

**Notes**  
**INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY**  
**PLANNING SESSION**  
**September 23, 2016**

**Members Present:** Chair and City of Lacey Councilmember Jeff Gadman; Vice Chair and Citizen Representative Ryan Warner; Thurston County Commissioner Bud Blake; City of Tumwater Councilmember, Debbie Sullivan; City of Olympia Councilmember Clark Gilman; Citizen Representative Karen Messmer; Citizen Representative Don Melnick.

**Staff Present:** Ann Freeman-Manzanares; Dennis Bloom; Jeff Brewster; Ben Foreman; Jim Merrill; Eric Phillips; Stefanie Randolph; Heather Stafford-Smith; Steve Swan; and Pat Messmer, Recording Secretary.

**Others Present:** Facilitator Jason Robertson; and Thomas Wittman, of Nelson Nygaard.

**Chair Gadman called the Planning Session to order at 8:30 a.m.**

**WELCOME/OVERVIEW**

Chair Gadman welcomed everyone to the 2016 Planning Session. Everyone provided a self-introduction that included what they were hoping to accomplish from the session.

Ann Freeman-Manzanares (General Manager) – Wants the opportunity to talk about the short and long-range planning process, from a staff and Authority perspective, and to understand the trade-offs involved in service planning, and be clear about why Intercity Transit is providing the service.

Ben Foreman (Director of Finance) – Wants to know the direction the Authority wants to take and whether Intercity Transit can afford it.

Stefanie Randolph (Marketing/Communications/Outreach Coordinator) – Wants to learn more about the direction the Authority is interested in going with the community conversation project and get a better feel for how marketing, communications and outreach can support the Authority's goals.

Steve Swan (Senior Planner) – Is curious to see and hear what discussions were about where the agency was headed, what future funding looked like, and what future service plans might be going forward.

Eric Phillips (Development Director) – Is interested in the Authority's questions about the future direction of Intercity Transit's services and to gather insights from those questions and comments so he can support the strategic direction moving forward.

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Bud Blake (Thurston County Commissioner) – Looking forward to all around discussion.

Debbie Sullivan (City of Tumwater Councilmember) – Wants to better understand how to fine tune the good work the Authority has accomplished to date.

Don Melnick (Citizen Representative) – He sees the challenge in how to make the public understand how efficient our transit system is; and how will the agency accommodate that given the financial restraints.

Jeff Gadman (City of Lacey Councilmember) – Wants to discuss future planning, and is hoping to get a direction on how the Authority can move forward and have a clear vision of what it takes to accommodate new growth and remain a highly functioning efficient organization.

Ryan Warner (Citizen Representative) – Wants to talk about how the Authority and staff can best facilitate the rolls they have. He spent time with other transit organizations and found out how much their staff and board members do not work well together. Intercity Transit's Board and staff work well together.

Karen Messmer (Citizen Representative) – Is interested in the planning the Board might do and the direction taken with services, and how to shape that for the expectations and where the community is headed and figure out more ways to communicate with the community about what the agency is, what the agency does, what the agency offers, and also have a response to new technology and some of the expectations or opportunities for new technology. When thinking about future plans, how can the agency realize things might change into positives for the agency and the community?

Jim Merrill (Director of Operations and Maintenance) – Wants to hear about what the Authority thinks how best to put the service out on the streets.

Heather Stafford-Smith (Director of HR) – Wants to hear the conversation about the decision making in the end, which helps her to do a better job from a strategic standpoint on how we staff, train and recruit, what we're looking for and where we're going.

Jeff Brewster (Marketing and Communications Manager) – Is looking for the intent of the Authority, not only collectively, but individually as the agency moves forward and crafts our messaging.

Dennis Bloom (Planning Manager) – Is looking forward to the conversation about service planning and getting Authority direction.

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Sue Pierce and Walter Smit (Citizen Advisory Committee) – Attending to observe and learn.

