

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

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the November 3, 2010, Meeting
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Amber Waldref, City of Spokane *
Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley
Mike Brewer, Citizen
Nan Kelly, Citizen
Ann Campeau, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen
Barbara Richardson, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Tim Dompier, ATU 1015
Phil Ridenour, AFSCME 3939

STAFF PRESENT

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Molly Myers, Manager, Communications
Mike Toole, Assistant Manager, Safety & Security

GUESTS

None

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wendy Van Orman, City of Liberty Lake
Patrick Rushing, City of Airway Heights
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598

* Chair

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **INTRODUCTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Ms. Waldref welcomed everyone and thanked them for being here, and added that introductions would not be necessary because everyone knows everyone. There was no correspondence requiring the Committee's attention.

3. **MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 1, 2010, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

Mr. Brewer noted that two words were transposed under Item #8.

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

Mr. Rolwes arrived at 1:33 p.m.

Ms. Richardson arrived at 1:34 p.m.

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL - SEPTEMBER 2011 SERVICE REDUCTION: PUBLIC INPUT TO DATE – INFORMATION**

Mr. Otterstrom explained that the purpose of his presentation was to inform the Committee of the comments received from customers regarding the preliminary proposal to reduce fixed route and paratransit services. Preliminary findings received before October 21st indicate:

- Many people feel changes will negatively impact travel.
- There are both pros and cons in the proposal based on individual travel on a particular day.
- Cheney riders feel the proposed changes would be beneficial to them and the majority prefer new local Route 68 serving Washington Street.
- There were major concerns about proposed elimination of service in Medical Lake. Approximately 100 paratransit riders would be affected by the proposed elimination of service, and concerns were expressed about job access to the hospitals and the impact on the economic vitality of the community.
- Route 72 - Liberty Lake Express - represents the most ridden route of survey respondents. Concerns have been expressed regarding increased travel time, capacity, and loss of mid-day service on Route 74 - Valley Limited.

Ms. Meyer commented that there is, generally, a lack of understanding about reducing service to save money. Staff is making every effort to balance service reductions with the necessity of finding cost savings. She said there's no way to not cut routes or affect service, even when it appears buses are running full. Some media reports indicate correct information is not getting out there, and it is important that agency partners are well informed.

Mr. Blaska added that based on the recent ridership assessment, routes 72 and 74 appear to be the most sensitive to the ridership decrease. Over the last year and a half, there has actually been more of a decrease on those two routes than system wide. This may be because those riders are more sensitive to changes in the cost of fuel and weather, and it's important to make sure there is enough capacity on those routes so that when they begin using fixed route service again, seats are available. He noted that no cost savings would be realized by adding an extra bus to each route; however, if available buses are too full, people won't ride and we'll lose riders.

Mr. Otterstrom said comments continue to come in and staff will continue to present the service reduction proposal to community groups. He added that a second report is being prepared for the December 1st Operations and Customer Service Committee meeting, and ended with a review of the service change timeline, noting that Board action will be requested at their March 2011 meeting.

6. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer elaborated on Mr. Otterstrom's report, adding that STA staff has met with administrators at Fairchild Air Force Base, Eastern State Hospital, Lakeland Village, and the Mayor of Medical Lake. Staff also has plans to meet with the owners of Bethany Place on Upriver & Argonne because approximately twenty registered paratransit riders at that location will be impacted by the proposed service reductions. Staff is focusing on meetings with those stakeholders who will be impacted most by the proposed service reductions.
- b. Ms. Meyer commented that staff needs to do annual updates for the jurisdictions served by STA. It is important that leadership in these communities be informed about STA's business activities and plans.
- c. STA staff participated in a joint open house with the City of Spokane held at the Washington State University campus on October 23rd regarding the Central City Lines Alternative Analysis. The Division Corridor Project, which proposes beautifying the Division Street exit from I-90 into the City of Spokane, and the East Sprague business development on the south side of the University District were discussed. Additional discussion took place about urban projects. Ms. Waldref added that there was a theme regarding transportation and how we get around our central city. She felt that this open house was very productive.
- d. Ms. Meyer said the STA Board of Directors has appointed her as a non-voting member to the Board of the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC). She said she is looking forward to this opportunity.

7. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. Third Quarter 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- b. Third Quarter 2010 Safety & Loss Summary Report - as presented.
- c. September 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- d. Community Outreach and Involvement - as presented.
- e. Holiday Service Hours - as presented.

8. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

None.

9. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

Ms. Waldref announced that due to another commitment, she might need to leave the meeting before the conclusion of the Budget presentation. She asked Mr. Schimmels if he would step in and adjourn the meeting when it was through.

10. DRAFT 2011 OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGETS – INFORMATION

Mr. Plaster reviewed STA's mission, organizational priorities, and 2011 budget guidance from the Board. He began his presentation by referring to the former 2009 baseline financial projection after the recession began. At that time sales tax growth was projected at -9% for 2009, -1% for 2010, 2% for 2011 and 3% for 2012 and beyond. The 2010 sustainable plan showed an actual sales tax growth for 2009 of -8.4% and projections of -1.6% for 2010, 2% for 2011 and 3% for 2012 and beyond with service level reductions of 2% in 2010, and 7% each year for 2011 and 2012 with a reduction of \$22.3M in capital expenses.

Ms. Waldref left the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Mr. Plaster commented that the economy has not yet recovered and experts say it may take three to five years. He said that a favorable 2010 operating expense variance of \$4.0M - \$4.5M is projected (mostly non-recurring), mainly due to lower fuel prices and staffing costs than budgeted. It is anticipated that there will be a cumulative loss in sales tax revenue of \$80.7M by 2015. For Spokane Transit to live within its means, the proposed service reductions in 2011 and 2012 are still necessary.

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

12. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Acting Chair Schimmels adjourned the meeting at 2:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant