

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes of the March 18, 2024

STA Board Meeting

1230 W Boone Ave., Spokane
w/Virtual Joining Option

MEMBERS PRESENT

Al French, Spokane County, *Chair (virtual)*
Betsy Wilkerson, City of Spokane
Chris Grover, Small Cities (Cheney) *Ex Officio*
Dan Dunne, Small Cities (Liberty Lake) *(Virtual)*
Hank Bynaker, Small Cities (Airway Heights) *Ex Officio*
Josh Kerns, Spokane County *(Virtual)*
Kitty Klitzke, City of Spokane
Lance Speirs, Small Cities (Medical Lake) *Ex Officio*
Pamela Haley, City of Spokane Valley
Paul Dillon, City of Spokane *(Virtual)*
Tim Hattenburg, City of Spokane Valley
Zack Zappone, City of Spokane
Rhonda Bowers, Labor Representative, Non-Voting

STAFF PRESENT

E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer
Brandon Rapez-Betty, Chief Operations Officer
Carly Cortright, Chief Communications & Customer
Service Officer
Karl Otterstrom, Chief Planning & Development Officer
Monique Liard, Chief Financial Officer *Virtual*
Nancy Williams, Chief Human Resources Officer
Dana Infalt, Clerk of the Authority

PROVIDING LEGAL COUNSEL

Megan Clark, Etter, McMahan, Lamberson, Van
Wert and Oreskovich, P.C.

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dan Sander, Small Cities (Millwood) *Ex Officio*

1. **Call To Order and Roll Call**

Chair French called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm and the Clerk conducted Roll call.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Everyone stood as Mr. Kerns led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Excused Absences** – none requested

4. **Approve Board Agenda**

Prior to approving the Agenda, the Chair exercised privilege and requested Ms. Haley, Chair Pro Tem, assume the position as Chair and recognize him to present a motion to amend the agenda. Ms. Haley agreed and recognized Mr. French.

Mr. French made a motion to amend the Agenda to add an item related to Agenda Item 8A for a discussion by Board members of potential programs STA can provide for the community's 50 year celebration of Expo 74. He noted once a second was received, he would speak to the motion. Mr. Zappone seconded.

Mr. French spoke about the 50th anniversary of Expo '74 approaching and the opportunity to demonstrate STA's support for the historic event. He said STA has a history of supporting community events like Bloomsday and Hoopfest and also offers other support such as the evacuation for the Gray fire and transportation to warming centers during cold weather events. The Board has historically considered the impacts and cost as part of its analysis of community programs to make an informed decision. He understood the City of Spokane had a proposal to be considered and he was aware of other suggestions as well. Mr. French stated the Agenda item would provide an opportunity to get

each of the proposals on the table and staff can conduct the analysis so the Board can make the best decision in April. The analysis would include financial impacts, programmatic impacts, operational impacts, and coordination with other programs already underway that STA supports. He thanked Vice Chair Haley for the opportunity to speak.

Discussion ensued regarding where to place the item on the agenda. It was determined it should be under Board Action – Item 8.

Mr. Kerns made a motion to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Dunne seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5. Public Expressions

Chair French reminded everyone that public expressions were intended to be for current issues. He asked that there be no personal attacks and that everyone follow the Rules of Procedure which allow 3 minutes of testimony per person. He asked Ms. Haley to facilitate the Public Expressions since she was attending in person. Ms. Haley agreed.

Mr. Erik Lowe introduced his son and spoke in favor riding the bus. He indicated he was in favor of a promotional free fare for the Expo celebrations, but not free fares forever. He suggested going fare free on a permanent basis would likely mean service cuts which would result in lower ridership and a lower quality experience for everyone and he discussed other potential benefits and drawbacks of free fares.

Ms. Anne Martin joined the meeting virtually to read into the record a letter she sent to the Board members prior to the meeting. The letter was in support of free fares during the Expo '74 50th Celebration and named multiple organizations, business representatives, and individuals as supporting the idea.

