

MINUTES
CITY TRANSIT TRUST SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 27, 2017 - 6:00 P.M.
LAWTON CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS/AUDITORIUM

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Fred Fitch, Chairman. Notice of meeting and agenda were posted on the City Hall notice board as required by law. Invocation was given by Pastor Bob Weger, Bible Baptist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Bob Morford, Keith Jackson, Caleb Davis, Jay Burk, Dwight Tanner, Jr. (arrived @ 6:08 p.m.), Cherry Phillips, V. Gay McGahee, Doug Wells.

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Jerry Ihler, City Manager; Frank V. Jensen, City Attorney; Traci Hushbeck, City Clerk, COL Samuel Curtis, Fort Sill Liaison.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF CITY TRANSIT TRUST MEETING OF JUNE 13, 2017.

MOVED by Wells SECOND by Jackson to approve the minutes of City Transit Trust meeting of June 13, 2017. AYE: Morford, Jackson, Davis, Burk, Phillips, McGahee, Wells. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. Hold a public hearing and consider approving Resolution No. 17-__ authorizing service reductions on the Orange Route, creating a Ft. Sill Shuttle, and reducing service hours and frequencies on Saturdays for all routes. Exhibits: Seat-drop Survey Tabulation, Resolution No. 2017-__ with Attachment #1 - Revised Orange Route Map and Attachment #2 - Description of Ft. Sill Shuttle and Revised Saturday Schedule.

Deborah Jones, representing the Lawton Area Transit System, stated the purpose of this item is to hold a public hearing and consider a service reduction to the orange route creating a Fort Sill shuttle and reducing the service hours and frequencies on Saturday for all routes. We have an older mixed fleet and we have some serious maintenance issues and we need to reduce the mileage of the fleet and we need to provide for more time for the fleet to be in the maintenance garage. In March, staff came to the trust to consider opening up a public comment period to consider a service reduction. Since that time the service reduction has been advertised in the media and they have also used the website and seat drops for the passengers. They provided the trust with a copy of the tabulation of the comments that came in from customers on the proposed service reduction. LATS management has modified the concept. Staff has recommended that they reduce the orange route to one bus with a one-hour frequency running in counterclockwise direction. The orange route would no longer enter Fort Sill but would travel on Rogers Lane from east to west. The orange route would be extended south to test potential ridership beyond its current service area. Service to Fort Sill would be provided by a demand response system (shuttle) vehicle to insure retirees, workers, or others traveling to and from Fort Sill would still have daily

transportation. This addresses a concern from Councilmember Tanner which was if someone was going to get stranded at the visitor center that does not have clearance. You will not be able to board the shuttle without showing clearance unless you are going to the visitor center to be cleared. The next major change would be to reduce the hours of operation on Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. for all routes and reduce all routes to one bus operating at a one-hour frequency.

McGahee stated at one point she asked about moving the orange route further east to 2nd Street for the Great Plains Improvement Foundation where they have the child support office, is there is bus that runs in that direction.

Ms. Jones stated the proposed route change does not go that far.

Ryan Landers, General Manager of LATS, stated they have looked at a number of ways to add service to the areas that we don't currently have and there are other possibilities. The problem that could arise is the timing of the route and it could affect the schedule. Right now the proposed route runs approximately 55 minutes, so they only have a cushion of 5 minutes. In order to add some additional streets they would have to take away something that they currently have.

McGahee stated she would like staff to look at this because she has citizens that need to get to the Great Plains Improvement Foundation and they need to have transportation.

Landers stated the only problem with going down Railroad is the incline and with the direction the bus is actually going it is steep and it could hurt the bus if it goes too fast. They have looked at a number of different options and they feel this is the best option. They will continue to look at it for future changes.

McGahee stated she has had citizens ask about a drop off at that particular location.

Landers stated they are always looking at alternate destinations.

Morford stated according to the seat surveys almost all of them are against cutting anything. He questioned if the Fort Sill shuttle will cover most of Fort Sill.

Landers stated he feels they will be able to cover more of Fort Sill. Right now they are restricted to the fixed route and now they can actually go into places a little easier so they can get someone closer to their destination. That is the added benefit.

Phillips stated she received six phone calls and everyone was in support of whatever they can do about the bus service. She questioned if they were still going to the food bank.

Landers stated yes.

COL Curtis stated he spoke with LATS staff and there will be flexibility in the system enough that if someone calls with no notice to be picked up, the system will be flexible enough to accommodate that. He questioned where the two hour requirement came in.

Landers state that they initially set that up as a starting block. It is a new type of service and they will be flexible. If something comes up and they need to change how they do things they can. They do not want to leave someone if they are on base.

COL Curtis stated he understands these changes are driven by the need to do maintenance on the buses and the shortage of buses. When the buses become available again after the maintenance period, this will be reexamined based on demand and whether or not they go back to the routes or is this a permanent solution.

Jones stated at this point it is a temporary solution, but she cannot guarantee the trust how many buses will be in the fleet next March or April. Although they have ordered six buses, they have borrowed three buses from Waco and they will probably want those buses back. She stated probably next summer they will have to reexamine routes again and they may be back for additional changes.

COL Curtis stated the new shuttle system allows the flexibility to modulate the vehicle you use based on the demands so as more people have reservations, you would provide a bigger vehicle.

Jones stated that is correct, but likely they will run a normal par transit vehicle. It looks like an airport van and they would prefer to run those because you don't have as many mechanical problems. If they get a capacity constraint they will be out there with everything they have.

Wells questioned if the whole system shuts down at 6 p.m. under this proposal or will the shuttle still be available.

Jones stated the shuttle operates the exact same hours as the fixed route.

Wells stated that people who work at 8 p.m. will have to find another method to get home.

Jones stated yes and they would on the fixed route as well. She stated they virtually have no passengers after 6 p.m. on Saturdays.

Burk stated it is sad because a lot of people are working later and we are saying we would like to have your ridership but it has to be on our terms and our time.

Jones stated they run a count every day and they have 15 years of experience with Saturday service and it has not generated the rides after 6 p.m. that they had anticipated it would so it becomes a cost issue.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

Eddie Gregory stated he is thankful for the buses. He takes three people with him that are in wheelchairs and the red and blue routes are the busiest routes they have. Five out of ten times there are two wheelchairs on and then they have to go across the street and catch the other bus to get the other one home. The blue route is the medical route and if you go once an hour with the two route buses on the red or blue, you are going to leave someone sitting every time. Some routes, for the sake of the handicap, need to be considered here. If they need to buy some more buses they need to raise the fares up a little bit.

Jones stated they always need more buses, but they offer a par transit vehicle that is a curb to curb service and the fare is higher. This is more designed for those that have different afflictions.

Tanner stated the bus reduction is just for one day, the other five days everything is going to be exactly the same. The only reduction is on Saturday except for the orange route and we are not going on Fort Sill with the orange route and they have fixed the problem because they will now have a special shuttle which will run six days a week.

Morford questioned if Mr. Gregory was concerned that there was not enough room on the buses.

Landers stated if they do not have enough space on a bus, by law they have 30 minutes in order to go and pick that individual up and every time they abide by that federal standard whether it is to pick them up in a para vehicle or another LATS bus.

Phillips questioned if they can shorten the 24 hour period.

Landers stated that is ADA par transit.

Jones stated it is an appointment driven service because there are a substantial number of para clients and they have a software system that covers Lawton and they use this system so that they can book more paratrips because this system geographically points where all these appointments are and it makes a route for these people. It is running very efficiently and it has allowed more people to book trips to get to their destination with less wait time and there are no capacity constraints on par transit.

Marina Wallen, 1127 E. Gore, stated she works on Fort Sill and she doesn't get off on Wednesday and Thursdays until 6 p.m. so she catches the last bus at 6:45 p.m. She questioned how she was supposed to get home and on Saturdays she gets off at 5 p.m.

Jones stated she will be able to book trips on the shuttle and they will get her to work and get her home.

Ms. Wallen questioned if the shuttle will take her directly home.

Jones stated yes.

Connie Krull, 901 NW Columbia, stated from 2003 to 2016 she rode the bus six days a week. She works at Fort Sill. She stated this is not an easy solution and tonight a lot of her questions have been answered. She stated for a lot of older people go out to Fort Sill for the commissary and their medical needs. She has not heard how people will get from one place to another on Fort Sill.

Jones stated there are about five or six vehicles in motion all the time across the city that can perform shuttle duties. They will work with people on these shuttles until they get where it needs to be. It may become more specialized that she originally described. They just have to adapt this service for financial reasons. She stated if they go to multiple places on a shuttle and it is within a 45 minutes window they will not charge them for every stop, they will just start with that initial \$1.50.

Jackson questioned if the taxi cab companies are required to charge the individuals \$1 to move anywhere on post as long as you don't cross to come to town.

COL Curtis stated he does not know the rate.

Jones stated that taxi cabs are not handicap accessible normally.

COL Curtis stated a lot of retirees that use the bus route try to maximize the time there during various stops. He feels the shuttle will be able to mirror that, it would just be calling the dispatcher and telling them where they need to go.

Jackson stated this is one of the most complicated issues they have run into in a long time and he knows the LATS staff is trying to accommodate everyone.

Ms. Krull stated since the bus started in 2002 she has asked the management how often they brief the soldiers about the routes, etc. and she was told that they put out maps. She stated they are concerned about the lack of ridership and she feels it would be more effective if the soldiers were briefed about the service on a face to face basis.

Jackson stated he is not sure we can do that.

Mayor Fitch questioned if the NWR works with LATS to distribute route maps at the welcome center.

Jones stated yes they have in the past. They used to go to an in processing but she is not sure if they currently do that. She stated they want to increase ridership and they will do anything they can.

Davis questioned the total cost of the LATS system.

Jones stated this year's budget is approximately \$2.8 million. Of the operating cost 50% is subsidized by the federal government and of the capital cost 80% is subsidized by the federal government. The local share is \$798,000.

Davis questioned how much we are projecting that this will save.

Jones stated it was equal to about \$38,000 and this reduction was included in this year's budget. If they do not want to do the reduction they would have to find the money or find a service reduction that is equal to \$38,000.

Davis stated the bottom line is that they are saving the city \$38,000.

Jones stated yes, in the local share.

Wynonna Alberty, 1505 ½ NW Arlington, stated she is a rider of LATS and she has ridden the red route many times and they can only facilitate two wheelchairs. People get on the buses with baby strollers and grocery carts and last year she got thrown completely off the bus on a stop. She stated when the temperatures were very cold they had to leave two wheelchair people out there for another bus to come. She stated there are issues on the Saturday bus because that is when most people do their shopping. Some people cannot afford the \$3 for the par transit bus.

Mayor Fitch stated the staff at LATS are working diligently trying to accommodate every situation.

Wells stated the bus routes are staying the same Monday through Friday except for the orange route which will go a shuttle service on Fort Sill. He stated that all routes will have one bus on Saturday.

Jones stated that is correct.

Wells stated when they talked about this a few months ago, the discussion was that we needed to do something because the buses are breaking down. Tonight they have thrown in a new issue saying it is financial with a savings of \$38,000. He will not support a change for \$38,000, he feels they can come up with the \$38,000. If it is because buses are not available then it is a different situation.

Jones stated the service reduction is needed because they have buses breaking down that are unreliable and they don't have enough time to service them in their garage. They are trying to get more time in the garage and reduce the mileage on the older buses. They need this service reduction and they can't go on like we are.

Mayor Fitch stated the \$38,000 is just a result of bus break downs and accommodating not having buses to run 24/7. As a result of trying to figure out how to make what fleet we have operable it amounts to a 38,000 savings.

Jones stated if we don't do the service reductions you are still going to have the same buses and the same complaints, same break downs and the maintenance time in the garage.

Wells stated his point is that when they first discussed it, it was because we had problems with buses, it was nothing about money.

Jones stated in that commentary it stated that there will be a savings in a service reduction.

Wells stated the reason the change is being made is not anything financial, it is because of the buses. That is what the citizens need to understand.

Davis questioned if we track ridership.

Jones stated yes.

Davis questioned if they track that from point A to point B there are so many riders on the bus or by how many citizens use the bus.

Jones stated they track rides every day by route, so they can tell you how many rides but not how many people.

Davis questioned how many rides there were for the year.

Jones stated approximately 34,000 rides a month.

Davis questioned how many break downs we have.

Jones stated they can provide a listing of every bus and the maintenance done. It is all tracked in a program. This reduction will lessen mileage and the frequency of the break down is less.

Davis stated we need to track this otherwise we won't have any way of knowing if this actually achieved the desired purpose of this reduction.

Mayor Fitch stated you cannot predict the break downs. If this was going to be a permanent situation there would be reason to do that, but it is not permanent.

Davis stated he is just asking so that during the duration of this we can compare that with what we have if this is implemented to see if this approach is effective.

Ihler stated we will be able to track if there is any progress as a result of having less miles on the buses.

Jones stated that trust members get this report each month.

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED.

McGahee questioned when they expect to have buses.

Jones stated early next summer we should know what is in the fleet.

Tanner requested that staff come back in three months and give a report to the trust.

Jones questioned if Councilmember Tanner wanted that report given at a trust meeting or a report sent to trust members.

Tanner stated he would prefer it be given at a trust meeting.

MOVED by Jackson SECOND by Morford to approve **Resolution No. 17-04** authorizing service reductions on the Orange Route, creating a Ft. Sill Shuttle, and reducing service hours and frequencies on Saturdays for all routes. AYE: Morford, Jackson, Davis, Burk, Tanner, Phillips, McGahee, Wells. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

2. Consider approving the annual Cooperative Agreement and an Agreement for Limited Funding between the City of Lawton and the Transit Trust to provide funds for the operation of a public transit system and authorize the Chairman and Secretary to execute the same. Exhibits: Cooperative Agreement and Limited Funding Agreement are on file in the City Clerk's office.

Jones stated this an annual agreement between the council and the trust by the city attorney's office. After the budget is approved this is the document that allows the council to transfer, when needed, the local share to the trust. The amount is \$798,000.

MOVED by Wells SECOND by McGahee to approve the annual Cooperative Agreement and an Agreement for Limited Funding between the City of Lawton and the Transit Trust to provide funds for the operation of a public transit system and authorize the Chairman and Secretary to execute the same. AYE: Morford, Jackson, Davis, Burk, Tanner, Phillips, McGahee, Wells. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m. upon motion, second and roll call vote.

FRED L. FITCH, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

TRACI L. HUSHBECK, SECRETARY