits of engaging an energy service company to assist with finding and implementing savings through more efficient use of energy in STA facilities. If an opportunity exists, STA has the choice to approve an investment grade audit to identify the scope, costs, and savings. Mr. Blaska added that the firm is registered by the State of Washington which makes procurement easier.
- B. The Senate Transportation Budget was introduced, but funding for the Central City Line was not included. The package that Senator Clibborn drafted dropped new revenue to \$4.5B over 12 years and included a 10-cent fuel tax increase but dropped the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) component. The North Spokane Corridor is on the current list for \$420M. Funding for transit is very low at \$120M over 12 years and will be distributed by formula to transit agencies statewide.
- C. In regard to the City Pass Program, Ms. Meyer said that the Mayor has been asked to honor the one-year contract currently in place with STA. Discussions will begin to meet the Mayor's cost containment objectives.

8. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- A. February 2013 Financial Results Summary - *as presented.*
- B. March 2013 Sales Tax Summary – *as presented.*
- C. February 2013 Operating Indicators – *as presented.*
- D. Community Outreach and Involvement – *as presented.*

9. APRIL 2013 COMMITTEE PACKET AGENDA REVIEW

Chair Allen asked if there were any comments about the agenda for the next Committee meeting. Ms. Meyer noted that there will be a final recommendation on the September service revisions, and a request to revise STA's Procurement Policy. **Chair Allen recommended adding an update on the Plaza and on STA's bus shelter/bus bench policy because the City's contract will expire at the end of this year.**

10. NEW BUSINESS

None.

11. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

None.

12. ADJOURN

Chair Allen adjourned the meeting at 11:44 a.m.

13. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2013, 10:00 A.M., STA SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant