

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

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes of the March 3, 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
Barbara Richardson, Citizen
Dan Murphy, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen
Tim Dompier, ATU 1015
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598
Phil Ridenour, AFSCME 3939

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wendy Van Orman
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Ann Campeau, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Nan Kelly, Citizen

* Chair

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
Don Reimer, Manager, Maintenance & Facilities
Jacque Tjards, Manager, Purchasing
Jan Watson, Exec. Assistant & Clerk of the Board

GUESTS

None

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Waldref 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 FEBRUARY 3, 2010, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL

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

4. PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS

None.

5. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF TWO VEHICLE HOISTS – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Blaska explained that two of four in-ground hoists are in need of replacement. The hoists have reached their normal life cycle, they are no longer supported by the manufacturer, and they do not have the lifting capacity required for the articulated buses. Replacements hoists that meet STA's requirements are available through the Washington State Purchasing Cooperative Contract. Replacement of the hoists was funded in the 2010 capital budget.

Mr. Rushing inquired about the construction for the project. Mr. Reimer responded that the existing foundation must be demolished and a new foundation built to hold the new hoists.

Mr. Rushing moved to recommend the purchase of one Eco 60 hoist and one Eco 90 hoist from the Washington State Purchasing Cooperative Contract for the sum of approximately \$261,874, including installation and sales tax; recommend the Board authorize the CEO to execute a contract for the services of JUB Engineering, Spokane, Washington, to develop the Scope of Work and provide construction oversight for this project; and authorize the CEO to award a contract to the lowest responsive bid from a responsible bidder for the demolition and construction work to be performed for this project. Total price for the replacement of these hoists (including applicable sales tax) will not exceed the \$406,500 originally budgeted. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO STA'S RULES OF CONDUCT – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Blaska said that the advent of “smokeless cigarettes” requires guidance as to how they relate to the use of other products. These items introduce a potentially offensive element into a public environment and produce a byproduct that is exhaled by the user which presents an uncomfortable addition to the immediate surroundings, and many of these products emit an aroma. STA has an already established practice of monitoring for unacceptable odors such as heavy perfume/cologne or lack of personal hygiene in an effort to keep the environment as clean and comfortable as possible for all passengers. An amendment to the current Rules of Conduct is needed to prohibit the use of “smokeless cigarettes” on STA vehicles or in STA facilities.

Ms. Waldref asked if there would be a campaign to educate the public about the prohibition of “smokeless cigarettes” on transit vehicles if the Board approves the revision. Mr. Blaska said signs would be placed on stanchions and in vehicles to inform riders.

Mr. Dompier moved to recommend the Board adopt the proposed revision to Spokane Transit's Rules of Conduct. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

7. PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL FOR SEPTEMBER SERVICE CHANGES – INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom explained that the 2010 budget calls for a 2% reduction in the operations budget beginning in September. Additionally, there are proposed 7% reductions in both 2011 and 2012. He reviewed the service impact of the economic downturn and the projected sustainable service plan.

Mr. Otterstrom also gave an overview of the proposed service reduction timeline and explained in detail the three types of changes:

- a. Route Eliminations - lowest performing routes in the system; service does not meet service type policies and route performance standards;
- b. Trip and Service Frequency Reductions - reduced frequency on routes during certain periods of the day/evenings or select days; lower demand on off-peak times/Saturdays; and
- c. Route Restructures - to improve service utilization and efficiency; improve frequencies to destinations such as EWU, SCC, the Medical District, and the Riverpoint Campus; increase productivity of under-performing routes.

He reviewed those routes which would be affected and noted that some of these proposed reductions would also affect the Paratransit service boundaries and impact approximately two dozen Paratransit riders. Information is available on the STA website and people without internet access are welcome to call in and request a hard copy of these proposed changes.

Mr. Rushing left the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

Mr. Otterstrom also reviewed the planned outreach efforts which include notices on buses, updates to the STA website, neighborhood council meetings, an online survey, and meetings with the City of Cheney, Eastern Washington University, Washington State University, Spokane Community College and SNAP Housing.

8. PROPOSED MAY 2010 SERVICE CHANGES – INFORMATION

Ms. Meyer commented that in accordance with STA's guidelines, the CEO is authorized to approve minor route changes without Board input. Mr. Otterstrom gave a brief overview of proposed route modifications which will begin in May:

- a. Route 25 - the schedule would be adjusted by time period of the day to reflect realistic travel times.
- b. Route 60 - routing changed to travel on Spruce; timepoint changed from 2nd and Coeur d'Alene to 2nd and Spruce.
- c. Route 61 - routing changed to travel on Spruce; timepoint changed from 2nd and Coeur d'Alene to 2nd and Spruce.
- d. Route 90 - moves to Zone 6 weekday nights (starting at 6:50 p.m. for outbound trips) and weekends to allow for an articulated bus to be used to alleviate passenger loads.

Rider alerts will be published to inform the public of the proposed changes.

9. FOURTH QUARTER/YEAR END 2009 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska reviewed the 2009 year end Performance Measures. Fixed Route Ridership finished at a record level of 11.1M rides, but this did not meet the goal of a 6% increase for the year. While gas prices were down in 2009, the economy has had an impact on people's travel habits and the result was ridership growth of 0.4% for the year. Nationally, Fixed Route ridership went down approximately 5%, so the fact that STA's ridership actually grew is positive. Paratransit Ridership showed a 1.0% growth for 2009, providing trips for over 521.5K riders. Twenty vans were added to the Vanpool program, but as gas prices went down, some van groups dropped out of the program resulting in a 6.5% decline for the year. Mr. Blaska noted that there was a 34% increase in the program between 2007 and 2008, so there is still an overall upward trend indicating that people are using the program. Marketing of the Vanpool program will continue.

Mr. Blaska reviewed Cost per Revenue Hour noting that STA's objective is to constrain costs to 94% or less than the statewide average for urban systems. STA's Fixed Route costs were 84.6% of the urbanized average costs. For Paratransit, costs were 80.7% of the urbanized average and STA has the lowest cost per revenue hour in the state of Washington. With the loss of several vanpool groups, the Vanpool program recovered 102% of its operational and administrative costs for 2009, but was about \$50K short of its goal of partial capital cost recovery.

STA transported 26.7 passengers per revenue hour, which surpassed the goal of 22. Paratransit transported 2.91 passengers per revenue hour, slightly short of the goal of 3 passengers, but higher than any other system in the state.

Mr. Blaska noted that the new Performance Measures regarding the Call Center indicate that the call abandon rate was 10.1%, which is higher than our goal of 4%. This is due to short staffing in the Customer Service area because of lack of funding. In reference to calls answered within 60 seconds, the goal is 90%; however, 78.2% are being answered within 60 seconds for Fixed Route, and 80.3% are being answered within 60 seconds for Paratransit. Staff continues to monitor for improvement. Mr. Blaska added that the number of comments from the public regarding service is growing, but that's a positive thing because staff actively solicits feedback from the public in an effort toward continual improvement.

10. 2009 FINANCIAL RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS – INFORMATION

Mr. Plaster's presentation was deferred to the end of the meeting for those Committee members wishing to stay to review the 2009 Financial Results.

11. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer said a \$2M appropriations request was submitted to Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray for the purchase of 24 Paratransit vans. If approved, this would accomplish the first year of a five-year replacement schedule and free up local funds.
- b. An All-Employee meeting was held on February 23rd and approximately 300 employees attended. Senior staff covered the Service Plan, the Quality Counts! Program, and STA's decision making process.
- c. The annual Awards Banquet was held on Sunday, February 28th, where those employees receiving Safety, Perfect Attendance, Employee Recognition, or Wall of Fame awards were recognized. Ms. Meyer noted that Council Member Waldref, Mayor Rushing, Mayor Van Orman, Council Member Rush, and a representative of Commissioner Mager also attended the banquet. Mr. Plaster commented that music for the event was provided by STA employee Naomi Zantello, Executive Assistant to the Finance Department, who sings with the group 5 MOR. Everyone had a wonderful time.

12. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. Fourth Quarter and Year End 2009 Financial Results Summary – as presented.
 - 1) Fourth Quarter and End of Year 2009 Capital Budget Status Report - as presented.
 - 2) Fourth Quarter and End of Year 2009 Statement of Net Assets & Federal Grant Reports - as presented.
- b. 2009 Fourth Quarter / Year End Operating Indicators - as presented.
- c. End of Year 2009 Safety and Loss Summary Report - as presented.
- d. January 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- e. Community Outreach and Involvement – as presented.

13. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

- a. Mr. Blaska said that some Committee members had not yet had an opportunity to tour the Boone Avenue facility and invited everyone to do so prior to the next Committee meeting. Ms. Waldref said she would be interested and asked other interested members to come 30 minutes prior to the start of the April 7th meeting for a facilities tour.
- b. Mr. Brewer mentioned that in years past, Board members were invited to attend the local Rodeo and were challenged to drive a Fixed Route bus. He asked if that was still being done. Ms. Meyer said that about two years ago, Dick Denenny and Al French attended the local Rodeo and actually drove a bus. Ms. Meyer said she discovered that her own gifts lie elsewhere, but it was fun to get behind the wheel of a 40-foot vehicle and see how it feels. Mr. Blaska added that this year drivers will not attend the national Rodeo in the spring but will participate in the local Rodeo in September. STA will be hosting the statewide Department of Transportation Conference in September, and Board and Committee members will be invited to attend.

14. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

None.

15. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 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 3:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant