



PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY
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**PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES – JULY 15, 2015**

The Planning Committee of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) Board of Directors held a meeting in the Auditorium at PSTA Headquarters at 10:30 AM on this date. The purpose of the meeting was to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2015 Planning Committee Meeting, approve recommendation of the FY 2016 Budget Trim Notice, and present information on the Phase I Service Redesign. The following members were present:

Members Present:

Julie Bujalski, Committee Chair
Darden Rice, Committee Vice-Chair
Mark Deighton
Ken Welch

Members Absent:

Patricia Johnson (Alternate)
Janet Long

Also Present:

Brad Miller, CEO
PSTA Staff Members
Members of the Public

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Bujalski opened the meeting at 10:39 AM.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ACTION ITEMS

June 19, 2015 Meeting Minutes – Mr. Welch made a motion, seconded by Mr. Deighton to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2015 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

FY 2016 Budget Trim Notice – Ms. Deborah Leous, PSTA Chief Financial Officer, told the Committee that at this time every year, the Finance Department brings the Truth in Millage (TRIM) Notice to the Committee for their consideration. She said that part of the adopted PSTA Path Forward strategic plan, recommendations for increasing revenue include considering increasing the current PSTA millage rate from .07305 adopted in 2012 to its cap at 0.7500.

Ms. Leous noted that over the years, tax revenue has been lost due to the overall economic downturn. Since 2007, PSTA has lost \$42.5 million, and even though property tax revenue is currently going up due to property value increases, the increase is not keeping pace with the budgetary needs. She indicated that homeowners with a median home price of \$151,500 would pay \$1.98 additional tax per year with the approved increase in the proposed PSTA millage rate. For the agency, this change would result in a gain of slightly over \$1 million dollars in annual revenue, a significant impact for the budget. The tax increase, along with fare increases, cost cutting measures and redesigning of routes, allows PSTA to maintain a sustainable budget until the year 2021.

Ms. Leous mentioned the alternatives to raising the millage including increasing service cuts from 3% to 6.25% or increase fare revenue by 30% instead of 15%, both of which would result in \$1 million positive adjustment to the annual budget.

Ms. Leous suggested that as the agency continues to engage partners in the discussion of new funding sources or increased funding options, it would be prudent to have already exhausted all revenue generating options within the agency's purview. She also provided a list of other pros and cons of raising the millage rate.

Mr. Welch pointed out that PSTA will be receiving approximately \$2.5 million more in revenue due to property value increases and expressed his opinion that this needs to be acknowledged. Committee Chair Bujalski reiterated Ms. Leous' point regarding using all possible means of revenue before seeking outside help. She also believes PSTA should back up statements made during Greenlight about the need for additional funding to sustain the organization and the services provided.

Mr. Welch requested clarification on the increase in budget shortfall beginning in 2019. Ms. Leous responded that the cost of replacing buses begins to affect the overall budget at that time.

Committee Chair Bujalski questioned the operating reserve line item and asked for clarification to identify the high percentage of the reserve that is being directed to the bus replacement program (capital).

Mr. Deighton made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rice to recommend the increase in the millage rate to the Board. The motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Phase I Service Redesign – The Board will be considering several additional budget decisions, in combination with service changes, to ensure a long-term balanced budget. Cassandra Borchers, Chief Development Officer, along with Heather Sobush, Planning Manager, and Bob Lasher, External Affairs Officer, presented an overview of the Phase 1 Route Redesign plan.

The plan is based on the 2013 Community Bus Plan recommendations for route restructuring. The Community Bus Plan considered three primary scenarios (Optimal, New Revenue, and No New Revenue) taking into consideration analysis of ridership and other data, extensive public outreach and route network.

Comments collected during the Community Bus Plan development show that riders want more frequency, a longer span of service, and faster travel time from destination to destination. The data indicates that changing to a grid system and streamlining the routes would help to improve service and ridership. With the failure of the sales tax referendum in November, staff is reexamining the options presented in the Community Bus Plan under the No New Revenue Scenario.

The Route Redesign Work Plan includes 10 phases of system review from years 2015 to 2017. Over this time, every route in the system will be examined for efficiency improvements, streamlining, and other changes that would improve overall service. Phase I will begin by examining the lowest performing routes and recommending elimination, realignment, or redesign. Based on a review of performance, Community Bus Plan recommendations, new data, and comments received through public outreach, PSTA is recommending discontinuation of routes 30, 58, 444 and the East Lake Connector. Realignment of Route 18 is planned to replace Route 58 service to

St. Petersburg College (SPC) Seminole Campus. Route 1 would be redesigned as a new Route 22 to serve 22nd Avenue between Tyrone Square Mall and 4th Street North.

Staff reviewed each of the routes examined in Phase I and discussed performance evaluation, demographic analysis, ridership analysis, financial implications, and transportation alternatives for affected riders. Staff met with stakeholder groups along the routes with proposed changes to gather information about how these changes might affect businesses and employees. In addition, on-board surveys were conducted with riders to find out what their concerns are and what options they have if routes are changed. Staff also presented the schedule for planned public engagement activities including several workshops, as well as post-decision public information actions.

A series of public workshops will be offered in different areas of the community, in proximity to the route changes, so that the public can ask questions regarding the route changes.

August 10, 2015 – East Lake Library 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

August 11, 2015 – Seminole Library 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM

August 17, 2015 – Pinellas Park Library 10:00 PM – 12:00 PM

August 18, 2015 – PSTA Administrative Offices 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

A Public Hearing is scheduled for August 26, 2015 at 9:00 AM prior to the regularly scheduled Board meeting. After Board decisions are finalized, staff will inform riders to ensure they are prepared for the adjustments. Outreach efforts such as Ambassadors on buses, posting various signs and notices, and social media notifications will be implemented.

In response to Mr. Deighton's questions regarding Demand Response Service (DART) customers, Ms. Sobush replied that there are no current DART riders whose service will be affected by the recommended changes. She also clarified the various modes of alternate transportation available to other riders who might be affected.

In response to Mr. Welch's question pertaining to ridership, Ms. Sobush explained that the stop-based ridership included the number of boardings and alightings (ons and offs). Mr. Miller cited monthly boarding figures on the four routes that will be affected showing that the affected routes are not performing.

Mr. Welch was also concerned about bus operator job retention. Mr. Miller assured the Committee that no current employees would be affected by the change, but that the hiring of new bus operators may be reduced.

Ms. Rice asked how the affected bus routes were originally established and what criteria went into choosing routes. Mr. Miller replied that although the demand for service provided justification for the routes, over the years they have been low performing and that ridership has continued to decline with various service cuts. Ms. Rice asked for a list of routes that were eliminated in 2008 and those that were being considered for elimination. Committee Chair Bujalski reiterated it is important to know the history of routes and what is causing low performance, and that future presentations should include such information.

Mr. Welch was concerned that children would continue to have transportation to Gladden Park Recreation Center. Mr. Lasher advised him there is another route that runs very close to Gladden Park. The Neighborhood Services Director of the City of St. Petersburg is leading the communication with the Disston Heights neighborhood to get feedback from the riders in that neighborhood.

Mr. Jonson inquired about some high rider stops in the Seminole Mall area and coverage for those stops if Route 30 is discontinued, and was informed by Ms. Sobush that those stops, including Seminole Mall, will be served by Route 18. Committee Chair Bujalski asked that future presentations include assurance that the re-development of the Seminole Mall is being considered in route changes.

Ms. Sobush informed the Committee that several residents of Crystal Lake Manor gave public comment at the Transit Riders Advisory Committee (TRAC) meeting, expressing their concerns about elimination of Route 444. The lack of a sidewalk on 62nd Street is a significant obstacle for the residents of Crystal Lakes Manor to access other bus routes, including Route 19. The sidewalk was proposed by the county as part of a larger roadway project on 62nd Street, but that project is currently unfunded. Additionally, those residents who cannot walk to US 19 may physically qualify, but may be financially unable to use DART.

The Committee was concerned that the Lealman area is beginning the process of becoming a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and the formation of the CRA should be taken into consideration. Ms. Sobush indicated that she has met with County staff about service in the Lealman area and that the County staff has agreed to include PSTA in CRA discussions.

The Committee was also interested in researching various other community transportation options for Crystal Lakes Manor. Ms. Sobush responded that Neighborly Care Network is attempting to maximize the use of their grant-funded vehicles and is working on providing some kind of service. A "shuttle" option may be

feasible using the same provider as the DART contracted service. Staff is discussing other potential partnership options with Pinellas Park and County staff.

There was continued discussion about the East Lake Shuttle and the East Lake Connector, where it goes, how it works, and how many people ride daily. In response to Committee Chair Bujalski's call for public comment, Lisa Lanza from Clearwater, Florida made comments about funding for the Jolley Trolley and also about providing a linking route between downtown Clearwater and Dunedin for the benefit of both towns. She also suggests a Trolley route between downtown Clearwater and the beach.

Andy McLeese of Think Direct Marketing expressed his concern for the elimination of Route 58. About 25 employees would be affected by the change, possibly losing their jobs if they are not able to come to work using public transportation. It would also affect the company's recruiting efforts. Mr. McLeese mentioned that a new company, Matrix Medical, is building in that area and would also benefit by a bus route in the area.

FUTURE MEETING SUBJECTS

The Committee was provided with a list of upcoming meeting subjects.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:01 PM. The next Planning Committee meeting will be held on August 19, 2015 at 10:30 AM.