

Transit Commission Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2018

The Transit Commission meeting of Wednesday, August 15, 2018 was called to order by Chairman Charles Poole. Other commissioners in attendance included Dr. Kathleen Cates, Dustin Perceful and Barbara Houston-Blatchford. Staff in attendance included Director Ken Savage, Sue Ruth, Mike Irwin, Lori Carr, Angela Crase, David Hewitt and Nancy Kain.

1. Minutes of the May 9, 2018 Meeting

Chairman Poole called for comments on the meeting minutes of the May 9, 2018 meeting.

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

2. Consider new applicants for the Transportation Assistance Program

1st Choice Pregnancy Med Center: This item was tabled until a representative could appear before the commission.

Five West Crisis Stabilization Unit: Jim Taylor appeared before the commission and spoke on behalf of this organization that provides assistance to individuals in active emotional and physical crisis.

Chairman Poole asked if they were associated with Prospective Behavioral Unit and Mr. Taylor said they work with them but are not a part of them. Chairman Poole asked how many people they serve and Mr. Taylor replied approximately 15 per month.

Goodwill Industries of Arkansas: Stacy Willinger appeared before the commission and spoke on behalf of this organization that provides life changes through education, training and employment along with re-entry services related to community corrections.

Staff recommended a quantity of 50 tickets per month for each of these organizations considering the current program participation levels.

Commissioner Cates was concerned about the agencies that were using a small fraction of their allotment and wanted the list possibly pared down. Commissioner Perceful noted the list had already been cut in half. Commissioner Cates asked that these agencies be contacted to see why they are not using much of their allotment. Director Savage assured her they would be contacted.

Commissioner Perceful made the motion to approve the two agencies to receive 50 tickets per month. Commissioner Cates seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of four in favor and zero opposed.

3. Consider temporarily closing the application process for the Transportation Assistance Program

Staff recommended the commission temporarily close the application process for the Transportation Assistance Program. A report was presented that identified program's level of utilization. Assuming the program continues at its current utilization rate for the remainder of the year, the amount of tickets distributed equates to approximately 9% of the total fares received in 2017. If the entire allocation amounts were used, the program utilization would represent approximately 15% of total fares received in 2017.

The program is working well within the community and temporarily suspending the application process should provide a better balance between the program's integrity and the fares needed to support the operations of the department. Staff assured the commission they will continue to monitor the program utilization to determine if more opportunities become available in the future for new organizations seeking transportation assistance for their clients.

Commissioner Perceful made the motion to temporarily close the application process for the Transportation Assistance Program. Commissioner Houston-Blatchford seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of four in favor and zero opposed.

4. Discuss results of the 30 day public hearing concerning proposed changes to the fixed routes and consider approving the proposed route modifications

Director Savage explained to the commission of the changes being made to the traffic signals that should make this project possible. Staff estimates the department is approximately 75% ready for the project to proceed. The transit department has been working closely with the street department in the project and there are still some signal programming alterations to be made to a few intersections, as well as further testing to ensure proper synchronizations of routes. They estimate the route changes (if approved) will be ready October 1, 2018.

To recap, 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. Traffic signal preemption should also allow drivers to serve the routes with greater consistency, fewer delays and minimize the need for bypassing route segments during heavy traffic configurations. He noted that emergency vehicles have priority over any traffic signal preemption for transit vehicles.

The enhancements include streamlining the Rogers Downtown 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. To accommodate the Rogers Downtown route/bus in a streamline fashion will require minor changes to other routes.

Lori Carr explained what sources were used to encourage public comments. They included placing an ad in the local newspaper, placed a large map of the proposed changes in the lobby of the transfer station and provided a posting on the electronic message signs on the buses along with notifications on the department's website and public access channel. During the public comment period staff prompted discussions with passengers likely to be required to board using the on-call method and the passengers have been understanding and favorable to the changes. Mrs. Carr said there were two comments received in favor of the changes and no oppositions to the change. Many individuals just asked when the changes will take place.

Chairman Poole asked if the emitters will be placed on the demand response buses as well. Director Savage replied they would be on all revenue service vehicles. He said the emitters also activate the gates as UAFS so bus service can be provided on campus.

Commissioner Houston-Blatchford made a motion to approve the route changes and modifications and for the changes to take effect on October 1st or soon afterwards as soon as staff can implement all the changes. Commissioner Cates seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of four in favor and zero opposed.

5. Other Business

• Transit Update

○ Scheduling Software

Staff has prepared an RFP but it will be the first part of 2019 before it is expensed. There will be a 3 month data transfer which will be time consuming.

○ Transit Asset Management

Director Savage summarized the elements of the TAM Plan stating the state (ArDOT) provides 80% of funding for our vehicles and they are all typically replaced within a four year time frame. The plan uses a cumulative scoring method consisting of the age, mileage and condition of a vehicle or facility to evaluate the need for replacement.

○ Shelter Update

Mike Irwin provided the current status of the shelter program, stating that the 17 new shelters are expected to be delivered soon. He is completing land surveys for the majority of shelter placement sites. Mr. Irwin indicated he may need some additional shelters once he receives confirmation from the remaining letters recently mailed.

- **CNG Fueling Station**

Director Savage explained the reasons for the delay in the bidding process and gave a timeline to completion with an expected completion date of October of 2019.

6. Commissioners Forum

Commissioner Houston-Blatchford shared a conversation with her neighbor who was praising transit because she drove by and saw transit staff picking up trash at a shelter location and they walked away from the shelter and picked up trash even in the surrounding area.

7. Citizens Forum

Keley Simpson asked what would cause us to move a shelter. Mike Irwin explained that with the proposed route changes that the shelters that are on the part of the routes that are no longer covered will be relocated to areas where the routes will cover.

Ms. Simpson also asked if transit was still working with the bus coalition at UAFS. Director Savage explained we were still working with them.

Kenneth Greene informed the commission that we were possibly in violation of ADA access at the transfer station. He said the bathroom doors did not have the ADA button to open the doors and they were difficult to maneuver and he wasn't even in a wheelchair.

Director Savage explained that when the transfer station was built everything was up to code but that was many years ago and things may have changed since then. He said this is one of the improvements to consider in the near future when we look at reinvesting in the transfer station. He suggested using remaining property value as in kind match to leverage grant funds for improvements. He also made note to get pricing on the door improvements.

Mr. Greene expressed his concern that the downtown shuttle (trolley) did not have any identifying marks related to the transit department. There is no logo or phone number on the trolley and there isn't a sticker that says will stop at all railroad crossings on the back of the vehicle. Mr. Greene said all transit personnel needs to have a title upgrade. He would like for every employee to have PPM which stands for "Professional People Mover" after their names and he thinks they should all be given business cards with the title on them. He thinks this would be a huge moral builder.

Reese Brewer explained to the commission the work they will be doing in regards to the Rogers Avenue Multi-Modal Corridor Study. They were one out of five nationwide to receive the Federal Highway Administration grant.

Chairman Poole thanked Sue Ruth for the wonderful food that she provided for the meeting.

Sue Ruth stated that in October she will be with Fort Smith Transit 22 years and that she will be retiring on November 2nd.

The commission set the next meeting date for November 7, 2018.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.