

Spokane Transit Authority
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BOARD OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes for May 14, 2014

Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Amber Waldref, City of Spokane, Board Operations
Committee Chair
Al French, Spokane County, Planning &
Development Committee Chair
Tom Trulove, City of Cheney, Vice Chair
E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer, Ex-officio

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mike Allen, City of Spokane, Performance
Monitoring & External Relations Committee Chair

STAFF PRESENT

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Steve Doolittle, Director of Human Resources
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Lynda Warren, Director of Finance & Information Services
Beth Bousley, Director of Communications & Customer
Service
Joel Soden, Transit Planner
Brandon Rapez-Betty, Sr. Communications Specialist
Jan Watson, Executive Assistant to the CEO & Clerk of the
Authority

GUESTS

Brian Gard, Gard Communications

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Waldref called the meeting to order at 12:34 p.m. and conducted roll call.

2. APPROVE COMMITTEE AGENDA

Mr. Trulove moved approval of the May 14, 2014 agenda and Mr. French seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. COMMITTEE ACTION/DISCUSSION

a. April 9, 2014 Committee Minutes

Mr. French moved approval of the April 9, 2014 minutes and Mr. Trulove seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. STA MOVING FORWARD – DISCUSSION

A PowerPoint presentation was distributed and is attached to these minutes.

Ms. Meyer said the objective for the meeting is to discuss and develop a proposed decision-making process to recommend to the Board that will enable them to select the final STA Moving Forward Scenario for public input (July).

Ms. Meyer reviewed STA's transformation which occurred during the years 2002-2014. Topics to be discussed during the meeting are the detailed list of projects in Scenarios A & B, including a Central City Line update and future plans.

Ms. Waldref asked if one of the objectives for this committee is to review all the projects and to look at a process to take the information to the full Board so that a decision can be made.

Ms. Meyer said it was. She said when the Board approves the final draft Scenario staff will take the information out for public comment. STA staff is proposing Scenario A (0.003 three tenths of one percent) package, but information for both 0.002 and 0.003 (two and three tenths of one percent) is included in the packet.

Mr. Otterstrom reviewed the background of STA Moving Forward which began with the comprehensive plan in 2009. Phases 1 and 2 involved a lot of public outreach at locations around the region.

Mr. French complimented staff on the level of public outreach. He said that the feedback has been from riders and employees and asked about feedback from the rest of the community.

Mr. Otterstrom said that approximately 50% of those that served on the Corridor Advisor Panels (CAPs) were not riders, which broadly represented the community. Media advertising was used and feedback was received from non-riders. A phone survey of 450 people was also conducted.

Mr. Blaska said that the results of the survey (2011 Community Perception Survey) showed 56% would support additional funding to restore service to 2009 levels, and 59% would support additional funding to improve or expand service.

Mr. Trulove asked when the survey was taken did the respondents understand that the increased service was not free. A question that will need to be answered is “What is my sales tax going to be?”

Ms. Meyer said the survey question asked if the respondent was likely to support additional funding for transit or not.

Ms. Waldref asked if the STA surveys would be included in the packet and suggested that the information be reviewed by the entire Board prior to a workshop.

Mr. Otterstrom reviewed preliminary scenario A and B summaries and additional projects which were not recommended to be included in either scenario.

Ms. Warren discussed sales tax revenue trends from 1993 – 2013, noting the average annual increase over the period was 3%. On that basis she proposed the following forecasting assumptions:

- Sales Tax Revenue
 - Begin at 2013 trend line prediction + 2.5% annually (0.5% below trend line)
- Operating Expenses
 - + 3.5% annually

Mr. French commented that even in recession periods the trend line average was 3.0%. Committee members agreed on these assumptions.

Ms. Meyer said that Scenario A, in response to current demand, regional growth plans and community input, will connect more people to more places. The goals for Scenario A are to:

1. Sustain and grow Fixed-Route bus service by over 25% (to approximately 500,000 revenue hours) moving about 14.5M passengers annually by 2026
2. Meet demand for Paratransit service (projected 21% increase by 2026)
3. Support aggressive growth in Vanpool program with 30 additional vans (approximately 30% growth)

Included in Scenario A are:

1. New/Improved Basic Service
2. New/Enhanced Commuter Service
3. High Performance Transit (HPT) Investments
4. Expanded/New Facilities
5. Passenger Amenities
6. Downtown Service Modifications

Ms. Meyer explained the Summary of Moving Forward Financial Forecast, including sustaining service, for 2016-2026.

Mr. Trulove asked if other revenue was factored in to this forecast and commented that the estimate is conservative.

Mr. Otterstrom said that assumptions are included for state and federal grants for each project.

Mr. French said that there should be additional revenue for STA if a state transportation package passes.

Mr. Otterstrom said that staff is primarily looking at existing grant/revenue sources. As population and service grow, more federal funding may become available.

Mr. Otterstrom reviewed the preliminary draft list of investments for STA Moving Forward Scenario A. Each project includes the year of implementation, location, cost, estimated ridership increases, other rationale and related capital projects.

Ms. Waldref asked for clarification and the benefit of buses no longer dwelling at the Plaza.

Mr. Otterstrom said that buses that currently dwell at the Plaza for 5+ minutes will only be there about 2 minutes or less. With this change, there would be 12 buses per hour at those zones versus 8 currently. The benefit to the rider is reliability and service. The additional benefit would be to eliminate “curb” time in front of neighboring businesses.

Mr. Trulove asked how the assumption of estimated boardings is calculated.

Mr. Otterstrom said that Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) produces a travel demand model which can predict transit ridership. In addition, forecasting based on existing service is used.

Mr. French asked if the increased ridership in the Indian Trail area is attributable to the apartment complex or the single family home residents who have shifted their patterns of commuting.

Mr. Otterstrom said that since 2011 the Indian Trail line (Route 23 Maple/Ash) has shown increased ridership. The route serves residential areas with a high concentration of downtown workers. Data is available that shows the destination of riders but is not surveyed at a rate to be statistically significant to provide detail at the neighborhood of rider demographics.

Mr. French asked about profiling the demographics of ridership in the STA system and the ridership that could be in the system, but is not currently. If the demographics were known and targeted to a particular audience, would ridership increase because now service is being provided to them?

Discussion ensued regarding demographics and ridership.

Mr. Otterstrom said STA is applying for a grant to study the Division corridor.

Ms. Waldref asked about the prior grant application for the Division Corridor.

Mr. Otterstrom said that previous grant was not received.

Mr. Trulove asked about the connection to Riverpoint.

Mr. Otterstrom said the northbound Division stop will be improved, but the southbound stop needs additional work in the southbound direction.

Mr. Blaska mentioned that the West Plains Transit Center improves the connectivity between Medical Lake, Airway Heights and Cheney without having to go downtown.

Ms. Waldref asked if more information could be provided regarding the capital costs of each project. She said that the Division route is approximately \$1M more than the Cheney route and asks if that's because of additional stops.

Mr. Otterstrom said it is. There are sidewalks and shelters included and the Phase 2 report includes more detailed information.

Mr. Otterstrom said that the increased peak and weekend service to Airway Heights planned for 2020 may occur earlier if the proposed casino is built and it pays mitigation for the expected impact on STA service.

Mr. Trulove asked if the project is needed if Fairchild Air Force Base closes.

Mr. Otterstrom said that most of the ridership is not tied to Fairchild but to the growth of the West Plains. The focus would be to provide transit up to Yokes Grocery Store.

Ms. Meyer said that Route 28 (Nevada) will not come downtown but a direct link will be created between North Nevada and South Perry. If a person was traveling to downtown they would transfer to the Central City Line.

Mr. Otterstrom said that Mission & Hamilton would be the transfer point. The Logan neighborhood is encouraging strong pedestrian activity and businesses at that intersection in their neighborhood planning work. He said that the goal is to provide more connectivity and not duplicate service.

Mr. Otterstrom said that the areas north of Francis on Crestline up to Lincoln Road (Bemis area) and north of Rowan on Market up to Francis Avenue (Hillyard area) do not have bus service currently.

Mr. French asked if those areas want bus service.

Mr. Otterstrom said that the Bemis (Correction: Morgan Acres) neighborhood area has wanted service for some time.

Mr. French asked about the prior cross town route.

Mr. Otterstrom said the route on Empire & Garland was a lower productivity route and was eliminated in 2010

Ms. Waldref asked if she wanted to go downtown from the Gonzaga area would she take Route 27.

Mr. Otterstrom said yes, but she could also take the Central City Line.

Mr. Otterstrom said all of these projects include assumptions. How each project is completed will be the subject of robust public input.

Ms. Waldref asked about the West Central route.

Mr. Otterstrom said that the plan is to extend the route eastward from the Community Center to make necessary connections such as to a grocery store and to the Central City Line.

Mr. Otterstrom said that the City of Spokane is pursuing grants for sidewalks and streets along some of the HPT corridors so some of the projects may begin earlier than planned.

Ms. Waldref said she is part of a group that is applying for a grant of \$4.5-5M for intersection improvements and other improvements in the historic East Sprague area. The City should be coordinating with STA for locations for transit stops.

Ms. Waldref suggested connecting with Teri Stripes, Incentive Specialist for Development in the City of Spokane.

Mr. Otterstrom mentioned that the Phase 2 report contains the detail of what is included in passenger amenities. The detail will be added to this spreadsheet.

Ms. Meyer said that Scenario B includes building/expanding some park and ride lots, maintaining current level of service and possibly adding back the 10% service that was cut in 2009 and 2010.

Ms. Waldref asked how many hours that would be.

Mr. Otterstrom said almost 40,000 hours.

Mr. Gard commented that the surveys show there are two kinds of support. One kind of support is from bus riders who get a specific personal benefit and the other is intellectual support. The latter are not bus riders, but see the benefit to the community. As STA increases service, riders increase and theoretically support increases as well.

Ms. Meyer reviewed the Central City Line (CCL) project planning history and estimated total costs plus the breakdown of cost categories.

Discussion of propulsion alternatives for the Central City Line (CCL) ensued.

Ms. Meyer said that detail of the project, costs and alternatives will be presented to the Board first, then to core stakeholders.

Mr. French asked about the grant application.

Ms. Meyer said that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) told STA that the project is very competitive and that considerable outreach and planning has already been done in the early stages.

Mr. French asked about a \$25M cap on the project.

Mr. Otterstrom explained an entire project can cost up to \$250M in the Small Starts category but that the cap, which was less than \$25M, has been changed to \$75M (or 80% whichever is higher).

Mr. French said that STA is competitive when seeking grant money.

Ms. Meyer commented that the consultant, Spartan Solutions, has said that STA will probably earn a medium rating from the FTA for Small Starts funding. STA's application would be most competitive if the amount requested was less than 50% of the project's capital costs. .

Mr. French had a recent discussion with Peter Rogoff, former Federal Transit Administration Administrator, and told him that STA has been successful working with a Buy America compliant manufacturer to design and build the vehicle envisioned for the Central City Line. Mr. Rogoff said he knew because he had also talked to the bus manufacturer.

Ms. Waldref asked how the STA portion of CCL (\$15M) was determined.

Mr. Otterstrom said that \$15M was considered the 'right-sized' amount during the Alternative Analysis process in 2010-2011.

Ms. Meyer considers \$15M to be the appropriate amount because it allows STA to also add more service in other areas. The package of projects needs to be balanced.

Mr. French said projections can be adjusted based on revenue.

Ms. Waldref added that it is about choices.

Mr. Trulove commented that projected ridership is important and the appropriate service that will be delivered.

Ms. Meyer said that the CCL will be a high ridership route. This route will connect many parts of the system beyond its 5.5 mile alignment. A decision will be made by the Board in the upcoming months regarding extending the CCL route to Spokane Community College.

Mr. French said the appeal of the CCL is more intellectual because the majority of the users will be those attending college.

Ms. Waldref views it as an important connection to get across town.

Mr. Gard agreed that increasing intellectual support for the CCL is important.

Mr. Gard said that United Streetcar built the first American made streetcars for Portland, then Tucson. The project involved many American sub-contractors as well. Mr. Gard commented that the Oregon Aerial Tram was way over budget. It is best to have independent studies and reviews, as STA has done, prior to beginning a project.

Mr. Trulove said that there are options and asked if cost estimates should be presented to the Board and then to core stakeholders. STA should look at all the options in terms of cost versus value.

Ms. Waldref said it is important to start talking and feedback will be important.

Mr. French said that property owners will probably be looking for a permanent investment such as the stations. Stops are just as exciting as the mode of transportation.

Ms. Waldref said she is a supporter of the catenary system, but cost is a factor in determining the propulsion options.

The committee agreed with staff to talk to the core stakeholders and obtain their feedback.

Ms. Meyer said that visuals and handouts will be prepared for the Board at their June workshop.

Ms. Meyer asked the Committee if they want staff to further develop Scenario B.

Mr. French said "no". STA's history with the voters has been that good decisions have been made. Moving Forward with two packages appears indecisive.

Ms. Waldref said she agrees and said Scenario B at 0.002 (two tenths of one percent) would result in virtually no improvements in service for ten plus years.

Mr. Trulove agreed and said STA needs to have something to show for the effort.
The Committee agreed to recommend Scenario A (0.003 three tenths of one percent) to the Board.
Ms. Meyer suggested a Board workshop on June 11, 2014 to discuss STA Moving Forward.
The Committee agreed and Ms. Waldref will invite Board members to attend.
Staff will meet with stakeholder groups at the end of May regarding the CCL route to Spokane Community College.

5. ADJOURN

Chair Waldref moved to adjourn the meeting and all members approved. With there being no further business to come before the Committee, Chair Waldref adjourned the meeting at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Merilee Robar
Executive Assistant to the Director of Finance & Information Services