

INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD

JUNE 30, 2010

ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present

Don Lawless, Chair
Charis Austin
Tim Cochran
Ira Hart
Lisa Haynes
George Heartwell
Jack Hoffman
Barbara Holt
Rick Morris
Rick Root
Terry Schweitzer
Rob VerHeulen
Jim White

Staff

Peter Varga, CEO
Kathy Anderson
Sarah Green
Alan Hartley
Taiwo Jaiyeoba
Meegan Joyce
Jennifer Kalczuk
Brian Pouget
Liz Schelling
Steve Schipper

Board Members Absent

Randy Gelderloos
Tammy Hopman

Others Present

Joel Anderson, Volunteer Mentor
Lander Bartley, Citizen
Jordan Buning, DDM
Zach Bosma, Christman Company
James Bruckbauer, Citizen
Casey Dutmer, CAC
Dan Fox, MV Transportation
Seth Horton, Progressive AE
Gopal Ji, Citizen
Kyla King, Grand Rapids Press
Frank Lynn, DAKC
Watchdog Miller, Citizen
Wayne Moore, GRPD
Tyler Nickerson, CTEH
Dean Peterson, MDOT

Julie Rowan, Cool Cities Intern
Lindsey Smith, WGVU
Don Stypula, GVMC
Clare Wade, Clare Wade Communications
Ashlee Wright, Citizen
Doug Wright, Citizen

**MINUTES OF
INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD
AS RECORDED ON JUNE 30, 2010**

Commencing at 4:01 p.m., Mr. Lawless called the regular meeting of the Interurban Transit Partnership Board to order.

Mr. Lawless introduced new Board Member Tim Cochran. Mr. Cochran gave a brief description of his current and past work experience and endeavors.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Watchdog Miller commented that the acoustics in the room are terrible and suggested having the meeting in an appropriate place like across the street. He noted that the six cities pay 32 times more in Rapid property taxes than the townships. This is a correction to the May meeting minutes regarding a statement he made during public comment. He mentioned that he requested a full alternatives analysis particularly in regards to Route 4 crossing tower town. Failure to get the EA to the public is another dishonest practice to seek a FONSI - finding of no significant impact from the federal government for the BRT. He noted that the Grand Rapids Press should list which featured personalities are former or present Rapid contractors. He mentioned a \$69,000 contract with Dick Bulkowski and Disability Advocates and noted that we charge senior citizens 43% more than Lansing. They charge \$18 a month and we charge \$26. He showed his free pass from Chicago, which allows seniors to ride free.

Doug Wright would like us to resume service along Byron Center between 28th and Prairie. He noted that it was more convenient.

Julie Rowan explained that she is an intern with the Cool Cities program and as part of her internship she is applying for a small grant from the state that would connect young professionals in the Grand Rapids area with college students. The two groups would perform a service project together. The service project proposed is decorating a few local bus shelters around the city. She is asking for support from The Rapid with this service project. She explained that it would be a public art project and would have no cost for The Rapid or the residents of Grand Rapids. The project would expose people to the neighborhoods in the city and the services offered by The Rapid.

1. Minutes of the May 26, 2010 Board Meeting:

A motion was made by Hoffman, supported by VerHeulen, to approve the May 26, 2010 Board Meeting Minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Holt, supported by Hart, to approve Consent Agenda items 2-7. Motion passed unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA

Strategic Planning Committee

8. Transit Master Plan Recommendation:

Mr. Hoffman explained that the Strategic Planning Committee is recommending that the Transit Master Plan final report be adopted.

Mr. Schweitzer commented that the report is visionary in terms of looking ahead and where the community would like to see the transit system go. He believes that it is important to point out that some of it is within the realm of the ITP but there are a number of recommendations that involve the outlying areas. It is a group project and not entirely within our authority to make it happen.

Mr. Lawless encourages Board members to build excitement within their individual cities and then move out to the townships and municipalities that are involved in the plan.

Mr. Hoffman noted that within the last 20 years The Rapid has done an exceptional job of providing basic transit. This plan helps to reinvent our community. He looks at this plan as a vision for the future where residents choose public transportation.

Mayor Heartwell commented that the work that has gone into the TMP has been exceptional. One of the most visionary elements of the plan is the history of streetcars. He is grateful for the strong statement made about streetcars in the plan.

A motion was made by Hoffman, supported by Cochran, to approve the Transit Master Plan. Motion passed unanimously.

9. Grant Opportunities:

Mr. Hoffman reported that staff is requesting that the Board authorize the CEO to submit grant applications for the BRT and/or streetcar projects to the Federal Transit Administration on behalf of the ITP Board for the TIGER II program and the TIGGER program. Authorization is also requested for the CEO to submit grant applications at any time that it is deemed in our interest to do so, as long as it is for a project in the Transit Master Plan, the CEO's work plan or some other Board-approved project.

He noted that currently staff presents grant applications to the Board for approval before submitting the application. However, the funding environment has recently changed requiring that applications be submitted within certain time constraints.

Mr. Morris noted that we have just adopted the TMP which is a visionary plan and questioned why we are granting staff approval to go after streetcar funds just because they may be available. This would be a major change for the transit agency and he feels the Board should have an opportunity to say if this is something they want. Are we granting this authority because this service is included in the TMP. He would like more explanation.

Mr. Lawless believes that we are authorizing staff to use good judgment in pursuing grant funds. He explained that if there is a big pot of streetcar money staff is authorized to apply for the funds and bring the information to the Board for approval.

Mr. Morris inquired why the TMP needs to be included in the language. To him the Transit Master Plan is the vision of taking our system to a bigger and broader system and improving service. He feels this resolution gives more power and questions if this is the intention.

Mr. Varga explained that this resolution has two parts. One is to apply for funding for the BRT and the streetcar and the other is authorization for us to apply for grants for approved projects as necessary which include projects highlighted in the plan. By approving the Transit Master Plan the Board has said that this is part of what they would like to see in the future. He noted that all applications are subject to grant requirements and would come back to the Board. We want to be able to submit the application and then return to the Board with the details. The Board would have the right to withdraw the application.

Mr. Lawless questioned if we are awarded a grant if we have to take it. Mr. Varga noted that you do not have to accept the funds.

Mr. Morris voted for the Transit Master Plan which he views as a vision that includes the possibility of a streetcar 10-15 years from now. However, the Board is now being asked to approve an application for staff to try and get funding for a streetcar.

Mr. Varga explained that there is more availability of direct grants from the federal government and the timing to apply for them does not allow for the previous procedures.

Mayor VerHeulen is supportive of staff submitting the applications but wants to make sure that authorization of a grant application does not get construed as saying this is something we are going to do. If an application not previously approved by the Board is submitted and well received it should come to the Board for acceptance of the grant.

Mr. Varga explained that we do not get authorization for award of a grant right away so we would have plenty of time to report to the Board on any applications we have submitted. The Board can reaffirm the action that we took or decide to withdraw the application.

Mr. White is supportive of this resolution. He believes that if we do not allow applications to be submitted to accommodate time constraints we may miss out on valuable opportunities. He noted that submitting the application does not commit us. Staff will report what they have done and at that point the Board can determine what they want to do.

Mayor Root noted that we have an application and an award process. He has never seen an award made within a month of an application and believes there is a window of time available to get an application back to the Board. We could create a problem if we were granted an award and we delayed the denial by taking our time to accept it. The question is not just the application but the decision whether we accept it on a common basis. He agrees that we could miss an opportunity if we do not allow staff to submit applications.

Mayor Heartwell mentioned that we have been working on a streetcar project for over a year. The Board has approved many ideas dealing with streetcar and to have staff explore possibilities for funding the streetcar is a logical step.

Mayor Root noted that this is a release of a certain amount of Board authority. He noted that the resolution does not address the CEO as Mr. Varga it addresses the administration of his job. He suggests we keep track of what type of authority has been awarded to the CEO for situations like this so that the Board is aware of what authority the CEO has.

Mr. Lawless commented that we do get routine reports on pending grant applications and expects this to continue.

Mr. Morris stated that at this point he feels he has a better understanding of the application process and believes it is a relatively easy process to apply for funds. He mentioned that we have spent a lot of funds on the BRT project during the application process and believes we have a responsibility to spend public money wisely. He supports the submission of applications but wants the opportunity as a Board to say if we want to do this after the application is submitted. He believes we have to continue to question if we are doing the best thing for the most people of the community and is still skeptical of the streetcar project.

Mr. Varga commented that he has never had a grant application that has been awarded really quickly. He noted that in all instances grant funds awarded have to be approved by the Board.

Mayor Root noted that turning down awarded funds could impact future funds if they have spent a significant amount of time evaluating an application.

Mr. Hart hopes we would be prudent enough to do some of the other things in the TMP before the streetcar project even if we are awarded a grant.

A motion was made by Hoffman, supported by Heartwell, to approve submittal of applications for the Tiger II and TIGGER programs, and to authorize the CEO to submit grant applications for grant opportunities if it is deemed to be in our interest to do so as long as the funds are for a project in the TMP, the CEO's work plan or some other Board-approved project.

Mayor VerHeulen recommends we amend the resolution by adding language to the end of the resolution that the Board is informed of the application as soon as reasonably possible after the application is submitted. This will help us decide if we support the application in a timely manner.

A motion was made by VerHeulen, supported by Hart, to amend the previous motion by adding that the Board will be informed of the application as soon as reasonably possible after it is submitted in order for the Board to decide if they want to support it before the funds are actually awarded. Motion passed unanimously.

The original motion, as amended, passed unanimously.

Mr. Lawless noted that in the vast majority of cases we will know about grant applications before they are submitted.

He commented that the TMP is a plan not a vision which we will try to reasonably get done. If an opportunity becomes available for us to get a piece of the plan accomplished we need to take that opportunity.

Mr. Schweitzer questioned if any other aspects of the TMP would qualify for funding with any of the current available grant opportunities. Mr. Lawless believes staff would have to look into this.

Mr. Varga noted that it is probable that there could be other projects that would qualify.

CEO's REPORT

10. Wealthy Operations Expansion Project - Phase 1 Update:

Mr. Varga identified the team which consists of Rapid staff, and representatives from Christman and Progressive AE.

Zach Bosma with Christman gave a presentation on Phase 1 of the Wealthy Operations Expansion Project.

Mr. Varga commented that if any Board members would like a tour to contact him.

11. CEO Monthly Report:

Mr. Varga encourages all Board members to read the Transit Master Plan.

12. Report on FY 2010 Priorities and Work Plan:

Mr. Varga noted that he has distributed his FY 2010 Priorities and Work Plan for review. He noted that the work Plan for 2011 will be provided on September 1, 2010.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Lawless asked for input on the FY 2010 Work Plan and any feedback regarding Mr. Varga's evaluation. He will send an evaluation form for everyone to fill out shortly.

At the last East Grand Rapids City Commission meeting he and Mr. Morris presented the new animation of the BRT and the draft of the Transit Master Plan. The presentation was well received and he encourages all Board members to do the same.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Dutmer thanked the Board for having three members of the Consumer Advisory Committee on the Mobile Metro 2030 Task Force.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. White commented that we have come such a long way with transit and thanked Mr. Varga for his leadership.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

There was no discussion on the following information items.

- A. Minutes of 6-16-10 Governance Committee Meetings
- B. Minutes of 6-23-10 Performance Oversight Committee Meeting
- C. Minutes of 6-23-10 Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
- D. Minutes of 6-24-10 External Relations Committee
- E. Communications

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Crothers, ITP Board Secretary