

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

SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes of the April 7, 2010, Meeting
Southside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Amber Waldref, City of Spokane *
Patrick Rushing, City of Airway Heights
Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Mike Brewer, Citizen
Barbara Richardson, Citizen
Dan Murphy, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Ann Campeau, Citizen
Tim Dompier, ATU 1015
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598
Phil Ridenour, AFSCME 3939

STAFF PRESENT

E. Susan Meyer, CEO
Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications
Mark Curtis, Manager, Customer Service
Frank Bezemer, Assistant Transportation Manager
Patty Talbott, Quality Performance Specialist

GUESTS

None

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wendy Van Orman
Nan Kelly, Citizen

* Chair

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Waldref called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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

3. **MINUTES OF THE MARCH 3, 2010, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

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

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **CONNECT SPOKANE: A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION – INFORMATION**

Mr. Otterstrom explained that the purpose of his presentation was to introduce the preliminary draft of the Comprehensive Plan, and the major policy topics which are proposed. He noted that state law requires STA to prepare a Comprehensive Transit Plan. Mr. Otterstrom reviewed the Comprehensive Plan timeline, noting that the draft will go out for public comment in April and a request for Board adoption is planned for July 2010.

Mr. Otterstrom said that STA's Comprehensive Plan shares a relationship with local, metropolitan, and state, comprehensive plans. There are three parts to the Plan: 1) Background - which includes introduction and goal of the plan, plus the history, regional context, and system integration; 2) Services - which includes Fixed Route, Paratransit, and Rideshare, as well as a High Performance Transit Network; and 3) Activities and Programs - which includes the system infrastructure, communications and public input, fares and other revenues, monitoring and improvement, regional transportation and land use coordination, and energy and environment.

Plan components include Principles (which provide necessary concepts and background information, are unchanging, and shape STA's policies), Policies (which build on principles and are the guidelines that decision makers will use to lead the agency toward continued improvement), and Connect Strategies (which include specific projects that meet the criteria established by the principles and policies and change as existing strategies are completed and new tactics are identified). Mr. Otterstrom explained Policy topics by element, the system

infrastructure, and the process of communicating the Plan through outreach and receiving public input. He noted that the Plan would be continuously monitored and improved as necessary.

Next steps include minor revisions to the Plan during April, preparation for public outreach beginning in May, introducing Connect Strategies to the Board of Directors, and gathering further comments on the draft Plan prior to final presentation for Board adoption.

Mr. Rushing commented that he had heard that a particular nursing home may lose Paratransit van service when Fixed Route buses no longer serve that neighborhood. Discussion ensued regarding the effect of Fixed Route changes on Paratransit service. Mr. Blaska stated that STA has a policy for providing Paratransit service to the maximum degree and times that Fixed Route service is provided, and it exceeds federal standards. However, should Paratransit service no longer be available in a particular area because bus service was eliminated, the possibility exists that STA's Special Use van program, whereby STA provides the van and the group or nursing home provides a driver, may be an alternative. Mr. Blaska added that several organizations and nursing facilities are already utilizing the Special Use van program.

6. 2009 ANNUAL ROUTE PERFORMANCE REPORT – INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom said that this report is required by the Service Design Guidelines and helps guide future planning. He noted that there are three standards used when looking at the performance of individual routes: Ridership Productivity (measured by boardings per revenue hour), Energy Consumption (measured by average load factor based on vehicle size), and Farebox Recovery. The standard varies to reflect service design and operations and is used to identify areas for improvement and change.

Mr. Otterstrom reviewed details on those routes which failed three, two, or one standard, and a list of the routes which were currently meeting all standards. Routes which fail to meet two or three standards will undergo review for remedial action within eighteen months. Possible remediation strategies may include: routing modifications, frequency adjustments, stop changes, capital improvements, continued analysis, or route elimination.

Mr. Driscoll commented that it is difficult to know who will be affected by business decisions such as these. Mr. Jacks agreed and added that now that this data is available, we have solid measurements which help us make wise decisions about service, but it's still tough to make changes because people will be affected. Discussion ensued regarding several of the proposed changes.

Mr. Blaska noted that these recommendations are being made not just because of current financial constraints, but because it is important to place resources where they are most effective. Proposed actions include the elimination of Routes 35 and 47, modification to Route 2, and continued analysis of Routes 41, 46, 62, and 97.

7. SUMMER DETOUR PLAN – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska explained that this report is to communicate changes to service as a result of upcoming summer construction projects throughout the area. The methodology includes pre-planning detours based on the best information from jurisdictions, publishing summary alerts for riders, following up with individual Rider Alerts and a temporary construction schedule. This will be accomplished through various venues including printed Rider Alerts, tagging stops on affected routes, and providing information via the STA website.

Mr. Blaska noted that significant detours affecting Fixed Route service include construction on Second Avenue and the City Loop (Routes 20 - SFCC, 22 -Wellesley, and 44 - 29th Avenue). He gave an overview of the detours planned for those routes, noting that thirteen routes will be impacted by construction on Second Avenue and twenty-seven routes will be impacted throughout the area over the construction season. Rider Alerts will be published approximately two weeks prior to any detours.

