

The Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees met on February 18, 2015 at 8:00 a.m. in the CyRide Conference room. President Haila called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m. with Trustees Haila, Abbas, Schainker and Goodman, present. Absent: Trustee Madden and Patwa.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Trustee Hamad made a motion to approve the January 25, 2015 minutes as presented. Trustee Goodman seconded the motion. (Ayes: Four. Nays: None.) Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Scott Renaud with Fox Engineering addressed the Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees with the following comments.

- He shared with board members that 50% of the high density residential developments in Ames are large complexes. As a result, he stated that it was out of the ordinary for the developer to be asked to help subsidize transit service. Further, he provided information on residents living in these developments:
 - 15% of the students do not have a car or do not have cars on purpose, as they choose to take the bus, bike, or walk.
 - 15% of the City's workforce rides the bus.
 - Research Park will be a large traffic generator, as well as large complexes in the future.
 - If someone misses a bus by a minute, they get in their car and drive to the Iowa State Center parking lot to ride the Orange route into campus. As a result, there has been an explosion of growth on the Orange route. He shared his interest in following the Orange Route service change discussions.
- Improvements for bus turnarounds have been offered, but have been denied.
- He stated his belief that most all transit systems are subsidized with local, state and federal sources, but that he believed there were two systems in the nation that were able to cover all of their costs.

The transit board members then began a dialog with Mr. Renaud regarding his remarks and requesting more information about denied improvements. Mr. Renaud provided examples of Target and Walmart stating that developers had offered to help pay for certain infrastructure improvements and these offers had been rejected (this would require a route change and additional operating costs). He also referenced Hy-Vee as well. He then shared that CyRide costs were much higher than private transportation providers – two to three times as high. He then questioned the efficiency of CyRide's services.

Trustee Goodman provided context around the discussion explaining the reason for the topic to be addressed at this time. He indicated discussions with one developer and the transit board memo to the Council on this issue as the reason this topic was being

discussed throughout the community. Tom Davenport, CyRide's Transit Coordinator, shared that as for the Hy-Vee example, Hy-Vee was willing to pave the road to bus standards on their property, but were not willing to improve the adjacent road that the bus would need to operate on (Dotson Ave.). Mr. Renaud further shared that CyRide is a service business, especially for individuals that do not have cars. Mr. Renaud also stated that students have alternatives and that 85% of them have cars, with many not using the bus system at all.

Mr. Renaud shared that the result of "impact fees" on the developer indicating a direct cost to students through higher rent. Further, he stated that these fees were dictated by government and that students had no choice on whether to pay for these services. He also shared that more people are driving from Ankeny and that the number of people living out of town has grown to 50%.

The transit board acknowledged that "impact fees" are not allowed in Iowa, but stated that through a developer's agreement, developers could help share some of the costs to improve service to the developments and, further, that better service was an expectation from students, as was experienced on the Gray route with the addition of the Grove and Copper Beech development. Mr. Renaud shared his belief that these types of costs represented extortion by government. President Haila responded that he believes that CyRide is at the breaking point in its ability to fund these service increases in light of federal funding reductions for capital and stable operating funding.

Trustee Goodman shared that he was under the impression that tenant rental rates are set by the market, and not by the incremental costs that would be incurred through a developer's agreement. Further, he indicated that the current market is tight, reflecting higher rental rates and that this had nothing to do with governmental costs – indicating that this was not a direct pass through of costs to students.

President Haila indicated that CyRide was a highly efficient bus system as compared to similar public transit systems. Mr. Renaud said he has a lot of respect for CyRide, but that it should consider having more express buses to get the larger number of people to their destination faster.

DEMAND RESPONSE SERVICE ACTION PLAN: Director Kyras provided a brief summary of the demand response project discussions, which began in August 2014. She indicated that, as a result a working group had been formed, consisting of representatives from the city, Story County, Story County Human Service agencies, and transportation providers (RSVP, HIRTA and CyRide). This group held four meetings to develop action plan recommendations to provide demand response service that would meet the community's needs. She indicated that information was included in the transit board packet regarding the results of this process. She then shared three main themes from these meetings: communication improvement, alignment of community and transportation provider expectations and a realization of limited resources for this

service. She shared that 12 of the 23 action steps were beyond the current resources and government requirements for demand response service in Ames. She shared that the working group had identified four priority actions: need to work together, technology, employing/retaining drivers and improving email/telephone systems. She then explained the next steps identified for completing the project.

Beyond the four priorities identified by the working group, Director Kyras stated that one other priority, #23 to add a bus during peak hours to provide unscheduled trips due to unforeseen service problems, would help provide a higher quality of service for Dial-A-Ride (DAR) customers. She indicated that service reliability, due to these unforeseen issues, was one concern that had been shared with CyRide staff on numerous occasions by DAR customers.

Trustee Goodman asked if the bus would serve only DAR customers or both DAR customers and demand response passengers. Director Kyras said she would propose that it be for both services. In this way the entire community could benefit from the additional service and the cost sharing by multiple funding sources would provide for a more efficient and viable service over the long-term. She indicated that a cost sharing model would need to be developed between the funders, which could be based on criteria such as the number of rides provided by each funding program. Further, she indicated that this additional service had been provided by CyRide management staff when it had directly provided service.

Trustee Schainker asked if one bus would handle the demand for this service and whether it would solve service reliability concerns. Director Kyras indicated that without trying the service she could not answer the question about the number of vehicles needed, but that she definitely believes that it would help address the service issues.

Trustee Goodman moved alternative #1 to direct CyRide staff to meet with ASSET, Story County and/or United Way of Story County staff to develop a financial plan for the DRS Action Plan recommendation #23. Trustee Schainker seconded the motion. (Ayes: Four. Nays: None.) Motion carried.

Assistant City Manager, Melissa Mundt, shared that this was a good first step to resolving community concerns, but stopping the conversation now would not address issues that had surfaced over the last two years. She indicated that ASSET funders needed to be at the table and that there needed to be some type of facilitated process. She indicated that completion of the project could benefit both the DAR and demand response side of the HIRTA services. Further, she indicated that there are special needs that the community cares facilities are working with that need to be met: mental disabilities, Mainstream Living, LSI, and Mary Greeley.

Trustee Goodman asked Melissa Mundt, on a scale of one to ten, how hopeful she was that this process could be successful. She indicated that continuing the conversation would benefit the parties, but that working on only four of the 23 recommendations would not resolve all concerns. She continued that it would take time for the process to make a meaningful impact.

Trustee Schainker asked Trustee Goodman what he felt the involvement of the Transit Director should be moving forward in light of her substantial involvement in the process to-date. Trustee Goodman indicated that he was very satisfied with the work completed so far. However, there was a consensus of board members that her role moving forward should be diminished on this project to focus on CyRide/DAR services more. Director Kyras indicated that CyRide could be helpful in some of the subcommittee groups to provide expertise, but that CyRide would not manage the process moving forward. Trustee Schainker and Melissa Mundt acknowledge the Director's role in making the process to-date successful.

Trustee Goodman shared that the demand response action plan was not the final product and that HIRTA and the agencies had to continue discussions for a successful service in the future.

DIAL-A-RIDE CONTRACT RENEWAL PROCESS: Director Kyras shared with board members that the HIRTA contract would expire on June 30, 2014 and then shared the possible process that could be used to consider renewal or to directly operate DAR service, which was included in the board packet. She then asked for board member input on the process and DAR contract.

President Haila shared two thoughts regarding HIRTA service. First, that communication should be sent to the human service agencies and Mary Greeley with information regarding HIRTA changes. Melissa Mundt indicated that this would be accomplished through the DRS working group. Second, that the City Attorney should review the HIRTA contract to establish a formal complaint process within the contract. Trustee Goodman indicated that he felt it would be more appropriate to wait until the next contract and incorporate this information, as a result of the DRS working groups recommendations.

