

**Minutes
INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Regular Meeting
July 2, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Cox called the meeting of the Intercity Transit Authority to order on July 2, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. This was a hybrid meeting held at the Pattison Street facility.

Members Present: Chair and City of Lacey Councilmember Carolyn Cox; Vice Chair and Community Representative Sue Pierce; Thurston County Commissioner Carolina Mejia; City of Tumwater Councilmember Kelly Von Holtz; Community Representative Justin Belk; City of Olympia Councilmember Robert Vanderpool; Labor Representative Mark Neuville; and Community Representative Wendy Goodwin.

Members Excused: City of Yelm Councilmember Brian Hess.

Staff Present: Emily Bergkamp; Pat Messmer; Amanda Collins; Brian Nagel; Katie Cunningham; Matt Kenney; Peter Stackpole; Thera Black; Jesse Eckstrom; Brenden Houx; Jessica Gould; David Chaffee; Daniel Van Horn; Dena Withrow; Heather Stafford; Tammy Ferris; Nicole Jones; Cameron Crass; Kayla Phillips; Cindy Young; Mario Torres; Annett Brock; MK Bergen; Lois Thomas; John Denicola.

Others Present: Jeff Myers, Legal Counsel; Ty Flint, Community Advisory Committee; Katrina Van Every, TRPC.

STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

- A. David Chaffee introduced **Kayla Phillips, Sr. Fleet Business Analyst.**
- B. Cameron Crass introduced the **Transit Ambassadors, Cindy Young, Mario Torres, Annett Brock, MK Bergen, Lois Thomas, John Denicola.**

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was M/S/A by Goodwin and Von Holtz to approve the agenda as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Karen Messmer of Olympia, a former Intercity Transit Authority member and Olympia City Council member, addressed the Board regarding the **Log Cabin Road project**. She highlighted that when the road was initially placed on the Regional Transportation map, the surrounding area was envisioned differently. Commercial activity along Yelm Highway and College Street, as well as Briggs Village, did not exist. The property intended for residential development, which would have generated ridership for a potential bus route and provided funding for the road through developer contributions and impact fees, is now a park and open space.

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Messmer emphasized there would be no riders or funding for a Log Cabin Road extension in its current context. She suggested that Olympia should not be expected to build a road it cannot fund. She presented alternative routes for bus service in Southeast Olympia, such as 37th Street in Lacey, Route 94, and Morse Merriman Road, noting that none are currently congested or predicted to be in the future. Messmer argued that the idea of building the road simply because it has been on the map is "absurd." While Lacey built connecting roadways, these were necessary for their own development and not solely in anticipation of the Log Cabin Road connection.

Messmer advocated for planning that reduces traffic and aligns with climate goals, asserting that great transit service doesn't require more roads. She proposed the study for Log Cabin Road should remain in the regional transportation plan to allow for a more comprehensive assessment of Southeast Olympia's transportation needs. However, she strongly recommends the specific Log Cabin Road project be removed from the plan because it lacks a sponsor, funding, and purpose, especially since the City of Olympia no longer includes it in their comprehensive plan. She urged the ITA to support Olympia's request for its removal.

Dan Delaney of Olympia, a former ITA Operator, addressed the Board regarding the Log Cabin Road project and shared his personal connection to Morse Merriman Road, recalling that a bus route, possibly the number 24, did exist on Morse Merriman Road in the past.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. TRPC Briefing on the Log Cabin Road Project** Katrina Van Every from the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) provided a detailed historical overview and current status of the Log Cabin Road connection project, a contentious issue receiving significant public comment. The TRPC and Transportation Policy Board are set to make a recommendation and take action on the new Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) next week, with this specific project being the main outstanding issue.

TRPC staff have actively engaged with all affected jurisdictions, including Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, Thurston County, and Intercity Transit, as well as state and federal partners. The primary focus of these communications has been to understand the potential ramifications of either including or excluding the Log Cabin Road project from the RTP. A critical concern revolves around securing access to federal funding for regional transportation projects, which could be jeopardized if the RTP is not adopted by the implicit July 11th deadline, or by October for certain jurisdictions.

The Log Cabin Road connection has a deep historical root within the region's transportation planning, having been consistently linked with the widening of Yelm

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Highway and the extension of Mullen Road for the past four decades, since the inception of the first RTP in 1984. While the planned improvements for Yelm Highway and Mullen Road have largely been realized, the Log Cabin Road component remains highly contested. The original justification for its inclusion was based on anticipated extensive residential development in the surrounding area. However, with the subsequent acquisition and development of LBA Woods into a public park, this foundational justification has been effectively nullified, leading to a significant re-evaluation of the road's necessity.

Van Every presented two distinct options for the inclusion of the Log Cabin Road connection within the updated RTP:

Option A: Include the Log Cabin Road Connection

- Pros:
 - Maintains consistency with long-standing regional connectivity plans.
 - Aligns with previous planning decisions and the regional vision.
 - Avoids potential increases in future vehicle volumes and congestion on existing alternative routes.
 - Acknowledges the substantial investments made by neighboring jurisdictions, such as Lacey, in their transportation networks, which were predicated on the completion of this regional connection.
- Cons:
 - Contradicts current standard practice for project inclusion in the RTP, as the City of Olympia has formally removed the project from its own long-range planning documents.
 - May create confusion among the public and stakeholders regarding Olympia's actual intent to construct the connection.
 - Fails to directly address widespread community concerns and opposition regarding the potential impact of the road on LBA Woods and LBA Park.

Option B: Remove the Log Cabin Road Connection

- Pros:
 - Acknowledges the significant changes in transportation patterns, land use, and community priorities that have occurred since 1984.
 - Aligns with the City of Olympia's current comprehensive plans and their intent to conduct a Southeast Olympia Street Connectivity Study before making a determination.
 - Respects the authority of the City of Olympia in determining its local infrastructure needs.
 - Directly addresses and is responsive to community members' desires to preserve LBA Woods.
 - Frees up an estimated \$10 million in dedicated funding that can be reallocated to other pressing regional transportation priorities.
 - Does not introduce additional level of service failures on the region's transportation network through 2050, according to modeling analysis.

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which showed negligible impact on overall vehicle miles traveled or travel mode share.

- Cons:
 - Removes a long-planned and defined option for improving transportation connectivity in an area of the region experiencing ongoing growth.
 - Could potentially increase future vehicle volumes and congestion on existing alternative routes, including Interstate 5, Ruddel Road, Morse Merriman Road, and Yelm Highway, leading to impacts on neighboring jurisdictions.
 - May undermine the long-term effectiveness of investments made by other jurisdictions that assumed the completion of this connection.
 - Could potentially reduce the urgency among regional partners to comprehensively address and resolve connectivity and congestion issues in this specific area of Southeast Olympia.

Van Every's presentation served to equip the Policy Board and Council with the necessary historical context and current data to make an informed decision regarding the Log Cabin Road connection. The forthcoming adoption of the RTP hinges on the resolution of this contentious project, with the TRPC emphasizing the importance of accurate information in navigating its complex history and diverse stakeholder perspectives.

Belk expressed his gratitude for Van Every's thorough historical overview of the Log Cabin Road project. He clarified that Intercity Transit isn't expected to take direct action on the matter tonight. Instead, this discussion originated from Policy Board and Council conversations, prompted by the Policy Board chair's request to gather input from each represented jurisdiction due to the project's long history and the many individuals involved. Belk indicated his willingness to convey the consensus reached during tonight's discussion to the TRPC Council, who will ultimately vote on the project's inclusion in the RTP. He reiterated that while the Log Cabin Road project isn't directly central to Intercity Transit's daily operations, the discussion arose, and he aims to reflect the group's consensus.

Vanderpool stated he holds a dual role, representing both Olympia on the Policy Board and this body on the Regional Planning Council. Speaking from his "Olympia hat," he unequivocally declared that Olympia has no sponsor or interest in the Log Cabin Road project remaining in the plan. He highlighted that over 100 public comments specifically requested its removal, and the Olympia City Council has no desire to undertake this project, with even a study is not being considered until after 2030. He believes removing the project aligns with public interest and synchronizes with Olympia's current planning efforts, thus he supports its removal for numerous reasons. He then expressed his desire to hear other perspectives, acknowledging that the public comments received also contained many excellent points.

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Belk acknowledged Vanderpool's perspective as an Olympia Council member and used the opportunity to emphasize Intercity Transit's broader policy stance. He noted that while the agency controls funding, budgeting, and operational decisions like bus frequency and routing, they have less control over crucial external factors such as land use and the road network. Belk asserted that, as a general rule, a well-connected street grid with supportive land use enables Intercity Transit to perform its job more effectively, a principle he attributes to transit expert Jarrett Walker. Regarding the Log Cabin Road project specifically, Belk reiterated his willingness to convey the group's consensus, acknowledging the unique local context and historical nuance. However, he stated that, generally, he will only support street connectivity because existing streets provide options for bus routes, whereas absent connections can shift traffic to other routes, potentially worsening congestion on those roads already served or planned for transit. He concluded by acknowledging that while street connectivity is a default stance, other environmental factors sometimes warrant consideration.

Goodwin said the discussion addresses upcoming changes to bus routes on Yelm Highway, specifically mentioning that Route 94 will be rebranded and its service adjusted to maximize shared frequency and provide more direct trips. She questions the rationale behind using Log Cabin Road for transit, suggesting that a more streamlined Yelm Highway route would be more appealing to riders due to its directness. They express a strong preference against developing Log Cabin Road, citing a love for the natural space and concerns about the lack of research into alternatives like Rich Road. The conversation then shifts to the feasibility of road widening, particularly for Yelm Highway and Wiggins Road. It's noted that while widening isn't impossible, it could necessitate acquiring private property, a measure jurisdictions try to avoid due to its impact on residents. Goodwin pointed out that areas like Wiggins Road aren't currently designed for pedestrian or bicycle traffic, highlighting a lack of consideration for multimodal transportation in past planning.

Mejia thanked everyone for the discussion which she initiated at a previous meeting to address what she sees as a jurisdictional issue, even though Intercity Transit isn't directly involved. As Thurston County's representative on the Transportation Policy Board (TPB) and having tracked this issue for years, she expresses confusion about keeping a project on the books when there's no clear sponsor and the City of Olympia seems to have already decided against it in favor of a study. She emphasizes the critical importance of the study, especially concerning the impact on Yelm Highway, which affects the county. Mejia concluded by stating the Commission has agreed to remove the project while retaining the study, providing context and gratitude for the conversation.

Cox conducted an informal vote of the Board, asking for a thumbs-up from those who believe the Log Cabin Road extension should remain in the Regional Transportation Plan, and another thumbs-up from those who think it should be removed. The result was unanimous for removal of the project.

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B. Long-Range Financial Forecasting Tool Task Order. Development Director, Peter Stackpole, presented a Task Order for the Long-Range Financial Forecasting Tool. Intercity Transit's current Long Range Financial Forecasting Tool, developed in 2004, has been periodically updated but no longer meets the needs of the agency. The existing tool relies on static financial models that require manual updates to inputs such as service hours, fleet size, and staffing levels. This approach does not adequately reflect historical trends or growth, resulting in reduced accuracy. Additionally, limited documentation of the tool's inputs and outputs over the years has made it difficult to use and update – particularly when new scenarios need to be evaluated. Each new scenario requires duplicating the tool and manually adjusting inputs.

To address these challenges, Intercity Transit is seeking support in developing a new, dynamic long-range forecasting tool. The updated tool will support agency-wide financial planning, service sustainability, expansion, and operational efficiency. It will integrate historical financial and operational data, including capital and operating costs, revenues, funding sources, ridership, and service levels, and enable detailed projections for future services, costs, revenues, and funding. The tool will also support scenario planning and sensitivity testing (e.g., changes in labor costs or service levels) to estimate impacts on annual budgets and financial plans.

WSP is prepared to partner with Intercity Transit on this initiative to help manage future funding and priorities.

Key project elements include:

- Project Management and Coordination
- Data Gathering and Development of Model Assumptions
- Forecasting Tool Development and Scenario Planning
- Comprehensive Reporting
- Training and Knowledge Transfer

Upon approval, WSP will initiate the project with a kick-off meeting anticipated in mid-July 2025. A draft of the tool's foundational framework will be delivered within two months of project initiation, with full project completion expected by January 2026.

It was M/S/A by Von Holtz and Goodwin to authorize the General Manager to execute a Task Order with WSP in the amount of \$209,948.38, which includes a 10% contingency.

C. Employees' 401(K) Retirement Plan and Trust. Bergkamp provided an overview of updates to the Intercity Transit Employees' 401(k) Retirement Plan and Trust, which was last fully revised in 2014. Since then, several amendments have been made, including allowing in-service distributions at age 59 1/2 (2014), permitting rollovers

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(2020), and adding a Roth option (2024). The current update incorporates these previous changes, along with several federal mandates, adjustments based on labor contracts, and general housekeeping to remove outdated language.

Key changes include an effective date of June 1st to align with ATU contract modifications, the integration of various resolutions adopted by Intercity Transit since 2014 and ensuring compliance with federal mandates. A new exhibit outlines employers matching contributions for each of the three labor groups. Additionally, a threshold has been added for participants terminating employment with balances of \$7,000 or less, alongside other minor administrative best practices.

A significant, newly introduced edit involves replacing gender-specific pronouns (he/she, him/her) with gender-neutral pronouns (they/them/their) throughout the document, aligning it with other current contracts.

It was M/S/A by Belk and Pierce to adopt Resolution 04-2025, which restates the Intercity Transit Employees' Retirement Plan and Trust documents for the 401(k) Retirement Supplemental Benefit for all changes since the last full plan adoption which occurred in January 2014, including amending the first paragraph under Article II Definitions on page two to read, "The following words and phrases shall have the following meanings:" and replacing gender specific pronouns throughout the document with gender neutral pronouns they/them/their.

COMMITTEE REPORTS - None.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

- All are invited to ride the Bubble Bus in the Tumwater Independence Day Parade on Friday, July 4 at 11 a.m. This is a fun way to enjoy the parade from a new perspective! If you decide to ride in the parade, please be at the staging area on Linderson Way in Tumwater by 10 a.m.
- Drop by and see Intercity Transit at the South Sound BBQ Festival Saturday, July 12 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Huntamer Park. The Bubble Bus will be in full swing with amazing staff providing information about our services, and there will be awesome BBQ from local vendors to enjoy.
- Bergkamp and other key staff met with SPSCC leadership to discuss future collaboration on a project to transit access in the Crosby Loop area of their campus.

AUTHORITY ISSUES

Pierce invited everyone to the South Sound Regional Roadeo July 12 and 13 at the Tumwater Brewery. They are still looking for volunteer judges or just come and show your support for the Operators. It's a great opportunity to watch them skillfully navigate around cones and obstacles.

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Belk reflected on the recent, unusually controversial nature of the Transportation Policy Board (TPB) meetings, expressing gratitude for the discussion on Log Cabin Road and satisfaction with the outcome, despite his general advocacy for connectivity options. He then shifted to another contentious issue: the potential re-introduction of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and climate change language within the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). He recalls that TPB's initial recommendation to remove this language was "flatly rejected" by the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC). Belk anticipates the TPB Chair will likely reopen this discussion at the next meeting and wants to convey the sentiment of the ITA on this matter. He admits that his own vote at TPB would be different if the decision were made today, acknowledging that his initial stance was overly pragmatic due to previous experiences with grant funding under a different administration, where "checking boxes" for compliance was the priority. However, subsequent troublesome correspondence from the FTA and USDOT, coupled with feedback from his own Council, has solidified his belief that the DEI and climate change language is crucial and should be retained. He emphasizes the significant effort put into incorporating new equity considerations into the plan, expressing pride in that work. Belk asked for an informal confirmation from the ITA and with a show of hands the ITA unanimously showed in favor that Belk is accurately representing their desire to keep all the original language, including that related to DEI, climate change, and electric vehicles, intact within the RTP.

Goodwin announced the Metropolitan Park District (MPD) will have a significant presence at the "Lacey in Tune" events throughout July leading up to the August 5 election. There will be signage and staff at all concerts and movies in the park to provide information about the upcoming MPD vote. She encouraged everyone to attend these free, fun events, noting that the Lacey Transit Center serves Huntamer Park directly. The MPD outreach efforts are set to kick off in earnest at the July 3 fireworks event.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Authority, Chair Cox adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY*Carolyn Cox*

Carolyn Cox, Chair**ATTEST***Patricia Messmer*

Pat Messmer
Clerk of the Board**Date Approved: September 3, 2025**

Prepared by Pat Messmer, Clerk of the Board/Executive Assistant, Intercity Transit.