

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

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Minutes of the April 21, 2010, Meeting  
City Council Chambers  
808 West Spokane Falls Blvd., Spokane, Washington

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Wendy Van Orman, City of Liberty Lake, Chair  
Amber Waldref, City of Spokane  
Jon Snyder, City of Spokane  
Dean Grafos, City of Spokane Valley  
Gary Schimmels, City of Spokane Valley  
Patrick Rushing, City of Airway Heights  
Mark Richard, Spokane County  
Bonnie Mager, Spokane County

### **STAFF PRESENT**

E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer  
Jim Plaster, Director of Finance & Administration  
Steve Blaska, Director of Operations  
Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning  
Mike Volz, Assistant Director of Finance & Administration  
Steve Doolittle, Human Resources Manager  
Molly Myers, Communications Manager

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Richard Rush, City of Spokane

### **PROVIDING LEGAL COUNSEL**

Laura McAloon, K & L Gates LLP

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1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**  
Chair Van Orman called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. and conducted roll call.
  2. **APPROVAL OF BOARD AGENDA**  
**Mr. Richard moved to approve the Board agenda. Mr. Grafos seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**
  3. **RECOGNITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**
    - A. **David Swalling, Retiring Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Chairman**  
Mr. Blaska reported that Mr. Swalling has been a member of the CAC since its inception in 2004 and its Chairman since 2007. The Board recognized Mr. Swalling for his outstanding leadership and dedication to Spokane Transit and public transportation.
    - B. **Ken Brown, Coach Operator - Retirement**  
Mr. Brown has worked for STA since 1986 as a Coach Operator and garnered 17 years of safe driving. Mr. Blaska said he was one of the coach operators who participated in the 2007 skating event and set the standard for excellence. The Board recognized Mr. Brown for his years of service and dedication.
    - C. **Years of Service Awards**  
Mr. Doolittle read the names of employees with 5, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years of service. He recognized Richard Bessette, first class mechanic for 30 years of service and Larry Eilmers for his 20 years of service. Mr. Eilmers was present for the recognition. The employees were commended for their years of service to STA and the community.
    - D. **First Quarter 2010 Employee Recognition Winners**  
Mr. Doolittle read the names of those employees who won the employee recognition awards for the months of January and February. No employees were nominated in March. This program was approved by the Board to acknowledge employees who go the extra mile in the course of their work.

4. PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS – None.

5. BOARD ACTION: CONSENT AGENDA

**Mr. Rushing moved to approve consent agenda items 5. A-C. Mr. Schimmels seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

- A. Motion to approve minutes of the March 17, 2010 Board Meeting.
- B. Motion to approve Accounts Payable Voucher and Warrant nos. 554978, 554979 and 561187 through 561660, and Worker's Compensation Warrant nos. 204347 through 204531 totaling \$3,257,492.20 for the period March 1 through March 31, 2010.
- C. Motion to approve the appointment of a citizen member, Dr. Philip Rudy, to the Citizen Advisory Committee.

6. BOARD ACTION: OTHER ITEMS – None.

7. STAFF REPORTS:

A. Annual Route Performance Report

Mr. Otterstrom outlined the three performance standards: ridership productivity (measured by boardings per revenue hour); energy consumption (measured by average load factor); and, farebox recovery. Several routes fail all three of these standards and two of these are scheduled to be eliminated in the September 2010 service reduction (routes #35 and 47). Other routes fail two of the three standards and some failed one standard. Sixteen routes met all the standards. Mr. Otterstrom explained that routes that fail to meet two of the three service standards will undergo remedial action within 18 months. This action may include routing modifications, frequency adjustments, elimination, and stop changes. Proposed actions include eliminating routes #35 and 47; modifying route #2; and, continuing to analyze routes #41, 46, 62, and 97. Board members discussed the ramifications of these changes.

B. Draft Recommendation for September 2010 Service Reduction

Mr. Otterstrom said this item is a draft recommendation only at this time. There will be a public hearing on May 19 and a Board decision will be requested at the June 16, 2010 meeting. Approved changes and reductions will go into effect September, 2010. Paratransit boundary re-alignment will take effect March 2011 since a longer period of time is needed to map the boundaries. The criteria for the preliminary proposal are consistent with the service design guidelines and the public outreach which included online surveys, Plaza display and posters, signage and press release. Staff also attended neighborhood council meetings and meetings with organizations such as universities and Spokane Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP) representatives. Approximately 12,180 annual hours of savings are proposed in this recommendation. Some recommendations have changed from the original proposal based on public input; three routes are modified (#27, 29, 91), three route recommendations are withdrawn or deferred (#31, 65, 66) and nine route recommendations remain the same (#2, 20, 33, 23, 35, 47, 44, 74).

Ms. Waldref asked how this would affect ridership and could passengers go on another route close by. Mr. Otterstrom said it was consistent with the elasticity of ridership standards. If service is less frequent, some passengers stop riding and some continue; an average is taken.

Mr. Snyder asked about mandates for paratransit service.

Ms. McAloon explained that approximately 15 years ago, STA was in a class action suit brought by paratransit riders who would have lost their service under the federal mandate of providing paratransit service to those who lived within ¾ mile of the fixed route bus service. Previously, the entire Public Transportation Benefit Area was served by paratransit service. The suit was settled and STA's provision of service within the ¾ mile boundary was accepted.

Ms. Meyer said it is a common misconception that paratransit service for those who qualify is separate from the fixed route service but in fact it complements it. If there is no fixed route service, there is no paratransit service.

Ms. McAloon added that those who qualify for paratransit service can still use it if they can get into the boundary, for example, at a park and ride lot.

Ms. Waldref said if the #35 and 47 routes are eliminated fixed route passengers will lose their service as well as those paratransit riders who are affected.

Mr. Otterstrom noted that the original proposed changes to the Cheney routes have been deferred.

Ms. Mager asked if Eastern Washington University subsidizes student passes.

Mr. Otterstrom said the University pays between 15 and 20% of each pass.

Mr. Otterstrom concluded by saying that written comments from the public will be accepted through May 20, 2010.

#### C. Quality Counts! Program Update

Mr. Blaska said TrendSource of San Diego was awarded a contract in May, 2009 to conduct a "mystery shopper" program for STA with the purpose of acknowledging and rewarding employees offering exemplary customer service. This program also serves to measure STA's performance toward its priority to "Provide Outstanding Customer Service." Over the past year they have conducted test, pilot, and baseline programs. STA employees have performed very well during all phases of the project. A rating of 4.5 on a 5-point scale was established as a standard and overall the rating was 4.67. Each month the employees who receive an excellent rating receive a pin and certificate and their names are put into a drawing for \$50. The Maintenance Department earned \$50 towards a celebration event in February for receiving an excellent rating for clean vehicles. Mr. Blaska pointed out that an excellent rating is not easy to achieve, making the employees' efforts even more admirable. Areas for improvement include stop announcements, paratransit employees identifying themselves to their customers, and telephone access (some calls went to voice mail).

Ms. Van Orman offered that STA employees follow up very well on telephone calls in her experience.

Mr. Richard asked about the cost of this service.

Mr. Blaska said it cost \$85,693 for development and three years of the sustained program. He added that the program is working very well and demonstrates the quality of STA's employees.

Mr. Richard said he was honored to sit on the Board of an organization with such a high level of professional employees.

#### D. March 2010 Ridership Highlights

Mr. Blaska reported an increase of 0.5% in March from March 2009, noting that there was one additional weekday in March, 2010. Year-to-date is an increase of 0.1%. Paratransit ridership decreased in March by -5.7% with a year-to-date increase of 1.0%. There has been a decrease in cash sales and an increase in student pass and day pass sales.

Ms. Van Orman asked if there will be an increase in ridership with higher gas prices.

Mr. Blaska said that when gas was \$4 per gallon, ridership increased and the increase was largely sustained when the price of gas went down.

#### E. February 2010 Financial Highlights

Mr. Plaster reported that operating revenue year-to-date was \$1.6M with a growth of 15.78% over the same period in 2009. Total revenue year-to-date of \$10.7M shows an increase of 0.04% above last year. Overall, year-to-date favorable budget variances (revenues and expenditures combined) were \$632,666. Sales tax revenue was -9.7% below budget in March and -4.0% below budget year-to-date as of March. Sales tax was 4.9% less than March 2009. Compared with other jurisdictions in the region, STA is in the middle at 4.9% in sales tax cash receipts.

8. CEO REPORT

Transportation Benefit District (TBD)

Ms. Meyer said the TBD draft interlocal agreement was included in last month's Board packet and at that time the Board agreed to get STA included in the TBD. The conceptual distribution of TBD funding is included in the grey folders. This funding assumes a \$45 car tab fee generating an estimated \$20M annually. Voter approval would be required. The proposed distribution formula would be based on 50% population and 50% vehicle miles traveled with 70% for maintenance and operations and 30% for regionally significant projects. Staff recommendations will be brought before the Board at the May 19, 2010 meeting.

Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) Agreement Update

On April 8, 2010, STA's Legal Counsel presented a memo to the SRTC Board summarizing the following outstanding issues: members who have not previously been required to contribute funds toward SRTC's annual budget would now be required to do so; the interlocal may be amended by a majority vote of the membership; some positions should be ex-officio and include a multi-modal interest in transportation. The SRTC Board agreed that SRTC may not acquire or use real property to operate a transportation system.

Ms. Meyer reported that a meeting of attorneys representing the County, Cities of Spokane and Spokane Valley, STA and SRTC will convene to see if agreement can be reached. Washington State Department of Transportation has also been invited to participate. Following agreement on the outstanding issues, the interlocal agreement will be circulated to the other cities and towns for review and comment. These comments will be reviewed by the SRTC Board and after they take action the agreement will be sent to the members for adoption by their respective governing bodies. This could take place in May or June.

Mr. Rushing left at 7:10 p.m.

Downtown Transit Alternatives Analysis

The Sounding Board has convened and a process established. Consultant CH2M Hill is developing a travel market assessment and drafting goals and objectives for input from partners. The ultimate decision is up to the STA Board and the Spokane City Council for the locally preferred alternative. An open house will be scheduled for June.

Three-Bike Racks

Ms. Meyer advised that staff has coordinated with other transit agencies to ascertain how problems have been addressed. This outreach will continue. The approximate cost to change the bike racks from two to three capacity on the entire fleet is \$150K to \$200K (\$1,500 each plus labor). This is not included in the capital budget.

Mr. Snyder said he was told the cost is \$900.

Mr. Blaska said Sportcraft is the one source for this product. He has checked their website and also Seattle Metro who currently have some three capacity bike racks.

Mr. Snyder suggested a pilot program in the summer.

In talking to other agencies Mr. Blaska said there have been problems with the reliability of the securement, obstruction of headlights, and the longer length of the rack.

Ms. Meyer said it would be best to do a trial on the highest ridership routes, possibly using hybrid buses.

Mr. Richard said in view of the upcoming service reductions this may not be the best time to consider such a project. He wondered how many customers would use this enhanced feature. It would be appropriate to find out the interest level first.

Mr. Blaska anticipated that coach operators would be concerned about the increased length of the vehicle with a longer bike rack since it affects the turning radius.

Ms. Van Orman agreed with Mr. Richard in that STA is barely making ends meet and it would be best to keep the status quo.

Mr. Richard added that the cost of doing a Request for Proposals (RFP) needs to be taken into account including staff time, even for a pilot program. He requested that staff provide an assessment of the time or cost of going through an RFP process.

Ms. Meyer agreed to bring this back to the Board in May after more research has been done.

#### Bloomsday

Bloomsday is Sunday, May 2, 2010. The cost of a day pass is \$1.25. There are four express shuttle park and ride lots: Valley Mall; Northtown Mall, Ferris High School; and, Cheney Red Barn. Buses will leave continuously between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and return from downtown between 10:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Regular Sunday service will begin one hour earlier. The smooth running of the Bloomsday event is made possible by a team effort by all STA employees who work at the trade show and load passengers at the park and ride lots in addition to the coach operators. It is an expense to STA to provide this service but it is considered part of a community partnership.

9. NEW BUSINESS – None.

10. BOARD MEMBERS' EXPRESSIONS – None.

11. BOARD INFORMATION

- A. Committee Minutes
- B. Miscellaneous Correspondence
- C. First Quarter 2010 Travel Report
- D. February 2010 Operating Indicators
- E. Summer Detour Plan
- F. First Quarter 2010 Procurement Report
- G. February 2010 Financial Results Summary
- H. Connect Spokane: A Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:30 p.m., Ms. McAloon announced that the Board would adjourn for an Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining.

The STA Board of Directors will reconvene in open session at approximately 7:40 p.m. If it becomes necessary to extend the executive session, a member of the staff will return to announce the time at which the STA Board will reconvene. If any action is to be taken as a result of discussions in the executive session, that action will occur in open public session.

At 7:40 p.m., the Board of Directors reconvened and Chair Van Orman declared the meeting back in open public session. No action was taken.

13. CABLE 5 BROADCAST DATES AND TIMES OF THE APRIL 21, 2010 BOARD MEETING:

Saturday, April 24, 2010	4:00 p.m.
Monday, April 26, 2010	10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, April 27, 2010	8:00 p.m.

14. NEXT COMMITTEE MEETINGS (Southside Conference Room, 1229 West Boone Avenue, Spokane, Washington):  
Operations & Customer Service                      May 5, 2010, 1:30 p.m.  
Citizen Advisory Committee                              May 12, 2010, 5:00 p.m.
15. NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, May 19, 2010, 5:30 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers, 808 West Spokane Falls Blvd, Spokane, Washington.
16. NEXT PUBLIC HEARING: Wednesday, May 19, 2010, 5:30 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers, 808 West Spokane Falls Blvd, Spokane, Washington to discuss:  
Draft Proposal for September 2010 Service Reduction
17. ADJOURNED  
With no further business to come before the Board, Chair Van Orman adjourned the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Watson  
Executive Assistant to the CEO  
& Clerk of the Authority