

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority Board of Directors
Planning and Development Committee
Proposed Meeting Summary
January 12, 2010 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Committee – Sue McCormick, Rich Robben (Chair)

Staff – Michael Benham, Terry Black, Ron Copeland, Michael Ford, Jan Hallberg, Ed Robertson, Mary Stasiak, Phil Webb, Karen Wheeler, Chris White

Absent: Committee – David Nacht

Committee Chair Rich Robben called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

1.0 Communications and Announcements

There were no communications or announcements.

2.0 Public Time – Comment on Agenda Items

Thomas Partridge appeared before the Committee and indicated that due to the length of the agenda, it would be difficult to conclude his comments in the two minute timeframe as requested by the Committee Chair. Mr. Partridge advocated for the expansion of AATA to a countywide service. He commented on the December 8 special Board meeting. Mr. Partridge alleged that the committee repeatedly returns to giving preference to commuter projects defying common sense and conventional wisdom. He stated the need for countywide fixed route bus service, accompanying dial a ride service, group ride paratransit, and senior ride service for those people (especially senior citizens and the disabled) who cannot use any other services. He stated that the services should be free of charge.

No one further appearing Mr. Robben declared Public Time closed.

3.0 Action Items

3.1 Capital and Categorical Grant Program

Chris White reported on the final adjustments made to the Capital and Categorical Grant Program noting that the committee has reviewed the program over the past two meetings. Chris indicated that the Program is the 2010 element for application to the Federal Transit Administration for funds in this fiscal year, although they will not actually be spent until subsequent fiscal years. The FTA application will also used as the basis for the application to the State of Michigan for FY 2011.

Chris reviewed the three final adjustments to the FY 2010 Program which included:

- The addition of \$60,000 for passenger shelters to comply with a federal requirement
- A reduction of \$500,000 for the estimate for ten Hybrid buses based on latest cost information; and
- An increase in the amount for planning by \$200,000 (for a total of \$675,000). Of this total, \$400,000 will be used for the development of the transit master plan and its corresponding countywide service plan.

Chris reported that staff is investigating the advisability of continuing to purchase Hybrid buses and will make a recommendation to the Committee on this issue within the next two months. The Grant Program can easily be adjusted downward at a later date; however, adjusting the Program upward presents far more difficult problems.

Michael Ford reported that the additional planning money was included for development of a Transit Master Plan. A draft of the request for proposals for consultants who might bid on the preparation of such a Master Plan document was included in the Board's January 8 weekly report.

Sue McCormick questioned the ability to "bank" funds, if a reduction to the Program is made. Chris indicated that the funds could be used for this or other purposes, but not likely be transferred between existing line items, as amendments to the planning program necessary for this to occur can take up to six months.

Sue McCormick moved to adopt the Categorical and Capital Grant Program and recommend approval by the full Board. Rich Robben supported the motion which passed unanimously.

3.2 Application to Michigan Department of Transportation for FY 2011

Chris White reported on the FY 2011 application to the State of Michigan which is required by state statute by February 1, 2010. The application must include operating revenues and expenses for urban and nonurban service. Funding received from the State is not based on the budget submitted, but rather on expenses that are actually incurred. The budget for purposes of the required application inflated the adopted FY 2010 budget by 1%. Chris reported that the Capital program has bearing on a series of required assurances and documentation required as part of the state application.

Ms. McCormick questioned the use of toll credits to match Federal funds. Chris White provided an explanation but noted that there is a finite amount of tolls the State can use, and toll credits are rapidly being exhausted. Implications are that the State may not be able to supply the 20% match for capitol items as it has done in the past. If there is a change to the State's ability to provide the full 20% match, then AATA would have to decide whether to use local funds for the match

or to discontinue or delay certain purchases. It is likely that the State will give some indication of its financial status prior to next fiscal year.

Chris noted that funds from FY 2009 are being used for the most recent bus purchases and that if all goes as promised, the State match will be available. He added that there are no big capital items slated for purchase in 2011, and that 2012 may require the consideration of local funds as a match for buses, depending on what happens with the State's Comprehensive Transportation Fund.

Chris reported that a Board resolution in the form required by the state of Michigan is necessary to submit the application to MDOT.

Ms. McCormick moved that the committee move forward with the intent to apply for Financial Assistance for FY 2011 under Act 51, and recommended that the Board approve submission of the application. Rich Robben supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4.0 New Business

There was no New Business.

5.0 Continuing Business

5.1 Low Population Density Service Model

Chris White reported on his talks with Pittsfield Township officials regarding a one-year pilot using a "FlexRide" or "Zone Service" to save money in the township. Chris reviewed the current fixed-route service and paratransit service now provided in the township. The proposed new service would be aimed at providing additional trips in areas of lower population density.

The service would be provided by subcontractor small vehicles to provide transit service within a defined area or "zone". Such a "demonstration" service would be free during the pilot program to promote ridership. The small vehicle would pick up and drop off within the zone and would also connect to AATA's fixed route service at a central hub location.

Chris reviewed the map of the two proposed service zones and a chart comparing the two demographic of the two township areas. A decision about which zone to conduct the pilot service in will be determined jointly by AATA and Pittsfield Township. If the service is successful, a decision would be made on whether to continue to provide the service with a subcontractor, AATA taking over the service, and whether a fare would be instituted for the service. Michael Ford indicated that staff would report back to the committee at its February meeting as to a timeframe for the proposed demonstration service.

5.2 Annual Board Strategic Planning Meeting

Michael Ford recommended holding two Board retreats over the next nine months. The first would be a budget retreat in late April or early May to address budgeting and goals and objectives for FY 2011. The second would be a countywide retreat in the fall of 2010 to address possible expansion of AATA into a regional authority and to discuss the service plan proposed by that time by the consultant. Mr. Ford recommended the use of a facilitator for both events, noting that Doug Eadie was instrumental in the reconfiguration of the Board and might be a good person to continue working with the Board and Senior Staff.

The Committee discussed Mr. Ford's recommendation. Ms. McCormick questioned the necessity of using a facilitator to discuss short term goals and their resulting budget. Mr. Ford responded that he saw the session as an opportunity for teambuilding, but indicated that he could amend the focus to narrow in on a producing a budget. Mr. Ford indicated that he would like to pursue utilizing a facilitator for the session on countywide.

Rich Robben suggested that the subject of retreats might warrant general discussion at a Board meeting. Mr. Ford agreed to take his recommendations to the Governance Committee.

6.0 Updates

6.1 Blake Transit Center Reconstruction Project

Terry Black reported he is working to develop a Request for Proposals for the design and construction of a new BTC building. He indicated that his goal is to issue an RFP by the end of January, and noted that a design proposal will be brought back to Committee and then to the full Board for approval.

6.2 Fuller Road Station

Chris White provided an update on the intermodal transportation center known as the Fuller Road Station project. A consultant and architect have been hired for the project, and design development has begun. Michael Ford is serving on the Facilities Planning Committee which is the executive committee for this effort. Chris White is a member of the Functional Planning Design Work Group, and Shawn Brophy is a member of the Public Safety and Security Group.

Efforts are currently underway to build a combined City and University parking structure as Phase I of the project. Work is being completed on the design to make sure that it is then able to add other elements of a train station, bike center, and a more vigorous transit center station in future phases.

6.3 Ann Arbor Connector Feasibility Study

Chris White reported that monthly meetings by the Steering Committee for this project that include representatives from AATA, the City of Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan and Washtenaw Area Transportation Study.

In order to test alternatives and compare them to a “no-build” alternative and to each other, it is necessary to have a detailed and well-tested transportation model. Much of the effort of the committee so far has been in this area. Public information will begin in the next month with a newsletter, website, interviews and focus groups.

6.4 Countywide Transit Service Plan Development

Michael Ford reported on the status of a request for proposal (RFP) to hire a consultant to develop a Transit Master Plan for county-wide services. The plan includes a needs assessment along with a service plan. The RFP is scheduled to be issued by mid-January. Input on the RFP was solicited from Terri Blackmore (WATS), Eli Cooper (City of Ann Arbor), Sue Gott (University of Michigan), and Susan Pollay (Ann Arbor DDA).

6.5 Proposed WALLY and East/West Commuter Rail Projects

Michael Benham provided an update on the WALLY project reporting on the expected use of an outside consultant to conduct an environmental assessment that will include a noise and vibration analysis.

Final issues associated with railcars to be used on WALLY have been resolved. Cars for WALLY are piggybacking on a rail car order from the East/West Rail Project. Station design standards are 90% complete and the next step is to develop site plans for each station.

A preliminary program of grade crossing improvements was developed by MDOT and reviewed by AATA. Final recommendations for these improvements will be developed and construction will be funded by MDOT. Two layover yards will be created (one for midday storage of trains and one for overnight) with both located on existing MDOT property. Construction of layover facilities is feasible in the second quarter of 2010.

Mr. Benham reported on marketing and public education efforts including meetings with coalition members, sub-committees and stakeholders. He provided an update on acquiring project development funding in 2010, and the investigation of federal grants to reduce operating subsidy requirements to a minimum level.

Mr. Benham provided an update on the East/West Rail Project that has a proposed startup date of October 25, 2010. The service is now planned to have two round trips between Ann Arbor and Detroit, and two additional trips between Ann Arbor

and Dearborn (with connecting bus service to downtown Detroit). Mr. Benham reported that a layover facility plan needs to be discussed with the City of Ann Arbor, and that Amtrak is expected to be the operator of the new service. He added that passenger capacity for both rail services is expected to be about 450 per train with 150 people in each of the expected three cars.

Ms. McCormick suggested that in order to function effectively and be successful, a tight connection would be necessary between the train and any connecting bus services. Chris White responded that connecting bus service is to be included in the funding for East/West, and that plans were in place to retain additional buses in AATA's contingency fleet when new buses arrive in May 2010. Chris added that a schedule for connecting service is very important, but has not yet been received by AATA.

6.6 Washtenaw Avenue Transfer Center

Chris White reported on plans to develop a common site that would serve both eastbound and westbound buses on the south side of Washtenaw Avenue. AATA Staff met with MDOT and the City of Ann Arbor to discuss this issue. The City was fairly positive about the plan's feasibility, while MDOT was more reserved.

The next step is to meet with the adjacent property owner on Washtenaw Avenue. Even though the project is entirely in the public right-of-way, it appears that the property owner's cooperation will be needed, since access to and from adjoining property will be affected.

Meanwhile AATA is proceeding with the design of the eastbound bus pull-out. This is the one element of the larger concept that AATA, the City, and MDOT feel can be built without affecting the adjacent private property. In response to a question from Sue McCormick on notification to the public on the details of project plans, Mary Stasiak indicated that details will be shared with riders once discussions begin with the adjacent property owner.

6.7 Central Campus Transit Center

Chris White reported that the design of the Central Campus Transit Center is complete. Construction specifications are being prepared for bid in February with construction scheduled to begin in May. A Use Agreement between the City of Ann Arbor, AATA and the University of Michigan is being developed, and a draft is expected to be received shortly.

7.0 Public Time

No one appearing, Mr. Robben declared Public Time closed.

8.0 Future Meetings

Tuesday, February 9, 2010 at 3:00 p.m.

9.0 Adjourn

There being no further business, Mr. Robben adjourned the meeting at 4:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Wheeler