



PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
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**TRANSIT RIDERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES – APRIL 14, 2015**

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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:

Catherine Baranowski, Alternate South County  
Lugene Blancher, Mid County  
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  
Lori Thomas, South County  
Carson Zimmer, Alternate Professional

Absent

Dennis Davis, Alternate North County  
Maranda Douglas, Alternate Mid County  
Sonny Flynn, Beaches  
Stephanie Lieshman, South County, Vice-Chair  
Christian Smith, Alternate Student  
Demetrius Sullivan, Student  
David Winchell, North County

Also Present:

PSTA Staff Members  
Bill Jonson, Chair, PSTA Board of Directors

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:06 PM by Committee Chair, Elaine Mann. Ms. Mann welcomed visiting Board Chairperson, Bill Jonson, to the meeting and introduced him to

the Committee. Mr. Jonson told the Committee how he came to be involved with PSTA and thanked the Committee for their efforts on the TRAC.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Rolle made a motion, seconded by Ms. McIlravey to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2015 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Advertising Policy – Cyndi Raskin-Schmitt, Director of Communications discussed PSTA’s revenue-generating bus advertising program and proposed expansion plans for the advertising program.

In the past, PSTA outsourced its bus advertising, but in the year 2000, PSTA began marketing ad space in-house and began restricting the content of ads to strictly commercial messages (selling of a product or service). Ad size restrictions were initiated in 2004 at the time of PSTA’s new branding began so that the new logo on the buses would not be covered up.

In 2014, PSTA began some new programs to increase revenue including hiring a part-time sales person who has generated much new business. Below is shown a history of revenue in the last few years.

- FY 2010                      \$191,359
- FY 2011                      \$305,286
- FY 2012                      \$388,040
- FY 2013                      \$351,806
- FY 2014                      \$221,021
- FY 2015                      \$309,000 contracted

PSTA proposes to outsource advertising in the future to further increase revenue. Outsourcing provides the opportunity to increase revenue while reducing overhead costs. The contracted vendor guarantees a minimum amount of revenue each year plus a percentage of any overage. The vendor also handles all the tasks including procuring vinyl, selling space, coordinating installation schedules with PSTA maintenance staff, and provides monthly reports. The contracted vendor will honor PSTA’s advertising policies and allow PSTA to maintain authority over ad content.

PSTA currently provides ads in the following sizes:

- Full Back
- Half Side
- Full Side
- King Kong
- Full Wrap

Additional small ad sizes such as King, Queen and Tail, will attract national sale advertisers. National companies (such as Coca Cola) buy a certain size ad that PSTA does not currently offer. Therefore, PSTA is losing potential revenue. The smaller ads will also target local businesses that prefer the lower cost.

PSTA's current content policy specifies the following:

- All ads must be commercial in nature, proposing the sale of a product or service
- Ads prohibit the following:
  - Alcohol or tobacco products
  - Depictions of violence, obscene or vulgar language
  - Promotion of a commercial transaction that is prohibited by federal, state or local law or regulation
  - Presents a clear and present danger of causing riot, disorder or other immediate threat to public safety, peace, or order
  - Political advertisements

PSTA is considering opening the policy slightly to accept service messages from other government agencies which could potentially increase ad revenue by \$200,000 per year and accepting alcohol ads could potentially increase ad revenue by \$50,000 per year.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been offered to advertising companies and is due at the end of April. PSTA expects to ask the Board of Directors for approval of a selected vendor in the May 27, 2015 meeting. Also in May, staff will ask the Board to refine the content policy.

The Committee asked various questions regarding current advertising policies, the bid process and advertising statistics. The TRAC requested that ad content should keep in mind "Florida Beautiful" that resonates with both tourists and locals. Mr. Miller told the Committee that PSTA would bring additional information to the TRAC after the RFP deadline.

Rider Code of Conduct - Jeff Thompson, Director of Transportation discussed the guiding principles posted on PSTA buses for the purpose of ensuring a safe and comfortable ride to customers. The current Courtesy Guidelines were drafted by the former Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) and Bus Operators and has been used for several years. The guidelines consist of the following:

- Fold strollers and carts before boarding
- Pay correct fare
- Use headphones when listening to music, at a volume that will not disrupt the safe operation of this vehicle
- Do not use rude, abusive, or vulgar language that disrupts the safe operation of this vehicle
- Refrain from eating, smoking, or drinking

Mr. Thompson told the TRAC that PSTA wishes to update the guidelines and asked the Committee for suggestions and comments. Mr. Miller added that perhaps the Committee might want to suggest more stringent rules, rather than guidelines, with bus driver enforcement. Some suggestions included the following:

- Please exit the bus using the rear doors
- Refrain from loud cell phone conversations
- Have correct fare ready prior to boarding the bus
- Remove personal belongings from seat so others can be seated

Mr. Thompson invited the Committee to e-mail additional comments or suggestions to him prior to the next meeting where he will present some guidelines from other transit authorities around the country. The Committee was in favor of exploring more stringent guidelines that would be enforceable by the driver. They also recommended more enhanced notification to riders that bus activity was under audio and video surveillance, stating that the likelihood of misconduct would decrease if riders were aware of this. In addition, they believe the riders would perceive the bus as a safer mode of public transportation. Some members of the Committee believe there are no problems with current guidelines.

Fare Revenue – Mr. Miller, Chief Executive Officer, Debbie Leous, Chief Financial Officer, and Ross Silvers, Mobility Manager, worked together to present a Fare Revenue Policy. Mr. Miller led the presentation by continuing the discussion of PSTA's new "Path Forward" concept and told the Committee that staff will be looking at ways to generate the appropriate amount of revenue from fares.

In the past, PSTA focused on maximizing the amount customers paid (fare box recovery) which sometimes negatively affected ridership. PSTA's new direction is toward a customer-oriented transit. This includes having a fare that is best for the customer such as U-Pass and other innovative programs. Fares remain a key source of revenue and provide \$14 million annually, but strategies must be developed to increase fares, allowing adequate revenue for the future.

Ms. Leous began by reviewing PSTA's current reserves stating that operating reserves are currently at two months, insurance reserves are fully covered, and general reserves are up as well. A good portion of these revenues come from the PSTA property tax, with some revenue coming from the state and the local beach trolley. To account for total fare revenue declines in the past few years, despite increasing ridership, PSTA staff is looking at increasing fare revenue to generate an additional \$1.2 million.

Mr. Silvers continued the presentation with a brief discussion about revenue generated from the U-Pass Program indicating that nearly 50,000 U-Pass trips occur each month, many trips being to destinations other than school and work. Thirty-nine percent of the U-Pass riders are new riders.

The Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program has also seen increased ridership. A year ago, 2,500 riders were receiving discounted bus passes. Today, that figure is 5,500 and still growing. Bus passes for TD trips are \$8.25 per month as compared to \$65.00 for a regular bus pass. The TD program also offers a 10-day pass for \$5.00. The increase in trips may result in some additional grant monies, supplementing the loss of revenue through discounted tickets, but not entirely. Those riders using the TD program must meet three criteria:

- Must live in Pinellas County
- Have no other means of transportation for life-sustaining purposes
- Have a household income below 150% of poverty level

PSTA works with agencies that serve the homeless and other agencies that provide assistance to those who need it. In the past, applicants needed to fill out a 2-page report documenting all medical and work related trips which then had to be verified by PSTA. This procedure was very labor-intensive and was recently changed to a more simplified process, allowing riders to qualify much faster. TD bus passes were also supplied to agencies that went through a certified training process with PSTA. These agencies work with PSTA to get riders who are in crisis get qualified within one hour. Non-profit agencies also receive a 10% discount on regular bus passes for those who do not qualify for the TD program.

It is important that PSTA find ways to increase revenue to compensate for the difference between the full retail value of TD passes and the amount received for those passes from both the customer and the grant combined. The Local Coordinating Board (LCB) has formed a subcommittee which includes two of PSTA's Board members. Public hearings will be planned for September 2015, after which time changes to the program will be voted upon.

PSTA Service Redesign Updates - Heather Sobush, Planning Manger, mentioned the presentation made by PSTA Senior Planner, Chris Cochran, last month on Performance Monitoring Methodology and the method used to evaluate route performance. The method made use of two screens, the first looking at ridership data, cost and fare revenue. The second screen consisted of a qualitative assessment based on the findings of screen #1. At that time, the TRAC had asked for additional information on the qualitative assessment, which Ms. Sobush presented at this meeting.

The process includes taking the results of Screen #1 using input from various data sources, focusing on improving higher performing routes through streamlining, increasing frequencies and hours of service, and providing more direct service. It also focused on modifying lower performing routes by redesigning through realignment, elimination of unproductive segments and reallocation of resources, combining with other routes.

The next step of the plan would be a more intense study, reviewing the following data:

- Number of low income, zero car households and seniors
- Number of people and jobs within walking distance
- Current ridership and number of boardings at stops
- Major trip generators and attractors served
- Other funding and partnership opportunities
- Travel demand
- Community goal served including economic development, community revitalization and tourism.

After some options are defined, PSTA will survey riders and speak to them about such topics as identifying potential alternatives for affected riders, and costs vs. benefits of change.

The timeline for reviewing routes has already begun. From January through May, staff will identify lower performing routes, review bus plan recommendations and current data and conduct targeted analysis of lower performing routes by surveying riders and identifying alternatives for riders of changed routes, engaging in community outreach,

and analyzing costs and benefits. In June and July, results will be presented from the targeted analysis, and options will be discussed.

### **FUTURE MEETING SUBJECTS**

- Driver Training Presentation/Driver Experience
- Customer Service Training

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 PM.

The next meeting of the TRAC will take place on May 19, 2015 at 4:00 PM.