

PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY BOARD

SEPTEMBER 10, 2015, 5:30PM-7:00PM
ASSEMBLY CONFERENCE ROOM SUITE#155

PTAB PRESENT:

Kevin Jackson
Stephanie Cornwell-George
Tim Sullivan
Carlette Mack
David Levy
Jed Smith

Absent:

Jay Dulany
Andrew Ooms

STAFF:

Jody Karcz
Christine Sondej
Michelle Felix

Guests:

Hans Thompson
Graciela Paz
Sam Moore
Joe Pichler

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:32pm 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

Jed proposed adding an item 9.f. Director's Comments to the agenda. Tim moved to approve the September 2015 agenda with the addition and David seconded. The Agenda was approved unanimously.

IV. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tim moved to approve the minutes for August 13, 2015. Carlette seconded. The minutes for August were approved unanimously.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

Hans Thompson with Code for Anchorage requested that the PTAB support his efforts to work with the Municipal IT department to implement GTFS real time. GTFS real time is an open data format for bus schedules and real time bus location information and is compatible in Google Maps. The public could see when buses are actually arriving, if they are on time or late, when they search for directions in Google Maps. Hans said that the IT department has not had the time to do this project, and Code for Anchorage could work with IT free of charge to get it implemented quicker since the information already exists.

Sam Moore stated that there is already a private app that has this real time data. Sam also supported the efforts of Code for Anchorage and stated that this would be good for passengers.

Stephanie made a motion to support Code for Anchorage's efforts to cooperatively open up real-time bus data for Google Transit. Carlette seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Jed stated that he will draft up a resolution reflecting the motion of support and circulate to

PTAB members via e-mail. Once all have reviewed and agreed he would circulate the adopted Resolution to Hans before September 28, 2015.

Joe Pichler stated that AnchorRIDES has routing issues. Pickups often are scheduled at the same time, causing delay and passenger and driver frustration. Joe also stated that riding the Route 45 is unpleasant due to odors, drunk passengers, and passed out passengers. Joe also voiced concerns that the Downtown Transit Center is getting worse, the public doesn't want to go inside, and many people are hassled. Joe stated that the Mayor was considering a police substation inside and that he supports that idea.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. None*

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. None*

VIII. STAFF REPORTS

- a. Land Use Plan Map Update*

Tom Davis with the Municipality of Anchorage Long-Range Planning Division provided an overview of the Anchorage Bowl Land Use Plan Project. Tom stated that the plan map had not been updated since 2006, and was in the process of being updated, with a public comment draft available later this month. Tom stated that the Land Use Plan Map guides future type, intensity and character of land uses across the Bowl and is a framework for neighborhood plans.

Tom stated that the part that the PTAB would be most interested in, is the transit supportive corridors that are identified on the map, and the supporting narrative. Tom stated that the corridors are ½ mile wide areas intended to have increased density, intensity, mix of uses and design to support higher transit frequencies and ridership. Tom stated that this is not a transit map and there are other corridors which have transit service. Tom stated that the narrative provides discussion on the criteria for transit supportive corridors.

Stephanie suggested that Tom work with transit staff, and also look at intentional communities.

David suggested that Tom look at the Glenn Highway as a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor. Tom stated that the current scope is for the Anchorage Bowl area, however in future if BRT is identified, the long-range planning division would be very interested in looking at the land use and development at station areas, but would not be affected much by long stretches of BRT corridor without stations.

Tim asked Tom what happened with the last draft of the land use plan map in 2006, he thought it had been adopted. Tom stated that the Planning & Zoning Commission had approved the map, but when it went to the Assembly their priority was completing the zoning code update first, which took many years and so the Land Use Map had never been adopted. Tom stated that this Land Use Plan Map update will guide land use decisions over the next few years, it will be updated periodically, and that most likely there will be a comprehensive plan update in the future.

- b. 2016 Operating Budget*

Jody Karcz stated that original guidance on the budget had been to cut about \$470,000 from the 2016 budget. She stated that the Department put together a proposal that included primarily fuel savings and providing no service on five Municipal holidays when service is currently provided: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Seward's Day, Veteran's Day, and the day after Thanksgiving.

Jody stated that she recently attended a meeting with the Mayor and Municipal Manager to talk about the proposal, and that after discussions she walked out with another direction. The Mayor accepted the fuel savings proposal, but asked that the Department look at providing Saturday service on the five holidays instead of no service. Jody stated that the Department budget would not be cut the full \$470,000. Jody stated that it's a bit of a gamble that fuel prices continue their trend into 2016, however this does not represent an actual cut to service, just a reduction in the budget to reflect fuel that the Department does not need based on current fuel prices.

Jody stated that the budget will go to the Assembly in early October, and that until then the proposals could continue to change.

Stephanie asked if there was a public comment opportunity. Jody stated that the public can comment during the public hearings at the Assembly on the budget.

Stephanie stated that she was concerned with Saturday service on the holiday's because many people would still not be able to get to work.

Tim suggested that it was time to focus on the core Anchorage network, contract the system, and he would prefer to cut service on the Route 102. Tim asked approximately how much that would save. Jody responded that it would save around \$500,000 per year. David stated that we have given Eagle River service, then taken it away, and that we have not provided a long-term investment in the community in order to grow the service.

Jed stated that he would like to reach out to the Eagle River Community Councils to talk about what kind of public transportation service the Eagle River community would like to see.

Stephanie stated that she does not like targeting one community or neighborhood for cuts.

Jody stated that her philosophy on cuts is that rather than making a huge impact on a small population, for example a cut to a specific community, she favored reducing service on the five holidays will have a smaller impact to a larger population.

