

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

OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes of the September 2, 2009, Meeting
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Nancy McLaughlin, City of Spokane**
Mike Brewer, Citizen
Ann Campeau, Citizen
Nan Kelly, Citizen
David Driscoll, Citizen
Barbara Richardson, Citizen
Dan Murphy, Citizen
Jim Fitzgerald, ATU 1015
Phil Ridenour, AFSCME 3939
Mitch Bright, ATU 1598

MEMBERS ABSENT

Richard Munson, City of Spokane Valley*
Rick Jacks, Citizen
Andrew Rolwes, Citizen

*Chair **Acting Chair

STAFF PRESENT

E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer
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
Susan Millbank, Community Ombudsman &
Accessibility Coordinator
Steve Doolittle, Manager, Human Resources
Mike Toole, Assistant Manager, Safety & Security
Cliff Schlienger, Security Coordinator
Patty Talbott, Quality Performance Specialist

GUESTS

Sean Powers, Paratransit, Inc.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairman McLaughlin 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 JULY 1, 2009, COMMITTEE MEETING – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL**

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

4. **PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS**

None.

5. **RECOMMENDATION FOR REVISIONS TO STA'S RULES OF CONDUCT – DISCUSSION**

Ms. Millbank distributed copies of the revised Rules of Conduct at the start of the meeting. She explained that STA developed its Rules of Conduct in order to maintain orderly, safe, secure, comfortable, and convenient public transportation. The first version was adopted by the Board of Directors in May 1995 and there have been several revisions to the Rules since that time. Ms. Millbank said there are six Articles to the Rules of Conduct and she briefly outlined the proposed changes to the Articles. She noted that the majority of the changes would be to Article III, which lists those behaviors which are considered "unlawful conduct" when riding a Spokane Transit vehicle. The proposed changes are tied to recent changes made by the Washington State Legislature, and include suggested revisions from STA Security and Operations staff members based on experience and history. She added that staff also suggested clarifications as well as expanded times in length of exclusion and the appeals process. Sections of the document were also reorganized for clarity and logical flow, and the Rules now include information pertaining to behavior at The Plaza. Ms. Millbank asked the Committee to review the revised Rules of Conduct and provide feedback at the October meeting.

6. **APPROVAL OF SCOPE OF SERVICES FOR HOSES AND FITTINGS SERVICE CONTRACT – DISCUSSION**

Mr. Blaska said the current hoses and fittings service contract will expire in December. Staff is asking the Committee to approve the Scope of Services in order to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for this contract. The contract is expected to cost approximately \$175,000 over five years. Staff also requested a member of the Committee to assist with evaluation of proposals received.

Mr. Fitzgerald moved to approve the Scope of Services for release of an RFP for the Hose and Fittings Service Contract at a total estimated cost of \$175,000 over the potential five-year contract. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Mr. Brewer volunteered to assist with evaluation of the proposals.

7. APPROVAL OF SCOPE OF SERVICES FOR FASTENERS AND FITTINGS SERVICE CONTRACT – DISCUSSION

Mr. Blaska said the current fasteners and fittings service contract will expire in December. Staff is asking the Committee to approve the Scope of Services in order to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for this contract. The contract is expected to cost approximately \$317,000 over five years. Staff also requested a member of the Committee to assist with evaluation of proposals received. Mr. Blaska added that these services may be available off the Washington State Procurement Contract and staff will compare costs to see if better pricing is available.

Mr. Brewer moved to approve the Scope of Services for release of an RFP for the Fasteners and Fittings Service Contract at a total estimated cost of \$317,000 over the potential five-year contract. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Mr. Brewer volunteered to assist with evaluation of the proposals.

8. PROPOSED AWARDS POLICY REVISION FOR QUALITY COUNTS SURVEY PROGRAM – DISCUSSION

Mr. Blaska explained that the Committee recommended and the Board approved an award of contract to TrendSource® in May for a “Mystery Shopper” program, which has been renamed the Quality Counts Survey Program. Implementation will include communication with employees about the program, a two-week validation process while the contractor observes how STA is currently operating, followed by a four-week initial test to look at the data and subsequently establish a baseline. An ongoing survey program is anticipated to begin in late February or early March of next year. To ensure the success of this program, staff is asking the Committee to recommend to the Board a change to STA’s current Awards Policy, which would include an incentive for employees who demonstrate outstanding performance.

Mr. Driscoll moved to recommend the Board of Directors approve by resolution the recommended changes to the current STA Awards Policy. The motion was seconded and passed 9:1. Mr. Fitzgerald voted against. Ms. McLaughlin inquired as to the reason and Mr. Fitzgerald stated it was to show consistency in the 1015 position on the program.

9. SYSTEMS RIDERSHIP ANALYSIS – SIX MONTH ASSESSMENT – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska said that rather than present a standard route-by-route and geographic analysis of ridership, he would like to review ridership in context with the external environment, the five-year perspective, and developing trends. In reference to the external environment, he noted that ridership has reached a plateau, which was expected. The national trend for first quarter 2009 indicates that ridership was down 1.5%; however, STA ridership still indicated marginal growth during that timeframe. Second quarter information will not be available until October, but the expectation is that despite the ridership plateau, STA will continue to out-perform the national trend. Staff looked for patterns of activity and looked at traffic counts to see where people were moving through the region, but the information was inconclusive. Economic activity including unemployment and program cuts have also had an impact on ridership.

Mr. Blaska said that over the last five years, STA has experienced a 48% growth in ridership, and a 45% increase over the last three years. However, there was an expectation that ridership would plateau based on maturation of the service change that was implemented in July 2005. There has been overall improvement. People who have tried the system have largely stayed with it.

In reference to developing trends, Mr. Blaska explained that month-to-month growth is still occurring in some routes, but there is some decline in certain areas compared to last year. The high frequency, direct routes are still performing well. However, there has been some ridership decline in the longest and shortest routes. It is unclear if this is a trend. Mr. Blaska said that staff will continue to monitor ridership to see if trends are developing to ensure STA is meeting the needs of the community.

The prognosis is that ridership will continue to be slightly lower in month-to-month comparisons to 2008 through the remainder of the year. In addition, staff anticipates an impact on ridership in 2010 when fare increases go into effect. STA’s objective is to provide quality service to retain the new customers, and to make minor service adjustments when necessary, using available resources to encourage new riders. However, without an infusion of new service, we should not expect the record increases in ridership that we have experienced over the last few years.

10. MOBILITY ORIENTATION (TRAVEL TRAINING) PROGRAM – THIRD YEAR REVIEW – INFORMATION

Mr. Blaska explained that this program began in July 2006 and it is designed to help seniors and people with disabilities gain more independence by assisting them in becoming fixed route bus riders by showing them how

the system works. Training is tailored to each customer's specific needs. Mr. Blaska reviewed program statistics for the past three years, noting that 128 people were successfully provided training this year, the goal of sixty intensive trainings was achieved within the first six months of the year, and the team is continuing outreach efforts by extending into new communities and groups that had not previously been contacted. The program is funded by the Washington State Needs Grant, and is self-sustaining through cost avoidance.

Goals for next year include 144 assessments, 60 basic trainings, 60 intensive trainings, and 36 group trainings. Objectives include continuing the focus on independent travel for the elderly and people with disabilities, improving trip tracking, expanding marketing strategies, and reducing the demand for costly paratransit services.

11. DRAFT SERVICE DESIGN PRINCIPLES, POLICIES, AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS - INFORMATION

Mr. Otterstrom explained that STA's current Service Planning Guidelines were updated and adopted in February 2000. The Guidelines established STA's fixed route and paratransit service standards. The draft "Service Design Principles, Policies, and Performance Standards," which will be distributed to Committee members for review later this month, is intended to replace the existing guidelines for fixed route service only. The proposed Guidelines would be used to improve existing service, evaluate options to increase service, and guide service reductions when required.

Major policy categories include fixed route service types, service allocation, hours of service, headway (frequency), stop spacing and placement, and decision making for service changes process. Performance Standards have a triple bottom-line approach: ridership productivity (social), energy consumption (environmental), and farebox recovery (economic).

Mr. Otterstrom reviewed the proposed timeline and concluded by saying staff will be asking the Board to incorporate the Service Design Principles, Policies, and Performance Standards into the Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation late this year or early next year.

12. CEO REPORT – INFORMATION

- a. Ms. Meyer said STA submitted a federal appropriations request in the amount of \$2.1M in 2010 for the hybridization of ten 40' coaches. Senator Murray subsequently submitted a request for \$1.3M. The federal Appropriations Committee approved the Transportation Bill before recess, and after recess the bill will go to Conference for the House and Senate to review. Staff is hoping for approval of the full \$1.3M requested in light of the fact that nothing was received during the last federal appropriations request.
- b. Ms. Meyer said the City of Spokane pursued and received a \$294K federal earmark for a Streetcar Alternatives Analysis. Because STA has experience in transit projects, the City has agreed to assign the earmark to STA to do a comprehensive analysis and comparison of streetcar and alternate modes on various downtown streets. The City also received a \$250K state grant to perform an assessment of the Howard Street bridges and a public outreach to promote the benefits of a streetcar, and STA has encouraged the City to contribute a portion of those funds toward the Alternatives Analysis project. Staff is developing a memorandum of understanding to establish a stakeholder advisory and technical oversight committee for this project. Ms. Meyer reviewed the proposed timeline for the project and concluded by saying that early next year staff will recommend the Board award a contract for a project consultant with the intent of completing the Alternatives Analysis by March 2011.
- c. Ms. Meyer explained that sales tax revenue is down 9.6% comparing August 2009 to August 2008, and down 8.6% year to date through August for an impact of -\$2.6M. She reviewed a sales tax summary of all the jurisdictions in the county and noted that sales tax revenue is down approximately \$7.4M for all jurisdictions together year to date.
- d. Ms. Meyer said she, Mr. Brewer, and Ms. McLaughlin attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the US 395 North Spokane Corridor on August 22nd. The Washington State Department of Transportation asked STA to provide fixed route coaches to transport attendees from the Mead High School parking lot to the festivities. Ms. Meyer commented that she was very proud of the wonderful job done by all the coach operators who participated. She noted that Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers also attended the ceremony and Governor Gregoire sent word of her commitment to submit a funding request for completion of the US 395 project through a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant.
- e. Ms. Meyer explained that on the previous Friday, Paratransit Van Operator Robert Chapman passed away while on duty. He was employed by STA for 23 years. He will be sorely missed by all his friends at STA and the customers he served on a daily basis. A memorial service will be held on September 12th.

- f. Ms. Meyer said that STA recently held a fundraiser for United Way wherein she and several other senior staff members submitted themselves to a “dunk tank.” The event was a success.

13. COMMITTEE INFORMATION

- a. Second Quarter 2009 Performance Measures - Results – as presented.
- b. 2009 Operating Indicators Through Second Quarter – as presented.
- c. Second Quarter 2009 Safety & Loss Summary Report – as presented.
- d. June 2009 Operating Indicators – as presented.
- e. July 2009 Operating Indicators – as presented.
- f. Community Outreach and Involvement – as presented.
- g. Downtown Spokane Transit Alternatives Analysis – as presented.

14. OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

- a. Ms. Kelly commented that the new bus benches that have been placed in several locations around town do not appear to be wide enough to accommodate larger individuals. Ms. Campeau echoed those same concerns. Mr. Blaska said there was also concern about the large trash receptacle that is attached to the benches which could constrain where the benches could be placed. Discussion ensued regarding construction of the benches. Ms. Meyer commented that the new benches do not appear to be aesthetically pleasing and the vendor is aware of STA’s concerns. The City is also soliciting comments from the public about the benches.
- b. Mr. Blaska said one application for membership on the Operations and Customer Service Committee had been received. Another individual expressed interest, but he would not be eligible for inclusion on the Committee unless the Board makes an exception because he does not live within the Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA). Mr. Blaska asked him to submit an application anyway, and noted that this individual’s role on Committee would be of great value because he would represent the University District.

Ms. Kelly left the meeting at 2:56 p.m.

15. COMMITTEE MEMBERS’ EXPRESSIONS

None.

16. NEXT MEETING – WEDNESDAY, October 7, 2009, 1:30 P.M., SOUTHSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM, 1230 WEST BOONE AVENUE

17. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Acting Chairman McLaughlin adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Van Dort, Executive Assistant