

Spokane Transit Authority
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CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes for April 8, 2009
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Fyrne Bemiller
Victor Frazier
Margaret Jones
Dean Lynch
David Swalling, Chair
Elaine Hoskin
Brenda Smits

STAFF PRESENT

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Naomi Dunning, Executive Assistant
Susan Millbank, Ombudsman
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

GUESTS

Tiffany (last name withheld by request)

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairman Swalling called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. and conducted roll call.

2. MINUTES OF THE CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE - Corrections or Approval

a.) Mr. Swalling asked the Committee to address the meeting minutes of February 11, 2009, March 5, 2009, and March 11, 2009.

The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes by consensus.

3. PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS

As a method of cutting Paratransit operation costs, Tiffany suggested to have private citizens assist STA by providing rides to Paratransit customers.

Mr. Lynch responded this would require a lot of staff time to coordinate this type of activity and would be a large expenditure.

Tiffany replied this would be on an informal basis.

Mr. Lynch said if it is informal then it should remain informal.

Ms. Millbank stated she and Tiffany have spoken about his many times.

Ms. Hoskin said the Committee will need to gather additional information in order to properly respond.

Tiffany also said the Paratransit monthly passes should not go beyond \$40.00.

Mr. Swalling thanked Tiffany for her comments.

4. TARIFF POLICY

a.) STA Staff Assessment of CAC Fare Structure Recommendation

For ease of reference, the Staff Assessment is attached and currently may be found on the STA website. Mr. Blaska said the Board will take action on the CAC fare increase at their May 21, 2009 meeting. Staff concurs with the CAC fare increase recommendation; eliminating the premium fare for Express service and modifying the Paratransit proposal by extending the increase over three years. The goal for farebox recovery for Fixed Route is 20%. Eleven transit agencies were compared; most have higher fares than the proposed increased fares at STA. Washington State law states that Paratransit fares can be no higher than Fixed Route and federal law is no more than twice Fixed Route. Mr. Blaska stated

there is one change to the recommendation that staff may make, which is to change Phase I to an implementation date of January 1, 2010. The other phases will be made as the Committee has recommended. Mr. Blaska continued by stating the raising of fares on Paratransit is a sensitive discussion. The cost per passenger is \$3.89 on fixed route versus \$23.15 on Paratransit; an 80% Fixed Route subsidy versus Paratransit 98% subsidy. Paratransit service takes 19% of STA's operating budget and provides 4.4% of all trips. Paratransit service is proportionally used more in Spokane than in other areas. Mr. Blaska said there are some feelings of Board members to put off the recommendation. Mr. Blaska said some Paratransit riders get their passes for free through other programs. Mr. Blaska said 67% of riders currently pay with a monthly pass and 65% of those took less than twenty trips per month. Approximately one third of Paratransit riders took one to four trips a month and has a monthly pass which is underutilized.

b.) Review of Revised Draft Tariff Policy

Mr. Blaska reviewed the changes in the draft Tariff Policy and asked if item F captures the intent. The Committee agreed. Mr. Frazier said this statement also captures his addition to the February 11, 2009 minutes.

The other changes noted are other implementation items for fare types and programs. Specifically where the formerly entitled VIP fare is now referred to Fixed Route reduced fare.

With these revisions, this will be the implementing document.

5. RECAP DISCUSSION ON CAC ROLE IN TARIFF POLICY REVIEW

Mr. Swalling asked the Committee members for their input of what they might like to see differently the next time this is reviewed.

Ms. Bemiller suggested to be more high-tech.

Mr. Swalling said the notebooks provided at the beginning was a lot of material.

Ms. Hoskin said it was more overwhelming than grounding and suggested to start with the general information, STA finances, etc.

Ms. Bemiller said the most helpful for her was speaking to the public and receiving their input helped to clarify the situation.

Mr. Frazier recommended a smaller notebook, mostly empty for minutes, a staff roster with numbers, and a Board listing. The emails of what other transits were experiencing were helpful and timely. The emails from Communications with the public feedback was extremely helpful.

Mr. Swalling echoed the public survey feedback spreadsheet was very helpful.

Ms. Hoskin said not only was it helpful to get the public input, but it helped organize her own thoughts and reinforced the conversations. The public outreach was a really important process.

Ms. Bemiller said the CAC is a good cross-section.

Mr. Lynch stated the elasticity model done by Ryan Stewart was extremely helpful.

Ms. Hoskin said the information provided by staff in addition to their availability, participation and administrative work was key to feeling comfortable.

Mr. Lynch commented the administrative work would have at least doubled the CAC's time.

Ms. Hoskin offered that the administrative work would have taken away from the CAC's focus of the task.

Mr. Lynch said having the choice of two projects helped to provide ownership.

Mr. Swalling said choosing this particular project helped to see a beginning and an end result.

Mr. Frazier suggested perhaps after five years of this implementation there will be another increase, however, given the volatility of the times, it is difficult to imagine what factors the CAC and STA will be dealing with at that time.

6. POTENTIAL NEW CAC PROJECT AND MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSION

Mr. Swalling said it was challenging to not have a goal. The Board reiterated this and it is difficult to come up with a project. If there is no project to work on, there is no purpose to attend monthly meetings. There needs to be a goal/project and there needs to be an increase in membership. Ms. Swalling suggested perhaps the committee could take a couple of months to regroup.

Ms. Hoskin asked how the Board views the CAC going forward. Will the Committee be activated when there is an identified need?

Mr. Blaska reported there is a core group of individuals to carry forward from one project to another. The Board would like for the CAC to be a standing committee, a sounding board for the community to funnel a community perspective directly to the Board. It would be consistent to have the Committee pick another project as a deliverable that needs visibility in the community.

Ms. Hoskin said perhaps it could be minimally once month or at least quarterly.

Mr. Blaska asked if the CAC wants a menu of choices before taking the summer off, or solicit for more members and decide the list when they come back.

Mr. Otterstrom stated he has many ideas for the Committee.

Mr. Frazier said there will be issues regarding the public's reaction to the fare increase and the Board may need feedback.

Mr. Lynch submitted a good direction to head is how to enhance the service existing now. The timing has pros and cons with the core group picking the topic vs. a new group of people when half of the people will not have the same perspective.

Ms. Hoskin said it might be helpful to have a topic so new members would know the new project.

Mr. Lynch agreed.

Mr. Frazier said he thought service enhancements would be a task for the staff.

Mr. Lynch said he was not suggesting doing it; rather, he was planting the idea.

Mr. Swalling asked if any applications for new members have been sent out.

Mr. Blaska replied this conversation needed to happen first.

Ms. Bemilller said a new topic needs to be selected prior to interviewing.

Mr. Lynch asked what the process is.

Ms. Bemiller said she was interviewed by the chair and the CEO.

Mr. Blaska said nobody on the CAC represents a certain constituent. A variety of views and backgrounds are key to creating an effective committee, there is no weighting or interest group that dominates the discussion.

Ms. Millbank said all CAC members must be a registered voter, live in the PTBA, without conviction of felony, or they can be an active rider if not in the PTBA. A cross-section of interest and areas has a big impact of what the new topic would be. Mr. Blaska said there could be active solicitation for a segment of the community if it seems to be missing.

Mr. Swalling asked if there needs to be a meeting in May, and when the new topics need to be discussed.

Ms. Bemiller said if there could be a precursor to the subjects that would be helpful.

Mr. Frazier said to wait until June to see what the Board has accepted or adopted in May.

The Committee elected to meet in June for a selection of new projects. There will be no meetings in May, July or August.

The Committee decided to have advertising in June, interviews in July and August with a final selection at the September meeting for nomination at the September Board meeting. The desired total is fifteen members (adding 8).

Mr. Swalling asked for the Committee to consider a new Chairperson.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS

There was no general business at this time.

8. SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

As decided by the Committee, there will be no meeting in May.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, June 10, 2009 – 5:00 p.m. (Regular Meeting) – Spokane Transit, Northside Conference Room.

9. ADJOURN

With there being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Naomi Dunning

Executive Assistant