

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

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes of the September 1, 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
Nan Kelly, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen
Barbara Richardson, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Jim Fitzgerald, ATU 1015
Dennis Tonhofer, ATU 1598
Phil Ridenour, AFSCME 3939

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wendy Van Orman, City of Liberty Lake
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Ann Campeau, 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
Jacque Tjards, Manager, Purchasing
Mark Curtis, Manager, Customer Service
Andrew Overhauser, Superintendent of Transportation
Teresa Overhauser, Manager, Technical Projects

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 one item of correspondence requiring the Committee's attention. Citizen Member Dan Murphy submitted his resignation effective immediately.

Mr. Brewer moved to accept Mr. Murphy's resignation from the Operations and Customer Service Committee. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. **MINUTES OF THE JULY 7, 2010, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

Mr. Schimmels moved to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2010, Committee meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT – ACTION REQUESTED**

Mr. Otterstrom explained that at their last meeting, the Board of Directors directed staff to add an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan referencing improvement to pedestrian infrastructure where there is a direct and tangible benefit to customers accessing a transit stop or other transit facility. In response to the Board's request, staff developed and proposed a policy statement covering Pedestrian Infrastructure.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding wording of the proposed amendment, the responsibilities of STA and any local jurisdiction partner(s) under this policy, and how a partnership would be defined in this instance.

Ms. Meyer commented that STA is in no financial position to pay for new sidewalks near a shelter or adjacent to a bus stop, but would like the flexibility to work with the City or neighborhoods in indentifying where and what types of improvements might be needed near transit-related structures, and assist with costs if and when funding allows STA to do so, because it is important to ensure bus riders can safely access transit shelters and bus stops.

Mr. Otterstrom also noted that a few minor grammatical edits were made to this section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Driscoll recommended making the language more definitive. Following additional discussion, Mr. Rushing recommended rephrasing the proposed amendment: *“As funding allows, Spokane Transit may partner with local jurisdictions to improve pedestrian infrastructure in locations where there is a direct and tangible benefit to customers accessing a transit stop or other transit facility.”*

Mr. Rushing moved to recommend the Board approve the amendment to the Comprehensive Plan as presented by staff with the aforementioned changes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. APPROVAL OF SCOPE OF WORK FOR PLAZA MANAGEMENT CONTRACT – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Curtis said that the current contract for Plaza management will expire on December 31, 2010. Staff is hoping to release a request for proposals in October to provide retail leasing expertise, administrative supervision, and on-site engineering maintenance during all hours and days of Plaza operation. Mr. Curtis said that the scope of work is essentially the same as the current contract, except that STA is requesting a more “hands on” presence by the selected property management firm. The new contract will be in effect for a period of five years, until December 31, 2015. Staff is also requesting a Committee member to assist with evaluation of proposals.

Mr. Driscoll moved to approve the Scope of Work for The Plaza Management Contract for the release of a Request for Proposals. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Mr. Brewer volunteered to assist with evaluation of proposals received, and Mr. Rushing volunteered to be an alternate in the event Mr. Brewer is not available.

7. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR COACH AND VAN OPERATORS, PARATRANSIT DISPATCHERS, CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES, AND SUPERVISOR’S UNIFORMS – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Blaska recognized Mr. Overhauser and Ms. Tjards for all their work in assembling a committee to discuss and make recommendations for improvements to STA’s current uniform requirements. Mr. Blaska explained that the current uniform contract will expire on September 30, 2010. Of the three proposals received from responsible bidders, Blumenthal Uniforms is being recommended because their prices were more competitive on higher volume items and they had more experience in this area than the other bidders. Based on STA’s currently approved staffing levels, expenses for this contract should not exceed \$102,700 per year.

Mr. Rushing moved to recommend the Board of Directors award a five-year contract to Blumenthal Uniform and Supply Company to provide uniforms for the Transportation and Customer Service departments effective October 1, 2010. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

8. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR ON-BOARD VIDEO AND AUDIO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Blaska explained that STA’s organization-wide priorities include a strong emphasis on customer and employee safety, security and risk management. Procurement of an on-board camera system supports this priority and is a key element of the Smart Bus project. This was determined to be an essential capital project because use of on-board cameras is becoming more prevalent in the industry and some insurance companies raise their rates when surveillance cameras are not available on buses.

Mr. Blaska commented that this has been a lengthy process, and staff has conducted numerous tests since June 2009 on equipment provided by the three vendors who submitted proposals, as well as taken site visits to other transit properties using similar equipment. He thanked Committee members Barbara Richardson and Andrew Rolwes for their participation in the process, and noted that consultant group IBI also participated by providing technical analysis of the equipment.

Mr. Rushing commented that he highly recommends having cameras on buses, not only because of the liability issues, but also for the safety of our passengers and operators. Mr. Blaska added that another application of the system includes mapping capability which has the potential to track on-time performance.

Mr. Rushing moved to recommend action by the Board of Directors to authorize the CEO to award a contract for onboard audio and video surveillance to Safety Vision in an amount not to exceed \$2,800,167 (includes sales tax and 15% contingency) contingent upon successful contract negotiations. In the event STA and Safety Vision are unable to negotiate a final contract agreement, authorize staff to begin negotiations with the next-ranked firm, until a successful agreement can be reached. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

9. SOLICITATION OF 2011 OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE MEMBERS – ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Blaska explained that tenure will expire for three current Operations and Customer Service Committee members at the end of this year. Staff would like to solicit feedback from those members to determine if they would like to continue participation on the Committee or resign their seats. Staff is requesting permission to solicit interest from the community for any open positions on the Committee, including the one seat recently vacated by Mr. Murphy, with a list of potential appointees to be forwarded to the Board for action in December.

Mr. Rushing moved to authorize staff to solicit interest from current citizen members whose term of service will expire in December, or from the community, for any open positions on the Operations and Customer Service Committee, with a list of potential appointees to be forwarded to the Board for action in December. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Mr. Blaska expressed his appreciation to the Committee for their ongoing efforts to be available for monthly Committee meetings. He noted that there has almost never been a problem achieving a quorum for items requiring Committee action, and added that it is very rewarding to work with a group that is so committed to this particular job.

Ms. Waldref thanked Mr. Brewer for his service on the uniform contract evaluation committee, and also Ms. Richardson and Mr. Rolwes for their time and effort in serving on the evaluation committee for the on-board surveillance system contract.

10. SYSTEM RIDERSHIP ANALYSIS - SIX MONTH ASSESSMENT – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that this analysis supplements the route-by-route detailed analysis presented annually by the Planning Department. This is a general, mid-year overview which assists staff with the decision-making process.

Mr. Blaska explained that while ridership is down slightly from 2009, it is still approximately 42% higher than it was in 2005. Therefore, the system is performing relatively well. Staff anticipated that upon maturation of the 2005 Service Plan implemented in 2006, ridership would plateau. Introduction of the new fare media a few years ago was another driving factor for ridership increases.

Mr. Blaska said that ridership reduction in 2010 is most likely due to the economic downturn which has led to widespread unemployment and program cuts, and it is important, therefore, to compare STA's ridership with how the rest of the country is doing. During the first quarter of the year, ridership nationwide was down approximately 4%; however, STA ridership was down only about 1% during that same period. In 2009, there was a nationwide decline in ridership of over 3% (compared to 2008 numbers). Unlike the national trend, STA was still experiencing an increase in ridership through June 2009. As a result, STA has sustained ridership longer than most other transit properties.

Mr. Blaska reviewed average weekday ridership graphs from January 2007 through June 2010. He noted that there appeared to be no decline in ridership directly related to the fare increase implemented last January.

Ms. Kelly left the meeting at 2:26 p.m.

Mr. Rushing inquired about the spike in ridership in January 2010. Mr. Blaska replied that when the weather is cold and there's not much snow, people like to ride the bus; but when the weather is very snowy, as it was the January before last when service was severely disrupted, ridership diminishes and people seem to prefer to just stay home. Mr. Rolwes asked if the skating event in January affected ridership for that month. Mr. Blaska responded that impact of that event was minimal because it only lasted a few days, and the graph reports average weekday ridership, not total ridership. Ms. Meyer interjected that STA increased advertising efforts regarding our services, and this may have contributed to the ridership increases.

