

The Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees met on March 26, 2014 at 3:15 p.m. in the CyRide Conference room. President Rediske called the meeting to order at 3:20 p.m. with Trustees Haila, Goodman, Murrell, Madden, and Schainker present. Absent: None.

Public in Attendance: Crystal Davis and Drew Kamp of the Ames Convention and Visitors Bureau were present for the Ames-Des Moines Corridor Study discussion.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Trustee Madden made a motion to approve the February 20, 2014 transit board minutes as presented. Seconded by Trustee Murrell. (Ayes: Five. Nays: None.) Motion carried.

**AMES-DES MOINES CORRIDOR STUDY PRESENTATION – OLSSON ASSOCIATES:** Director Kyras introduced Mark Swope and Clyde Prem with Olsson Associates. The consultants were hired by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, as a result of the Capital Crossroad project, to conduct a study of the transportation corridor between Des Moines and Ames. The consultants provided the transit board with the study's task and timeline in order to gain the transit board's insight and perspective regarding improved services in the corridor as the study is beginning.

Mr. Prem told the transit board that the purpose of the study is to identify improvements in transporting people to jobs, schools, and shopping within the corridor and specifically to look at needs, cost of improvements, and determine who would provide any service improvements. The consultants presented initial information, ideas and concepts based on 2010 census information. Mr. Prem then described their initial ideas and operational concepts breaking down the concepts into three categories: Des Moines to/from Ankeny, Ankeny to/from Ames and Ames to/from Des Moines. He indicated that the strongest need included Ankeny to Des Moines as currently served by DART service and between Ames and Des Moines. The weakest travel pattern was between Ankeny and Ames.

He indicated that the project needs commuters that are on the same schedule and identified major City of Ames employers as the Iowa DOT, City of Ames, and ISU. He indicated that service could be provided with express bus, regular bus or vanpool services. Mr. Prem also stated that cost and funding would be completed at the end of the study, but indicated that a possible non-local source could be the State's Intercity funding program, but that it required intermediate stops between Ames and Des Moines. He then requested comment from the transit board regarding the information presented and their level of interest in improving transportation within the corridor.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Board of Trustees consensus was that the main purpose of CyRide is to provide exceptional customer service within Ames before moving outside of Ames. While this was a worthwhile study, at this time CyRide's focus needed to be within the community with its growth and unmet funding needs. Trustee Madden shared that he would not be against DART buses coming into Ames or the Intermodal Facility and believes Ames does not have major congestion problems. The Board of Trustees agreed that they would not be able to fund or subsidize services resulting from the study, but directed staff to continue to be part of the conversation and provide information to the consultants and study group.

**QUARTERLY OPERATIONS REPORT:** Director Kyras provided highlights from the first quarter of the fiscal year - July through September 2013. She explained that the second quarter statistics were completed, except for contractor numbers, but that this would be provided to the transit board at the next meeting. She indicated that she would also verbally provide information on the second quarter along with the first quarter so that board members had a better understanding of how the system was performing this year as they discussed the next agenda item.

She indicated that:

- Ridership was higher for the first quarter and even stronger for the second quarter - +3.8% and +13% respectively.
- Farebox revenue is down 2.5% - this is due in part to Iowa State Parking systems reducing their subsidy from 50% to 30% for faculty and staff in conjunction with the fare increase. As a result a significant number of individuals chose another means of transportation. Another factor may be due to the increasing number of passengers per bus making it less attractive to ride.
- Maintenance trends show bus interior cleanings were slightly lower, but this trend was reversed in the second quarter when drivers were available to assist with cleaning.
- The number of road calls is higher. In researching this trend, the failures are not due to similar issues, but staff will continue to closely monitor all failures. CyRide is operating with three spare buses because of the additional services provided this year. The normal number of spare buses is 15 – 18 for the number of CyRide buses operating at any one time. CyRide has a fleet of 83 buses of which, 7 are small and the rest are large buses.
- The average diesel miles per gallon were lower and staff believes that this may be due to a reporting error. Buses idled overnight this winter to keep them operating so

the diesel did not gel; however, this should not have contributed significantly to this statistic.

- Accidents were higher in the first and second quarter with most occurring in the CyRide bus storage area resulting in small dollar expenses, but a higher number of accidents. The current construction project contributed to the number of accidents.
- Customer comments increased but were due to more service requests and compliments.
- Drivers reporting late for work and missing work is lower, which is a good trend.
- Dial-A-Ride ridership for the first quarter was down, but up for the second quarter. Farebox revenue is lower, -31%. The Director indicated that she will discuss this with HIRTA staff.
- Moonlight Express ridership is higher due to the Iowa State-Iowa football game and generally higher on other nights. The remaining statistics indicate that service is being provided efficiently with expenses, miles and hours stable to slightly lower.

**FIXED ROUTE SERVICE STATISTICS:** Director Kyras explained that the fixed route service statistics agenda item was in response to the board members request at the January 2014 transit board meeting to gain a better knowledge of the peak times and lower ridership routes on CyRide's system. She indicated that a question had been raised about whether there were opportunities to incentivize period of the day to modify customer travel patterns allowing for CyRide to operate fewer buses. She began by explaining a chart that illustrated the #1 Red route peak period throughout the day by half hour periods. She indicated that most other routes in the system would reflect the same peaks with fewer riders. She pointed out to board members that at 50 rides, this equals approximately 1 bus. There were several observations from this chart: the morning peak period (7-9 am) is higher and more condensed, the number of rides provided throughout the day requires at least one bus per trip and she indicated that with more riders, the lower ridership times have changed dramatically as riders are choosing to take these trips to avoid the crowds. She also indicated that the only time periods to incentivize that would not require additional buses is later in the evening, on weekends and during the summer.

An extensive discussion by transit board members included commending staff for preparing the graph and allowing the board to have a conversation about ways to reduce the peak periods. Trustee Madden discussed that Iowa State had taken a look at staggering class periods to help spread out congestion on the buses and on campus. He indicated that there were challenges with this idea, such as having class at times that students do not prefer - early in the morning, evening, weekends. Other suggestions were discussed such as having freshmen come to campus at a certain time of the day, sophomores at a different time, etc. Director Kyras indicated that transit service cannot change travel patterns, it only serves to provide transportation to customers as they come to the bus stop.

Trustee Madden pointed out driving, walking, biking, and boarding the bus on Osborne Drive is becoming dangerous. He indicated that he was questioning whether Orange Route buses should move to Pammel; however, experience tells him this solution results in major changes.

Trustee Goodman shared that he believes the question that should be asked is if there is a way to move a bus or two per route during the peak times to eliminate the need for buses.

President Rediske shared that he knows students do not like changes and suggesting sharing the data presented at the meeting with ISU administration.

Trustee Schainker shared that possibly this would be a way to maintain a sustainable system for the future as opposed to looking at the cost-sharing model as discussed in previous board meetings.

Trustee Goodman shared that he was looking for a way to protect the city from increasing costs at a time when the growth was occurring as a result of higher enrollment. He further shared that his goal is to shift the peaks to even it out more. He suggested looking at an exercise that would illustrate what would happen if the peak periods could be reduced/shifted to no more than 450 riders and then project this savings forward for a ten year period.

Trustee Haila mentioned that additional apartments are being built within Ames, and system wide and asked if the vision of the Board of Trustees was to add buses and additional drivers. Director Kyras indicated that the mission of the board was to provide an efficient system that provided transportation for customers at the bus stop.

Trustee Madden asked for clarification from the other board members as to what they were asking for from CyRide staff and ISU administration. He further shared his concerns with the current operation of Osborn Drive where buses, cars, pedestrians, bikes and skateboards shared a confined area. He indicated that the university has had discussion on ways to reduce conflicts in this area such as prohibiting parking on the street, eliminating deliveries at certain peak times, etc.

Trustee Goodman suggested that staff develop information for the board and ISU administration that would broaden the peak period - spreading passengers out - which would save buses and require fewer buildings. He indicated that this could buy CyRide time in addressing these issues while at the same time not decreasing total riders. He indicated that he would like to see what this savings could be over a 10 year period.

Trustee Madden asked what factors should be included in this study - cost savings, safety. Also, how should this be accomplished - fewer stops? He indicated that the board would need to develop a plan before he could sell it to ISU administration.

One suggestion was raised to charge customers a premium during peak times. Director Kyras explained that if CyRide starts charging passengers, it will take passengers longer to board which will in turn requires more buses to carry the same number of people. The board decided to not identify specific solutions to spread out the peak, but to complete a hypothetical study to determine what/if there are benefits and then address this issue at that time.

Trustee Madden shared that students are the major revenue generators for CyRide and that it is important to educate the new Government of Student Body board who will be sworn into office before moving forward.

CyRide staff shared with the transit board that there is not enough time to implement changes that would result from this study for the 2014 fall semester. Information will be brought back to the transit board for possible implementation for fall of 2015.

At the completion of this discussion, Director Kyras briefly shared with the transit board the route performance statistics information indicating that there were three CyRide routes performance below the board-established minimum criteria - Pink, Yellow, and Aqua routes. She also shared that the Aqua route ridership was lower than the year before as well as pool attendance due to the rainy beginning of the season and hot end of the season. She also indicated that CyRide provides rides to approximately 3 -4% of the Ames residents using the pool. Based on this report, the transit board members decided to not consider further action on the three routes falling below the performance criteria.

#### **TRANSIT DIRECTORS's REPORT:**

- Union negotiations went smoothly this year and the impact to CyRide's budget will be \$14,000 - \$15,000 more in wages. CyRide anticipates fuel expenses will continue to trend lower than budgeted, which will provide the additional funding needed to address the wage expense.
- CyRide staff can submit an Iowa Clean Air Attainment Grant Application for projects to reduce congestion and improve air quality within the community. With the additional services approved in January by the transit board, CyRide staff can prepare a grant application to help pay for some of these services. An application would request up to 80% funding for two years for the Brown and Green route changes. This would reduce the dollars needed from students as they are funding 100% of these additional services. Transit board member consensus was to prepare an application for consideration.

Director Kyras reminded board members of the special transit board meeting scheduled for Tuesday, April 15, 3:30pm, CyRide Conference Room.

Trustee Goodman mentioned to Director Kyras that the City Council has requested to speak with Director Kyras and the HIRTA Director, Julia Castillo.

Transit Board meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

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Dan Rediske, President

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Joanne Van Dyke, Recording Secretary