

**DES MOINES AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**1100 DART Way – Des Moines, IA 50309
November 29, 2011**

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Bob Mahaffey, Angela Connolly, Tom Gayman, Steve Brody, Skip Conkling, Gaye Johnson, Steve Van Oort

Commissioners Absent: Ted Boesen, Chris Hensley

Alternates Present: None

Staff Present: Elizabeth Presutti, General Manager; Tom Reynolds, Chief Operating Officer; Jamie Schug, Chief Financial Officer; Randy Ross, HR Director; Claire Celsi, Marketing and Community Partnerships Director; Kirstin Baer-Harding, Advertising Manager; Gunnar Olson, Public Information Officer; Jim Tishim, Planning Director; Mike Kaiser and Greg Schmitt, Transportation Training; Paula Covington, RideShare; P.J. Sass, Customer Service Manager; Paula Covington, RideShare; Nolden Gentry, Legal Counsel; Suzanne Robinson, Clerk to the Commission;

Others Present: Dana Conn, TMA; Nathan Goldberg, MPO; Todd Erzen, Des Moines Register; Greg Sparks, City of West Des Moines; John Halsband, DART customer

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Angela Connolly at 5:00 p.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

Notice of the meeting was duly published.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Connolly called for corrections to the October 25, 2011, meeting minutes.

There being no comments on the minutes, it was moved by Mr. Gayman and seconded by Mr. Conkling that the minutes be approved. The minutes were approved as written.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

TRAC REPORT

Mr. Rod Van Genderen, the recently named Vice Chair of the Transit Riders Advisory Committee, summarized the November TRAC meeting. He said that the committee discussed goals for 2011 and 2012, and heard a presentation on detours from DART supervisor Greg Schmitt. He said that the current TRAC committee is much more involved and active, which promises a good year ahead. Election of officers was held at the meeting, with Alexander Grgurich named Chair and Mr. Van Genderen Vice Chair.

CONSENT ITEMS

Consent Item 7C – October 2011 Financial Reports

Ms. Schug announced that Fixed Route financials were better than anticipated, and that Paratransit is down \$90,000 due to the loss of Medicaid trips. RideShare financials reflect the fare increase that took place in November. Mr. Brody asked about a discrepancy in the Paratransit figures, and Ms. Schug explained that fuel costs are now being shown in the Fixed Route financial report. It was moved by Mr. Van Oort and seconded by Ms. Johnson, that the Consent Items be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item 8A – 2012 Federal and State Legislative Priorities

Ms. Presutti said that the Legislative Committee (Christine Hensley, Steve Brody, Skip Conkling) met with Mr. Bill Wimmer, DART's legislative consultant, and the DART General Manager, and they came up with some priorities for the Commission to consider:

State Legislative Priorities

Thank Legislators for Their Support – Thank legislators for their support of DART projects, including \$4 million I-JOBs grant that leveraged the full funding of the \$21 million DART Central Station and other capital projects funded through the state's Public Transportation Infrastructure Grant Program.

Protect DART's Civil Servants – Support steeper penalties for assailants of DART employees. Currently, assaults on police officers and fire fighters are felonies; the same protection should be given to bus operators, who are exposed to hundreds of members of the public every day. Eight DART operators have been assaulted in the past two years.

"Iowa in Motion" – Continue to monitor and, where appropriate, make comments on the Iowa DOT's State Transportation Plan, "Iowa in Motion: Planning Ahead 2020," as it moves toward finalization. Voice support for components of the plan that identify the need for public transit investment and identify means for funding public transit.

Commercial Property Tax Reform – Monitor and, where appropriate, make comments on efforts to reform commercial property taxes. Seek to have regional transit authorities such as DART be eligible to use any alternative funding methods to "backfill" losses to commercial property tax base.

Need Funding Options – Open discussion for forms of revenue for public transportation other than local property taxes, recognizing the sensitivity to over-reliance on property taxes.

Support Iowa Passenger Rail – Monitor and, where appropriate, make comments on the Iowa DOT's feasibility study of passenger rail service connecting the Quad Cities, Iowa City, Des Moines and Omaha. Support recommendations to move forward with the project.

The Committee listed the Federal Legislative Priorities:

Thanking Congressional Delegation – Thank Iowa’s Congressional Delegation for their support of DART projects, including \$16.5 million in federal grants for DART Central Station and, more recently, a \$2.1 million grant to purchase six new diesel buses and another \$1.125 million grant to upgrade five replacement buses to hybrids rather than diesels.

University/Ingersoll Rapid Transit Corridor – DART will complete its Alternatives Analysis this fall and is actively seeking a local match. Assuming a commitment to a local match, DART will apply for federal funding through the Very Small Starts program of the Federal Transportation Administration. (FEDERAL REQUEST: \$20 million)

Advance Smart Card Reader and Fare Payment System – Updated fareboxes will be crucial for DART to expand its partnerships within the community. (FEDERAL REQUEST: \$3 million)

Additional Buses -- DART will need additional buses in the coming years to expand service as outlined in the recently adopted DART Forward 2035 Plan.

In addition, DART will work with the American Public Transportation Association to advocate for key priorities in a long-term reauthorization bill for federal transportation funding, specifically:

- A multi-year bill to foster stability and predictability in transit budgets.
- Maintain funding at current levels, if not increased levels.

DART will stress that cuts to transit would have significant consequences. For example, a cut of 30 percent to federal funding – as previously proposed – would result in a loss of approximately \$2.1 million annually, requiring service cuts and drastically limiting residents’ access to jobs, schools and shopping.

Chair Connolly elaborated on the possibility of a 30% cut in federal funding, stating that it would be a disaster for the community. Ms. Presutti added that the cut would be from DART’s formula funds, affecting DART’s bottom line. She added that she will be in Washington DC the first week in December for an APTA conference, and has scheduled meetings with the Congressional Delegation, at which time she will inform them of the consequences of a cut in public transit funding.

It was moved by Mr. Brody and seconded by Ms. Johnson that the Commission approve the 2012 State and Federal Legislative Priorities.

The motion carried unanimously.

Action Item 8B – Ingersoll/University Bus Rapid Transit Project Local Match Campaign

Ms. Presutti summarized the work to date on the BRT project, and added that The Federal Transit Administration (FTA, Very Small Starts program) funds projects like the Ingersoll/University loop corridor BRT. The Very Small Starts program is a competitive process based on the evaluation criteria which includes having a strong financial plan with local financial commitment. A factor that may help is that the State of Iowa has never received any FTA Very Small Starts funding, and in addition, FTA Region VII has given approval for the project.

She said that the next step is to apply for the federal grant, which will cover 80% of the funding, so that a match of 20% must come from local sources. Ms. Presutti added that staff has developed a presentation that will hopefully convince local funders to invest in the project. She stated that the focus will be on quickly communicating the opportunity, securing lead gifts and engaging those who are influencers in much of the decision-making related to economic development, quality of life initiatives and retaining and attracting the region’s workforce. She added that staff recommendation is that the commission approves the plan to move forward with the BRT-related

fundraising for the \$5 million local match, and participate whenever possible with phone calls and letters of support to the companies on our list.

Mr. Gayman asked what the reaction has been in the presentations already made in the community. Ms. Presutti said it has been positive, and that attendees have given lots of feedback. Chair Connolly said that the support of member communities for this project is very important. Mr. Brody asked if the BRT route will be integrated into other DART bus routes, and if DART will have to buy land or get easements for shelters and stops. Ms. Presutti said that the BRT will connect with all routes, and that DART expects that most stops and shelters will be built in the right-of-way. Mr. Brody asked what costs for operating the BRT will be, and Ms. Presutti said that operating costs have been included in the DART 2035 budget. Chair Connolly added that the Grant will pay for the cost of the infrastructure.

It was moved by Mr. Van Oort and seconded by Mr. Mahaffey that the Commission approve the Ingersoll/University Bus Rapid Transit project Local Match campaign. The motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

9-A - DART Central Station Update

Mark Trost, DART's Owners Representative, gave a quick update on the progress of DART Central Station. He stated:

- Steel will begin to arrive on site in December.
- The first official change order was submitted during the month.
- The weather gods have been smiling on the project.
- The public art presentations were viewed and approved with some changes.
- Looking for a vendor is proceeding.

Chair Connolly added that the project is on schedule, which is great news.

9-B - 2013 Budget Update

Ms. Schug made a brief presentation, and stated:

- Staff has identified areas where the budgeting process could be improved.
- She attended a conference in San Antonio at which she made an effort to find a better model for DART.
- Software MuniCast was approved and purchased which allows 100 different scenarios to be configured over a 20-year period, making the budget forecasting process much easier and more transparent.
- The software also puts all budgeting information in one place for easier access.
- It allows for "seasonality" so that staff can see what real spending looks like for the year, not amortized over 12 months as in the past.