Trustee Goodman indicated that he did not want to revise the DAR survey, but that he would like to glean more information from customers about different aspects of the service.

Director Kyras requested that if there were any further thoughts on the survey or contract, that board members could contact her over the next several weeks.

ARTICULATED BUS PURCHASE: CyRide’s Assistant Director of Fleet and Facilities, Rich Leners, shared that in 2014, the FTA awarded the last discretionary grant to purchase four, 60’ articulated buses through the Ladders of Opportunity grant program. He indicated that CyRide received \$3,000,000 from this program, equating to \$750,000 per bus. In order for CyRide to keep moving forward with purchasing these vehicles, CyRide staff is asking transit board approval to award the purchase of the four, 60’ articulated buses to NOVA Bus in Plattsburgh, New York under a bid completed by the Austin, Texas transit system. Four options under this contract could be transferred to CyRide to secure these buses, which would allow for standardizing the articulated bus fleet with the two buses CyRide currently has from this manufacturer. This purchase would be a not-to-exceed amount up to the grant funding of \$3,000,000.

Mr. Leners provided additional background on this purchase. There are only two manufacturers of articulated buses in the United States. Only one (NOVA Bus) offers the chassis CyRide prefers and the size of the two units that comprise the bus – a 40 /20 split.

Trustee Goodman made a motion to approve alternative #1 to approve award of four, 60’ articulated buses to NOVA Bus of Plattsburgh, New York at a price not-to-exceed \$3,000,000. Motion seconded by Trustee Abbas. (Ayes: Four. Nays: None.) Motion carried.

SHOPPING CART DISCUSSION: Barbara Neal, CyRide’s Operations Supervisor, provided board members with an overview of the shopping cart issue at bus stops. She indicated that the focus of discussions around this issue were centered on the bus stop on the #3 Blue route at S. 4th and S. Duff, which had garnered resident comments and discussion at City Council meetings. She provided board members with information regarding CyRide’s and Walmart’s practices to try to address this concern, such as instructing drivers to notify dispatch if there are a large number of carts and then having CyRide’s Dispatcher call Walmart. She indicated that Walmart sends personnel during daylight hours at least three times per day to retrieve the carts. She also indicated that Walmart’s manager has spoken with regional headquarters about installing an anti-theft cart perimeter, but that it could take 30 – 60 days before a response is received. She also shared that Walmart had indicated that they had posted signs on the path customers took to the bus, indicating that the carts could not be removed from the property, but that this had increased instances when customers were taking the carts off the property.

She also shared with board members the route modification that could be implemented to provide service closer to the Target and Walmart stores. She indicated that the operation of this route extension would require an additional bus to be operated Monday through Sunday, at an additional cost of \$488,000 annually. She further explained the reason for the additional bus in that the schedule was current tight and the additional time it would take to operate the extended route would result in every bus being late. By putting an additional bus on the route, a timely schedule could be maintained.

She then shared the outcome of the City Council discussion regarding this topic. The manager from Walmart had shared with council members his current plans to improve the situation and the Council decided to postpone further discussion until the manager had received a response from the regional headquarters regarding the anti-theft system.

Trustee Goodman asked for clarification on the Blue Route extension, specifically how an additional bus would allow the route to operate on time. Ms. Neal indicated that by adding a bus, the currently scheduled buses would “drop back a trip” allowing for them to start each trip on time. She indicated the layover time for the buses at the end of the route would also increase as a result of this additional bus.

Director Kyras highlighted the Saturday and Sunday cost of extending this route, which is significantly less costly, and inquired about the board’s interest in changing the route only on the weekends when the largest number of customers are using the route to the Target and Walmart stores. President Haila was not in favor of spending CyRide dollars as he believes it is a Walmart issue.

Board members shared their desire at this time to wait for a response from Walmart.

Trustee Abbas made a motion to approve alternative #1 to delay further actions on this project until after a response from Walmart’s regional office has been received. Trustee Schainker seconded the motion. (Ayes: Four. Nays: None.) Motion carried.

QUARTERLY OPERATIONS REPORT: Director Kyras provided a brief overview of the quarterly performance statistics.

- Ridership is 5 to 6 % higher than last year, about half of the increase experienced last year
- Accidents are lower
- Customer comments are lower
- Dial-A-Ride ridership is increasing, up about 7% as a result of HIRTA’s driver shortage as more passengers are turning to DAR for a guaranteed ride per ADA requirements

President Haila shared that he thought the increased number of road calls was concerning. Asst. Director Leners responded that it is a relatively small number in comparison to the number of vehicles operated each day. He provided further details regarding the road calls - weather was in the single digits with two buses gelling up and the brakes on two buses locked up. He shared that it continues to be an issue to operate service with a high fleet age. However, he indicated that CyRide has the manpower and resources available to address the road calls and that he believes that CyRide can continue to maintain the fleet in good condition. He also shared that most road calls are minor in nature, such as a headlight switch out and that major mechanical issues, when a bus cannot complete its trip, are from buses that will not start in the garage.

TRANSIT DIRECTORS REPORT:

- Director Kyras explained that CyRide had been contacted by the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) requesting that this agency be allowed to perform a free, voluntary review of CyRide's safety and security practices. Several other transit systems in Iowa have also been contacted by TSA for this same review in this agency's effort to improve safety throughout the transit industry. As staff reviewed this request, they identified benefits and potential concerns in participating in this review. The benefits include: free expertise in the safety/security area, recognition that this may be a required federal review in the future. The concerns include: staff time devoted to a two-day onsite visit as well as pre-visit preparation, and a concern on how federal agencies would use the information contained in the formal report, especially regarding grant funding decisions. She indicated that the TSA staff person had indicated that the review could be conducted during CyRide's slower time in June. Director Kyras asked the transit board for their direction on whether to participate in the review in light of these benefits/concerns.

Director Kyras shared that she believes that CyRide is operating a safe and secure service, but that, with TSA's expertise through this review, there may be opportunities to further improve in this area. She also shared that the review could include recommendations for improvement in areas that do not apply to a smaller transit system or that could not be implemented due to CyRide's governance structure.

Transit board members had a lengthy discussion sharing thoughts about the potential funding risks, the benefits of the review and concerns about unreasonable recommendations for a small transit system that could result from the review. Trustee Abbas shared that he believes that CyRide should complete this review since it is voluntary and free at this time. However, other board members indicated that the concerns outweighed the benefits at this time.

The consensus was for staff to not complete the formal TSA review at this time, but to review TSA's packet of information containing the questions and areas of review to determine if safety and security improvements could be accomplished without going through the formal review. Further, to possibly consider this review in the future after CyRide's internal review, using TSA's information, was completed.

- Director Kyras shared with board members the results of the City Attorney's research of what CyRide could legally do to address the impact that large developments had on CyRide's costs. She indicated that the previous discussion had addressed this issue with the understanding that Iowa law does not allow "impact fees."

Trustee Haila asked board members how the Transit Board could further address this issue with the City Council as they were making decisions in the near term on developments, prior to the joint Transit Board and City Council work session that will

be scheduled to occur later in the year. Transit members suggested that the Transit Board President and CyRide Director meet one-on-one with council members to keep communication open in the interim.

ADJOURN: Trustee Abbas made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 a.m. Motion seconded by Trustee Goodman. (Ayes: Four. Nays: None.) Motion carried.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Thursday, March 26, 2015 at 3:45 p.m.
Wednesday, April 30, 2015 at 3:45 p.m.