

Public Transit Advisory Board  
February 15, 2018, 5:30 pm  
*CITY HALL, MAYOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM #830*

**PTAB PRESENT:**

Britta Hamre  
Jedediah Smith  
Gretchen Wehmhoff

**STAFF:**

Abul Hassan  
Bart Rudolph  
Andrew Watts

**GUESTS:**

Rashaud Joseph (DOT&PF)  
Jillanne Inglis (MOA)

**CITIZENS PRESENT:**

Pierrette Jenkins  
Andrew Klein  
Paul Watson  
<illegible>

Pat M. Olson  
Linda Larson  
Alan B. Rice  
Maarten McDonald  
Laurie Wood

Grace Anderson  
James Duhart III  
Kim Ansaknok

Wendy Norling  
Carl Kancir  
Fannie Flood  
Aaron Smith  
Yvonne Lockwood  
Buck Bloomer  
Heather MacAlpine  
Edward Odomin  
Murali  
Dene K John

*I. CALL TO ORDER*

The meeting was called to order at 5:32pm by **Chair Britta Hamre**.

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

After roll call a quorum was **not present**. **Vice-Chair Lugo, Mr. Ooms, and Mr. Moore's** absences were noted as excused. In the absence of a quorum, it was decided to proceed with an informational session including public comment. No official action was taken.

*III. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT*

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

*IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA*

In the absence of a quorum, the agenda was informally agreed to as a general list of discussion topics.

*V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – DECEMBER 14, 2017*

In the absence of a quorum, the approval of the December 14 minutes was continued to the March meeting.

*VI. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY*

**Chair Hamre** invited the members of the public attending to comment.

An **unidentified citizen** discussed her general safety concerns with the buses and one incident in particular on 02/15/18 at about 5:00pm on route 10. She stated that three drivers have told her that the mayor says to pick up drunks for free. She has seen this happen daily, multiple times a day. Her concern is that drunks and homeless people are getting free rides, meanwhile the Downtown Transit Center is getting shut down. Drivers are stuck in this situation, and the city isn't taking care of the homeless issue. She asked what the city is doing about Brother Francis and suggested that they need

to shut it down and put more security on the buses.

**Grace Anderson** – Ms. Anderson stated that she can't get to bus stops because of the snow banks, and when she goes in the roadway people aren't nice about it. She stressed the need to make sure sidewalks and bus stops are accessible. It has been a particular issues around Bragaw and Debarr near Costco and on Penland.

**James Duhart III** – Mr. Duhart stated he is concerned about a route that was eliminated. He stated that it is vital that there's a route by the library and by Providence Health Services on 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He stressed that it is vital to bring this route back for its educational and health benefits.

**Kim Ansaknok** – Ms. Ansaknok stated that 3 weeks ago at Debarr and Bragaw, when it was really cold, she was there several minutes before the bus at 5:07pm was scheduled, and it never showed up. Also, the 5:34 bus didn't show up, the next one drove by marked out of service, and the next one was at 5 something. All told she had to wait about 45 minutes between buses on what was supposed to be a 15-minute route. The next driver said to make a complaint. Customer service told her it would take time to investigate, up to 2 weeks. This was 3 weeks ago, and she hasn't heard a word from anyone. Yesterday, she was catching route 25, and a bus marked out of service still stopped for her, so it's confusing when they're actually picking people up or not. **Director Hassan** asked clarifying questions and asked her to follow up with him after the meeting.

**Linda Larson** – Ms. Larson stated that there's insufficient seating at the Downtown Transit Center now that half of it has been closed off. There were 40 people inside the other day for now 12 seats in the smaller remaining area. The bathrooms are also closed now. She stated that she has also noticed people being given free rides and that route 30 is always behind schedule.

**Buck Bloomer** – Mr. Bloomer stated that he is retired military and has been trying to work with us on getting buses on base. Other installations have it. He is also concerned that route 60 was removed from the library. He asked what the mayor's actual goal is with these changes and whether the end goal is socialism. He suggested that a good program would be to offer bus tokens in exchange for bringing in recyclables.

**Laurie Wood** – Ms. Wood stated that the route 25 electric bus is never on time and then it went out of service 1/8 mile after she got on. Route 25 in general is not reliable and doesn't show up. For route 30, she stood in the rain on Monday for 40 minutes before one shower up. She suggested that there should be fines for the Department if buses aren't reliable and that would help it clean up its act. The customers need help, and they're paying for the system.

**Paul Watson** – Mr. Watson stated that he agrees with several of the previous comments. For him personally, the new service on route 40 is very good. The only problem is that when you're heading toward the airport but you need to go to Dimond, you have to wait for a transfer on Spenard. He stated that he appreciates the help he got from customer service when the routes changed and that after the stop at Spenard and Northern Lights moved closer to REI, at first there were no lights at the stop and it was hard to be seen by the drivers. Now there are lights on the building, and it's easier to see and be seen. There is a long walk to transfer from inbound route 10 to outbound route 40 where the sidewalks aren't always cleared in front of the businesses on Northern Lights.

**Andrew Klein** – Mr. Klein stated that his question is still whether the Department is broke or not and no one has given him an answer except Courtney at OMB down the hall (who says that it takes \$23

million to pay the drivers and their pensions and another \$7 million for maintaining the buses). He asked whether the system is failing, period and if we're looking at the end of service. **Director Hassan** clarified that the changes made in October are geared toward adding value.

**Alan Rice** – Mr. Rice stated that he takes the buses a lot, lives in Mountain View, and service has improved so much for him that he can't see how the Department can afford to do it. He has seen faster travel times and for him it's a giant step upwards and better.

**Carl Kancir** – Mr. Kancir replied to **Mr. Rice** stating that Mountain View has better service because the Department eliminated routes 36 and 60. There are much longer walks for people who used those routes than there are in Mountain View. He suggested that the route numbers shouldn't have been changed, there needs to be better reliability, and the routes people really need should be brought back. He expressed concerns about having to walk farther from route 25.

**Maarten McDonald** – Mr. McDonald stated that there are redundant services in some areas like Mountain View (with a circulator and a big bus). He also noted that 20-ride passes had been more economical for him because he uses the bus infrequently.

**Pierrette Jenkins** – Ms. Jenkins stated that the changes are good but there's a need to tighten up and improve, especially with the small buses. She's had a number of issues with missed connections and late buses especially on the small ones.

**Patricia Olson** – Ms. Olson asked when the public would get answers to their questions.

**Director Hassan** stated that he would answer questions now. First, concerning the funding level, the current service costs more than what the Muni budgets for the Department, with the remainder based on federal funds for service expansion. Smaller buses are being used because, being contracted services, they can be operated at a fraction of the cost of the big buses (\$1.5 million per year versus \$8 million), which allows stretching the federal funding farther. The federal money is to carry the service through for right now until it can be sustained through partnerships with other entities. There are good and bad drivers on the neighborhood routes, but they're hired by the contractor rather than the Municipality, so the Department doesn't have direct control over them. The only personnel the Department controls are those who driver the 40-foot buses. There are concerns about the old IT systems limiting what the Department is able to do as far as service change flexibility. As far as routes 36 and 60, work in underway on leveraging third-party funding to restore that service. Concerning the reason for giving free rides, **Director Hassan** explained the spate of assaults on drivers in recent years and the increased costs that these incurred on the Department. From his perspective, it makes more sense to let people ride for free and lose a couple of dollars rather than get in a confrontation and have thousands of dollars in medical costs and lost time. He also spoke to the concerns about the homeless population and how that can only be indirectly affected by transit, such as by closing the bus stop in front of Brother Francis Shelter. **Ms. Wehmhoff** also spoke on the question of addressing the homeless population.

**Ms. Kim Ansaknok** asked whether we are moving toward privatization. **Director Hassan** clarified that we are not and that the model he has in mind are public-private partnerships that will leverage funding from organizations that provide transportation as a side piece to their main business line, like the Neighborhood Health Center or hotels, allowing them and Public Transportation to focus on their main businesses and reduce redundancies.

## *VII. BUSINESS / INFORMATION ITEMS*

### *a. Item 7e – New Bus System Update*

**Mr. Rudolph** presented an update concerning the performance of the new bus system. He discussed the ridership, productivity, and on-time performance statistics attached to these minutes. **Mr. Rudolph** noted that the next steps will be to readjust routes 11, 21, and 31, specifically their timing. There will be a public process where concepts will be released to the public, there will be opportunities to comment, the concepts will be presented to the Board, and adjustments will be made. The concepts should be ready for release at the April meeting, and **Mr. Rudolph** encouraged everyone to attend.

**Mr. Carl Kancir** noted that when the bus stop schedules had a definite time, they were right on target. He also stated that the signs advising people to cover their mouth when they cough should be on the bulkheads instead of overhead.

### *b. Item 7a – Electric Bus & Charging Stations – Limiting Factors*

**Mr. Rudolph** discussed the battery performance so far on the electric bus. Statistically, it's getting about 6.5 hours or 80 miles of service per day, and it's being run down to about 25% charge before being returned to the garage. He noted that the comment about it going out of service mid-route is interesting because it isn't running out of power. **Director Hassan** stated that there have been discussions with the electric utilities for charging stations around the municipality. These would be funded by FTA in partnership with electric companies to use part of the fleet of service vehicles, or possibly part of the wider municipal fleet, as part of a microtransit concept. Vehicles would be available to qualified drivers to help provide first and last mile service to access the bus system.

### *c. Item 7b – Design Criteria Manual – Road Typology and the Impact to Public Transportation / PTAB Advocacy and How to Effectuate Change*

**Director Hassan** noted that AMATS steers what the city and its roads and sidewalks should look like. They make the long-range plans. The Department cares because we fail if we can't get people to buses. Toward the end of the year, the Department will be commenting about bus stop spacing. By going through the process, the Department can give its input on what stop spacing, sidewalks, roads, and the like look like, what the role of the Department is, and what to do about accessibility. At the end of the year, staff would be happy to make a presentation to the Board on this process.

### *d. Item 7c – Tapping into Tourism*

**Director Hassan** discussed the reason route 40 is currently experiencing low productivity, the goals for the route, and some of the challenges in reaching it. He noted that it is lower productivity because our current IT systems don't allow the flexibility to easily allow us to run different winter and summer schedules. Because it takes at least 6 months to set up a schedule change in the systems, the October schedule had to be frequent on this route to see gains during the May, June, and July timeframe. The Department is trying to capture a ridership base it doesn't have now in tourists who are visiting Anchorage and staying along the Spenard corridor or downtown. A major challenge with this at present is the lack of bus marketing at the airport. There is also a retrofit project in the works to put luggage racks on buses that run this route.

### *e. ITS Degradation*

**Director Hassan** stated that the current systems used for tracking the buses and their performance,

scheduling work, and many other functions are 15 years old. This has led to the data errors and caveats that have been discussed by **Mr. Rudolph** and **Mr. Watts** surrounding new bus system performance and is the reason the Department can't change schedules quickly and easily. It was decided to prioritize replacement of this system. An RFP is in the draft phase now, and a new system could be implemented by June 2019 if funding is secured to move forward.

*f. Muni ADA and/or State DOT Update*

**Director Hassan** introduced **Ms. Inglis** and **Mr. Joseph** and explained their roles and why they are at the meeting. An open discussion was held for them to hear concerns about access directly from the public.

*VIII. BOARD & STAFF COMMENTS*

**Mr. Smith** thanked **Ms. Inglis** and **Mr. Joseph** for attending. He stated that he has noticed greater responsiveness and improvements in getting sidewalks cleared this winter compared to last. He stated that for the last three months, he has ridden the bus every day. It is ½ mile to the nearest stop to his house, and there are no sidewalks. It hasn't been an easy walk, but the #40 bus is very convenient. He has also taken route 25 from downtown to meetings in midtown. The schedule every 15 minutes in midday has been just about on time. He has also walked from C Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the library, which is a shorter walk than from his home to route 40. It's a farther walk than it used to be to get from the bus stop to the library, but it's possible to get there and this was a known tradeoff going in. He noted that the mobile ticketing app is very convenient, but drivers are not reliably entering the riders in the farebox.

**Ms. Wehmhoff** told attendees about how her car died recently when going to a party for her granddaughter. She was left wondering how she was going to get to work, especially at her second job. She noted that she is with the riders. So many things are going in the right direction, but there's always a need to innovate. She is also concerned about pedestrian access on the Old Glenn and mentioned this to **Mr. Joseph** specifically. She commended **Director Hassan** and staff for looking outside the box. She mentioned three issues in particular she would like to focus on: 1) service to and in Chugiak and Eagle River, 2) trips to Girdwood (e.g. for skiing and the Forest Fair), and 3) service into town for Fur Rondy or out to Eagle River for Bear Paw, which could pay for themselves.

**Chair Hamre** stated her appreciation for everyone attending tonight. She stated that she looks forward to figuring out how to harness the energy in this room to advocate with the Mayor and Assembly to sustain and even increase funding. She mentioned the need for a work session to discuss advocacy priorities.

*IX. NEXT PTAB MEETING DATE*

Next Meeting Date: March 8, 2018 – Assembly Conference Room, #155 City Hall

*X. ADJOURNMENT*

In the absence of a quorum, all informational items having been discussed, the meeting ended at 7:03 pm.