MINUTES OF
INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD
As Recorded on February 22, 2017

ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present: Charis Austin, Rosalynn Bliss, Dave Bulkowski, Gary Carey, Tim Cochran, Randy Gelderloos, Jack Hoffman, Barbara Holt (Chair), Mark Huizenga, Stephen Kepley, Terry Schweitzer, Amna Seibold, Paul Troost

Board Members Absent: David Bilardello, Michael Verhulst

Staff Present: Kathy Anderson, Michael Bulthuis, Robin Crothers, Rod Ghearing, Jennifer Kalczuk, Linda Medina, Brian Pouget, Peter Varga (CEO), Scott Walsh, Mike Wieringa, Kevin Wisselink

Others Present: David Covey (CAC Chair), Allan Klepadlo (MV Transportation), John LaFromboise (BDO Seidman), Asher Lockwood, Watchdog Miller, Bianca Nunn (MV Transportation), Tony Schrabel (Watkins Ross)

Ms. Holt called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Watchdog Miller said that the Grand Valley group that protested at a prior Board meeting should have been prosecuted. They received $5,000 from the ATU and are the front organization. He commented on the current budget and stated that we spend too much on administrative salaries and only $600,000 on Fuel and Lubricants. Going to CNG is a black hole. We should have more bus service in the downtown.

MINUTES

1. Minutes of January 25, 2017 Board Meeting:

   Ms. Holt asked for corrections to the minutes. None were offered. The minutes stand approved as written.

CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were placed on the Board’s Consent Agenda by the Performance Oversight Committee at their February 15 meeting.

3. December 2016 Ridership and Productivity Report
A motion was made by Seibold, supported by Bliss, to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA

9. FY 2016 Audit Report

Ms. Holt asked for questions or comments on the FY 2016 Audit Report. There were no questions or comments.

A motion was made by Seibold, supported by Austin, to accept the FY 2016 Audit Report. Motion passed unanimously.

10. BRT Corridor Selection and Refinement Study:

Mr. Schweitzer stated that staff requested authorization to execute a contract with AECOM for this work in an amount not to exceed $433,125. There were no concerns expressed at the Performance Oversight Committee meeting and they recommended approval.

Mr. Wisselink reported that the Transit Master Plan (TMP) does not include a third bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor. This study will examine the area and come up with potential corridors for BRT or some other type of service. The funding for this project was obtained through the MPO. There was federal Section 5303 funding available that was not being used which The Rapid applied for and received.

Four proposals were received and one was eliminated as not being competitive. Based on evaluation criteria, AECOM was recommended to conduct this study.

Mr. Bulkowski asked about last mile service. Mr. Wisselink noted that the study will focus on all possible corridors and all types of service will be considered.

Mr. Varga indicated that the last mile service is a separate effort that should be coming to the Board in May 2017, along with other shared mobility options.

Ms. Holt inquired about public input and how we determine who will attend. Mr. Wisselink responded that the AECOM proposal included an extensive public input process. Anyone can come and give input on the proposed recommendations.

Mayor Seibold commented on AECOM’s proposal, noting that they had the lowest cost per hour. She asked about the other two proposals. Mr. Wisselink stated that their cost was close. Mayor Seibold would like to see the costs for all proposals for these projects.

Mr. Cochran commended Rapid staff for making the effort to obtain these funds. Mr. Varga mentioned that it was definitely an opportunity that we were able to make work for us.

Mr. Bulkowski stated that he looks forward to discussion on other types of mobility besides 40-foot buses.
A motion was made by Seibold, supported by Bulkowski, to approve a contract with AECOM Corporation to conduct a BRT Corridor Selection and Refinement Study at a cost not to exceed $433,125. Motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEM

11. Presentation on Ridership:

Mr. Wisselink gave a presentation on ridership including trends and impacts.

Discussion took place regarding the impacts of services like Uber and Lyft. Mr. Wisselink stated that we do not have ridership data for these services.

Mr. Varga commented that the younger generation is using these services as one of their possible modes of transportation, but we don’t know to what extent since we don’t have this information. When services like Uber partner with transit systems, which is starting to happen, they have to share data due to federal requirements.

The impact of gas prices and service increases was discussed. Mr. Varga noted that increased fuel prices have an impact on our budget. With the inclusion of CNG fueled buses into our fleet over time, the budget will not be affected by gas prices.

Mr. Bulkowski asked if anyone rides the buses to talk to passengers and ask them why they ride.

Ms. Kalczuk responded that we get this information through our ridership surveys.

Mr. Varga mentioned that we would get more comprehensive information if we actually rode the buses and talked to passengers. He stated he would look into it. Mr. Varga commented that passengers are impacted significantly by who is driving the bus.

In response to a question from Ms. Holt, Ms. Kalczuk stated that we do ridership surveys every other year.

Mayor Bliss questioned whether we survey people who don’t use our services and do we ask them why they ride or don’t ride The Rapid. Mr. Kalczuk indicated that we do a phone survey every year, and most of those people do not use our services. These surveys are more focused on awareness of Rapid services.

Ms. Holt felt that asking why people don’t ride would be valuable information.

Mayor Seibold noted that the “no fare zone” for the Silver Line has been in operation since September 2016 and asked if we are tracking to see if it is increasing ridership. Mr. Wisselink responded that we are tracking use of the no fare zone. A detailed report should be available for the Board in March.

Mayor Bliss would like to see ridership numbers for the Silver Line no fare zone and DASH.

Mr. Varga mentioned that the Silver Line no fare zone is a 10-month pilot project through June 2017.
CEO REPORT

12. CEO Monthly Report:

There will be an item on the March Board agenda regarding the fare structure changes that come with the smart card/e-fare implementation. The Board will be asked to approve taking the proposed fare structure changes to the public for input.

Mr. Varga noted he will be meeting with federal legislators and/or their staff, as well as the Transportation Committee, about the Laker Line BRT project in March while he’s in Washington DC for the APTA Legislative Conference. He will keep the Board posted.

We have a good partnership with GVSU that has been important during development of the Laker Line project. They are working with us on some design elements. The Project Management Oversight Consultant (PMOC) will be doing a risk assessment on the project in mid-March. Mr. Varga indicated that he is optimistic about the project.

Board members were encouraged to talk with their legislators. We can provide the Board with the appropriate materials.

Mr. Varga stated that he has been conducting “Getting to Know You” sessions with all new employees since he became CEO. The employees’ managers also attend these sessions. This has been a very positive and useful effort. It is good for all employees to know the CEO. He suggested that the Board consider having a session like this in order to get to know each other better. He felt it would be very beneficial.

CHAIR’S REPORT

Ms. Holt asked that Mr. Wisselink’s ridership presentation be sent to the Board. Mr. Varga asked the Board to let him know if there were any other issues we should be examining.

The Governance Committee will be discussing whether to move Board meetings back to the Board Room in the Administrative Office on Ellsworth Avenue next to Central Station where committee meetings continue to be held. The Board will be notified when a decision has been made.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. David Covey, current: Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) Chair, introduced himself and noted that the CAC is committed to focus on the reputation of the riders from the paratransit community and ensure that they get the best possible transportation service. He mentioned that Ms. Joyce, The Rapid’s Special Service Manager, does a wonderful job, as well as Mr. Wisselink who also attends the meetings.

Ms. Holt thanked Mr. Covey for coming to report to the Board. The CAC is a valuable asset to the Board.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mayor Huizenga stated that there was a public hearing regarding transit service on the 3-Mile Road corridor. There was good attendance.

Ms. Holt inquired if this was about the Wheels to Work program. Mayor Huizenga noted that the 3-Mile Road issue is different, but the Wheels to Work program is doing well.
Mayor Huizenga also mentioned that he feels The Rapid does a good job on social media responding to complaints and other issues.

Mayor Bliss commented that the Grand Rapids City Commission recently approved development of bike share and car share programs. She will keep the Board informed on progress in this area.

Mr. Hoffman complimented Mr. Wisselink on his ridership presentation. He believes that alternative modes like Uber will play a big part in the future of transit.

Mr. Bulkowski stated that the alternative methods of transportation are significant and we need to figure out how to bring in these new services. Mr. Varga agreed that we need to determine how to change the dynamics of transit and noted that Seattle is a good example of how to do this.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Collective Bargaining

Executive Session was not necessary at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Crothers, Board Secretary