

**BATTLE CREEK CITY COMMISSION
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
COMMISSION CHAMBERS – CITY HALL
10 N. DIVISION STREET
February 4, 2016
4:00 PM**

Committee Members Present: Commissioners Baldwin, Faris, Flores, and Gray

Committee Members Absent: None.

City Staff Present: Rich Werner, Donna Hutchison, Larry Bowron and Victoria Houser

Others: Tracy Gadell, Calhoun Community High School

Call to Order: Rich Werner called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM.

Organizational Issues

A. Selection of Chairperson

A motion was made by Comm. Gray, supported by Comm. Faris, to elect Comm. Baldwin as Chairperson of the Public Transportation Committee. All yes, none opposed. Motion carried.

B. Approval of January 21, 2014 Public Transportation Committee meeting minutes

Comm. Baldwin asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of January 21, 2014.

A motion was made by Comm. Gray, supported by Comm. Faris, to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2014, Public Transportation Committee meeting. All yes, none opposed. Motion carried.

Issue Briefs:

A. ADA No Show Policy

Mr. Werner, Transit Manager, presented a survey of ADA versus Non-ADA no-shows during the time period of July 2015 to December 2015. Mr. Werner stated there were only 14 suspensions due to violations of BC Transit's no-show policy, stating none of the individuals were ADA certified, noting the most recent ADA certified suspension was in January 2015. Mr. Werner further stated there have been 40 non-ADA certified individuals suspended since that same time.

Mr. Werner discussed the Tele-Transit No Show Policy, stating that individuals who do not show for 3 rides within a 30 day period, will be suspended for 30 days. Mr. Werner noted that trips missed for reasons beyond the individuals control will not be considered No-Shows. Mr. Werner stated the federal government has found that transit agencies had policies that encumbered ADA individuals, stating the recommendation the Transit agency create a policy to track each individual and use their percentage of trips missed, and then to determine a punishment that is feasible for the number of rides. Mr. Werner recommended the elimination of the No-Show policy for ADA

passengers, stating a public hearing for a change in policy was not necessary as a fee was not collected for ADA customers. Mr. Werner recommended keeping the current policy in place for Non-ADA passengers. Mr. Werner noted a No-Show policy was not mandated by the Federal Government, but was necessary to reduce the incidents of No-Shows, stating there is a cost for No-shows. Mr. Werner stated passengers who consistently fail to cancel or take the scheduled trip have been reserved a ride that could have been available to another passenger.

Mr. Werner stated ADA customers would receive a letter in the future regarding the missed ride, but would not have any punishment.

Comm. Faris requested the language in the reminder letter be in a friendly, non-threatening tone.

Larry Bowron, Transportation Director, stated letters would be sent to all ADA customers notifying them of the policy change.

B. Main/Post Route Issues

Mr. Werner presented several maps of a route on the Main and Post route, beginning with the original route that used Winding Way that ran through an apartment complex. Mr. Werner stated the deterioration of Taft Street, in Emmett Township, resulted in a re-routing of the transit bus down Bonita Drive. Mr. Werner stated damage to a Transit vehicle and injury to a Transit driver while traveling on Bonita resulted in a secondary re-routing to enter the parking lot of Main Street Market instead of traveling down Winding Way, noting there was not a turnaround area at River Oaks Apartments, stating residents then had to walk .24 miles to the bus stop.

Mr. Werner stated the parking area at Main Street Market, off Bonita Street, is too damaged to use, in addition the abundance of vehicles for sale in the parking lot hinders the maneuverability of the Transit vehicle. Mr. Werner recommended the Transit route be changed to traverse from Main Street, to Massachusetts, to Taft, with a stop at Kingman, then to proceed to Main Street, noting customers of Main Street Market would now need to walk .26 miles from the bus stop at Kingman and Main Streets. Mr. Werner emphasized the changes were necessary to prevent damage to Transit equipment and injury to staff.

Mr. Bowron stated the City has talked with Tim Hill, Emmett Township Supervisor, for 18 months, stating he is hopeful they can find funding, and that the proposed re-routing is temporary, as Transit would like to minimize the impact to transit passengers.

Mr. Werner stated he and his staff have looked at all other roads in the area, noting Richmond, Alden, and Lyda are all in bad condition.

Comm. Gray asked if the parking lot a Family Dollar Store would provide enough room for a bus stop.

Mr. Werner stated his preference not to use retail parking lots as Transit would be responsible to maintain or repair their parking lot, stating this could cause potential risks.

Comm. Faris expressed concern the closest bus stop to Main Street Market was a quarter of a mile.

Mr. Bowron stated it was believed Emmett Township would soon enter into an agreement with Calhoun County to have the roads repaired, as Bedford and Pennfield Township have done.

Comm. Gray stated she would prefer to see a more aggressive time line for a response from Emmett Township.

Comm. Baldwin reminded the Committee the Transit system needed to stay within the City budget, while considering the safety of the equipment and staff. Comm. Baldwin recommended Emmett Township residents lobby their council to properly repair the roads so that Battle Creek Transit would not damage their equipment while providing services to their residents.

Mr. Bowron agreed to follow up with the City Manager to see if she has received any additional information from Tim Hill, and to stress to him how the reduction of Transit routes affect his residents.

Committee members discussed other possible routes. Mr. Werner noted this is a very busy route and that the 30 minute time limit was very tight.

Committee members expressed approval of the proposed temporary route, with a recommendation to contact Emmett Township to determine their progress on a road funding plan.

C. Bus shelter at Main Street near Hamblin Ave.

Mr. Werner discussed problems with the bus shelter located on Main Street in front of the Liberty Mart convenience store. Mr. Werner stated the owner approached the Police Department with concerns of persons drinking in his parking lot, resulting in the posting of signs on his property prohibiting loitering and alcohol consumption in his parking lot. Mr. Werner stated this resulted in customers loitering in the bus shelter and drinking, which caused numerous complaints from residents with children who were waiting for the bus, and bus drivers who had difficulties with intoxicated persons. Mr. Werner stated they would be removing the shelter, stating they were working with CA to move the shelter down a few blocks to prevent accidents.

Mr. Bowron agreed they would find a location in the spring that would serve this route.

D. Springfield Service Request

Mr. Bowron informed the Committee that Nate Hennee, Springfield City Manager, has requested the City consider service in Springfield, stating he has provided a cost based proposal that would be reviewed by the Springfield City Council.

Discussion:

Student/Youth Bus Fare

Mr. Bowron stated Comm. Helmboldt has requested the Transit Department consider free fares to students, stating the idea was sparked by a fund raiser for the Calhoun Community High School to collect funds for currently discounted student bus fares.

Mr. Werner presented a chart of the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 cost of transit services per trip, per mile and per hour, along with a chart of ridership, noting every time someone steps on a bus, it is considered a trip. Mr. Werner noted Transit charges only \$1.25 for a full fare trip, but that the actual cost per trip was \$5.61. Mr. Werner also noted only 28% of the trips pay the full fare price of \$1.25, noting this is how the City provides service to the community.

Mr. Bowron stated students currently receive a 47% discount, valid for school activity only, stating they are required to pay full fare for other than school activity trips, stating the student must have a valid student bus pass and valid/current school issued student picture ID. Mr. Bowron stated this results in a subsidy of \$3,388 for FY 2014/2015. Mr. Bowron discussed fare changes, including raising the height of the “Shorter than Fare Box” measurement from 41” to 52”, which is the average

height of youth 11 years old. Mr. Bowron stated this would have an estimated impact of \$7,500 to \$20,000 unrealized revenue.

Mr. Bowron discussed next steps, stating City staff would develop program requirements in accordance with the draft policy, with a presentation to the Commission. Mr. Bowron stated the changes to the fare policy would require a public hearing and a resolution approved by the Commission. Mr. Bowron stated they would like to implement the new program at either the start of the new fiscal year, July 1, 2016, or the onset of the 2016/17 school year.

Comm. Baldwin noted there are only a few Transit services that are able to fund themselves, stating most are similar to Battle Creek, in that they need general funds. Comm. Baldwin recommended staff determine if all of the Battle Creek area schools provide student IDs, asking also about the ridership to Kellogg Community College. Comm. Baldwin recommended a follow-up meeting to continue the discussion once more information is obtained.

Public Comment

Tracy Gadell discussed the school's pursuit of grant funds to help obtain student bus passes. Ms. Gadell stated several students request to leave school early to catch the bus that runs on Territorial.

Mr. Werner noted the Territorial route is an hour, stating it goes out bound near the school, then 10 minutes later inbound, stating there are numerous other stops nearby within the hour period, including 20th or Columbia.

Member Comment

Comm. Faris expressed her appreciation the subject was being discussed, stating transit positively impacts the local economy and education.

Comm. Baldwin noted that Comm. Sherzer expressed concern about low income adults who have to pay, when children ride without charge, stating he also expressed disciplinary concerns when large numbers of kids were on the buses. Comm. Baldwin also noted there were concerns with increased ridership resulting in a need for an additional bus.

Mr. Werner stated the concern would be the older fleet, stating there could be issues with both equipment and drivers.

Comm. Baldwin stated Mayor Walters had concerns that students already receive discounts and how the elimination of student fares would affect the Transit budget, stating he was willing to review the recommendation of the Committee. Comm. Baldwin also noted Comm. Owens expressed her support for free student fares, but requested Mr. Werner's input due to State and Federal rules.

Mr. Bowron stated he would try to convene a meeting by the end February or very beginning of March to ensure Comm. Baldwin would be able to attend.

Mr. Werner requested Committee members provide suggestions on how to reach out to stake holders and the public.

Comm. Baldwin recommended staff contact the schools to inquire as to student IDs.

Adjournment

Comm. Baldwin adjourned the meeting at 5:17 PM.