

DES MOINES AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority – 1100 DART Way
March 25, 2008

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Ted Boesen, Bob Mahaffey, Gaye Johnson, Bob Parks, Steve Van Oort, Tom Gayman, Skip Conkling

Alternate Present: Rick Clark, Region 5

Commissioners Absent: Chris Hensley, Angela Connelly

Staff Present: Brad Miller, General Manager; Sharon Scheip, Finance Director; Rebecca Lovig, RideShare Manager; Chet Bor, Paratransit Director; Debra Meyer, Capital Planning Manager; Brian Litchfield, Chief Development Officer; Jim Tishim, Transportation Director; Carol Pelfrey, Maintenance Director; Randy Ross, Human Resources Director; Kirstin Baer-Harding, Advertising Manager; PJ Sass, Customer Service Manager; Peg Hadley, Customer Service Supervisor.

Other Present: Gunnar Olson, Des Moines Register; Sherrie Taha, DART Driver; Rox Laird, Des Moines Register; E.J. Giovanetti, Polk County; Frank Strong, CICIL; Curtis Chong, Iowa Dept. of the Blind; Michael Barber, President – National Federation of the Blind/Iowa; Tom Macha; Rose Field; John Tenikat II; Madelyn Allen; Sharon Blair.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Skip Conkling called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

Notice of the meeting was duly published.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Conkling called for corrections to the March 2, 2008 minutes. There was an amendment to the minutes under Action Item 9E, second paragraph:

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Mahaffey that ~~the purchase of a new MIS be approved.~~ staff is authorized to negotiate the statement of work, detailed pricing and prepare and execute a contract with Mincom Inc. and RNR Consulting for a combined value not to exceed \$1,650,000 plus 10% contingency, and if staff is unable to negotiate a satisfactory contract with Mincom, staff may award the work to the next most qualified vendor under the terms set forth above.

Further, the arrangement with Bank of the West for acquisition of the Management Information System under a lease with a five-year term not to exceed \$1,365,000 is approved.

Mr. Parks moved, and Mr. Mahaffey seconded that the March 2, 2008 minutes be approved as written and amended. The motion carried unanimously.

5 – PUBLIC HEARING on Proposed Fixed Route & Paratransit Fare Adjustments

The Public Hearing was called to order by Chair Conkling at 5:04 p.m. He outlined how the hearing would be conducted. General Manager Brad Miller then did a Power Point presentation showing the various changes and reasoning for the changes. He also reviewed comments from the public that came in via e-mails and phone calls. Based on those comments, he recommended the adjustments as proposed except for the following changes/additions:

1. Extend transfer time from 30 minutes to 2 hours (passenger able to continue trip – cannot reverse directions)
2. Reduced fare passes should be similar in appearance to avoid “stigma” of having a “special” pass.

He announced that the fare adjustments have been advertised and posted for over 30 days; this is the second Public Hearing on the subject; and the Commission is asked to take action tonight.

Mr. Miller then went through all segments of ridership and the corresponding fare adjustments line by line. Highlights included: no increase in children’s fares; seniors may now use their ID for reduced fares at any time of the day; increase the age for seniors to 65 (persons under age 65 now in possession of a senior ID will be able to keep their ID); weekly passes will be \$14.00 and a packet of 10 tokens will be \$15.00 (this will encourage pass use over tokens); will now offer reduced fare weekly and monthly passes; and all transfers will be free. Mr. Miller pointed out that the \$24.00 fare for the general public’s use of Bus Plus has to do with Medicaid reimbursements. He also stated that the overall purpose of the adjustments was to cover the rapidly rising cost of diesel fuel.

6 - PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Conkling then called upon members of the general public in the room who wished to address the Commission with their thoughts on the fare adjustments.

Michael Barber, who is the President of the National Federation of the Blind/Iowa said he supports and understands the reasoning for the fare adjustments. However, he had concerns about the hybrid buses being too quiet for sight-impaired persons to detect and asked that DART consider some type of warning sound at intersections. He does not oppose adding hybrid buses to our fleet, but feels strongly that they should emit some type of sound. He asked that the Commission keep in contact with his organization regarding this issue.

Curtis Chong, from the Iowa Department for the Blind, also mentioned concern over the quietness of the hybrid vehicles. He is supportive of the needed increase in fares. He has persons who help teach transit skills, and also asked that DART keep in contact with his department.

Frank Strong, from CICIL, requested that the OTT fare increase be lowered from the proposed \$21.00/month, saying that to many of their clients, that increase is significant when compared to their monthly incomes.

John Tenekat, citizen, had several suggestions for improvements to DART: have any hybrid buses equipped with trolley pulls; use curb-liners, which use electricity to save money on diesel fuel; increase the capacity of our bike racks; put flashers on our stop signs so they are more visible at night; stressed the need for DART to economize our operations wherever possible.

Sharon Blair, citizen, said that we need to have police officers in the downtown transit hub to help police the area and keep it safe for all passengers.

There being no other persons wishing to speak, Mr. Conkling closed the Public Hearing at 5:36 p.m.

Discussion followed among the commissioners regarding the fare adjustments, with specific emphasis on the OTT program and fares. Mr. Miller, Mr. Parks, Mr. Boesen, Mr. Clark and Mr. Mahaffey discussed the program and agreed to review the OTT program proposed fare adjustment proposal. Mr. Boesen suggested that we look at alternatives then changes this one item, if needed, at a later date while approving the overall fare adjustment proposal. Mr. Clark agreed. Ms. Johnson indicated she too was most concerned with the OTT increase and suggested the need to look at the statistics for waiting lists. Mr. Mahaffey thanked the public for coming.

Mr. Conkling called for a motion to approve the proposed fare adjustments, with the stipulation that staff and the Commission look at the OTT program and its proposed fare increase with the option to change it from the proposed \$21.00 if deemed necessary. Mr. Boesen moved that the fare proposal be accepted and be effective June 1, 2008. Mr. Mahaffey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Parks asked that DART staff look into audio signals for hybrid vehicles; Mr. Miller assured him that options will be researched.

7 – CONSENT ITEMS

Consent items this month include: February Fixed Route Financial Reports, February Paratransit Financial Reports, February RideShare Financial Reports, Legislative Updates, and FY2009 Grants. Mr. Parks moved to accept the consent items as written. Mr. Johnson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

8 – ACTION ITEMS

The only action item was the proposed fare adjustments, which passed earlier in the meeting.

9 – DISCUSSION ITEMS

9A: Comprehensive Planning: Mr. Gayman agreed with the approach. He would like to see a task force of city officials to determine formula to use to gain cooperation; have a timeline; and gather suggestions as part of comprehensive planning.

Mr. Conkling said that it will be a tiered look at all aspects: finance, current service, need for better communication, planned services; need a committee comprised of all metro organizations.

Mr. Parks stated that people in his region (Region 2 – West Des Moines area) are going to get together to discuss transit in the western suburbs, and will apprise the Commission of the results of their discussions.

Mr. Conkling agreed that DART needs to take a cooperative regional approach to making decisions and offered to help other Commissioners.

Mr. Van Oort supports a cooperative effort and appreciated this item being on the agenda. He has been in contact with the mayors in his region. They would like to see some action taken and Mr. Van Oort would like to see the formula reviewed and discussed and pushed for substance to take back to his mayors.

Des Moines City Manager Rick Clark said the process appears to be a good plan. He emphasized that he believes the DART Commission should continue to be the key leading decision-body for these funding plan.

Mr. Tenekat, from the audience, had questions about future plans for light rail system and was told that light rail is quite costly for an area our size.

9B – SNOW EMERGENCY PLANNING

Carol Pelfrey and Jim Tishim made a PowerPoint presentation outlining how DART handled this winter's extreme weather. Jim gave statistics on weather, accidents, etc. Carol went over equipment damage and noted a need for a new truck with snow plow/sander attachments.

Mr. Miller thanked staff for their efforts, and emphasized that we learned a lot from this past winter's unusually bad weather/snowfall. Mr. Conkling also thanked staff.

Mr. Miller briefly went over his report. He noted that ridership was up significantly; that he Mr. Conkling, and Mr. Boesen had attended the national APTA conference and had commissioners refer to the two booklets they brought back; shared that they spoke about different ways to fund transit.

At that time (6:25 p.m.), Mr. Miller and Mr. Boesen were excused to attend the Pleasant Hill City Council meeting where they were scheduled to give an update on DART activities.

9C – TRANSIT HUB DESIGN

Mr. Litchfield then presented renderings of the proposed Transit Hub design. He pointed out that some staff would be moved to the new facility, most specifically Customer Service. He noted that there would be extra room to rent/lease out areas for commercial business to help sustain the project. At this time, the proposed site on Cherry Street, just south of existing transit area, is owned by Polk County, the City of Des Moines and Wells Fargo. Mr. Clark is very supportive of the project, and asked if the parties have agreed to the sale of the property. Mr. Litchfield replied that Wells Fargo is on board, but Polk County has not formally agreed as yet. The City and Wells Fargo will sit down and decide on the sale. Nationwide is funding a downtown tram feasibility study which would be linked to our project.

Mr. Van Oort agrees that we should go forth with the project. His concern was funding and comprehensive planning and he wondered how this new hub fits in with future planning over the next 10 years. He wants us to be sure this facility fits into what we are going to be doing regionally.

9D – DOWNTOWN SHUTTLE UPDATE

A name for shuttle has not yet been finalized. DART is working on the details of the marketing plan to advertise this new service. The trolley buses will be en route

to Des Moines between April 2-11, 2008. There will be a kick-off celebration sometime in April, with the start date for the new shuttle service scheduled for late April/early May, with the hope of being operational before this legislative session ends.

9E – PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Mr. Parks had several thoughts to share. Regarding snow equipment he said there seemed to be a lack of equipment and we should try to acquire 1-2 new vehicles, possibly piggy-backing with other contract(s) to get a better price. He also suggested flashing lights on these buses. There was discussion on a salt and sand shortage this past year and said there was talk of construction of a central salt storage bin for area municipalities and thought DART should look in to joining this effort.

10 A-E DEPARTMENTAL MONTHLY REPORTS

These were not gone over individually; commissioners were to view/study on own.

11 - FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were none declared.

12 – TRUSTEE ITEMS

There were none declared.

13 – OTHER

Mr. Conkling provided his report on his recent attendance of the APTA Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. He said it was a good opportunity to talk about DART's priorities with the Congressional delegation and DART needs to continue to be proactive in applying for this type of funding.

There were no other communications to share.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Mr. Conkling announced that the next meeting date would be April 22, 2008, at 5:00 p.m. here at the DART offices. He also noted that he will contact commissioners regarding attendance at other meetings that involve DART interests.

ADJOURN

Mr. Van Oort moved, and Ms. Johnson seconded, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Chair

Secretary/Treasurer

Date