

Public Transit Advisory Board
May 11, 2017, 5:30pm-7:00pm
ASSEMBLY CONFERENCE ROOM, SUITE #155

PTAB PRESENT:

Jedediah Smith
Carlette Mack
David Levy
Andrew Ooms
Kevin Jackson
Britta Hamre

CITIZENS PRESENT:

Shirley Smith
Linda Larsen
Chris Langdon
Christa Moeller
Carl Kancir
Karen Carson
Brian Schroeder
Selina Metoyer
Graciela Paz
Kim Ansaknok

Steve Tandy
Deborah A Nelson
James E Woods III
Christie D Nelson
Paul A Greeno
Joe Pichler
Adrienne Torgramsen
Frederick K Peters
Kathleen O'Sullivan
David Borney

PTAB ABSENT:

Samuel Moore (excused)

STAFF:

Wes Renfrew
Bart Rudolph
Collin Hodges
Andrew Watts

James William Tebo
Richard-Lee Riley
Bev Wilke
Anna <illegible>
Linda Tandy

Wendy Williams
Samuel Williams
Ezekiel Williams
Nehemiah Williams
Ishmael Prado

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:32pm by Chair Jed Smith.

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

After roll call a quorum was present. Mr. Moore's absence was noted as excused.

III. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

An announcement was made to those attending by Chair Smith that there will be a public comment period in which those wishing to make comments will be allowed two minutes.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was requested to add Item 7e (motions by Mr. Levy concerning a proposal to create a Transit Safety Committee of the Board and to submit a letter of support to the House Finance Committee concerning full funding of state matching funds) and Item 7f, to inform the Board of the People Mover station on Bike to Work Day. Ms. Mack made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Ms. Hamre seconded the motion. Without objection, the agenda was approved as amended.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Levy made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 13 meeting. Mr. Jackson seconded the motion. Mr. Levy noted that the minutes were very thorough and thanked Mr. Watts for his work on them. Without objection, the minutes were approved as submitted.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

- a. Shirley Smith - Ms. Smith stated that she knows the Board is not surprised to see her again, but the same thing happened again. She was able to text Director Hassan. It was on 36th Avenue trying to get the bus to go to the hospital area. She was waiting by herself for the longest time, then another gentleman came up, and then someone else crossed the road. She stated that she's tired of other people behind her in line being allowed onto the bus before her. She has had it up to here <gestures over her head> and then some. This shouldn't happen. They still aren't checking IDs, so she still hasn't had her smart card found. When she went down there to get another one, she had to pay \$5, and she doesn't think she should. She's really waiting until June 28th, when she'll be moving. Also, she commented that changing the numbers for the new bus system isn't going to work, especially changing every single number. She doesn't think it's going to work, especially in the wintertime with the snow and ice.
- b. Selina Metoyer - Ms. Metoyer stated that she wanted to piggyback on Ms. Smith's comments. She's just starting to ride the bus again. She's been driving for several years, but her car has been hit four times, so now she's back on the bus. The Department is providing a service for customers, but the drivers apparently are not trained in any kind of customer service. When you get on the bus, the driver doesn't say hello. When you get off, they don't say thank you for riding. Most of them don't have a pleasant look on their face. She worked customer service for 15 years and was written up if she didn't greet a customer. This has been a problem for years and years. She started riding the bus in the early 80s, and the drivers had the same problems then. She has seen drivers not want to answer customer questions. She thinks the drivers should be trained in customer service, because the public is paying their salaries, so they should be a lot more cordial. The other thing she wanted to say is that the screens that are supposed to say what the next stop is don't always work. Also, when they stop to pick up people, there should be an announcement that says no profane language, front seats are for seniors/disabled. Ms. Mack asked Ms. Metoyer which routes she is riding, and Ms. Metoyer replied that she lived on route 8.
- c. Christa Moeller - Ms. Moeller stated that she is a regular rider since she moved here from Fairbanks. She stated that she completely agrees with Ms. Metoyer. In the Fairbanks bus system, every driver always thanked her and wished her a nice day and had excellent customer service skills. Here, she's lucky if she gets a "Bye, see you later" or anything. There is one route that she takes that the driver is always awesome, and that's 2 and 45 in the morning. The 2 at 7:20 and 45 at 7:40. He's always cordial. Other than that, no. That should be addressed because the public are paying customers. She pays twice as much here as in Fairbanks. That is an issue, especially since there are people in this community like the students at UAA who don't pay anything. Also, she would like to know if the bus signs that will not be used anymore are going to be removed or at least posted where it says it's not a stop anymore, because there are homeless people and others in this community who may have moved here recently who might not know what's going on with the new system. So, there are a lot of signs around Anchorage that either should be removed, or it should be posted that this is no longer a bus stop.
- d. Linda Larsen - Ms. Larsen stated that she is a frequent rider, a lot of times multiple routes a day. She stated that most of the drivers she encounters are polite. They aren't necessarily talkative, which she appreciates. She doesn't like the ones who are engaging in long conversations while

driving. Most of them do greet her when she comes on, and she appreciates the job they do.

- e. Karen Carson - Ms. Carson suggested that there be a route 52 added to route 55. It would replace parts of routes 36, 2, and 60 that are being cut. This change would replace some vital areas of three routes that have been overlooked in the new system. It would cover the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center. The existing alignment for route 55 only goes from Providence to Dimond Mall, which is a shorter route than most of the others. The suggested new route would go from Providence to Dimond then back up Old Seward to International Airport Road to Minnesota to 36th Avenue back to Providence. She stated that she submitted this suggestion in writing to staff.
- f. Carl Kancir - Mr. Kancir stated that he has been riding for four or five years. He stated that he's been studying the new routes since they came out, and he's puzzled about why there are four routes with 15-minute service (two of which were reduced from one hour wait times) and another with 20-minute service when route 60 down Old Seward is being eliminated, which he really needs. He doesn't remember who he talked with, but he's really irritated. He stated that they told him he could walk to his office, but his office is over 1/2 mile away. From where he lives to the bus is also over 1/2 mile, downhill going out and uphill coming in. So if he has to walk from Tudor to his business, he's walking 2 miles a day. If route 60 is eliminated, there are people he's seen, women with children, who are going to have to walk a mile to the bus. It doesn't make sense to reduce these routes from hour or half-hour wait times to 15 minutes when you're eliminating route 60. He started counting people getting on and off the bus, and there were at least 15 people that got on. His suggestion is to change the 15-minute wait times back to half an hour and bring back route 60. In good news, in his four or five years riding the bus, the vast majority of drivers have been friendly. He also still wants to see signs posted about covering your mouth when you cough.
- g. Bev Wilkie - Ms. Wilkie stated she has been riding since last summer, and she thinks that there are a very few bus drivers that need a little retraining or a reminder of how to treat people. The majority of drivers she has ridden with have very good skills and are very helpful. When she rides on Wednesdays, most of them actually look at her license to verify her age for the free ride. Some don't, but generally speaking the drivers are pretty top-notch. Her suggestion is for people to call customer service when they have an issue.
- h. Linda Tandy - Ms. Tandy stated that she uses route 60 and so do her teenager, her 20 year old daughter and her three grandchildren. It's their only means of transportation because in the winter there are no sidewalks. It's impossible to walk to Dimond Center in the winter. In the last week, she's ridden the bus four times, and she's counted the people. There were at least 15-20 people on the bus each time besides them. Route 60 is needed by many people for their appointments, jobs, or whatever. She's wondering why some routes will have the buses more often, but route 60 will not exist at all. They would rather have the bus every hour than no bus at all.
- i. Richard Riley - Mr. Riley stated that he lives by Center Bowl. He uses routes 7, 3, and 36. It's vital for him to have a bus on 36th because he has medical appointments near 36th and the Seward Highway that he needs to get to, and walking is not all that fun. During the winter, as others

have mentioned, there are no sidewalks to walk on. He has gotten into confrontations with city workers and police. He keeps asking the officers to show him where the sidewalk is and he'll walk on it. That was years ago. Now they don't bother anymore, but it's still a safety issue. He agrees that routes 60 and 36 should be kept, maybe not that often, but still a bus, and he bets there are a lot of people in the Turnagain area who agree.

- j. James Tebo - Mr. Tebo stated that he rides a lot of buses, usually to get from south Anchorage around Huffman to downtown back. If he doesn't have time to take a 9:15 route 60 to Huffman, he'll take other combinations. It's not very fun walking in the middle of the night, no matter who you are, especially if you have personal belongings with you. There have been advisories telling people not to walk by themselves at night. If there's no route 60 (or new 91) on the weekends, everyone is going to be walking to and from Dimond Center. There are a lot of people who ride route 60. He doesn't know how much people have been able to get out into the community and ride route 60 all the way to Huffman. There are a lot of people who ride that bus. People say that the bus is a service, but buses are also a kind of community right when you have a large community like Anchorage. The bus is a necessary commodity. People need it to get places. The commercials for People Mover talk about "Connecting People and Places", but now that's not happening anymore. He knows someone who chooses to ride the bus every day, even though that person's partner drives. He suggests that there should be a direct route between Huffman and downtown without having to transfer at Dimond Center.

VII. BUSINESS / INFORMATION ITEMS

- a. Item 7a – Service Change Timeline and Schedule - Mr. Rudolph introduced the schedule of internal tasks for the service change between now and October. There are 300 tasks identified, each of which has sub-tasks. The goal of this is to visually display and work internally to coordinate everything. This shows that there is no wiggle room between now and October. The Department is now having weekly meetings to go over everyone's roles. He is happy to answer any specific questions, and he noted that this timeline doesn't even include the marketing component.

Chair Smith appreciates staff keeping the Board in the loop on this.

Mr. Rudolph noted that the Department is planning to hold another round of public meetings around July when the draft schedules are done. This will allow the public to comment on the schedules.

Ms. Hamre asked if the Department wanted the Board to be involved in those meetings.

Mr. Rudolph replied that staff plans on going out for a full week every night to locations. It would be nice to have some Board representation, but we plan on doing a comment response summary. If someone wants to make a comment this time, they'll have to write it down. We won't be taking testimony like we did before. The Board will see all the comments.

Chair Smith asked for clarification that this was soliciting comments on timetables and not on routes. Mr. Rudolph replied that this is the case. The routes are now set, so the only thing left is the timing, unless the Department gets more money.

The public comment period is planned for mid-July based on the contractor's timeline.

- b. Item 7b – PTAB Outreach and Advocacy – Chair Smith stated that he has been talking with staff, particularly Director Hassan, who have been helping to formulate and offer constructive feedback on an outreach plan. He has been working on this and hasn't sent out a copy to the Board yet because he still has a few things to add. Essentially, the list of tasks identifies stakeholders and tries to assign each member one or two Assembly members as well to talk to about what needs are and what the Department is trying to accomplish with this restructure. He will email it out to the members individually. He noted that some of the contact numbers may be out of date but for the most part it's good. The next question is probably "What's the message", and the Board is still working on that. He would like to discuss what the summer work session schedule might look like. The target date to mobilize is October. The question now is messaging and what to say when members reach out to their assigned contacts. He noted for members of the public that the Assembly just cut the Department's budget in the quarterly budget revision, so going into 2018, the Board will be pushing for them to add that back in.

Mr. Rudolph noted that one of the things you notice in local government is that reaching out to Assembly members beforehand and letting them know what's happening works, but what really works well is them having an amendment prepared and ready, which is something staff isn't able to help with. Developing relationships with Assembly members and helping them draft budget amendments that would build the Department budget back up would be helpful from a staff perspective.

Ms. Karen Carson asked whether the budget cut was because the Prop 2 bond didn't pass.