Ms. Campeau asked if there was a number to call to see if a particular route will be affected by construction. Mr. Blaska responded that all inquiries should go to Customer Service at 328-RIDE. Members of the Committee suggested that the detour for Route 33 could be more clearly highlighted on the draft temporary construction schedule for the City Loop.

8. QUALITY COUNTS! - SURVEY PROGRAM UPDATE – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that the purpose of this report was to provide an update on STA's incentive-based program designed to acknowledge employees offering exemplary customer service. The program was designed to help

management measure the company priority of "Providing Outstanding Customer Service," and staff will be reporting on the program as part of the quarterly Performance Measures reports.

Mr. Blaska explained that STA's Board of Directors awarded a contract to TrendSource in May 2009 to develop standard observation tools, establish a baseline for performance excellence, and establish an ongoing program of observations. He reviewed the implementation schedule which included the development of questionnaires, testing, a pilot program, the establishment of a baseline, and the observation process. He said that we are currently in the sustained observation process and he gave a brief overview of the forms that were included with the packet which explain the steps that are taken to measure the customer's experience. On a scale of 1 to 5, 4.5 will be considered the standard for the overall performance of the organization.

Early indications are that employees on the "front lines" are performing excellently. Monetary incentives were distributed to three employees in March. Noted areas for improvement include Fixed Route stop announcements, Paratransit driver identification, and improved telephone access to office staff. Results of the surveys are posted in employee work areas in order to provide feedback.

Mr. Dompier and Mr. Smith expressed concern that some responses could be subjective and asked if employee discipline would be tied to responses. Mr. Blaska replied that that is not the intent of the program and no discipline will be imposed over the first year of the program. After the first year, if a pattern of poor customer service becomes apparent from this program as well as other feedback, an employee could receive counseling in an effort toward improving his or her customer service skills.

Ms. Richardson and Mr. Jacks both commented that the amount of the monetary incentive (\$50) didn't seem to be a large enough reward for customer service excellence. Mr. Blaska explained that if all individuals in the Fixed Route or Paratransit Operator surveys conduct stop announcements (for Fixed Route) and introduce themselves (for Paratransit), the award for the drawing winner increases to \$100. He added that there are already instances where employees have received so many "Excellent" surveys, staff is considering some sort of an additional recognition.

9. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer said that although the economy is showing signs of improvement, the March sales tax figures showed a 10.6% decrease for January 2010. She noted that January was the month of the championship skating event in Spokane, so the efforts of that activity offset what could have been a much larger decrease. Year to date, the sales tax has decreased 4.1%; the objective is -1.5%, so it will take some good months to bring us up to where we hope to be. Ms. Meyer added that if this trend continues, it could affect the current service reduction plan.
- b. Ridership in March was about the same as March 2009, but there is an extra weekday this year, so it is actually down a little. However, ridership is good when compared to other transit agencies.
- c. State auditors are at STA and an opening conference was held to discuss what they wanted to look at. Board members will be invited to the closing conference.
- d. Ms. Meyer said she was invited to join the Washington Policy Center Transportation Advisory Board. This is a statewide organization and she will be the first representative from a transit agency in the state.
- e. There was a kick-off meeting of the Downtown Transit Alternatives Analysis (DTAA)/Streetcar Study. Ms. Meyer and City of Spokane Mayor Verner are co-chairing. The opening session was a Chartering session, and they met with the Sounding Board which consisted of twenty-five individuals from the community who will advise the DTAA Board. The project is expected to last until March 2011 and there will be many opportunities for input from the public. The end result will be the selection of a locally preferred alternative for a downtown transit system which will connect Gonzaga University, the University District, Browne's Addition, the Convention Center, and the South Hill Medical area. At this time, no funding exists to actually build such a system, but grant money is available now to plan for this project.
- f. Ms. Meyer commented that she is the proud grandmother of a new granddaughter, Alexis, who was born two weeks ago. Alexis joins her 2½ year old sister, Lauren. Congratulations from the group were forthcoming.

10. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. February 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- b. Community Outreach and Involvement – as presented.

11. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

- a. Mr. Blaska asked if members of the Committee would be interested in a 30-minute tour of the Boone Avenue facility prior to the next meeting on May 5th. Several members said they would be interested, and a reminder will be sent out with the Committee packets for next month.
- b. Mr. Brewer asked if drivers of the Special Use vans needed CDL cards or if a regular driver's license was sufficient. Mr. Blaska responded that a regular driver's license was acceptable for vans with less than fifteen passengers.
- c. Ms. Waldref asked staff to highlight the expected duration of each agenda item on the agenda. This will help meet the goal of a maximum 90-minute meeting timeframe. Staff agreed to work on this for next month's meeting.

12. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

None.

13. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2010, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM,
1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

14. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chair Waldref adjourned the meeting at 12:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant