

**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

WSTA Staff

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

OTHERS:

Gregg Turner, Assist. City Manager
Toneq' McCullough, Transportation
Director
Scott, Tesh, Budget and Evaluation Analyst
Brenda King, Transportation Financial Manger
Clair Stone, Community Advocate for Transportation Services

ABSENT:

Mrs. Ruth Carter

Meeting Opened: 4:04 pm

Chairman Robert Garcia welcomed everyone to the September 29th, WSTA Board of Directors' Meeting.

Resolution Approving the Minutes for July 28, 2016 Board Meeting

Board members were allowed a moment to review the minutes from the July 28, 2016 board meeting for approval.



Dr. Fleer made a move to approve the minutes that was seconded by Ms. Regina Streed. The minutes from WSTA's July 28, 2016 Board Meeting was approved by common consent.

Resolution Authorizing the Purchase of Twelve Paratransit Vehicles

Mr. Barnes stated that WSTA has been waiting on a grant to underwrite the purchase of 12 Trans-Aid vehicles. WSTA is happy to announce that the grant was recently approved. It will be used to underwrite 80% of the purchase price. The new unit option price is \$120,833 compared to the original unit price of \$118,953. This price represents a total increase of \$945 for the body and the chassis; and an additional \$935 increase for radios and tablet mounts. This is about an 8/10 of one percent increase in price. The delivery time will be no more than 3 to 4 months from the issuance date of a PO.

The resolution will have to go before City Council since the purchase option exceeds \$300,000. As previously stated, the Federal Government underwrites 85% and the City will have to provide the remaining 15%. WSTA has to wait for an okay from not only the City Council; but the City of Winston Salem as well. This is to make sure there is sufficient liquidity to underwrite the local share.

Ms. Regina Streed made a motion to approve the above resolution. Her motion was seconded by Dr. Jack Fleer. The resolution authorizing the purchase of twelve Paratransit vehicles was passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING REVENUE ENHANCEMENTS FOR TRANSIT OPERATIONS

Mr. Gregg Turner—Assistant City Manager—introduced himself to the Board and presented a change to some items on the agenda the Board was to consider. This change request came from the Magistrates Office.

The City Council Public Works Committee met several months ago to listen to presentations and to discuss them. These presentations were in regards to issues with Transit, the new routes, and the Mass Transit Tax Fund (the funding source for everything WSTA does). One of the comments made at that meeting pointed out the Mass Transit Tax Fund is depleting and something needs to be done. In response to that comment, the WSTA staff prepared resolutions for the Board's consideration recommending that City Council look at several fare increases as part of their evaluation of how to stabilize that fund.

At the last minute it was realized that it might be premature to propose specifics such as fare increases, since a follow-up discussion is going to take place with City Council next month. With that being said, the resolution that was just distributed on behalf of Mr. Gregg Turner handles the intent of the three resolutions listed on the agenda.

In essence this new resolution states that the existing system is depleting resources in the Mass Transit Tax Fund and the fund needs to be stabilized. It also states that the Board is recommending that the City Council take actions to increase revenues in order to stabilize that fund.

Chairman Garcia asked about Mr. Turner's use of the word 'intent'. Mr. Turner clarified that the intent of the three original resolutions was to ask the Council to do things specifically to address the revenue problem the fund is having. The intent of the new resolution is the same; however, it is in more generic terms. It is also an umbrella resolution that covers all three items listed on the agenda. Chairman Garcia asked if the replacement resolution will be followed up with more specifics. Mr. Turner replied that it would.

Dr. Trae Cotton asked if there were other avenues that could be explored by the council other than the three that were to be presented to the Board. Mr. Turner responded "yes;" and further elaborated with examples such as: a Mass Transit Tax Fund reallocation, a motor vehicle privilege fee increase, or an additional motor vehicle allocation from the existing fund. Currently, the City charges \$15 to persons who own cars. Legislation approved last year allows up to a \$30 charge. This is an option that City council may choose do, or they could choose to go somewhere between \$15 and \$30, or they may decide to allocate more money from the existing fund. Another option would be to increase the amount that comes out of the general fund to go into the Mass Transit Tax Fund. There are many options available, with at least 2 of them being viable.

Chairman Garcia asked if this resolution will be discussed at next month's City Council meeting. Mr. Turner said "correct; it will go to the Public Works Committee." The Chairman has stated that he wants nothing else to be on the agenda because this will take up a significant amount of time with his committee. This request was made so that the committee may spend the entire meeting discussing Transit issues."

Chairman Garcia asked when the meeting would be held. Mr. Barnes confirmed with Ms. Toneq' McCullough that the meeting will be held Tuesday; October 11, 2016 at 6 p.m. Mr. Turner stated that the Committee would love to have all of the Board Members present that are available to come.

Dr. Cotton asked, "If the resolution is approved, would the Council need any further direction or advice from WSTA's Board? For example, if the Council chooses to move the fare from \$1 to \$1.30, would this resolution cover the Board's required duty?" Mr. Barnes responded by saying the Board does not have the authority to increase the fare; however, the Board can recommend a fare increase. Mr. Turner responded by saying if the resolution is passed, the Council may proceed by saying something along the lines of, "We have received direction from Board regarding this issue; therefore, we are going

to increase rates by whatever amount. The Council would not have to come back to you (The WSTA Board); but, they may choose to regardless.”

Dr. Cotton made a move to accept the resolution as presented. His move was seconded by Ms. Regina Streed. The resolution was passed unanimously.

Mr. Barnes stated that a presentation had been prepared for the Board regarding the original 3 resolutions. Mr. Barnes asked Mrs. Carson-Wilkins to start the presentation and he went over it with the Board. The presentation showed that WSTA’s Fixed Route fare is pretty much in line with the average fare for NC. The presentation also showed that WSTA’s ADA rate is far below the NC average. WSTA’s ADA fare is \$0.50 while the national average is somewhere around \$2.00-\$2.50. Mr. Barnes stated that this is what he wanted to point out to the Board. This gives the Board members a bit of information regarding how transit fares stand across the state.

Dr. Cotton asked Mr. Barnes to give some history on why WSTA’s ADA fare is half of its Fixed Route fare when it is virtually double everywhere else in the state. Mr. Barnes stated that the \$0.50 fee goes back to 2006 when the Board of Directors instituted that rate. Before the \$0.50 fee, it was free to ride. Mr. Barnes stated that most of the Transit systems have taken advantage of the opportunity to have fares that are, in some cases, twice the Fixed Route fare because the ADA regulations allow that. The reason this is allowed is because the expense of running paratransit is much higher than it is for Fixed Route. WSTA’s paratransit average per trip fee is probably around \$20 were as our average per trip fee for Fixed Route is around \$3 to \$3.50. However, WSTA’s Board has always been very sympathetic to the disabled community, hence the fare and the exemption for passengers on Medicaid.

Chairman Garcia shared that the City Council meeting he and Dr. Flear attended shed a lot of light on ADA. He stated that the huge rate difference is what caught City Council’s attention. With that being said, the Council will take a serious look into the rates. He also said that with the resolution that was just passed, the Council will probably institute a fare increase although he doesn’t know that for sure. They will not take the fact lightly that WSTA charges \$0.50 for a trip that cost them an average of \$20.00.

Chairman Garcia shared that he will be on vacation the day of the meeting; but, he strongly encourages his fellow Board Members to attend if they are available. He also asked that a reminder email be sent to remind the Board of this meeting.

Resolution Recommending City Council Rescind Fare Exemption

This resolution was replaced by the Resolution Recommending Revenue Enhancements for Transit Operation.

Resolution Recommending a Fare Increase for Trans-Aid

This resolution was replaced by the Resolution Recommending Revenue Enhancements for Transit Operation.

Resolution Recommending a Fare Increase for Fixed Route

This resolution was replaced by the Resolution Recommending Revenue Enhancements for Transit Operation.

Public Comment:

Ms. Clair Stone distributed packets of information to the Board and meeting attendants prior to the meeting starting.

Ms. Stone stated that most of what she had to say was about the fare increases. She is glad that WSTA may be stepping back regarding this issue. She said the Board should not be having public meetings after a fair increase has been voted on. She stated the way it seems to work in other Transit Authorities is a proposal is made, public meetings are held, you have a hearing where the public will be allowed to speak once more, and you vote on the issue.

One of the handouts distributed contains the minutes from the August and September meeting. The second handout is regarding the ADA guidelines for fare increases.

Ms. Stone reiterated her plea to the Board to not suggest an increase greater than 20%. She said that this is the average amount for paratransit increase that was recorded in 2011. Ms. Stone stated that she did not know how WSTA got a count of how many people riding Trans-Aid for free; but, if the fare is raised from zero to \$.75, a lot of people will not be financially able pay this fee.

Ms. Stone asked the Board to look into Trans-Aid passengers riding Fixed Route for free. She said the Greensboro have been doing this for approximately 8 years; their Transit Board recommended that it be continued. They believe it is saving money. While considering this option, think about the passengers having a picture ID because if you are going to have a paratransit passenger riding Fixed Route they will need some type of ID. Ms. Stone stated she noticed that in WSTA's brochure there is a special population's card. Ms. Stone inquired if the paratransit passengers would receive this card automatically and would they be able you use them to purchase half fare passes.

Ms. Stone reiterated that any public meetings need to be held at ground level with easy street access in a large room.

Mr. Barnes responded to Ms. Stone by repeating his statement regarding the Board not having the authority to institute bus fare increases. It is left up to City Council to make that decision. WSTA will go before City Council on October 11, 2016. After this it will be up to City Council to do decide which direction they will take. Therefore, it would not make a lot of sense to schedule public meeting now with regards to a fare increase

when we don't even know that a fare increase is going to be recommended by City Council.

If City Council does decide to institute a fare increase, it is then required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to hold a public meeting. The results of the public meeting will be presented to the City Council. The FTA policy on this matter was included in the meeting materials.

For clarification, Dr. Cotton asked, if City Council decides to consider the fare increase, it is WSTA's responsibility to hold the public forums and not City Council's. Mr. Barnes said this is correct. WSTA will hold the public forums on behalf of the City Council.

Information Items:

Advertising Contract-There has been talk regarding this topic for a while now and it has finally come to fruition. WSTA has a bus advertising contract with Streetlevel Media in which WSTA will receive 50% of the advertising revenues. The idea was to solicit a much larger market that would include the areas operated by PART, HiTran, Greensboro and WSTA; thereby increasing our revenue. This was previously voted on and went into effect August 2016. In addition, WSTA retains 15% of the space of the advertising space on our vehicles. This is kind of a bonus so that we can do with that space whatever WSTA wishes.

Dr. Cotton asked why 15% of advertising space on buses was reserved. Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins explained the reason by saying there are some small mom and pop shops that can't afford the fee that Streetlevel Media will be charging.

Dr. Cotton then asked if WSTA offers a not-for-profit discount. Mrs. Carson-Wilkins stated that WSTA does. The Agency must be able to produce documentation verifying they are a nonprofit organization.

Chairman Garcia asked if the discount given to nonprofits is only for our 15% reserved space. Mrs. Carson-Wilkins stated that Streetlevel does offer for free interior cards (advertising on the inside of the bus) as long as the agency is willing to pay for the production and installation of the cards.

Sears-Mr. Barnes sent the Board an email regarding Sears. The Board is aware that WSTA has been negotiating with Sears for about a year. The Board has gone as far as approving an engineering contract with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB). Moving forward there were a number of conference calls and the two were in the final stages of putting together a legal document to be signed by both Sears and City attorneys. Pretty much everything had been worked out. Mr. Barnes had been working with the Asset Manager at Sears all this time and had been making progress as reported in previous Board meetings.

When it came time to put together the final contract document, the Asset Manager presented the project to her superiors for the final sign off and was turned down. There was no reason given; only an apology.

There are some things that have transpired since then. Mr. Barnes spoke to the Mall Manager who said that WSTA would not be removed from Mall; but, has not offered any solutions. In the email sent from Sears they said that they would be sending WSTA a letter to remove authorization to come on to their property.

Mayor Allen Joines sent an email to Sears protesting their position. Sears has reached out to Mayor Joines but was unsuccessful in their attempt to talk to him. Mr. Barnes said that he has been hesitant to move any further at this point. Barnes is waiting on this document; but he cannot wait too long with respect to the implementation of the new routes scheduled to begin in January. Mr. Barnes stated the he is going to have to take a proactive stance if there is no communication in the very near future. Sears can just give us a deadline and we go from there.

Chairman Garcia stated that we hope Sears will respond positively. He also reminded the Board that this all stemmed from the location the bus was picking up and dropping off. Mr. Barnes agreed and stated the location was changed from the front to the side of Sears where operators actually had more space to operate in addition to passengers having more space to get on the bus. The stop was to be enhanced with real-time signs and bus shelters.

Mr. Barnes did share that he was told to ask other stores along the frontage of the mall if they would allow WSTA bus to park in front of their locations.

Mr. Barnes shared the Mall management company actually owns very little of the property. It is the stores that own the property but the roadway as well as the parking lots. This is the reason we need Sears permission to pull up in front of their store.

Mrs. Regina Streed asked if the issue was that the stores did not want the bus to come to the Mall at all. Mr. Barnes said the he has his opinions about that; but, he would rather leave it up to Sears to explain their position.

Trapeze System Implementation-Mr. Barnes started by saying there is bad news and good news; however, the good news is better than the bad news☺! Originally, the Trapeze System was to be instituted in September based on RFPs that were put out for the various components needed to put this system in effect. There was a delay in the arrival of the servers and the servers were absolutely crucial to the Trapeze project so it had to be pushed back. Now the servers are here, the tablets are here, the brackets are here, and the data plan has been purchased. WSTA now has everything needed to make it work. The training has been scheduled for the operators, dispatchers, and supervisors. The training will take place in December.

5307\5309 Grant Approval-5307 is an additional grant that was approved along with the 5309. A lot of people were happy to see this money come because it was 2014-2015 money. There have been a lot of delays with respect to the receipt of funds from the FTA for a couple of reasons. One, being the FTA gives WSTA money in increments. Each time an increment of money is given the application has to start again for each of the increments. The FTA suggested to WSTA and a lot of others to just wait until the entire amount is allocated; and then apply.

A new FTA software system also contributed to the delay. This delayed the application getting process. Once the computer system was installed there were a lot of bugs and kinks to work out before it was fully functional. This went on for months; therefore no one could submit applications to FTA until that process was completed. WSTA ended up applying for the grant in April 2016. The money is now in WSTA's possession (\$3.9 million.)

City Council Presentation-Mr. Barnes shared again that WSTA will be going before the Public Works Committee. The meeting will be held on Tuesday; October 11, 2016 at 6 pm in the Committee Room. The entire WSTA Board was invited to come.

Operations Report-Out of respect to Mr. Barnes, Chairman Garcia announced that the Board has the Operations report in front of them for reviewing. He asked that the report be reviewed individually. The Board was in agreement.

Chairman Garcia asked that all questions be directed to the staff via email.

Financial Report-Mr. Barnes announced that the financial report is going to seem way out of whack. It always does at the beginning of the fiscal year because of encumbrances.

Marketing Report-Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins elaborated on the Marketing Report. She shared that Christine Ware is the new Chair of TRAC. The old Chair, Tina Taylor, is now the Vice Chairman

Try Transit Program-Downtown Health Plaza Medical Professionals

News Release/News Stories-WSTA was featured in the Winston-Salem Journal.

Reporter Wes Young did an articles titled "*Riders Challenge WSTA on Transport for Blind*" July 29, 2016 and "*Student bus drivers: WSTA Trainees hit the road*" September 2, 2016. The article included a Facebook Live feed.

WSTA's Coalition Building efforts are the Regional Bus Advertising Program with Streetlevel Media, Business I-40 Mitigation Work Group (Marketing group) and WSTA's TRAC group meeting

There were two Special Events held in September: The Hispanic Fiesta and The South Fork Craft Fair.

WSTA's new route book is available on Facebook. Next bus is being advertised in the Wake Forest Student Planner

There are two Service Design and Coordination projects: The finalization of the modifications to proposed new routes and the development of Lowery Street Route 110.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Transcribed by: Teika Holloway

October 19, 2016