

**SAN MATEO COUNTY TRANSIT DISTRICT
1250 SAN CARLOS AVENUE, SAN CARLOS, CALIFORNIA**

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2, 2009**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Baker (Vice-Chair), A. Chow, T. Collette, K. Feldstein, M. Hall, P. Hitchcock, W. Kingsford-Smith (Chair), K. Kott, M. Matev, D. Milton, K. Nobles, S. Price, P. Ratto, D. Wilcox

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: P. Loranger

SAMTRANS STAFF PRESENT: K. Green, N. McKenna, C. Patton, E. Proctor

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Peter Ratto said in his comments on page three, third paragraph, the word residences should be changed to *residents*.

David Milton said on page four, seventh paragraph, the sentence should read “management should *first try* raising fares on express routes for *net* revenue neutrality before any express routes are eliminated *as he believes we would find there is considerable fare elasticity*. He also said on page three, first paragraph the end of the sentence should read express routes *net* revenue neutral *and whether we can test fare elasticity on these routes as he believes there is elasticity*.

The Committee (Feldstein/Nobles) approved the corrected minutes of August 5, 2009 (Hitchcock/Collette abstained).

UPDATED SERVICE REDUCTION PROPOSAL

Director of Bus Transportation Chester Patton made the following points:

- The District is facing a \$28 million deficit.
- There has been an 11 percent decline in ridership; sales tax receipts continue to decline; the State Transit Assistance (STA) has been eliminated and the debt service is approximately \$25 million per year.
- Four community meetings were held to discuss the proposed service reductions; a presentation was given at the August CAC meeting; and a public hearing was held at the August Board meeting. Numerous e-mails and correspondence were received from the public.
- Staff feels well informed based on the number of inputs received.
- Staff heard people love SamTrans and the proposed levels will be painful and disruptive to the lives of many. There was a distinction between comments received - those that praised the convenience of the service and those who are desperate and did not know what they would do or how they would maintain the basic functionality of their lives.

- It was very obvious the necessity of Routes 17, 295, 292, KX and 397 for many passengers.
- With the comments received staff studied the Strategic Plan, the Guiding Principles and the Mission and Vision Statements to find an ethical context in which to form our decision making and come up with a precise, specific plan that conformed to these values.
- The District's vision statement states the "District is a mobility leader providing transportation choices and a sustainable future that meets the needs of our diverse community." There are nine guiding principles adopted by the Board of Directors in 2004 and of these nine, six directly apply to the new service proposal that staff has developed. The most telling is "Sustain basic mobility services for transit dependent and low-income persons."
- In addition The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the application of Title VI. This statute forbids discrimination relative to the usage of public funds. This applies to Title VI areas of which East Palo Alto is one.
- The proposal preserves service for transit-dependent and low-income groups, such as customers on Routes 17, 295 and most of the East Palo Alto routes. Rather than shrink the service span for the night owl service, the new proposal retains Routes 297, 397, 292, KX and 390/391.
- Staff proposes elimination of express services to San Francisco. The high fares and exclusive nature of these services are desirable, but do not serve the core transit-dependent riders. Most express riders have alternate transit options. Express routes to be eliminated are MX, NX, PX, RX, DX and FX.
- Route CX is being retained. It has a local fare, stays in the county and goes from Linda Mar in Pacifica to Colma BART.
- Route FX is a high ridership route and as mitigation staff is going to implement feeder service through Foster City and bring passengers to the Millbrae Intermodal Station. Staff feels this is a very attractive alternative.
- Route KX is being retained and research indicates it has a much higher usage by transit-dependent passengers. The service will be reduced from 30 to 60 minute service. The Page Mill segment, which is non-productive, has been eliminated.
- The only impact to East Palo Alto is that Route 280 will go from 30 to 60 minute intervals.
- The bi-directional Route 14 in Pacifica will change to a one directional route before 7 a.m. and after 4 p.m.
- Route 342 in Millbrae will be eliminated.
- Routes 390 and 391 will change from 30 minute to 40 minute intervals on weekends only.
- Route 141 will go from 30 to 60 minute intervals, except during school hours.
- There is no impact to paratransit service.
- The recommended changes will save the District \$6.3 million annually and with the fare increase the total is \$7.5 million. Only half of the savings will be realized this fiscal year since these changes will be implemented in December. This is only a partial solution to the financial problem.
- Staff knows the proposed changes will not be satisfactory to all passengers, however this proposal best balances the need to lower costs with the priority of protecting the most transit-dependent riders.

- This plan puts the District in sync with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) desire to see a reduction in duplicative service.

Ken Feldstein said the last comment disturbs him. He said there is no joint fare with BART so the patrons that take the shuttle service and transfer will be paying two fares and then an additional fare if they have to transfer to Muni in San Francisco. Mr. Feldstein said Route FX is very productive and there is elasticity to charge an additional \$1 in each direction. He said the wrong message is being sent by eliminating a high productive route. Hourly service on Route KX is not good and should be every 30 minutes during peak periods. Mr. Feldstein is glad the all-nighter service was retained. He said areas where service could be cut are the duplication in routes between Hillsdale and Redwood City Caltrain Station on the El Camino Real where there are Routes 390, 391 and KX. Mr. Feldstein said Route 260 in Redwood Shores runs every 30 minutes, which is a waste, and should have hourly service. He said Route 274 to Cañada College should not run during the middle of the day or during the summer.

David Milton said he endorses Mr. Feldstein's comments. Mr. Milton asked about using capital reserves to replace or augment operating funds without any limits. Mr. Patton said it is a decision by the Board and there is a finite amount of capital reserves. He said staff is trying to extend out the life of the District to find a lasting solution.

Mr. Milton said customer interface with bus operators is excellent. He asked how the reduction in service affects the operators. Mr. Patton said this is a difficult thing and a bus operator has never been laid off. The District values its human capital. There are contractual constraints with MV Transportation that limit how much the service can be varied without entering into negotiations and raising the economical rate. Mr. Patton said there is a provision in the collective bargaining unit with the operators that prevents the District from going below a certain number in the layoff. It is a bit of a challenge to focus on a target with a precise balance in the service. Mr. Patton said the bottom line is there is a target to reach for these savings and it means layoffs because the expenses are in wages and benefits.

Mr. Milton said the 7.5 percent reduction presented at the last CAC meeting included some or all express service being retained and now the express service is largely eliminated. Mr. Patton said the public notice had three levels of proposals which could be modified.

Pam Hitchcock said she is speaking on behalf of the express riders whose community is being disproportionately affected by these cuts. She said she has a hard time with people who make twice as much money telling her that because she makes so much money she has to go to another system. Ms. Hitchcock said people shouldn't assume people that ride the express buses are not transit dependent. She said there is a difference between transit-dependent and transit-loyal. A lot of the people she knows who are transit-dependent only ride the bus until they can get a car. Ms. Hitchcock said express riders have been tremendously loyal over the years and a class stratified system is being created. She said revenue from express riders in 2008 is \$2.34 million. Ms. Hitchcock said instead of eliminating the express routes staff needs to look at consolidating routes. She said people on the bus don't have a lot of extra money and she makes half of what staff makes and she feels her community is being disproportionately targeted. Ms. Hitchcock said SamTrans is supposed to be a green agency and this proposal is forcing people in Redwood City to drive.

Peter Ratto said SamTrans did listen to the people who testified at the community meetings and the Board meeting. He was very impressed with those that spoke about Routes 295 and 17. These people are transit-dependent and will continue to be. Mr. Ratto said it is very easy to save money by reducing frequency. He is disappointed with the cuts to the express service. Mr. Ratto said the plan is not perfect and given what is needed to be done to preserve the service, a job well done by staff with the proposal.

Andy Chow said he was glad there were no cuts above 7.5 percent, but disappointed that SamTrans wasn't more surgical in what was cut to reduce the pain. The plan does have a lot of route eliminations and he hopes when the economy gets better service can be reinstated. Mr. Chow said he understands the financial burden, but to abandon a certain groups of riders, i.e. express routes, is not good. He is appreciative of staff paying attention to MTC's request to eliminate duplicative service, but it is not fair that express service has to be cut. He said there is duplicative service with Routes KX and 390 along El Camino Real and the potential overcrowding in Palo Alto. Mr. Chow asked if Route 397 could be adjusted to run along the most used segment of the route.

Matey Matev said the elimination of Route DX is not fair for people who work in San Francisco; and it is inconvenient for people who take Route CX to transfer at Colma BART. He said Routes CX and DX should be combined and stop at Colma BART and then San Francisco. Mr. Matev said Route 14 should run on the hour in one direction and 30 minutes after the hour in the opposite direction. He said Route 260 should run hourly between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. because of low ridership. Mr. Matev said Route 271 duplicates service of Route 295 to Woodside Plaza. He said many people in San Mateo County need the express service and it is not good to eliminate Route FX service to San Francisco. Mr. Matev said it is not comfortable to go to Millbrae and have to transfer to Caltrain or BART and it also costs more. He said staff should reduce the number of Route FX buses it runs instead of completely eliminating the service. Mr. Matev said staff should consider combining Routes MX and PX from Hillsdale Shopping Center and Millbrae to San Francisco.

John Baker commended the professionalism of staff during this process and the wide public process. He is happy the cuts weren't based totally on numbers and glad Route 17 and night-owl service were retained. Mr. Baker said cuts may happen again and if so asked that the process be refined with a list of possible cuts with how money would be saved. He asked when the proposed changes will occur.

Mr. Patton said the changes would be implemented on December 20, 2009.

Katherine Kott thanked staff for the hard work and time to plan the mission. She is happy the late night bus service was retained. Ms. Kott said people have to adjust when transit changes occur. She said this may be a good time to look at inter-agency politics and transfers between agencies. Ms. Kott said she works at Stanford and participates in the Caltrain GO Pass program and maybe SamTrans could start a program like this.

Maureen Hall said Route 14 is used heavily during the day. She understands the reason for the elimination of Route DX and Route CX does offer other options to passengers.

Sondra Price thanked staff and her colleagues on the CAC who offered a lot of energy and attention to the process. She said, at last month's meeting, four performance measures were

mentioned to look at route eliminations; and did staff cave for political reasons in their recommendation for eliminating the express service.

Mr. Patton said nothing is easy about this and understands people will put their own interpretation on all of this. He said the plan was designed independently of the MTC recommendations for the reasons stated.

Tom Collette thanked staff for all they have done, but his concern is Route FX. Is it possible to increase the express fares and continue the service?

Mr. Patton said these routes are heavily subsidized. The fares, on average, only cover 18 percent of the cost of the trip. In order to break even the cost would be prohibitive unless people were willing to pay \$28 roundtrip.

David Wilcox had no comment.

Ms. Nobles said the CAC has expressed the issue of express routes and having to find another means of transportation. She asked if Caltrain would be able to accommodate 200 additional people who would be boarding at Millbrae.

Manager, Operations Planning Eric Harris said he will research this question and will have Mr. Patton report back at the next meeting.

Chair Kingsford-Smith thanked staff for their hard work and asked the CAC what message they want to deliver to the board.

A motion (Baker/Feldstein) passed 12-2 (Hitchcock/Wilcox) that the CAC acknowledges receipt of staff's service proposal and appreciates their hard work and outreach for formulating the plan. Individual CAC members have concerns in the following areas: Loyal transit riders have been left out of the process as tied to the mission statement as an impacted segment; do not eliminate peak hour express service, but look at the possibility of consolidating service as a means to preserve express service to San Francisco; eliminate duplicate service between Hillsdale and Redwood City; reduce service on Routes 260, 271 and 274; ensure timely multimodal connections and keep Route FX and express service on El Camino Real between Hillsdale and Millbrae.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Chair Kingsford-Smith had no report.

SAMTRANS STAFF UPDATE

Mr. Patton introduced Public Information Specialist Kelly Green who will be Mary Knuckles' replacement at the meetings.

CAC MEMBER COMMENTS/REQUESTS

Mr. Feldstein said this is a very sad day with the service cuts, but nothing can be done about it. He said he was in New York last week and it was nice to be able to get service every five minutes.

Mr. Milton asked if there is an opportunity to positively market the new buses that will be out on the system. He said staff has to be careful how they are marketed and people need help to understand the difference between stimulus funds for capital projects versus non-stimulus operating expenses and that service was not cut to purchase new buses. Mr. Milton said this distinction needs to be made clear to the customers.

Ms. Nobles said she is very proud to be part of the CAC and how hard everyone worked to the best of their knowledge and capability on this issue and to be able to set emotions aside.

Mr. Ratto said yesterday San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom announced Muni hit their highest on-time performance at 74 percent. He said he had five opportunities to ride Muni yesterday and they had four missed runs. When he got off Caltrain in Hillsdale Route 295 showed up on time.

Mr. Matev said over one million people use public transportation in Sofia, Bulgaria daily and passengers are able to buy their ticket from an outside vendor.

Ms. Kott asked that her e-mail not be given out to the general public.

Mr. Collette was in England and Germany and seniors there do not pay to ride the buses.

LIAISON REPORTS

a. SamTrans Board – Wayne Kingsford-Smith

Chair Kingsford-Smith reported on the August meeting:

- A public hearing on proposed service reductions was held.

b. SamTrans Accessibility Advisory Committee – Tom Collette

- Translink testing has begun on Caltrain.
- There was a discussion on the proposed service cuts and fare increases on SamTrans.
- There is a program at several senior centers where seniors are matched with seniors who don't use transit to get them to try it.

c. Caltrain Accessibility Advisory Committee – Peter Loranger – absent

d. Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board – David Wilcox

- New fencing is being installed and there is a focus on safety at 25 grade crossings.
- Thirty-one cars have been converted for additional bike capacity.
- Effective August 31 mid-day service has been reduced, GO Pass pricing and daily and monthly parking increased.
- A fuel hedging program was approved.
- The Fiscal Year 2010 capital budget was approved.

e. Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board Citizens Advisory Committee – Andy Chow – no report.

f. Senior Mobility Action Plan – Ken Feldstein – no report

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held October 7, 2009, at 6:30 p.m., 1250 San Carlos Avenue, Bacciocco Auditorium, 2nd Floor, San Carlos, California 94070.

ADJOURNED: 8: 55 p.m.