

Notes
INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY
PLANNING SESSION
August 21, 2015

Members Present: Chair and City of Olympia Councilmember Nathaniel Jones; Vice Chair and Citizen Representative Ryan Warner; Thurston County Commissioner Bud Blake; City of Tumwater Councilmember, Debbie Sullivan; City of Lacey Councilmember Jeff Gadman; City of Yelm Councilmember, Joe Baker; Citizen Representative Karen Messmer; Citizen Representative Don Melnick; and Ed Bricker, Labor Representative.

Staff Present: Ann Freeman-Manzanares; Dennis Bloom; Donna Feliciano; Ben Foreman; Kris Fransen; Jim Merrill; Heather Stafford-Smith; and Pat Messmer, Recording Secretary.

Others Present: Facilitator Paula Dillard from Ascent Partners.

WELCOME/OPENING COMMENTS

Chair Jones welcomed everyone to the 2015 Planning Session.

MEETING - PURPOSE & GOALS

Facilitator Paula Dillard provided an overview of the agenda and objectives for the day, explaining the process, tools and exercises she would use.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dillard explained the role as Facilitator and the participants' role. Dillard reviewed the meeting guidelines and then asked participants to share their guidelines for engaging in respectful communication. Participants said they would like the group to:

- Respect differences of opinion
- Disagree without dissention
- Listen respectfully and with patience
- Understand and appreciate everyone's communication style

WHAT IS STAFF'S ROLL TODAY?

Dillard explained staff's roll in today's exercises is to provide support to the Board, and engage in any way to share knowledge and provide clarity to the Board during discussions.

WHO'S IN THE ROOM?

This was an "ice breaker" exercise. Participants formed a line in the order of the date they joined the Authority or were hired by Intercity Transit. Participants provided self-introductions.

FIVE DISCIPLINES OF LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

Dillard quoted from Peter Senge, "An organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future." The five disciplines are:

1. Personal Mastery: Clarifying what is most important to us, and mastering the ability to achieve it.
2. Shared Visioning: Building a sense of commitment in a group, based on what people want to create.
3. Mental Modeling: Reflecting on our internal pictures of the world to see how they shape our actions.
4. Team Learning: The capacity for collective intelligence.
5. Systems Thinking: Putting pieces together and seeing the whole.

RECONNECTING WITH MISSION, VISION, GOALS & STRATEGIES

Mission, Vision, Values (MVV) – MVV statements are not just pieces of paper hung up on the wall. They are the guiding documents. They speak to your organizational goals, strategies and values. Seeking alignment with your MVV is important. *"Alignment creates focused energy in an organization leading to better outcomes at the strategic (task) and relationship (people) levels."*

CREATING A SHARED CONTEXT

Based on past Authority meeting discussion leading up to the annual planning session, Freeman-Manzanares addressed the three "burning questions" which will be repeated throughout the day. The three questions to be focused on are:

1. "How do we best deliver on increasing demand for services to our community?"
2. "How do we best communicate/engage our community?"
3. "How do we best fund/finance our short and long-term goals?"

Freeman-Manzanares reminded the group of the upcoming processes (customer satisfaction and market segmentation surveys, community conversation, short and long range plan development) and how those fit into today's agenda. We'll be talking to the stakeholders about what they need from us to help them be successful.

The short term question in which Freeman-Manzanares hopes to get Authority direction is whether to proceed with an additional sales tax option.

Freeman-Manzanares pointed out that positioned around the room were displays showing the financial forecasts discussed at previous Authority meetings, along with various maps of the PTBA showing a variety of demographics with an overlay of our fixed route services. This helps us identify how we touch areas of the community with a particular demographic such as residential and employment density, age and income levels.

ENVISIONING OUR CHANGING FUTURE - GROUP EXERCISE

Authority members and staff were assigned to join one of four groups to begin an exercise called "Shared Visioning of the Future." Each group's goal was to write two news "headlines" pertaining to Intercity Transit. One headline they **wanted** to see in the local news; and one headline they **did not want** to see in the local news.

Group 1 (Jim Merrill, Dennis Bloom, Jeff Gadman, and Karen Messmer)

Want to see: Intercity Transit more than just a bus service - Diverse services available to community. It shows we also offer vanpools, community vans, village vans, bike racks on buses, etc. We provide opportunity for people to get around how they choose.

Do not want to see: Intercity Transit ignores safety concerns raised by riders.

Group 2 (Kris Fransen, Ryan Warner, Joe Baker and Debbie Sullivan)

Want to see: Intercity Transit supports emergency response to rescue effort. It reflects how we are there for the community when needed. That goes along with full-spectrum transit service.

Do not want to see: Intercity Transit drivers walk! Bus service stops! This headline says we don't care about our employees. On a positive note, it could show that our employees are our top-level most important resource and if we don't take care of them, this sort of situation could become reality.

Group 3 (Don Melnick, Ed Bricker, Heather Stafford-Smith and Ann Freeman-Manzanares)

Want to see: Intercity Transit remains best transit system in the nation. Excellent examples:

- Good stewards
- Responsive to community needs
- Employer of choice
- Amazing community asset
- Efficient delivery of service

Do not want to see: Intercity Transit employees' behaving badly. Lack of transparency dealing with: HR, Safety, Public Resources, Accidents, Customer Service

Group 4 (Bud Blake, Donna Feliciano, Ben Foreman and Nathaniel Jones)

Want to see: Intercity Transit recognized for trusted full-spectrum transit service (credible, reliable, feasible costs), integrated, innovative, quality service, and mobility.

Do not want to see: Intercity Transit forced to cut valuable services.

Dillard pointed out the "themes" as a result of this exercise that the group should hold onto as they move forward in discussing the three "burning" questions.

- The good headlines are already things Intercity Transit does and that points to how well the agency works. Every time the Authority makes a decision, they must focus on the mission/vision statements. They remain the target.
- The negative headlines are creating “anti” mission/vision statements. The Authority always needs to be aware of these and avoid.
- Be constantly vigilant about doing the “wants” such as being transparent, listening to what the community needs, having open engagement between staff, the Authority, the CAC and the community. Building a foundation of trust is an ongoing goal. So if a negative thing should happen, the community would be prepared to trust Intercity Transit beyond just one incident.
- The community at large doesn’t understand the complexity and effort of what it takes to run a transit agency. The Agency needs to create a “ground of information” to help the community understand that we are maxed out in terms of resources and cannot provide additional services at this time. In fact with reduced federal grant opportunities, we won’t be able to continue to provide the services we are today. Establish the “why” we would need to ask for additional funding dependent upon what the community needs or wants us to provide. The community conversation should include an education piece about all of the diverse things Intercity Transit offers.
- There’s a real difference between these four groups. This talks about transit’s impact on community, (emergency response or simply the availability of transit); and then there’s the capability of the agency itself, the organization.

Dillard summarized: The group needs to refer to the above statements when discussing the “burning questions.” She reminded the group they’ll be talking about how to engage the community; talk about funding; talk about how to meet the demands of increasing services and what she is hearing from the group is “hold on to the services we’re currently providing now” because it’s meaningful and creates a future state the group wants to create.

“Building Awareness of our Mental Models”

Dillard presented a slide entitled, “Building Awareness of our Mental Models.” “How we climb the **Ladder of Inference**.” She said people walk around with perceptions that are created by their surroundings. She showed a photo describing the different phases of processing this information of perception called “Emotional Reaction/Energy.” It’s to help the group understand where they come up with the different opinions and ideas, and where their strong emotions may be coming from (past or present experience). This exercise helps the group become aware of their own thinking and reasoning.

Dillard presented, “**Team & Individual Learning**” and “**Finding a Balance between Advocacy & Inquiry**.” She explained that “generative thinking” takes time. She said Western culture is wired to do a lot of “telling” and “asking” or in some cases because

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

August 21, 2015

Page 5 of 14

what we think our role is, we can't just observe – if you see information you may have to tell somebody about it. We want to shoot for “high advocacy for what we know;” and “high inquiry” about what other people know and this creates this “generative conversation and ideas.”

Dillard polled the group to share their thoughts of the group session thus far – what they feel excited about – what has resonated.

Messmer said Intercity Transit is a healthy organization in a broad sense – it's so fun to be here, creative, really likes what happens, and the second part of that for her is how do we use that creativity and capacity that we have to serve and achieve the things in the community that we want to achieve? How do we use that energy to do community service?

Freeman-Manzanares appreciated the headline exercise. It was good to spend time, as a group, envisioning those ultimate positive headlines and understand, from each group's perspective how the negative is envisioned. It reminds us of how important it is to hang on to our values, vision and mission and create the positive we want to see.

Jones liked the ice-breaker where everyone lined up and did self-introductions. He liked finding out the number of years staff and the Authority members have been with the agency and the depth of experience and knowledge.

Gadman said what we're proving is everyone is very trusting of each other. What impresses him is that everyone is so supportive of each other. Everyone keeps the lines of communication open. It's clear that our goals involve how best to serve our community.

Warner appreciates that the elected officials are not looking out for just their individual jurisdictions, but looking out for the entire PTBA as a whole. That's important to the success of the agency and our community.

Jones said Intercity Transit provides a sort of interjurisdictional venue where the jurisdictions are working with each other and it sets a tone and ability for the Authority to have those kinds of relationships across jurisdictions in other settings as well. It helps the community as a whole in many ways to have those connections. He said Thurston County is changing – looking back decades ago there wasn't this interconnection.

Sullivan likes that the Authority looks at staff as partners as opposed to people they direct. It's a healthy approach to accomplishing this important work.

Feliciano said she likes this format because it allows us to gain a broader perspective.

Merrill likes that this enhances staff's ability to perform by having a good relationship with the Board and the labor unions.

ANSWERING BURNING QUESTIONS - GROUP EXERCISE

Dillard explained why she calls these the "burning" questions. She said when she spoke with Authority members individually, these were the common themes that resonated strongly among the nine members. These are the things the Authority worries about.

Dillard said this exercise is not "strategic planning" but instead "priority setting and direction setting." Reviewing, reconfirming and realigning so staff (and the Authority) can finish the work they need to do to move forward.

The group broke into three separate groups with each group taking on one of the "burning" questions. Board members were asked to select the one "burning" question they have the most energy and interest in. Staff members were asked to select a burning question they can best support. The group assembled as follows:

Question 1: How do we best deliver on increasing demand for services in our Community? (Jim Merrill, Ryan Warner, Karen Messmer, Joe Baker, Dennis Bloom, and Jeff Gadman)

Question 2: How do we best communicate/engage our community? (Educate, stakeholder input, board/staff roles) (Bud Blake, Heather Stafford-Smith, Kris Fransen, Don Melnick, and Donna Feliciano)

Question 3: How do we best fund/finance our short and long-term goals? (Debbie Sullivan, Ben Foreman, Nathaniel Jones and Ed Bricker)

The three groups were asked to consider:

- Pre-work/meetings/work sessions
- Today's MVV and goals / strategies review
- Headlines (want/don't want)
- What has been working well
- What has not been working well
- What would you recommend to do more/less of or a new strategy/direction

The group recessed for lunch.

Everyone regrouped to report out and facilitate a Q & A with the larger group.

Question 1: How do we best deliver on increasing demand for services in our Community? (*Jim Merrill, Ryan Warner, Karen Messmer, Joe Baker, Dennis Bloom, and Jeff Gadman*)

- How do we define increased demand?
 - a) Could mean a variety of changes not just volume increase. Population, land use, other demographics.
- Demand for what? What is considered service?
 - a) This is not just about fixed route and DAL services, although those are the driver for our budget. Service is a broad term that means people have the ability to get where they need to go. How do we best serve the needs of those in our community? (Provide transportation choices that support an accessible, sustainable, livable, healthy, prosperous community).

RECOMMENDATION

Build Public/Community/Private Partnerships

- A. Need to build organizational capacity to do this
 - a. Example: Jubilee was provided an opportunity to address a transportation dilemma by having a community van.
 - b. Proposing broad-based transportation opportunities - we're not just a bus company anymore. We have options to provide but not as much as requested for lack of resources. We're going to leverage available resources but need to build a structure to make that happen. We get existing staff to make that their job. Go out to the PTBA and build partnerships and relationships.

What do partners bring to the table?

- B. We come to the table to offer assistance so others can meet their goals. Whether that is getting employees and students to jobs and school, or getting clients to court and medical appointments. We are missing the other side of the equation in that we need to be asking our partners – what are they doing to help us help them. What are they willing to do and support to help us all accomplish a greater vision. Can you provide something related to your customers or employees getting to and from this site? This wouldn't be a requirement but if we're going to create partnerships we're building an expectation there is some benefit they're gaining and bringing something to the table. And IT is leveraging the service we already have along with their capacity and ideas and what will work for them.
- C. This does not necessarily include fixed route to a certain location. It could be readjusting current routes and service. It could mean providing support through scheduling and prioritizing transportation at a higher level.
- D. IT leverages our services and expertise well.
 - a. Do we need to build on our internal structure to help support these activities?
- E. IT can support other transportation opportunities.

- a. If we can help an organization get started and maintain services that connect with existing routes.
- F. We need to determine appropriate level of service
 - a. Our current method is counting individuals who board the bus or DAL of how we measure service we're providing. In reality with this new additional layer of partnering how do we count that? How do we insure we are best serving customers that have no other transportation options as well as choice riders? We also need to discuss within our existing service what are the appropriate level, size and shape.
- G. Facility challenge
 - a. We cannot expand service until we rehabilitate and expand our maintenance and operations facility. How to innovate to maximize capacity? Staff is continually working to improve methods and making it work but we've moved beyond the seams. If we do not receive grant funding to rehabilitate and expand, what is the fall back plan? Are we willing to get smaller in terms of service offered because we don't have a place to support the needs of the operation?

WRAP UP / DECISION

- Where does IT lead, and where does IT support?
 - Are there businesses or others willing to arrange service that will connect up with IT service on a regular basis if it supports their cause? How might this or other scenarios of support play out?
- Ask what services are needed.
 - This helps identify role for each partner
- What parts of service expansion can be the responsibility of others?
 - What does each partner provide?

It's important as a Board and staff to acknowledge that we can be open and creative in how we provide mobility services. The community can tell us how they want us to respond to a variety of needs. We can take the lead but also acknowledge where we can be supporters and partners in the community and provide a secondary role in providing transportation. Intercity has a lot of expertise and could do a really good job providing support to community partners. It's important to acknowledge what our role is going to be.

Question 2: How do we best communicate/engage our community? (*Bud Blake, Heather Stafford-Smith, Kris Fransen, Don Melnick, and Donna Feliciano*)

The challenge = Ways to communicate with the community has changed significantly.

Came up with this formula: Outreach + recruitment = success divided by services.

- Why?

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

August 21, 2015

Page 9 of 14

- How?
 - Outreach (twitter, HOA, Board/public)
- Who?
 - People, and community at large
- What?
 - Successes – changing the behavior of that individual or group of people to say, “I didn’t know transit could do that for me.” Or, “I didn’t realize transit does that for others.”
- Engagement
 - Services (security, cleanliness, on time performance)
- Options/solutions in messaging
- Increase community (engagement) Outreach – talk & listen – 2-way communication (educate and learn)
- Multi-pronged approach – what will it take to change behaviors?
 - Community Connection - “Mentoring” campaign – “Ride the bus with Bud”
 - Social media / blogs
 - Speakers bureau (Toastmasters and facilitation skills)
 - “Invite ourselves” – “Nicely aggressive”
 - Surveys/market research
 - Go to where they are (schools, retirement community, worksites)
 - Meaningful involvement in community organizations
 - Newsletter (monthly)
 - Internal (employee) communication (programs, services)
 - Bus ads
 - Media relations
- What’s working? Not working?
- Testimonials/personalized story-telling
 - Need to do more outreach, sooner than later
 - What Intercity Transit does well is go to where “they” are. Schools, Panorama, and to continue to do more of this.
- Educate the public what it takes to run a transit agency, what the challenges are
- Heather Stafford-Smith said, “In the HR world, you should be out selling yourself as an employer of choice before you have the opening, then that way you generate interest, and when you have an opening people come running. The same thing as our situation, we need to figure in that education; we need to be purposefully and intentionally communicating. We talked about making sure you know the purpose for communicating - is it to inform, is it to persuade, is it to change behavior and then are you asking, are you telling, are you informing. There is a deployment strategy that happens, and multiple communication strategies but all of that together you know how to do, who or the media, that’s where we get that purposeful communication for a