Chair Smith replied that his understanding is that the quarterly budget revision is because the RideShare contract came in under budget. The reason this is going to impact service is not because of that contract saving money in 2018 but because the Department's overall bottom-line budget, with these system changes recommended, was based on an overall number, which has now been cut. From the Board's perspective, it would be most helpful for the staff to have as much flexibility in the budget as possible to implement these recommended changes.

Ms. Carson asked whether the service change could be put off for another year if the Department doesn't have the money. She noted that there's a big push to get it started in October, but if it's going to hurt everyone to implement it soon, why do it?

Mr. Levy noted that the information the Board got from staff is that the timeline is in place for the restructure. There may be some discussion around the timetable, but the restructure is happening. Obviously if the budget changes in 2018, that may impact the overall restructure, but staff has been directed by the Municipality that this is happening. Chair Smith noted that this was a matter of when, not if.

A member of the public asked whether the Board or the Department asked for input of the people that ride the bus before the schedule was made.

Chair Smith explained the year-long Anchorage Talks Transit process that happened, including the public meetings and the comment period.

A member of the public asked whether the Board realized that the majority of the population is on a fixed income and does not have the ability to go online or get to the meetings they need to get to in order to make comments. What she's hearing is that route 60 is an issue for walking. She also noted the higher cost of living in Alaska compared to the Lower 48. This is going to create a problem come October. If the Board is telling the public that the budget is not going to allow for the public to ride the bus in certain places, they will find other ways, which is going to limit the Department's income and budget even further.

Chair Smith replied that he appreciated the citizen's comment, but we don't necessarily want to retroactively reflect on the public comment period. The Board have all put in a lot of work listening to what the public had to say, and they think that staff did an adequate job of reaching out to as many people who will be impacted by this as possible. We all acknowledge that there are people who will be negatively impacted by these changes. It's unfortunate, but we do also recognize that we think this is the best way forward based on the majority of the comments we heard, recommendations from consultants and staff, and from the way that a lot of members who have been working on transit issues understand the situation. The fact that this is going to impact a lot of people is not lost on the Board. However, it also underscores the fact that the Board and the public are all going to have to remain vocal in expressing the need for the Assembly and the Mayor to provide adequate resources for this public transportation system. The Board is not willing to accept continuing cuts and members are all advocating strongly for budget resources and will continue to do so.

- c. Item 7c – Summer Meeting / Work Session Schedule - Mr. Levy suggested at least one work session in July and one in August, maybe at the Tudor campus or another location rather than at City Hall.

Ms. Hamre supported Mr. Levy's suggestion.

Chair Smith added that we don't necessarily want to sit back through June and not have done anything. He doesn't want to wait until July or August to have a meeting about what the message is. Rather, start contacting the people on the lists before then and at least try to engage them in some form of conversation. Really the intention is that the Board is looking for support from the people on that list. He thinks that to whatever degree each member is comfortable with engaging in that conversation and gauging interest and support, he would encourage them to do so. If not, at least try to listen to them and find out what their concerns are and how the Board can address some of those concerns. The intention is that by October the Board will need that support.

Ms. Mack agreed that it's important to have the conversations earlier, and she also stated that it is important to have information available when having those meetings.

Chair Smith noted that July and August are difficult to schedule for a lot of people, but they'll do the best they can and put out a Doodle poll to schedule.

Mr. Levy asked whether there should be a work session in May to get the message together.

Chair Smith stated that they're just going to shoot for July. It sounds like staff might want the Board to participate in the public events on the timetables. There will be a number of

commitments to be made going into this summer. He is excited about it because he feels passionate about this system, but on the other hand, it's also summertime and it's really hard to do. He's willing to suck it up and make a commitment and hopes the others are on board as much as they're able. Chair Smith asked Mr. Watts to put out a Doodle poll to schedule a work session. Chair Smith will email out a list of assigned contacts to the Board members.

Mr. Levy asked whether Ms. Mack would be able to host the work sessions at Covenant House.

Ms. Mack replied that depending on the date that would be fine.

Time, date, and location of the work sessions are to be determined at this time and will be sent out when finalized.