*Councilmember Gilman arrived.*

### **STATE OF INTERCITY TRANSIT**

Planning Manager, Dennis Bloom continued with the Fixed Route Service Overview Presentation that was shown at the ITA/CAC Joint meeting on September 21, 2016, finishing with the following slides:

- Transit Planning Factors
- Market Density Drives Transit
- Land Use Travel Characteristics
- Population Density 2010
- Employment Density 2010
- Integration of transit service and land use
- Example of incorporating transit “Mobility Strategy”
- Proposed Olympia Community Transit network
- Service Considerations
- Customer Considerations
- Overview of Land Use and travel characteristics for improved transit service
- Other considerations for the future

Bloom asked for questions/comments.

Melnick said there are situations where businesses will not come to an area until transit is there, and that’s the challenge Intercity Transit faces. We need to get businesses involved early on in the development process and ask them to share expenses.

Gadman said Xerox employs Verizon call center workers and that is a classic example of the need for transit service; yet the business is not willing to change their employee schedules to accommodate transit service. We’re not working together to achieve a goal.

Messmer posed the question, “Why can’t businesses look at the existing system and locate near the existing system, rather than businesses looking at locations that don’t have transit?” What is the issue about the existing systems since it’s where the density is projected to go, and yet businesses say they want transit over here and they’re not coming into our plan – they’re coming with their own separate plan and schedules even though the cities say this is where things should happen.

### **Performance Standards**

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Freeman-Manzanares and Foreman reviewed the Financial Models which show the agency would be in the “red” in 2023 based on the current direction provided by the Authority. Also reflected is the next purchase of clean/efficient diesel vehicles. The model also allows for the possibility of buying different technology in the future.

Freeman-Manzanares said funds to rehabilitate and expand the facility, is the crux of everything the agency does. If there are no state and/or federal dollars to make that happen, the agency can't expand service. Community-wide support is needed to gain funding to deal with this facility.

Freeman-Manzanares reviewed the accomplishments made as a result of the 2015 Planning Session. The three burning questions were:

1. How do we best deliver on increasing demand for service to our community?
2. How do we best communicate and engage our community?
3. How do we best fund our short and long range plans?

Progress to Date:

- Completed our customer satisfaction and market segmentation surveys.
- Hired new staff (Development Director, Marketing Manager, and Marketing Outreach Coordinator).
- Hired state advocates David Foster and Joanna Grist.
- Involved in the economic alliance with EDC.

Still in the Works / Challenges:

- Bringing in a Business Community Liaison
- Involved in the economic alliance with EDC and working on getting on their Board.
- The state legislature wants the agency to use the last one tenth of a percent sales tax before giving out any more funding.
- Support a perceived tax increase.

### **COMMUNITY CONVERSATION: SETTING THE STAGE**

Robertson said before going out into the community, it's helpful to give the public the knowledge they need to give back useful input. He asked the group to share what they would brag about Intercity Transit and what they feel the public doesn't know about the agency.

- Intercity Transit is more than just buses. It's a multi-model system that advocates for pedestrian and biking solutions coordinated in with the transit solution.

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- Make the public more aware of what it takes to run an efficient transit system and the challenges the agency faces. Also advertise the social value of DAL to keep people with mobility issues active.
- Make the public aware of what it takes to provide quality and safety and the effort and training and the kind of system we need to support the number of hours and days of service for fixed route and DAL.
- The agency invests in security - not just safety, so people can ride the system and feel safe.
- How innovative and nimble the organization is within the operating constraints the agency faces.
- Explain the level of skilled professionalism of the operators and share the recent Rodeo Award results, and the customer satisfaction survey to show Intercity Transit provides a unique level of customer service and skill.
- How Intercity Transit runs an efficient and effective service and are responsible stewards of public money.
- Intercity Transit gives back to the community and community partners i.e. providing vehicles to nonprofits.
- There is a level of value provided to families and individuals in terms of their economic budget for their family. To be able to use the bus instead of driving a car makes a difference in their choices about what they can spend money on. Telling a story about that is important - how many people can't drive or own a car for any number of reasons who don't qualify for DAL. Intercity Transit is the service that supports their ability to get around.

Robertson will take the above feedback and develop a portfolio of stories about Intercity Transit (i.e. a rider profile factsheet to dispel myths). He'll develop a profile of Intercity Transit's different divisions.

Robertson asked the group to start thinking about how to talk to the public. Examples:

- Get people who vote, but don't ride transit to see the value.
- Majority of voting population is in favor of expanding transit "for you."
- Seniors giving up driving due to age.
- High yield investment community - provide significant economic development-related resources. How do you show that investment strategy? How do you get buy-in on that investment because there is a real value to employers? Provide a corporate report and show how productive the return on investment to the community is being \_\_\_\_\_ in the long term.
- Make transit a more viable option by conveying to the public the effort that goes into selecting and training operators - selecting the right person to be an operator, and the efforts made on security of the person riding the bus.

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- How vanpool helps employers. How does that fit in terms of a business value of having vanpool support? It saves parking; lowers absenteeism; employees arrive on time to work, etc.
- Lacey has the highest military population with the largest percentage of vanpool vehicles going to JBLM; therefore, Intercity Transit is providing a value to JBLM by reducing congestion at the gate; it's an essential part of JBLM's traffic studies.

Robertson asked what topics should be brought to the people. Who to reach and how to communicate with them.

Sullivan brought up the question about how to stop discussion of light rail coming to Thurston County and focus on transit. How to bring more discussion about the value of transit and get past or work through the concept that rail is better. Light rail - not happening today so let's use other means.

Bloom said there is a need to address the lack of HOV lanes. There needs to be HOV's in order to accommodate the increase in services. Buses can get stuck in traffic. How does Intercity Transit implement HOV lanes from the current locations to extend down to Thurston County in order to accommodate those increases and needs for express service. You don't get to a light rail system without an HOV system.

Robertson asked the group about other solutions they would like to test:

- HOV Lanes
- Maximizing signal prioritization
- Optimizing people's interaction with the system (i.e. like Portland's Trimet Application)
- The system of being able to walk near the bus stops and lines with a feeling of safety and access. Work with jurisdictions to get a focus so more people feel comfortable getting to the bus stops.
- Include bikes - safe and dry places to park them.
- Having an app that indicates multimodal ways to get around regardless of jurisdiction.

Warner said to work with the community to provide information for people with mobility devices, to get them off DAL and on to fixed route. Provide an app that shows a curb path to the bus stop.

How do we make the bus a better experience?

- WiFi vs. getting there faster (trade-offs)
- People want speed to get where they are going when using the bus.

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- How to show people the bus is moving faster than cars?
- They don't want to wait long for the bus.

### Fare Structure:

- What should it look like?
- Move away from cash – move towards scan / passes
- Use credit/debit cards?
- Why can't it all be tied together?
- Public wants seamless payment and fare structures.
- Do a breakdown of what riders use.

### What do you want to tell constituents about Intercity Transit?

- Bus service at Hawks Prairie
- How to build connected system
- What creative solutions to help employers

### Other services people are asking for that Intercity Transit can't provide:

- Areas in PTBA that do not receive service early, late or as frequently
- Weekend service
- Takes too long on some routes/Frequency
- Providing service outside the PTBA
- Intercity Transit should consider working with the Port of Olympia.
- Figure out how to close the gap relating to services to tribal developments where they don't pay sales tax.

Test the statement: "We are looking at expanding service beyond our service area today, but we will be tracking it so that someday circumstances dictate we ought to expand the service area, that is something we'll look at."

Create a featurette about the service areas, routes, frequency and length of service so there is a standard rule factsheet.

Marketing comes up with a fancy graphic – tradeoffs. There may be a longer wait for the bus, but in turn more people are using the service.

### Who are the key stakeholders?

- Employment partners – clustered solutions
- HP
- State – who rides and how?
- Legislatures
- Lobbyists
- College Students

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- Health care employers
- Non riders/ voters
- WSDOT
- Environmentalists
- PTA
- Stories from the riders
- Social Service Agencies
- Senior Community
- Local government (jurisdictions)
- Tribe-County-other underserved areas outside PTBA
- Chambers of Commerce
- Visitors
- Local hospitality businesses

### **How to Engage?**

- Self-advocate and sell businesses an investment in transit – get a long-term buy-in from them. They won't have to deal with the expense of moving their business.
- What does investment in Intercity Transit look like?
- Invite new investment on corridors where service already exists or expand the number of people who live and work there.
- Be synchronized and polished (focus / fun)
- Testimonials
- Advocating through media / creative ways
- Focus groups
- Go where the people are – intercept survey
- Rider intercepts
- Employee education / outreach
- Elevator speech and brand + travel training stories
- “Ask me” buttons
- Social media presence + accessible web
- ADA compliance
- Fact sheets
- Be synchronized
- Council

### **Process to follow in arriving at the community conversation:**

Focused areas (visioning):

- Environmental/sustainability
- Education
- Economic Opportunity



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- Public Service
- Quality of Life

Then say:

- “Here’s what Intercity Transit does.”
- “Here are the goals.”
- “Here’s what IT is doing today.”

Then go back to the community and say:

- “What is missing?”
- “What else should IT be doing?”

Then come back together and discuss all of the above and figure out how to accomplish this. These conversations will occur in:

- focus groups;
- conduct intercept surveys at festivals and interview people off the street and ask their impression of IT;
- give people ownership of the system – if they owned the bus company, what would they change;
- interview riders on Dash during legislative session;
- educate Operators driving the buses; educate IT employees and how to help them develop their own story;
- presentations with business groups / service clubs / have Authority members participate
  - Staff presents what IT does, here’s where IT is going, explain ways the groups can help figure out how to make it happen,

## SYSTEM PLANNING

Thomas Wittman from Nelson Nygaard reviewed the Short and Long Term Study.

Definition of a short-range transit plan is taking an in-depth look at the strengths and weaknesses of the existing services that are out there, looking at the market for transit, looking where people are using the services right now, is there an axis between those two, are there gaps, are there opportunities right now to improve effectiveness, efficiency and reliability of service. Here’s how to maximize resources, increase ridership, conserve new areas with minimal increase in cost.

A robust public outreach process is the key to the success of both short and long range elements

Eighty percent of ridership is related to population of employment density.

**Short Range Elements**

- Public involvement
- Conduct market analysis
- Analyze existing service
- Develop service options/ scenarios
- Evaluate service options/ scenarios
- Develop recommendations

**Long Range Elements**

- Funding outlook
- Integrating land use and transit
- Service expansion priorities
- Capital investment planning
  
- Existing service network
- Senior Population density
- Low income resident density
- Zero vehicle household density
- Thurston county travel desire lines
- What is the efficiency of the travel corridor?

**Link between Economic Development and Transit**

- According to a study by Daniel Chatman UC-Berkley, it suggests transit expansion leads to economic growth via agglomeration.
- This means concentrating on employees and businesses, the ability to have transit service that provides a bigger market reach of employees, to sell more products, and leverage.
- A 10% expansion in transit service has the potential impact to increase a region's gross domestic product by 1 to 2%.

**Industry Trends in Transit to Consider**

New vehicle technologies have the potential to revolutionize how people look at transit and the image of transit. There are benefits of technology, but also a lot of costs associated with it. Examples of new technology:

- Clean diesel
- Diesel electric hybrids
- Compressed natural gas
- Hydrogen fuel-cell technologies
- Fully electric buses

There are benefits to all technologies but there are also long-term costs that must be considered.

### **Transportation Network Companies**

Big game changers for the transit industry include partnerships with Uber, Lyft or others show promise to provide more convenient cost effective service in areas of lower demand. It's more cost effective to subsidize with a solution like this than running a big bus in low density areas. If productivity is less than 12 passengers per hour need to look at alternate partnerships.

- Challenges still remain:
  - Liability
  - Accessibility - Uber and Lyft model doesn't allow for accessible vehicles
- Most agencies are looking at this but implementation has been limited.

### **How will Autonomous Vehicles Impact Transit?**

- Autonomous vehicles can revolutionize mobility
- Huge Opportunities Exist
  - Lower cost bus service due to less operators
  - Better first/last mile connections
  - More effective way to serve low density areas
- Threats
  - Perception that transit service is no longer necessary
  - Competition from other providers
  - Roadblock to using autonomous vehicles is the mix of human-operated vehicles on the road, and wildlife. These will prevent mass adoption of autonomous vehicles.

### **Discussion - What is the Role of Innovations for Intercity Transit in the next 5-20 years?**

- Provides partnership opportunities with the private sector that allows IT to expand faster than solely relying on public funds.
- What is difference between autonomous vehicles and smart cars in terms of the technology piece? Sounds like avoiding payroll expenses due to less labor. If the only shift in these models is moving people to an informal contingent employment model or just replacing jobs, it's not technology - it's a shift in jobs.
- It's managing different types of jobs i.e. managing computer systems that support/monitor autonomous vehicles
- Watch how this goes and as opportunities arise to integrate into it. It could fill gaps for the agency.

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- People are given more options, especially last mile, how can it be integrated and provide support and make it seamless for people to get around. Maybe use Uber to get to the park-and-ride, the train, etc.
- Uber and Lyft are used more by young people.
- Keep options open for the type of trip needed (i.e. commute, leisure, appointments, etc.).
- Begin conversations with employees (Operators) if going in this direction.

*Gadman recessed the meeting for a 30-minute lunch.*

Wittman reviewed Intercity Transit's Fixed Route Ridership Statistics

- Ridership has declined last several years.
- Rider Turnover of over 20% is typical
- 20-25% riders are new

Fleet Route Fleet Replacement

- Eight 2004 buses
- Seventeen 2005 buses
- TDP shows funding for 17 buses in next 5 years

Dial-A-Lift

- 34 vehicles in next 5 years
- TDP shows funding for 34 vehicles in next 5 years

Vanpool

- Annual replacement plan

Base Capacity

- The Pattison Operations base is near capacity
- Future system growth is constrained by base capacity

## **Goals and Visioning**

### **2016-21 Strategic Plan**

Seven Strategic Plan Service Recommendations:

1. Operate five different types of local service, each designed to meet the needs of the neighborhoods it serves.
2. Strengthen serving operating along major corridors.
3. Reduce customer travel times.
4. Keep pace with new high-density development.
5. Expand regional express routes.

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6. Support a range of transportation alternatives.
7. Provide fixed facilities and equipment that support the region's public transit infrastructure.

Wittman asked the group, "Which one of these recommendations is the highest priority."

- "Putting them in priority order can pose problems."
- "They should be used as guidelines."
- "If Authority is not comfortable making trade-offs, take it to the community conversation. Have the public rate the recommendations."

### **Tradeoffs in Service Planning**

Vision of Intercity Transit's Service – what does the Authority want to accomplish six years from now as a result of the planning efforts?

- Transit family using different modes of transportation
- Transit is a part of our lives
- The little system that could (dependable and predictable growth over 50 years)
- Intercity Transit shows increase in ridership and satisfaction
- Intercity Transit touted as best in Washington State
- Bicycle Commuter Challenge breaks 10,000 riders
- With the opening of the new facility poised to increase service
- Ride the bus – none of it's free because there's enough sales tax revenue

### **What should Intercity Transit's Values Be?**

Wittman asked the group, "Where on the spectrum do you feel Intercity Transit should place its emphasis?"

- Coverage Discussion  
Is it more important to provide less frequent service to more areas or provide more service to fewer areas? The group responded:
  - Provide more service to fewer areas, but with the caveat IT needs to work with other agencies, programs and businesses. What can Intercity Transit do to come up with other solutions?
  - Weekend service? Eliminate Sunday night service? Provide that service in another way.
  - What impact does quality service have on location of residential and commercial investments?
  - The goal is to optimize service according to population.

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- Don't walk away from existing customers.
  - Focus frequent service in areas that have the most?????????
- Frequency and Span

Is it more important to provide more frequent service for a shorter time or provide less frequent service but for a longer time?

    - Find a balance taking everything into consideration.
    - How do we take existing resources and this population base served and how to maximize that to make sure to provide the people with what they are expecting when they give us the dollar?
    - Determine the type of user we'd be adding service for, are they transit dependent?
  - Days of service

Is it more important to provide less weekday service; more weekend service or provide more weekday service; less weekend service?

    - We've been flexible depending on need for example the Evergreen College late night service.
    - Are we missing not serving weekend employees?
    - Looking for answers to whether IT is maximizing service and if not what would that look like?
  - Regional vs Local Service

Service area stays within PTBA or IT serves regional commuter market.

    - How does the Vanpool Program address desires to serve commuter markets?
    - What is the roll of the state in providing regional commuter service?
    - Find a funding source that supports the longer distance transportation needs outside PTBA.
    - Major undertaking of I-5 by WSDOT. Huge impact on those commuters between Pierce County and Thurston County.
    - When there is new construction assign residential impact fee and the state is importing 25,000 people/day through Pierce County and there's an impact on the transportation system that isn't getting covered. Would they be willing to pay to fix congestion by subsidizing the cost of people moving in/out?
    - We're trying to incorporate traffic mitigation into the Ceba (???) process per construction project. Right now legislation says whatever fallout from major projects that lands in transit's lap is transit's responsibility, and we want to say it's not our responsibility. It's your project; you need to pay for it.

## WRAP-UP AND FINAL THOUGHTS

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Robertson said he'll convert the group's input to shape the way Wittman pulls the planning program together and how to frame the community conversation.

1. Define the three things to talk to the community about and use as a diagram.
2. Identify the tools and timeline.
3. Test and refine.
4. Go.

Most of community doesn't know full range of services.

Direction to go is to be more than a bus service and an integral part of community  
Create stories and relate to people before we ask them what do you want IT to be like.

Get better at communicating with constituents - build proactive conversation and develop lingo when strategizing service.

How does transit become part of the beginning of development conversation?

City could publish transit zoning map when discussing development which also shows sewer, etc. information. Have it as a pop-up when there is discussion about development.

Developers never ask the question about site specific details to include transit.

Conveying the value proposition to the community and discussion simultaneously about funding uncertainty - federal / state, start by telling our story, saying, "This is the base system that IT can offer given our local resources that exist today." Maybe it's a system map. Then say, "With federal funding we're able to do this." With an increase of .01% at the polls we could do this going up to .04% at local tax dollars we can provide this. Make it simple for the community to understand. Show the base system - no new money, and federal dollars extracted.

Jurisdictions are being bombarded with requests and suggestions of raising taxes to pay for them. Need to isolate this type of conversation and separate from all others. It's overwhelming taxpayers.

Tell people what we can do. Okay to ask community how to rearrange things but understand we'll ask them for more money.

Show different ways to pay for service. Need permanent funding source. One thing that is elastic is local funding. Things we have to look at to increase service but first ask what are we doing now.

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Open up to opportunity other than we're doing all the work and service. Public helps to find ways to increase service. Form a partnership.

Separate effort to talk about how to maximize our service and better serve the public than to sell Intercity Transit as a community vendor.

What is Intercity Transit's role in improving the transportation system in Thurston County?

What's best for Intercity Transit?

Look at strategic partnerships to build a complete system.

Provide community education about Intercity Transit.

Find out what the barriers are for people to ride the bus.

**ADJOURN**

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

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