

City of Lawrence
Public Transit Advisory Committee
September 8, 2015 minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Marian Hukle, Alan Black, Heather Thies, Samantha Snyder, Mark Hurt
MEMBERS ABSENT: James Pavision, Jane Huesemann, Lyle Hettinger
STAFF PRESENT: Robert Nugent, Serena Pearson, Wendy Koerner, Mike Sweeten, Jessica Mortinger
PUBLIC PRESENT: Lance A. Fahy, Shofi Ull Azum

1. Call to Order

Marian Hukle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:15. Quorum met.

2. Introductions

Guest Shofi Ull Azum was introduced. He is a graduate Student at KU majoring in Transportation Planning.

3. Approval of Minutes (Action Item)

Minutes from July 14, 2015 PTAC meeting were presented to PTAC members. There was a motion from Alan Black to approve minutes. Heather Thies seconded, all in favor, no opposed.

4. Transit Amenities Campaign (Action Item)

Bob Nugent passed out photos of chairs that have been placed at bus stops in town. He explained that the chairs have been placed at three locations in Lawrence - 11th & Delaware, 15th & Haskell, and Haskell & LaSalle. We don't know who is putting these chairs out. There has been a movement with City Commission to do an amenities program. For the last 2 ½ years we have been looking for a transit center. We had been waiting on an answer from the City Commission regarding the transit center issue before we put out new amenities since the routes would be changing.

Since then, the 21st and Stewart location for a transit center was rejected by the City Commission, so we are back to square one. We are currently doing passenger surveys on Route 1 to ask bus riders about amenities. We are looking at ridership and passenger comments, especially concerning the three stops with the chairs. Our intentions are to look at these three locations and put out benches but one of the locations has a right-of-way issue, one has a brick sidewalk that could cause a problem, and the other would work fine to put out a bench.

On the heels of that, we were just awarded some money to do a Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA). One of the items in the COA is segment and stop data and information. Our amenities package that we recently put together has a minimum amount of boarding for each location. We need the boarding numbers at each location before we can do amenities at each location and the COA will do that. What we do know now is that routes 10, 11, 27 and 29 are under-served on amenities, but all of the other routes are over-served based on what amenities we have and the current ridership. This won't stop us from looking at East Lawrence. We have 39 shelters and 3 benches in place right now. A lot of them are in front of grocery stores, a

hospital or something that produces a lot of bus trips. We don't have a lot of amenities in residential areas. We know that the shelters are spread out across the whole system. For us to do a more elaborate amenities program, we will have to get stop information from COA. Before that, we will ask the passengers what they need, and go forward from there.

Mark Hurt asked if the chairs are still there and what would the liability be with these chairs if someone were to fall or get hurt in one of the chairs. Does the City Manager not realize that there could be potential liability if something would happen? Mark said that he is concerned that if the City leaves them there, they are basically approving them to be there permanently.

Bob Nugent stated that he would like to see a process in place to put out benches or chairs. No one has actually come to us and asked if they could put a chair out.

Mark suggested that if there were standards in place for the community to access, a group of people could go out on a Saturday and dig a hole, put in a bench, etc. It would make people appreciate a bus bench as a community project. They would need to be ADA accessible.

Bob Nugent replied that you could have the community claim ownership of the bench, including the upkeep. But for now, we will put amenities out and possibly move them if need be later.

Bob said that he is asking to move forward on amenities in East Lawrence, then move on as we find them in our system. Mark Hurt asked if the numbers in East Lawrence are justified to put in benches or shelters, not necessarily based on ridership, but other criteria. Bob said that we will put them in if they are justified and if there is a place for them.

Marian Hukle suggested that motion should proceed based on researching individual bus stops. Proceed with evaluation plan. Mark Hurt moved to approve, Alan seconded. All in favor no opposed.

5. Service to Lawrence Community Shelter (Action Item)

Bob Nugent explained that we realigned route 5 to go by the Lawrence Community Shelter once it was moved out to southeast Lawrence. When we did this we stopped at Franklin, just north of 25th Street. We got pushback from neighbors and businesses, so we moved it to 25th Terrace at the corner of Franklin. Now, with Noria Road being closed, the interchange being put through, and our inability to continue on K-10, we were forced to move our stop to the corner of Fairfield and 25th Terrace. Plus, with the addition of the O'Connell traffic signal, now we have to loop through there and come back to the traffic signal to get to our terminal point which is East Hills Business Park.

There is some conflict going on regarding this new stop, as there has been for all of the stops in that area. Transit is being blamed for pedestrians in the area - property owners do not want people walking across their property to get to a bus stop. There is some pressure right now to eliminate the current stop (and previous stops) and have a bus go directly to the Lawrence Community Shelter to avoid any foot traffic altogether.

When the Community Shelter was built, they knew that we would not be able to operate on Franklin for long and we would have to go to Fairfield. For us to lose this stop and put a stop at the shelter, we could not do this with the route 5 or 15. We would be forced to discontinue service on the route 5 and 15 to the Community Shelter since we cannot go any further on these routes without going over on time. With distance is time and we can't get any more time

out of these routes. Without serving the shelter, we don't need these routes to service this area.

What we have been asked to do is provide service directly from downtown to the Lawrence Community Shelter, via an underserved area in east Lawrence. If we put a new route in place, we would have a mismatch of route 1, 5 and 15 which means we would need to restructure these routes. In order to discontinue these two routes to the shelter, we would have to take this to the public.

What we have requested from some property owners and City Hall is - instead of us serving at the first or second location - serve it southbound instead of northbound on Franklin from K-10 and stop right across the street from both other stops. In other words, we would have the bus go from K-10 to Franklin, take a right, then go clockwise and loop around. We are asking to give us that until August of next year so we can have time to restructure these other routes. This new bus stop would be approximately ¼ mile from the shelter and closer than the current bus stop.

Mark Hurt asked how long this process would take. Bob replied that if either the property owner or City Hall decides that we can use this location, we can move on it pretty quickly, otherwise we have to go through the public process which could take a while. It would also cause us to have to reprint the transit guides out of cycle, which is confusing and costly.

Alan Black asked if released prisoners from the jail are walking during the daytime to go to jobs, then go back to jail at night. Bob replied that we moved the first stop because of problems we had with people coming out of the jail.

Marian Hukle asked what the action item would be. Bob said he would like to get approval on a southbound route, and if that does not go through, then put in a new route to the shelter. Marian said that from her recollection, changes to bus routes take way more than two months to complete. She believes that it will be next August before the new route would go through anyway.

Mark Hurt asked how much the new route would cost. Bob replied that the new route would cost approximately \$250,000. Mark asked if the City Administration knows this. Bob replied yes. Mark asked how much a fence would cost. Bob said he did not know. A fence is not a transit issue or decision.

Alan Black, Marian Hukle and Mark Hurt stated that they are completely against creating a new route right now. Guest Lance Fahe made the point that if the City Commissioners were here, they would not be happy with the expense of a new bus route that is created out of the regular cycle.

Alan Black moved to approve first item – move the bus stop to southbound Franklin at 25th Terrace. Mark Hurt seconded, all in favor, no opposed.

Alan Black also moved that we postpone until next cycle - which is next August - to create the new route, although it can be studied further in the meantime. Mark Hurt seconded. All in favor no opposed.

Bob Nugent said that he will be writing a memo that will go to the City Commission.

6. Funding Referendum Discussion –

Serena Pearson explained that there will be a sunset on the tax referendum in 2018. Bob Nugent explained that he doesn't necessarily want to wait until 2018 and move up the vote to 2017 in order to get up in front of it. As City employees, we can't campaign for this, but we are setting up a marketing campaign to start driving this from outside. We would like to start ratcheting up the marketing campaign as we get closer to the vote. We are talking about newsletters, websites, posters, etc.

Bob said that he wants to talk about this more often over the next year or so, and would like the PTAC's input. Alan Black said he believes the City Commission election will be in Nov 2017. Do we want the referendum election at the same time? Marian Hukle explained what worked in 2008 was that it was a presidential election. A bigger turnout helps the bus.

In 2018, it will be the gubernatorial election. Heather Thies said that Cottonwood worked very hard to campaign for Transit in 2008, and Marian worked with Students for Transit group. It was a grass-root campaign with meetings and lots of signage (yard signs), a parade, plus the city had an interest in fire and streets. Jessica Mortinger stated that there has been a discussion of a bike/ped element of the upcoming referendum. Marian said that there is a lot to think about.

Bob Nugent said that we could have a small group to discuss this issue from PTAC. Lance Fahe stated that this may be a good time to reach out to larger employers and schools since they have a lot of ridership. They need to be educated on this issue since they may not be aware of the referendum sunset. Bob says we can market information, but we cannot make the next step and say "this is going to happen if it doesn't pass." We can collect data, and pass it along to the committee, who can pass this information on to people who request it.

Alan Black said he once wrote a history of transit in Lawrence and could update that. He could also write something to compare Lawrence Transit to other transit systems in the state. Bob said we could put out some stories about all of the things we have done in the last 10 years.

7. Updates:

- a. **Transit Center** – Bob Nugent gave a quick update. We are talking to KU about doing something in their Central District, close to Stauffer Place. We are thinking about using the first floor of a new parking garage as a transit center. The Federal Government has competitive grants available for high dollar projects and we are meeting with the FTA in a couple of weeks. It would be an 80/20 grant, so for \$1 million, we can get a \$5 million dollar transit center, and for \$3 million KU can get a \$15 million parking garage. We would have to wait for a grant notice to apply, and when there is money available, we would be ready. We will have to make sure that KU uses the revenue generated from the parking garage for transit, including Jayhawk Basketball parking. This would be necessary when using federal funds.
- b. **Summer Pass Program** – Serena Pearson explained that we sold 418 Summer Bus Passes this year which was an increase from last year of 398. The Library and the Parks and Recreation Department have been great partners. We sold passes at all of the community centers this summer. We may expand sales to the grocery stores next year.
- c. **FTA Ridership Award** – Serena Pearson showed the award that Lawrence Transit received for the top increase in ridership in the state of Kansas for 2014. The award was presented at the KPTA conference in Manhattan, Kansas in August.

- d. Comprehensive Operational Analysis** – Jessica Mortinger explained that our Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) applied and for some competitive, consolidated planning grant funding from KDOT for a COA for \$150,000 grant with a \$50,000 match. The project was awarded to us. This will be part of the 2016 calendar year. Bob Nugent and Jessica Mortinger will be working on writing an RFP and hiring a firm to work on the analysis for the system to bring more data for operation efficiencies. There is also another \$40,000 with a \$10,000 match for a bike share feasibility study that was awarded as well.
- e. 30 Minute Service** – Bob Nugent stated that we will be rolling out 30 minute service on certain routes, but it will involve ordering new buses and hiring new drivers. We plan on rolling this out in August of next year. Bob said that we will have to get used vehicles since it takes 18 months to get new vehicles. We were hoping to have COA done before the 30 minute service, but we can roll it out and work on other items later.

Mike Sweeten asked the committee if they have any ideas for finding drivers. He stated that MV is a flexible employer because of all the various services such as Safe Bus, Nightline and T-Lift. If we order 5-6 more buses, we will need 15-20 drivers. There are 160 employees right now, but it would be good if there were about 175-180 employees to ensure coverage. Years ago, MV was the 14th largest employer in Lawrence, but that has changed. MV Transportation is currently one of the largest employers in the city of Lawrence.

Bob said that we will need to order used vehicles and it will cost us money. We may want to test some routes with 30 minute service, but may have to change that if the ridership doesn't support that.

8. Public Comment

No comments from Public.

9. Next Meeting

Tuesday, November 10, 2015

10. Adjournment

5:30

-Submitted by Serena Pearson