David asked if a Resolution was required. Jody stated that the board could wait until October to see what develops. Jed stated he would like to meet with the Mayor.

Jody stated that at the end of her meeting with the Mayor on the budget, she was asked what she would do if she had unlimited budget. Jody showed a handout with the existing transit service with frequency at least every 30 minutes, then another handout with routes prioritized for increased frequency. Jody said that this high frequency network would really improve transit service for the Anchorage area, and would make transfers more palatable since the greatest wait time should be about 15 minutes.

David made a motion that if there was more funding that transit cops for the Downtown Transit Center and a study for rural transportation services be provided. There was discussion on both topics. Stephanie suggested the Department talk with the new chief of police. Carlette agreed on the ideas, but stated that if the PTAB wanted a wish list they should have a budget attached. Jed stated that the motion might be premature as discussions are beginning with ACDA about the Transit Center. Jed encouraged more investigation into exactly what the PTAB would ask for.

Stephanie stated that there was a need for more services serving Midtown, and that she supported the increase in higher frequency routes.

Jody agreed that the Department needed a plan for transit service. She stated that the high frequency network map provided was based on the People Mover Blueprint transit plan and the 2009 Route Restructure Update. Jody stated that staff has talked about bringing a consultant in to

help us talk about what we want our bus system to look like.

David withdrew both motions but emphasized that he would like to send a statement that People Mover protects its investments, which are its riders. David stated he would like to see improvements at the Downtown Transit Center and a long term study for public transportation services in the rural parts of the city and how that would fit into the entire system.

Jed stated that he would like a consultant to help the board in understanding a vision for the entire system.

Stephanie made a motion that the board and staff provide a concerted effort to reach out to Eagle River in the short and long term. The motion passed unanimously.

c. 2016 Capital Budget—2016 Bonds as match to federal funds

Jody Karcz stated that usually the Department requests bonds to match federal funds ranging from \$300-700,000. Jody stated that the Department's request would be \$600,000 for 2016 and that the bonds would be identified to match federal funds for buses, AnchorRIDES vehicles, bus stop improvements, and ITS. Jody stated that the match rate is 80/20 if matching FTA funds, and approximately 91/9 if matching FHWA funds.

David asked how many buses the Department intended to buy. Jody stated that the Department does not prefer to buy buses in ones or twos, and so would the first buy would likely be 15-18 buses in 4-5 years. She stated that buses right now cost about \$550,000 per bus. Jody stated that the useful life of a bus according to FTA is 12 years or 500,000 miles, and People Mover's oldest buses are 1998's, 2006's, and 2008's.

d. 2014 System Performance Review

Christine Sondej provided a brief overview of the structure of the System Performance Review document. She stated that the document covered a regional overview, including gas prices and economic indicators, a systemwide performance review, and a review of the performance of individual routes. Christine stated that the purpose of the report is to document the performance standards and analysis conducted by the Department which informs the decision making for service adjustments. Christine stated that performance standards are identified in the 2009 Route Restructure Update and the Municipality's Performance.Value.Results. framework.

Christine stated that the document is currently in draft form, and welcomed feedback and edits from the PTAB until September 25. Christine stated that final System Performance Review documents would be provided to the PTAB at their October meeting.

e. Ridership Report, January-July 2015

The ridership report was provided for PTAB review.

f. Director's Comments

Jody stated that retirement for the last 13 months had been nice, but that she was happy to be back. Jody stated that she had recently invited the mayor to attend a PTAB meeting sometime in 2015, and that she was waiting to hear back when he would be available.

Jody stated that when she first came back to transit she reflected on what she had accomplished, and what she had failed to accomplish during her time in the Department. She came back with a few priorities, the greatest need being to mentor, share her knowledge, and challenge staff to think outside the box, since there have been a number of retirements and other staff turnover the last few years.

Jody stated that she is intrigued by the Houston METRO's system reimagining plan. Jody stated that the Department will undergo their Triennial Review in May which is a federal management review of compliance. She stated that the Department's Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) project was closed out in 2015 which ended a ten year technology implementation, however the systems are already at the end of their useful life and she looks forward to helping the Department kick start upgrading those systems.

Jody stated that another priority is ridership. She stated that in her experience ridership can ebb and flow, however the system was built up to over four million riders multiple times and that we need to team up to grow the system.

Lastly, Jody stated that a priority for her as Director is the environment at the Downtown Transit Center and that she is very serious about creating a safe, convenient and comfortable environment for transit passengers.

BOARD COMMENT

Kevin stated that he would like to see improvements at the Downtown Transit Center since the PTAB has heard from so many concerned people. Kevin stated that he was encouraged by Andrew Halcro's presence at the last PTAB meeting, but that he would like to see a follow up with him.

Tim had no comments.

David congratulated Jody Karcz on becoming the Director of Public Transportation again. David stated that he would like to hear the marketing plans to increase ridership now that there is a new Communications Manager on board.

Stephanie stated that in response to other comments made, Eagle River is not a different city, and that the growth rates in Chugiak/Eagle River over the next ten years will be exponential and much higher than the Anchorage Bowl. She stated that we can't only talk to existing riders in Eagle River, because many people can't ride transit with the current schedules and level of service, and so we should talk to others in the area to grow our ridership.

Jed had no comments.

Carlette echoed Stephanie's comments and stated that if we create service that people can actually use, then they will ride. Carlette also stated that she has a hard time talking about cuts when we're also talking about growing at the same time. She stated that she appreciated hearing about the Blueprint transit plan and the proposal for higher service if additional money was available.

David made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Carlette. The meeting adjourned at 7:15PM

Next Meeting Date:

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