

INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD

MAY 27, 2009

ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present

Randy Gelderloos
Ira Hart
Barbara Holt, Vice Chair
Jack Hoffman
Rick Morris
Richard Root
Terry Schweitzer
Rob VerHeulen

Board Members Absent

Charis Austin
Lisa Haynes
George Heartwell
Don Lawless, Chair
Steve Maas
Barb VanDuren
James White

Others Present

Jeff Ammon, Miller Johnson
Blanche Babers, Passenger
Henry Borgeling, Rapid Bus Operator
Rob Carter, Citizen
Russell Lewis, Citizen
Sgt. Wayne Moore, GRPD/The Rapid
Watchdog Miller, Citizen
Dean Peterson, MDOT
Douglas Wright, Passenger

Staff

Kathy Anderson
Robin Crothers
Mark Fedorowicz
Taiwo Jaiyeoba
Meegan Joyce
Jennifer Kalczuk
Brian Pouget
Liz Schelling
Peter Varga, CEO

MINUTES OF
INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD
AS RECORDED ON MAY 27, 2009

Commencing at 4:02 p.m., Ms. Holt called the regular meeting of the Interurban Transit Partnership Board to order.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Rob Carter noted that he supported the BRT millage and would like to know if an appropriate alternative would be a regular route that would travel that corridor.

Watchdog Miller commented that he would like the minutes of the April 22, 2009 Board meeting amended to state that he does support the Amtrak Station. As written, the minutes state that he does not support the Amtrak Station. Could use extra lines on the Amtrak. He feels that metal benches are not a good choice. Metal is not a friendly material and downtown Grand Rapids is a mismatch of buildings and we need benches that are the most comfortable. He commented on the document distribution at Board meetings.

Blanche Babers would like Go!Bus to allow more than two bags per passenger. Mr. Varga noted that we would look into this.

Russell Lewis believes that the Board and staff are striving for quality, clean service, but would like to see more opportunity for citizen comment and feedback. He commented that he has called and been told that we are unable to give him the name of a staff member who he should direct his concerns to but that he can send a letter to Central Station and it would be given to the correct person. He feels, as a taxpayer, he should be able to have the name of the staff member who he can direct concerns/comments to. He feels that additional opportunities for feedback from the public would be beneficial and helpful to the system. He mentioned that he has heard comments from other passengers about the Silver Line with most saying this is not what they want and felt they had not been asked. Riders are looking for extended routes and hours.

Douglas Wright commented that he would like to have extended service on Sunday.

1. Minutes of the April 22, 2009 Board Meeting:

A motion was made by Gelderloos, supported by Hoffman, to approve the April 22, 2009 Board meeting minutes, including the amendment requested by Mr. Miller under Public Comment. Motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Morris, supported by VerHeulen, to approve Consent Agenda items 2-9. Motion passed unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA

Performance Oversight Committee

10. FY 2009 Second Quarter Report Card-Fixed Route:

Mr. Schweitzer reported that we have set standards to measure performance and the Performance Oversight Committee would like to highlight that we have received green lights in all areas for the second quarter. He noted the system average of 24 passengers per bus hour and 30.4% farebox recovery both are evidence of the high level of service usage and passenger contributions towards the cost of operating.

Mr. Morris reminded members that we did raise the standards recently and even with the change utilization of our system compared to similar systems is high. These are all positive things that we are doing.

A motion was made by Schweitzer, supported by Hart, to approve the FY 2009 Second Quarter Fixed Route Report Card. Motion passed unanimously.

11. FY 2009 Second Quarter Report Card-Paratransit:

Mr. Schweitzer noted that the second quarter paratransit report card also had all green lights, proving to be a cost-effective service to passengers. He mentioned that we have 1.8 passengers per hour. In past years we have obtained software to better schedule trips and meet the needs of more passengers while keeping the cost down.

A motion was made by Schweitzer, supported by Hart, to approve the FY 2009 Second Quarter Paratransit Report Card. Motion passed unanimously.

Strategic Planning Committee

12. FY 2010 Budget Formulation Guidelines:

Mayor VerHeulen noted that state operating assistance is the only change to the FY 2010 budget formulation guidelines compared to last year. It is budgeted at 29.5%. He noted that this is a conservative budget with no proposed fare increase; however, property tax and fuel costs remain areas of concern.

Mr. Varga noted that contribution to the administrative employee defined benefit pension plan shall be the high-range contribution. An additional contribution, above the high range contribution, may be proposed if funding exists.

A motion was made by VerHeulen, supported by Hart, to approve the FY 2010 Budget Formulation Guidelines. Motion passed unanimously.

External Relations Committee

13. TF2 Transportation Funding Package:

Mr. Varga reported that the Board is asked to consider supporting the funding package that came out of the Transportation Funding Task Force (TF2) report. These bills are designed to stabilize transportation funding and gradually, over a period of 5 to 7 years, achieve 90 percent of the recommended increases in the state's investment in roads, bridges, and public transit.

He explained that the bills have not yet been introduced in final form, and because there is expected to be discussion and compromise as they move through the legislature, staff is asking the Board to endorse objectives that the bills must meet. As long as these objectives are met in the legislation, staff will be authorized to be involved in advocacy efforts, including expressing the endorsement of the ITP Board.

A motion was made by Root, supported by Morris, to support the TF2 Transportation Funding Package. Motion passed unanimously.

14. Consumer Advisory Committee Appointment:

Ms. Kalczuk noted that the Consumer Advisory Committee recommends the appointment of Rae Bower as a member to serve a term to expire on December 31, 2010.

Mr. Hart mentioned that Rae Bower is active in the community and would be valuable to the Consumer Advisory Committee.

A motion was made by Hart, supported by Hoffman, to approve the appointment of Rae Bower as a member of the Consumer Advisory Committee. Motion passed unanimously.

Other Business:

Related to Public Comment at the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Varga commented to Mr. Lewis that there should be comment cards on every bus, which allows for direct comment to him. He noted that he reads each comment card and sends a response if contact information is provided. If comment cards are not on vehicles, please let him know.

Mr. Varga noted that Henry Borgeling, a Rapid Bus Operator, requested an opportunity to address the Board.

Mr. Borgeling commented that he has recently returned from service in the military. While in the military he had the opportunity to nominate The Rapid for a Patriot award from the U.S. Department of Defense, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, entitled "Above and Beyond Award" for outstanding service

and continuing support to the national defense. This award recognizes companies that support employees who serve their country through the National Guard and Reserve. Mr. Borgeling presented the award to Mr. Varga.

CEO's REPORT

15. CEO Monthly Report:

Mr. Varga noted that we would be evaluating options in connection with the long-range plan for the Silver Line. We will use the long-range plan process to gain information about many services including the BRT. The BRT project status with the FTA has not changed, and is still considered a valid project. The Board did approve moving forward with the environmental assessment and a financial plan will be reconsidered by the Board. The long range plan, along with other public forums, will help us to understand what the community is asking for regarding future projects.

16. Language Line:

No discussion.

17. Silver Line BRT-Next Steps:

Discussed under item 15, above.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Ms. Holt mentioned that we have Vanpools available and to please let Mr. Wisselink know if you know of any company that may be interested.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORTS

No report.

Board Member Comments

Mayor Root noted that the message of the BRT was not clear to the public. He questioned how we get a message to a community of people who no longer use traditional methods of communication, i.e. newspaper.

Mr. Hart inquired if we could get clarification for the public on the process of addressing concerns.

Mr. Varga noted that there are many ways for the public to communicate to the Board. We provide comment cards on the vehicles and have opportunity at Board and Committee meetings for the public to provide input. He mentioned the document for distribution of materials at meetings clarifies the process of how documents can be distributed to the Board.

Mayor VerHeulen commented that if a member of the public asks a question during public comment how do we know that they have received an answer.

Mr. Morris noted that we do have a process including the comment cards and opportunity to comment at meetings.

Mr. Varga explained that we do have opportunity for public comment at the meetings; however, we do not engage in question and answers so the best way to communicate with staff is to fill out a comment card and include contact information to receive a response. If members of the public would like a response about questions or comments asked at meetings they would need to make sure that we have contact information to respond to them.

Mayor Root noted that communication could also start with each city helping to deal with resident concerns.

Mr. Hoffman agrees with Mayor Root's analysis of the election. He is aware that the message and the development aspect did not get through to the voters.

Mr. Varga noted that we presented a question to the public that we believe was easy to understand. Much of the public did not understand the service being proposed and once it was explained to them they understood and supported the project. He also mentioned that when a transit system tries to do something that is different from current service the community is not always immediately supportive. We have a good opportunity to listen and work with the long range plan effort so that community input can filter in and help us understand what the issues are.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Rob Carter is disappointed that we still have many areas where we do not have enough service especially in various townships. He would like to see an effort in the long-range plan to get more service in the townships. He gave his contact information for a response to his earlier question at the beginning of the meeting.

Mr. Varga noted that township issues could also be addressed at township meetings because they negotiate the contract for transit service.

Watchdog Miller commented that he believes we spent a lot of funds getting the message out about the millage and next time equal time should be given to transit supporters that oppose the issue. He clarified that we have the right to leave information at the bus depot. He thanked staff for good work on Route 17 and supports the position of the City of Kentwood, if they want it then keep it. He noted that The Rapid blames the economy for the millage results, but Kalamazoo passed a millage the same day. He commented on millage results.

Russell Lewis commented that he is concerned with the lack of real time information available. He encourages The Rapid to look at all electronic methods available to improve communication. Community communication through web based messages and blogs could be helpful.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

There was no discussion on the following information items.

- A. Summary of 5-13-09 Annual Planning Meeting
- B. Minutes of 5-13-09 Governance Committee Meeting
- C. Minutes of 5-20-09 Performance Oversight Committee Meeting
- D. Minutes of 5-20-09 Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
- E. Communications

The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Crothers, ITP Board Secretary