

**WINSTON-SALEM TRANSIT AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Clark Campbell Transportation Conference Room
100 W. Fifth Street, Winston-Salem, NC**

MINUTES

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

PRESENT:

Board Members

Robert Garcia, Chairman
Keith King, Vice Chairman
Regina Streed
Dr. Jack Fleer
Dr. Trae Cotton

Art Barnes, General Manager
John M. Ashford, Assistant General
Manger
Verylen Crawford, Operations Director
Robin Kirby
Tina Carson-Wilkins
Tikiha Alston
Teika Holloway
Erica Lowery
Ciatta Williams

WSTA Staff

OTHERS:

Toneq´ McCullough, Transportation
Director

Clair Stone, Community Advocate for Transportation Services
Ms. Rosie Betha, Winston Salem Industries for the Blind
Mr. West Young Winston Salem Journal

ABSENT:

Mrs. Ruth Carter

Meeting Opened: 4:05 pm

Chairman Robert Garcia welcomed everyone to the July 28, 2016 WSTA Board of Directors' Meeting.

Resolution Approving the Minutes for May 26, 2016 Board Meeting

Board members were allowed a moment to review the minutes from the May 26, 2016 board meeting for approval.



Ms. Regina Streed asked that Ms. Tikiha Alston's name be corrected from Ms. Tikiha to Ms. Alston on page 4. The correction was made as requested.

Mrs. Ruth Carter asked Mr. Barnes if it were permissible for members of the Board to attend meetings, such as the City Council meeting with him. Mr. Barnes responded by saying, yes. Mr.

Barnes shared that the last City Council Meeting—Public Works Committee Meeting—was attended by Mr. Garcia and Dr. Fleer. They both actually spoke to the City Council during the meeting.

Mrs. Carter stated the reason she asked is because some of the Board members may have connections with other members of the community including the City Councilpersons; therefore, it would be beneficial for Mr. Barnes to be accompanied to said meetings by one or two of WSTA's Board members. Mr. Barnes told Mrs. Carter that she would be invited to the next City Council Meeting.

Ms. Streed made a move to approve the minutes that was seconded by Vice Chairman Keith King. The minutes from WSTA's May 26, 2016 Board Meeting were approved by common consent.

Resolution Approving the Medicaid Contract for 2016-2017

Mr. Barnes explained that the Medicaid contract is an annual contract that is ran by the Department of Social Services. The actual contract is with Forsyth County. WSTA provides transportation services for Medicaid clients in addition to bus tickets.

The total amount of the contract this year is \$230,000.

Chairman Garcia asked Mr. Barnes to confirm information that was shared with the Board members at the last Board meeting. He asked if there was a decrease in Medicaid clients as reported at the last meeting. Mr. Barnes confirmed the number of Medicaid clients being serviced by WSTA had decreased. At one point WSTA was averaging revenue around \$400,000; but as the ADA ridership increased the Medicaid ridership decreased. WSTA is mandated to provide service to ADA clients as a condition to receive federal funding; therefore, WSTA must provide ADA trips. Medicaid ridership is an option.

Chairman Garcia asked if the decrease in Medicaid clients caused a hardship for Medicaid. Mr. Barnes stated that he cannot speak for DSS; but, he knows that DSS has other transportation providers. The capacity of Medicaid's other transportation providers is unknown. Mr. Barnes believes that WSTA's rate per trip is lower than any of Medicaid's other providers; and, said that DSS/Medicaid maybe suffering from that aspect; but, again he is not familiar with that component neither.

As WSTA's capacity increases and Trans-Aid ridership begins to stabilize, WSTA can again provide additional trips for Medicaid. This is good for the system in respect to revenue because the WSTA recovers the full cost of the trip.

Chairman Garcia pointed out that the decrease in Medicaid ridership was about 80%. Mr. Barnes confirmed this is correct.

Vice Chairman King made a motion to approve the authorizing contracts with Forsyth County for the provision of Medicaid transportation services. His motion was seconded by Ms. Streed and was passed unanimously.

Resolution Approving the Purchase of Computer Servers

Chairman Garcia told the Board members that Mr. Barnes would explain to them why he left three blank lines in the resolution. Mr. Barnes stated that this is a contingency resolution. It was included in the meeting packet just in case the bids for WSTA's computer servers were \$100,000 or over and needed the Board's approval; however, they were not and did not need to come before the Board.

These computer servers will replace WSTA's current servers. The reason it was urgent to purchase these servers is because one out of the eight new servers will be used to handle WSTA's new Trapeze® software that will probably go online sometime in September.

This software is directly related to Trans-Aid and will provide a number of things for WSTA in terms of data, the tracking of Trans-Aid vehicles, and communication. WSTA will have the ability to record on time data, missed trips, no shows, and the other things that are currently requiring a large amount of labor and manpower. Mr. Barnes reiterated his statement from the last Board Meeting stating it is almost impossible to keep up with all the data required by the FTA. Therefore, WSTA has been putting a priority on getting this system in place. A number of conversations have transpired with Trapeze® personnel and they have agreed to come and provide training the end of August.

There are a couple of other components with respect to this acquisition. A data plan is needed (basically cell phones) to feed the tablets that will be located on the buses. There will be another acquisition for the both tablets and a data plan which is currently out for bid. Mr. Barnes stated that he believes this bid will end August 9.

After explaining this resolution, Mr. Barnes said that because the lowest bid was only \$69,000 there was no need for it to go before the Board. There was a high bid in the amount of approximately \$116,000 for the same service. Mr. Barnes said the specifications were carefully analyzed this morning to ensure that the low bid did meet the specifications required. After analyzing the specifications, a purchase order was requested to obtain the servers.

Chairman Garcia stated that there was a big difference between the lowest bid and the highest. He inquired if the highest bid came with support? Mr. Barnes said that the bid for \$116,000, included a backup system that is more elaborate than the one that is included in the \$69,000 bid; however, the vendor that provided the \$69,000 bid met the support specifications.

Mr. Barnes reiterated that this was a contingent resolution that is not needed due to the amount of the bid WSTA chose.

Resolution Approving the Purchase of Bus Shelters and Ancillary Equipment

The Board was reminded of the consulting firm that was hired to analyze the corridors—Peters Creek and Patterson. The consulting firm provided specifications regarding the placement of shelters, benches, and in some cases real-time signs.

WSTA received a low bid from Brasco to get everything that is needed. A total of 4 bids were received. WSTA is asking the Board to approve the acquisition of shelters, poles, and benches to install in the 2 corridors. Subsequent to the approval of this acquisition, a construction contract will have to be requested. As WSTA moves forward and address the reconfiguration of the entire route system, WSTA will have to procure additional equipment. This particular resolution authorizes the procurement of equipment not to exceed \$295,000.

Ms. Streed inquired about federal funds underwriting 80% of the purchase and local funds underwriting the remaining 15%. Mr. Barnes stated that it should read 20%. Mr. Barnes explained the breakdown of equipment and prices from an attached spread sheet comparing the bids received.

Chairman Garcia asked how much more is projected to outfit the new routes and what is the timeline. Mr. Barnes responded by saying that Chairman Garcia's inquiry is a serious consideration. For this reason this resolution and the following resolutions are very important in terms of acquiring additional equipment and getting construction contracts in place since WSTA has committed to providing new routes on January 2, 2017. Mr. Barnes ended by saying WSTA is in crunch with regards to time.

Chairman Garcia asked if there was a motion to approve this resolution.

Ms. Streed made a move to approve this resolution and it was seconded by Vice Chairman King. The resolution authorizing the purchase of bus stops, shelters, benches, trash receptacles, poles, solar packages and real-time display equipment was passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

Ms. Clair Stone distributed 4 packets of information prior to the meeting starting. She presented 3 issues to the Board. Her first issue involved her first handout that contained a letter written to the Mayor and City Council Members. The letter asked that subscription trips be reinstated for the employees of The Industries for the Blind (IFB). Ever since IFB's subscription trips were discontinued, none of them know the time of their 30 minute pickup windows. They have tried to find out in a variety of ways and get different times. Ms. Stone stated that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) sited WSTA for this finding. She also feels that IFB has been targeted and bullied because they are the only entity to have their subscription trips taken away. She said that if WSTA is adopting this as a policy, it should be for the entire ridership and not just for IFB.

Ms. Stone's second issue is she believes the WSTA Board should apologize to riders for their inaction on reservations. She stated that she distributed several packets over the years and stopped because she knew the compliance review was coming up and there would be some changes. She said it was asked on—several occasions—that the reservation procedures be corrected. CAT's is asking for WSTA's assistance in getting a clear 30 minute window stated to the riders that will not change before the call between the rider and the scheduler ends. The same window should be communicated by the reservationist, the dispatcher, the driver, the manifest, the automated machine. Ms. Stone told the Board members that this information should be familiar to them by now and it is still not happening.

Another of the handouts contained new complaints compiled and the 78 page Compliance Review from 2013. The handout indicated that the reservation procedure and the changing of reservations were the main issues in 2013. In 2014 changing reservations was the main issue. Ms. Stone asked that the Board members review the handout that contains the City Council Public Works Committee response on page 2. The same handout contains 5 months of CATs meeting minutes.

Ms. Stone's final issue is her concerns about WSTA's stated interest in a Trans-Aid fare increase. She is asking that WSTA have data in hand regarding how many riders are using the Medicaid card to ride for free (not just an estimate) before making a decision. Ms. Stone stated that many riders, that she know of, do not have Medicaid and those that do are not aware of the Medicaid policy. She is also asking that an increase greater than 20% (the average paratransit fare increase rate recorded in 2011) not be suggested. Ms. Stone asked that public meetings be held (required by law) when the rate increase is suggested. She also asked that any future public meetings be held at ground level in a larger room with easy street access. She asks that WSTA make sure the minutes are compiled in a way that they can be released to the WSTA Board Legislators and the public.

In closing Ms. Stone stated that an inquiry was made about free Fixed Route for paratransit rides. She stated that this is something that Greensboro Transit does and suggested that WSTA call them and inquire about how often this service is used.

Chairman Garcia addressed Ms. Stone and asked about her use of the word "bully." He stated that when the words targeted and bullied (a very, very strong word) are used, bullied brings on a whole new meaning. He expressed that he would like to discuss this further with her at another time. Chairman Garcia also stated to say something like that in a public forum can bring up a lot of questions such as: Who was it?, What was it?, Is it written?, etc. Ms. Stone agreed by saying absolutely and stated that the handouts show how quietly and how long CATs has been working on this with Mr. Barnes, An assistant City Attorney, and City Councilman Dan Besse. She said that she has tried behind the scenes and it didn't work. Ms. Stone said that she would love to have a conversation with Chairman Garcia.

Chairman Garcia then referred to Ms. Stone's statement about para transit riders with Medicaid not knowing about the Medicaid policies. He then asked WSTA's staff, "Whose reasonability is it to make sure riders do know?" Ms. Stone stated it is equally all of our responsibility and the point behind her making that statement is maybe this policy isn't used very much. She said that WSTA should get data regarding this to find out. If it is used by 90% of the riders, Ms. Stone said that she would eat her hat; but, she doesn't feel it is.

Ms. Rosie Betha was given the floor to speak. Ms. Betha stated that she appreciates the services provided by Trans-Aid. However, since the changes have been made, there have been too many inconsistencies with the pickup times during the morning. She would like to see the Board work on this issue. Ms. Betha also stated that with the afternoon pick up, not all the drivers get off the bus to let the people know they are there.

Ms. Betha said that since the subscription trips have been taken away, everyone at IFB has been confused. She would like for the Board to come to IFB and clear up the confusion.

Mr. Barnes commented on subscription trips by saying subscription trips are repetitive trips that do not require calling in. As most remember, there were a number of things WSTA had to do as a result of the FTA review. One of the things was reducing the number of standing orders to below 50%. There are a couple of organizations that have the most standing orders; the first is IFB and the

second is Dialysis. WSTA approached both of these organizations regarding modifying those trips to meet FTA's guidelines and standards. Dialysis did not want to do this; however, IFB did. This allowed WSTA to get these trips below the 50% level. Mr. Barnes reiterated what Ms. Stone said about WSTA not being required by law to provide subscription trips. As WSTA moves on beyond this, one of the things being negotiated is to find a contractor that will provide some expertise with respect to Trans-Aid services and that will also address City Council with respect to the items they wanted WSTA to tend to.

Chairman Garcia thanked the public for their comments and Mr. Barnes for his remarks.

Information Items:

Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) VHB Contract (Sears Hub Project)-this is a contract that has been finalized with VHB to plan a Sears hub. There has been some communication with both the engineers of VHB and Sears. Sears expressed their concerns about the design.

Chairman Garcia asked if there were any changes to the location from 2 months ago. Mr. Barnes said that the location is the same; WSTA will be provided more space to park buses. This will probably involve the expansion of the sidewalk area; also, the removal of some landscaping. The plan is to put a real-time sign at this location and a bus shelter larger than the current bus shelter.

Financial Report-Mr. Barnes said that he made some adjustments to the financial report. After making these adjustments WSTA is \$35,000 over budget. This goes back to what was budgeted last year for the fare box revenue. The assumption was made that the ridership would remain the same. However, the decrease in the price of fuel directly correlates with the number of transit riders.

Operations Report-As previously mentioned there is a decrease in **Fixed Route** ridership. It is approximately a 7% decrease year-to-date (YTD). Preventable vehicle accidents are down from 23 to 14 YTD. Also, preventable employee accidents are down from 3 to 0 YTD. Complaints are up YTD. They went from 368 to 465; however, chargeable complaints are up from 26 to 36. Chairman Garcia asked if when one looks at the total number of complaints, are they to extract 36 from 465. Mr. Barnes replied that this is correct because those are claims that can be charged to employees as a result of them not doing what they were supposed to do. With regards to complaints, Chairman Garcia asked if there were any standards set within the transportation industry that would serve as an oversight committee (state or federal). Mr. Barnes said there is not one that he knows of; however, when WSTA receives a complaint they go to the department heads and from them to the supervisors. Who investigates the complaints and reports their findings back to the department head to be addressed. Chairman Garcia said the reason he asked is because he was curious about that since WSTA receives federal funds.

Trans-Aid ridership is up and is about where it was projected to be. Trips increased about approximately 6%. They went from 191,278-203,505 YTD. Preventable vehicle accidents are down YTD; they went from 12 to 7. Chargeable complaints are down from 30-22 YTD. Missed Trips and No Shows will definitely show up again on the spreadsheets with accurate information once the new system is put in place. Right now, as indicated at the last Board meeting, it is too labor intensive to try and calculate either one of these. The telephone performance average is .57 sec. with a maximum wait time of 18 min 33 sec. This has been consistently going down. WSTA is currently scheduling

interviews for another customer service representative to assist in answering the phones. In addition to this, a certification specialist is being added to Trans-Aid operations so that applications can be processed more quickly and phone calls answered in a timelier manner. Interviews will soon be held for this position. The applicants have been narrowed down to 4 candidates.

Mr. Barnes stated there is not a lot to see with on the **Maintenance** report. He said that the crux of this report is the road calls have gone down substantially from last year. For Fixed Route they decreased from 486 to 297 YTD; but, for Trans-Aid road calls went up from 118 to 162 YTD.

Out of the 12 buses that were purchased, 11 of them are out on the street right now. Mr. John Ashford is reviewing the last one received to ensure that all specifications have been met. Once all of the buses have been introduced into work operations, 75 % of WSTA's fleet will be alternatively fueled (Hybrid Electric). Chairman Garcia stated that he noticed that Maintenance hours and Mechanic hours are up YTD and inquired if this is due to the new buses. Mr. Barnes stated the new buses just came in and eventually they will have an effect on these hours. The buses that were in operation prior to the purchase of the new buses were over 12 years old.

WSTA is waiting on the approval of a grant application to purchase Trans-Aid buses. The hope is to have the new buses by the end of the year. The grant application goes through FTA and a number of other departments with the final one being the Labor Department. The grant application is then routed to the Union. WSTA is monitoring this process very intently because of their desire to get the new vehicles on the street as soon as possible.

Marketing Report-The Marketing Report was included in the meeting packet. Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins went over this report in detail.

She reported that WSTA's **Try Transit Program** is usually kind of slow during the summer being that there are no schools in session requesting Try Transit trips. However she did have a group (5 adults and 10 students) that drove down in a van from a Hillsboro VA High School. The parents wanted the students to be educated on how to take public transportation because there is not a similar system in their community.

Mrs. Carson Wilkins gave the group a tour of the facility, had a conversation with them and explained the does and don'ts of using the bus. The group then took a ride to Hanes Mall. Mrs. Tina stated that this was the first group she has had to come from Virginia.

News Releases/News Stories there were press releases sent out about the new Hybrid buses and the Winston Salem Journal covered the 2016 Accessible Festival. Mr. Barnes added that channel 12 gave coverage for the rollout of the new buses.

WSTA is working with the following agencies as a part of its Coalition Building: Triad First Families, The Quarterly Marketing Meeting held July 29, 2016 (PART, GTA, WSTA, and Burlington), Accessible Festival Planning Committee (WSTA, The Enrichment Center and Bayada Habilitation), the Regional Bus Advertising Program with Streetlevel Media, and The Business I40 Mitigation Work Group (a marketing group)

WSTA had 2 **Special Events**—The Employee Safety/Service Appreciation Day and the 2016 Accessible Festival. A PowerPoint presentation was shown highlighting the Accessible Festival. Mrs.

Ruth Cater expressed that she wish the entire Winston Salem community could see this presentation. She stated that Transit not only provides transportation to the community but helps the community as well. Some members of the Board requested a copy of the presentation and also to help with the festival next year.

WSTA is continues the finalization of modifications to the proposed new routes and the Lowery Street Project as a part of their **Service Design and Coordination**.

The Accessible Festival was **Advertised** using Entercom Communication's Simon/WQMG and Triad City Beat.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Transcribed by: Teika Holloway

Aug 30, 2016