

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

## **OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the January 7, 2009, Meeting  
Northside Conference Room

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane\*\*  
Rick Jacks, Citizen  
Ann Campeau, Citizen  
Mike Brewer, Citizen  
David Driscoll, Citizen  
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen  
Dennis Antonellis, ATU 1015  
Steve Pinkerton, AFSCME 3939  
Guy Smith, ATU 1598

### **STAFF PRESENT**

E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer  
Steve Blaska, Director of Operations  
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration  
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications

### **GUESTS**

None

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Richard Munson, City of Spokane Valley\*  
Nan Kelly, Citizen

\* Chair \*\* Acting Chair

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#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairman McLaughlin called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. She noted that a revised agenda had been distributed.

#### **2. INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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

#### **3. MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 3, 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. SECURITY SYSTEMS (CCTV) PROCUREMENT – DISCUSSION**

*(This item was pulled from the Committee packet and did not appear on the revised agenda.)*

Ms. Meyer said that this item was removed from the packet because the price was significantly higher than originally anticipated. She explained that staff had waited until a consultant/engineer could determine precisely what components and related pricing of the project would best serve Spokane Transit's needs. When the original budget estimate was submitted, staff did not envision the need for cameras in the Park and Ride lots, so staff wants to take a careful look at the total cost of this project prior to presenting it to the Committee and the Board. Ms. Meyer added that the project is expected to have a two-year timeline rather than a one year timeline in order to phase the project in light of STA's current financial projections.

#### **6. SOLICITATION OF 2009 OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE MEMBERS – DISCUSSION**

Mr. Blaska said that the terms of two Operations and Customer Service Committee members were due to expire. He said that they would be asked to let staff know within the next day or two if they would like to continue on the Committee so a recommendation could be made to the Board at their next meeting. Mr. Blaska noted that Mr. Gainor's term has expired, and the Board is scheduled to make a decision regarding his replacement. Mr. Blaska commented that in the past there have been as many as thirteen members serving on the Committee, which assisted in ensuring a quorum for the meeting, and asked the Committee if they would like to authorize staff to solicit for a thirteenth member.

Mr. Antonellis asked for clarification regarding the Committee membership for the union positions, referencing the statement in the agenda item that stated that there would be "no seats guaranteed to any entity or group." Mr. Blaska confirmed that the union seats on the Committee are different from the citizen positions in that the union seats are appointed by position and not individuals. Those positions do represent their group.

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**Mr. Jacks moved to authorize staff to solicit interest from current citizen members or from the community for another position on the Operations and Customer Service Committee, with a list of potential appointees being forwarded to the Board for action in March. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

**7. CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE FARE STRUCTURE PROJECT – INFORMATION**

Mr. Blaska explained that the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) works directly for the Board and is a pulse of the community for the Board. The CAC is project oriented and their first project was a revision of STA's current Tariff Policy. The project has been in the works for over a year, and a proposal was presented to the Board last month that a fare increase be implemented for both Fixed Route and Paratransit due to declining sales tax revenue and increased operational costs. The CAC is currently doing public outreach to solicit input in order to make a recommendation to the Board in March. Public outreach includes meetings with designated groups, Plaza events, special website information and feedback mechanism, a telephone hotline, regular media outlet information and printed material.

The CAC proposes to increase fares in two phases between now and January 2011 to achieve an appropriate user fee relative to the cost of service. This would bring STA fares more in line with other comparable transit agencies. Mr. Blaska said that the fixed route recovery ratio goal is 20%, based on general industry standards. He noted that this is a general target and said that Seattle Metro has recently increased theirs to 25%. He also said that in a traditional model, for every 10% increase in fares, ridership reacts by decreasing approximately 3%.

Ms. Meyer explained that the actual cost for a Fixed Route bus ride is approximately \$3.90, of which the rider is currently paying \$1.00. The actual cost for a Paratransit van ride is over \$20, of which the rider pays 50-cents. The challenge is to determine what portion of the cost of a ride should the taxpayer (who may or may not be a public transit user) pay, versus what portion of the cost of a ride should the actual transit user pay.

Ms. Meyer added that staff has not made a recommendation on this issue, but they will continue with outreach efforts. She commented that some Board members expressed concern about the Paratransit fare being raised to the same figure as the adult fare for Fixed Route. No decision from the Board will be requested until after the public hearings.

**8. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION**

a. Ms. Meyer said that Fixed Route ridership continued to grow through the middle of December, but because of the extreme weather at the end of the month, staff is expecting to see a 17% growth in ridership. She added that most transit agencies of similar size experienced approximately 12% growth. She said more details would come when the numbers are finalized, but STA expects to exceed 11 million rides for 2008.

b. Ms. Meyer asked Mr. Blaska to comment on STA's performance during the recent historic snowfall. Mr. Blaska said that STA has never had an occasion before where service needed to be reduced as it did during this period of time. The impact of service disruption affected service reliability and focused on the challenge of communicating updated information to the riders. With a typical snowfall, service may be disrupted for a short time, but with this historic snowfall, the process of disruption and recovery lasted for days. Staff was tasked with balancing what they wanted to do (provide service to all of our customers) with what actually could be done because of reduced capacity on roadways, huge snow berms, and parked cars. Mr. Blaska said that new lessons were learned during this event which will lead to future improvements in call center capacity, radio communications, tire chains for the fleet, and prioritizing the clearing of streets in the downtown core.

Mr. Blaska commented on the exceptional service provided by the drivers, supervisors, and maintenance personnel during this difficult time and gave several examples of the efforts made by certain individuals to ensure service to STA's customers. Ms. Meyer agreed that STA's Fixed Route and Paratransit supervisors, drivers, and maintenance personnel did an outstanding job in a very difficult situation, and she was very proud of them for their dedication and performance. Mr. Blaska said that the historic snowfall validated STA's request for more staff including supervisory personnel, a communications position, and additional customer service representatives. It also validated the need for real-time bus location information (so riders would know when their bus would be arriving), as well as the importance of prior planning.

Mr. Antonellis left at 3:00 p.m.

**9. COMMITTEE INFORMATION**

- a. November 2008 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- b. Community Outreach and Involvement - as presented.

**10. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS**

None.

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**11. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS**

Mr. Jacks expressed kudos for all the drivers who did such an excellent job during a very stressful time.

Mr. Smith recommended that staff contact the television stations to ask them to run updated information regarding the bus routes and schedules along the bottom of the screen, as they do with school closures. Ms. Myers said she would ask if that could be done.

**15. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2009, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM,  
1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE**

**16. ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Acting Chairman McLaughlin adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant