

AMES, IOWA

June 25, 2014

The Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees met on June 25, 2014 at 3:15 p.m. in the CyRide Conference room. President Murrell called the meeting to order via conference call at 3:21 p.m. Present: Trustees Madden, Goodman, Haila, Murrell and Abbas via conference call. Absent: Trustee Schainker.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Trustee Goodman made a motion to approve the May 21, 2014 Transit Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion seconded by Trustee Haila. (Ayes: Five. Nays: None. Motion carried.)

PUBLIC COMMENTS: No public comments.

NEW GRANT OPPORTUNITY: Director Kyras explained to the Board of Trustees that the Federal Transit Administration had recently distributed information regarding a new grant opportunity. She further explained that the current transportation law, MAP-21, is a two year bill set to expire September 30, 2014. The previous funding bill was called SAFETEA-LU and that it had favorably addressed the capital needs of smaller transit agencies through discretionary grant opportunities. She further explained that this grant would be the last foreseeable capital grant opportunity for small transit systems as the MAP-21 bill negatively impacts smaller transit agencies in receiving funding for capital needs.

She explained that the Federal Transit Administration had identified unused funding under SAFETEA-LU totaling approximately \$100 million and that they would be allocating these remaining funds through a discretionary capital grant opportunity called the "Ladders of Opportunity." This grant will fund capital at an 85% federal share. The grant application is a competitive grant due August 4, 2014.

Director Kyras shared that in reviewing the funding evaluation criteria, that CyRide could adequately justify a project for the grant. She indicated that staff believes the best project would be for the purchase of buses as opposed to a facility project as the grant requires all projects to be scalable. She indicated that it was easier to scale back buses than a facility, plus the uncertainty of what is needed for a facility at this time would make a competitive grant a challenge. She indicated that staff was currently weighing the question of whether 40' or articulated buses would provide the greatest benefit for CyRide at this time and provided three options to the transit board. She also shared with board members that even if CyRide were awarded buses under the Ladders of Opportunity grant, CyRide's fleet age would continue to increase as seven new buses per year is needed to keep the fleet at its current age of 9.9 years, which has increased from 8.7 years a year ago. CyRide staff believes the grant is a good opportunity, but recognizes that receiving an award will be a challenge due to the small amount of funds and the large need for bus capital nationwide.

Director Kyras shared that the five year capital plan currently identifies a locally-funded plan for \$125,000 per year to purchase buses. Director Kyras explained that the first two years of the plan are currently committed to ten used buses recently purchased and in the process of being rehabilitated. She explained that the third year was committed to the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Grant application recently approved for submittal by the Ames Transit Board of Trustees. The Ladders of Opportunity grant would commit the fourth and fifth years of the plan, potentially resulting in a fully funded capital plan for buses.

Transit board members shared that they realized the complexity of the decision to purchase articulated buses versus 40 foot buses regarding whether articulated buses improved passenger transportation and/or reduced roadway congestion. Trustee Goodman asked whether the grant could be written to include purchasing used buses to rehabilitate as well as funding new buses. Director Kyras responded that used buses had not been considered by staff and further shared that it would be very difficult to write a competitive grant application for used buses that could not be identified until after a grant was approved. Trustee Goodman also asked about whether minibuses could be purchased for service and if this would create a cost savings. Director Kyras indicated their cost is less, but that CyRide's ridership demand requires large buses. She also indicated that a majority of CyRide's operating costs are for driver's wages and that more drivers would be needed to carry the number of riders in minibuses. Tom Davenport, CyRide's Transit Coordinator stated that CyRide currently maximizes the number of minibuses on its routes for evening and weekend service.

Trustee Madden shared a concern about larger buses on campus with pedestrians and bicycles. Director Kyras indicated that the main reason for considering articulated buses at this time was that the Ladders of Opportunity grant created the only opportunity to receive 85% federal funding for an articulated bus as other sources limit federal funding to 80% of a lower-priced 40' bus. The board inquired as to whether a 60 foot bus provides double the capacity. Director Kyras said it does (120 versus 60 passengers), but that the main cost savings relates to having driver's wages for one bus as opposed to two buses. Director Kyras indicated that with CyRide's growth and higher fleet age, she believes that either type of vehicle could be considered in a competitive grant situation.

Transit board members shared that they did not have a strong opinion about which option should be included in the grant application. However, Trustee Haila shared his thoughts that if this is the last chance for federal bus capital funding, that CyRide should thoroughly consider its options before deciding which vehicle style provides the maximum benefit.

Trustee Goodman made a motion to approve Alternative #1 submitting the Ladders of Opportunity grant application and committing up to \$450,000 in local match. Trustee Madden seconded the motion. (Ayes: Five. Nays: None. Motion carried.)

ISU SPECIAL STUDENT FEE & TUITION COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS: Director Kyras explained that CyRide staff meets each year with the Special Student Fee & Tuition Committee (Fee Committee) to recommend fee rates two years into the future. Director Kyras distributed to transit board members the information that was discussed at the Fee Committee. Director Kyras shared the reasons for the unusually large ridership increase this past year, which included: ISU enrollment increases, the harsh weather and possibly the NEXTbus system. She indicated that the number of annual rides per student increased from 170 to 180.

CyRide requested the following at the Fee Committee: \$85,000 out of the GSB Trust Fund to meet the current year's additional expenses, amending the 2014-2015 budget by \$85,000 to continue the increased level of service into the next budget year and then a \$2.24 fee increase in the 2015-2016 school year. This level of funding will slowly allow the GSB Trust Fund to decline to the desired level of approximately \$500,000 from its current level exceeding \$1 million, as future year fees will generate less dollars than are needed to support CyRide service.

Trustee Madden mentioned that discussions with the Fee Committee are the first step and that ultimately the Board of Regents will need to approve any fee increase. Trustee Madden also mentioned that both the University of Northern Iowa and Iowa are competing and becoming more active in recruiting students and that enrollment will most likely not increase at its current rate.

The discussion turned to the desired GSB Trust Fund balance. Trustee Madden shared the purpose of the Trust Fund with board members. A discussion then ensued about the appropriate trust fund level – 12%, 20% or 25%. Trustee Madden shared that he believes the approach of slowly increasing fees and trying to lower the balance is appropriate. Trustee Madden also emphasized that 6.6 million riders is a remarkable number for a community the size of Ames with 60,000 population.

Concern was shared about new developments and the pressure this created on CyRide's service.

Trustee Goodman inquired about the status of the board-directed request for a meeting with ISU Administration, GSB representatives and the CyRide board to discuss possible methods of slowing or reducing ridership on CyRide. Trustee Madden indicated that it was difficult to find the time over the summer to physically have everyone in Ames, but that he would work on this. Trustee Madden also shared that the Deloitte Consultants studying ISU's organization were looking at utilization of classrooms and that their results could impact ISU enrollment levels, and ultimately CyRide ridership, in the future.

TRANSIT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Odyssey of the Mind (OM) was held the last part of May and ridership was almost 10% higher than the previous OM event held in 2012 with CyRide receiving good comments regarding its service. Director Kyras explained that this event proves to be quite challenging as it is managed with a summer staffing level and provides a school year level of ridership. If it continues to grow at 10% per event, it will be a big challenge for CyRide in the future.
- Director Kyras reported that she had, had a good conversation with the HIRTA Director regarding Dial-A-Ride service. Both Directors believe that there needs to be more discussion and direction from the transit board on what the expectations are for the Dial-A-Ride service, above the ADA-required level of service. Director Kyras proposed organizing a meeting between HIRTA, CyRide and representatives from the Transit Board. Director Kyras indicated that if the desire was to have a larger conversation regarding all of HIRTA's services in the community, as opposed to just Dial-A-Ride services, then ASSET's staff and board would need to be part of these discussions. A lengthy conversation followed.

Trustee Goodman and other board members agreed that there needs to be an understanding from both organizations of what their expectations are. He further clarified that it is important to understand the needs of the human service agencies and that he believed that they should be a part of the meeting. He shared his thoughts that customers are not happy with the service at this time and that he believes that their perspectives need to be identified. He provided the example of customers being denied trips. Director Kyras indicated that she believes the ADA definition of "denials" may be different than the customer's definition.

Trustee Haila asked how CyRide educated its riders. Director Kyras explained that CyRide currently has a Dial-A-Ride brochure with basic information on how to use the service. She further explained that it does not include the rights or responsibilities of the service or the rider. She indicated that staff has a desire to enhance its current brochure with this type of information. Trustee Haila concurred stating that it could help clients better understand the service so that expectations match the service available to serve them.

Trustee Madden and Transit Board members suggested CyRide host a conversation regarding HIRTA service, including Dial-Ride and other services HIRTA provides. He indicated that he was supportive of getting a group together and including the ASSET staff/board members. Director Kyras indicated that she will initiate a conversation with Melissa Mundt, Assistant City Manager, who is staff to the ASSET Board to determine how/if to proceed with this larger group. Director Kyras requested that several members of the Transit Board also be part

of this group to ensure that Dial-A-Ride expectations are met, including all federal requirements.

- Director Kyras and CyRide staff met with CIT Signature Transportation to explore their interest in collaborating with CyRide to provide service for CyRide. Director Kyras indicated that CIT recently purchased two transit-style buses. The concept that developed from this conversation was to potentially contract for two work shifts on CyRide's Cardinal route in the morning during CyRide's highest peak service. However, only one of CIT's vehicles has a wheelchair lift. Therefore, to contract with CIT for two work shifts, CyRide would need to lease a bus to CIT for a demonstration project. Director Kyras explained the preliminary concept to board member including specifics of the service required and quality control measures being discussed. At this time, CyRide staff is developing a draft proposal for the two organizations to work from to determine if the concept is feasible for implementation. She indicated that there are a number of issues to work through such as timing of a demonstration project for a semester, whether the trial project would need to bid, etc. She also indicated that once the concept proposal was developed, staff would need to cost CyRide's expenses (capital and operating) as well as receive a cost proposal from CIT to be able to determine if the concept is financially feasible. She indicating that based on the timing of this project, the tentatively scheduled July 30th Transit Board meeting might be needed to discuss this project.

SET TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING: August 26 at 8:00 a.m.; however, will contact board members if the July 30, 2014 meeting is needed.

Meeting adjourned at 4:31 p.m.