

# WINSTON-SALEM TRANSIT AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Cark Campbell Transportation Center Training Room  
100 W. Fifth Street, Winston-Salem, NC

## MINUTES

THURSDAY; June 29, 2017

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### PRESENT:

#### **Board Members**

Robert Garcia, Chairman  
Keith King, Vice Chairman  
Regina Streed  
Jack Fler

#### **WSTA Staff**

Art Barnes, General Manager  
Verylen Crawford, Operations Director  
Robin Kirby, Finance Manager  
Tikiha Alston, ADA Coordinator &  
Customer Service Manger  
Teika Holloway, Admin. Assistant

#### **Others**

Toneq´ McCullough, Transportation  
Director  
Stephen M. Hawryluk, Deputy Budget &  
Evaluation Director  
Glenda Sears, Sr. Financial Analyst  
Brenda King, Transportation Finance Manager  
Morgan, Simmons, City Planner  
Claire Stone, CATS  
T. Lee Covington,  
Kristin Perry, Chief Operating Office

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#### **Meeting Opened: 4:02 pm**

Chairman Robert Garcia welcomed everyone to the June 29, 2017 Winston- Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) Board Meeting. He extended a welcome to our guests, the public, City Officials, and the WSTA Staff.

#### **Resolution Approving the Minutes for May 4, 2017 Board Meeting**

The first action item was the approval of the May 4, 2017 meeting. Chairman Garcia gave the members of the Board a few moments to review them.

**A motion was made by Dr. Jack Fler, and seconded by Ms. Regina Streed. The minutes for WSTA's May 4, 2017 Board Meeting were approved.**

## **Resolution Authorizing the General Manager to Remove Vehicles from the Active Fleet**

Mr. Barnes stated that the resolution was routine. It is done periodically when new vehicles are delivered. Mr. Barnes announced that at the conclusion of the meeting, a demonstration of the Trapeze scheduling system will be provided. Mr. Barnes feels this is a great way for the Board members to see how the system works and to view one of the recently-delivered Trans-Aid vehicles.

Ms. Streed shared a question she was asked regarding the buses' recycling process. Mr. Barnes replied that when the buses are removed from the fleet, they go to the City. Chairman Garcia added to this response saying he believes the City auctions them off after receiving them. Mr. Barnes confirmed Chairman Garcia's statement and continued saying he usually receives an email from the City informing him when equipment will be auctioned off. The buses are included in that auction.

Mr. Barnes told Ms. Streed that he could forward the email to her when he receives it if she is interested in knowing when the auction would be.

**Dr. Fleer's motion to approve this resolution was followed by second motion by Vice-Chairman Keith King. The Resolution authorizing the General Manager to remove vehicles from the active fleet was approved.**

### **Public Comment:**

None

### **Information Items:**

**Senior Services (Age Friendly Forsyth)**-Mr. Barnes introduced Mr. T. Lee Covington, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Ms. Kristen Perry, Chief Operating Officer (COO) from Senior Services to the Board. He stated that they are engaged in a project called Age Friendly Forsyth. Mr. Barnes had the opportunity to attend one of their meetings some months ago. In addition, he met with them both last week and found they have done a lot of research with respect to the aging community in Winston-Salem. As a result of their continuing research they have come to a number of conclusions. Although the process is incomplete they have gathered a lot of interesting information regarding Winston-Salem's senior population. One of the top tier concerns is the need for quality transportation. Currently, it is not known how WSTA and Senior Services will interact, but Mr. Barnes said he wanted Senior Services to come and speak with the Board not only for the general purpose of making the members aware of the program; but also, because the City Council approved a number of things for Trans-Aid with the caveat that the revenue generated from Trans-Aid must go back to the clients

