

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

**OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Draft Minutes of the July 2, 2008, Meeting  
Southside Conference Room

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Allan Gainer, City of Cheney\*\*  
Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane  
Mike Brewer, Citizen  
Nan Kelly, Citizen  
Ann Campeau, Citizen  
David Driscoll, Citizen  
Dennis Antonellis, ATU 1015  
John Rabe, AFSCME 3939  
Guy Smith, ATU 1598

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Richard Munson, City of Spokane Valley\*  
Rick Jacks, Citizen  
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen

\* Chair \*\* Acting Chair

**STAFF PRESENT**

E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer  
Steve Blaska, Director of Operations  
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration  
Jacque Tjards, Manager, Purchasing  
Mark Curtis, Manager, Customer Service  
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications  
Gordon Howell, Manager, Planning & Grants  
Don Reimer, Manager, Maintenance & Facilities  
Charlie Phillips, Maintenance Analyst

**GUESTS**

None

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairman Gainer called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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

3. **MINUTES OF THE JUNE 4, 2008, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

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

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY EAGLE PASS PROGRAM CONTRACT RENEWAL – DISCUSSION**

Mr. Curtis said that after its fifth year of operation, the Spokane Transit/Eastern Washington University (EWU) Eagle Pass Program continues to be successful. In the 2007-2008 school year, EWU students, staff, and faculty using their Eagle Pass to ride the bus accounted for approximately 599,468 rides system-wide, and this was 71,352 more rides than in the previous year. He said that EWU is very satisfied with and eager to continue the Eagle Pass program. Using a formula which is based on the 2007 annual Eagle Pass ridership and the STA average system fare, staff is proposing increasing the price of the Eagle Pass program to \$375,324 for the 2008-2009 school year. This represents a 13% increase over the previous contract. EWU is requesting the flexibility of two (2) one-year extensions based on the All Cities CPI-U.

Mr. Antonellis asked if there was a reason why this program did not extend through summer months. Mr. Curtis said that EWU was not interested in participating during the summer for budgetary reasons. Mr. Driscoll asked what the riders got with the Eagle Pass. Mr. Curtis responded that Eagle Pass holders ride the entire system seven days a week for a nine-month period, and the student or faculty ID acts as a pass when boarding the bus. Students pay \$6.50 per quarter as a transportation fee when they pay their tuition fees to assist with the cost of this program.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board of Directors authorize the CEO to enter into a contract with EWU for the Spokane Transit Eagle Pass Program from September 24, 2008, through June 14, 2009, with the option of two (2) 1-year extensions. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

6. **AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF FOUR (4) 60-FOOT FIXED ROUTE COACHES – DISCUSSION**

Mr. Blaska explained that increased ridership is pushing the requirement for more 60-foot coaches and that this purchase matches the vehicle replacement strategy briefing given at the previous meeting. He noted the routes

where previous 35-foot requirements grew to 40-foot requirements including the City Loop, #20 SFCC, #33 Wellesley, #44 Bernard & Garland, #24 Monroe, #43 Lincoln, #61 Airway Heights, #62 Medical Lake, #73 Valley Transit Center, and the #23 Maple/Ash. Those routes which previously used 40-foot coaches but now needed 60-foot coaches include #66 EWU, #72 Liberty Lake, #73 Valley Transit Center, and #74 Valley Limited. Mr. Blaska said that the new plan would include three 29-foot coaches, fifty 40-foot coaches, and four 60-foot coaches, and this represented an approximate 2.4% increase in capital cost. He reviewed the reasons why using 60-foot coaches would be more cost effective.

Mr. Blaska said that there is an opportunity for an intergovernmental purchase with King County Metro and the vehicles will be built similar to the ones STA purchased in 2006 by the same manufacturer. It is important that STA get into the production cycle as quickly as possible for delivery prior to the 2010 U.S. Figure Skating Championship event. Mr. Blaska noted that in 2005, the cost for these buses was approximately \$500K. July 2008 pricing is \$589K for the 60-foot bus primarily due to a PPI increase of 9.025% since November 2005. He added that the new buses will have enhancements to meet 2007 emissions standards.

Ms. McLaughlin arrived at 1:46 p.m.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board approve the inter-governmental purchase of four (4) 60-foot fixed route coaches, spare components, training and travel from New Flyer of America for a sum not to exceed \$2,600,000 and approve the disposal of up to four coaches. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

7. APPROVAL OF SCOPE OF WORK FOR LEASING OF TRANSIT VEHICLE TIRE MILEAGE AND SERVICE CONTRACT – DISCUSSION

Mr. Blaska explained that STA operates a fleet of 145 fixed route coaches requiring 894 tires, and the average tire life for a coach is 114K miles. STA's current five-year contract for tire mileage leasing expires on November 30, 2008. He said that STA prefers leasing versus owning the tires because the contractor would own the tires from "cradle to grave," including acquisition, delivery, installation, maintenance, and eventual disposal of the tires. Leasing would reduce liability as well as inventory investment by over \$400K for STA. Also, there is a cost savings of approximately \$25 per tire by leasing rather than purchasing the tires, and leasing relieves STA of disposal requirements.

Ms. McLaughlin inquired about the average life of a tire. Mr. Blaska responded that it would depend on the mileage, but 114K miles or 3 years is average. Ms. McLaughlin also asked if the tires would be changed out more frequently by leasing than if STA owned them. Mr. Blaska said no, in fact they would probably be changed less frequently because the contractor would provide a dedicated professional to monitor the air pressure and tire condition, which would extend tire life.

**Mr. Brewer moved to approve the Scope of Work for the leasing of transit vehicle tire mileage and authorize staff to release a Request for Proposals. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Mr. Brewer volunteered to assist in the evaluation and selection of a vendor.**

8. APPROVAL OF SCOPE OF WORK FOR SUMP PUMPING SERVICES – DISCUSSION

Mr. Blaska explained that STA operates with nineteen in-ground sump pumps and the material gathered (from bus cleaning and steam washing the undercarriages) needs to be removed regularly and analyzed to determine the proper disposal process. The current five year contract expires on September 30, 2008, and the average annual cost over the past four years was \$26,500. Mr. Blaska added that a five year contract is preferred by STA to get the best competitive pricing and achieve on-call pumping service as required.

**Mr. Brewer moved to approve the Scope of Work for sump pumping services and authorize staff to release a Request for Proposals. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Mr. Brewer volunteered to assist in the evaluation and selection of a vendor.**

9. SUMMARY OF SEPTEMBER 2008 ROUTE ADJUSTMENTS – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska noted that this item is for information only; no approval is required because the changes are minimal. He said that requests from the community were received and staff carefully reviewed the requests and will make necessary adjustments to certain routes in order to better serve the needs of the public. He briefly explained the reasons behind adjustments which will occur on routes #61 Highway 2, #64 Airport, #91 Mission, #26 Addison, #43 Lincoln/37<sup>th</sup>, #72 Liberty Lake Express, and #96 Pines. He concluded by noting that most, but not all, of these service adjustments are scheduled to begin in September.

Mr. Brewer inquired about service adjustments to routes north of Francis. Mr. Blaska said that staff will be soliciting for other service requirements and, when compiled, the list will be prioritized to determine what is affordable and how the requested changes would impact ridership. He added that service north of Francis was on the list for review.

10. 2008 EMPLOYEE SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT – INFORMATION

Ms. Myers noted that the full Employee Survey had been included with the Committee packet and that she would cover selected highlights. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback to evaluate overall satisfaction with employment at STA. Robinson Research administered 160 surveys at three all-employee meetings on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Myers said that overall ratings of STA's performance have improved every year since 2006, and in a series of questions testing performance on aspects of service, all twelve were rated higher than the mid-point of the scale. Overall satisfaction with STA as an employer averaged 3.33 out of a possible 4.0, which was significantly higher than last year. Ms. Meyer reviewed slides showing how employees felt STA rated in various categories including providing service to the public, employee experience with other transit systems, effectiveness of internal communications, overall satisfaction with STA, and length of employment with STA. She said the survey concluded that STA has made significant progress in overall employee satisfaction and verbatim information is available on request.

11. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer gave an update on ridership for the Hoopfest shuttle, noting that ridership was up 34% over last year. Average Saturday ridership was up 38.7% and average Sunday ridership was up 20.4%. She said that she really appreciated all the work the supervisors and coach operators did to make the event such a great success.
- b. Ms. Meyer said that STA is projected to be \$1M over budget for fuel. Staff is working to re-forecast budget figures to reflect this increased cost.
- c. Ms. Meyer commented that Deer Park has shown interest in coming into the Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA). STA has been cautious because service would be very expensive to provide, particularly Paratransit service. Staff will continue discussions with Deer Park on this matter.
- d. Ms. Meyer said that another company was responsible for the bus benches throughout the Spokane area; however, perception is that STA provides and maintains the benches. The City of Spokane has an ordinance which prohibits certain types of advertising on benches and billboards, so many of the benches are out of compliance with this ordinance. The City has notified the company who maintains the benches that they need to be removed over an unspecified period of time. STA has been asked, and has agreed, to take responsibility for the benches, but this is not yet in the budget. There are concerns regarding the transition from the other company to STA because the benches are not all ADA compliant and many are in bad shape. If they are removed and not immediately replaced, customers may wonder what STA has done because it's normal to think that the benches are provided by the transit provider. Ms. Meyer said that this is an awkward situation.
- e. Ms. Meyer noted that ridership was up 13.9% in May and is up 13.5% year to date. Paratransit ridership was up 1.7% in May (but there was one fewer weekday in May 2008 than in May 2007), and is up 3.1% year to date.
- f. Ms. Meyer noted that the "hands free" law went into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>, meaning that you cannot drive and use a cell phone. This also means that the coach and van operators cannot use a handset while driving so they are unable to call or radio in to the dispatch office unless they are stopped. Ms. Meyer commented that she was concerned that this law would prevent operators from coordinating transfers for our customers when a route is running late. She said that the Washington State Transit Association (WSTA) has worked to get an exception for transit vehicles, but has not been successful to date and planned to try again in the future.
- g. STA Board Member Al French has been named Board Member of the Year by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and will receive an award in October.
- h. STA recently went through a triennial review conducted on site by the FTA over a two-day period. There were no findings, and the report at the exit conference noted that Ms. Jacquie Tjards and Ms. Tammy Johnston did an excellent job providing answers and documentation for a thorough review. In every department the reviewers saw examples of best practices and were very impressed. They also said that the Safety and Security programs were the best they had seen in years. Ms. Meyer said that STA received high praise because of the overall hard work and dedication of each and every employee involved. Mr. Blaska noted that Ms. Tjards, Mr. Reimer, and

Mr. Howell were singled out to provide much of the needed information and were instrumental in the ultimate success of the review.

12. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

1. May 2008 Operating Indicators (*Steve Blaska*) – as presented.
2. Community Outreach and Involvement (*Molly Myers*) – as presented.

9. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

None.

10. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

None.

11) NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, September 3, 2008, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

12) ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Acting Chairman Gainer adjourned the meeting at 2:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant