

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

MINUTES

THURSDAY, November 21, 2013

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

PRESENT:

BOARD MEMBERS

**Robert Garcia, Chairman
Keith King, Vice Chairman
Ruth Carter
Dr. Jack Fleer
Nora Streed
Dr. Trae Cotton
Pridgen Amos**

WSTA STAFF

**Art Barnes, General Manager
Tina Carson-Wilkins
Tikiha Alston
Dean Reynolds**

ABSENT

OTHERS

**Ben Rowe – City of Winston-Salem Budget Office
Claire Stone-----NC Division of Services for the Blind/CATS
Glenda Sears – City of Winston-Salem Finance Department
Bobby Fitzjohn - City of Winston-Salem Finance Department**

Meeting Opened: 4:05 pm

Action Items

Approval of the Minutes

Chairman, Robert Garcia greeted all those in attendance and asked Board members to review minutes from the September meeting. Mr. Barnes thanked Mr. Garcia, Mr. King and Ms. Carter for attending the celebration event launching the Sunday bus service, sponsored by the City of Winston-Salem and WSTA. Mr. Barnes and Mr. Garcia shared details about the October 27 event. Mr. Barnes then introduced Dean Reynolds, WSTA's Operations Manager to the Board. He told them that in December, Reynolds will retire from WSTA after 39 years of service. Barnes wanted to formally recognize Reynolds' invaluable and trustworthy contributions to the company. Following comments by Reynolds, Mr. Garcia moved forward with the Board meeting. He requested someone make a motion for approval of minutes for the September 26, 2013 meeting.



On a motion by Dr. Jack Fleer, and seconded by Keith King, the Board approved the minutes by common consent.

Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a Revised MOU for the Urban Area MPO

Mr. Barnes gave some background on the information provided for the Board. The resolution authorizes the execution of a memorandum of agreement by the municipalities represented in the MPO. The WSTA Board is required to approve the MOU because WSTA is a part of it. The package of information also included the voting distribution; and stipulated that WSTA will receive 2 votes. Following further review of the information, **Dr. Jack Fleer moved for the adoption of the resolution; which was seconded by Dr. Trae Cotton.** Chairman Garcia asked if this agreement started in 2014, and was told affirmatively yes. The resolution was passed without any further questions/concerns.

Dr. Fleer made the staff aware that Ms. Streed's last name was misspelled on the minutes from the September 26 Board meeting. Mr. Barnes assured him that a correction would be made.

Public Comments

Ms. Claire Stone did not have any information or concerns to share; however she provided the Board with a summary of the meetings conducted by the Community Advocates for Transportation Services (CATS) in 2013. The information consisted of concerns expressed by the members of the CATS organization.

Mr. Garcia thanked her for sharing her information and assured her it would be reviewed by the Board and staff.

Information Items

Mr. Ben Rowe (City of Winston-Salem's Finance Director) came to the Board meeting to report on WSTA's capital acquisitions. His presentation was prefaced by comments made by Mr. Barnes, who reminded the Board that a follow-up of the recent strategic planning retreat was a requirement implemented by the Board. Details of the capital acquisitions were mandatory within 6 months of the development of WSTA's strategic plan. Prior to the presentation, Barnes communicated information that will affect WSTA's capital acquisitions. Due to financial concerns by the NCDOT, monetary matches for capital projects will be unavailable to transit agencies throughout the state of North Carolina. The NCDOT match is usually around 10% (now 7.5%) for vehicle purchases. WSTA will have to look at how the agency currently acquires vehicles and the timeline for doing so; operating under the assumption that no funds will be forthcoming. There is a competitive process to receive funds, which will begin in 2015. However, the five new vehicles (Gillig hybrid buses) recently purchased by WSTA have

no matching funds available as of this Board meeting. Although there is a plan to meet with officials from Raleigh in the very near future, there are no guarantees WSTA will receive the state-allocated matching funds. A formula has been developed by the state legislators (HV817) to use in the allocation process. The percentage of allocated matching funds was cut in half. Rowe's presentation on WSTA's Capital Improvement Plan to the Board was put together upon request. The summarized 6-year capital plan is typically presented to the City Council. Funding is appropriated for the first year, and the remaining five years of the plan are adopted "more as a guide". He spelled out the types of projects that are submitted to the Budget Office for approval. Most of the money is programmed into the operating budget to recover operating costs. There is approximately \$600 million dollars' worth of unfunded capital needs that cut across numerous city departments. There will be a capital needs workshop with the City Council in February 2014; possibly as a precursor to later discussions about an upcoming bond referendum. Fixed route bus and Trans-AID vehicle replacements, passenger amenities (bus shelters with security cameras and metal detectors at the Transportation Center), administrative vehicle replacements, transit center enhancements and part replacements are all subjects that fall under conversations about acquisitions. None of these projects include matching funds from the state of North Carolina. He discussed the possible vehicle replacement schedule; however, there is no funding available. The purchases will be spread out over the next few years; including the Trans-AID vehicles scheduled for replacement. Rowe opened the floor to questions:

Mr. Garcia asked about the five buses that WSTA took receipt of in October. He wanted to know if the vehicles received matching funds. Mr. Barnes said a meeting has been scheduled with the NCDOT top officials to discuss the matter; hopefully before the end of the year. Barnes explained how the process works and the flow of funds from request to distribution of the funds.

Dr. Fler asked if it was correct that WSTA receives 10% for matching funds. Barnes said it used to be 10% from the state, 10% from local and 80% federal. However, now it is 85% federal, 7.5 from the state and 7.5 local.

Dr. Trae Cotton asked what happens even if the proposal is very well executed, but the state still does not provide the matching funds? Barnes responded that he did not know, but we still have to be aggressive in finding the funding.

Mr. Garcia asked what happened prior to purchasing the five vehicles. Barnes told him that there were grants available before, but the state mentioned they were having some issues about meeting the requests for matches. He was told that the funds were not available.

Dr. Fler then asked if every city has been withdrawn or just a select group of cities. Barnes mentioned that only some cities were withdrawn.

Mr. Garcia observed the cost of the transit center renovations. Barnes said additional funds were available, so they were placed in that category. Due to the COA, some construction of a transfer facility may be needed for operators and passengers. WSTA has identified the Department of Social Services as a major generator, so a transportation transfer facility would help cut travel time for some passengers.

Mr. Garcia asked about the number of non-hybrid vehicles. Barnes said WSTA has 53 vehicles in its fleet with five of those being contingency vehicles; which are not counted in the vehicle fleet count. There are 25 hybrids in the fleet. Peak hour service requires 39 vehicles on the street. WSTA will run the hybrids because they are new and less expensive to operate. After several other questions regarding the fleet, Rowe mentioned that WSTA could probably purchase 6 hybrids in the future, because the grant money has been appropriated for them already.

Transit Alliance of the Piedmont

Barnes told the Board that one of the goals of the strategic plan was to engage a transit advocacy organization. Transit Alliance of the Piedmont was active in 2012 but stopped meeting. They have since started the organization meeting again, with Chantale Wesley of PART as the chair. They are looking at developing a campaign for funding to engage corporate support for public transportation in the region. They are considering hiring an administrative assistant to handle to operation of the alliance. Garcia asked if WSTA will benefit from joining this alliance. Barnes responded yes.

COA

Mr. Barnes told the board that the COA is still ongoing. Barnes mentioned that the weekday routes have been configured with a small amount of tweaking necessary. The route development group has been out on the road timing the routes, and considering the logistics of a few of them that are presenting a problem. Progress is being made. The weekday daytime routes are pretty much done. The nighttime routes may mirror the daytime routes, and the Saturday and Sunday routes are possibly/probably going to change as well due to the routing configurations. Garcia asked about the Next Bus technology. Barnes told him that the various features of the system are being tested by different staff members for different reasons. We are conducting testing from a passenger's point of view. He said Next Bus should be up and running by the first of the year.

Sunday Service/New Buses/Hanes Mall

Ridership for the first couple of Sundays was in the Board's packet. Approximately 27.5 passengers are riding per hour. The first couple of Sundays WSTA had around 17 passengers per hour. That equals to about 60% of Saturdays service. Barnes said it may take a little while to get the ridership up to the level of Saturday ridership. Utilization will reflect demand for the service.

New buses have arrived and are in operation currently. They were used for the Sunday service demonstration.

Mr. Barnes met with the new manager of Hanes Mall to discuss the possibilities of numerous stop locations at the Mall. He (Mall manager) has given the green light for Trans-AID vehicles to access all entrances of Hanes Mall that are controlled by the management of the facility. WSTA asked him to consider increasing access for fixed-route buses as well. Our passengers currently have to get off the bus at Sears at the Mall, which makes for a long walk for passengers who are trying to access other locations of the facility. Mr. Garcia wondered why the buses cannot stop at Macy's. Barnes gave specific details on where the bus travels and why.

United Way

A letter was included in the Board packet from United Way of Forsyth County, which congratulated Tikiha Alston and Tina Carson-Wilkins on the great job they did with WSTA's 2013 United Way campaign. The contributions totaled over \$25,000.00 this year. Mr. Garcia and the Board congratulated them as well.

Operations Report

Art Barnes gave a brief overview of the operating reports for October 2013

- Questions asked during his report included:
 - How do passengers file complaints with WSTA?
 - What is the actual projection for revenue from Greyhound?
 - Is there any prospect for the state funding to change?
 - Does that mean the budget amount will not be met?

Marketing Report

Tina Carson-Wilkins gave a brief overview of the Marketing Report for October 2013

1. Mrs. Carter asked if a bus shelter can be placed on Liberty Street near the Love CDC. (Route 9)
2. Ms. Streed mentioned the happy passengers using the Sunday service.
3. Ms. Carter mentioned the number of people standing in the bus shelter located on Old Greensboro Road waiting for a Sunday bus.
4. Ms. Carter said she saw a shelter with all types of advertising inside the shelter; she took the signs down.
5. Mr. Garcia asked if there will be a December meeting or a holiday get together for the Board. Mr. Barnes mentioned that he is trying to find a location that will accommodate the Board for the holiday.
6. Dr. Fleer said he saw a news story regarding the necessity for seat belts for children riding on public transportation vehicles. He wanted to know if WSTA would fall under those regulations. Mr. Barnes told him that he doubted very seriously if fixed route vehicles will be required to offer seatbelts.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28:44 pm

Next Meeting Date: January 30, 2014 @ (4:00 pm)

Transcribed by: Tina L. Carson-Wilkins
January 21, 2014