Council Member Jonathan Bingle, City of Spokane representing the Northeast District expressed concerns over the absence of representation for his district on the STA Board. He highlighted the district's significant ridership, high level of need, unique challenges, and elevated poverty rates. The council member acknowledged that the STA Board does not control this representation but emphasized the importance of having a voice for his district, especially in discussions about STA's future services.

Mr. Chad Camandona, ATU 1015 President, spoke to say he was not taking a side one way or the other, but thought the emphasis needed to be on the safety of drivers [when discussing fares related to Expo '74?], noting there were roughly 450 members in the union.

Vice Chair Haley turned the meeting back over to Chair French.

6. Recognitions & Presentations

A. Spokane Public Schools / Spokane Transit Partnership – Ms. Meyer introduced the Superintendent of Spokane Public Schools (SPS), Dr. Adam Swinyard. She said he is here to share about the wonderful and successful program STA and SPS have undertaken the last two years to achieve our objectives regarding zero fare youth ridership and to create a common card for high school students. She said that about 9000 of the students in the schools have cards that double as school ID and a transit pass. She said STA is appreciative of SPS and Dr. Swinyard's support and has enjoyed collaborating with them.

Dr. Swinyard expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak and represent Spokane Public Schools. He praised the value of partnerships and recounted the pre-pandemic challenges of student transportation, which worsened when SPS service providers withdrew from Spokane. He commended the current successful partnership with STA for high school student transportation,

noting its innovation, collaboration, and community value. Dr. Swinyard advised he is looking forward to further discussions to enhance this transportation model.

He noted a recent survey the school conducted with the students and said, in general, they received very positive feedback about students’ experiences. They’re working with families and seeing mini-ancillary benefits as younger siblings are getting acclimated. There’s an increasing dialogue among middle school students about transportation and access. He talked about providing middle school children with access and opportunity and how the intersectionality of transportation with access and opportunity can’t be understated.

As we look ahead to the future, he said one of the things SPS is focusing on is “Every Kid, Every Day” and providing something to do after school. The unique mental health therapist model within schools was highlighted as a source of pride and an essential service. The need for creative solutions to address mental health issues, chronic absenteeism, and disengagement was emphasized, given the resource constraints. The importance of providing after-school activities for students was discussed, noting the risk of unsupervised hours between 3 PM and 7 PM. A call for community partnership was made to offer a variety of engaging programs beyond sports, including clubs and other activities. The role of technology as both a tool and a challenge in capturing students’ attention was acknowledged.

Dr. Swinyard expressed gratitude for existing partnerships and optimism for future initiatives to benefit students’ well-being and engagement. He thanked the Board and staff for their contributions.

7. Board Action - Consent Agenda

Ms. Klitzke moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 7A through 7I. Mr. Hattenburg seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

- A. Minutes of the February 15, 2024, Board Meeting – Corrections/Approval
- B. Minutes of the February 15, 2024, Board Workshop – Corrections/Approval
- C. Minutes of the March 6, 2024, Board Workshop – Corrections/Approval
- D. Minutes of the March 6, 2024, Special Board Meeting – Corrections/Approval
- E. Approval of the following February 2024 Vouchers:

DESCRIPTION	VOUCHER/ACH NUMBERS	AMOUNT
Accounts Payable Vouchers (February)	Nos. 625868 – 626300	\$ 4,827,141.76
Worker’s Comp Vouchers (February)	ACH – 2286	\$ 333,352.30
Payroll 02/09/2024	ACH – 02/09/2024	\$ 2,738,581.09
Payroll 02/23/2024	ACH – 02/23/2024	\$ 1,940,045.91
WA State – DOR (Excise Tax)	ACH – 1767	\$ 5,280.77
FEBRUARY TOTAL		\$ 9,844,401.83

- F. City Line Station Security Camera System: Final Acceptance approval.
- G. 2022 Service Change Bus Stops - Phase 1: Final Acceptance approval.
- H. Connect 2035 Strategic Plan: Funding and Investment Principles – Adoption of Resolution #818-24.
- I. Public Works Contracts under \$35,000 – Final Acceptance of the contracts listed as complete and authorize release of retainage security subject to receipt of Department of Labor & Industries approved prevailing wage affidavits.

8. Board Action – Other

- A. Route 11- Arena/Downtown Shuttle and Shuttle Park Pass Promotional Fare (Resolution) – Chair French suggested this item be deferred to April in response to the discussion he was going to facilitate.

Mr. Hattenburg moved to approve deferring the Route 11-Arena/Downtown Shuttle and Shuttle Park Pass Promotional Fare (Resolution) until the April Board Meeting to be considered in a comprehensive fashion. Ms. Haley seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Chair French opened the conversation about the Expo Shuttle Park pass fares, requesting ideas or options from Board Members. Chair French outlined his understanding of the proposed Shuttle Park Pass promotional fare being presented by staff and asked Board members to offer other options for staff to return with an analysis of in April. Staff will consider foregone revenue, security, and impact to operations.

In addition to discussions surrounding Bloomsday fares that have been marketed, safety on the bus when fare free, increasing ridership, and the Expo events, other options to be considered were discussed as follows:

1. \$0.50 Route 11 from May 3 through July 7 (all days)
2. Free Fare Systemwide May 4 through July 7 (all days)
3. \$0.50 Fare Systemwide May 4 through July 7 (all days)
4. Free Fare Systemwide Saturdays Only May 4 through July 4
5. \$0.50 Systemwide Weekends and Holidays May 4 through July 4

Mr. French invited Board Members to submit other ideas after the Board meeting the CEO or to him, prior to Monday, March 25, 2024.

- B. Spokane Public Schools Transit Infrastructure Construction Reimbursement: Preliminary Concurrence – Mr. Otterstrom noted that Board concurrence provides assurance to jurisdictional partner in moving forward with construction of transit improvements prior to formal agreement. He provided background and noted the proposed construction on Howard Street, the Interlocal agreement requirement between Spokane Public Schools and Spokane Transit and noted preliminary concurrence by the STA Board of Directors will provide good faith assurance to SPS of the intent to formalize reimbursement by agreement.

Staff recommended the Board provide preliminary concurrence of planned transit improvements to the PFD-owned parking lot at West Boone Avenue and North Howard Street, by Spokane Public Schools and authorize the CEO to communicate the Board's intent to reimburse SPS for transit-related infrastructure costs not to exceed \$350,000.

Ms. Haley moved to provide concurrence as presented. Mr. Hattenburg seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

- C. Spokane Valley Sprague High Performance Transit Infrastructure Construction Reimbursement: Preliminary Concurrence – Mr. Otterstrom said the Board concurrence provides assurance to jurisdictional partner in moving forward with construction of transit improvements prior to formal agreement. He provided background, described the project area and current proposed improvements. He discussed the current cost estimate and the interlocal agreement requirement between the City of Spokane Valley and Spokane Transit for the crosswalk investment and the High Performance Stop infrastructure

Staff recommended the Board provide preliminary concurrence of planned transit improvements to the City of Spokane Valley Sprague Avenue Stormwater project and authorize the CEO to

communicate the Board's intent to reimburse City of Spokane Valley for Sprague High Performance Transit (HPT) infrastructure costs not to exceed \$275,000.

Mr. Hattenburg moved to provide concurrence as presented. Ms. Haley seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Board Report

- A. Connect 2035 Strategic Plan Phase 2 Update – In consideration of the time, this report was deferred to April. Mr. Otterstrom mentioned there will be two open houses between now and the next Board meeting. The first will be in the West Plains in Airway Heights on March 25th, and the second will be held at the Plaza on April 9th.

10. Board Operations Committee

- A. Chair Report - Chair French asked Mr. Kerns to provide a report on the meeting. Mr. Kerns reviewed the items covered and the discussions held at the Board Operations meeting.

11. Planning & Development Committee (P&D)

- A. Chair Report – Ms. Haley requested Mr. Otterstrom to review the items covered at the P&D meeting. Mr. Otterstrom provided a summary of the items approved and discussed at the committee meeting.

