

Notes
INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY
PLANNING SESSION
October 11, 2013

Members Present: Chair and Citizen Representative Martin Thies; City of Lacey Mayor Virgil Clarkson; City of Olympia Councilmember Nathaniel Jones; Vice Chair and City of Tumwater Councilmember, Ed Hildreth; Citizen Representative Karen Messmer; Citizen Representative Ryan Warner; and Rusty Caldwell, Labor Representative.

Staff Present: Ann Freeman-Manzanares; Dennis Bloom; Ben Foreman; Meg Kester; Karl Shenkel; and Pat Messmer.

Also present were facilitators Faith Trimble and Paul Norton of The Athena Group.

OVERVIEW

Trimble provided an overview of the agenda and objectives for the day, explaining the tools and exercises she would use and incorporate.

Everyone provided self-introductions.

MISSION/VISION

Each person was asked to write down why they thought they were here today. Several people shared and some common themes included creating a better world, social justice, contributing to the community, representing their constituents' needs, stewardship of public assets and environmental sustainability, advance the role of transit, hear what our policy makers have to say, and do more of what we do.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR DISCUSSION

Freeman-Manzanares provided a financial overview of the long term goals. It included our current service plan, our sales tax, vanpool program, Travel Training position, new federal grant guidelines, and Pattison rehabilitation funding. Foreman presented a spreadsheet which showed examples of how the dollar numbers could fluctuate using different scenarios.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

Trimble started the session by focusing on the agency's Mission and Vision statements, and reviewing the 2012 retreat results, which were:

- To be a regional player and connector between the north and the south
- Focus more within our service territory versus extending out to others
- Be more assertive and participatory about land use decisions
- Preferred productivity over comfort in regards to service levels

There's been a forward movement and narrowing about sustainability conversation and we need to think about how we fit into that focus on corridors and intensity of land use. We're shifting the mission to move towards promoting more transportation options (walking, biking, carpooling, etc.) rather than just fixed-route service.

Trimble asked if the mission or vision has changed. Messmer said she doesn't think they have changed; however, the community has been having a big conversation about sustainability. She said Intercity Transit needs to think about how to respond to this conversation. Increase focus on corridors and urban centers and intensity of land uses.

Trimble led the group into an exercise where everyone was separated into groups of four to focus discussion on the four main policy questions:

- Service Levels
- Regional Role
- Capital Purchases
- Financial Constraints/Sales Tax Initiative

Before groups began deliberating, Trimble asked the Authority to think about, "How do these policy questions take you where you want to go?"

- Is it moving us closer to our vision?
- Is it moving us away from our vision?
- What are the tradeoffs?

The group was divided between four tables, with two Authority members and one staff member at each table. Each table was assigned a policy question. The purpose was to talk about and share opinions about that policy question and staff recommendations. The Authority was asked, "Does the staff recommendation get us closer to our vision or not, and what are the trade-offs?" Staff's role was to facilitate and answer questions.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS:

Trimble brought the group back together to review the various discussions and outcomes of the four policy questions. She asked each staff member to share the outcome of the question assigned to their table.

Below are the four policy questions with staff recommendations. Following the questions are the summaries of the discussions.

1) Should Intercity Transit Maintain status quo service levels in 2014 or consider new or expanded local transit services needed to serve the growing population?

Staff's recommendation is a status quo approach.

2) What is Intercity Transit's role in providing regional mobility? Staff's recommendation is to support the continued growth of the vanpool program. Continue to implement and evaluate additional service provided through the Regional Mobility Grant program. Continue to engage with TRPC and WSDOT to consider alternatives for serving JBLM and I-5 corridor. Continue to pursue joint use agreements as necessary to secure park-and-ride lots rather than construct our own.

3) Are there capital purchases or other projects that are needed to allow future growth? What is the appropriate timeline for these projects? Staff's recommendation is to determine how the expansion renovation of the Pattison Street facility will be funded and look for opportunities to complete the final design and construction.

4) Should Intercity Transit's planning for the next six years be financially constrained? Staff's recommendation is to go for the sales tax increase in either 2014 or 2015.

Key Themes:

1. Tell our story.
2. Partnerships are key.
3. Define Intercity Transit's role as player vs. leader.
4. Go for 0.1% sales tax request (2014 or 2015).
5. Find new/diverse funding sources.
6. Watch for Pattison facility expansion opportunities.

Aha / Insights:

1. Leverage regional transportation issue with regional players (Puget Sound Transit systems and stakeholders).
2. Federal lobbyist assists with the funding strategy.
3. Federal stakeholders brought into regional/local funding issue.
4. Service changes need to be strategic.
5. Evaluate efficiencies and performance of current service first.
6. Consider phased approach to Pattison project.
7. "Catchment" area w/land use strategies to encourage walking to bus stops.

Disagreement / Further Discussion:

1. Does regional service compromise local service provision?
2. Does providing regional transportation further the Intercity Transit mission?
3. Is 2014 too soon for a tax increase request (timing, other ballot issues, community expectation, stakeholder messaging)?
4. How can/should we expand service without expanded operations/maintenance facility?

Other Key Points:

- Vision is sound.
- Continue as regional player (leading/active stakeholder).
- Go for 1/10th of one percent tax increase.
- Go ahead with Pattison expansion and look at options.
- Refine message (what's our story?). Engage public.
- Run as productive and efficient as possible.
- Pursue alternatives to fixed route.
- Partnerships: What's their role? What will they do to help?
- How does our community see its responsibility to influence the future?
- Intercity Transit's role as educating people on most productive, sustainable choice.
- Moving towards providing transportation options.
- Community conversation (about sustainability) - viewed as a "fixed route" provider – need for flexibility.
- Land use process
 - Need to be more participatory
 - Need to be more assertive

Warner said we need to get the public to understand why we service plan the way we do. Define our message as a tool to educate the public.

Messmer said when we talk regionally and locally, our story should include how the community can help and what their responsibility is. Companies should be thinking how they get their employees to their businesses. What is Intercity Transit's role; community role; individual's role?

Messmer said what about extending our service to the south county. We need to come in with recommendations. We stretched current resources including Pattison, but we need to constantly review what we have, and look at additional corridors because sales tax isn't enough.

Jones said attention is needed to the I-5 corridor. Continue to position ourselves to be part of that solution and pick up additional roles. How do we phase Pattison expansion to get more service? Aggressively pursue other transportation choices. We should be looking at whole range of non-fixed route activities and pursue and not get stuck on the Pattison expansion.

The Authority agreed to proceed with the ballot measure to go for the remaining 1/10th of one percent sales tax. However, there needs to be a discussion about when and define our story. Be sure we use the money efficiently.

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There is need for more discussion regarding capitol purchases.

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Pat Messmer

Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary