

# TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES

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Date and Time: The Transit Commission met on Thursday, November 21, 2013, at 1:00 P.M. at the Metro Ride Office, 420 Plumer Street, in Wausau

Members Present: Sherry Abitz, Keith Draheim, George Peterson, Daniel Guild, Keene Winters, Robert Mielke and Joan Joss

Members Excused: Txang Hue Yang

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.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Mielke moved to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2013 meeting. Guild seconded. The motion carried.

## **Public Comment on Matters Appearing on the Agenda**

Peckham asked for an update on bike racks. He said he hasn't seen any bikes on the racks. Bus operator Tracy Pagryzinski stated that every route encounters at least one bike every day.

## **Financial Report/Budget**

Seubert presented a year-to-date financial statement. He explained that expenses are fully allocated between bus service and paratransit service in his annual operating budget. However, the allocation not occurring on the City's financial statements. This disparity creates an overstatement of bus expenses and an understatement of paratransit expenses on the year-to-date financial statement. It also makes it difficult to compare year-to-date expenses to budgeted expenses. Seubert stated that he manually adjusts expenses each month in order to prepare paratransit reports, but is uncomfortable with the fact that monthly financial statements do not match those reports. Seubert said that financial statements will be reconciled at year-end. Moving forward, Seubert would like to automate the allocation of personnel expenses and perform some monthly adjustments with Metro Ride staff. He has had some discussion in that regard with the finance department.

Revenues are lagging, but they should catch up in fall when school resumes and ridership increases. Expenses are under budget overall, but tire expense is over budget. Seubert stated that in recent years capital funds were used to acquire spare tires with each new bus. By using capital funds, rather than operating funds, tire expenses were somewhat understated. Seubert said he may not have taken that into account when he prepared the 2013 budget. Excess tire expenses should be offset by lower parts expense. Seubert indicated that paratransit revenues and expenses are under budget because ridership is lower than anticipated.

Seubert noted that his 2014 budget was prepared with the assumption that Route K would be continued. He announced that all 3 municipalities have now confirmed their intent to continue the route next year. Some minor budget adjustments were made since the transit commission last met, largely relating to health insurance expenses. However, the amounts paid by each municipality changed only slightly. Transit services and fares will remain unchanged.

No action was taken.

## **Wheels-to-Work Program**

Seubert stated that funding for the Wheels-to-Work program has traditionally come from a section of the Federal Transportation Act dedicated to job access programs. The State of Wisconsin had a similar funding program for that same purpose. When Congress reauthorized the Federal Transportation Act in 2011, they streamlined the various programs and access to jobs programs will now draw funds from transit operating assistance (Section 5307). Since the City of Wausau is the only designated recipient for 5307 funds in the Wausau urban area, the Wheels-to-Work program can only apply for them as part of the City's State and Federal transit operating assistance applications.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has indicated that fewer funds are available now that programs are combined. WisDOT is not certain how this will impact overall transit funding, but it may mean fewer funds available for transit services. Seubert wanted the Transit Commission to be aware that Mayor Tipple has agreed to include the Wheels-to-Work program in the City's grant application.

Winter stated that he has concerns about parking issues in the downtown and suggest that increased support for transit may reduce the need for additional parking ramps. He suggested that transportation needs be considered more comprehensively so that programs are complementary to one another and not competitive. Abitz suggested that the Chamber of Commerce provide assistance by working with the businesses community to promote transit services. Seubert said a more comprehensive look at transportation needs is a great idea, but it would have to occur after the 2014 grant application has been submitted. The grant is due by December 30<sup>th</sup>.

Seubert stated that he has met with representatives from the Wheels-to-Work program. They indicated that the program is not designed to take away transit riders. It is designed to augment transit services by serving locations where transit service is limited or unavailable.

Mielke noted that his brother is involved in the Wheels-to-Work program, and in order to avoid a conflict of interest, he would abstain from voting in this agenda item.

Winter suggested that the program consider whether people applying for a car could take the bus instead. Becky Zorowski, who represents the Wheels-to-Work program, said that people who apply for a vehicle are placed on a waiting list, because there aren't enough vehicles to go around. While on the waiting list, there will be several options for getting back and forth to work or school, including a shuttle van, cab vouchers or bus vouchers. Options will vary depending on where they live. The program would take care of the cost of those options in the interim. They currently have clients on an 8 month waiting list.

Seubert stated that the new funding arrangement will present some challenges for the Wheels-to-Work program. State and Federal funds have historically covered 100% of program costs, but only about 55% of cost will now be covered. Additionally, actual funding levels will not be known until after the first quarter of 2014, yet the program will begin incurring costs starting January 1.

Seubert stated that the City of Wausau will be required to ensure that the Wheels-to-Work program complies with Federal and State requirements that come with the funding. He and his staff will be responsible for overseeing the program in that regard.

No action was taken.

### **Transit Funding Proposal**

Seubert stated that three of our State elected officials appeared at the NAOMI transit forum and all indicated they did not support the funding proposal. Seubert noted that an RTA proposal, specific to the Fox Cities, has been introduced in the legislature. Winters suggested that other people be made aware of our funding proposal. Seubert said that he is chairman of the Wisconsin Urban and Rural Transit Association (WURTA) and has introduced the proposal to the WURTA executive and legislative committees. They thought it was interesting and may serve as a fallback if RTA proposals fail. Seubert thinks that the only way to gain momentum for the proposal locally is to get the business community involved. He suggested that transportation gaps identified in the soon to be released United Way LIFE Report may cause the business community to become more involved.

### **Transit Director's Report**

Seubert stated that we will begin a recruitment to fill two vacant part-time bus operator positions now that the continuance of Route K has been confirmed. The vacancies have caused us to pay overtime.

Seubert state that he is in the process of designing and printing bus route maps that will include Route K. Information for Route K is currently provided in the form of a separate map insert. A Hmong language version of the rider's guide will also be developed. Joss asked about a Hispanic language version. Seubert stated that analysis of census data indicates that the Hispanic speaking population is insufficient to warrant a Hispanic version.

Seubert stated that in February the FTA will visit to perform their Triennial Review. They will evaluate our compliance with 23 program areas. We have already provided them with materials for their desk review. Between

now and then we will be reviewing and possibly updating written procedures. Some changes may require Transit Commission approval.

Seubert stated that he doesn't anticipate a meeting in December unless something comes up. The next regular meeting date would be Thursday, January 16, 2014.

Kathy Zoern, representing NAOMI, circulated a letter that seeks support of the Fox Cities RTA Bill. She requested that members consider preparing a similar letter.

Abitz asked if there would be any upcoming changes in passenger fares. Seubert said that no changes are planned for 2014.

Guild said that in January, Weston would like to share with the Transit Commission their plans regarding the conclusion of their transit referendum obligation, which will occur at the end of 2014.

Seubert stated that he will be developing 2014 transit service contracts for Rothschild, Schofield and Weston in the coming weeks.

Mielke moved to adjourn the meeting. Winters seconded. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abitz, Chairperson

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