

Jefferson Transit Authority Citizens Advisory Committee Remote Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 5, 2020, 3:30 pm
63 4 Corners Road, Port Townsend WA

CAC Board Members Present: Darrell Conder, Brandon Maxwell, Anne Metcalfe, John Nowak, Debbie Jahnke, and Brenda McMillan with Viviann Kuehl and Tim Caldwell excused. A quorum was present.

Authority Board Member Present: Jefferson County Commissioner Kate Dean and City of Port Townsend Council Member Ariel Speser

Staff Present: Finance Manager Sara Crouch, Operations Manager Leesa Monroe, Mobility and Outreach Coordinator Miranda Nash, and Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board SJ Peck

Call to Order/Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 pm by Committee Chair Darrell Conder.

Public Comment

There was none.

Approval of February 5, 2020 Minutes

Debbie Jahnke inquired about typos. Sara Crouch stated that non substantive corrections may be sent to Sj Peck.

Motion: John Nowak moved to approve the February 5, 2020 Minutes. Brenda McMillan seconded. Vote: The motion carried unanimously, 6-0 by roll call vote.

Discussion: Ridership Numbers During COVID-19

Leesa Monroe gave updates on the following (please see Attachment A):

- Fixed Route Ridership
- Dial-A-Ride Ridership
- Return to Service

Deb Jahnke asked about budget reliance on paid ridership and if the COVID Cares Fund is helping Jefferson Transit Authority (JTA) to maintain service. Sara Crouch explained that JTA's budget does not rely on ridership except as a performance measurement. The COVID Cares Act is enabling JTA to keep employees on administrative leave as opposed to unemployment. Drivers work partial days and are on partial administrative leave when not driving. Only two layoffs occurred when customer service closed. In 2020, ridership is not a performance indicator due to the

reduced ridership from COVID-19. Elizabeth Safsten, the JTA Community Liaison for Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), stated that WSDOT is not going to penalize consolidated grant recipients based on performance measurements related to ridership due to COVID. Debbie Jahnke clarified that she was asking if COVID money was replacing the budget loss as fare revenue is such a small part of the budget. Sara Crouch said JTA is on the first round of Cares Act Funding. JTA is fine at the moment, but we do not know how long this event will last, we need to be conservative with the funding.

Brandon Maxwell asked about reinstating commuter buses. Leesa Monroe encouraged riders to fill out the JTA survey. JTA would like to get more information from commuters. JTA is taking in considerations such as commuter schedules, rider safety, social distancing, bus capacity, ADA considerations, masking directives and mask supplies.

Kate Dean joined the meeting at 4:03 pm.

Brenda McMillan asked if volunteers can hand out masks. Leesa Monroe explained that for safety purposes, bus drivers will hand out masks.

John Nowak asked about the morale of JTA employees. Leesa Monroe described the projects completed by JTA employees and talked about the positive morale among the employees.

Margaret Lee thanked Leesa Monroe for the report.

Kate Dean inquired about reasons for ridership during COVID and asked what other transit agencies think about the future of transit. Leesa Monroe explained that she does not have a sense of who is riding. The largest consistent group of riders are previously from the fairgrounds and have moved to the Legion. JTA has an online survey to get more answers on the topic of ridership. Sara Crouch explained the service of other transit agencies. Steam cleaners, driver barriers, bus cleanliness, and masking directives, and customer service plastic shields are all changes that have occurred in transit service. JTA is on a waitlist for driver barriers.

John Nowak explained that ventilation is a big factor in the transition of COVID and asked about JTA ventilation precautions. Leesa Monroe said she will look into this.

Ariel Speser left the meeting at 4:25 pm.

Darrell Conder talked about using the bus only for essential trips.

Brenda McMillan said she would ride the bus more often, but finds herself driving more due to lack of service and asked about future plans.

Discussion: Fare-Free Update

Sara Crouch explained the Supplemental Budget Resolution for the next Board Packet and impact of loss of revenue. Fare-free was meant to reduce contact with drivers and provide economic relieve to riders during the Pandemic. This is projected to continue through the rest of this year and possibly beyond.

Leesa Monroe stated that the fare-free customer comments are about planning to buy monthly passes.

Kate Dean commented that JTA has considered trying fare-free, but that doing so under these circumstances doesn't give an accurate indicator of incentivizing ridership. Debbie Jahnke said fare-free is still a good way to get the public on the bus and may work out long-term. Sara Crouch said that once full service is reestablished, JTA should have a better idea if fare-free has an impact on ridership.

Brandon Maxwell stated that due to contact reasons, he probably wouldn't ride the bus if it was not fare-free and asked about future plans for token transit. Leesa Monroe said this has been discussed, although not while fare-free is in effect.

Margaret Lee said that she and many others have long been in favor of fare-free transit.

Ridership Report

Leesa Monroe explained various events that JTA utilizes to increase ridership and discussed the increase in ridership from 2018 to 2019.

Sara Crouch explained that sales tax revenue is doing surprisingly well given the circumstances.

Debbie Jahnke asked to have data in writing for the CAC Meetings.

Kate Dean spoke of the future of the CAC with the purpose of increasing ridership.

Sara Crouch spoke of the value of the CAC in the community.

John Nowak added that the CAC has value and is in favor of continuing the meetings.

Anne Metcalf asked about providing service to the schools. Leesa Monroe said she will look into this. Kate Dean said that schools will be back session and added that partnerships with the schools may be beneficial.

Darrell Conder is hopeful but does not see a change in the near future with ridership or Dial-A-Ride. Sara Crouch stated that Dial-A-Ride has increased, but is still half of where it was.

Public Comment

Margaret Lee thanked everyone for the discussion.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 pm. The next regular meeting is November 4, 2020, at 3:30 pm, and will be held at 63 4 Corner Road, Port Townsend, WA.

SJ Peck, Clerk of the Board

Date