



November 10, 2021

AMES TRANSIT AGENCY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees met on November 10, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. in the CyRide Conference room. President Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. with Trustees Beatty-Hansen, Cain, Ludwig, and Schainker present.

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 13, 2021 MINUTES: Trustee Ludwig made a motion to adopt the October 13, 2021, Transit Board minutes as presented, and Trustee Beatty-Hansen seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: None) Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY UPDATE AND ADOPTION: Director Neal requested approval of an updated drug and alcohol policy. She explained the change requested is a clerical update to include the Chief Safety Officer as a covered position within the policy. The person in this position, Kevin Gries, was already covered in the policy due to his former position as an operations manager.

The Transit Director recommended approval of Alternative #1 to adopt the Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy changes as presented, which will help keep CyRide in compliance with federal regulations and maintain the organization's eligibility to receive federal funding.

Trustee Schainker made a motion to approve Alternative #1, approving the revisions to CyRide's Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy to reflect the addition of Transit Chief Safety Officer under covered positions. Trustee Ludwig seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: None) Motion carried.

2022/23 RATE SETTING RESOLUTIONS: Director Neal requested approval of the 2022/2023 fare structure; city ordinances require that the Board establish fares annually. She said the sale dates for the passes are the only updates to the resolutions compared to the prior year, and no fare changes are being recommended.

Trustee Beatty-Hansen asked if a fare-free structure could be analyzed, as the non-student ridership is low and would not significantly impact the budget. Trustee Schainker said the cost of a fare-free system would have to be covered by a funding partner. Director Neal noted approximately \$200,000 received from farebox revenue would have to be considered. She added that the Ames City Council funded a fare-free summer as a pilot project in the past. Additional discussion about the fare-free structure and what would be needed to review further such an initiative, including statistics from the last fare-free summer pilot project and potential funding sources.

Trustee Beatty-Hansen made a motion to have CyRide staff further review a fare-free rate structure and report findings back to the Board. Trustee Ludwig seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: None) Motion carried.

Trustee Ríos Martínez joined the meeting at 4:42 p.m.

Trustee Cain inquired about the average cost per ride and requested that staff provide an estimate of what students pay versus the public, with the Orange #23 route not included in the calculation. Transit Scheduler/Administrative Analyst Rob Jennings said that the average cost per ride is approximately \$0.75, as passes offer unlimited rides. He confirmed that the requested information would be prepared for the board's review.

The Transit Director recommended approval of Alternative #1, adopting the proposed 2022/23 rates, which will fulfill ordinance requirements and maintain last year's fare structures for the upcoming budget year.

Trustee Ludwig made a motion to approve Alternative #1, approve the Rate Setting Resolution 2022-1 and Rate Setting Resolution 2022-2 for 2022/23. Trustee Schainker seconded the motion. (Ayes: 6 Nays: None) Motion carried

ARTICULATED BUS PURCHASE: Director Neal requested board approval for the award of contract to purchase a 60' articulated bus. She stated that six articulated buses are currently in the fleet, and a seventh was approved for purchase by the board in March 2021. The goal is to operate all articulated buses on the #23 Orange Route and purchase a bus each year through FY 2024 for a total of ten articulated buses in the fleet.

Director Neal explained that the most cost-effective method for purchasing buses is to use the State of Washington's contract, which is allowed under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. CyRide's entire articulated bus fleet is manufactured by Nova Bus, an approved manufacturer in the State of Washington's contract. She stated our specifications will be continually refined until six months prior to the build. Director Neal said that the preliminary pricing of \$796,333 does not include additional technology components such as the automatic vehicle location system, automatic vehicle annunciators or automatic passenger counters. Therefore, a not-to-exceed amount of \$850,000 is being requested to allow for changes. She confirmed this bus purchase is programmed in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) and will support the Transit Asset Management Plan (TAM) goals.

The Transit Director recommended approval of Alternative #1. The purchase of this new articulated bus will move CyRide closer to the goal of operating the #23 Orange route exclusively with articulated buses. This new bus will also help CyRide achieve its TAM plan goals and increase the overall sustainability of the fleet.

Trustee Beatty-Hansen made a motion to approve Alternative #1, to approve the award of contract for one 60' articulated bus to NOVA Bus of Plattsburg, New York, for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$850,000. Trustee Ludwig seconded the motion. (Ayes: 6 Nays: None) Motion carried.

BATTERY ELECTRIC BUS CHARGER AWARD: Director Neal requested approval of the award of contract for the battery electric bus dispensers and chargers. She explained specific infrastructure is required to operate battery electric buses, including plug-in chargers to connect the bus to the power source and power cabinets for managing the charging cycle. A request for proposal (RFP) was issued on September 27, 2021, with responses due on October 19, 2021. Director Neal referred to a table included in the board packet that listed the response scores for the three firms that responded: Siemens, ChargePoint, and WESTCO. She said that Siemens was deemed the best overall value.

The Transit Director recommended approval of Alternative #1. Approving the award of contract of charging equipment to Siemens will enable CyRide to proceed with the battery electric bus project's facility construction and equipment phases at the best value for the organization and its funding partners.

Trustee Cain made a motion to approve Alternative #1, to approve the award of contract to Siemens Industry Inc. of Buffalo Grove, IL, at a total not-to-exceed amount of \$140,000. Trustee Schainker seconded the motion. (Ayes: 6 Nays: None) Motion carried.

MONTHLY REPORT:

Ames Resident Satisfaction Survey: The 39th annual Resident Satisfaction Survey that collects feedback on city services recently released its results. Overall satisfaction with CyRide has increased from 93.9% to 94.4%, and 166 comments were specific to CyRide. President Jeffrey inquired if the dissatisfied comments were new topics or similar to past years. Assistant Director of Operations Chris Crippen said the comments were comparable to prior years, and some were directly related to ridership during the pandemic and perception of empty buses.

Winter Season Preparation: The maintenance staff has begun preparing sand, salt, and snowplows for winter weather. Operations is ensuring drivers are educated on proper driving techniques for winter driving. President Jeffrey inquired about who clears the snow at the bus stops. Assistant Director of Fleet and Facilities, James Rendall, explained that snow removal at 130 bus stops is contracted for any event over one inch or ice event. Iowa State clears stops on campus, the city clears stops at City Hall, and some homeowners help with stops near their homes. Drivers may also notify staff of stops that need to be cleared, and the maintenance staff will assist.

Quarterly Report: Key performance measures were reviewed with comparisons to the prior year and pre-pandemic levels. Ridership is up 75% from the 1st Quarter of 2020, but still 40% lower when compared to pre-pandemic ridership for the 1st Quarter. The pandemic has affected the perceptions of what a full bus looks like, as passengers don't like to be close to one another on the bus. Other noted statistics in comparing 1st Quarter FY 2021 with 1st Quarter FY 2022 are that total miles driven are down 2%, Moonlight Express is up 71.6%, Dial-A-Ride is up 132.6%, driving hours are down 4.5% due to the driver shortage, and preventable accidents are down 54%. Maintenance has seen a decrease in road calls by 7.7% compared to the same timeframe last year. The cost of gasoline is up 43.2%, and diesel is up 93.7% from the 1st Quarter of FY 2021.

Director Neal said that fuel prices would continue to be monitored as staff prepares the budget for next year. She explained that the amount would likely be left at an estimate of \$2.75 per gallon, with any overages covered by the above 10% closing balance. Trustee Beatty-Hansen inquired if futures were purchased for fuel. Director Neal replied that fuel is purchased on contract.

Trustee Ludwig asked about the progress in hiring drivers. Assistant Director of Operations Chris Crippen said that training is still catching up, and a notable impact would not be realized until the next semester because training takes about 120 hours. She added that progress has been slow because of the unavailability of drivers that can work over 30 hours per week. Assistant Director Crippen added that the hiring incentive has helped with applicant flow.

Spring Meeting Times and Dates: Meetings will be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 4:00 p.m. Dates of the meetings will be January 26, February 23, March 23, April 27, and May 25, 2022.

Adjourn: Trustee Ludwig made a motion to approve adjourning at 5:06 p.m. Trustee Schainker seconded the motion. (Ayes: 6 Nays: None) Motion carried.

Liz Jeffrey, President

Julie Brouard, Secretary