12. Performance Monitoring & External Relations (PMER)

- A. Chair Report – Mr. Kerns reviewed the items the committee members discussed and/or approved at the PMER committee meeting.
- i. EXPO 50th Anniversary Celebration Update – This item was deferred based on the earlier discussion about the Expo Fares.
 - ii. 2023 Unaudited Year-End Financial Report – Ms. Liard provided a review of the unaudited year-end financial report and offered to answer questions. Brief discussion ensued.

13. CEO Report

Ms. Meyer discussed ridership for February 2024 versus 2023 and totals year-to-date. Fixed route saw a 22.5% increase in February and 15.1% year-to-date. The portion of that ridership attributed to Zero-Fare Youth was 167,467 riders in February and 316,099 riders year-to-date. Zero-Fare Youth ridership increased 47.9% in February and 34.5% year-to-date. Paratransit experienced a 15.1% increase in February and is 10.1% higher year-to-date over 2023. Rideshare realized a 23% increase in February and is 14.3% year-to-date higher than 2023.

Monthly Fare Revenue by Service Type was reviewed. Fare Revenue exceeded budget by about 5% in February. She noted fares are offset by things like fare capping or reduced fares for people 60 and over, those with disabilities or military, active duty, and veterans.

Ms. Meyer was happy to report the highest Ridership recorded for the Saturday of the St. Patrick's Day Parade: ~18,650. She shared a graph indicating ridership back to 2007.

The City Line Ridership update shared average weekday ridership increased following the introduction of 7.5 minute peak frequency and is now exceeding 2400 boardings daily. The monthly trend reflected seasonal fluctuations largely based on GU, CCS, SPS school days. Daily fluctuations mostly reflected system-wide fluctuations, driven by weather, day-of-week, entitlement disbursements and community events.

February 2024 Voter-approved Sales Tax Revenue was below budget by -\$166,722 or -1.6%. Year-to-date sales tax is 2.1% above budget (\$0.4M).

Ms. Meyer provided an update on the 2024 legislative session that ended March 7, 2024. She shared transportation budget impacts on STA, noting all STA grants were continued at the current levels and timeframes (plus carryover) and the Move Ahead WA funding for the Division Street BRT– fifty million over the next three biennium – remains the same.

She discussed SB 5788 service animals in training, which the 2024 Legislative Task Force supported; SB 5444 restricting firearms in certain premises, noting both bills passed. Ms. Meyer also mentioned the bills that did not pass SB 6304 recommendations for transportation electrification strategy, and HB 2191/SB 6185 providing the option to add two transit users to a PTBA Board.

Ms. Meyer congratulated the STA Communications Team on the APTA First Place AdWheel Awards for the “City Line Service Begins” commercial in the category of Commercials, Best Marketing and Communications to Increase Ridership – Electronic Media, and the “That’s Bussin’ ” video series in the category of Video Series, Best Marketing and Communications Educational Initiative - Electronic Media. Grand prize winners will be announced this summer.

The report concluded with thanks to STA employees and a mention of National Transit Employee Appreciation day on Monday, March 18, 2024. STA hung banners thanking all transit employees in the skybridge of Boone and Plaza.

14. Board Information

- A. Committee Minutes
- B. February 2024 Sales Tax Revenue
- C. January 2024 Financial Results Summary
- D. January 2024 Operating Indicators
- E. Connect Spokane Comprehensive Plan Update: Revenue & Fares Element
- F. 2025-2030 Transit Development Plan: Tactical Framework and Stakeholder Outreach
- G. Division Street Bus Rapid Transit: Development and Public Outreach Update
- H. 2023 State Audit Timeline

15. New Business - none

16. Board Members' Expressions

Ms. Bowers apologized for missing the Workshop last month, noting the union is in contract negotiations. She mentioned she will also miss the next Workshop, too.

Mr. Zappone thanked everyone for the discussion about fares for Expo and requested that the information for the analysis be provided in time to digest before the meeting.

17. Executive Session – none

18. Adjourn

With no further business to come before the Board, Chair French adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Dana Infalt
Clerk of the Authority