

Spokane Transit Authority
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CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes for September 9, 2009
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Fyrne Bemiller
Victor Frazier
Margaret Jones
Dean Lynch
David Swalling, Chair
Brenda Smits

STAFF PRESENT

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Susan Millbank, Ombudsman
E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance and Administration

MEMBERS ABSENT

Elaine Hoskin

GUESTS

None

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairman Swalling called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. and conducted roll call.

2. MINUTES OF THE CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE - Corrections or Approval

- a.) Mr. Swalling asked the Committee to address the meeting minutes of June 10, 2009. Mr. Swalling requested to move Mrs. Jones' name from the "Members Present" category to the "Members Absent".

The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes by consensus.

3. PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS

There were no public expressions at this time.

4. PROPOSED NEW PROJECT REVIEW – SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

a.) APTA Sustainability Workshop Summary

Ms. Meyer reported Brenda Smits was selected from the CAC to attend the APTA Sustainability Workshop in Salt Lake City, Utah with Ms. Meyer, Commissioner Mark Richard, and Mr. Blaska. Ms. Meyer also stated Mr. Frazier would have also attended had staff known at the time of planning for this travel that the statewide CAC conference in Seattle was going to be cancelled.

Ms. Meyer said the workshop was very well executed and in attendance were the "fathers" of sustainability from other transits who shared their experience with the attendees. Ms. Meyer said she is on the Mayor's sustainability task force which assisted her with understanding the content of this workshop.

Ms. Meyer stated she has yet to hear from the Committee as to their perspective on the sustainability project and is interested in hearing the Committee's input. She acknowledged that Mr. Blaska and Ms. Smits also have comments to share regarding the workshop, however, first shared with the Committee the Board feedback on new project recommendations.

b.) New Project Recommendations from STA Board Members

Ms. Meyer shared the responses of the two Board members' recommendations and reported Mr. Richard would like for the Committee to focus on the Plaza over the sustainability. Mr. Rush would like for the Committee to evaluate how much bus service there should be on Sprague, Route #90.

Ms. Meyer said she thinks the Route #90 evaluation as more of a staff assessment rather than a CAC project.

Mr. Frazier and Ms. Bemiller both said they believed the evaluation of service on Route #90 is more appropriate as an Operations and Customer Service Committee project.

Please note the following discussion encompasses Agenda items 4.a., 4.b., 4.c., and 4.d.

Mr. Blaska said the effort in sustainability has continued to gain traction in general, and specifically applies to transit. There is an international arm of APTA that has embraced sustainability in addition to the International Standards Organization (ISO), however, it is still a work in progress from APTA's perspective. He added this was an opportunity to attend a meeting for those transits who have committed to the sustainability outlining efforts, goals, etc. The signatory discussions were largely comprised of questions, leaving Mr. Blaska with the impression that STA is not a late-comer to this project.

Ms. Meyer reminded this is only the first year for APTA's commitment to sustainability.

Mr. Swalling asked for clarification on what APTA stands for.

Mr. Blaska replied American Public Transportation Association.

Ms. Meyer stated APTA is STA's association for public transportation in the United States and Canada.

Mr. Blaska said a notebook of the conference material has been compiled, and there is much to draw from in order to develop a desired program for STA in addition to education on the requirements and level of participation prior to making a signatory commitment with APTA. The Committee would need to determine why this needs to be done and to what level or extent. Mr. Blaska said there are also models from Utah Transit Authority which would be very helpful.

Ms. Meyer added this is a new project for APTA. They do not yet have a set standard and are still working on its development.

Mr. Swalling asked what exactly the term "sustainability" means to transit.

Ms. Smits replied APTA says sustainability has an environmental, social and economic component. It is a holistic approach.

Ms. Meyer shared that APTA said it should be a good business decision to operate in a sustainable fashion. It is an umbrella word that many environmental efforts fall under, however, she believes sustainability refers to the planet and how to make resources last the longest.

Ms. Smits said the Committee can determine the meaning for STA and what exactly the project will be. She added there were quality presentations at the workshop. Many transits were in attendance, each discussing the meaning of sustainability. Other transits are measuring against a set baseline to show improvements in becoming more sustainable. APTA requirements are overwhelming and thought it would take a significant commitment from both

the staff and the Board as it takes agency personnel to track and report certain items. This would be required even at the lowest level of commitment and perhaps the APTA sustainability program is not the one for STA based on these requirements. Ms. Smits suggested beginning with a small task and add on incrementally instead of jumping into everything at once.

Mrs. Jones asked if this project is feasible to do at this time, considering the economy etc.

Ms. Smits replied many of the presentations at the workshop represented economics as the primary reason why agencies are participating in sustainability.

Ms. Meyer added there were two main ideas at the workshop. The first idea is how transits are becoming more environmentally friendly, the second being how public transportation can change the world, which included examples from other countries.

Ms. Smits stated Ms. Meyer provided many networking opportunities for the STA representatives. It was beneficial to hear other perspectives and levels of expertise.

Mr. Swalling asked if there are federal regulations that would impact STA regarding sustainability.

Mr. Blaska said there are efforts in order to take a holistic view in defining transit's role so transit is not penalized as the agency invests in additional services for the community.

Ms. Smits said eventually there will be both federal and state regulations.

Ms. Meyer added as of 2009, STA is required to report the agency's emissions to the state. These regulations are the starting point and will possibly be followed by the cap and trade legislation which means to cap emissions and trading credits with another agency that is not as large of an emissions producer.

Mr. Swalling stated if the CAC were not involved with sustainability, then at some point staff would need to be, due to federal and state requirements.

Ms. Meyer agreed.

Mr. Swalling asked if the CAC would be assessing more of the effect and outcome of sustainability and regulations to STA, or if the Committee will act as more as the driver by helping staff with building this program.

Ms. Meyer stated STA does not have enough staff resources to focus on as much detail as has been discussed. It would be better if the CAC would participate, however, it needs to be determined how much of this program is right for STA. The CAC could assist by committing to an evaluation of the correct level of sustainability effort.

Mr. Blaska said if a sustainability program is selected, then the reason why needs to be determined in order to make sense to the community and the Board. Depending on the reasoning, and the level of complexity, further resources may be required. The CAC's endorsement or recommendation on a new project would be helpful in moving forward and determining the project itself.

Ms. Bemiller asked how many hybrid buses it takes to make a difference both financially and to be considered "green".

Mr. Blaska replied a reduction in fuel by thirty percent is achieved by hybrid buses. He added STA is looking for whatever opportunities can be found for hybrid bus funding and is currently hybridizing buses that would otherwise

be a diesel fleet. The trade off weighs into the research to be done and the only way to reduce CO2 emissions now, is to reduce the consumption in fuel. What is not currently known is how many hybrid buses are needed to meet this threshold.

Ms. Meyer stated in the six year capital plan, thirty-two buses will be replaced.

Mr. Frazier asked if STA would be evaluated favorably for carbon emissions if over the next six years a commitment to purchasing hybrid buses takes place vs. the baseline year of reporting.

Ms. Smits replied it depends on the baseline reporting year. 2009 will be reported in 2010. Washington State has not ever received this information before and will gather data for at least two years prior to evaluation.

Mr. Blaska stated STA will have twenty-two hybrid buses by mid 2010.

Ms. Meyer said it is not the amount of hybrids that are considered for CO2 emissions, it is the percentage of reductions in comparison to the year prior to introducing the first hybrid bus to the STA fleet.

Ms. Jones reminded the Committee a discussion needs to take place about the viability of the factories making the hybrid buses, and if they will remain open in this economy. She said just because a bus is hybrid does not mean that it produces less bi-product into the air.

Mr. Lynch said this will be a part of the conversation as the project is further defined.

In reference to the hybrid bus example, Ms. Meyer said it would cost an additional \$6.4M to replace thirty-two coaches with hybrids. A diesel 40' coach is \$330,000; a hybrid 40' coach is \$530,000. If the CAC were to recommend this is an investment worth making both economically and socially, this analysis could be taken to the Board.

Mr. Swalling said it seems there is a technical aspect necessary for this type of analysis and requires a ground level explanation for the public.

Mr. Blaska said STA has a maintenance analyst, Charlie Phillips, who could research materials for this extended analysis.

Ms. Meyer informed the Committee of the House Substitute Bill 1481, which has passed and requires all governments to have one hundred percent bio-diesel or electric fleets by 2015. An assignment has been given to the Department of Commerce to evaluate whether it is practicable.

Ms. Millbank added this Bill is on hold due to lack of state funds. The Department of Commerce is not pursuing setting this as a regulation.

Ms. Meyer announced STA has been invited to participate in a project to evaluate how much it would cost to convert the local fleets to bio-diesel or electric. Avista, City of Spokane, STA, and Spokane County each would be partners in this project. It has been proposed based on this new legislation suggesting it will take place. Each partner has been asked for \$5,000, staff support, in addition to a grant from the Department of Commerce.

Ms. Meyer feels STA should not participate so early in the project prior to the final outcome of the legislation. Otherwise, STA is in a position of joining or explaining why it is not participating. She did say however, if the consulting firm changes their scope of work to meet STA's requirements, then STA would agree to participate.

Mr. Blaska said this is a potential requirement that STA needs to address.

Ms. Meyer stated it is hopeful that the bio-diesel study previously conducted by STA will be helpful to this process.

Mr. Frazier asked if electric means wired or an electric bus.

Ms. Meyer replied it is both and is applicable to all fleets, such as police, fire, etc.

Mr. Blaska reminded to think about what is required for these projects in combination with what the CAC would like to do. This will assist in determining a program and its components.

Mrs. Jones stated she is bothered at the notion of electric vehicles and the associated cost with this unfunded mandate.

Ms. Millbank replied it is important to establish an outline when moving forward with new projects.

Mr. Frazier said he would like to see the Committee address sustainability for STA. He agrees with Commissioner Richard regarding the CAC providing input on the Plaza projects and suggested for the Committee to address the Plaza projects along side of the sustainability issues.

Ms. Smits reflected back to Ms. Bemiller's earlier question regarding the benefits of hybrid buses. She said in diesel fuel there is a component called PM2.5 and poses a significant health hazard which has been measured and documented, for which the EPA has set new standards.

Mr. Swalling asked the Committee if they were prepared to make a motion.

Mrs. Jones said she liked Mr. Frazier's idea.

Mr. Frazier asked about a timeline on the Plaza projects.

Ms. Meyer said an RFP has not yet been released for an architect or a construction firm. The process is not yet confirmed. If the CAC chooses to address sustainability, then the Committee's contribution to the Plaza project would be to scale. There is a large public outreach component needed for the Plaza project.

Mr. Swalling reminded the Committee of Ms. Hoskin's sentiment regarding the Plaza project. She is concerned with the messaging of the recent fare increase in addition to a \$3M renovation of the Plaza. She wonders why more money is being spent on the Plaza when riders have just been told they will be spending more to ride the bus. Can the project be delayed?

Ms. Meyer replied the Plaza does not operate well in its environment as the building was constructed in such a way the rider has to wait on the street to be sure not to miss their bus. There are no windows on the Sprague Avenue side and the sidewalk is narrow in a number of places creating bottlenecks on the corner of Post and Sprague for example. There are a number of operational, environment, and public relation reasons to do this project. The downtown business community supported reauthorization of the sales tax and followed with great interest whether STA was to remain at the Plaza or go to the Intermodal Center. The analysis favored remaining at the Plaza which was explained to these businesses. Their response was favorable only if changes took place at the Plaza to improve operations.

Mr. Blaska responded positively to Mr. Frazier's suggestion of the Committee addressing both the sustainability and the Plaza at the same time. The CAC can provide input on various aspects of the Plaza project, however, it would

not be a project for the CAC to own. He states a timeline is not available at this point. Additionally, the sustainability project will advance slowly, however, will be a direct CAC project, and will eventually result in a recommendation from the Committee to the Board. Both projects can alternate being in the forefront of the CAC's scope as specific items arise needing to be addressed. The Board values the CAC's input as the voice of the community on both projects.

Mr. Frazier reiterated the importance of including all the communities which use the Plaza into the discussion for primary user input.

Mr. Lynch said if an architect is hired prior to getting a bid, this will make a favorable difference with the CAC involvement. He added it would be helpful for the CAC to have a sub-committee as a primary contact with the project manager to report back to the CAC. If the CAC membership were to expand to fifteen members, this would allow for dual focus by a set group of people.

Mrs. Jones stated the users need to be a part of the process.

Ms. Meyer replied there are many stakeholders in this process.

Mr. Frazier said the Committee would need to know how many additional members there will be prior to splitting the CAC into sub-groups.

Mr. Frazier motioned for the CAC to address both the Plaza renovation project in addition to the sustainability project with the intent to form sub-groups at a later date based on necessity and if the number of Committee members permits.

Mrs. Jones seconded Mr. Frazier's motion.

Mr. Lynch clarified he was not suggesting a split of the Committee, rather, developing a focus group for the Plaza project.

Ms. Bemiller said she is an advocate of being available for the Plaza project as needed and to keep the sustainability project as the Committee's main focus.

Ms. Smits said if a sub-committee is necessary she would be in support.

Mr. Frazier modified his motion and suggested for the CAC to address both the Plaza renovation project in addition to the sustainability project. Sub-groups may be formed at a later date based on necessity and if the number of Committee members permits.

Mrs. Jones seconded Mr. Frazier's motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

5. CAC REVISED CHARTER – REVIEW AND APPROVAL FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD

Mr. Swalling asked if upon Committee approval of the revisions to the CAC charter, would this final product be presented to the Board for approval.

Mr. Blaska said the detailed list naming each Committee member will be removed as an exhibit to the charter and STA legal counsel will review the resolution for any necessary changes. If the Committee has no further changes, the revised charter and resolution will be on the Board October meeting agenda for adoption.

Mr. Lynch motioned to approve the revised Charter.

Ms. Smits seconded Mr. Lynch's motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

6. NEW MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

Mr. Swalling asked if CAC members may suggest new members.

Mrs. Jones requested a copy of the advertisement so she may forward it to persons of interest.

Mr. Blaska said all outreach is helpful.

Mr. Plaster noted one typographical error which will be edited by the Communications staff.

Mr. Lynch asked for the final advertisement to be emailed to the Committee.

Ms. Millbank reminded the Committee that applicants need to live within the Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) or be a current transit user, and must be a registered voter.

Mr. Swalling asked Mr. Blaska for clarification on the application review process.

Mr. Blaska said once the applications are received, they will be provided to the Committee for review. Selected applicants will partake in an interview process with the Board Chair and a staff member, which the Committee members are welcome to attend. Upon final selection, a recommendation for approval of the new members will be made to the Board.

7. STATEWIDE CAC MEETING

Mr. Swalling announced the 2009 statewide CAC meeting to be hosted by King County Metro in Seattle on Friday, September 25, 2009 has been cancelled due to significant cuts in travel budgets.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

Mr. Blaska called the Committee's attention to items provided by Ms. Dunning from spokesmanreview.com regarding "Sustainable September". Included in these items is a calendar of events taking place throughout the month. Mr. Blaska noted one event in particular, Faces of Sustainability: "The Bottom Line of Going Green", and said there are two free tickets and if more members are interested in attending, approval would be needed to purchase additional tickets.

Mr. Plaster stated he reviewed the STA Bylaws and reported the CEO could approve the purchase if needed.

Ms. Bemiller and Ms. Smits said they would like to attend. Other Committee members expressed interest and said they would contact Ms. Dunning.

Mr. Swalling asked Mr. Plaster to provide a financial update at the next meeting.

Mr. Plaster said he would provide a highlight of current financial data.

Mr. Frazier announced he will be on the sustainability committee for his employer, The Spokane Club.

Ms. Smits noted there is a sustainability tour of “green” homes on September 20th.

Mr. Plaster shared there will be a Board Planning and Financial Workshop on October 7th following the Operations and Customer Service Committee meeting and CAC members are welcome to attend.

9. SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Wednesday, October 14, 2009 – 5:00 p.m. (Regular Meeting) – Spokane Transit, Northside Conference Room.

11. ADJOURN

With there being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Naomi Dunning

Executive Assistant