

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

**OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Draft Minutes of the September 3, 2008, Meeting  
Southside Conference Room

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Richard Munson, City of Spokane Valley\*  
Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane  
Mike Brewer, Citizen  
Ann Campeau, Citizen  
David Driscoll, Citizen  
Dennis Antonellis, ATU 1015  
Steve Pinkerton, AFSCME 3939  
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Allan Gainer, City of Cheney  
Rick Jacks, Citizen  
Nan Kelly, Citizen  
Andrew Rolwes, 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  
Mark Curtis, Manager, Customer Service  
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications  
Jan Watson, Executive Assistant & Clerk of the Authority

**GUESTS**

None

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairman Gainer called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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

3. **MINUTES OF THE JULY 2, 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. **REQUEST FOR SPECIAL FARE POLICY STRUCTURE FOR THE 2010 U.S. FIGURE SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS – DISCUSSION**

Ms. Myers said that Spokane had been chosen to host the 2010 U.S. Figure Skating Championships to be held on January 14-24, 2010, and STA received a request to be the "Official Event Shuttle." She noted that STA was deemed a significant contributor to the success of the 2007 Championships which were also held in Spokane, and STA would like to position itself the same way for the upcoming event. STA would provide the same level of service as was provided in 2007 which includes regular service augmented by additional shuttle service that will serve the downtown area and the Arena with ten-minute frequency. The cost to STA would be approximately \$55,000. Staff is proposing the following fare standards for this event: \$.50 for a one-way ride, \$1.00 for a two-hour pass, \$2.50 for a day pass, and a special system-wide event pass for all transit service for the ten-day event for \$12.00. In addition, credentialed athletes, officials, and judges would be allowed access to service free of charge.

Mr. Brewer asked how many complementary rides were provided for the 2007 event. Mr. Blaska responded that the estimate was between 150 and 300 people were authorized free transit use, but he did not have an exact figure for the number of rides they took. He added that approximately 40K rides were provided during the last event and that it is important to consider the benefits derived to STA from marketing. Mr. Driscoll commented that 50-cents for a shuttle ride seemed very low. Mr. Blaska said that the standard shuttle fare is 50-cents; staff is seeking Board approval to charge \$12 for a ten-day event pass. He added that approximately 2,000 passes were sold for the previous event, and TicketsWest markets the ten-day pass along with the event ticket package. Also, the 2010 Championship event will be slightly longer than the 2007 event, and the pass would be good system-wide, so the benefit would be extended to everyone who rides our service.

Discussion ensued regarding the cost of the ten-day pass, and Ms. McLaughlin said she could not recommend that this item go to the Board as it stood because she felt that the charge for the ten-day pass was too low. Mr. Munson

commented that this event would bring millions of dollars into the local economy, and he was not concerned with the event pass cost. Ms. Myers added that STA gets thousands of dollars in marketing services from this event.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board adopt the following fare policy for the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, January 14-24, 2010: general public fare of \$.50 for one-way shuttle service on the additional shuttle, and \$12.00 for a system-wide ten-day event pass. Complimentary access to STA services for credentialed personnel is available due to value of advertising and marketing for public transportation provided by STAR USA. The motion was seconded.**

Additional discussion took place regarding the \$.50 fare for the event shuttle, and Mr. Antonellis asked if shuttle fares would still be \$.50 in 2010. Mr. Blaska responded that if the fares changed before the event, staff would need to return to the Board with new pricing for this shuttle service for their approval. Mr. Pinkerton asked if the recommendation could just be amended to say that the shuttle fare would be whatever the standard shuttle fare is in 2010. The group agreed that the recommendation should be amended. Ms. Campeau commented that traffic and parking is a real problem in the downtown area, and it was important for people to use the shuttle rather than bring personal vehicles downtown.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board adopt the following (amended) fare policy for the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, January 14-24, 2010: general public fare on the additional shuttle at the current rate for a shuttle fare at the time of the event, and \$12.00 for a system-wide ten-day event pass. Complimentary access to STA services for credentialed personnel is available due to value of advertising and marketing for public transportation provided by STAR USA. The motion was seconded and passed 7:1.**

6. REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF BHW1 CONTRACT EXTENSION – DISCUSSION

Ms. Myers explained that in July 2005, the Board approved a one-year contract with two 1-year extensions for marketing and communications services with BHW1. In July 2006, the Board approved the first contract extension and in August 2007, the Board approved the second contract extension, which will end on December 31, 2008. Staff is recommending an additional extension of the contract until July 31, 2010. This extension would reposition STA's relationship with BHW1 to be in keeping with other STA contracts which are for three years, with two one-year options to extend, for a total of five years. She added that pricing for the additional 1½ years would remain the same.

**Ms. McLaughlin moved to recommend the Board extend the contract with BHW1 an additional 1½ years until July 31, 2010. The motion was seconded.**

Mr. Munson added that the original contract for this service was scheduled to end after the second year, but it was extended in order to give BHW1 a chance to demonstrate successful performance, and they have done so admirably. Ms. Meyer provided further information regarding the background on the evaluation committee's decision to select BHW1.

**The motion passed unanimously.**

7. REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF DISCOUNTED YOUTH PASS PROGRAM FOR 2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR – DISCUSSION

Mr. Curtis said that in April 2007 the Board approved the implementation of a discounted Youth Pass program for school year 2007-2008. Because of the success of the program, staff is now requesting an extension of the program for the 2008-2009 school year (ten months). He noted that the program is funded through a Washington State Special Needs grant. The cost of the Youth Pass would include a reduction of \$6.00 (from \$26 to \$20 per month), and the estimated cost of the program would be approximately \$120K (at 2,000 passes per month). Mr. Curtis also noted that Youth Pass sales have increased 19.3% and youth pass ridership has increased 29.6% (comparing September 2006 through July 2007 to September 2007 through July 2008). In addition, Youth Pass sales for July 2008 are up 98.6% compared to last year, and ridership is up 25.9% year to date.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board approve the extension of the discounted Youth Pass program through the Washington State Special Needs Grant for the 2008-2009 school year (September 2008 through June 2009). This includes a reduction of \$6.00 per month in the cost of the current monthly pass fare, from \$26.00 to \$20.00. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

8. PROPOSAL FOR BUS PASS PROGRAM FOR CITY OF SPOKANE EMPLOYEES – DISCUSSION

Mr. Curtis noted that a revision was made to this item and copies of the revised version had been handed out at the start of the meeting. He said that staff is very excited about this opportunity to partner with the City of Spokane to implement a pass program. The City has approximately 1,000 employees who would participate in the program,

and City Hall is served by several bus routes. Mr. Curtis said that in accordance with the STA Tariff Policy, the fee for the program would be based on the organization's total ridership for the contract period multiplied by the system-wide average fare, or a minimum cost of \$45K. However, for the 2008-2009 contract, the minimum cost would be reduced to \$30K for the pilot program. Ms. Meyer asked if staff would need to return to the Committee if the program costs during the two 1-year extensions were less than \$45K. Mr. Curtis said that the cost for the program during the two additional 1-year extensions would be calculated using the formula as stated in the Board adopted Tariff Policy. Mr. Munson asked that the recommendation be amended to reflect that information.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board authorize the CEO to enter into a contract with the City of Spokane which includes a price of \$30,000 for the pilot program term, with the option for an extension to this Agreement in writing for up to two (2) additional 1-year periods, with costs for the extended year(s) to be in accordance with the Board's adopted Tariff Policy. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

9. POTENTIAL SERVICE REQUEST FOR THE 2009 NATIONAL VETERANS' WHEELCHAIR GAMES – INFORMATION

Ms. Myers noted that Spokane was chosen to host the 2009 29<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games to be held July 13-18, 2009. The games are a multi-event sports program and are open to military veterans who are eligible for care at a Department of Veterans Affairs facility. STA would provide 20 buses for event participants and the support group. Seats would be removed from STA buses. Total expense for the event organizers is estimated to be approximately \$107K. Staff has met with event officials, but has not yet received an official request for this service, so no recommendation from the Committee is requested at this time. When an official request is received, staff will pursue a waiver of the FTA charter requirement. Ms. Myer concluded her presentation by showing a short film about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

10. SYSTEM RIDERSHIP ANALYSIS - SIX MONTH ASSESSMENT – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that he would give a summary rather than go through all of the slides the Committee received with their packet. He said that ridership is up 18.0% year to date. He reminded the group that routes are categorized differently based on function, and he will be presenting raw numbers regarding ridership. Mr. Blaska presented information showing the comparison of boardings per revenue hour (January to July 2007 vs. the same months in 2008), and a table showing weekday ridership on each route. He noted that in 2008, there has been growth in the use of the Plaza-Arena shuttle and the Medical shuttle.

Mr. Blaska reviewed ridership highlights by quadrant:

- South: Ridership on Routes 2/45/46/ 47 is up approximately 18.0%; Routes 43/44 are up 13.2%; Route 45 (a high-frequency urban core route) is up 19.6%, and the Southside Shuttle is up 16.8%.
- West: Ridership to Cheney/EWU is showing solid growth (14.1%); there's growth on routes to Medical Lake (14.0%) and the West Plains (31.4%); and following the changes to Route 64, ridership is up 6.9%.
- North: Ridership on the high-frequency core Routes 23/24/25 showed a 12.7% increase; Routes 26/28 showed a 20.4% increase; the North Express (started on January 21<sup>st</sup>) has transported over 36K riders; Route 30 Francis shows a 24.7% increase; Route 31 Garland shows a 30.4% increase, Route 33 Wellesley shows a 16.1% increase, and Route 22 Northwest Blvd. had a 2.9% increase in ridership. Growth on Route 20 SFCC is relatively flat (0.4% increase), but it's still a very productive route.
- East: Ridership on Routes 91/95/32 increased 26.8% increase in ridership; Routes 72/73/74 showed a 25.8% increase (particularly mid-day); Route 96 had an increase of 42.2%, and use of a larger coach is planned to accommodate ridership increases. Route 97 had an increase of 31.8%; and Route 90 (high-frequency core route) has increased of 10.5%.

Mr. Blaska concluded by saying that the challenge now is how to support ridership growth with no new resources. At the current time, rather than increase frequency, buses are being added to individual routes.

11. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer noted that Mr. Blaska's ridership report was through June, but comparing July 2008 to July 2007, ridership is up 34.7%. In addition, Paratransit ridership for July is up 13.2% compared to July 2007.
- b. Ms. Meyer said the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) expects to bring a recommendation to the Board in January regarding new fares. STA staff has developed a tool which demonstrates the net impact of any fare changes. Ms. Meyer noted that approximately 11% of STA's revenue comes from fares.

- c. Ms. Meyer commented that a Community Forum is planned for Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, which will provide the public an opportunity to learn and give input regarding service improvements, the status of The Plaza (vs. the Intermodal Center), the 2009 Budget, and the Transit Development Plan (TDP). The STA Communications team has prepared visuals and handouts for each of the four stations. Any pertinent recommendations from this Forum will be reviewed for incorporation into the TDP and 2009 Budget, and a Public Hearings will take place prior to upcoming Board meetings.

Mr. Munson commented that at least three state-wide “climate change” committees have been established and in regard to the trend for transit, local legislators are insisting that: any recommendations for legislative change will be budgeted; any outcomes must be measurable; and the measure(s) must be cost effective. Any actions toward “climate change” will be considered justifiable. He said that before the end of the biennium, we will be given tasks to improve and expand transit for the region, and he expects the STA Operations and Customer Service Committee to be involved in making recommendations to the Board for change. He told the group to be prepared for interesting conversations over the coming months.

Ms. Meyer added that she serves on the Mayor’s Sustainability Task Force, and in the near future there will be recommendations made to improve the community’s environmental conditions, with a focus on what the City can do to make measurable changes toward improvement.

12. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. Second Quarter Performance Measures – Results (*Steve Blaska*) – as presented.
- b. Second Quarter 2008 Operating Indicators (*Steve Blaska*) – as presented.
- c. Second Quarter Safety and Loss Summary (*Mike Toole*) – as presented.
- d. May 2008 Operating Indicators - REVISED (*Steve Blaska*) – as presented.
- e. June 2008 Operating Indicators (*Steve Blaska*) – as presented.
- f. July 2008 Operating Indicators (*Steve Blaska*) – as presented.
- g. Community Outreach and Involvement (*Molly Myers*) – as presented.

13. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Brewer commented that people are pleased with the use of hybrid buses.

14. COMMITTEE MEMBERS’ EXPRESSIONS

- a. Mr. Antonellis asked why STA did not assume the cost of removal of the bus seats for the 2009 Wheelchair Games. Mr. Blaska responded that the event organizers expect there will be a cost for this service, and they budget for it. Some discussion ensued.
- b. Mr. Plaster said sales tax revenues for August were 7.2% below the budgeted estimate, and are 4% below the previous year. Year to date, STA is running about \$1.7M or 5.3% below the target estimate. Staff is keeping a close eye on this.
- c. Mr. Munson asked about the status on service to Deer Park. Ms. Meyer responded that staff spoke with elected officials of Deer Park regarding their desire to take to the voters the idea of joining the Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) because they have identified transportation as one of their primary limitations. It would appear that their focus is on Paratransit service, with fixed route service during peak hours. Ms. Meyer said their request has been placed on the list with other requests for service and will be evaluated in the future.

15. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 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 3:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant