MINUTES OF
INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD

October 25, 2017

ATTENDANCE

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

Board Members Absent: Rosalynn Bliss

Staff Present: Kathy Anderson, Ali Brown, Michael Bulthuis, Robin Crothers, Ronda Frazer, Nancy Groendal, Meegan Joyce, Linda Medina, Nick Monyios, Brian Pouget, Brittany Schlacter, Peter Varga (CEO), Conrad Venema, Scott Walsh, Mike Wieringa

Others Present: Matt Bair, Louis DeShane (ATU Labor Activist/Rapid Driver), Heidi DeVries, Brandon Dillon, Officer Brian Grooms (GRPD), Alex Kelley (Socialist Alternative), Max Krueger (Socialist Alternative), Ryan Letts (KICLC), Asher Lockwood, Shelly Lubbinge (CWA), Nick Manes (MBiz), Watchdog Miller, Grant Pecor (Clark Hill), Jack Prince, Peter Ricketson (Rapid Driver), Captain Scott Rifenberg (GRPD), Kip Smith, Phil Snyder (Socialist Alternative), Officer Mike Soule (GRPD), Chris Swank (GVSU), Scott Urbanowski, Robert VanKirk, John Verzi, Floyd Visser, Ashley Wright, Douglas Wright, Tammy Yeomans, Amanda

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

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

John Verzi stated that he has been riding the bus for 15 years. The Rapid wants the millage but they should fix what problems they have. He mentioned problems with connections on Routes 8 and 44.

Douglas Wright commented that The Rapid is selling naming rights for the Silver Line but they should fix the problems they have with it. They should approve a fair contract for drivers and mechanics. He asked that The Rapid fix its problems before they create new problems.

Floyd Visser stated that he rides The Rapid every day. He was at The Rapid Board meeting last month and complained that some Rapid drivers have kicked him off the bus for bringing his cart on the bus. He received an email after the last Rapid Board meeting that explained the rule for bringing carts or other large items on the bus which he read aloud. He stated that some drivers follow the rules and some don’t. He feels that he is being singled out because he has been asked to unload his cart or get off the bus because he has a cart and other riders are not. He is a US citizen and should not be discriminated against. All drivers should be enforcing
the rules the same for everyone. Mr. Visser stated that people should not give money to the bus company to help them discriminate against US citizens.

Peter Ricketson mentioned that the union and The Rapid have another negotiation session tomorrow and that today is D-day as far as the millage is concerned. The union wants to support the millege but they also want a fair contract. The Rapid is selling naming rights for the Silver Line because there were financial oversights so they need extra money and it was in the news. You can’t balance the budget on the backs of the workers. Public comment went for two hours at the Grand Rapids City Commission meeting last night. A lot of the comments were people stating they would not support the millege unless the workers had a contract. The union is not asking for extra money. They agreed to go to the defined contribution plan for their retirement. Daily overtime does not need to be eliminated to save money. Schedules could be made without daily overtime built in. Loss of seniority and daily overtime are priorities for the union. Management has not provided a number for what daily overtime is costing. They were warned about the Silver Line and the workers should not have to pay the price. He strongly encouraged that they get a good contract done at tomorrow’s session. He stated that the millage will fail.

Ms. Holt asked Mr. Ricketson to encourage his team to work hard and negotiate a good contract at tomorrow’s session.

Max Krueger stated he is new to Grand Rapids. He has enjoyed the area and riding The Rapid. He knows people who worked for unions and we need to listen to what workers need and what they want. This would help workers and riders. The workers have been suffering. Their concerns are real and important.

Amanda commented that she moved back to Grand Rapids in 2009. She was told there was a good economy and good transit. This has not always been true regarding transit. She supports the union effort. She depends on the bus every day. The high cost that workers are paying for healthcare is very upsetting. The Rapid needs to work with the union to resolve the issues. She will not vote for the millage.

Louis DeShane told Mr. Visser (previous commenter) that he doesn’t worry about someone with a cart on the bus unless he is told that it is in the way and then tries to take care of the problem. He hopes Mr. Visser can enjoy riding The Rapid. Mr. DeShane apologized to Mr. Varga stating that he has treated him unfairly and the union tactics cannot be solely blamed on him. He realizes Mr. Varga is not a lone wolf on the union issues. He then made an inappropriate remark that violates the Board’s rules for public comment and at that point Ms. Holt told Mr. DeShane that his opportunity to comment was over and asked him to sit down.

Kip Smith stated he has commented previously about boycotting the Grand Rapids area and The Rapid due to the labor issues between the ATU and The Rapid. He noted that he will be taking his full three minutes today. He said the last time he was at a Rapid Board meeting he asked for an extra two minutes or even just one minute to comment beyond his three minutes based on the Board’s rules. He was told to sit down and he believes he was told to shut up by Ms. Holt. He felt this was rude. He asked in an appropriate manner. He appreciated that Mayor Bliss approached him later and wanted to hear his concerns. He wanted to say that he understands the security concerns expressed by the wife of a driver. The Rapid should be concerned about driver safety. He asked Ms. Holt not to be rude. He wants to come back into Grand Rapids. The drivers need a contract.
Ms. Holt stated that she does not speak in that way and she did not tell Mr. Smith to shut up during public comment. She noted that he asked to continue speaking while someone next to him was speaking at the same time. She reiterated that she did not tell him to shut up and apologized if she offended him. She expressed appreciation that Mr. Smith comes to the meetings.

Alex Kelley was concerned about comments on Facebook or at meetings saying that the union has been misrepresenting issues. It's The Rapid's fault since they stopped automatic dues deductions and healthcare costs have increased. This makes it difficult for people to pay union dues. Surveys of the members have shown that they want to keep daily overtime and to resolve the seniority issue. They agreed to compromise on the pension. He will vote no on the millage.

Phil Snyder didn't like Ms. Holt's behavior as Chair when his friend was cut off at a previous meeting after only one minute for no reason. He stated that Mr. Hoffman makes comments online regarding daily overtime saying that it is something that is mostly beneficial for workers with two jobs. Drivers are not being paid enough due to no raises over the past two years so some need two jobs. Workers don't want to work 10-12 hour days. Fatigued driving is dangerous. He mentioned the last vote by the union and The Rapid's concern that a small number voted. It doesn't matter how many voted it is still a legitimate vote. Elections are decided by the number of people who actually vote. This is a disingenuous tactic to delegitimize the union and is unfair of The Rapid. It has been said that daily overtime is something most workers don't have. That's trying to divide the people, trying to say the drivers are threatening the millage because they want something you don't have. That's just wrong. Everyone should have daily overtime. His organization will not support the millage unless a contract is approved.

Robert VanKirk stated that he has been to all six city councils as part of a group of concerned citizens. They spoke about the impact of no contract on families and workers of The Rapid. Board members are public servants and they should be serving the communities they represent, including Rapid workers and citizens who ride The Rapid. He supports public transit but when workers are being stretched to the point of breaking they sometimes adopt tactics we don't agree with. He is sorry about the personal attacks. The Rapid Board should use common decency and humanity. The workers and riders need a fair contract.

Jack Prince commented that he is a retired school teacher. He has a son who rode to the bus to college. He stated he finds it annoying that it appears that the onerous is put on the tactics of the ATU to boycott or protest the millage election. The comments are out of balance. There is concern for people who need the service and also for the workers and their families. The consequences of workers protesting the millage are commensurate with the suffering that the workers are experiencing. They need a fair contract. He felt a win-win situation for workers and riders is possible.

Matt Bair said that The Rapid is engaged in union busting. The Rapid just wants to get rid of the ATU. Unions have played a major part in history. One big thing with unions is that wages go up. People have high rent to pay and they need good wages. Unions push up wages. He is not sure why The Rapid wants to bust the union, but it will backfire.

Debra S. talked about her 15-year-old autistic daughter who will probably ride The Rapid. She would send her out with these drivers and they are good people. If The Rapid busts the union and they use scabs she won't let her daughter ride. She is a progressive activist and a member of the Kent County Dems and she will be canvassing her precinct.

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Scott Urbanowski supports public transit. As a business owner, his clients need to be able to afford his services and that means people need to make enough money at their jobs, including Rapid drivers and others. He supports public transportation and rides often. In 2011 he participated in the canvassing effort to get the Rapid millage passed. He doesn’t want the community to suffer. The drivers move our community. He asked The Rapid to do what’s best for the drivers.

Brandon Dillon stated that he is a former state representative and served on the Transportation Appropriations Sub-committee and knows about public transit funding. He wants to support the millage but it is disappointing that the workers have no contract and that it is being suggested that the drivers are holding it up. The Board has the power to get the contract settled. The drivers don’t make as much as the drivers in Lansing or Southeast Michigan. They have sacrificed their pension and now they are expected to give up their daily overtime and on the seniority issue. He asked that the Board settle the contract. The Board has the power to get it done. The drivers have sacrificed. Give them a fair contract because they love what they do. Get the contract settled this week so everyone can get on board for the millage.

Watchdog Miller commented that Brandon Dillon doesn’t know what’s going on. The CEO and the Board should all be elected by an ungerrymandered district so the people in Grand Rapids get a fair shake. It would be a five or seven seat board. We need somebody who cares about riders. There is not enough bus service on Sundays. The union does not move people, it stalls people. Drivers do not need a contract with that union. We should hire Dean at lower wages. We need wider bus seats. Ridership is down about 7%.

Ashley Wright said that fare enforcement officers don’t check passes on the Silver Line. About 40% of riders are not paying. Some buses have no fare enforcement officers. If this milage passes, The Rapid should have more fare enforcement officers on the Silver Line.

2. MINUTES – September 27, 2017 Board Meeting

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

3. AGENDA ITEMS – no action items

4. STAFF REPORTS

a) Monthly Financials – August 2017:

Mr. Walsh reported that it was a good year with a fund balance of approximately $375,000. The budget includes $1.5 million in preventive maintenance which has not been needed as yet.

b) August 2017 Ridership and Productivity Report:

Mr. Venema reviewed the August 2017 ridership and productivity report. Total ridership for August 2017 decreased 2.8% compared to August 2016. There were three Clean Air Action Days in August last year and none this year. If those days are factored out, fixed route ride-shipping decreased by only 0.1% in August 2017 instead of 4.5%. Total ridership decreased 3.8% year-to-date compared to last year. We are anticipating approximately 11 million rides for FY 2017.
c) **August 2017 Paratransit Ridership Report:**

Ms. Joyce reported that total monthly paratransit ridership decreased 3.1% from August 2016. ADA and non-disabled senior ridership increased, and PASS and Network 180 ridership decreased. There were 834 trips in Cascade Township in August 2017 compared to 725 in August 2016. On-time performance for August 2017 was 95.62% and on-time drop-off performance was 98.86%. The average cost per trip increased 4.7%.

In response to a question regarding Network 180 ridership, Ms. Joyce stated that decreased ridership for Network 180 has been due somewhat to program changes for the agency but she hasn’t checked with them recently on other reasons for the continued drop in ridership.

Mr. Bulkowski asked how many of the trips in Cascade Township are actually Cascade residents. Ms. Joyce responded that only a small number are Cascade residents. The majority of trips are from the surrounding cities.

d) **Balanced Scorecard:**

Mr. Venema reviewed the balanced scorecard. He mentioned that some of the categories only update annually. The September scorecard remained consistent with the previous month with two exceptions. First, there were no lost service hours in September which is a slight improvement over August with 16 lost service hours. Second, the system on-time performance increased to 86.4% which is above the target of 85%.

5. **CEO’S REPORT**

Mr. Varga reported that he recently attended the APTA Annual Meeting. There was information provided on changes in the federal program which is the result of the new administration. We expect FY 2018 appropriations to be delayed. We hope to receive the Laker Line grant in November. This past year we didn’t receive our FY 2017 grant funds until the last month of the fiscal year. Jane Williams has been appointed as the new FTA Deputy Administrator and is also serving as the Acting FTA Administrator. Mr. Varga noted that he invited Ms. Williams to G’and Rapids to see the Silver Line and she was very receptive. There have been few federal appointments to the USDOT at this point. He encouraged Board members to talk with their legislators regarding public transit funding. It is difficult to function when formula funds are received at the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Varga mentioned that he will reach out to congressmen and senators regarding appropriations for the Laker Line. The State of Michigan is fully supportive of our project.

6. **CHAIR’S REPORT**

a) **Committee Charges:**

Ms. Holt stated that copies of the proposed committee charges from the governance study were included in the packet. She asked for input and stated this item will be addressed at the next Governance Committee and Board meetings. She noted that according to the study, there would be five Board members on each of the two committees.
In response to a question from Ms. Holt, Ms. Crothers stated that Board members are being polled regarding their availability for a Board retreat and at this point it looks like January 22 will be the date.

7. ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORTS
   
a) Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities:

   Ms. Joyce commented that the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) did not meet in October so there was no report.

   Ms. Holt asked that the issue with carts on GO!Bus vehicles be addressed by the CAC. Ms. Joyce stated that the CAC will address this issue at their next meeting.

8. CLOSED SESSION – Collective Bargaining

   A motion was made by Cochran, supported by Huizenga, to enter into Closed Session to discuss collective bargaining issues. A roll call vote was taken.

   Yes: Austin, Bilardello, Bulkowski, Carey, Cochran, Gelderloos, Hoffman, Holt, Huizenga, Kepley, Schweitzer, Seibold, Troost, Verhulst

   No: None

   Motion passed unanimously (5:08 p.m.).

   A motion was made by Seibold, supported by Gelderloos, to resume Regular Session. A roll call vote was taken.

   Yes: Austin, Bilardello, Bulkowski, Carey, Cochran, Gelderloos, Hoffman, Holt, Huizenga, Kepley, Schweitzer, Seibold, Troost, Verhulst

   No: None

   Motion passed unanimously (5:40 p.m.).

   There was no action to be taken as a result of the Closed Session.

9. ADJOURNMENT

   The meeting was adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]
Robin Crothers, Board Secretary