

TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES

Date and Time: The Transit Commission met on Thursday, September 18, 2014, at 1:30 P.M. at the Wausau Downtown Airport, 725 Woods Place, Wausau, WI.

Members Present: Daniel Guild, George Peterson, Keene Winters, Sherri Abitz and Tchang Hue Yang

Members Excused: Keith Draheim, Joan Joss and Robert Mielke

Also Present: Greg Seubert, Mary Foss

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Wausau Daily Herald in the proper manner. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Abitz after noting a quorum was present.

Public Comment on Matters Appearing on the Agenda

Kathy Zoern asked what Schofield and Rothschild will do if the Weston referendum does not pass. Peterson noted that at the last meeting, Joss stated that Schofield would be out if their 2015 cost did not remain the same as 2014. Peterson stated that if the cost rises for Rothschild, they would be out as well.

Approval of Minutes

Winters moved to approve the minutes of the July 17, 2014 meeting. Peterson seconded. Motion carried.

Route K (Scenario 6) Schedule Recommendation and Cost Estimate

Seubert stated that his 2015 Budget Scenario 1 incorporates Route K (Scenario 6) at 8 trips per day. The Commission had endorsed the proposed route in July, but the exact number of daily trips was to be determined once the 2015 budget was prepared. Seubert recommended 8 trips per day, noting that the local share cost for Schofield, Rothschild and Weston was similar to the targets set at the last meeting. Abitz stated that budgets are becoming increasingly challenging and she expressed her appreciation for Seubert's effort in preparing the budget. No action was taken.

2015 Budget Scenario

Seubert stated that he prepared three budget scenarios and presented them to the City of Wausau. He provided the Commission with summaries of each scenario, along with local cost distribution exhibits. Budget Scenario #1 assumes that the Weston transit referendum will pass and Route K will operate at 8 trips per day. Budget Scenario #2 assumes that the referendum will fail and Route K will be discontinued. The result is an increase of about 5% in the City of Wausau's share of the Metro Ride budget. Budget Scenario #3 assumes that referendum fails and Route K is discontinued. A passenger fare increase is incorporated to reduce the cost for the City of Wausau. Seubert projects that we will be under budget this year, which means that the State/Federal contribution could go up from 55.6% of expense to as much as 60%. That would in turn reduce the cost for local municipalities.

Abitz asked why paratransit costs weren't reduced with the elimination of Route K. Seubert said that predicting paratransit ridership and cost is difficult, because transit dependent riders may relocate to retain access to the program.

Peterson asked about ridership loss due to the fare increase. Seubert said that he used a nationally recognized formula that assumes a 1% ridership loss for every 3% the fare is raised. He noted that the loss of Route K would mean the loss of another 2% of overall ridership.

Abitz asked bus operator Tracy Pagryzinski if bus riders have expressed concern about the loss of Route K. She said that riders are always asking for more service, not less. Bus operator Andy Klaschus said that the uncertain future of Route K makes it difficult for riders to decide where to live and where to seek employment.

Seubert said that he considered service alternatives that would reduce route frequency during the middle of the day and cut cost. He explained that the result would be unpredictable transfer connections for passengers and frequent layovers of thirty minutes. He stated that layovers would not be prudent, particularly in the winter, unless the transit center were to be modified to provide inside waiting space for customers.

Abitz asked if we could run a route that serves only the colleges. She thought maybe a survey should be sent to all the Colleges. Seubert acknowledged that current services are insufficient to meet the needs of college students, but he question where funding for additional services would come from.

Winters asked if the budgeted fare increase of \$21,000 was from Wausau alone. Seubert said yes. He stated that the last fare increase was in January 2012 and that it, along with cuts in service resulted in the loss of 20% of bus ridership. Seubert stated that Mayor Tipple's budget incorporates Metro Ride budget scenario #1. The Mayor felt that by keeping Route K in the budget it would send a positive message to citizens in Weston. No action was taken.

Consider Possible Changes to Bus Routes and/or Passenger Fares and Establish Schedule for Seeking Public Input

Seubert stated that regardless of the outcome of the Weston referendum, public input must be sought and considered before cutting services or increasing passenger fares. He noted that public notices must be published at least 14 days in advance of the hearings, so waiting until after the referendum to schedule them would provide little time to prepare before implementation of the changes. He recommended that hearings be held in October to gather input regarding the new Route K design; the possible elimination of Route K; and the proposed fare increase.

After a discussion regarding possible hearing dates, times and locations, Guild moved to empower the Transit Director to set dates and locations for public hearings. Winters seconded the motion. Seubert will contact members when details are finalized.

Transit Director's Report

Seubert stated that six Metro Ride buses had been removed from service several months ago because the frames were cracked. Since then, four used buses were acquired from Ozaukee County Transit. Although each has accumulated about 500,000 miles, the frames, which are constructed of stainless steel, are in very good shape. Seubert stated that he hoped to purchase four additional used buses from Milwaukee County Transit, but decided to pass because they were in poor condition. He and his staff will continue to look for available buses elsewhere. In the meantime, some routes are overcrowded, because too few buses are available at peak times of day.

The next regular meeting date is October 16, 2014, at 1:30 p.m.

Winters moved to adjourn the meeting. Peterson seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abitz, Chairperson