Interurban Transit Partnership

MINUTES OF

FUTURE PLANNING & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

MAY 6, 2019

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members:
☒ Jack Hoffman
☒ Terry Schweitzer
☒ Robert Postema
☒ Rosalynn Bliss
☒ Paul Troost

Citizen Committee Members:
☒ Ryan Anderson
☒ Dave Bulkowski

Staff Members:
☒ Brian Pouget
☒ Robin Crothers
☒ Shannon Radke
☒ Andrew Johnson
☒ Dina Reed

Max Dillivan, Bill Kirk, Asher Lockwood, Conrad Venema, Mike Wieringa

Guests: Debbi Coleman (Hope Network)

Others: Tammy Britton (Talent 2025)

Mr. Schweitzer called the meeting to order at 8:01am.

PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comment

1) **MINUTES** – March 4, 2019
   No changes. Minutes accepted as submitted.

2) **DISCUSSION**
   a. **Wheels to Work – Presentation/Q&A (Debbi Coleman, Hope Network)**

      Mr. Schweitzer introduced Debbi Coleman, from Hope Network, to discuss the Wheels to Work Program.

      Ms. Coleman started her presentation explaining that Wheels to Work is a hub-based transportation program, with curb-to-curb service as well, which runs 24/7.

      The program currently operates in Muskegon County, Newaygo County, Ottawa County and Kent County. The program will be expanding into Allegan County and Barry County soon.

Steve Hartman, the Executive Director of Transportation at Hope Network, could not be present today as he is in Lansing, in talks to expand the program there as well. There have also been discussions to expand the program to Detroit, St. Ignace and Marquette.

As part of the partnerships with local employers, generally the employer pays a portion of the fee and the employee pays a portion; it's being incorporated as a way to retain talent.

67% of ridership does not have or want a car and 2% of ridership wants to reduce carbon footprint.

Wheels to Work buses are going to be adding bike racks and WIFI, and they are being rebranded to prevent the "red bus" stigma that had been attached to the red bus design used for other services.

An app is coming soon for requesting rides. A 15 min pick-up window is provided, for when the bus can arrive, and the bus will only wait 2 mins at a designated stop.

They are in their 3rd year of operation and have had almost 1000% growth since inception. Productivity dropped from 6.77 rides per hour in 1st year to 4.57 rides per hour in second year due to increased location expansion and more riders.

There are currently 40 companies actively participating and 52 companies on the wait list.

Debbi Coleman is the point of contact for Wheels to Work.

Wheels to Work partners with: Michigan.gov, ENTF, United Way, City of Walker, The Rapid, Talent 2025 and Hope Network.

Presentation Discussion:
Mr. Hoffman asked about the cost per trip to which Ms. Coleman responded that it costs $8.26 per ride, but currently $8.00 per ride is being charged. She further explained that most employers are using the program as an incentive and will cover all or some of the cost for employees.

Ms. Coleman explained that the program started with grant money, which has since been exhausted, and that the program is currently self-sustaining, but is looking for extra money for expansion.

Mr. Schweitzer asked what other problems there were to tackle, beyond recruiting drivers. Ms. Coleman reiterated that there is a need for more startup money to add new communities and new vehicles. According to Ms. Coleman, they currently have 108 vehicles and have 10 more on order, (cut-aways, vans and CDL buses).

Ms. Coleman explained that the current employer list is on the Wheels to Work website, with links to the hiring entities at each company, for those looking to apply for jobs to companies that are currently participating.

Mayor Bliss acknowledged the great successes, and mentioned the need for a willingness to take future risks.

Mr. Anderson suggested that The Rapid identify the top three unmet needs. He mentioned that there is a need to be attentive and pursue a different model, while maintaining the current one, including the opportunities to look into new processes.

Mr. Schweitzer addressed Mr. Johnson, asking how this will fit in with his mobility services initiatives. Mr. Johnson responded that it fits right in. He asserted that it is "a matter of vision, of looking ahead." Mr. Johnson went on to elaborate that he agrees that we need to look beyond the current 6 cities and into further regional opportunities. He mentioned the necessity to continue building further partnerships while making sure that there is a way to continue to meet current needs with the resources we have available to us. He agrees that we need to work together to figure out the best way for The Rapid to support Hope Network and mentioned that we will work with the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA), to start building toward becoming a mobility integrator.

Mr. Troost asked about the Rail Project, and WMX meetings, to which Mr. Venema responded that cost analysis showed the train to be cost prohibitive, but that an over-the-road coach service is being considered instead. Mr. Johnson believed that The Rapid should operate this service.

Mayor Bliss reiterated the need to focus on what problems are key to solve, querying if there were opportunities for The Rapid to be involved in possible car sharing initiatives. Mr. Johnson replied that The Rapid is scheduled tomorrow to speak with a 3rd party provider, looking into van pool and other options.

Ms. Coleman mentioned that there is a new mentality on transportation options, asserting that there is a move towards the expectation of public transportation availability.

Mr. Schweitzer mentioned TOD projects and Mr. Johnson replied, noting that the entire board will be working on the direction that the COA study will take.

b. Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) Consultant

Mr. Venema mentioned that three proposals came in and were reviewed. The team narrowed them down per the initiative goals of, "Go Big, Go Bold, Go

Innovative." He went on to explain that the team will be submitting a proposal at the May Board meeting, recommending Nelson-Nygaard to do the COA.

Mr. Bulkowski asked when the kick off would be if approved in May, to which Mr. Venema replied that it would start in June and it would take 12 months to complete.

Mr. Pouget mentioned that Nelson-Nygaard would keep close contact with the Board, to obtain their input as well as significant public input.

Mr. Johnson added that the success of the study would be incumbent on staff, the Board and the public to come together to make this a very productive process. In response to Mr. Schweitzer's question as to whether this was currently being brought up to look for an endorsement or being shared as informational, Mr. Johnson asserted that this was informational, as it would be discussed in detail at the May Board meeting.

In response to Mayor Bliss enquiring about the Board Planning Meeting, Mr. Johnson recommended to cancel the meeting, but that he is awaiting input from the Board Chair for confirmation.

Mr. Bulkowski asked about the Mobility Challenge. Mr. Pouget replied that he has been in contact with Disability Advocates. He went on to mention that there had been a set-back with staffing, but that it is currently being worked on. He asserted that they are back on track, and that service should be expected by the end of July. Mr. Pouget explained that there will be a 5 vehicle, 6 month, pilot study done in the SE quadrant service area, with same-day service options. They are looking forward to the learning opportunities that will come from the pilot study.

Mr. Bulkowski stated that persons with disabilities are looking forward to these greater transportation opportunities.

Mr. Johnson took a moment to introduce the new Executive Administrator, Shannon Radke.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04am.

Robin Crothers

Robin Crothers, Board Secretary

Shannon M. Radke

Shannon Radke, Board Secretary