

City of Lawrence
Public Transit Advisory Committee
June 9, 2015 minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Alan Black, Heather Thies, Jane Huesemann, Mark Hurt, James Pavision, Lyle Hettinger, Samantha Snyder, Marian Hukle
MEMBERS ABSENT: None
STAFF PRESENT: Robert Nugent, Serena Pearson, Wendy Koerner, Mike Sweeten, Danny Kaiser, Kristina Maude
PUBLIC PRESENT: None

1. Call to Order

Alan Black, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:10. Quorum met.

2. Introductions

Introductions went around the room.

3. K-10 Connector Funding (Action Item)

Bob Nugent stated that we have paid Johnson County \$120,000 last year and this year. They are currently asking \$200,000 for 2016. We are having this meeting in order to allow PTAC to look at this issue again.

Bob explained that we end up paying about 14% of the service for Johnson County for the K-10 Connector route. We are basically securing their funding from the state because we are giving them the revenue miles. We should be getting credit for about 19,000 passengers. Mark Hurt said that he is concerned about that and their request for funding since they are getting a 42% farebox return. Why in the world are we paying them? Bob replied that Johnson County renegotiated their urban allocation and they are getting one million dollars more this year from the Federal government. They also started a new route right after we paid them the \$120K last year. Is the money we give them going to the K-10 Connector? That is something we don't know.

Bob also noted that the K-10 Connector is operating service every 30 minutes, and we should be putting it in our service since we have three routes that need to be on a 30 minute service, but are currently on a one hour schedule. We need to match our productivity to what they are doing.

Jane Huesemann suggested that maybe we should offer them a lower amount of money, or counter proposal, instead just saying no. If we just repeat the same strategy that we did last year by offering them nothing, we may end up paying the full amount. Mark Hurt stated that the 2008 referendum proved that voters want bus service within our community. Alan Black made a point that the K-10 Commuter helps Douglas County because it brings students to KU. Bob Nugent stated that 97% of people using this service are students either at KU or JCCC and neither institution contributed to this route. Lyle Hettinger questioned why there are 45 one-way trips between Lawrence and JCCC. It seems excessive. Jane Huesemann said we can

question everything about this funding, but in the end we should say that there is some benefit for our community, but perhaps we could do it better or more efficiently. We support the idea of the service, but for a lesser cost, so we could offer them a smaller amount of money. Mark Hurt said that KU and JCCC were asked to contribute money to this service, but offered nothing, so they pay nothing. Bob Nugent said we need to revisit this because we have three new commissioners and we need to educate them on this issue. Jane Huesemann thinks a clean response would also be to say that we need this money for our own service. We should not say we are questioning their management practices, but clearly state that we need the money for our own service here in Lawrence. Our concerns about their overhead are valid, but we maybe need to take another approach. Mark Hurt is concerned that this route is actually making them money for their other routes and they are not doing this for our benefit. Alan Black asked why their ridership has gone down. Bob replied that Johnson County stated that decreased ridership is due to increased fares and lower gas prices. He does not believe that this is entirely true since the fare increase was a few years ago and should not make a difference anymore. KCATA is now administering the service for them. The ridership is down on all of the Johnson County routes and the projected ridership is also down. James Pavisio asked what would work with this City Commission and how can we show them that we need to invest this money into our own service. Bob Nugent said he is not sure, but he thinks that showing them that we need 30 minute service in Lawrence, and that giving money to Johnson County may prevent us from doing that.

Action: Jane Huesemann thinks that we could put many things in a letter. Mike Sweeten asked what the normal way to communicate with City Commission would be. Marian Hukle said that in the past a letter was sent to them. Mike Sweeten gave a recap of what he heard from PTAC members in the meeting. He heard the following: Ridership is down on The Jo while our ridership is up, yet their request for funding from us is increasing even though their funding levels have increased. Also, the State sales tax increases will make it much less likely that the local future referendum for additional services and amenities will pass, so we need to honor the previous referendum by not giving money to Johnson County and keep it here locally. We also have many needs still unmet here in Lawrence, such as 30 minute service, while they already have 30 minute service year round. From a business perspective, why would you ever give your money away?

Motion from Mark Hurt: Deny their request and direct staff to craft a letter to City Commission stating that PTAC is not supportive of transfer of funds. Put into a bulleted list to send to City Commission. Express that the money could be used much better here in Lawrence. James Pavisio seconded, all in favor. Motion passed.

4. Quick Updates:

- a. Transit Center – Bob Nugent stated that we still need a transit center in our community and it is back on the radar screen with the City Commission. Commissioner Boley asked if we would contact the owners of the land at 9th and Iowa to see if they would be interested in a transit center at that location. Bob Nugent said that he talked to them today and they are not interested. We have the money in our budget to build the transit center. Commissioner Amyx has expressed that he would like to see a transit center built that works for our community. A couple of the other commissioners want a destination center, but that is not the point of a transit center. It needs to be a transfer point to get you to your destination, not be the destination itself. Bob is not sure where the other

commissioners stand on the issue. Alan Black stated that he thought the location by the football stadium on campus was best, but Bob Nugent replied that that location is no longer available.

- b. 30-Minute Service – As stated above: We have three routes that need to be 30 minute service, but are currently on a one hour schedule. That is why it is imperative that we keep our money here in Lawrence instead of giving our money to Johnson County.
- c. Free Passes for Lawrence Summer Food Program – This is an ongoing request. Bob Nugent passed out a handout of an existing policy for free fares from 2004. Maximum contribution should only be 1% of the fare box contribution. Bob will work on this policy and show it to PTAC next month. We don't know how many or what type of passes the Summer Food Program is looking for – a three month Student Summer bus pass, or single ride tickets. If it is not same people using the passes each day, the single ride passes would work best. He has not gotten an answer back yet. We would not distribute the passes, but leave it up to the agencies. The Summer Food Program is currently providing meals to about 1,000 people a day during summer months. The concern is that offering free passes to some people and not others may do harm to the program and create confusion.
- d. Future Items – No items.

5. Public Comment

No comments from Public.

Bob Nugent introduced Samantha Snyder to the group. She is the new PTAC member and works for the Housing Authority at Babcock Place. She works in resident services office and runs the bus program there. Prior to that, she worked in at the main Housing Authority office and at Family Promise before that. She has worked with people who rely heavily on transit for a while.

6. Next Meeting

7/14

7. Adjournment

5:20

-Submitted by Serena Pearson