Ms. Schug also listed the current budget assumptions:

- IPERS changes, the contribution rate for FY 2013 will increase by 1%, that 1% increase will be split between employer and employee, with the employer rate increasing by 0.6% and the employee rate increasing by 0.4%
- Residential Rollback will be 50.75%, Commercial Rollback will remain at 100%
- 1% pay increase for staff with incentive pay potential
- Implementation of Year 1 of DART Forward plan

And areas of uncertainty being:

- Property tax reform
- Federal funding amount

Mr. Conkling asked about DART's ability to pay large amounts without amortizing throughout the year. Ms. Schug said that her department will remain cognizant of such scenarios in making sure DART can meet its monthly obligations.

Ms. Presutti thanked Ms. Schug for taking on the research for the purchase of the MuniCast software.

9C – Performance Reports

No discussion this month.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Reynolds updated the commission on the situation at Merle Hay Mall, in which mall management wanted to remove the bus stop at the mall because bus-riding Hoover students were stopping at the mall after school. He stated that thanks to Commissioners Hensley and Gayman, DART staff were included in a phone meeting with the mall owner and were able to work through the issue. Mr. Reynolds introduced new Dispatcher, Skip Herbold, who will also deliver the morning WHO report in addition to his dispatching duties. Mr. Reynolds announced that supervisor Greg Schmitt will be the new Training Manager, with Mike Kaiser assuming a new position as Manager, Service Management. A new transportation supervisor was hired as well – driver Neil Hampton moved up during the month to his new position.

Ms. Celsi gave highlights of doings in the Marketing Department:

- Working on the Marketing Plan
- Updating social media sites and attempting to update every day.
- Have seen a 50% decrease in complaints.
- Going to have a Training Session on working with difficult customers.
- Thanks to Paula Covington in the RideShare department for shouldering all the responsibilities of the department during this transitional period.

Ms. Presutti announced that negotiations with the Amalgamated Transit Union have begun.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Nolden Gentry will bring a new Re-districting Plan before the Commission at the December meeting.

COMMISSIONER ITEMS

By Laws

Mr. Gentry explained that since a regional transit authority was a new entity in the State of Iowa, there were some glitches in the By Laws that need to be corrected. He said that an amendment to the By Laws needs to be made to provide for an Annual Meeting and a date for the Election of Officers of the Commission. He is recommending that the June Commission Meeting be designated as the Annual Meeting, and that the Election of Officers take place during the June Commission

Meeting as well. The Amendment may be passed with a two-thirds vote of the Commission. Mr. Gentry also discussed some minor changes that need to be made in the Intergovernmental Agreement, including the number of meetings per year of the Commission and regarding the duties of the Secretary to the Commission and the Clerk to the Commission. Mr. Brody asked if the By Laws have been checked for other anomalies that should be changed. Mr. Gentry assured him that they have now been thoroughly scrutinized and any problem discovered.

CLOSED SESSION

Chair Connolly called for a motion to recess and reconvene in a closed session.

Closed Session:

It was moved by Mr. Mahaffey and seconded by Mr. Van Oort that the Commission adjourn and reconvene in closed session pursuant to Section 21.5, Subsection 1, Paragraph C of the Iowa code to discuss strategy with counsel on a matter where litigation is imminent where its disclosure would be likely to prejudice or disadvantage the position of DART in that litigation.

Roll Call: Connolly yes, Brody yes, Gayman yes, Mahaffey yes, Conkling yes, Johnson yes, Van Oort yes. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Connolly recessed the meeting at 6:10 pm. At 6:23 pm it was moved by Mr. Conkling and seconded by Mr. Van Oort that the closed session be adjourned.

Roll Call: Connolly yes, Brody yes, Gayman yes, Mahaffey yes, Conkling yes, Johnson yes, Van Oort yes. The motion carried unanimously.

The regular Commission meeting was resumed at 6:24 pm. Chair Connolly stated for the record that no action was taken during the closed session.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Next Meeting Date:
December 20, 2011

2012 Meeting Dates

Jan 31, Feb 28, Mar 27, Apr 24, May 22, Jun 26, Jul 31, no meeting in August
Sep 25, Oct 23, Nov 27, Dec 18

Chair

Secretary/Treasurer

Date