

PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY BOARD

AUGUST 13, 2015, 5:30PM-7:00PM

ASSEMBLY CONFERENCE ROOM SUITE#155

PTAB PRESENT:

Kevin Jackson
Andrew Ooms
Tim Sullivan – phone conference
Carlette Mack
Jay Dulany
Jed Smith
Stephanie Cornwell-George
David Levy

STAFF:

Sandy Hansen
Christine Sondej
Abul Hassan
Michelle Felix

Guests:

Deb Stone
Shirley Smith
Sam Moore
Buck Bloomer
Andrew Halcro /ACDA
V. Kunigenas

Absent:

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Chairman Jed Smith.

II. ROLL CALL, INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS, STAFF, AND GUESTS

After roll call and introduction of guests, quorum was present.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jay moved to approve the August 2015 agenda and Carlette seconded. The Agenda was approved unanimously.

IV. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Carlette moved to approve the minutes for May 14, 2015. Jay seconded. The minutes for May were approved unanimously.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

none

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. None

VII. New Business

a. 2016 Operating Budget – 2% reduction of 2015 budget (\$469,967)

Abul stated that the Administration asked all Municipal Departments to reduce their budget by 2%, in which Transit's portion would be \$469,967.00. Abul stated that \$95,000.00 of reductions may come from Eagle River Connect service, cut by half which would leave 2500 additional hours of reduced fixed route service (\$270,000.00) to reduce. He offered that a possible reduction impacting the least amount of riders may be running Saturday service on Municipal holidays which would save \$167,000.00.

Jed asked about the Eagle River Connect Service impact on individuals at the \$95,000.00

Abul stated that the Connect service currently averages 9 riders daily which is unproductive.

Christine provided a 2016 service reductions options document with cost savings per option. She stated that the list is the same as the 2015 options which is preliminary and will require more research and discussion. She stated that the same public involvement process would also be taken as last year.

New PTAB member David Levy asked about cost savings versus revenue without service.

Christine stated that Planning has not researched service/saving as a revenue perspective however it can be something worth looking into if we need to look at reducing service.

Stephanie inquired about the steps taken to increase ridership on other routes for increased revenue to make up for the reductions.

Abul stated that the Communications Manager, Michelle Felix is present and currently in the process of hiring a marketing supervisor and once on board, they will work to increase ridership and funds for advertising.

Christine added that the UPass program is a successful program with increased participation this fall with two new schools.

Carlette inquired about evaluating routes for businesses to maintain for service.

Abul speculated that Transit may need to decide if making adjustments every year is the direction to take or if modeling the service based on population and customer base density is a more efficient method. He suggested not offering bus routes in neighborhoods and focus on main arterial roads which would lead to more efficiency. Abul acknowledges that removing routes from neighborhoods will impact riders which would require extensive research and analysis.

Stephanie inquired about offering service on Route # 13 for a new housing complex.

Christine stated that she anticipated requiring more data for research.

Carlette asked about the timeline to approve for recommendations.

Abul stated that the service changes would be more of a net neutral change and to look at the long range plan to include multiple years. He encouraged PTAB to be involved with AMATS meetings as these affect federal funding and transportation projects. Abul also talked about what the Anchorage Public Transportation Department can do to partner with the Borough (Mat-Su) and possible agreements to become a contractor to the Borough for commuter service.

Andrew inquired about Valley Mover's buses being full and ours are not. Wouldn't it make sense for them to do it, coming from the Valley?

Christine mentioned that Valley Mover had been approached to provide service in Eagle River however Valley Mover's buses were full and they would require more vehicles.

Jed stated that Eagle River seems to be cut at every reduction lately with no recovery in sight. He suggests that a special meeting addressing the issue and inviting the Eagle River Assembly Representative would be beneficial.

Downtown Transit Center Discussion

David stated that he has been involved in Transit a long time. He mentioned that he is aware that people are afraid to walk into the Downtown Transit Center and that it needs overall improvement for ridership to improve. David acknowledged that Andrew Halcro is present at the meeting and asked that he speak about the subject to date.

Andrew Halcro, Director of the Anchorage Community Development Association, addressed the meeting by stating that he is in the third week of his new position. Mr. Halcro affirmed that he has been in the Downtown Transit Center (DTC) observing patron behaviors, security actions and janitorial duties. He stated that he has seen data, discussed options with Legal, and attended briefings with security personnel. Andrew admits that the janitorial services are terrible and he is in the process of changing companies which should improve cleanliness. Mr. Halcro stated that recently the press did a story about "spice related overdoses" in which the stories centered on the DTC which is untrue resulting in a general negative perception of the DTC. He expressed that the DTC is not as bad as others believe it is. He suggested that the facility would benefit by opening later and closing earlier to curtail the winter patrons from using it for reasons other than business or Transit. Mr. Halcro talked about individuals that report activities to security be able to text for quicker actions. He stressed that the facility is a public place which restricts the actions that can be taken and limits the parameters of the legal department to prosecute the offenses.

Stephanie expressed that the DTC is a public space that should be made comfortable for all and offer options for those with disabilities. She stated that she has witnessed two fights at the DTC and one that spilled into the parking lot across the street. She asked if the parking lot could place a fence surrounding their lot to limit access. Stephanie admitted that she doesn't feel comfortable at the DTC.

David stated that the perception of the DTC is reality and that he has witnessed security sit in their office for hours and not patrol the area.

Jed thanked Mr. Halcro for providing PTAB with an update since his appointment to ACDA Director. He suggested that PTAB have a meeting specifically for DTC and continue the discussion with Mr. Halcro at another date within the next two months.

Abul agreed.

b. 2016 Capital Budget – 2016 Bonds as match to federal funds

Abul stated that Transit is requesting bond matching funds for a few future projects; ITS replacement as the current technology is 12 years old and in need of upgrades, AnchorRIDES buses and fuel tank installation for diesel and standard fuel.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

a. 2015 Budget Status

Abul stated that Transit was asked to cut in 2015 however, savings in fuel costs for 2015 offset the amount recommended.

b. Ridership Report, January –July 2015

Sandy Hansen provided a ridership report document. She stated the ridership numbers were down compared to last year and the new service change has limited data to determine the ridership impact at this time.

Jed inquired about the time it takes for Wheelchairs to board and bikes to be loaded as it pertains to running time.

Christine stated that actual running time data tracks mobility aids and any other delays through the trip when evaluating running times.

c. Director's Report

No additional information to report.

BOARD COMMENT

Tim agrees that the budget reduction is an ongoing challenge. He stated that Transit should eliminate far reaching routes and concentrate on a core service.

David expressed 'Kudos' to Transit Staff as he utilizes bus service all over town. He is encouraged to know that the DTC will be a work in progress with Mr. Halcro. David acknowledges that transit will need to be creative to offer better service in the long term and Public Transit needs to be a priority in Anchorage.

Andrew stated that he rides the Route # 8 and the new realignment is a positive change. He mentioned that he is on the Air Quality AMATS committee and a recent air quality analysis show that the expansion of the van pool program is recommended.

Stephanie agrees that the DTC is a priority and that public perception is everything. She asked that Transit Staff look into the bus stop safety at Bragaw and DeBarr, in front of the Costco just north of the traffic light. Stephanie stated that traffic is backed up behind the bus and drivers make unsafe maneuvers to pass the bus.

Carlette thanked Andrew Halcro for attending and providing insight. She cautioned Mr. Halcro in his assessment of the DTC "as not that bad" because she has talked with renters in the facility and they believe that it IS bad.

Jay agreed that a meeting regarding Eagle River be coordinated.

Kevin thanked Mr. Halcro for attending.

Jed expressed that the bus stop at Arctic and Benson, in front of McDonalds, for Route # 9 southbound is a mess. He stated that he was riding his bike and as a bus was stopped there, it caused a huge problem and frustration for commuters and pedestrians.

Jed stated that ridership behaviors on board buses and at bus stops are connected to behaviors in the DTC and as such, he encouraged PTAB members to ride the bus more to gain experience.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45PM

Next Meeting Date:

Next Tentative Meeting items:

- a. PTAB regular meeting September 10, 2015
- b. PTAB Next regular meeting: October 8, 2015
- c. PTAB regular meeting: November 12, 2015