Mr. Covington thanked Mr. Barnes and distributed a four-page executive summary to the members of the Board that presented a culmination of approximately nine months of data. He said, "Age Friendly Forsyth started about 18 months ago as an idea and over the last 9 months or so they have had three hundred or more people engaged in various committee works. One of

the key pieces to this formation was a randomized telephone survey (for scientific validity). The results are weighted to community demographics so they can be applied across the entire community. Every zip code in Winston-Salem was covered with exception of the two that covers Winston-Salem State and Wake Forest Universities. Obviously, there is not anyone living in either of these zip codes that are age 60 or older (this is why they were not included). Some of the key findings are summarized in the handout.” Mr. Covington stated, as mentioned by Mr. Barnes, “it is no surprise that transportation needs show up pretty much throughout the entire summary. The full report with all the data is about 37 pages long. It is available on the Senior Services website noted on the front of the summary.” Mr. Covington believes the next step is to build a collaborative of multiple organizations that can begin working.

Ms. Perry stated that, “Senior Services is very excited about entering into phase 2 of the collaborative work. Senior Services met with Mr. Barnes last week regarding how they can get partners and organizations that have an interest in moving the report forward, touch seniors on a day-to-day basis, tackle issues that transcend the senior population in the entire community around the table. Obviously, WSTA is one of those organizations that really tackle transportation needs and have access to resources. Therefore, Senior Services wanted to make sure that Mr. Barnes and WSTA were at the table. Ms. Perry stated that “the model for Age-Friendly-Forsyth is a collective impact type model.” She said she is not sure if the members of the Board were familiar with the collective impact of movement across the country. She went on to explain that it is just a framework for collaborative community work and involves a shared common agenda or goal; shared measures, mutually reinforcing activities in an organization, and a way to measure and move those things forward at the community level. In addition, it gets people involved. Ms. Perry said that these are the things Senior Services is seeking to create around aging in Forsyth County. She said they have a list of approximately thirty-five partners that they will be speaking with in the next several weeks. She said, they are trying to form a leadership table of organizations that touch seniors in our community and they are also looking at various funding structures and government structures to move the initiative forward and ensure that everyone has a voice at the table. “Every voice will be accountable to their respective boards, to their constituent, and to the community.”

In closing, Ms. Perry said, WSTA will be hearing more about this project as the leaders are gathered around the table. She said Senior Services is hoping that Mr. Barnes will be around that table. She said they are looking forward to taking the next step towards making Forsyth County a place where every person and every senior can live their best life.

Mr. Covington stated that once everything has been absorbed, Senior Services’ Age Friendly Forsyth will be happy to meet with anyone individually or as a group to dig a little deeper and to help keep everyone engaged.

Chairman Garcia asked to be kept abreast of the progress and stated he works with Senior Services in another capacity and has found them to be a joy to work with. He also asked to be

informed of their next Age Friendly Forsyth meeting. Mr. Covington did inform Mr. Garcia that he is meeting with Linda from the other agency Chairman Garcia is associated with next week.

**Financial Update** (PowerPoint presentation)-Mr. Barnes introduced Steve Hawryluk and shared that Mr. Hawryluk was recently promoted to Deputy Budget Director.

Mr. Hawryluk began by thanking Mr. Barnes for the introduction and gave a greeting to all in attendance. He then said that he was here to go over the recently approved Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-2018 budget for Winston-Salem Transit Authority. WSTA's total operating budget is approximately \$18.3 million for the upcoming FY. This includes an adopted tax rate of 4.98% which is an increase from 3.62% the previous year. This was done to cover two things: (1) solvency to WSTA's funds, and (2) fund enhancements to the Fixed Route system.

The City Council Finance Committee approved changes to the budget; one of which was the rescinding of Medicaid exemption and increasing Trans-Aid fare to \$1 per ride (effective 10/1/2017). The revenues (an estimate of \$90,000) from the fare will be used to provide bus passes for low income Trans-Aid riders via agencies in the community. The specifics for how this will be done are still being worked out. The \$90,000 estimate comes from Trans-Aid consultants months ago. Mr. Hawryluk touched on the decrease in Medicaid reimbursements, among other things pertaining to Trans-Aid's revenues and expenditures.

Mr. Hawryluk reported Fixed Route's fare box revenue is down by approximately \$254,200 which is 14.5%. The reduction is believed to be due to lower gas prices and a decrease in ridership. Fixed Route Expenditures are up by 9.5% in personnel expenses and 10.0% in operating expenses. This increase includes \$1,012,540 for enhancements to the Fixed Route system. The presentation and handout included a list of specific, approved enhancements. Mr. Hawryluk noted that the proposed budget recommended eliminating Route 100; however the Finance Committee and the City Council will evaluate it over a 6-month period. He then deferred to Mr. Barnes for elaboration.

With respect to Route 100; Mr. Barnes stated, that the Staff had recommended the elimination; however, some ideas have been proposed and the route will stay in effect for now. The route runs from Union Station to Forsyth Tech by way of Winston Salem State University (WSSU) and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA). This route has time to spare and one idea is to keep the same route; but extend it to Hanes Mall which may increase the route's marketability. Mr. Barnes said that he will be meeting with the mall manager with regards to the boarding area there. He plans to market the route at the Mall and the other institutions along the route with the hope of increasing the ridership.

Mr. Hawryluk said adding night routes to Saturday and Sunday service is an addition to the new route system.

As a side note, Mr. Barnes added that modifications, tweaking and other things that logistically need to be done to improve the efficiency of the system are incomplete. This is very much an ongoing process.

The City has a 6-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY 2018-2023. WSTA receives funding from two main capital grants through FTA. The first one is the Section 5307 Capital Grant that is 80% federal with a 20% local match. The second one is the Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Program that is 85% federal with a 15% local match. Mr. Hawryluk included a detailed breakdown and chart for the adopted and planned appropriations for the 6-year span of the CIP in his presentation and handout.

The last slide of the presentation was of WSTA's fund reserves. Mr. Hawryluk explained that this is viewed prior to the budget coming through. During the FY 2016-2017 WSTA was going below the red line. For this reason, the solvency aspect was addressed during this budget.

The floor was opened for questions, and Chairman Garcia inquired about the appropriation of funds for vehicle replacement (exhibited in the PowerPoint presentation). Mr. Hawryluk explained that the FY 2018-2023 CIP is just a plan and going into WSTA's next year budget planning, this will be used as a starting point. The first questions he will ask are: Is the need still there? Is federal funding available? What will the local match be? Where does WSTA stand financially; and has the need shifted to Fixed Route bus replacement? Right now, the information being shared is a plan for those years. Chairman Garcia then asked if the expected life span of the hybrid vehicles is longer than those that are not hybrid. Mr. Barnes responded by saying that it wasn't; and he went on to say that they all have a twelve-year life span; however they will last longer if they are maintained properly. Mr. Barnes shared that the vehicles have a twelve-year life span because this is when the vehicles will be eligible for replacement funding from the Federal Government. If it has only been 11 years and vehicle replacement is desired, the Federal Government will not provide funding for replacement due to ineligibility. Mr. Barnes went on to say normally, buses are not purchased out of Section 5307 funds because it would eat it all up due to the vehicles cost of about \$670,000. Therefore, WSTA relies on flex-funding to pay for them.

Chairman Garcia asked will the changes that are going on with Medicaid transportation affect funding. Mr. Hawryluk stated there weren't many assumptions made that were based on the future of Medicaid transportation. It is known that \$110,000 is WSTA's Medicaid reimbursement; so, in worst case scenario, if it went away completely, it wouldn't be as bad as losing (for example) Section 5307 operating assistance. Since Medicaid revenue has trended downward, it is less of a major revenue source compared to what it used to be. Mr. Barnes said that the Medicaid contract begins in July; but he hasn't heard from them to date. The cost per Medicaid trip has remained the same for the last 3 years; Mr. Barnes said he will probably ask for a small increase this year. Medicaid provides the full expense of the trip plus a tiny bit more.

Dr. Fleer asked what the projected amount of revenue is to be generated by the \$1 per ride fee. Mr. Hawryluk said that the current estimate is \$90,000. Dr. Fleer then asked how much of that money will be set aside for passes. Mr. Barnes responded that all of it will go towards passes. He explained that all the details have not been sorted out at this time; but he is assuming the revenue will be collected prior to distribution of passes.

**Trans-Aid Update**-Mr. Barnes stated mostly everyone knows that City Council approved an increase in fare from .50¢ to \$1.00 along with the elimination of the Medicaid exemption and discounted passes.

**Labor Negotiations**-Mr. Barnes announced that Labor Negotiations will begin the middle of July. He is hopeful that it will be successful.

**Black Theatre Festival**-WSTA has provided transportation for this event for the last 4 festivals that were held (if memory serves correct) and will do so for the 2017 festival. In preparation, a mini transportation system is created. Routes will run from the downtown hotels to the theaters and from hotels to downtown where people will transfer to buses that go to the theaters. At night the process is reversed to get everyone back to where they need to be. There is a lot of work involved that includes 13 dedicated buses to provide this service. Mr. Barnes stated it becomes a real challenge when 13 buses are pulled from the fleet and regular service still has to be provided. During this time, everyone will have their nose to the grindstone making sure things go as smooth as possible. Schedules called run cuts are created for this particular event due to it being so large.

Dr. Fleer asked if the buses are filled to capacity when in service. Mr. Barnes stated they are pretty much filled to capacity; however, it fluctuates and dwindles as time passes due to the trips being repeated. There are not as many trips returning from the theaters because everyone returns at once.

Chairman Garcia asked if WSTA is increasing the venues being served. Mr. Barnes said yes; due to the festival adding more venues, there was an increase. Mr. Crawford confirmed the assessment and said 12 venues in addition to approximately 23 hotels will be serviced.

Dr. Fleer asked if something similar was or could be done for River Run. Mr. Barnes responded by saying yes, but, he has never been approached to do so. He also stated he is unclear regarding how many people attend the River Run. He went on to say, in the past this was a paid service until the FTA prohibited public transportation systems from running charters. When this came into effect, WSTA could no longer be paid for providing this form of transportation. However, Mr. Barnes shared he had heard several years ago the festival generates approximately \$13 million and WSTA's expenditures are about \$20,000. He would have to run the number to be exact.

**Operations Report**-Mr. Barnes reiterated what Mr. Hawryluk stated by saying **Fixed Route** is trending downward by about 13% year-to-date. WSTA is expecting to turn this around with the added night service, and continued improvements to the system by tweaking some of the routes; and making passenger shelter enhancements. Some additional technology is being added; however, Nextbus is not active right now. The process of reconfiguring it is long due to the modifications being done to the bus stops. WSTA is now sure the bus stop signs have the correct information on them so that the passengers can dial into that system and get the next bus information accurately. WSTA is also working on Trapeze (a trip planner) to allow passengers to input their origin and destination into their device and the program then tells them the needed information regarding trip instructions. WSTA is very close to implementing this program.

**Fixed Route** vehicle accidents are up by one (17) compared to last year (16), year-to-date. Complaints are down from 434 last year to 415 this year; and chargeable complaints are down from 35 to 26.

**Trans-Aid's** ridership last year was 187,000, right now it is 183,000 year-to-date. Preventable vehicle accidents are up one (7) compared to last year (6), year-to-date. There has only been one preventable employee accident this year. Missed trips are down from 1,200 to 1,100 this year. 'No shows' are up from 9,448 to 10,576.

Chairman Garcia asked for someone to tell the Board about 'no shows'. Mr. Barnes defined what a "no show" is and Chairman Garcia asked how much money does a "no show" cost WSTA. Mr. Barnes stated that each 'no show' costs about \$18 per trip. He went on to explain the "no strand" policy requires WSTA to provide transportation to persons transported to a destination; even if the person doesn't have the fare to return. Chairman Garcia then asked if there were any ideas on how to bring that amount down or is WSTA at the mercy of passengers saying never mind when the driver gets there to pick them up. Mr. Barnes said that WSTA is still waiting on the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to give their final determination with respect to their audit that was conducted almost 2 years ago. Mr. Barnes went on to explain WSTA has been asking the auditors for a conference call to finalize everything. WSTA cannot enforce disciplinary policies until the audit has been finalized. The FTA must be on board with the consequences of the no show policy.

Chairman Garcia noted that the number of "no shows" in less than a year is alarming and asked if this is the norm for other transit systems. No one from WSTA had this information. Chairman Garcia said he was only asking because he is curious to know what other transit systems do in these cases. He said if "no shows" continue to increase at this rate they will be up to 20,000. When WSTA is looked upon for rate increases and everything else; and taking that into account, one wonders what can be done. Mr. Barnes stated without an enforcement mechanism WSTA is pretty much at the mercy of the passengers in regards to "no shows." He went on to say that an enforcement mechanism would be a "suspension of service" if the issue is a continuing one.

There is a cost associated with “no shows” and there has to be something in place to address it. With that being said, WSTA would truly like to move on; if only the FTA would proceed with finalizing everything. WSTA is persistent in calling the FTA and asking “Is something that needs to be fixed before the report can be finalized?”

Ms. Streed asked if there was a difference in clients that change their minds about a scheduled trip, and those clients that have an appointment and still have not seen their doctor by the time their ride is scheduled to arrive; or a procedure that took longer than planned. She wanted to know if the consequence is the same for someone that changes their mind about going for a scheduled trip and someone not being available or ready for a schedule trip due to something out of their control. Mr. Barnes stated there is a difference and it is a part of the policy to not penalize someone for not taking a trip for reasons outside of their control. Ms. Alston explained that for doctor appoints there is a program called “Will Call”; where if the client does not know how long their appointment will take, they have the option of calling when they are done. There are some instances where the client says they will be done in an hour and that doesn’t happen and it ends up being a “no show.” Mr. Barnes explained that under FTA definitions, “will-calls are a premium service and additional fares can be charged for it; however WSTA has never done that.

Mr. Barnes said the only significant thing to happen with Maintenance is that mechanic hours have increased significantly along with the maintenance hours. On a positive note, the road calls (both major and minor) are down year-to-date. Chairman Garcia commented that the maintenance hours are usually down and asked if it was due to the new buses being put out on the road. Mr. Barnes confirmed this to be true and stated he would like to remind everyone of the new vehicle that will be available for a tour and the demonstration of the new scheduling system software after the meeting.

**Financial Report**-Mr. Barnes stated the bottom line is WSTA’s revenue standing is pretty good. He went on to say both Transit Operating and Trans-Aid revenues were under budget. After adjustments, the bottom line for Transit Operating revenue is it was short \$305,000 and Trans-Aid revenue was short \$113,000. However, on the expense side WSTA did very well. After adjustments WSTA is was \$381,000 to the good for both Fixed Route and Trans-Aid. Mr. Barnes announced he could provide specifics on the adjustments he made if anyone cares to have them.

**Marketing Report**- In Mrs. Tina Carson-Wilkins’s absence, Mr. Barnes asked everyone to look over the Marketing Report for May and June 2017 at their leisure. He also said he would try to answer any questions if anyone had any. Ms. Alston volunteered to assist Mr. Barnes in answering questions if anyone had any. Below is a synopsis of the Marketing Report:

During this two-month period, several news releases and stories appeared in the *Winston-Salem Journal* and the *Winston-Salem Chronicle*. A completed list of the article titles was included in the report as a part of the meeting packet.

WSTA participated in the following community events: WSTA TRAC meeting, Carter High School Transition Fair, Mayors Council Barrier Awareness Day, Triad First in Families' 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Bowling Tournament, and the Monarch Community Outreach Program.

Employee Appreciation day for WSTA employees was held June 27, 2017.

WSTA's annual Accessible Festival will be held on July 14, 2017. This event is being advertised via social media, the *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, and radio. This year's theme is 80's Block Party. The Festival will include a DJ, resource exhibits, arts and crafts, arcade games and food. Chairman Garcia stated Hospice will donate bottled water for the festival.

**The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.**

Transcribed by: Teika Holloway

July 3, 2017