



April 27, 2022

AMES TRANSIT AGENCY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees met on April 27, 2022, at 3:57 p.m. in the CyRide Conference room. President Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 3:57 p.m. with Trustees Beatty-Hansen, Clayburn, Ludwig, and Schainker present.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 23, 2022, MINUTES: Trustee Ludwig made a motion to adopt the March 23, 2022, Transit Board minutes as presented, and Trustee Clayburn seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING MEMBER: Director Neal recognized Kit Clayburn as an exiting member of the Transit Board. Kit has accepted a new appointment as a member of the Student Government Cabinet and will be leaving the Senate. His eagerness to participate in board discussions and his perspective brought to the meetings is appreciated and will be missed.

MINIBUS PURCHASE:

Director Neal requested the award of contract for two low-floor minibuses. CyRide was awarded Section 5310 funding through the Iowa DOT (IDOT) for two low-floor minibuses at an 80% federal share and was included in the FY 2022 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which was approved by the board in December 2021. The IDOT completed a statewide bus bid for low-floor minibuses in the fall of 2021. Transit agencies in Iowa can use these contracts to purchase buses.

The two buses being replaced are now ten years old, which is beyond their useful life of eight years. Replacing these buses with a new low-floor style would improve accessibility for passengers using wheelchairs and individuals who may have difficulties navigating the steps, increasing mobility through greater accessibility. This type of vehicle would also reduce maintenance costs associated with lift repairs. New England Wheel's Frontrunner has been selected as the best option. Hogle Bus of Marshalltown is a dealer for this vehicle and has provided a price per bus of \$167,432. This price exceeds the budget by \$11,234 per bus for a total of \$22,468. The price is higher than anticipated costs due to industry-wide price increases, which have occurred between the time CyRide submitted the grant and when funding was awarded. Director Neal explained that the funds could be drawn from the operations fund closing balance, which is anticipated to be \$1,398,562 above the Transit Board directed 10%. Another option is to purchase two high-floor minibuses and stay within the original budget; however, there is the possibility that the costs of those buses could fluctuate due to volatility in the bus market.

Director Neal recommended board approval of Alternative #1 to approve the award of contract to Hogle Bus for two low-floor minibuses for \$341,583. While there is a higher upfront cost for these vehicles, they will improve accessibility for passengers and thereby increase equity.

Trustee Clayburn asked for clarification about the difference in price between the high and low-floor minibuses. Assistant Director for Fleet and Facilities James Rendall clarified it is due to how the buses are manufactured and the additional work and design that goes into building them.

Trustee Ludwig made a motion to approve Alternative #1. Trustee Clayburn seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

AMES POLICE DEPARTMENT TENANT LEASE AGREEMENT FOR THE AMES INTERMODAL FACILITY:

Director Neal requested approval of the contract for the Ames Intermodal Facility and the Ames Police Department's new lease agreement. The Ames Police Department (APD) is one of three tenants at the Intermodal Facility, and they have a five-year no-cost lease for shared office space, which is set to expire on June 30, 2022. The presence of the police department at that facility has strengthened security and minimized incidents of vandalism. The new agreement has been reviewed and approved by the City of Ames Chief of Police and the City of Ames Legal Department. No significant changes have been made to the previous agreement.

Director Neal recommended board approval of Alternative #1 to approve a new five-year no-cost contract with the Ames Police Department. This contract provides enhanced safety at the facility.

Trustee Ludwig made a motion to approve Alternative #1. Trustee Beatty-Hansen seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE EXPRESS AMES INTERMODAL FACILITY CONTRACT AMENDMENT:

Director Neal requested approval of a contract amendment for Executive Express at the Ames Intermodal Facility. Executive Express is one of two private tenants at the Intermodal Facility and currently has a five-year lease agreement that will end on June 30, 2024. Leases are generally limited to transportation providers. In July of 2020, the board granted an amendment to Executive Express' contract adjusting the monthly base rent to \$750 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In April of 2021, the board approved an extension of the amendment. Executive Express wished to extend the contract amendment for an additional year, which was presented to the board in February of 2022. It was determined that it would be in the best interest of all parties to extend the amendment for another year to retain this critical infrastructure. Following informal guidance from the board, CyRide worked with the City of Ames Legal Department to extend the contract amendment through June 30, 2023.

Director Neal recommended board approval of Alternative #1 to approve the contract amendment for the FY 2023 lease, allowing Executive Express to continue adjusting its services for the future and help preserve necessary transportation infrastructure in the Ames community.

Trustee Schainker inquired what the profit would be for the Intermodal next year. Transit Director Neal clarified that it would be approximately \$36,000 based on budget projections from ISU's Project Manager. Trustee Ludwig asked if other businesses were requesting to be prospective tenants, and Director Neal said there were not.

Trustee Schainker made a motion to approve Alternative #1. Trustee Ludwig seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

FY 2021 STATE GRANT BUS APPROVAL:

Director Neal requested approval of CyRide's FY 2021 state grant formula funding award. In May of 2021, CyRide submitted a state grant application to the IDOT that included eight 40' 20-year-old buses. At the time of submission, we did not know the number of buses CyRide would be eligible to replace or at what funding level. Buses funded through this process can be federally funded between 80-85%. On April 25, 2022, IDOT notified CyRide that seven buses were awarded guaranteed formula funding, and the board can accept or decline any portion of this funding award. Local funding of \$152,812 for two 40' heavy-duty buses was included in the FY 2023 CIP. The board could fund the additional local match requirement of \$526,231 for the additional five 40' HD buses by using a portion of the \$2,500,000 set aside to pursue 40' bus procurements.

Director Neal recommended board approval of Alternative #1 to approve the state grant award with guaranteed funding for all seven buses and commit to the local match requirement of \$680,043. Approving these vehicles would guarantee that CyRide will be able to replace these obsolete buses with newer, cleaner-burning vehicles that have a lower operational cost per mile.

Trustee Beatty-Hansen asked for some clarification regarding the provided pricing structure. Assistant Director for Fleet and Facilities James Rendall and Transit Planner Shari Atwood provided information on how the buses are priced.

Trustee Ludwig made a motion to approve Alternative #1. Trustee Schainker seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

FY 2022 STATEWIDE BUS & BUS FACILITIES DISCRETIONARY GRANT APPLICATION:

Director Neal requested approval to include one bus in CyRide's State of Iowa consolidated bus grant application. In March of 2022, the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) announced the FY 2022 notice of funding opportunity under the Bus & Bus Facilities grant process. The IDOT notified CyRide that they would be developing a statewide consolidated bus replacement grant application for this opportunity on behalf of all Iowa transit systems. If the board wishes to participate in this grant submission, the IDOT would need the number of buses CyRide would like included, the local funding commitment, and authorization for staff to develop a letter of support for inclusion in the grant application. Director Neal recommended including the one 40' bus that was not funded in the guaranteed formula funding, allowing CyRide to replace the last 20-year-old vehicle in the fleet. The local match commitment would be \$81,522 and drawn from the \$2,500,000 the board had previously set aside.

Director Neal recommended board approval of Alternative #1 to include one 40' bus in the state's grant application, the letter of support, and a local match commitment of \$81,522. This funding would allow CyRide to replace the last 20-year-old bus not included in the guaranteed formula funding.

Trustee Schainker made a motion to approve Alternative #1. Trustee Beatty-Hansen seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

FY 2022 LOW OR NO EMISSION DISCRETIONARY GRANT APPLICATION:

Director Neal requested approval to submit an FY 2022 Low or No Emission Discretionary Grant application on behalf of CyRide. The FTA released the Notice of Funding Opportunity for this grant on March 7, 2022. This grant program has approximately \$1.1 billion available, and the grant previously provided funding that allowed us to purchase two battery electric buses (BEBs) for delivery this summer. CyRide would like to submit a discretionary grant request for \$4,805,408 to purchase four BEBs and the infrastructure needed to support them, which would bring our BEB fleet to 12 if awarded. The infrastructure would include a depot charging station and dispensers, facility construction, Architecture and Engineering design, training, and a consultant to update our zero-emission transition plan.

CyRide would like to replace four of our 12-year-old Gillig "Cybrids" with BEBs. While the hybrids were cutting technology at the time of release, the manufacturer only made 26 of these vehicles with the Voith transmission technology. Voith stopped supporting its hybrid program in 2016 and liquidated its inventory. CyRide proactively bought many hybrid parts through liquidation, but these parts have since become obsolete and unattainable. Also of note, Iowa does not currently support the replacement of hybrid buses through its grant process and instead replaces only diesel buses. The local match commitment of \$701,582 would be drawn from the \$1,000,000 in the capital projects fund for BEBs, which the board approved in September of 2021.

Director Neal recommended board approval of Alternative #1 to approve the submission of a Low or No Emissions discretionary grant for a battery electric bus project with up to \$701,582 in local match for the grant. This grant will allow CyRide to replace four hybrid buses that are beyond their useful life and would enable CyRide to continue down the path toward a more sustainable and clean bus fleet.

Trustee Ludwig made a motion to approve Alternative #1. Trustee Clayburn seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

FARELESS ANALYSIS SCOPE OF WORK:

Director Neal requested approval of a Scope of Work (SOW) for a systemwide fareless analysis. At the March 2022 board meeting, the board approved hiring a consultant to assist staff in analyzing a systemwide fareless model. Based on board comments, a preliminary SOW was developed to be included in the Request for Proposal (RFP) document. The SOW details a three-month project and consists of six tasks to be accomplished by the consultant. The tasks are 1) a kickoff meeting refining goals and objectives, 2) an evaluation of existing conditions, fare structures, policies, and data analysis, 3) a peer review and study of best practices, 4) a systemwide fareless program evaluation, 5) an evaluation of fare scenarios and revenue and ridership implications from different program alternatives, and 6) a report on fare analysis recommendation and documentation. The initial budget is estimated at \$50,000 and could be secured from the Operations Fund's closing balance.

Trustee Schainker believed the SOW needed to include more about equity. For example, if fareless increases ridership and popularity, CyRide would have to expand routes and services and, therefore, need a cost analysis of expansion. Trustees Jeffrey and Beatty-Hansen also had the same question regarding future demand and how that might change with the system being fareless. Transit Director clarified that is the intention of the SOW, so staff will ensure it is more clearly explained.

Director Neal recommended board approval of Alternative #1 to approve the scope of work as presented with the modifications suggested by the board. In addition, hiring a consultant to evaluate a fareless model would allow the Transit Board to assess and analyze the potential positive and negative impacts on CyRide and the local funding partners.

Trustee Beatty-Hansen made a motion to approve Alternative #1. Trustee Ludwig seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

DRIVER SHORTAGE - INFORMATIONAL:

Director Neal presented an informational report on driver shortages requesting input from the board members on possible solutions or suggestions for moving forward. CyRide has struggled to hire an adequate number of drivers this year, which is not unique to CyRide. Other transit agencies and businesses have also experienced a dramatic employment drop since the pandemic. CyRide has made adjustments to try and increase applicant flow through various approaches, but hiring remains lower than usual. It is crucial that CyRide increase applicants and reduce turnover so the fall semester can be at the full schedule.

CyRide has 4,500 hours of work per week to fill in a typical year, and when 92-95% of that work is filled, leaving only 300 open hours, it is considered fully staffed. This year, due to lower ridership that has not fully rebounded from the pandemic, the weekly work was reduced by 6% (300 hours), but only 74% could be filled, leaving about 1,000 open hours a week. As ridership continues to recover, management is concerned that there will not be enough drivers to cover it. In addition, CyRide is hiring a new trainer position, and the person who takes that role will not be fully trained for a couple of months. Finding qualified employees before the pandemic was difficult, and the staffing situation has been exacerbated by a relatively large number of employees departing this year, with 53 drivers leaving the organization. Of these 53, 22 were three-quarter time employees, and four were full-time. The training department has

made strides in hiring this year. They hired 51 drivers, and 45 completed training, but these new employees only covered approximately 885 hours of the approximately 1,200 lost, and only seven of those employees could take 30 or more hours. To be fully staffed next fall, CyRide needs to hire 40 or more part-time drivers this summer, which exceeds the average number of summer hires, which is 17.

Trustee Jeffrey asked if the barrier to CyRide's applicant flow is about people not wanting 40 hours or if there is not the capacity to have additional full-time employees. Director Neal said she believes it has been a combination. CyRide does not have full-time positions available but has been trying to find ways to close that gap. Recently, management conducted a focus group with the newer drivers who received the \$1,000 hiring bonus to see how that might have convinced them to apply at CyRide. One of the items that came from that group is the hourly wage and how other businesses in the community are starting at a similar hourly wage to CyRide. It is currently \$16.96 per hour to start at CyRide and will increase to \$17.51 on July 1, 2022. There is also fierce competition among businesses for people with CDLs, and many places are offering a large hiring incentive for that requirement.

Trustee Ludwig inquired if the union contract restricts the wage CyRide can offer. Trustee Schainker and Director Neal clarified that yes, it does, and if it were to be changed, it would need to be amended. Director Neal said that at this time, the organization wants to be very thoughtful of what changes are made in order to consider long-term costs and how they affect our funding partners. Trustee Ludwig also inquired if management has seen a consistent trend for why employees have left. Director Neal answered that many of them are staying home to take care of their kids, and some have graduated. Trustee Beatty-Hansen asked if CyRide had considered daycare as an option. Trustee Schainker answered that if the organization were in the business of caring for children for a certain amount of time, it would have to be a certified daycare, so a better option would be to contract the service.

Director Neal stated that one of the biggest concerns at this point is burnout. Since August, management and dispatch have driven over 3,000 hours, and many drivers have continued to pick up shifts. As burnout occurs, the likelihood of signing up for a shift to assist decreases. Some of the ideas developed have been to change the on-call shifts per-hour rate from \$1.00 in the summer and \$5.00 during the school year to \$10.00 year-long. CyRide utilizes OWD positions, which are benefited open work driver positions. These are designed to be career-oriented, and if their structure was modified, they could become more appealing. Trustee Jeffrey inquired whether more OWD positions would allow for a tighter work schedule so their possible hours would not extend so long over a day. Trustee Beatty-Hansen mentioned that with so few options for full-time drivers, it would be difficult for new drivers to see where they can develop in their career at CyRide, which lowers morale and retention. Trustee Schainker mentioned he recalled the organization could not add FT positions in the past due to flexibility needs. Director Neal said the balance of work has shifted, and the summer schedule's needs could potentially allow for more full-time positions that operate throughout the entire year-long schedule.

Director Neal said CyRide has three main goals: attracting new employees, allocating the work that needs to be filled (nights and weekends), and increasing the retention of employees. Trustee Ludwig said he was open to addressing these issues and trying to develop some solutions. Trustee Jeffrey mentioned that adding a benefited position to a business in Ames benefits the community, especially if it comes with flexibility. Trustee Jeffrey suggested possibly evaluating a bonus structure with on-call shifts since they are hard to fill. Director Neal advised that management would continue to review our three goals and bring some suggestions and plans back to the board for review.

MONTHLY REPORT:

- **Conflict of Interest forms:** The city of Ames requests members of city boards and commissions annually, or any time changes occur, to submit a conflict of interest disclosure form. The form was included in the board packet and will be sent via email to members who request it in that format.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Transit Chief Safety Officer Kevin Gries has reviewed and updated CyRide's Tornado/Severe Weather Response Plan. He has updated maps, communication templates, and decision-making templates to assist dispatch, drivers, and maintenance in case of severe weather incidents.
- **Mask Mandate:** On April 14, 2022, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) announced they were extending the mask mandate until May 3, 2022, and on April 18, 2022, a US District judge struck down the mask mandate. TSA Legal reviewed it and decided not to enforce it at that point, so at that time, CyRide lifted the mask mandate, but will continue to allow passengers and employees to wear masks at this time.
- **State Grant Modifications – Section 5310:** At the March 23, 2022, Transit Board meeting, the board approved the state grant application to the IDOT, which included funding to support Dial-A-Ride service, automatic voice announcement system fees, and infotainment signage. On April 12, 2022, the IDOT notified CyRide of its final Section 5310 funding allocations. CyRide's funding was increased by \$44,513 due to a change in the overall transit appropriation. This funding was added to support Dial-A-Ride because it is up to 80% federally funded and will reduce the local funding partners' cost.
- **CyRide Roadeo:** The CyRide Roadeo will be Saturday, May 21, 2022, and all board members are invited. The Roadeo will be at CyRide, and the winner is qualified to go to the state Roadeo in Cedar Rapids.

Spring meeting dates:

- May 25, 2022, 4:00 p.m.
- June 22, 2022, 4:00 p.m.
- July 27, 2022, 4:00 p.m.

Adjourn: Trustee Ludwig made a motion to approve adjourning at 5:15 p.m. Trustee Clayburn seconded the motion. (Ayes: 5 Nays: 0) Motion carried.

Liz Jeffrey, President

Cheryl Spencer, Recording Secretary