

Notes
INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY
PLANNING SESSION
June 20, 2014

Members Present: Chair and Citizen Representative Karen Messmer; Vice Chair and City of Olympia Councilmember Nathaniel Jones; Commissioner Karen Valenzuela; City of Tumwater Councilmember, Debbie Sullivan; City of Lacey Councilmember Jeff Gadman; Citizen Representative Don Melnick; and Ed Bricker, Labor Representative.

Staff Present: Ann Freeman-Manzanares; Dennis Bloom; Ben Foreman; Meg Kester; Jim Merrill; and Pat Messmer, Recording Secretary.

Also present, Facilitator Faith Trimble from The Athena Group.

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Karen Messmer introduced and welcomed Don Melnick as the new Citizen Representative to the Authority, and thanked the members for attending today's planning session.

OVERVIEW

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

Everyone provided self-introductions.

MORNING GROUP EXERCISE

The morning exercise consisted of a group interview and discussion. The goal was to "bring things home," and by the end of the day, members would have clarity about how each feels about current situations and how to move forward together. Members would understand their similarities and differences and what needs to happen now and what can be placed on hold. Those members unable to attend today will receive a debriefing.

Trimble passed out the "Principles for being Together" and asked participants to pick one principle that stands out for them. Members discussed their selections.

Trimble reviewed last year's planning session results then discussion went into new group work

- Restarted conversation regarding the Pattison expansion and revenue.
- Federal funding is a deciding factor.

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

June 20, 2014

Page 2 of 7

- Look for funding opportunities. Do we move forward with design and have faith there will be funding later on?
- With limited grant funds how do we become more competitive? We need to consider completing design to take advantage of competitive grants.
- Do we pull out pieces of expansion like the underground storage tanks?
- Have discussion with City of Olympia to partner in filling our needs while city is working on other projects / construction.
- Agency can be more involved in city discussion on Martin Way improvement. Need to flush out zoning issues, etc. as opposed to the decision being made around us. We can then move forward with next steps.

Going out for the sales tax:

- Most conclusive way to address funding short fall rather than “waiting” for Federal or State legislature to dedicate funding to transportation.
- Start a conversation with stakeholders about where we are and what their input is before deciding whether or not we should go for sales tax increase.
- There needs to be public communication.
- Come up with out-of-box ideas as we may be limiting ourselves too much.

AFTERNOON EXERCISE

Trimble posted specific questions and the members were asked to pick one topic they were most interested in discussing.

1. How do we shape a compelling story and value proposition for enhanced revenues? What can we do now? (*Valenzuela; Messmer; Sullivan; Gadman; Melnick; Bricker*)

- Bus riders appreciate Intercity Transit but perhaps not everyone else in business community appreciates what we do even non-riders.
- Region is anticipated to grow and it won't happen well without an effective public transportation system.
- How is this paid for?
- Transportation costs will continue to rise?
- People are living closer together.
- Where people live determines needs for transportation.
- We need affordable housing.
- Households spend a large portion of their money and budget on transportation.
- The public is not aware of our services. Get the word out.
- Public doesn't distinguish difference between vanpool, community van and village vans.
- Public doesn't understand cost differential of using DAL versus fixed-route and doesn't understand purpose of DAL.

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

June 20, 2014

Page 3 of 7

- IT has more services than just fixed route bus.
- Our charge is to be part of the transportation network.
- Population growth.
- Changing demographics
 - Aging population
 - Foster choice and opportunity
- Include partnerships with colleges, state, TPB and JBLM. The work we do needs to be supported by enhanced revenue.
- How does story get told in such a way that public understands.
- There should be discussion about the number of vehicles transit takes off I-5, and the number of people we get to work, and the kids we transport. Talk to key stakeholders.
- We want the public to know we have a problem with funding, and how service is paid for -- where the money comes from and how we pay for it now.
- What will non bus riders ask?
 - Why are there empty buses?
- Safety - many are afraid to ride bus because of others on the bus.
- Fear of the congregation of street people at the OTC.
- What is the message we as an Authority take out into the community?
- Don't just place responsibility on staff to get the word out.
- Identify champions -- other people in the community with some type of authority and recruit them.
- What will the senior community ask?

How do we know when it's time to act?

How do we know we have had enough conversation?

What are the triggers that make us have to make choices? Need to refine the story and get out in the community and purpose is education, sharing what we do and that we're considering a service increase.

What are known dates?

- Purchase new coaches in 2018.
- Need to know revenue by 2016 so can plan order.
- What is happening with federal legislation? Decision depends on this. MAP 21 eliminating more than half of the funding and eliminating discretionary funds is devastating to our ability to provide service.
- If going for sales tax in 2015, we need to decide by November/December 2014.
- File May 2015 for ballot August 2015.

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

June 20, 2014

Page 4 of 7

Share ballot measure with a jurisdiction. Have two questions but share the distribution of information and education. Are any of the jurisdictions or anyone willing to champion all of this?

2. How can we further action on “crazy” ideas like Nathaniel’s (going to the ballot together with other jurisdictions)? *(Valenzuela; Bricker; Jones)*

Work together as a region to solve our transportation issues.

Talk to the voters jointly.

Look beyond 1/10th of 1%.

1/10th of 1% doesn’t solve it – what are the other methods?

3. How do we know when to act on service reductions or revenue enhancements?

We need to focus on the value proposition. We would like the story to be that we can add the service that people want. Our story now is we have to replace eliminated grant dollars so we can keep what we have. So many variables and unknowns.

