

AMES TRANSIT AGENCY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

AMES, IOWA

October 29, 2008

The Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees met on October 29, 2008 at 8:00 a.m. in CyRide's conference room. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 a.m. by President Anders. Trustees in attendance: Anders, Schainker, Popken and Munoz. Absent: Trustees Madden and Hayek.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Trustee Popken made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 29, 2008 Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees meeting. Trustee Schainker seconded. (Motion carried unanimously).

PUBLIC COMMENTS: No public comments.

AIRPORT SHUTTLE SERVICE: Director Kyras explained that in 2006, the board approved a contract with a private charter bus company to operate the Des Moines Airport shuttle. This proved to be a very positive change as the over-the-road coach was more comfortable for the customer. Rider surveys confirmed this positive change.

Since that initial year, CyRide has annually bid this service. Late this summer, bids were again solicited for the 2008-2009 school year. CyRide received bids from CIT at \$350 per round trip and Windstar at \$400 per round trip. In 2007 - 2008, CyRide contracted with CIT for \$130 per trip. Director Kyras explained that if CyRide were to accept the low bid of \$350 per round trip from CIT, this would be an increase of more than 250% leaving CyRide in a deficit position of approximately \$7,000. She further explained that fares for the airport shuttle service increased from \$10 to \$12 per trip in 2007 and the net gain over expenses from the beginning of this service to the present was \$963. To breakeven, CyRide would need to raise the fare from \$12 to \$26 per person per ride. CyRide staff believes that raising the fare for the Des Moines Airport Shuttle service this year would create a hardship as very little notice could be provided.

Director Kyras talked with the CIT manager about the significant increase in the fee and he indicated they had changed their philosophy and no longer believed that they could continue this service at the lower community rate. Tom Davenport, CyRide's Transit Coordinator, indicated that instead of 45 trips by private operators that CyRide would need to operate 55 bus trips to handle the loads and this would cause the service to operate at approximately an \$800 deficit if ridership remained at last year's levels.

The transit board's options are to reject all bids and have CyRide operate the airport shuttle service with the \$12 fare, accept the low bid of \$350 per trip from CIT and remain at \$12 fares or charge a \$26 fare.

Transit board members discussed what was best for the customer, a possible rate setting increase for the fare in 2009, and bench marking with other universities on the fee they charge for this type of fare.

Trustee Schainker made a motion to reject all bids and directly operate the Des Moines Airport Shuttle service using CyRide vehicles. Motion seconded by Trustee Popken. (Motion on the floor carried unanimously.)

FARE FREE SERVICE OPTIONS: Director Kyras indicated that staff had been developing service options to extend the fare free service to more residents in Ames. She briefly discussed the experiences CyRide had had when the student fare program began in 2002-2003. She then explained the two main studies which are cited as objective examinations of fare free transit studies. These studies found that fare free programs were more successful in smaller communities such as Ames.

The CUTR study is less positive and sites a lack of commitment by policy leaders as a major reason why programs can be less successful. The studies found that fare free programs can increase joy riding, vandalism, homeless riding the bus, conflicts with school age children, and overcrowding on the buses. The case studies found an increase in ridership of 25 – 50% with a majority of the additional rides coming from existing riders.

Three systems were found to be similar to Ames/ISU/CyRide and are: Chapel Hill, NC, Logan, Utah and Austin, TX. Chapel Hill and Logan were successful program while the Austin program was not.

Four options were presented to the transit board for their consideration. Option 1 was a large-scale fare free program that would operate for the entire year on every route, each day of the week. Under this option, CyRide would operate four additional buses during the week with a fifth bus as a spare to maintain reliable service. The biggest impact under this option would be for Dial-A-Ride service as it would be free, as well, resulting in an anticipated increase in rides and expenses of 50%. The cost for this option would be a little over a million dollars.

Option 2, Weekend Program, provides many of the same benefits as the large-scale program, but the impacts on CyRide would be significantly reduced. Through its research, CyRide staff did not find other cities that had tried a fare free weekend only program. There is unused capacity on the buses on the weekend; therefore, the cost per new ride is much lower. CyRide staff estimates an increase in ridership of 50,000 to 75,000.

Dial-A-Ride for option 2 is expected to increase ridership by 20% or 400 trips per year as passengers do not use this service as much on the weekend. Operating costs under this option would be approximately \$50,000 in the first year.

Option 3, Weekend and Evening Program, would provide fare free evening service after 7:00 p.m. until midnight and all day on the weekends. This service would provide many of the same benefits as the large scale option as well. No additional buses would be needed and information based on the "Dump The Pump Day" ridership indicates a 20 – 30 percent increase which amounts to 100,000 to 155,000 additional rides per year. The Dial-A-Ride impact for Option 3 is expected to increase by approximately 450 annual rides. The total estimated cost for this option is about \$65,000.

Option 4, summer fare free program, would operate from May 15 to August 15. There is sufficient bus capacity during the summer and overtime would not be needed. CyRide was not able to find other bus systems that provided fare free programs during the summer; therefore, CyRide is basing the additional 95,000 to 145,00 rides on the "Dump The Pump Day" experience. Dial-A-Ride ridership is anticipated to increase by 600 – 900 rides from the average of 3,046 rides during the summer. The estimated cost is \$155,000.

There would be several cost savings/additional revenue associated with a fare free program such as printing of passes (summer only), savings for ISU faculty/staff passes, additional state and federal funding. Non-Financial savings for CyRide would include a reduced need to distribute and reconcile passes (summer only) and farebox money counting.

Director Kyras indicated that a citywide fare free system could be successful in Ames and that the community is small enough that this program could be as successful as the fare free system in 2002 – 2003 for ISU students. She indicated that the level of commitment by the community would need to be determined.

Trustee Popken suggested making passes available for everyone. Passes could be purchased and distributed to anyone who requested a bus pass. Director Kyras indicated that it would be difficult to get the word out regarding the availability of passes and she believed that the impact on ridership would be lower. Tom Davenport also indicated that drivers would have to enforce a dual system which would create customer conflict and confusion. The remainder of the discussion on this item was addressed in the next agenda item on potential new services in FY2010.

FY2010 ROUTE PLANNING: Each year CyRide develops a base line budget for service requests made by the public or where additional service might be needed to meet public needs. This year CyRide has four options to consider and would

like board input on these options to be included in budget options presented to the board at the December meeting.

The first option addresses service to the Aquatic Center which is expected to open July of 2009. This center is expected to serve 3,000 individuals per day. Currently, the closest CyRide service to this new facility is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away. CyRide has received service requests from residents and child care providers, specifically ACPC, to provide service to the door. If operated, this service would be available from 12:30 to 8:30pm beginning the first day school is out until the Friday before school starts in the fall. The route would be operated by a minibus with service operated every 20 minutes from City Hall. Annual cost estimate for this service would be \$25,000.

Transit board members requested that CyRide examine other route options that would connect both the east and west sides of Ames to the new facility. Trustee Schainker expressed his opinion that a route that served more of the community would be more successful. Tom Davenport indicated that the route was developed under the belief that more children coming from the east side of Ames would utilize transportation to the Aquatic Center. Other locations discussed for consideration were: Beyer Hall and Kildee/Bessey for connection to other CyRide routes; however, it was believed that these options would require a second bus making it more expensive. Another option Trustees would like to consider on this route would be to reduce the headways from the planned 20 minutes to 40 or 60 minute headways. Further discussion indicated a desire for the continuation of a bus stop at Ridgewood on the Green route so students can walk from the high school to the Aquatic Center.

The second option addresses evening service to the DMACC Hunziker Center. CyRide's Gray route currently offers 3 trips in the morning and the afternoon to this area and limited midday service. ISU and DMACC have developed a relationship whereas ISU students take courses from this center in the afternoon and evening. Currently students can arrive at the center at 3:00 p.m. for classes, but cannot return home using CyRide as service has ended. Under this option, CyRide could add two additional trips to the Gray route, beginning at DMACC, at 6:05 p.m. and 9:05 p.m. This would be in correlation with the class schedule at the DMACC Center. The annual estimated cost for this service would be under \$13,000.

The third option addresses the previously discussed Fare Free options. The four designs would provide Large Scale Fare Free program, Weekend Program, Weekend and Nights or summer program alternatives. The four fare free variations ranged in price from \$50,000 to over \$1 million dollars to implement.

The fourth option adds service to address the high ridership and overcrowding issues currently being experienced on CyRide routes. CyRide's ridership is on track to break all past records. The increased 12% ridership this year has

created issues in maintaining a reliable schedule. With additional riders, the boarding times at bus stops are increased making it difficult if not impossible to maintain the published schedule on certain routes. One of the results has been increased passenger complaints. This issue is of concern from a customer standpoint as well as safety as the drivers push to stay on time and take unnecessary risks in trying to maintain the schedule. Two more buses would be added to the operation from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. each week day - one on the Red route and one on the Green route. The estimated cost for this option would be \$35,000. Director Kyras expressed her recommendation that this option was a necessity in next year's budget.

Director Kyras solicited the board's input on these options for further budget development in the next month. Trustee Schainker asked what percentage would be needed to maintain existing service plus the fourth option discussed previously in the meeting. Director Kyras indicated that preliminary budget calculations indicated that an 8% increase by the three funding partners would be needed to operate CyRide's system efficiently.

Board members inquired if criteria existed that could be used to select new service. Director Kyras indicated criteria usually are examined when cutting services or routes and usually it is a political decision to add service. Board members asked about service to the east side of Ames along Dayton and East University Blvd. Director Kyras indicated that she had not included this service in light of the potential increases needed for next as it would be significantly more expensive at approximately \$250,000 per year.

Trustee Popken indicated the fare free option for CyRide is on the City Council table from their point of view. Board members indicated Option 4; Summer Fare Free might be the best choice because it includes all routes. The summer fare free option includes the entire city where as other options serve a smaller number of residents. Trustee Popken also indicated that he believed that the residents expected bus service to the Aquatic Center when it opened. He further inquired about ridership projections on each service option. Tom Davenport indicated that, as part of the budget process, he would estimate ridership and revenue that would be generated from service options. Mr. Davenport further stated that the service option to DMACC would have no revenue source because DMACC students are ISU students and would ride for free.

Director Kyras also told the board that state funding revenues are lower than anticipated due to the economy and slowing of auto sales which will make the 2009-2010 budget even more challenging.

FACILITIES MASTER PLAN: This item is a follow-up from the August transit board meeting when PB America's, Adam Manuel presented results of CyRide's facility needs for the next 20 years. The findings indicated that the existing site could not accommodate the projected needs of the transit system. The staff was

directed at the August meeting to determine a scope of work and cost for additional tasks to assess potential satellite building sites, as well as further development of the functions and space needs within a satellite facility. The board also directed staff to further refine bus/ridership projections in light of projections of stable population and ISU enrollment. Three scenarios were presented to the board on ridership/bus projections.

Director Kyras solicited help from the City of Ames Planning Department to project 2028 population in Ames which is expected to grow to 62,000. She also indicated that three ridership scenarios had been developed which ranged from low, medium and high ridership based on rides per capita.

Scenario 1 is conservative and predicts ridership to be 5.1 million rides with 82 rides per capita. The number of buses needed to support this ridership would be 88 vehicles.

Scenario 2 is a modest ridership prediction and anticipates 5.2 million rides with 85 rides per capita. The number of buses needed would be 91.

Scenario 3 reflects substantial ridership growth with 5.5 million rides and 90 rides per capita. The number of buses needed would be 95.

Director Kyras explained that if the board approved the second phase of the Facilities Study, this would provided the needed data to justify federal funding for a new facility. The timing is appropriate to request funding in the new transportation bill that congress will begin debating shortly. CyRide received \$2 million in the last transportation bill for facility construction projects.

Trustee Schainker made a motion to approve the revised Facilities Study Scope of Work from PB America's for an additional \$34,828.78 to address the functional requirements, including circulation and proximity relationships, appropriately in the Conceptual Design. Motion was seconded by Trustee Popken. (Motion carried unanimously.)

TRANSIT DIRECTOR'S REPORT - OCTOBER 2008:

Highlights from the report were:

- Ames to Iowa City Service was completely funded for the first year of operation. CyRide will transfer a bus it will receive in the next month so that this service can begin 6 months earlier than planned. CyRide will procure another bus for its purposes.
- Ames to Des Moines Service study committee has been created and representatives Steve Schainker, City of Ames and CyRide, Warren Madden, ISU and CyRide, Ames Chamber of Commerce, Dan Culhane, Wayne Clinton,

Story County and the Ames Area MPO will attend the October 31 meeting to discuss the need and direction of this potential service.

- Ridership for the first quarter of the fiscal year was down 5.6%. Ridership information is skewed because there was one less week of ISU classes, CyRide did not participate in the State Fair Shuttles; and due to construction on Osborn Drive.

SET TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING: Next transit board meeting will be held on November 19, at 8:00 a.m.

ADJOURN: Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.