

Committee for Transit Accessibility

Wednesday, October 7, 2009
 Building A, Auditorium
 Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)
 3331 North First Street
 San Jose, California

SUMMARY MINUTES

CALLED TO ORDER at 1:05 pm

1. ROLL CALL

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Lori Arnberg	Member	Absent
Emma Eljas	Member	Absent
Christina Fernandez	Staff Aide to Ex-Officio Board Liaison Reed	Present
Linda Gallo	Member	Absent
Sandra Gouveia	Second Vice Chairperson	Absent
David Grant	Member	Present
Katie Heatley	Ex-Officio Member	Present
Troy Hernandez	Member	Present
Marjorie Jensen	Member	Present
Connie Langford	Member	Present
Martin Lasich	Member	Present
Laura Michels	Member	Present
Mike Montague	Member	Absent
Aaron Morrow	Chairperson	Present
Shawna Nourzaie	Member	Absent
Larry Saltman	Member	Present
Dilip Shah	Member	Absent
Thomas Slack	Member	Absent
Barbara Stahl	Member	Present
William Zhu	Member	Absent

A quorum was not present and a Committee of the Whole was declared.

2. INTRODUCTION OF AUDIENCE MEMBERS

The Committee of the Whole received introductions from the audience including: Mark Romoser, Silicon Valley Independent Living Center; Joonie Tolosa, Manager Operations Analysis, Reporting and Systems; Andrew Ittigson, Consultant; Jason Tyree, Transportation Planner; Scott Haywood, Policy and Community Relations Manager;

Ehsan Ilyas, Transportation Engineering Manager; Sandra Weymouth, Policy and Administration Manager; Patrick Griffin, Customer Service Supervisor; Dan Smith, Chief Operating Officer; Dino Guevarra, Sales and Promotion Supervisor; Ann Carey, Executive Assistant to the General Manager; Ronald Young, Bus Technical Trainer; and Walter Schinke, South County Advocate.

3. **PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:**

Walter Schinke, Interested Citizen, thanked staff for accompanying him to several bus stops and the transit station in Gilroy to assess accessibility. He thanked VTA staff for coordinating with the City of San Jose on plans for a sidewalk and accessible bus stop at Great Oaks and Vineyard in San Jose which services the San Jose Veterans Clinic. Mr. Schinke requested staff continue providing reminders to drivers regarding tie downs issue. He indicated his awareness of the difficulty to fix bus stops because of property lines. He suggested drivers ensure there is room for a person to get on or off the bus when the lift is deployed.

Mark Romoser, Interested Citizen, expressed concern regarding the recent service reductions and the Outreach policy change for certain areas populated outside the new corridors noting the absence of service. He suggested VTA take paratransit corridors into account when creating fixed route service areas.

David Grant, Interested Citizen, indicated several of his students submitted an application for the Adopt-A-Stop program and never received any feedback. Customer Service was contacted and they were told staff would be in contact regarding the application. Mr. Grant noted they had not yet received a response.

Patrick Griffith, Customer Service Supervisor, took a copy of the application from Mr. Grant and he will provide a response.

4. **Minutes of September 9, 2009**

The Committee of the Whole deferred the Minutes of September 9, 2009.

5. **Chief Operating Officer**

The Committee of the Whole received an update from the Chief Operating Officer.

Staff provided a brief update on the following: Decline in ridership being experienced by VTA and partner agencies; New Prius vehicles received by Outreach; Between Car Barriers Bollards demonstration at Almaden Light Rail station; and, CTA reappointments.

The Committee of the Whole questioned if it is common for transit properties to report ridership numbers and adapt them later. **Staff** responded agencies don't typically change their numbers, but Alameda County Transit indicated they are going through some systematic changes with how they do their ridership reporting.

The Committee of the Whole questioned the amount of money VTA receives for operating the Dumbarton Express. **Staff** indicated VTA contributes \$350,000 annually for the Dumbarton operation.

The Committee of the Whole questioned why there has been no increase in the fare for the Highway 17 Express. **Staff** responded they are working with Santa Cruz Metro to develop an increase which will go into effect sometime next year.

BUSINESS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS/GENERAL MANAGER

6. Board of Directors Report

The Committee of the Whole received the Board of Directors Report.

Christina Fernandez, Staff Aide to Ex-Officio Board Liaison Reed, provided a brief report from a visit to Washington, D.C., by Board Member Reed, Board Vice-Chairperson Liccardo, and Michael T. Burns, General Manager, to advance the regional transportation priorities. Ms. Fernandez indicated the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, and other administrators were impressed with the progress of the BART project and San Jose was highlighted as a model city for meeting federal requirements and securing funding.

7. The Committee of the Whole received the Quarterly Legislative Report.

Staff provided a brief summary of the Federal and State programs, bills, and legislation affecting transportation. Federal changes highlighted were the extension of the current federal transportation bill, Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA - LU), and the one month extension for transportation appropriations passed by Congress. California legislature wrapped up their session with approximately 700 bills awaiting the Governor's signature. Ten of the 15 bills VTA took position on are on the Governor's desk and one has been signed.

The Committee of the Whole questioned what bill was signed. **Staff** responded AB112 which gives VTA authority to provide funds for local streets and roads.

8. The Committee of the Whole received the Pass-Up Complaints from Persons with Disabilities Report.

Staff provided a follow up to an off agenda report which indicated how operators proceed with buses being full and buses whose wheelchair spaces are already occupied. They indicated these are the only times operators are allowed to pass a stop without picking up passengers. Operators are required to stop and make contact with someone in a mobility device if there is no space available for them on the coach and Operations Control Center (OCC) must be contacted.

The Community of the Whole questioned if another bus will be provided. **Staff** responded the next regularly scheduled bus will pick up passengers but if it's the last bus, alternative transportation will be provided.

The Committee of the Whole questioned if a driver is required to stop if people are sitting at a bus stop and not standing.

Staff responded if a person is making movement, the driver must stop.

The Committee of the Whole expressed concern with comments that have been made about drivers passing up passengers because of the amount of times it takes to operate a lift, and indicated their dissatisfaction with the information staff has presented. They indicated statistics should be higher but believe passengers are not calling in and complaining.

Staff responded they are aware it happens and it is taken seriously and operators are trained and made aware that people need to have enough time to get to the bus. They indicated some of situations may be contributed to passengers trying to board training coaches which are not in service.

The Committee of the Whole questioned how many complaints a driver can receive before something happens. **Staff** responded a larger view is taken of a driver's entire record and steps for discipline are handled on an individual basis.

The Committee of the Whole questioned if passenger complaints was the only way of getting data. **Staff** indicated information can be obtained in cases where a bus is full, but the only way to get information on people being passed up because of a driver's choosing is through individuals calling in.

The Committee of the Whole questioned if operators are reprimanded for consistently failing to maintain schedules and suggested looking at adjusting timetables so drivers don't feel so rushed. **Staff** indicated there are too many constraints to penalize drivers for falling behind schedule but they are penalized for running early.

The Committee of the Whole suggested steps to rectify the issue including providing monitors on buses and sending a memo to the operators letting them know it is an issue that is being taken seriously. They requested the item be brought back to the Committee.

9. **The Committee of the Whole** received a report on the Guadalupe South Line Elevators and Escalators Retrofit Project.

Staff provided a report and information on the planned service interruptions of elevators and escalators on the light rail platforms of several stations along the Guadalupe South line. Staff indicated the retrofit project is expected to take 8-10 weeks to complete at each station. The closure of the elevators and escalators will prevent access to the station by some persons with disabilities. VTA is working with Outreach to provide alternate accessible transportation.

The Committee of the Whole expressed concern with both the elevator and escalators being shut down at the same time and questioned why one cannot remain operable while the other is being upgraded. Staff indicated this would prolong the process and be more expensive.

The Committee of the Whole requested staff look at restructuring the retrofit project indicating the inability for some trips to be planned ahead of time and the difficulty for passengers to choreograph trips with paratransit. **Staff** responded VTA has experienced this type of interruption with the retrofit project, and they worked with Outreach to develop a process and make arrangements, but indicated they will share the Committee's comments with the design team.

10. **The Committee of the Whole** received a report on the Light Rail Systems Analysis.

Staff provided an update and presentation on the Light Rail Systems Analysis, evaluating the infrastructure and operating flexibility of the existing light rail lines and proposed changes to the planned system and BART extension. Staff provided the five scenarios which are being developed to address the current and projected constraints to the system including, faster service, better rail connections, Almaden integration into system, and new service.

The Committee of the Whole questioned why Scenario E was the only one to include the light rail extension to Eastridge and questioned if funds set aside for that extension would be used to make other improvements. **Staff** responded the analysis will identify the projects and VTA will move forward with a plan based on available funding.

The Committee of the Whole favored a plan which would include the light rail to the Airport and questioned why that is not being considered. **Staff** responded the scope of the analysis is looking at the existing service to see how it can be improved.

The Committee of the Whole questioned where people with disabilities are travelling and indicated the need for policy makers to listen to people in the community while plans are being created.

11. **The Committee of the Whole** received the Transit Operations Performance Report: Preliminary Annual Report (Fiscal Year 2009) (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009)

Staff provided a report on the bus and light rail ridership, key performance indicators, operating expense and revenue, Outreach paratransit services, and ridership for contracted and inter-agency services. **Staff** indicated there was an overall increase in ridership numbers and revenue, and all performance goals were met.

The Committee of the Whole questioned the increase in ridership when there have been significant decreases during the last few months. **Staff** indicated ridership numbers overall were helped by a strong performance at the beginning of the year.

The Committee of the Whole questioned if gas prices affected ridership numbers. **Staff** indicated when gas reached a certain amount, it spiked ridership, but unemployment rates have had the most impact.

The Committee of the Whole questioned the impact of fare increases on ridership. **Staff** responded light rail is expected to be hit harder and the forecast for revenues is flat.

12. **The Committee of the Whole** reviewed the Committee Workplan.

The Committee of the Whole requested the Pass up Complaints, ACE Committee report, and CTA Nomination of Chair and Vice-Chairs be placed on the Workplan.

The Committee of the Whole questioned if the Farebox item would be brought back to the committee and if an invitation to view possible choices would be given.

REPORTS

13. **The Committee of the Whole** received the City of San Jose Disability Advisory Commission (DAC) Report.

Chairperson Morrow announced City of San Jose Disability Awareness Day and noted the council's proclamation of October as Disability Employment Month.

14. **The Committee of the Whole** received the Committee Staff Report.

Jim Unites, Staff Liaison, announced the retirement of CTA Vice-Chairperson, David Julian and thanked him for his years of service and dedication to the Committee.

15. **The Committee of the Whole** received the Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Morrow indicated the need to quiet the fears in the community regarding the redrawing of paratransit lines. Some paratransit users are fearful they will not get rides when needed. He requested those members who work with community service agencies to reassure their clients that they will still get where they need to go.

The Committee of the Whole suggested sending out letters to clients notifying them of the changes and providing solutions for them. Ex-Officio Member Heatley, Director of Outreach, indicated her staff has spent the last 6 months working with individual clients solving problems for those affected by the changes.

The Committee of the Whole questioned what can be done to enlarge area of service or have VTA supply more money for services. **Staff** responded revenues are declining and there is no money coming in from the State due to the budget so changes have to be made.

The Committee of the Whole requested to see customer feedback on service reductions. **Staff** indicated that information is available online.

OTHER

16. **Announcements**

There were no Announcements

19. **ADJOURNED at 2:58 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Menominee L. McCarter, Board Assistant
Office of the Board Secretary