- It would be great if MAP 21 80/20 match for vehicles and construction wasn’t eliminated.
- Do we want the extra 1/10th of 1% sales tax? (Value \$3.5 million). It’s not the end all, be all.
- Timing with King County and Pierce County vote and other factors.
- Feels uncomfortable to ask the taxpayers for funding.
- What are the Feds going to do?
- Other ballot issues
 - Lacey going to vote 2/10%
 - Tumwater 2015 ?
 - School districts?

4. How can we change the assumption that transit will come? What can we do now?

(Melnick; Valenzuela; Messmer; Gadman; Jones) – Land Use & Zoning Discussion

- Pre-submission is past the point of no return.
- When an investor is looking at property is when transit should get involved.
- Implementation and development regulations and requirements.
- Several layers. Information needs to be placed in front of someone first.
- Present to others what current transit routes are and make people aware of our routes to help with zoning. Or we’ll get the ask to bring transit where building just occurred.
- What can transit do to be more informative to the planning process?
 - GM and Planning staff meet with community development directors.

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

June 20, 2014

Page 5 of 7

- Push the transit message out to planning commissions and counsels. Arrange meetings. Or pull Intercity Transit into these types of discussions.
- Site specific – pre-discussions – planning counsels.
- Geo data layer – how can we add?
- Are you asking to down zone?
- Disclose to property owners?
- Developers’ share cost of expanding transit?
- Builders don’t care about transit. Buyers and those visiting establishments care and complain after the fact.
- Need to disclose that transit is not available.
- Identify steps and activities to move forward to get better position.
- Intercity Transit should be at the table when discussion of development occurs with the jurisdictions.
- Interested in land use and revenue discussion in the afternoon.

The process worked:

- Capitol Blvd.
- Brewery District
- Woodland District

Where it’s not working:

- Planning commission level
- First we build then expect transit
- Zoning decisions engage transit
- Efficiently map “urban corridors.”
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5. How do we support our regional service needs fairly w/o compromising our local service? (*no one signed up*). *Regional Service Discussion.*

- What is the state role? What is the federal role?
- There was an opinion that Thurston County is a bedroom community. Employment trips working outside to the north of the county. And projections show it may continue to grow (30,000 leave here to work north).
- Not all members agree. Regional, Express, Local, Circulator, Rural.
- Recognize other systems cut service. Pierce eliminated Express trips to Thurston. Intercity solely paying the bill. Intercity Transit stepped up to fill in that service.
- Does transit have a role in sustainability? If you build it do you expect transit to provide service?
- Majority of people who work for the state travel from the north.
- Do we continue discussion of service out to rural areas or do we take it off the table?
- Identify steps and activities to move forward to get better position.

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

June 20, 2014

Page 6 of 7

- Intercity Transit should be at the table when discussion of development occurs with the jurisdictions.
- Interested in land use and revenue discussion in the afternoon.
- Focus on productivity now and complete land use issues.
- Two issues to bring home: changing assumption transit will come to you. Regional service vs. service to rural areas. Take off the table of serving rural areas. Need to serve productively in urban corridor. Density matters in terms of productivity.

Local and Express Service – Stay the Course:

Sustainable Thurston – Transit plays a key role.

How do we maintain service and serve newer activity centers?

6. How can we be more proactive in the Martin Way discussion with City of Olympia and PSE? (Sullivan and Jones) – Pattison Discussion

- How valuable is the strip of land?
- Martin Way conversation needs to evolve further.
- Are funding opportunities on the horizon?
- City and frontage improvements? Partnership? PSE Utility project leverage.
- What are the tradeoffs?
- Do we move forward with design or is that too risky?
- How do we become more competitive? We have to take a chance by spending money to complete the design. But what if construction dollars aren't available?

ACTION ITEM:

Get involved and ask imagine – make it be what it can be for all of us?

DEBRIEF / WRAP UP DISCUSSION

- Refine the message
- Senior community
- Business community
- Establish the value proposition
- Interviews: What do you know – What do you need to know?
- One-on-one conversations

Staff attending community events

More Authority involvement in sending the message

Identify Community Champions

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

June 20, 2014

Page 7 of 7

ACTION ITEMS:

- August 2014 – MAP21 Ends. Congress decides next step.
- November/December - Ask the question if should go forward in 2015 or not.
- Ask – sell the value proposition – refine message.

CONCLUSION:

Authority feels comfortable with the balance of local, express and circulator services. The issue of productivity versus coverage will always be at issue but we feel comfortable for now. There is most definitely unmet need in our community. We need to move forward with the Pattison Street rehabilitation and expansion to serve our current service and provide the level of service local jurisdictions indicate in their planning documents. We do not feel like we have a good handle on the Hybrid vs. Conventional coach decision. Land use planning needs to consider transit before siting, not afterwards. It causes lots of problems but not clear on how to tie transit service into the process in a practical way.

On Deck:

- Hybrid vs. Conventional Aug – Sep
- Transit focused zoning
- UST's

In Motion:

- Revenue
 - Waiting for Congress
- Push land use conversation
- Pattison – talk with City and PSE

Done:

- Local service area – stay the course
- Service within PTBA
- Productivity versus coverage
- Align with Sustainable Thurston
- Regional service – stay the course

Meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Prepared by Pat Messmer, Recording Secretary/
Executive Assistant, Intercity Transit