Mr. Blaska also reviewed a slide showing Weekday Boardings per Revenue Hour. He commented that the trends reflected assist with decision making regarding which routes are performing, or not performing, well. Mr. Rushing said he felt this slide was important to show the public so they could see where STA is losing money on routes that are not performing well. Mr. Blaska said that ridership productivity is only one standard of understanding how decisions are made regarding route changes - the other standards include energy consumption and farebox recovery. Ms. Waldref agreed that this is a good slide to show the public. Mr. Rushing asked if slides for the other standards could be produced so the public could get a clearer picture of STA's decision making process concerning service reductions. Mr. Otterstrom said staff will work on that.

Mr. Blaska said developing trends include an 18% decrease in riders paying cash. Those paying cash are probably consolidating their trips, so we may not have lost that rider, it's just that they're traveling less often, probably for economic reasons. It is hoped that the Rider Survey in September will give staff more information about this trend. Youth ridership also decreased approximately 22%, and staff believes that due to the economic downturn, there is less household discretionary money available and choices are being made to use what funds are available in other ways. In addition, there are less activities for young people; Riverfront Park has experienced a 10% decrease in participation. Mr. Blaska noted that there has actually been some year-to-year growth on certain routes, in particular, those serving the community colleges.

The prognosis is conflicted. While it would be good to continue to grow service, STA simply cannot afford to sustain the current level of service in this economy. Transit agencies have become a target of commuter frustration, but the public needs to recognize that the resources are not available operate at current levels. Mr. Blaska added that it is important to not make any short-term decisions that would prevent STA from being in a position to grow service when funding allows in the future.

11. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer said Coach Operator Chris Ferguson was driving Rt. 29/Broadway when a woman ran out of her home yelling that her baby was not breathing. Operator Ferguson stopped to assist, found a child on the floor of the home not breathing, and administered CPR and heart massage and revived the child. He stayed with the child until paramedics arrived. Ms. Meyer said that this is just one example of the really good things our operators do while out in the community.
- b. The local coach and van Rodeo was held this past weekend, and the winners, Gabe Fernos (Fixed Route) and Jill Thornton (Paratransit), will represent Spokane Transit in the state Rodeo to be held in Spokane on September 19th. Ms. Meyer added that STA Board Members Patrick Rushing and Richard Rush both stopped by the Jefferson Lot to watch the competition and had an opportunity to drive one of the buses. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Public Transportation Conference begins September 19th and will run through September 22nd.
- c. The Downtown Transportation Alternatives Analysis (DTAA) is moving forward. Discussion regarding routes and alignment is ready to begin. Following further discussion regarding connections to downtown or to Browne's Addition or to the Medical Center, which modes will be used will be explored. Selections include street car, light rail, electric trolley car, and bus (electric or otherwise). All modes will go through criteria screening and an open house will be held for input on alignment and mode. Ms. Meyer invited everyone to stop by the open house to be held on October 26.
- d. The Rider Survey will begin on September 27th. The Paratransit Survey has been done and staff will report on the results in October.
- e. Staff plans to make a presentation to the Board of Directors in October regarding the service reduction.
- f. STA will provide service to Valleyfest on September 25th and 26th, and for the River Clean-up scheduled for September 25th.

Mr. Driscoll left the meeting at 2:49 p.m.

12. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. Second Quarter 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- b. Second Quarter 2010 Safety & Loss Summary Report - as presented.
- c. June 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- d. July 2010 Operating Indicators - as presented.
- e. Community Outreach and Involvement - as presented.
- f. Second Quarter 2010 Performance Measures - as presented.
- g. Mobility Orientation (Travel Training) Program - Fourth Year Review - as presented.

13. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

None.

14. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS

Mr. Rushing expressed his appreciation at the excellent job everyone does by participating in these Committee meetings. He also thanked STA staff for all their hard work.

15. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 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 2:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant