

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

**OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Draft Minutes of the June 3, 2009, Meeting  
Northside Conference Room

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Richard Munson, City of Spokane Valley\*  
Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane  
Rick Jacks, Citizen  
Ann Campeau, Citizen  
Mike Brewer, Citizen  
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen  
Nan Kelly, Citizen  
David Driscoll, Citizen  
Barbara Richardson, Citizen  
Dan Murphy, Citizen  
Dennis Antonellis, ATU 1-15  
Phil Ridenour, AFSCME 3939  
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598

**STAFF PRESENT**

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations  
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration  
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning  
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications  
Jan Watson, Exec. Assistant & Clerk of the Authority  
Patty Talbott, Quality Performance Specialist

**GUESTS**

P j Sisseck, Citizen

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Nan Kelly, Citizen

\* Chair

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairman McLaughlin 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.

Phil Ridenour arrived at 1:32 p.m.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MAY 6, 2009, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

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

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

Ms. Sisseck expressed concern about the proposed changes to Route 64. She felt the changes would not be beneficial for many people living in the Airway Heights area served by this route. She also mentioned that she does not get the newspaper and had to hear about the proposed changes from another person.

Mr. Munson thanked Ms. Sisseck for her input and explained that this Committee is not in a position to address those concerns at this time, but they will be addressed as the Committee and Board consider their position regarding the changes to her route.

5. **PROPOSED SEPTEMBER 2009 SERVICE CHANGES – DISCUSSION**

Mr. Otterstrom explained in detail the proposed service changes to several current routes. He said that information about the proposed changes was posted on the STA website and that postcards were mailed out in April to over 10,000 addresses informing those who would be affected by the change where they could get more information and inviting them to participate in a survey. 131 on-line surveys were completed and 94 requests for hard copies of the survey were received. In addition, a Public Hearing was held on Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, and three people provided testimony. Meetings were also held with the Mayor of Airway Heights and his staff.

Mr. Otterstrom said that proposed changes include:

- **Route 60** – would replace the existing Routes 40 and 64 with service from downtown, through Browne's Addition, and then extend via Sunset Hill via Airport Drive to Spokane International Airport. Neighborhoods affected include Browne's Addition, Sunset Hill, Windsor Road (Group Health), and the Spokane International Airport.
- **Route 61** – would no longer serve the Spokane International Airport on nights and weekends. The route pattern would change to serve Browne's Addition via Sunset Hill on the inbound and outbound trips. Northern Quest Casino and Airway Heights Correctional Facility will be served on every trip with select trips also serving south of Highway 2 along McFarlane/Lawson. Neighborhoods affected include Airway Heights

(including Fairchild AFB, McFarlane/Lawson, Northern Quest Casino, and Hayford Road), Sunset Hill, and Browne's Addition.

- **Route 62** – would serve Jefferson Park and Ride and the medical facilities in Medical Lake as an express service with selected trips on weekdays and Saturdays. This includes local circulation in Medical Lake. There would no longer be a stop on Grant Street in Medical Lake. The neighborhood affected would be Medical Lake, including Eastern State Hospital, West Lake, and Lakeland Village.
- **Route 67** – would be an all-day, two-way route between Medical Lake and downtown Spokane and would include the Spokane Airport Business Park and local circulation in Medical Lake. There would no longer be a stop on Grant Street in Medical Lake. Neighborhoods affected include Medical Lake, the Airport Business Park, Geiger Boulevard, and the Jefferson Park and Ride lot.

Mr. Otterstrom said that there would be an annual cost savings of approximately \$101K over the current routing configuration by making these changes. He noted that approximately 15-25 daily riders would lose fixed route service within ½ mile of where they catch the bus now (limited to Geiger Blvd.). Within 18-24 months, a net increase of 500 riders per day is projected with an annual net benefit of approximately \$182K. He added that there would be some minor adjustments to the Paratransit service boundaries in Medical Lake and Airway Heights as a result of these proposed changes which could affect approximately 10 Paratransit service users.

Ms. McLaughlin arrived at 1:55 p.m.

Mr. Jacks said that while staff has tried to communicate these changes to the public, it is inevitable that some people may fall through the cracks. He asked if other avenues of communication had been explored. Mr. Murphy commented that flyers on buses might be beneficial. Ms. Myers said that staff considered printing Rider Alerts, but since not everyone rides the bus every day, and the same bus is not used on the same route each day, there might still be some people who would not receive the route change information if flyers were left on buses.

Mr. Munson said he felt that it might be advisable to do more research on the issue prior to making a recommendation to the Board regarding the proposed changes. He recommended that this item not be forwarded to the consent agenda, but be sent to the Board for further discussion. Mr. Blaska said staff could have more information ready for the Board at their next meeting.

**Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board approve the proposed changes to service as described and presented by staff to become effective September 2009, with an addendum that STA staff will further research the ability for Route 62 to cover the segment of Geiger Boulevard currently served by Route 64. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

6. EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY EAGLE PASS CONTRACT RENEWAL UPDATE – INFORMATION

Mr. Curtis explained that this is the sixth year for the Eagle Pass program and the last year of their three-year contract. He said that the contract price for the 2008-2009 school year was \$375,324 and the contract price for 2009-2010 will be \$401,048, which is a 6.9% increase over the previous contract. Contract price is based on the average fare of \$0.65 times the number of EWU riders (617,948). Mr. Curtis said that EWU is expected to have the contract signed for the July Board meeting. If EWU does not sign the contract, staff has offered them participation in the Student Pass program or the Employer Sponsored Bus Pass program.

Mr. Driscoll asked if Gonzaga University participates in a like program. Mr. Curtis said that staff met with GU officials, and they said they did not have the funds to support this type of program.

7. STA SERVICE FOR THE 2009 NATIONAL VETERAN'S WHEELCHAIR GAMES – INFORMATION

Ms. Myers said that several months ago, STA was asked to enter into an agreement with the Paralyzed Veterans of America to provide transportation for the upcoming wheelchair games to be held in Spokane, WA, on July 13-18, 2009. She said there are approximately 650 participants registered for the games, as well as family members, friends, and volunteers who will be supporting the effort. Transportation is critical to the success of the games, and the STA Board of Directors approved the retro-fitting of twenty buses for the event. STA will receive national recognition for their support of the games.

8. FIRST QUARTER 2009 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that Fixed Route ridership is up 5.4%, Paratransit ridership is up 1.3%, and Vanpool ridership is up 17.7% year to date. Goals for growth were set slightly higher for 2009, but ridership is expected to plateau.

In regard to STA's goal of providing Excellent Customer Service, new phone system Call Center software has been installed which enables staff to capture data on telephone hold time and call abandon rates. The industry Call Center abandon rate standard is approximately 4%, and we are over that amount at 7.7%. Efforts toward improvement include monitoring daily peaks and valleys, and striving to make sure there are at least three people

on the phone to handle customer calls. Unfortunately, Customer Service also handles the front counter, and one position which staff requested could not be filled due to budget constraints for 2009, so meeting the 4% objective is a challenge. In regard to Service Level, the performance level goal for answering calls within 60 seconds was set at 90%, but staff needs to investigate further to determine if this is a realistic goal. Staff found that Paratransit riders will wait longer on the phone to make a reservation than a bus rider will wait for routing information.

Mr. Jacks asked if there was an on-hold message informing callers that information about bus routes could be found on the internet. Mr. Blaska said there was. Mr. Jacks asked if the reason people are not waiting on hold might be because they have learned that the information is available on their computers. Mr. Blaska explained that if people do not go through the phone "prompts," they don't get counted.

Mr. Blaska concluded by saying that information regarding accident rate and accident-free days will be presented with the mid-year report to the Committee and Board.

#### 9. MARCH FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS – INFORMATION

Mr. Plaster gave a report on the March financial highlights. He said the year-to-date decline in total revenue is 5.4% compared to 2008. May sales tax receipts (which reflect spending in the month of March) were 10.3% below budget. The actual decline is 8.1% year to date, which is the average for all local jurisdictions combined.

Mr. Munson inquired about the effect of this decline on the future. Mr. Plaster said that current projections indicate that cash balances will be exhausted by the end of 2012, and discussions will soon begin on ways to find funding sources to sustain service at current levels and avoid potential service reductions. Mr. Blaska added that many transit agencies throughout the country are already facing those decisions.

#### 10. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. In Ms. Meyer's absence, Mr. Blaska reported that STA provided approximately 8,000 rides for the Artfest event. This was down from previous events.
- b. Mr. Blaska said that in regard to the Tariff Policy revisions discussed at their last meeting, the Board asked staff to network with social service agencies in an effort to find if a subsidy was available for low income Paratransit customers. Mr. Blaska said that meetings will be held over the next few weeks to identify which agencies might be able to partner with STA to find funding sources for those needing a reduced fare. Mr. Munson commented that the Board is unable to determine the number of people who will be affected by the fare increase, and it is important that STA make an effort to partner with social service agencies to help understand how large a segment of the Paratransit community will be impacted by the change.
- c. Mr. Blaska said that he, Mike Brewer, and Andrew Rolwes have been invited to serve on Mayor Verner's Bus Bench Task Force. He said that the agreement is now that the benches currently in place are being removed and you can no longer contact the original vendor; however, the Mayor did allow the current vendor to keep benches in the 100 locations identified by STA. There are 1,800 bus stops in the City of Spokane, and the Task Force is working with the City to develop a list of 200 or more sites where benches will be recommended. Thirty days after release of a Request for Proposals, a new vendor will be selected.
- d. Mr. Blaska said that the reason Ms. Meyer is not present is because she is in Washington DC working with Congresswoman McMorris Rogers to support the addition of a line item to the Transportation Authorization Bill. The bill is currently in development and expected to be published next year. Although STA is not far enough along in high-capacity transportation planning to immediately benefit from this line item addition, the Bill would include a plan for the funding of such projects. Mr. Blaska noted that if this line item is not included in the current bill, there would be a delay of up to six years before they could try again to get it through Congress.

#### 11. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. First Quarter 2009 Financial Results Summary – as presented.
  1. First Quarter 2009 Capital Budget Status Report– as presented.
  2. First Quarter 2009 Statement of Net Assets and Federal Grant Reports – as presented.
- a. April 2009 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- b. Community Outreach and Involvement - as presented.

#### 3. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

- a. Mr. Brewer commented he was very much in favor of having Spokane Transit be the transportation service provider for the VA Wheelchair Games and praised Ms. Myers for her hard work in supporting this event.
- b. Mr. Jacks commented he watched an episode of Antiques Roadshow on PBS which was filmed in Spokane and he noticed in the ending segment how Spokane Transit played such a huge role in providing

transportation to and from the event. He also mentioned the excellent job done by STA during the Skate America event and said he expected to see the same stellar performance by Spokane Transit for the VA Wheelchair Games. He said he was impressed with how STA performs for these events.

- c. Mr. Blaska noted that Spokane Transit was one of three finalists nominated for the Agora Award for Business Excellence. The winner of the award was the Downtown Spokane Partnership. Mr. Blaska said that Spokane Transit was very pleased to have been one of the three finalists for this award.

4. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

None.

12. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 2009, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

13. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chairman Munson adjourned the meeting at 3:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant