

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

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the October 6, 2010, Meeting
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Amber Waldref, City of Spokane *
Mike Brewer, Citizen
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Nan Kelly, Citizen
Ann Campeau, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen
Barbara Richardson, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Jim Fitzgerald, 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
Denise Marchioro, Manager, Paratransit
Steve Doolittle, Manager, Human Resources

GUESTS

None

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wendy Van Orman, City of Liberty Lake
Patrick Rushing, City of Airway Heights
Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598

* 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 SEPTEMBER 1, 2010, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

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

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **2011 SPECIAL COMMUNITY EVENTS FARE STRUCTURE – ACTION REQUESTED**

Ms. Myers explained that the purpose of this item was to incorporate special community events into the 2011 fare structure architecture. Staff is proposing the following fare structures for approval:

- First Night: \$0.75 fare. (Same price as a standard one-way shuttle fare.)
- Bloomsday: \$1.50 fare. (Same price as a standard one-way fare.)
- Hoopfest: \$1.50 fare. (A standard Day Pass, discounted from \$3.50 to \$1.50.)
- Valleyfest: \$0.75 fare. (Same price as a standard one-way shuttle fare.)
- 61st National Square Dance Convention: \$12.00 for a four day pass. (A standard Day Pass for three days and a Hoopfest day pass for the final day.)

Mr. Plaster commented that following the success of the recent National Skating Championships earlier this year, the National Square Dance Convention was encouraged to give Spokane a try for their event. Ms. Waldref said that this was exciting and it could pave the way for other organizations to follow suit.

Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board of Directors approve the 2011 Special Event fare structure for First Night, Bloomsday, Hoopfest, Valleyfest, and the 61st National Square Dance Convention as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. **DISPOSAL OF TWO HEAVY-DUTY MAINTENANCE VEHICLES – ACTION REQUESTED**

Mr. Blaska explained that there are two heavy-duty maintenance trucks slated for disposal, and the current procurement policy allows STA's CEO disposal authority up to \$5,000. However, these two trucks could bring

in more than that amount, so staff is requesting authorization for their disposal. One truck is a 1988 Chevrolet and the other is a 1991 Ford.

Mr. Jacks asked if the Committee could recommend to the Board to give the CEO disposal authority on vehicles such as this. Mr. Blaska responded that the value of used 5-ton maintenance trucks is normally far less and this issue doesn't come up very often, but these vehicles are popular right now. If the procurement policy is revised in the future, increased disposal authority could possibly be addressed at that time.

Mr. Brewer moved to recommend the Board authorize staff to dispose of one 1988 Chevrolet 5-ton, heavy-duty maintenance truck (vehicle #291), and one 1991 Ford 5-ton, heavy-duty maintenance truck (vehicle #804). The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

7. PILOT STUDY TO AID IN DETERMINATION OF ADA PARATRANSIT ELIGIBILITY - RESULTS - INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska explained that many transit properties utilize a third-party in-person functional transit skills assessment to assist in objectively determining Paratransit eligibility. STA staff conducted a three-month study to explore ramifications of incorporating information from a third-party in-person functional transit skills assessment to assist in objectively determining Paratransit eligibility. Goals of the pilot project included:

- Compare results of IPA with current eligibility process
- Consider the applicant's disability and the effects of their disability on their functional abilities to use fixed route service some or all of the time
- Improve confidence levels in eligibility determinations
- Experiment with adding in-person reviews for some or all applicants
- Determine if we can eliminate or consolidate eligibility steps
- Solicit input from the participants to better understand the limitations and perspective of the applicants
- Evaluate potential for long term cost savings

Mr. Blaska noted that results of the pilot project indicate that the percentage of applicants found capable of using fixed route rather than Paratransit service is significant enough to justify the program. Staff will implement a partial in-person assessment program beginning in July 2011. An estimated 50% of all Paratransit applicants will participate, and staff will continue to make eligibility decisions in house using existing eligibility staff.

