

Spokane Transit Authority
1230 West Boone Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99201-2686
(509) 325-6000

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the January 9, 2008, Meeting
Northside Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Victor Frazier
Dean Lynch
Brenda Smits
David Swalling

STAFF PRESENT

Steve Blaska, Director of Operations
Naomi Dunning, Executive Assistant
Molly Myers, Communications Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT

Fyrne Bemiller
Barbara Bumann
Greg Falk
Bob Faltermeyer
Elaine Hoskin
Margaret Jones
Kathleen Stevens

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS (David Swalling)

Chairman Robert Faltermeyer was absent for this meeting. Committee Member, David Swalling was the acting Chairman for this meeting.

Mr. Swalling called the meeting to order at 5:12 p.m.

2. MINUTES OF CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE – CORRECTIONS OR APPROVAL

The minutes for December 12, 2007 were not approved due to not having a quorum. They will be brought forth at the next regular committee meeting for approval.

3. TARIFF POLICY – FARE STRUCTURE MATRIX

As a follow-up from the work done on the Fare Structure Matrix at the December 12, 2007 meeting, Mr. Steve Blaska, Director of Operations began by verifying the list of “Products” agreed upon at the last meeting, which included: Two Hour Pass; Day Pass; Calendar Monthly Pass; City Ticket Pass; Summer Pass (Youth); Weekend; 3 Month Pass; Ticket Book; 31 day rolling pass; 7 day pass; 14 day pass. The “Fare Structure Matrix” is a grid representing “Products” down the left side, and “Customer Categories” across the top. Once completed, this working aid will provide a solid structure to work from when moving forward with the project as a whole, and in keeping with the master calendar as previously set forth in order to make a final recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Blaska continued by discussing the “Customer Categories” to be reviewed. The customer list is comprised of categories as represented in the Tariff Policy notebook.

Following their review of each customer category suggested, the Committee jointly agreed on a revised list of Customer Categories paired with the revised set of products to further develop in working towards a new fare structure matrix. A revised matrix representing the Committee’s choices for both “Products” and “Customer Categories” will be provided at the next meeting in February.

Mr. Blaska stated that the first three customer categories to be reviewed, (Adult, Youth, VIP) are fairly standard and straight forward categories. Following is a recap of the categories reviewed:

ADULT

This category is defined as ages 19 through 64, and will remain in the fare structure matrix.

YOUTH

The “Youth” category is defined as 6 through 18 years of age, with 6 and under free with an adult. Currently, the discount only applies to monthly passes. The 2 hour price is the same as adult. The committee elected to keep this category with the proposed change of a youth 6 and under riding with an adult is free.

VIP

The qualifications for this category are defined as: 65 years of age and older, has a qualifying disability, or has a valid Medicare card issued by the Social Security Administration. There is federal guidance for pricing in this category. Mr. Blaska also mentioned that at the March meeting, STA Ombudsman, Susan Millbank, and Legal Counsel, Laura McAloon, will be in attendance to provide and discuss information on exactly what the law dictates for this category of customer. This category will remain in the fare structure matrix.

ZONE

This category was dismissed under the premise that it would be very difficult to define zones in a city the size of Spokane. The Committee elected to strike this category from the fare structure matrix.

EXPRESS

A differential fare was discussed for express service. It can be defined by time of day, or by route/location. An express pass vs. a regular pass may be a possibility. The connectivity between this and other passes, i.e., monthly and EWU would need to be considered. Currently, most of the express riders use a monthly pass. Committee members also submitted that they and others they know would be willing to pay more for an express service as the time saved is valuable. This category will remain in the fare structure matrix.

LOW INCOME

Following extensive discussion, the Committee elected to strike this category due to the extensiveness of verifying riders' income for qualification, invasion of privacy, staff time, etc. on the premise that the need is accounted for in other ways. Mr. Blaska reiterated there are mass venues through which low income populations are currently reached by STA via state grant programs which are already established, i.e. DSHS, Community Centers, Feed Spokane Program, etc. It was discussed that as the Tariff Policy forms into a final product, the Committee may choose to make a formal recommendation that the needs of low income and other populations are recognized and the Committee's view is that these populations are best served by established social service and educational networks and STA should be encouraged to develop relationships that access funding for discounted programs.