reason not just we can do those and hundred other things. Just because you can do it doesn't mean you should be. We should be doing things that have a return on their investment that is worth staff time, gets you what you need and gets us providing the services that we can."

Gadman asked, "Did you come up with any ideas on how to distribute this information to employees and the Board so they become the advocates for IT?"

Dillard said she thinks what she's hearing is before we say what we're going to do, we have to have a clear strategy. A clear project plan (i.e. this is how we're going to talk to businesses; how we're going to talk to employees). Have the goals of your communication and engagement program and then you can clarify the best roles for people and get tactical. The customer satisfaction and market segmentation surveys that are going out this fall will be informative.

Messmer thinks this conversation about the messaging is very helpful as well as the concept that there are different layers of methodologies including wherever conversations are happening. We should absolutely be thinking about the CAC and the Board being involved with this in a big way. If staff is going to give a presentation or going to meetings, invite the CAC and Board and get them involved with those kinds of engagements so they're hearing a story from someone other than staff. It's all about stories.

Question 3: How do we best fund / finance our short and long-term goals? *(Debbie Sullivan, Ben Foreman, Nathaniel Jones and Ed Bricker)*

The first thing this group did was identify what the increased needs are. They determined that:

- A. DAL's needs will increase total cost. How do you stabilize and maintain the funding to meet the needs of this no-denial service and what are those needs going to be in the future.
- B. Right size will not be the same in the future, what will it be?
- C. What funding sources will be available to make funding stable? Is it going to be locally dependent or can we count on state and federal support? We have the option to look at additional sales tax. Is that our only option?
- D. What is the message and what data will apply (i.e. surveys, etc.).
 - a. Are we going out for the additional sales tax and when?
 - b. Do we ask for additional sales tax authority?
 - c. Is the survey going to meet all our needs?
 - d. How you market this will be crucial and the timing is important.
- E. It's hard to determine what is short-term/what is long-term? The group decided short-term is 2-3 years and long-term would be after that point.

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

August 21, 2015

Page 11 of 14

- F. Long-term will require action and needs to be considered but short term is pressing.
- G. Volatility of long-term solutions and how do you defend against the uncertainty of what's going to happen in the future. Are there other funding sources?
- H. The dynamics of the Board changes over time. How do changes of the Board affect decisions the current Board makes?
- I. What is the vision of the ITA in 2-5 years if no action taken by Board?
- J. There are so many financial variables that are outside of IT's control. Hard to plan for the future of the agency and the community when the sources of income and expenditures (namely sales tax and fuel) are so volatile.

Messmer wants to talk about the conversation with the community as we want to provide services to, how we envision those services being provided. Ask "how can you help us with the concept of people getting around and how can you help us with the partnership that we can have." Let's ask them how we can work together to do something. We don't need to be the sole service provider – and if someone else can do it well they can be an innovator or entrepreneur, and IT can help. The success of the community being able to move around is our ultimate outcome and if we're not the sole provider, that's okay.

Dillard wrapped this segment up by pointing out how the three burning questions are connected.

Joe Baker and Ed Bricker left the session.

WHERE ARE WE AT? SETTING/REALIGNING SHORT & LONG-TERM PRIORITIES

Question 1:

- Warner said, "Where do we go based on this group's recommendations?" "Was anything decided or needs additional staff work?" This will require more conversation, and the idea of some sort of business community liaison is something the Board should look into; and what would that position look like?
- Messmer said where we're at with delivering increasing demand for services is talking about those partnerships and working with the community and leveraging and changing the concept. As more of that communication/conversation goes on it connects to our community conversation which is adding that layer of what we described as service.
- Dillard summarized by asking, "Does the organization need to make this decision – where does Intercity Transit lead and where does Intercity Transit support?" "Is this an organizational priority?" Warner said he believes that's

more ongoing and we'll be developing partnerships throughout time and we need to look at each individual partnership and determine whether to take the leadership or does the partnership organization have the capacity to do it themselves if Intercity Transit gives them support. Dillard summarized that the leadership isn't in the decision-making.

- Gadman said it's about community education. Getting the word out there, marketing ourselves, talking about what we do right and that can be facilitated in things we're already doing - just change the focus.
- Jones said he's hearing we need to be more creative about customizing a package of education services and that should include major employers and worksites.
- Melnick asked if there any resources (i.e. transit agencies) we can connect with. We can't be the only transit agency facing these challenges. Freeman-Manzanares said APTA, WSTA, WSRO, ACT and others are great resources to connect on these matters.

Question 2:

- There's a human connection and we need to make that connection. Blake wants people thinking about the bus, and be happy to take the bus. Personalize it with story-telling. Teach the public how to ride transit.
- One of the challenges we have is land use planning. It's not necessarily conducive to public transit. Everything is so spread out that it's more difficult and expensive to reach all those that need or want to use the service. So the public gets that locked in their mind and they think there's no way the bus can get them where they need to go when they need to be there. How do we continue to tell our story our own way?
- Staff, Authority and the CAC should take responsibility to coach/mentor members of the public about taking the bus. Be a bus buddy.
- There are different layers of audience and they have a different story that strikes them.
- Strategic marketing plan has to reach all people.
- Every communication has to have the message we want to tell.

Question 3:

- Freeman-Manzanares said she's been playing with the idea of what was added to the strategic plan last year which rolled into the community conversation. Looking at the remainder of 2015 and then through winter/spring and even summer of 2016, pursuing our community conversation and short and long range plan. There is a good deal of community engagement involved in both of those processes. Issues: It will take time to pursue the customer satisfaction and

marketing segmentation surveys. The community conversation and short and long range planning follow this process. It would be disingenuous to plan for a sales tax measure before we complete these processes. August 2016 is the presidential primaries. November 2016 is the presidential election. We could look to February, March, August or November of 2017 if that is the appropriate direction. We can also continue to request additional local options through the state legislature.

- Messmer likes the concept of having the community conversation and the planning discussions with an open-ended outcome regarding how we finance these efforts. Let's not have a predetermined outcome in terms of a sales tax ballot. Be thorough with our conversation and have the feedback and use that to frame what we're offering and what it takes to provide that.
- Jones said it's going to be difficult to gain any attention in 2016 because there will be a lot of focus on the presidential election. He is hopeful about this round of federal discussions about surface transportation and there's the possibility we'll see bus and bus facility funding. He's concerned this still won't solve our problem. We still have a significant hole. We are still looking for additional authority in some form or we need to cut service.
- Sullivan asked for clarity regarding the outreach – is that for getting feedback from the community or is this about educating the community? She's uncomfortable an August 2016 primary or anything that has to do with the presidential election.
- Freeman-Manzanares said we could explore approaching the legislature in the next session for additional local options.

Dillard relayed the basic concepts of the conversation were to focus on our strategic planning, surveys and community conversation and legislative outcomes and opportunities in 2015/2016 and look to 2017 to take an issue to the ballot if warranted.

Messmer said we are faced with the challenge of asking for something that doesn't even fill the gap; or asking for what it will take to provide us the opportunity to provide more service.

Jones suggested it's not too soon to put together a strategic process that includes all of this community engagement.

ACTION PLANNING & NEXT STEPS

Dillard asked if there are other follow up items, timelines, due dates or roles around the other items. For example:

“When does the Board need to hear back on the business development resource?”

“When will you come up with your strategic plan and report back to the Board?”

Intercity Transit Authority Planning Session

August 21, 2015

Page 14 of 14

Gadman said from the business development resource, he would like Freeman-Manzanares to get with staff and report back with a recommendation on how best to implement it.

Freeman-Manzanares said staff can come up with a game plan with what this might look like in a timely way so we can move forward and achieve it in the next 18 months.

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

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