



## PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY BOARD

*Advisory committee to the Mayor on public transit issues*

Meeting Minutes

for the meeting on January 25, 2016

### **Members present:**

Erik Gaikowski  
Cherie Gerry  
Brett Glirbas  
Philip Jacobson  
Greg Johnson  
Jeri Reed

### **Public in attendance:**

Melanie Bliss  
Randy Dobberpuhl  
Joe Dvorak  
Don Glirbas  
Mike Heinman  
Pat Seiner  
Jeff Wilka

### **Members absent:**

Megan Myers

### **Staff present:**

Kenny Anderson, Jr., City Council  
David Bixler, Budget Analyst  
Jim David, Legislative/Operations  
Manager  
Dennis Erckfritz, Operations Manager  
Amber Gibson, Planner II, SECOG  
Randy Hartman, Assistant GM  
Eric Meyerson, General Manager  
Colleen Moran, Assistant City Attorney  
Rex Roling, City Council  
Sam Trebilcock, Transportation Planner  
Ryan Weisenbach, Maintenance Manager

### **Call to order**

With a quorum present, Erik Gaikowski, Chair, called the Public Transit Advisory Board (PTAB) meeting to order at 3:45 p.m. and made introductory comments.

### **1. Approval of November 23, 2015, PTAB Meeting Minutes**

Cherie Gerry made a motion to accept the November 23, 2015, PTAB meeting minutes. Jeri Reed seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **2. Public input on non-agenda items:**

There was no public input.

### **3. Public Hearing: Paratransit Fare Revision**

Erik Gaikowski announced that this was a public hearing for a paratransit fare revision. Rex Roling and Kenny Anderson, Jr. presented the paratransit fare revision. Approximately two years ago, the Council's Transit Task Force recommended that fares be increased. Fare increases were approved for fixed route, but not paratransit, in the summer of 2015. In the interim, an internal audit was conducted and a recommendation to increase paratransit fares to \$2.50 was included in the report. The proposed paratransit fare revision will go before Council for its first reading on February 9, 2016, and for its second reading on February 16, 2016.

Brett Glirbas asked how much revenue the increased fare will raise. Sam Trebilcock stated that it would be approximately \$60,000 per year.

Jeri Reed stated that the fare increase would impact a population that has a limited income that has not increased. Kenny Anderson, Jr. stated that while there have been increases in taxes and utility rates, Council has postponed increasing the paratransit fare. He also stated that if the fare is not increased, there will need to be a cap on ridership in the near future.

Jeff Wilka stated that he is 63 years old, has cerebral palsy and scoliosis, and is on a fixed income of \$800 per month from social security which is used to pay rent, other bills, and two books of bus tickets. He asked that the Board take this into consideration. Jeff Wilka also submitted the attached statement opposing the increase after the meeting.

Pat Seiner stated that people on social security did not get a raise and asked the Board to take this into consideration.

Pam Nelson stated that she has talked to paratransit riders and their average wait time is two hours, that paratransit is understaffed and overbooked, and that paratransit does not serve the entire city. She also stated that society is better the more independent people are, that people need transit to be able to get to work, and that gas is cheaper so an increase is not needed. Pam also stated that if services are not provided, it will have to be paid for in another way. She asked the Board not to raise the paratransit fare.

Joe Dvorak stated that he is torn, but understands that people need the service and are having to wait for it. Joe also stated that an increase of \$0.50 per ticket is a significant portion of riders' income and he challenged Council and others to look at other ways to raise revenue, and he hopes that service improves as a result.

Chad Powell asked that rates be kept as is because he buys two books of tickets per month at \$80 per book and will be broke soon if rates are increased.

Don Glirbas stated that he was at the last Council meeting the fare increase was considered at and hoped that it would be at least another year before an increase was reconsidered. Don asked about the free rides provided to kids, vets, and Augie students and if they would continue. Rex Roling stated that free fares were implemented for kids and vets last summer on the fixed route system and those programs will likely continue. The Augie rides are paid for by Augustana. Rex also stated that the cost to the City for a fixed route ride is approximately \$3.50 and the cost of a paratransit ride is approximately \$30.00.

Melanie Bliss stated that she is embarrassed that Council was considering a paratransit fare increase four months after stating there wouldn't be an increase. She also stated that the increase is being put on the backs of the people who are least able and have no transportation, and they are going to work and can't take themselves. She stated that public officials should find a better way to create independence. Melanie also stated that people having to go through the indignity of being certified for paratransit should indicate their abilities.

Pam Nelson stated that it is inappropriate for the bus operator to determine eligibility and that people should qualify if they are considered handicapped by the federal government.

Randy Dobberpuhl asked whether a study has been done to determine how much the fare increase will affect the people served. Sam Trebilcock stated that a study has not been done to that detail, but the Transit Task Force spent a year identifying ways to mitigate concerns and implement other strategies. Randy also stated that the riders didn't choose to be in the position they're in, so the community should step up.

Jeri Reed read the attached email sent to her by Margaret Blume opposing the fare increase.

Jeri Reed read the attached email sent to Brett Glirbas by Wayne Fleischhacker opposing the fare increase.

Philip Jacobson made a motion to close the public hearing and Greg Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Brett Glirbas asked about the number of changes to paratransit in the past five years. Sam Trebilcock, Eric Meyerson, and Randy Hartman stated that evening paratransit service was limited to ¾ of a mile within certain fixed routes with expanded evening service, that the paratransit service area was adjusted to align within ¾ of a mile of the fixed route service area with a grandfather clause, and that the eligibility process was updated.

Greg Johnson stated that he has been on PTAB for six years and the financial crisis was apparent then. There was an understanding three to four years ago that services would have to be cut unless the finances were addressed. Greg also stated that he works with a lot of people with low income seeking transportation and education and he has not seen transportation grow greatly in the past 20 years. He said he is also torn, but realizes the financial inevitability of cutting services, redistributing funds, or taxing more. Greg thanked the Council members for attending the meeting and stated that he admires the advocates that have been working over the years.

Jerri Reed asked if there is a guarantee that service would be improved. Sam Trebilcock stated that the fare increase is needed to maintain service. He also stated that paratransit currently has capacity for 500 trips per day and is providing approximately 550 trips per day. SAM is in the process of hiring additional drivers, which would improve the wait times that currently average around 30 minutes.

Brett Glirbas asked if there is going to be additional funding contributed to the transit system. Sam Trebilcock stated that there has been additional funding contributed to the transit system since the Transit Task Force made its recommendations, particularly due to the decrease in federal funding for capital purchases.

Rex Rolwing stated that although he also torn, but that the City would not be able to keep up with the projected increased transit budget over the next 10 to 15 years if the transit system is not made more sustainable.

Greg Johnson made a motion to approve the paratransit fare increase as presented. The motion was seconded by Cherie Gerry. The motion was approved with a vote of three yes votes and two no votes.

#### **4. New Business:**

**a. Transit Development Plan**

Sam Trebilcock stated that it has been six years since the Transit Development Plan was last updated and he is currently working on the next update. As part of the update, goals, routes, capital improvements, and staffing plan will be reviewed. This item was informational only.

**5. Reports:**

**a. Ridership Committee Report**

Sam Trebilcock and Amber Gibson discussed the need for a coordinated community system outside of the paratransit system and ongoing efforts, including coordination with Project CAR, an upcoming pilot project with CCTS/River Cities Transit, Drive To Help, the Buddy System Program, and other travel training activities. This item was informational only.

**b. November and December Operations Report**

Eric Meyerson reviewed the November and December Operations Report. Eric stated that the declining ridership trend continued through December as fixed-route ridership was down 5.59% and paratransit ridership was down 3.46%, compared to December 2014. Year to date, fixed-route ridership is down 7.35% and paratransit ridership is down 8.3%. Eric also noted that five new fixed route buses had been purchased to replace aging buses and that the new buses are longer, have stadium seating in the back, and are more easily accessible for wheelchairs. This item was informational only.

**6. Adjournment:**

Brett Glirbas made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Greg Johnson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 p.m.