STUDENT

Currently STA does not technically have a "student" category. The agency does however, participate in a side program for student passes via the university pass programs for students who are enrolled in an institution which provides federal financial aid, or has obtained a vocational school license by the Washington State Workforce Training Education Coordination Board. In order for the students to benefit from the discount, the school sends STA their certificate or validation. Once the school is registered, the students present their student i.d. card at the point of purchase to receive the discount. Currently the students are receiving the \$33 pass for \$26 and it is marketed to the qualifying institutions by the STA Communications Department. This program has been very successful, and has been expanded to include workforce training sites. Due to this being a program vs. a category, the Committee elected to strike this category from the fare structure matrix.

VISITORS

The committee liked the idea of marketing the bus to visitors, educating visitors to the system, and encouraging them to ride the bus. Mr. Blaska submitted that for special events (National Figure Skating event, Hoopfest, Bloomsday, First Night, etc.) there have been special passes sold, some of which have been more successful than others. After lengthy discussion and in conjunction with the service that has been provided for large/special events, the Committee elected to strike this category from the fare structure matrix. The Committee strongly encourages STA to make an ongoing marketing effort to appeal to visitors and making the system accessible.

In general, Mr. Blaska offered two items to consider when moving forward with review of the Fare Structure Matrix:

1. How to identify the population. What is the discriminator to identify a member of any given customer category?
2. If we have a fare differential, how much of an incentive is it for that population?

SPECIAL NOTE

Mr. Frazier discussed having a category for a military discount. Mr. Lynch offered that perhaps they could participate in a program similar to that of the student program. Mr. Blaska submitted that through the Federal Government, there is a voucher program and the military participates in the vanpool program for free. Mr. Blaska is going to verify if this is applicable to bus passes as well.

4. TARIFF POLICY PROJECT PLANNING CALENDAR

Mr. Blaska spoke about the planning calendar and presented different scenarios of timing based on when the Committee would like to implement the fare change. Some of the key items to consider when compiling the timeline are pricing, draft proposal to the Board of what will be taken to the public, public outreach, response to any input, any final revisions, public hearing for the final recommendation (this hearing can take place at the same meeting as the final Board approval of the recommendation), implementation. Steve noted that there is not a requirement to provide 6 months notification to the public before implementation, and while there is some logic about implementation at the first of the year (January 1, 2009), it is not required.

Mr. Blaska noted that another item for consideration is the when the sales tax reauthorization will be presented for a vote. It could be May, August, or November. It is the general feeling that it is not prudent to have the reauthorization on the same ballot as a presidential election. CEO, E. Susan Meyer is currently advocating for the vote to be on the May ballot, which makes for a constrained timeline.

These issues are key when considering the Committee's public outreach for changes to the fare structure.

Mr. Lynch expressed his concern for a vote in May and felt it would be rushed leading to an unfavorable outcome. Mr. Blaska spoke with the Committee regarding their opinion as a body on the sales tax reauthorization and on behalf of E. Susan Meyer, invited the Committee to compose a formal recommendation to the Board at the next meeting.

Mr. Frazier asked if the vote could be reintroduced later in the year if it fails. Mr. Blaska said that it could. If the election is lost, there is a reduced service level plan which would be implemented. The reduced plan from 2004 plan would need to be re-worked for 2009.

Mr. Lynch inquired about the cash balance and asked how long it would sustain full service while the numbers for the reduced plan were being re-worked. Mr. Blaska informed that it

would be based on the timing of the cuts. Some transits have cut service as soon as the funding went away even though they had resources. The money comes from the capital replacement plan and is used to pay for buses in years to come. Whether to sustain or cut service is a Board decision.

Mr. Blaska confirmed with the Committee that at the January Board meeting, he would relay that the Committee is concerned about the timing of the vote and does not allow for a well prepared, well communicated base for a decision.

It was also discussed that the February and March meetings would be utilized to discuss pricing. Staff will provide a draft recommendation of what will be taken to the public to the Committee in March for editing. Steve will also provide the committee two different timelines based on implementation dates.

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

- a) Public Expressions – None.

7. SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

- a) The next meeting is set for February 13, 2008.

8. ADJOURN

With there being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Naomi Dunning
Executive Assistant