Chair Smith suggested that leading up to the work sessions, the Board might want to plan on having a budget amendment drafted by the September 14th meeting so that they can pass a resolution supporting it. They should also work on finding a sponsor for that amendment.

- d. Item 7d – April 2017 Ridership Report - Mr. Watts presented the April 2017 Ridership Report. He noted that average weekday ridership was up 0.4% this April from last April, and the average Saturday ridership was up 1%. Overall, year-to-date ridership is down 2.9% from 2016, and there have been 2.7% less hours of service due to holiday cuts, so the fixed routes are essentially breaking even with where they were last year. Also of note, the number of bikes counted onboard doubled from March to April, from 1005 to 2005.

Chair Smith noted that according to the 13-month average sheet on the ridership report the Board receives, route 60 has an average of 615 passengers per day, which makes it the 8th-highest ridership of all routes (or 4th-lowest). So the Board recognizes that there is demand on that route, but it is not one of the routes that has the highest demand. That's not to discount people that use that route, but decisions are being made based on this.

- e. Item 7e – Motions by Mr. Levy regarding Board resolutions

1. Mr. Levy introduced a proposal to create a transit safety committee of the Board with the goal of developing some recommendations on developing a transit safety plan.

Mr. Ooms seconded the motion.

Mr. Levy stated that the reason he wants to introduce this is recognizing that we have some big changes going on in public transit right now with the route structure. With the comments the Board heard from the public, it is equally important to ensure that their ride is safe. All of us who ride the bus recognize that it is a safe system, but perception equals reality. It's going to be hard to sell these changes if people don't feel comfortable on the bus. Recognizing that staff has their hands full, it is important for the Board to look at some transit safety options that we can present to the community that can be rolled out at the same time as the service change or shortly thereafter.

Chair Smith asked Mr. Levy how he envisioned the committee to be structured, whether it would be a couple of members of the Board who can contribute and maybe solicit feedback from the

public but essentially make recommendations to staff on safety measure?

Mr. Levy stated that he is looking for a couple members of the Board to work with staff to help identify some funding options and some of the challenges that the system has around transit safety and maybe present those recommendations both to staff and to the Board sometime in the fall.

Mr. Renfrew noted that there is a staff safety committee in the Department and we would be open to anybody on the Board who might want to join it or participate, rather than creating another mechanism.

Mr. Levy appreciates Mr. Renfrew's willingness, but with the timeline of the route restructure and the feedback we've gotten from the community, it's important that we are able to present something to the public that says in addition to the route restructure, this is what we're doing on safety. It may be in conjunction with the internal committee, but it is important that some recommendations are presented publicly.

Chair Smith asked whether anyone on the Board has the time or interest to put into serving on a safety committee. Ms. Mack replied that she was interested, and she thinks it has to be in conjunction with the existing safety committee. Mr. Levy concurred. He stated his goal is not to recreate but to make sure that we come out with some recommendation.

Chair Smith asked whether Mr. Levy and Ms. Mack would be willing to attend the internal safety committee meetings and come back and present their feedback. They agreed that they would. The motion on the floor is that Mr. Levy and Ms. Mack will form a safety committee of the Board and will join with the the Department's safety committee. Without objection, the motion was agreed to.

2. Mr. Levy introduced a proposal for the Board to submit a letter of support to the House Finance Committee to fully fund the state match for public transportation.

Ms. Mack seconded the motion.

Mr. Levy stated that for the last five years the Alaska Legislature has provided a state legislative match for public and community transportation in Alaska. Last year, the Municipality of Anchorage received \$225,000 in capital and operating funds for transit. This year, the Senate eliminated that funding, and the bill is going back over to the House over the weekend to try to resolve. A letter of support from the Board would be justified. Chair Smith clarified that this is in the state capital budget.

Mr. Rudolph noted that the Department receives very few funds that it can match federal funds with. To receive federal funds, the Department has to provide state or local match money, and the few hundred thousand that it gets from the state helps.

Chair Smith stated that by not writing a letter to House Finance we would be leaving money on the table. It's not guaranteed that the Department will get it, but it could potentially affect the

amount of federal funds the Department is able to apply for.

Chair Smith asked whether Representative Gara is on House Finance. Mr. Levy replied that he is vice-chair.

Mr. Ooms asked what the match ratio is. Mr. Rudolph stated that most are 80% federal and 20% state/local. There are also a couple of 90/10 ones in there. Mr. Levy noted that this means that a cut of \$225,000 in state match means a potential loss of \$1 million in funding overall.

It was agreed that Chair Smith and Mr. Levy will collaborate on writing a letter to House Finance.

The motion on the floor is for Chair Smith and Mr. Levy to write a letter to be sent to the House Finance Committee requesting restoration of state matching funds for public transit. Without objection, the motion was agreed to.

- f. Item 7f – People Mover station at Bike to Work Day – Mr. Rudolph informed the Board that the Department will have a station by Westchester Lagoon for Bike to Work Day. There will be a bus and areas of blind spots around the bus will be roped off to let everyone know when they pass a bus that there are blind spots they should be aware of. The event will be held May 17th.

VIII. BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Ooms notified the Board that he's been on a lot of media lately. He was in the Alaska Common Ground series talking about transit and bikes as well, not really representing the Board but speaking to the future of transit in Anchorage, discussing funding, BRT, and future challenges. He stated that he was also on the radio this afternoon. It was mostly about biking in Anchorage, but bikes on the buses were mentioned. He regrets not having the numbers to put on the air, since the bike numbers are substantial. It was mentioned that often bike racks are full on the buses.

Ms. Mack requested that the letter to House Finance be sent to the Board members so they could send it to their own representatives. She also noted that the conversations that the Board is having are hard, but they're productive. She noted that the last few meetings there have been a lot of comments about customer service on the bus, and she would like to know what steps are taken to follow up with concerns.

Mr. Levy concurs with Mr. Ooms. A couple days ago, Mr. Ooms, Mr. Levy, and Chair Smith attended Common Ground's discussion about transportation. One of the areas they talked about was the commuter rail issue, one that's been talked about for a long time. Somewhere down the road it would probably be a good idea to bring the railroad back in to see if they have any updates on commuter rail. He also noted that public transportation in the Mat-Su Valley is changing with some mergers, and it would be good for Valley Transit to come down sometime later in the fall and talk about opportunities for both entities to work together.

Mr. Jackson had no further comments.

Ms. Hamre noted that the Board hears a lot of customer service comments at meetings. She is glad

members of the public can come here and know that they're being heard. She noted that as a Board, they don't respond to the complaints directly, so she wondered how to communicate with the public how to best channel those customer service concerns so that those don't have to come to meetings in order to be heard.

Chair Smith noted that the Assembly reduced the Department's FY17 budget by \$375,000. That won't impact fixed-route service for the remainder of this year, but it could potentially impact the ability to provide that service in 2018. He wanted to reiterate to members of the public that if they happen to speak with their Assembly representative, please let them know that making a financial commitment to supporting this service into the future as these changes go forward is going to be very important. We really need them to recognize that they need to make a commitment to funding this if it's going to be successful. He also mentioned that the best way to get customer service issues addressed is to call the customer service line with specific information on the date, time, and details of when a complaint occurred. If you come to this meeting and tell the Board that "two weeks ago on the route 60, I was riding and the driver didn't lower the ramp," you can come tell the Board. However, the more specific information you have and the quicker you can get to the customer service line to log that complaint, the more effective it will be to get that issue addressed. The number to call is 343-6543. He also noted that he attended the Alaska Common Ground discussion on transportation. He noted that there are a lot of people not in this room who support the idea of Complete Streets, walkable communities, and public transportation, and those issues are all tied together. It's all about providing access to people who don't necessarily drive.

IX. NEXT PTAB MEETING DATE

Next Meeting Date: September 14, 2017 – Mayor's Conference Room, #830 City Hall

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Levy made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Mack seconded the motion. Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 6:44pm.