



PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY
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**TRANSIT RIDERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES – FEBRUARY 17, 2015**

The Transit Riders Advisory Committee (TRAC) of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) held a meeting in the Auditorium at PSTA Headquarters at 4:00 PM on this date. The following members were present:

Present:

Lugene Blancher, Mid County
Susan Dargusch, Beaches
Stephanie Lieshman, South County, Vice-Chair
Elaine Mann, North County, Chair
Lee Ann McIlravey, Mid County
Vivian Peters, Mid County
Jaksa Petrovic, Professional
Kimberly Rankine, DART
G. W. Rolle, South County
Demetrius Sullivan, Student
Lori Thomas, South County
David Winchell, North County

Also Present:

PSTA Staff Members

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:06 PM by Committee Chair, Elaine Mann.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Thomas made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dargusch to approve the minutes of the

January 20, 2015 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Recognition of TRAC Member, Susan Dargusch – Ms. Cassandra Borchers, Chief Development Officer, thanked Ms. Dargusch, who is moving out of the state, for her service on the TRAC Committee for the past year. Ms. Dargusch was presented with a framed certificate and given an opportunity to share some of her thoughts on how to improve ridership.

Welcome to New Members – Ms. Borchers told the Committee that the move from alternate positions to permanent positions by some of our TRAC members created new open positions to be filled. In addition, the positions of alternate professional and alternate student were created. After an open enrollment period, the nominating Committee approved five new alternate members and one permanent member to replace Ms. Dargusch. These new members are expected to attend beginning in March.

Binder Overview - At the beginning of each year, staff will update the member Welcome Binder. Committee members were given a packet of new pages to insert into their binder in place of last year's pages which can be discarded.

PSTA Financial Forecast – Mr. Brad Miller, Chief Executive Officer, told the Committee that over the next six months, he is looking to the TRAC Committee to be “the voice of the rider” as the Board makes decisions. Prior to the facilitated PSTA Board Workshop scheduled to take place on February 18th, PSTA staff is working to develop revised long-term financial projections for providing its existing transit service levels, reduced service levels, and costs of incrementally improving PSTA transit services.

A draft of the financial forecast was presented to PSTA Finance, Planning, Legislative and Board meetings and is being presented to TRAC so that all committee members will have an opportunity to understand the financial assumptions and policy implications in the PSTA's long-term forecasts.

During the development of the Greenlight Plan, the PSTA Board adopted a “Plan B” option in case Greenlight did not pass. This is called the No New Revenue Scenario. The No New Revenue Scenario includes two options, each requiring a service reduction of over 25%.

The first option is the Core Scenario which concentrates service on the highest ridership routes including the 4, 18,19, 52, 59, 60, and Central Avenue. The bus routes would be much faster and include 15 minute frequencies on these routes. There would also be a

reduction in the total number of lower demand, neighborhood routes. Although some people may be affected by this change, the plan is expected to maximize ridership and fare revenue.

The second option is to keep the current service to to neighborhoods but decrease the frequency and span of the bus service, meaning buses will not come as frequently or run as late in the evening and weekends. This is called the Coverage Scenario.

Regardless, current revenues will not be able to keep up with projected expenses. One problem PSTA is facing is that the federal government has greatly diminished discretionary funding (earmarks) for buses and bus replacements. PSTA's need for bus replacements is approximately \$40M over the next five years. Staff is recommending the following policy changes to begin to address the problem

- Distribute bus replacements to a consistent annual quantity until all buses are replaced.
- Extend the useful life on some buses to 15 years.
- Contract out express services and do not replace coaches.
- Discontinue hybrid-electric bus purchases.
- Use 100% of the Capital Grant Contingencies for buses.

Even with these changes, PSTA will still need to increase revenue in order to maintain the base service. Options for this include:

- Maximize the PSTA property tax to the statutory cap.
- Contract out and increase bus advertising.
- Initiate a fare increase plan.
- Initiate administration cost reductions.
- Seek Metro Planning Organization (MPO) allocated Federal Surface Transportation (STP) funds or other funds for bus replacements.
- Advocate for bus funding at the federal level.

FDOT Bus in Express Lanes – Scott Pringle of Jacobs Engineering Group gave a presentation on behalf of the FDOT. FDOT is currently looking at implementing tolled express lanes and options to accommodate public transportation in these planned express lanes.

Mr. Pringle told the Committee that FDOT is looking for ways to optimize the express lanes for multi-modal transit service and has conducted a feasibility study to identify various factors.

The feasibility study outlined three major objectives:

- Where are the stations?
- What is the most feasible way to operate the express service across the region?
- What are the specific plans for operation (costs, etc.)

Generally, the express service will follow the I-275 corridor from Pasco, to Hillsborough, to Pinellas County. Station locations identified for the express bus in express lanes service include:

- Wesley Chapel
- University of South Florida (USF) area
- Downtown Tampa
- Westshore
- Gateway area in St. Petersburg

Several possibilities were identified to operate the service:

- Hours of operation (5:30 am until 10:30 pm on weekdays) with 15 minute frequency in peak hours
- Hours of operation (5:30 am until 10:30 pm on weekdays) with 30 minute frequency in peak hours
- High frequency service only available during peak hours

Some options for facilitating express lanes are as follows:

- Bus Only Lanes
- Queue Jumps
- Signal Priority

FDOT is planning on engaging the public by holding a series of workshops, distributing materials and reaching out to Boards and Committees, agencies, and the community. Some of these agencies include:

- Greater Tampa Chamber
- New North Transportation Alliance
- St. Petersburg Chamber
- Tampa Bay Partnership
- Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC)
- Tampa Downtown Partnership
- Tampa International Airport (TIA)
- Westshore Alliance

FUTURE MEETING SUBJECTS

- Rider Code of Conduct
- Live Streaming of Committee Meetings

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Mann reminded the TRAC committee that we will take a group photo at the next meeting which will be posted on the PSTA web site.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 PM.

The next meeting of the TRAC will take place on March 17, 2015 at 4:00 PM.