Education of customers, key stakeholders, and Paratransit employees is critical to program implementation. Next steps for implementation include project planning and development, preparation and approval of a budget to support the program, incorporation of the in-person assessment functionality into the mobility training scope of work (current contract expires in June 2011), commencement of outreach education and training for Paratransit customers and employees, vendor selection, finalization of course and assessment tools, and monitoring and reporting results of the program. In addition, discussion needs to take place regarding whether or not a licensed professional, rather than a mobility specialist, would be needed to administer all assessments or just needed on a case-by-case basis. Using a licensed professional would increase the cost of the program.

8. SUPPLEMENTAL PARATRANSIT FARE SUBSIDY PASS APPLICATION PROGRAM UPDATE - INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska explained that several advocacy groups and Paratransit users expressed concern that low-income Paratransit riders would be challenged to afford the fare increases scheduled for Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Board approved Tariff Policy. In response, STA offered a fare subsidy grant opportunity to meet the potential need for low-income Paratransit riders. Staff met with representatives from ARC of Spokane, the Department of Social and Health Services, Aging and Long-term Care for Eastern Washington, SL Start, Spokane County Division of Developmental Disabilities, and People First and phoned or emailed 43 different community oriented agencies/service providers. Because STA is not in the position to validate Paratransit riders' financial resources, it was hoped that one of those agencies would be interested in partnering with STA to ensure any fare subsidy provided would reach those in need.

No service provider agencies submitted a Supplemental Paratransit Pass Grant Application. Reasons cited include:

- The 15% administrative cost allocated was deemed insufficient to cover administrative overhead for the program
- Few participants could be found who could benefit from the program
- Some low-income riders already receive subsidies from other programs
- Lack of staff to assist with application completion

- Felt STA should assume the role of determining rider financial need

Mr. Blaska said that the Application Program will be placed on hold until after the January 2011 fare increase takes effect. Staff remains committed to working with other agencies to seek alternatives for low-income Paratransit customers, should the need exist. The grant runs until June 2012, so if interest is shown, STA will reinvigorate the program.

Mr. Fitzgerald said that he has spoken with people who ride on Paratransit service and many of them are on SSI and of limited means. He commented that the STA Board could freeze the Paratransit fare at the Phase 1 level and that the Operations and Customer Service Committee could make that recommendation to the Board and they could take action.

Mr. Blaska added that what Mr. Fitzgerald said is true, however, many people on SSI also have access to Special Mobility Service (SMS) and other similar services for their transportation needs. A community partner would have to come forward to help STA identify exactly who needs the type of assistance offered by this program.

Ms. Waldref commented that she is disappointed that STA couldn't find a community partner for this program, because there are people out there who could benefit from this. She asked staff if there were any programs at other transit agencies such as this one. Mr. Blaska said that the Feed Spokane provides monthly bus passes to individuals so they have transportation to meal site programs. Feed Spokane is in a position to determine who is eligible to receive the passes.

9. PARATRANSIT SERVICES VAN RIDER SATISFACTION SURVEY – INFORMATION

Ms. Myers explained that in Summer 2010, staff tasked The Gilmore Research Group of Portland, Oregon, to conduct a Paratransit Van Rider Satisfaction Survey. Goals of the survey included:

- Measure overall satisfaction with service currently, and compare to previous levels
- Track changes in quality ratings for the application process, trip reservations and riders' experience over time
- Identify methods of fare payment and use of financial subsidies for paratransit fares
- Provide a demographic and ridership profile of paratransit users
- Establish use of electronic media, Riders' Hotline and access to the STA website
- Identify the key elements that drive overall customer satisfaction with STA Paratransit services

Survey respondents included 322 Paratransit riders and 86 in-home caregivers and/or facilities' staff. Survey results were extremely positive. Overall customer satisfaction average score was 4.48 on a scale of 1 to 5. 60% rated the service as excellent, and 98% rated the service from good to excellent. Grand averages for all aspects of Paratransit service (application process, reservations, and riding the van) ranged from 4.42 to 4.52 on a scale of 1 to 5. Ms. Myers added that the significant improvement in minimizing "on hold time" and customer understanding of their van's arrival time can be attributed to reservationists performance using the new call center technology.

10. PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL - SEPTEMBER 2011 SERVICE REDUCTION – INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom explained that the 2011 budget calls for a 7% reduction in service beginning in September 2011. The primary means available for reducing operating costs to this extent is by reducing the number of hours of fixed route and paratransit service STA provides. Input from employees, customers, and the community is currently being gathered, and staff is looking closely at route performance reports and ridership data. Mr. Otterstrom reviewed the timeline for proposal presentation, noting that staff will present a final recommendation to the Board in March 2011.

Initial estimates of proposed service reductions include:

Proposed annual hours of reduction	34,000 - 38,000
Estimated cost reductions	\$3.4 Million - \$3.8 Million
Complete route eliminations	Three
Estimated fleet reductions	8 - 11 coaches
Estimated bus ridership impact (annual rides)	740,000 - 1,040,000 less rides
Estimated Paratransit riders directly affected	100

Proposed route eliminations include #41-Latah, #62-Medical Lake Hospitals, #67-Medical Lake/Geiger, #30-Francis, #31-Garland, #42-Maple, #46-Altamont, #72-Liberty Lake Express, and #95-Millwood. Mr. Otterstrom reviewed in detail maps of the proposed service reductions, and gave an overview of three proposed options for reduced service to Cheney. He added that approximately 100 Paratransit riders will be affected by the proposed service reductions.

Information about the proposed service reductions is available on the STA website, at The Plaza, and by request via phone hotline. Presentations will be made to city, county, and community groups in October and November. Comments from the public are requested. Additional discussion ensued regarding specific proposed route changes.

Ms. Kelly left the meeting at 2:54 p.m.

11. CENTRAL CITY TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS: SHORT LIST OF ALTERNATIVES – INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom gave an overview of the Central City Transit Alternatives Analysis goals:

1. Consensus Building goals
 - Involve a large and diverse group of citizens
 - Adopt a Locally Preferred Alternative that is both technically and financially feasible and has the full support of the Sounding Board and Core Stakeholders
 - Make it happen: Implement the Locally Preferred Alternative
2. Transportation goals
 - Provide a “high performance transit” investment (transit investment) that is preferred for trips within the greater downtown area
 - Connect major activity nodes within the downtown area
 - Connect and maintain the character of downtown neighborhoods
3. Development goals
 - Use the transit investment to stimulate new development within the downtown
 - Provide a “business case” for a downtown transit investment
4. Urban Character goals
 - Enhance the pedestrian environment by activating the street
 - Compliment recreational amenities including the park and centennial trail
 - Provide big city amenities and small city feel
 - Mitigate barriers such as I-90, the railroad, and the river
 - Use the transit investment to support existing policies and plans including the Downtown plan and University District plan

He said that it is important that this is decided on as a region because this project will be a major transportation investment. He reviewed the project timeline and detailed maps of alternatives which included Browne’s Addition to University District, County Campus to Medical West, County Campus to University, and University to Medical West.

Mr. Otterstrom noted that a public open house which will focus on routes and modes of transportation is scheduled for October 26, 2010, from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Washington State University.

12. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. In Ms. Meyer’s absence, Mr. Blaska reported that Paratransit van operator Kevin Lukes passed away recently while on a bike ride for a local charity. Mr. Lukes was 47 years old, and he will be missed by all his friends and colleagues, and the people he transported during his nine years of service with STA. He leaves behind a wife and three children.
- b. Mr. Blaska said that STA received a Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) grant of \$3.7M to be used for capital projects. The funds will be used in part to repair the roof of the Boone Avenue facility and to upgrade over 20-year old Finance and Human Resources systems.
- c. An advertisement for individuals to fill vacant positions on the Operations and Customer Service Committee has been placed in the Spokesman-Review, and staff is waiting to hear from the community if anyone is interested.
- d. In his absence, Tim Dompier was congratulated for receiving an “excellent” in the Quality Counts! survey for providing excellent customer service.

13. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. August 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- b. Community Outreach and Involvement - as presented.
- c. Plaza Operations Improvements - as presented.

- d. Transit Enhancements Program Detail - as presented.
- e. WSDOT Regional Mobility Grant - as presented.

14. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

None.

15. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

None.

16. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2010, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

17. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chair Waldref adjourned the meeting at 3:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant