

# TRANSIT COMMISSION MINUTES

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Date and Time: The Transit Commission met on Thursday, November 20, 2014 at 1:30 P.M. at the Wausau Downtown Airport, 725 Woods Place, Wausau, WI.

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

Members Excused: Daniel Guild and Txanj 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 18, 2014 meeting. Joss seconded. Motion carried.

## **Financial Report**

Seubert provided the Revenue & Expense Summary for the period ending September 30, 2014. Expenses are at 70.8% of budget, while revenues are at 68.6%. Seubert stated that state and federal assistance will be higher than expected and he hopes it will make up the difference. He expressed concern about overtime costs caused by a shortage in bus operator staffing. Abitz asked about a part-time bus operator vacancy that Seubert has requested to fill. He explained that the position was budgeted, but he has delayed filling it in an attempt to operate with fewer drivers. The cost of overtime has caused him to conclude that it would have been cheaper to fill the position. Seubert provided an exhibit that compares labor cost using overtime versus regular wages. The annual cost of paying overtime exceeds the cost of paying regular wages by \$3,245.32. No Action was taken.

## **Consider Elimination of Route K and Paratransit Service in the City of Schofield, Village of Rothschild and Village of Weston**

Two public hearings were held on October 22, 2014 to consider the elimination of Route K and paratransit service in Schofield, Rothschild and Weston. Seubert provided copies of attendance lists; written comments received; and a summary of oral testimony. Seubert noted that subsequent to the hearings, voters in Weston decided not to increase their tax rate to pay for transit services. As a result, Weston will not fund transit services after December 31, 2014.

Peterson stated that Rothschild included transit services in their budget, but they cannot support the service on their own. Joss stated that Schofield already removed transit services from their budget after hearing the results of the Weston referendum. She suggested that the wording of the referendum question promoted "no" votes. Draheim stated that people with disabilities will suffer without transit services. Winters stated that the communities need to work together. He noted that Weston is the richest of the four communities and we need to send the message that this is disappointing to everyone. Abitz stated that this is going to be a burden for family members and it will take independence away from the disabled. Mielke indicated that he sent an email to the Village of Weston stating that he felt that conducting the referendum and putting out the disabled was morally wrong. Joss has asked that these comments be forwarded to Weston.

Winters moved to eliminate Route K and paratransit service in Schofield, Rothschild and Weston. Peterson seconded. The motion failed. Seubert stated that State statutes prohibit the provision of transit services across municipal boundaries without a cost sharing agreement and he requested that they reconsider their vote. Upon reconsideration the motion carried 3-2.

## **Consider Passenger Fare Increase**

Seubert provided a passenger fare and ridership exhibit that he included in his budget (scenario #3). He proposed the fare increase in the exhibit to address an estimated \$30,000 funding gap caused by the loss in

participation of Schofield, Rothschild and Weston. He estimates that fare revenue will increase by \$22,000, while ridership will decrease by 23,000 passengers or about 4%. Metro Ride reserve funds will be used to fill the remaining funding gap. He indicated that notice of the proposed fare increase was published in the Daily Herald and mailed to stakeholders in advance of two public hearings. No input was received in opposition to the fare increase.

Winters moved to approve the passenger fare increase as proposed. Joss seconded. Motion carried.

#### **Consider Location of Future Transit Commission Meetings**

Seubert stated that the airport was selected as a meeting location, in part, because it was more centrally located for the four participating municipalities. He noted that with the loss of members from Schofield, Rothschild and Weston, meeting at the Wausau City Hall or Metro Ride may be more convenient. Draheim expressed a preference for meeting at Metro Ride, because he has found the ramp and the doors at City Hall to be difficult at times. Winters moved to approve Metro Ride as the location for future meetings. Joss seconded. Motion carried.

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

Seubert provided a ridership report that shows fixed-route bus ridership is down by 2.81% and passenger revenue is down by 2.91% compared to last year. He noted that a big fare increase and significant service cuts in 2012 resulted in a 20% ridership loss. In 2015 Metro Ride will revert back to 2012 service levels, which represent a 33% loss of regular routes since 2009.

The paratransit operations report shows a cost per trip of about \$70. Seubert stated that paratransit trips are generally provided one at a time, which is why the cost per trip is so high compared to fixed-route bus service. Metro Ride no longer contracts for paratransit services, because low ridership makes it difficult to attract contractors. Abitz asked if we have any comparisons of rides provided in other cities our size. Seubert stated that Metro Ride provides far fewer paratransit rides than any of our peers.

Seubert provided a fleet status update. Four buses acquired from Ozaukee County have been placed into service and are working well. He would like to acquire four additional used buses so that overcrowding can be addressed at peak times of day. Currently, no spare buses are available at peak times to accommodate mechanical breakdowns. Duluth and St. Louis may be selling buses early next year. Funds have been appropriated for this purpose.

The next regular meeting date is January 15, 2015, at 1:30 p.m. at Metro Ride.

Mielke moved to adjourn the meeting. Draheim seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abitz, Chairperson

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