MINUTES OF
INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD
September 27, 2017

ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present: Charis Austin, David Bilardello, Rosalynn Bliss, Dave Bulkowski, Gary Carey, Randy Gelderloos, Jack Hoffman, Barbara Holt (Chair), Stephen Kepley, Terry Schweitzer, Amna Seibold, Paul Troost, Michael Verhulst

Board Members Absent: Tim Cochran, Mark Huizenga

Staff Present: Ali Brown, Michael Bulthuis, Robin Crothers, Judy DeVries-Eppinga, Nancy Groendal, Meegan Joyce, Jeremy Mlaker, Nick Monoyios, Brian Pouget, Liz Schelling, Brittany Schlacter, Peter Varga (CEO), Conrad Venema, Scott Walsh, Mike Wieringa, Kevin Wisselink

Others Present: Josh Bocks (AECOM), Marc Gillman, Laurel Joseph (GVMC), Amy LeFebre (Truscott Rossman), Asher Lockwood, Josh Lunger (GRACC), Watchdog Miller, Josh Naramore (Mobile GR), Grant Pecor (Clark Hill), Zoe Pentaleri, Pete Ricketson (ATU-Local 836), Officer Jason Sotke (GRPD), Chris Swank (GVSU), John Verzi, Floyd Visser

Ms. Holt called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. She noted the new Board agenda format developed as part of the Board Governance Study.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

John Verzi stated that a major issue is the planning. Buses don't line up correctly. Board members should ride so they can experience it. He gave some examples of recent trips on Rapid buses that show bad planning. He commented that they want people to vote for the millage but The Rapid has worse service than it did ten years ago. There were better connections.

Floyd Visser came to the meeting to ask about and obtain written documentation on The Rapid's policy for dealing with people who bring things on buses, particularly walkers and carts. He rides the bus every day and it is his only means of transportation. Some drivers let him bring his cart on the bus and some don't and he has been told to get off the bus. He felt he was being singled out and wanted the same policy to apply to all riders. Ms. Holt asked Mr. Visser to leave his contact information so The Rapid could respond to his concerns.

Pete Ricketson commented that the ATU Local 836 had a ratification vote on Sunday, September 24, 2017. He noted that union members have a problem with elimination of daily overtime. They offered a compromise on daily overtime that he came up with. Mr. Pouget says
there is an issue with absenteeism where people get overtime after eight hours in a day and then take a day off later in the week while still receiving overtime pay. Mr. Ricketson stated if someone takes a day off in a week where they have daily overtime and don’t have personal time or vacation time to cover it they lose their daily overtime. He feels it is an acceptable compromise because it deals with the absenteeism problem. More schedules could be made for only eight hours. Some of this was dealt with in establishing 10-hour runs where people with four days for 40 hours. These are all straight time. Morale is bad here. The ratification vote failed by 97% of those voting. There is no need for animosity. He mentioned that the Kent County Democrats have said they won’t support the millage if there is no contract. They will help with the millage if a contract is approved. Mr. Ricketson stated it was silly to fight over $300,000 and the loss of seniority clause while we have $30 million at risk. We have a first class art festival and why do we want a third class bus system. Management has not been able to give him an amount for what is being spent on daily overtime, only estimates. We need to come to a fair compromise.

Watchdog Miller stated that Route 28 should connect to all routes. The Rapid needs to look into their policy on bringing carts on buses. The Rapid needs to go to double decker buses. Spectrum passes are free and they don’t like The Rapid service. The special buses like Spectrum buses are competition. The Rapid needs to get their buses looking as good as the Spectrum buses and they will see more ridership. He asked why the windows are so high on the buses. The seats are ridiculous. They should be wider and have cushions. The condition on buses is appalling. They should dismiss the union goons from the last meeting.

2. MINUTES – August 30, 2017

Ms. Holt asked for corrections to the minutes. None were offered. The minutes of the August 30, 2017 Board meeting stand approved as written.

3. AGENDA ITEMS

a) Senior Millage Funds:

Ms. Joyce stated that Board approval is requested to complete the continuation of funding process and enter into a contract with the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan for Senior Millage funds in an amount up to $276,073 to fund transportation, a RideLink Coordinator position and a part-time call-taker position.

She reviewed the background for RideLink, which started as a pilot program 11 years ago as the result of a study by the Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF). Six agencies have provided trips for RideLink, including The Rapid, Hope Network of West Michigan, Senior Neighbors, United Methodist Community House, Area Community Services Employment and Training Council (ACSET) and the American Red Cross. She mentioned that the Red Cross no longer provides transportation services and as of July 2016, Hope Network took over that operation.

The requested amount of Senior Millage funds of $276,073 includes $223,866 for providing up to 13,000 trips and $52,213 for the RideLink Coordinator and part-time call-taker. These funds cover the full cost of the service.

Mr. Bulkowski noted that he is co-chair of the ENTF and will abstain from voting on this item.
A motion was made by Seibold, supported by Austin, to approve submittal of the continuation of funding request and to execute a contract with the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan for Senior Millage funds in an amount not to exceed $276,073 for RideLink trips, the RideLink Coordinator position and a part-time caller. Motion passed, with 12 in favor and 1 abstention (Bulkowski).

b) Renew of One-Ride Ticket Program:

Mr. Wisselink provided background on this pilot program. With the fare increase in October 2016, The Rapid was approached by organizations working with homeless populations about the need for reduced fare options to provide to their clients. The Rapid Board authorized the sale of up to 35,000 tickets to organizations working with homeless populations in The Rapid’s six-city service area at the rate of $1.35 per ticket. This is the equivalent of the per ticket cost of an adult 10-ride card. Sixteen organizations have been authorized to purchase tickets under this program who applied to purchase a total of 29,40 tickets. So far through FY 2017, The Rapid has sold 13,335 tickets. There have been no major issues in the selection of organizations or distribution of the tickets. Staff has received a very positive response from the participating organizations.

The Board was asked to authorize the reduced one-ride ticket program as a part of The Rapid’s fare structure.

In response to a question from Mayor Seibold, Mr. Wisselink stated that there was no general advertisement for the program. The Rapid sent out information to organizations we have dealt with in the past and any other organizations that deal with homeless populations.

Mr. Schweitzer inquired about how this program will work once the smart card program is implemented. Mr. Wisselink responded that there will be a one-ride barcode ticket to replace the current magnetic strip ticket.

Mayor Bliss suggested that The Rapid contact the Coalition on Homelessness through the Essential Needs Task Force. Mr. Wisselink noted that he will reach out to them.

A motion was made by Bliss, supported by Troost, to authorize continuation of the one-ride ticket program as a permanent program of The Rapid which includes the sale of up to 35,000 one-ride tickets per year at the price of $1.35 per ticket to organizations in the service area that deal with homeless populations. Motion passed unanimously.

c) Walker Latent Transit Demand Analysis:

Mr. Wisselink stated that the Walker Latent Transit Demand Analysis of the 3-Mile corridor in the City of Walker was conducted in response to increased demand for transit service. AECOM was hired to complete the study. Mr. Josh Bocks from AECOM was present for any questions. There is a large number of commuters coming into the corridor for employment and employment growth is projected. The study determined that there is a potential for more employment trips in the corridor if transit service was available. Data analysis was done and employers in the corridor were surveyed to obtain the necessary information. Mr. Wisselink noted that the employment patterns in the 3-Mile corridor are similar to the patterns along Route 17 and ridership levels should be comparable, depending on the level of service offered.
Mr. Wisselink reviewed the options that came out of the study. The preferred option was a Route 7-West Leonard deviation to Walker Avenue and 3 Mile Road. This option would be basically peak service only and it does not require any additional buses. He informed the Board that The Rapid does not have any operational funding currently to implement this service and staff recommends incorporating it into the Short Range Plan as a priority if and when additional operational funding is identified.

Mr. Bulkowski stated that he was surprised by the lack of creativity and innovation from this study. The preferred option is a two-tailed route, which doesn’t work well. There will be long walks from bus stops to employment front doors since this area was built as an industrial area. This type of land use does not call for a 40-foot bus. He mentioned a door-to-door option which would be more like demand response service. He felt there could be more creative solutions. There must be options in other cities that could be examined. We need to connect employees to where the employers are located.

Mr. Bilardello noted that he has heard that Wheels to Work in Walker is exceeding its ridership goals. He asked if this new service would take rides from that service and that we take this into consideration. He had similar concerns as Mr. Bulkowski with the staff recommendation.

In response to a question from Ms. Holt, Mr. Wisselink stated that the next Board retreat would be a good opportunity to discuss the results of the study and any potential modifications or other options for inclusion in the Short Range Plan.

Mr. Bulkowski reiterated his preference for looking at a demand response type service.

Mr. Varga commented that there are three other priorities in the Short Range Plan. The Board needs to review the Short Range Plan at the Board retreat to determine what needs to be included and come to a compromise on service priorities.

Mayor Bliss suggested that this matter be revisited when Mayor Huizenga can be part of the discussion since he has been actively engaged in the study.

Ms. Holt asked for a progress report on Wheels to Work.

Mayor Bliss agreed with Mr. Bulkowski’s comments regarding a more creative solution, and that a larger conversation needed to take place.

Mayor Seibold asked for clarification that accepting the Walker Latent Transit Demand Analysis does not mean anything in the report will be implemented. Further discussion will take place. This was confirmed by Ms. Holt.

A motion was made by Seibold, supported by Austin, to accept the Walker Latent Transit Demand Analysis report. Motion passed with 12 in favor and 1 opposed (Bulkowski).

d) **FY 2018 Priorities and Work Plan:**

Mr. Varga explained that the FY 2018 Priorities and Work Plan has been revised based on Board member comments. The Work Plan lays out work for the upcoming fiscal year. The report on the Work Plan will be provided in June.
A motion was made by Hoffman, supported by Seibold, to approve the FY 2018 Priorities and Work Plan. Motion passed unanimously.

**e) DASH Contract:**

Mr. Pouget stated that the Board is requested to approve a contract with the City of Grand Rapids for continuation of DASH service in the downtown area. He noted that this is a 3-year contract through September 30, 2020. The city buys the buses and The Rapid operates the service and maintains the buses. This DASH contract has been reconfigured to include all of the DASH services, including DASH North, DASH West, and DASH Silver Line (no fare zone). The contract has been reviewed by The Rapid’s legal counsel.

Mayor Bliss mentioned that Josh Naramore, Director of GR Mobility, was present at the meeting if there were any questions. She thanked Mr. Naramore for the work he has done with the DASH services and other work that he does for the city.

A motion was made by Schweitzer, supported by Bliss, to approve the DASH contract with the City of Grand Rapids.

In response to a question from Mr. Bulkowski, Mr. Pouget stated that the city determines the routing for DASH services.

Josh Naramore commented that the current DASH routing is the result of the multi-year planning effort by GR Forward in conjunction with DGRI and the City of Grand Rapids. The city is working with a consultant on a rebranding and future visioning process for the next five years for DASH services. He noted the city is also in the early stages of a research project with the University of Michigan regarding first mile/last mile trips. The University will be debuting a new on-demand shuttle system to gather information on ways to optimize fixed route service. There should be information available to share with the Rapid Board in the spring of 2018.

Mayor Bliss asked Mr. Naramore to talk about integrating an equity lens into the work the city is doing related to mobility.

Mr. Naramore reported that at a survey was done last fall related to the DASH rebrand and it was found that many people don’t find the DASH service accessible. They are looking at new ways to extend out to areas of in areas of low car ownership and poverty and to some of those business districts like Madison Square. There is also a bike share study underway. They are looking at ways to connect into The Rapid’s fixed route system.

Discussion was held regarding automated and autonomous vehicles.

Mr. Varga stated that automated vehicles is a quickly evolving area in transit. Informal discussions have been held with Ford. They are entering into the transit area. There may be a good opportunity to partner with the city on something.

The motion passed unanimously.
4. INFORMATION ITEMS

a) Monthly Financial Statements – July 2017:

Mr. Walsh reported that the July 2017 financial statements look good. There is no capitalized operating budgeted at this time. We show a $375,000 surplus as of the end of August. He noted that he was not certain if we will finish the year with a surplus, however, through the year-end process the number typically fall to our advantage.

Mr. Schweitzer asked if there was any money for the unfunded pension liability. Mr. Walsh responded that he believes there will be money for that purpose.

Mr. Varga commented that we budgeted for the high end contribution as we have in past years and has authorized a $250,000 contribution to the Administrative Defined Benefit plan in this fiscal year. There was a $300,000 payment this year to the Union Defined Benefit plan. The plan is to pay off the Union pension liability over the next 10-15 years.

In response to a question from Mr. Hoffman, Mr. Varga stated that he did not advise using Preventive Maintenance funds for unfunded liabilities. We should look at our capital needs over the next five years. He suggested that this would be a good topic for the Board’s next retreat in order to determine the appropriate policy direction.

Ms. Schweitzer mentioned that we need a long-term strategy to take care of the unfunded liability.

Mayor Kepley indicated that he would like to see the capital plan for the next 15 years.

b) July 2017 Ridership and Productivity Report:

Mr. Wisselink reviewed the July 2017 ridership and productivity report. The ridership trend has stayed pretty much the same. There were two Clean Air Action Days in July 2016 and none in July 2017 which brings down comparative ridership levels for the month. Removing Clean Air Action Days, the change in fixed route ridership is a 3.5% decrease.

Total monthly ridership decreased 4.2% compared to July 2016. Total ridership year-to-date was down 3.9%.

c) July 2017 Paratransit Ridership Report:

Ms. Joyce reported that total monthly ridership for August 2017 decreased 3.1% compared to August 2016. There were 834 trips in Cascade Township. Average weekday ridership decreased 0.1%, average Saturday ridership decreased 4.0%, and average Sunday ridership increased 7.6%. On-time performance was 95.62% and on-time drop-off performance was 96.86%. The average cost per trip increased 4.7%.
d) Balanced Scorecard:

Mr. Venema reviewed the balanced scorecard that was part of the recent Board governance study that was developed for the Board to use to measure a variety of organizational attributes at The Rapid. The Balanced Scorecard has five categories, including Innovation and Learning, Internal Process, Customer and Community Satisfaction, Financial, and Strategic. Each of these categories contains sub-categories with target objectives established by the consultant and Board and staff leadership. He noted that some categories will ultimately meet the objectives, however, others may require a change in Board policy in order to do so. Also, certain categories may prove too difficult to measure. Categories and targets can be revised over time. Mr. Venema suggested that the Balanced Scorecard be presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Ms. Holt mentioned that the category called “Lost Service Hours” should be changed to “Full Service Hours”. Mr. Venema stated he would change that and correct how this measure is tracked.

Ms. Holt noted that the Balanced Scorecard is a work in progress and can be revised by the Board at any point.

The Board discussed the various categories of the Balanced Scorecard. Mr. Bulkowski suggested something be included on safety.

5. CEO REPORT

a) CEO Monthly Report:

Mr. Varga reported that we expect the Laker Line grant in October 2017. The Rapid was approved for $56.1 million in federal funds with a state match of $14 million. All other projects were capped at $40 million.

Because the federal grant for FY 2017 are just coming in, The Rapid had to use local funds to bridge the gap. He commented that it is possible we will have the same issue for FY 2018 and he will keep the Board updated.

Mr. Varga mentioned that he has been on the Parking Commission for several years and appreciates this appointment. It has been a great experience.

He stated that the FY 2018 Work Plan will be his last. The Board will need to evaluate how this will work going forward. He believes that there has been some very good work done at The Rapid over the last 20 years.

6. CHAIR’S REPORT

Ms. Holt noted that the CEO Search Committee had their first meeting on 9-21-17 and will meet again in October. They are moving forward with an RFQ for a recruiting firm.

In response to a question from Mayor Bliss, Ms. Holt stated the Request for Quotations has been sent out and responses are due back sometime in November.
7. ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT(S)
   
a) Consumer Advisory Committee:
   
   Ms. Joyce explained that there was no meeting of the Consumer Advisory Committee in September and consequently there was nothing to report.

8. CLOSED SESSION – Collective Bargaining
   
   A motion was made by Bliss, supported by Verhulst, to go into Closed Session to discuss collective bargaining issues. A roll call vote was taken.
   
   Yes: Austin, Bilardello, Bliss, Bulkowski, Carey, Gelderloos, Hoffman, Holt, Schweitzer, Troost, Verhulst
   
   No: None
   
   Motion passed unanimously (5:24 p.m.). (Kepley and Seibold left the meeting prior to this vote.)
   
   A motion was made by Carey, supported by Schweitzer, to adjourn Closed Session and return to Regular Session. A roll call vote was taken.
   
   Yes: Bilardello, Bulkowski, Carey, Gelderloos, Hoffman, Holt, Schweitzer, Troost
   
   No: None
   
   Motion passed unanimously (6:02 p.m.). (Austin, Bliss and Verhulst left the meeting prior to this vote.)
   
   There was no action necessary on collective bargaining.

9. ADJOURNMENT
   
   The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Crothers, Board Secretary