

Transit Commission Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2018

The Transit Commission meeting of Wednesday, May 9, 2018 was called to order by Vice-Chairman Dustin Perceful. Other commissioners in attendance included Dr. Kathleen Cates and Barbara Houston-Blatchford. Commissioner Poole was not present. Staff in attendance included Director Ken Savage, Sue Ruth, Mike Irwin, Lori Carr and Nancy Kain.

Commissioner Perceful called for comments on the meeting minutes of the February 7, 2018 meeting.

Commissioner Perceful made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Cates seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a vote of three in favor and zero opposed.

The second item discussed was a request from staff to open a 30 day hearing to seek comments from the public regarding proposed route enhancements and minor changes to the fixed routes. The enhancements include streamlining the Rogers fixed route to serve as an express route, whereby the Rogers Downtown route/bus would traverse from downtown to the supercenter and back within the same hour. This route enhancement will be made possible with time savings attributed to signal preemption which has been added to all fixed route buses.

Signal preemption is a specially mounted transmitter that enables public transit systems right-of-way to reduce travel time. Time savings from signal preemption should ultimately allow the department to expand service using the same fleet and staff in a more efficient manner. To accommodate the Rogers Downtown route/bus in a streamline fashion will require minor changes to other routes.

Park Avenue, as currently served by the Rogers Downtown route/bus, is proposed to be served by the Grand Avenue route/bus. The proposed changes incorporate new service on Kinkead Avenue between North Greenwood Avenue and Albert Pike Avenue. The proposal omits service on Albert Pike Avenue between Park Avenue and Free Ferry Road. Also to be removed is a stretch of service on Free Ferry Road between Albert Pike Avenue and Rogers Avenue and a small stretch on both North Greenwood and May Avenue between Rogers Avenue and Park Avenue.

Commissioner Houston-Blatchford asked in what manner transit staff would get word to the people along Texas Road. Director Savage explained the driver lead persons would visit with them individually. Commissioner Houston-Blatchford also asked if there would be signage or postings regarding the changes. Director Savage said there would be postings on Facebook, the website, electronic messaging on the buses, a large map on display at the transfer station, newspaper notification and also there would be printed handouts given to the passengers.

Commissioner Perceful asked if there were any active passengers that would be adversely affected by the changes. Staff indicated the changes were minimal. Small segments of the route may not be served and may require the passenger to use a different bus. Staff will work out each concern individually.

Commissioner Perceful made the motion to open a 30 day public comment period. Commissioner Houston-Blatchford seconded the motion. Three were in favor of the motion and none opposed.

The next item discussed was the Scheduling Software Project. Director Savage told the commission that staff was preparing a draft Request for Proposal (RFP). Staff received software demonstrations from four reputable companies. The RFP will be submitted once staff receives comments from the ITS Department and finalized.

Director Savage informed the commission that the department has applied for a grant from AARP thru the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in an effort to help pay the local match for the scheduling software.

Director Savage next gave an update on the Transit Asset Management Plan. Trans Systems, hired by the department as a consultant, has recently assessed all transit facilities, fleet and equipment. There is a one-time cost of \$7,500 for the consulting services.

An OSHA trained representative from the city's insurance provider, Arkansas Municipal League, to assess the safety of transit facilities and fleet. The inspector identified some minor issues that need to be addressed. Staff received favorable comments from the mayor, board of directors and administration regarding the outcome of the inspections.

Commissioner Cates inquired about the price of the scheduling software. Staff estimated and budgeted \$215,000 for the project.

Director Savage updated the commission on the shelter project. Staff recently ordered seventeen additional shelters, trashcans and accessories. Once installed it will bring the number of shelters to a total a 66. Director Savage explained the added amenities was a focus of the Future Fort Smith Comp Plan.

Director Savage asked the commission to consider a new TAP application request from Literacy Council of Western Arkansas. The agency's stated purpose is to change lives through education, training and employment. Staff did not invite a representative of the organization since the application was received after the agenda was posted.

Staff recommended an allocation of 50 tickets per month in an effort to be consistent with recent amounts provided to other organizations.

Commissioner Cates agreed their clients were low income and could definitely use the tickets. Director Savage said the commission may need to consider closing the application process in the near future due to utilization. Commissioner Cates then requested a spreadsheet of the TAP ticket usage at the next meeting.

Commissioner Cates asked if transit ridership was up. Director Savage shared a graph which showed an increase in ridership during the months of January and February. March ridership was virtually consistent with ridership in March of 2017. She also asked about ridership for Future School and UAFS. Future School currently has 15-16 passes issued every month. Staff did not have any numbers regarding UAFS usage but agreed to provide them at the next meeting.

Commissioner Perceful asked for an update regarding the behavioral issues from Hope Campus. Staff explained how things are improving and starting to settle down. He also thanked Keley Simpson with First Presbyterian Church for the funds that were used to leverage the federal funds to purchase the shelters.

Commissioner Houston-Blatchford asked if staff has done anything regarding the city's 200 anniversary. Staff presented the commission with examples of the promotional items purchased and explained how they have been sharing them with the public.

Director Savage took a moment to introduce Reese Brewer and Cody Schindler from Western Arkansas Planning and Development District (WAPDD) which also serves as Fort Smith Transit's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The new Driver Leadpersons, Angela Crase and David Hewitt, we also introduced.

Reese Brewer explained to the commission the recent work they have been providing for transit which includes the passenger surveys as well as preparing the grant application for AARP funds. She also explained future work they will be providing as transit's MPO.

Ms. Brewer also suggested two good locations for the next shelters would be in front of the Children's Emergency Shelter and in front of Sparks Hospital.

Commissioner Perceful thanked Sue Ruth for the amazing food she cooked for the meeting.

After the commission set the next meeting date for August 15th a noon, Commissioner Perceful called to adjourn the meeting.