

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

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes of the July 7, 2010, Meeting
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Patrick Rushing, City of Airway Heights**
Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley
Mike Brewer, Citizen
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Barbara Richardson, Citizen
David Driscoll, 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
Jacque Tjards, Manager, Purchasing
Butch Slaughter, Capital Projects Manager
Joel Soden, Transit Planner II

MEMBERS ABSENT

Amber Waldref, City of Spokane *
Wendy Van Orman, City of Liberty Lake
Ann Campeau, Citizen
Nan Kelly, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen
Dan Murphy, Citizen

GUESTS

None

* Chair ** Acting Chair

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chair Rushing called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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

3. **MINUTES OF THE JUNE 2, 2010, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

Mr. Dompier noted that item number 13 on the minutes did not reflect that Mr. Otterstrom commented during the meeting that if STA was successful in obtaining Federal Transit Administration grant funding, this would free up capital dollars which could be used for other projects.

Mr. Brewer moved to approve the minutes with the aforementioned revision. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES – ACTION REQUESTED**

Ms. Myers explained that staff is asking for an award of contract for marketing and communications services to assist the Communications Department in developing, producing, and coordinating the 2010 - 2015 program in an effort to increase public awareness of STA's programs and services. The current contract will expire on July 31, 2010. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was advertised in May 2010, and one response to the RFP was received from our current vendor, BHW1. An evaluation committee consisting of Mr. Brewer and STA staff members reviewed the BHW1 proposal. Final selection was based on RFP compliance, commitment to project and allocation of resources, qualifications and experience of firm, key staff and references, methodology of plan of action, and proposed fees.

Hourly rates proposed are the same as in the current contract for the first three years, and will be adjusted according to the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers: U.S. City Average (CPI-U) for years 4 and 5. Ms. Myers added that staff is pleased with the quality of service provided by BHW1 over the current term.

Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board award a five-year contract to BHW1 for communications and marketing services commencing August 1, 2010. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: ADOPTION REQUEST – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Otterstrom said that in order to move forward with other planning exercises such as the High Performance Transit Network, staff is seeking Board approval of the Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation.

Mr. Otterstrom reviewed a visual pyramid of the hierarchy of STA plans which included *Connect Spokane* (the Comprehensive Plan) as the foundation, followed by the Transit Development Plan (TDP), the Capital Improvement Program, the Service Implementation Plan, and lastly, the Annual Strategic Plan and Budget.

Mr. Otterstrom also reviewed some of the proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan which were based on information received at the June 16, 2010, public hearing, as well as input from Board members and staff. [A second errata sheet was distributed prior to the start of the meeting.] Most changes were minor (to improve grammar or to clarify), but there were two principles added to the Monitoring and Improvement Element:

6. Respect diversity - although the subjects being monitored may look alike on the surface, in reality they may need to be held to different performance standards; and
7. Checks and balances - evaluating more than one measure of performance helps to limit extremism during the implementation of remedial actions.

Other changes included wording regarding bicycle accommodations, the addition of “mobile devices” to the section regarding outreach tools, clear descriptions of each of STA’s aforementioned plans and the role that they play, and strengthening of the language regarding Regional Transportation and Land Use Coordination.

Mr. Rushing noted that the Board was aware of the recent changes to the Comprehensive Plan, as it was the main topic of discussion at the special Board workshop held on June 30, 2010.

Mr. Jacks moved to recommend the Board approve the Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation for adoption as presented by staff. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

7. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION PLAN: SEPTEMBER 2011 SERVICE REDUCTION - ACTION REQUESTED

Ms. Myers explained that the purpose of this presentation was to review and discuss the strategy for educating and engaging the public in discussions about the 2011 service reductions possibilities using multiple communication methods. Major milestones of the Communication Plan were reviewed, as well as an overview of the communications tools to be used for public outreach including the STA website, printed material, static Plaza displays, a dedicated phone hotline, Facebook, twitter, RSS feeds, SMS text messaging, employee discussion forums, public meetings, presentation to governmental jurisdictions, core stakeholder briefings, media alerts and interviews, and employee meetings.

Mr. Otterstrom covered the major milestones for the Service Reduction Plan:

- proposal development in Summer 2010, including input from targeted partners and employees;
- preliminary proposal and public input to be presented to the Board on September 15, 2010, and available on the web by September 23rd;
- draft recommendation for public comment presented to the Board in January 2011, with public hearings in February 2011; and
- final recommendation presented at the March 2011 Operations and Customer Service Committee meeting, with action by the Board at their March 2011 meeting.

Mr. Rushing asked if public outreach required Board approval. Ms. Meyer said that staff sometimes asks the Board to approve an outreach plan, but she did not believe it was required. Mr. Otterstrom responded that while it is not yet required, once the proposed Comprehensive Plan is adopted, the outreach plan for a major service reduction would require Board approval. He said it is important to identify that the Board has given approval to outreach efforts regarding major changes to the way STA does business.

Mr. Driscoll expressed concerns regarding how the public and the media might react when STA is cutting service while the Comprehensive Plan includes information about embarking on larger programs such as the High Performance Transportation Network. Ms. Meyer responded that there is a difference between near-term plans such as reducing service as a response to the current economic downturn, and a long-range plan of what transit might look like when there is a steady revenue resource. She added that there are no plans to go forward

with the implementation of any major projects yet. The Comprehensive Plan is a framework for the future, for when funding allows. The focus right now is on service reductions and the total reduction is the equivalent of 16% of fixed route service. In addition, approximately forty-five positions would need to be eliminated, but it is intended that this will be done through attrition using a multiple-year strategy.

Mr. Schimmels moved to recommend the Board approve the Public Outreach Plan for the 2011 Service Restructure as presented by staff. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

8. PLAZA DOWNTOWN RENOVATION DESIGN UPDATE – INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom gave a slide presentation showing the vision for renovation of The Plaza which included straightened sidewalks around the building, a more functional interior including Customer Service relocation to the first floor, elimination of the escalators, office space on the second floor, and real-time information available for riders. In addition, a new canopy would be installed in the Shuttle waiting area on Wall Street. STA has hired a Capital Projects Manager to oversee the project and ensure that budget guidelines are met. Basically, the vision remains unchanged with a goal of improving customer service by improving space use and functionality, and minimizing loitering areas on the second floor. Staff is currently working to reconcile the project scope and budget and will proceed with a pre-design study. It is anticipated a scope of work will be presented to the Committee for approval in the near future.

9. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer said that in regard to the 2010 service reduction, the news media interviewed several people who were not regular riders on those routes that will be affected by the service reduction, yet they said they were opposed to the elimination of those routes. She said it is important to be cautious about what is being reported about the 2010 reductions because the routes being cut are extremely unproductive routes. Ms. Meyer noted that there are seventeen Paratransit riders who will be impacted by the service reduction, but several of those individuals have already relocated, or soon will relocate, to inside the Paratransit boundary. Other changes include moving off the street for a couple of blocks or changes in frequency, and not much service will actually be affected in the overall scheme of things. Ms. Meyer said she would encourage everyone to communicate to individuals who ask about the service reductions that the 2010 change is very modest, and actually an improvement because it will eliminate two very unproductive routes.
- b. The STA Board of Directors held a workshop on June 30 to discuss the Comprehensive Transit Plan and to get 2011 Budget guidance. The final 2011 Budget is expected to be presented to the Board in October and will include figures for the 7% service reduction in 2011. Also discussed was the value of living within our means until 2015 if no additional revenue can be secured. Staff may propose a ballot measure in 2012 which would potentially allow STA to avert the 2012 service reductions as well as fund a portion of costs associated with implementation of a High Performance Transit Network. Board members also wanted information on the specific revenue needed just to avert a third service reduction. All of this is subject to revision because sales tax revenue continues to be lower than anticipated.
- c. An open house was held on June 29, 2010, to discuss the Downtown Transit Alternatives Analysis (DTAA). STA is partnering with the City of Spokane, the Downtown Spokane Partnership (DSP), the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC), and the Public Facilities District on the DTAA. The open house was held in the Champion's Room at the Spokane Arena, and stations were set up where people could learn about various alignment alternatives and how it would connect the downtown core to other major activity centers around the area, as well as modes of transportation that could be used such as light rail, streetcars, electric trolleys, and hybrid buses. Based on input received at the open house, a list will be developed of alternative alignments and modes.
- d. The Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) sponsored a visioning project which is intended to gather all of the projects from all jurisdictions and STA to build a comprehensive picture of what the next five, ten, and twenty years will look like. The presentation focused on trends and noted that capital funding for transportation in Spokane is allocated in a way that is inconsistent with the stated objectives of the SRTC. Stated objectives are to support a multi-modal system which includes cars, transit vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians. However, 95% of the capital is allocated to roads, about 4% to transit, and about 1% to other. SRTC is examining how to potentially more evenly distribute the capital funding. More information will be forthcoming about upcoming roundtable sessions scheduled in July and August.

- e. Hoopfest ridership was up less than 1% this year, but since 2007, ridership for the event has increased almost 60%. STA provided over 20K rides this year.
- f. STA did not provide service on July 4th following the fireworks show downtown because Independence Day was on a Sunday this year, and Sunday service ends early in the evening. STA would have had to bring on a full shift of employees to drive the coaches to provide transportation for approximately 450 round-trip riders at a cost of approximately \$20K - \$25K. Providing service was deemed not to be cost effective given the number of potential riders for the event.

10. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. May 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- b. Community Outreach and Involvement – as presented.
- c. Fiscal Year 2010 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 Program of Projects and Budget - as presented.

11. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

None.

12. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

Mr. Schimmels commented that SRTC visioning project was well presented and dialogue was excellent. Ms. Meyer said it would have a big impact when completed. Mr. Rushing agreed.

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

14. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Acting Chair Rushing adjourned the meeting at 2:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant