

**BATTLE CREEK CITY COMMISSION
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
JANUARY 28, 2009
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
MULTIPURPOSE ROOM; 150 SOUTH KENDALL
4:00 P.M.**

Committee Members Present: Commissioners Baldwin, Hersha, Thompson, Walker

Committee Members Absent: None

Others Present: Greg Zanotti, Public Works Transportation Director; Jerry Hutchison, Transit Manager; James Ritsema, Assistant City Manager; Deidre Laser, City Clerk; Alison Townsend; Larry Strange; and Phil Kazmierski; Ebony Thorpe, Andy Tilma; Deb Crippen; Loren Antes

Call to Order: Commissioner Baldwin called the meeting to order at 4:07 P.M.

Public Comment: None.

Jerry Hutchison welcomed and introduced those in attendance. He noted the purpose of the meeting was to update the Committee on the Transit Study and draft recommendations developed by the Corradino Group.

Review of Transit Study – Larry Strange

Larry Strange reported that the Corradino Group looked at Battle Creek Transit, how it is operating today, and considered if this is the best way for it to operate in the future. Data was collected and focus groups met. The entire bus system was surveyed regarding ridership, trip activity, future services and fares.

The On Board survey revealed that most citizens walk to a bus stop, most ride the bus daily, and many wanted evening service. Of those surveyed 34% rode the bus to work and 26% rode the bus to shop. When asked if a fare increase would affect usage, 73% answered, “no.”

Route productivity showed average weekday ridership for the following routes:

1W/ West Michigan	193
2E/Emmett – East Ave.	178
2W/Columbia – Territorial	323
3E/Main – Post	428
3W/Kendall – Goodale	408
4S/ S. W. Capital	276
4N/N.E. Capital	234
5W/Fort Custer	311

The overall transit system was found to work efficiently. Each route was analyzed by looking at boardings, demographics, job locations, flex routes and residences. The Corradino Group concluded their design for optimal service looked very similar to what exists today. They also considered ways to reach low density areas.

Comm. Baldwin asked if routes were implemented where they didn't exist before, would there be ridership.

Larry Strange stated they applied demographic data to a clean slate. Typically riders have lower incomes and fewer automobiles per household. However, the transit system developed as the same basic structure.

Comm. Hersha shared his concern regarding students using the transit system who live on the south side of town; however, the colleges are located on the north side of town. The schedule is time consuming and asked if the study considered their needs.

Mr. Strange remarked that one of the recommendations is a south side circulator which would drastically decrease the length of time south-side students would ride the bus.

Mr. Strange turned the meeting over to Alison Townsend and Jerry Hutchison to explain the short, medium and long-term recommendations.

Short Term Recommendations – (Now to 6 months)

Jerry Hutchison indicated the short-term recommendations are those that could be implemented relatively quickly at little or no cost within six months. Medium-term recommendations have a time frame of six months to two years and would involve making route changes that would require additional resources. The long-term recommendations, two years or longer, would require more study for new services and possibly partnering with Kalamazoo and Marshall for regional services.

Alison Townsend reviewed the following short term recommendations:

1. Shorten 1W by ending it at McDonalds making it a ½ hour route
2. Reconfigure 2E
3. Interline Routes 3E & 3W on weekdays
4. Improve 4N headway to 30 minutes
5. Resume regular service to Felpausch on 4N
6. Restore 30 minutes headways on Saturday to 2E, 3E, 3W, & 4N.

Jerry Hutchison added that the W. Michigan route has the lowest ridership and the recommendations would make better use of the resources in another area.

Alison Townsend said there would be no physical changes to 3E and 3W; however, the same equipment would be used.

Mr. Strange indicated that studies show when frequency of service is increased; there is a corresponding increase in ridership.

Comm. Baldwin asked if the study looked at expanding night hours.

Mr. Strange responded there are fewer people using the buses at night and there are limited resources.

Mr. Hutchison added that expanded hours would require another shift of personnel and would perhaps double the budget.

Medium Term Recommendations – (6 months to 2 years)

Alison Townsend reviewed the following medium recommendations:

1. Reconfigure Route 2W
2. Reconfigure Route 4S
3. Add Beckley Road circulator route
4. Establish a Super Stop
5. Provide potential service to casino
6. Relocation of BCT transfer facility
7. Plan for regional connections with Kalamazoo and/or Marshall
8. Evaluate downtown and Fort Custer circulators
9. Evaluate the expansion of evening van service

Jerry Hutchison noted the recommendation for a Beckley Road circulator route was to provide a greater level of service for citizens to travel around the Beckley Road area, including doctor's offices, stores, apartments, etc. It would take approximately \$75,000-\$150,000 to implement the Beckley Road circulator route.

Greg Zanotti added that one of the advantages of the circulator route for people living in south side apartments is they would not have to ride downtown.

Vice Mayor Walker liked the circulator idea and asked if Mr. Hutchison had considered a fee structure.

Mr. Hutchison stated it will require some work to finalize the project.

Mr. Strange remarked that the private business sector may want buy-in into a circulator route.

Comm. Thompson asked Ms. Townsend to demonstrate the route a student would take from Beckley Road to KCC.

With the development of the casino, Mr. Hutchison stated there has been some interest in Kalamazoo and Marshall to have a regional bus connection. A few years ago, Battle Creek provided a limited bus service to Marshall, The Link, and it was successful.

Mr. Zanotti commented that the casino will generate many jobs and there may be a need for bus transportation.

Based on riders indicating the main reason they come downtown is to access government buildings like City Hall and the Toeller building, Mr. Zanotti stated it makes sense to move the current downtown transfer point closer to City Hall, possibly on South Avenue. He noted that very few riders get off city buses to connect to trains.

Comm. Thompson was pleased with the ideas.

In regards to extended evening van service, Mr. Hutchison stated that some workers have a hard time getting home from their jobs and they would like to evaluate the need further over the next two years.

Long Term Recommendations – (2 years or longer)

1. Add downtown and Fort Custer circulators
2. Add connectors to Kalamazoo and Marshall
3. Expand evening van service if feasible

Mr. Hutchison stated these final recommendations would clearly require finding other funding sources to help implement them.

Comm. Hersha asked if the bus drivers were included in the focus groups.

Mr. Strange responded some bus drivers did attend the focus groups in April.

Grant Possibilities

Mr. Hutchison announced there are a couple of grant programs available to transit systems to receive funding to implement the recommendations:

- 1) The JARC Program assists employment transportation. It is a competitive grant process with 100% funding with no local match. Transit will be working with the Corradino Group to put together and file an application by March 1, 2009. Part of the process is to obtain public input as required under the regulations.
- 2) The New Freedoms Program provides operating and capital funding to improve the type of services for individuals with disabilities. This funding program would allow Transit to expand the level of service that we currently provide. However, it requires a 50% local match.

Mr. Zanotti felt from a planning perspective the south side circulator makes sense and asked for feedback on moving forward with the grant application.

Mr. Hutchison stated there are a number of details that would need to be worked out: where to place the Super Stop, the schedule, the fare, etc.

Vice Mayor Walker agreed with the concept.

Comm. Hersha supported the concept, but asked in what other communities circulators have worked. He felt it would be meaningful if the public could see examples.

Mr. Strange replied that Louisville, Kentucky has a circulator that serves the Blue Grass Industrial Park. There are many other areas that have circulators.

Motion: A motion was made by Comm. Thompson, supported by Comm. Baldwin, to move forward with making a grant application for a Beckley Road circulator route.

Vice Mayor Walker asked Mr. Hutchison to provide a report to the committee regarding the grant and project progress.

All yes. Motion carried.

Next Steps: An Open House will be held at Full Blast on Thursday, January 29, 2009, from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. to present recommendations from the Battle Creek Transit Planning Study to citizens. Mr. Hutchison noted the Open House has been widely publicized.

Public Hearing: The Battle Creek City Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, at 7:00 P.M. to receive public comments regarding the transit study and plan. The JARC application and formal adoption of the plan would be approved at a subsequent meeting.

Next Meeting: Comm. Hersha asked that future meetings be held near a bus stop. It was agreed to meet February 11, 2009, at 4:00 P.M. at Full Blast.

Adjournment: 5:35 P.M.

DAL