

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

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Revised Minutes of the June 2, 2010, Meeting
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Amber Waldref, City of Spokane *
Patrick Rushing, City of Airway Heights
Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley
Mike Brewer, Citizen
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Ann Campeau, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen
Tim Dompier, ATU 1015
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598
Phil Ridenour, AFSCME 3939

STAFF PRESENT

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Joel Soden, Transit Planner II

GUESTS

None

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wendy Van Orman, City of Liberty Lake
Nan Kelly, Citizen
Barbara Richardson, Citizen
Dan Murphy, Citizen

* Chair

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Waldref called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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

3. **MINUTES OF THE MAY 5, 2010, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

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

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **TARIFF POLICY UPDATE - ROLLING MONTHLY PASSES – ACTION REQUESTED**

Mr. Blaska explained that staff is asking for a recommendation from the Committee to the Board of Directors for approval to add a provision to the Tariff Policy for a rolling 31-day pass, which is concurrent with Phase 2 of the Tariff Policy to be implemented in January 2011. Benefits of the 31-day rolling pass include customer convenience and value, the sales process is spread over an entire month rather than concentrated at the very beginning or end of a month, an opportunity exists for passes to be offered at more consignment locations, and ticket vending machines can offer these passes. Mr. Blaska called attention to other minor changes to the Tariff Policy which included reformatting of the policies and elimination of descriptions of the types of service. He also gave an overview of the revised fare matrix for Phase 2 of policy implementation.

Mr. Rolwes remarked that he felt this was a good move, especially since it will remove the 'bottleneck' of customers trying to purchase passes at the beginning or end of the month. Ms. Campeau commented that many people receive social security checks on the third or fourth of the month, so this would allow them extra time to use their passes. Mr. Rushing asked if it could be noted somewhere that Reduced Fare passes are for people who are age 65 and older. Mr. Blaska said that information was in the body of the policy, and it also appears on the back of the bus schedules.

Mr. Jacks moved to recommend the Board of Directors approve by resolution the proposed Spokane Transit Authority Tariff Policy and Procedures for Fixed Route and Paratransit Services. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. SEPTEMBER 2010 SERVICE REDUCTION: FINAL RECOMMENDATION - ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Otterstrom explained that the budget called for a 2% reduction in service in 2010, followed by a 7% reduction in service for both 2011 and 2012. This presents an opportunity for STA to eliminate those routes from the system which have demonstrated very low ridership. He reviewed the public process timeline, noting that the draft recommendation was presented to the Board on April 21, 2010, legal notice of a public hearing was published in the Spokesman-Review on April 25th, and written comments were accepted until May 20th.

Mr. Otterstrom reviewed a summary of the final recommendation which will go to the Board of Directors on June 16th. Of note: approximately 12,710 annual platform hours of service will be reduced (2.8% reduction), with an estimated loss of 165K annual boardings (1.5% reduction). Seventeen active Paratransit customers will be affected by Fixed Route service reductions. Those 17 customers utilized the service for 1,286 rides in 2009, which is less than 0.3% of Paratransit passenger trips for that year.

Mr. Otterstrom gave a route-by-route overview of the final service reduction recommendations:

- Route 2 - increase frequency to 15 minutes and modify route to reduce overall travel time
- Route 20 - reduce weekday evening frequency to 60 minutes; no night service on Clarke Avenue
- Route 23 - reduce weekday peak frequency to 30 minutes; eliminate Hastings Park & Ride segment
- Route 27 - reduce weekday evening frequency to 60 minutes
- Route 29 - modify route to serve Mission Avenue from Greene Street to Napa Street, discontinuing service on South Crescent Avenue
- Route 33 - reduce weekday evening frequency to 60 minutes
- Route 35 - to be discontinued
- Route 44 - reduce weekday evening and Saturday frequency to 60 minutes; no weekday night and Saturday service on Bernard Street
- Route 47 - to be discontinued
- Route 74 - reduce midday frequency to 45 minutes
- Route 91 - offset schedule with Route 29; routing to remain as it is now

Brief discussion ensued regarding some of the individual proposed route changes.

Mr. Otterstrom covered a summary of written and public hearing comments regarding the proposed service reductions, noting that there were six speakers at the public hearing on May 19th, and most concerns were in regard to reduction of the Paratransit service boundary. He also reviewed the decision-making process and pointed out that potential service changes would become effective on Sunday, September 19, 2010, if approved by the Board.

Mr. Rushing moved to recommend the Board approve the September 2010 Service Reduction Final Recommendation as presented by staff. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

7. COMPREHENSIVE TRANSIT PLAN - POLICY OVERVIEW - INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom said the purpose of this overview was to discuss the policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation and that this precedes a request to recommend the Board approve the Plan at their July meeting.

The Plan has three sections: Principles, Policies, and Connect Strategies. Mr. Otterstrom said the focus for today's discussion would be Policies, and these were divided into three sections: policies already adopted, policies already followed, and policies introduced for the first time.

Mr. Otterstrom briefly reviewed those policies already adopted:

- Fixed Route Service Design (adopted December 2009)
- Revenues and Fares (adopted June 2009)

Policies already followed included:

- Paratransit - Service Area (geographic area/boundary) and Service and Eligibility Standards (travel time/call center/reservation window, eligibility determinations/emergency conditions/safety)
- Rideshare - Service Standards (service types/geography/safety) and Service Coordination (complementary service)
- System Infrastructure - Specific Infrastructure (The Plaza) and Passenger Interface Components (stops/benches/shelters and awnings)
- Communications and Public Input - Service Communication (branding/technology/public education)

- Revenue and Fares - State and Federal Funding, Pursuit of Grants, Advertising, Debt, and Non-traditional Revenue Sources
- Monitoring and Improvement - Agency Performance Measures

Finally, Mr. Otterstrom gave a detailed overview of the newly introduced Policies:

- High Performance Transit Network (HPTN) - Corridors, Service Type Selection, Mode Selection, and Prioritization
- System Infrastructure - Capital Investment Considerations, Specific Infrastructure (property/transit centers/park and ride lots), Passenger Interface Components (lighting/bicycle accommodations), and Capital Improvement Programs and Projects
- Communications and Public Input - Public Outreach (service changes/fares/grants/stop changes/Transit Development Plan/Comprehensive Plan/Disadvantaged Business Enterprise/Title VI reporting/major capital projects/alternatives analysis/budget/environmental outreach)
- Monitoring and Improvement - Revisions and Adaptations (Comprehensive Plan updates and amendments/annual Strategic Plan)
- Regional Transportation and Land Use Coordination (leadership/adherence to service design guidelines/coordination with other agencies and other planning documents and regulations).

Mr. Rushing asked about project prioritization. Discussion ensued. Mr. Blaska commented that priorities would be determined using a decision matrix. Mr. Otterstrom added that project prioritization may change from year to year. Mr. Rushing said he felt it might be a good idea to have something in the Comprehensive Plan which explains how staff will prioritize projects. Mr. Otterstrom said this could be a topic for discussion at the Board Workshop scheduled for June 30th.

Mr. Schimmels left the meeting at 2:50 p.m.

Next steps include a public hearing at the June 16th Board meeting, an STA Board Workshop on June 30th, a request for a recommendation for Board adoption from the Operations and Customer Service Committee at their July 7th meeting, and a request for adoption by the Board at their July 21st meeting.

Ms. Waldref asked if there was a reason the Comprehensive Plan needed to be adopted by the Board by the end of July. Mr. Otterstrom responded that it is important that we focus on making these decisions and move forward adoption of the plan in order to have a complete foundation for making further service reduction decisions and proceed with HPTN planning and implementation.

8. PHASE 1 BUS STOP CONSOLIDATION PROJECT - FINAL REPORT- INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom explained that in November 2009, staff began working on a draft plan to rationalize bus stop locations on frequent service bus routes including Routes 20, 24, 25, 33, 44, and 90. As outlined in STA's *Service Design Guidelines*, stops should generally

- be no closer than 800 feet,
- be no further than 1,500 feet, and
- average stop spacing should be one-quarter mile apart.

Goals of the project include improving reliability of travel speeds for Fixed Route buses, reducing travel times for passengers, allowing more bus stops to be placed near crosswalks and signalized intersections, and improving the reliability of the Fixed Route bus schedules.

Mr. Otterstrom reviewed project outreach efforts which included a 45-day internal comment period that resulted in two stops being taken off consideration for removal because of coach operator input. Following a four-week external comment period, results from forty-seven surveys indicated a favorable majority either approved or could accept the proposed changes.

Staff has developed three groups of routes, each on its own track and implementation schedule: (1) Routes 20, 33, and 44; (2) Routes 24 and 25; and (3) Route 90. Steps toward implementation of the project include:

- Rider Alerts to be posted at stops that are proposed to be eliminated
- Receipt and review of public comments
- Review of public comments with the Service Improvement Committee
- Rider Alerts posted at stops to confirm that the stop will be eliminated
- Stop changes to be input into STA computer software systems
- Stops to be removed from service by the jurisdiction or an STA Operations Supervisor

Mr. Otterstrom also showed a sample of a Stop Closure Notice. Ms. Waldref asked when the process would be completed. Mr. Otterstrom replied that beginning June 21st, notices will be posted, and the project is expected to be completed sometime between August 23rd and September 12th.

9. PARATRANSIT SUPPLEMENTAL PASS SUBSIDY PROGRAM - GRANT UPDATE - INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that the Board expressed concern over the increase in the cost of the Paratransit fares which were approved in the revised Tariff Policy. In response, the Paratransit fare increase was extended over a three-year period. The Board asked staff to investigate ways to assist low-income riders in covering the increased cost of the monthly pass.

In December 2009, the Board approved a grant program and staff has developed a pilot program which would use grant monies to subsidize the fare for a select low-income population. By partnering with social service agencies in the community, the pilot program would allow the grant-funded subsidized passes to be distributed by a responsible party who would be accountable for monitoring the distribution of the passes.

In coordination with community partners, a grant application packet has been developed. The pilot program is expected to last only for a specified period of time while determination is made that this program is meeting the needs of low-income riders. If successful, social services agencies may then be eligible for other grant opportunities outside of transit funding in order to continue this program beyond the pilot program period. Staff plans to release the grant application in June and solicit grant applicants by September. Applications submitted will be reviewed and prioritized, and a selection of grant recipients will be made. Mr. Blaska invited one or more of the Committee members to sit in on the application review panel. The pilot program is slated to begin in January 2011.

Mr. Blaska commented that the most recent Paratransit fare increase has not had an impact on ridership; however, the main concern is for implementation of Phase 2 and 3 of the fare increase.

Ms. Waldref inquired about the number of agencies who participated in development of the application. Mr. Blaska responded that there were representatives from seven social service agencies involved, and it was noted that there was no provision for overhead for a staff person to handle oversight of the project at any participant's location. A change was made to include approximately 15% of the subsidy as overhead to help cover those costs. Mr. Blaska added that it would be interesting to see which agencies step forward to meet this need for the community.

10. MARCH 2010 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS - INFORMATION

Mr. Plaster reported that operating revenue for the first quarter of the year was \$2.5M with a growth of 15.8% over the same period in 2009. Total revenue year-to-date of \$16.1M shows an increase of 4.17% above last year. Overall, year-to-date favorable budget variances (revenues and expenditures combined) were \$1,708,737. Washington State Department of Transportation advised that STA could take the remainder of the Special Needs Grant in one sum rather than draw it down on a monthly basis. This attributed to the increase in revenue.

Sales tax revenue was 1.5% above budget in April, reporting February sales, and 2.8% below budget year-to-date as of April. Compared with other jurisdictions in the region, STA is in the middle at a 3.7% decrease in sales tax cash receipts. Mr. Plaster added that it is very encouraging to see a positive sales tax revenue.

11. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

None.

12. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. First Quarter 2010 Financial Results Summary - as presented.
 - 1) First Quarter 2010 Capital Budget Status Report - as presented.
 - 2) First Quarter 2010 Statement of Net Assets & Federal Grant Reports - as presented.
- b. April 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- c. Downtown Transportation Alternatives Analysis - Update - as presented.
- d. Community Outreach and Involvement – as presented.

13. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

a. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION GRANT PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES - INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom said there is currently a \$775M Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant opportunity which allows for the replacement, rehabilitation, and purchase of buses and related equipment, and to construct or rehabilitate bus-related facilities. Funding under this initiative includes capital projects such as buses and vans and related equipment, fare equipment, communications devices that are FCC mandatory narrow-banding compliant, replacement or modernization of bus maintenance and revenue service facilities, and the development and implementation of transit asset management systems. Cost sharing would be 80% FTA and 20% local, except for ADA vehicles which would be 83% FTA and 17% local. The deadline to submit for grant funding is June 18, 2010.

Mr. Otterstrom explained the criteria for grant application:

- prioritization at the local/regional level (project identified in long range plan with letters of support);
- ready to implement (environmental work has been initiated, initial designs of facilities projects are complete and the project can be amended into the Transportation Improvement Plan); and
- capacity to implement (the proposer has the technical capacity to administer the project, no legal issues, and the local match is identified).

Project type criteria include:

- Bus projects - age of asset to be replaced is relative to useful life, degree that project addresses deferred maintenance, demonstrated positive impact on air quality, and conforms to spare ratio.
- Bus facility and equipment - age of asset to be replaced relative to useful life, degree that project addresses deferred maintenance, supports advanced technologies, and is compliant with "Green Building" certification.
- Transit asset management system - describe how the asset management plan will be developed, how asset inventories will be maintained, how logistical decision support tools will be used in day to day, and demonstrate the long-term financial commitment to using the asset management system.

Staff is proposing to file applications for grant funding for the following capital projects:

- Boone Avenue facility roof (approx. \$3.62M)
- Radio frequency upgrade (approx. \$2.1M)
- Asset Management system (approx. \$2.35M)

Mr. Otterstrom added that if we succeed in getting these grants, it would free up capital dollars which could be used for other projects.

Mr. Rushing moved to recommend to the Board that staff file grant applications for the following capital projects: Boone Avenue Facilities Roof Replacement, Radio Upgrade, and Business and Asset Management System Replacement. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

14. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

Mr. Brewer noted that there is a new State of Washington memorial cemetery in Medical Lake and said he felt that public transportation should be available to serve that cemetery. Mr. Otterstrom said that he believed that area was outside of the Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA), but he would look into it further.

15. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 2010, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

16. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chair Waldref adjourned the meeting at 3:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant