MINUTES OF
INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD
As Recorded on March 29, 2017

ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present: Charis Austin, David Bilardello, Dave Bulkowski, Gary Carey, Tim Cochran, Jack Hoffman, Barbara Holt (Chair), Mark Huizenga, Stephen Kepley, Terry Schweitzer, Paul Troost, Michael Verhulst

Board Members Absent: Rosalynn Bliss, Randy Gelderloos, Amna Seibold

Staff Present: Michael Eulthuis, Robin Crothers, Rod Ghearing, Meegan Joyce, Nick Monoyios, Brian Pouget, Peter Varga (CEO), Conrad Venema, Scott Walsh, Kevin Wisselink

Others Present: Allan Klepadlo (MV Transportation), Asher Lockwood, Watchdog Miller, Zoe Pentaleri

Ms. Holt called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Watchdog Miller commented on The Rapid’s commercial showing Fr. Mark Przybysz of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church. He did not feel it was appropriate since The Rapid doesn’t serve the Catholic west side of Grand Rapids well. He mentioned a letter from Peter Varga that praised drivers. He felt this was inappropriate because of the union contract issue. Mr. Varga should pull out of the negotiations completely. Route 19 is still doing poorly since it was rerouted. Saving $70,000 going to smart cards is inconsequential. Smart cards are a waste. He said that having to activate smart cards at Rapid Central Station would hurt riders. They wouldn’t get as many rides. We don’t need smart cards. The Rapid isn’t focusing on its real priorities.

MINUTES

1. Minutes of February 22, 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 March 22 meeting:

4. Fare Structure Changes

A motion was made by Hoffman, supported by Huizenga, to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA

5. Monthly Financial Statements for February 2017:

Mr. Walsh reported that there is a small surplus through February. The budget is in good shape and he has no concerns. He noted that the wrong Combined Operating Statement was inadvertently sent out in the Committee packets. The correct report is included in the Board packet.

A motion was made by Schweitzer, supported by Kepley, to approve the Monthly Financial Statements for February 2017. Motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEM

6. Cascade 28th Street Service – Year One Update:

Mr. Wisselink reported that service on Route 28 was extended into Cascade Township in January 2016 at the Township’s request. It serves the new Mary Free Bed YMCA, the Cascade Meijer and runs on 28th Street out to Cascade Road. This service has exceeded staff expectations. The average weekday ridership started out at approximately 150 riders and has increased to a high of 386 riders traveling in and out of the township in December 2016. This translates to 30 passengers per bus hour, which exceeds our system average. Weekend ridership is also doing well. Much of this ridership is employment based. The YMCA is pleased with the service.

There have been 700+ monthly GO!Bus trips consistently since its implementation. Most of these trips are coming from people in the six cities. Paratransit service along this extended corridor have also exceeded expectations.

Mr. Wisselink noted that this is a 3-year pilot program that is funded by Cascade Township. We will continue to monitor this service and report back to the Board.

Mr. Bilardello stated that he has been hearing comments about empty buses at the end of this extension. Mr. Wisselink responded that due to timing of the service, it was necessary to go to Cascade Road rather than have a long layover closer in. Riders get off at locations before the end point which happens with most bus routes.

Mr. Varga commented that roads and transit have peak times. He mentioned that Meijer is contributing to the cost of the extension.

Mr. Varga stated that the Mary Free Bed YMCA is a universal Y, the only 100% accessible YMCA in the United States. There are a lot of trips on GO!Bus and fixed route from the six cities.

Mr. Bulkowski asked about paratransit cost per trip for the Cascade extension. Mr. Wisselink indicated that we do not break down the cost in that way. Mr. Varga noted that the cost per trip for paratransit is determined by the contract with MV.
Mr. Bulkowski informed the Board about a presentation he attended regarding changes to the transit system at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. They will be using smaller vehicles and saving a lot of money. It is expected to be implemented on July 1, 2017. He suggested that Rapid staff look into this.

Mr. Hoffman commented that he would be interested in learning more about the U/M service.

Ms. Holt reminded the Board that we are in the process of the corridor study. Mr. Varga stated that the consultants are looking at all six cities for major investments that would work, including BRT or other methods.

In response to a question from Mr. Bilardello, Mr. Wisselink informed the Board that the Automatic Passenger Counters (APCs) on the buses count boardings and alightings. The numbers are not exact but are close to actual.

Mayor Huizenga asked is smart cards will keep track of origins and destinations. Mr. Wisselink responded that we will only be able to count boardings.

CEO REPORT

7. CEO Monthly Report:

Laker Line Funding:

Mr. Varga reported on the status of Laker Line funding. There is uncertainty regarding the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program with the new administration. We are hearing that only projects that already have a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) will be funded, but this has not been confirmed.

He noted that he and Mayor Huizenga have been working with legislators on Laker Line funding, along with Grand Valley Station University President Thomas Haas.

Mr. Varga stated that he has talked with Appropriations Committee regarding CIG funding. He also met with the FTA Executive Director Matt Welbes.

It is important for our project to be in the appropriations bill, but we don’t know if there will be a bill or another Continuing Resolution (CR). The current CR expires later in April.

Mr. Varga asked Board members to assist with outreach to the Congress or Senate on Laker Line funding. Our project has been rated very high and we are ready to go. Mr. Varga asked that Board members let him know if they do get a chance to talk with legislators.

Senator Peters and Congressman Huizenga have expressed their support and will assist in whatever way they can in this effort.

Mayor Huizenga mentioned that not knowing if there will be an appropriations bill or another CR is a big problem at this point.

Mr. Varga indicated that there is an authorization bill (FAST Act) that is good for three more years.

Mr. Troost commented that written support from Senators to the Appropriations Committee would be helpful. Mr. Varga noted that a letter or phone call to staff is also good.
Mr. Varga stated that we need to make sure that the Laker Line is in the FY 2017 appropriations bill.

Bus Operator Retirement:

Bus Operator Fred Carlon retired after 22.5 years and a celebration was held on March 24. Mr. Varga noted that Fred was a great employee, a straight-shooter and always communicative. He was very supportive of the organization. He will be missed.

CHAIR’S REPORT

Security:

Ms. Holt commended Mike Wieringa for doing a great job with security at The Rapid. He is actively involved at Central Station and on the platform and is aided on weekday afternoons by two GRPD officers.

Appointment for Dave Bulkowski:

Ms. Holt asked Mr. Bulkowski to comment on his recent appointment by Governor Snyder. Mr. Bulkowski stated that he was recently appointed to the Council for Future Mobility by the Governor. He was appointed to provide the disability viewpoint. Mr. Kirk Steudle, VDOT Director, is co-chair of the Council. Autonomous vehicles will be a topic for this group along with other mobility modes. Mr. Bulkowski noted that he will engage others in the area to enhance his participation.

Ms. Holt congratulated Mr. Bulkowski on his appointment.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mayor Kepley reported that he met with Rapid staff today on possible transportation solutions for employees in industrial areas and on pension investment.

Mr. Cochran thanked The Rapid for use of a bus and driver to hold a tour with officials from the seven school districts in Wyoming.

Mayor Huizenga commented that the Walker Latent Demand Study of the 3-Mile Road corridor is going well. They have received a lot of positive feedback.

Mr. Hoffman noted that the Rose Group who consulted with Mayor Bliss on equity issues highlighted transit as one of the three major concerns. This is an important effort.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Robin Crothers, Board Secretary