

AMES TRANSIT AGENCY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

AMES, IOWA

August 31, 2016

The Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees met on August 31, 2016 at 11:00 a.m. in CyRide's conference room. Vice President Valentino called the meeting to order at 11:08 a.m. with Trustees Madden, Staudt, Schainker, Valentino and Gartin present at the meeting. Absent President Haila.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Director Kyras stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss and set policy direction on the System Redesign Study. She then introduced Thomas Wittmann with Nelson Nygaard.

STUDY INTRODUCTION: Mr. Wittmann, Project Manager for the study, shared his thoughts about the purpose of the meeting. He indicated that his goal was to: provide preliminary information regarding community demographics that would be one "clue" to rider needs, share initial information regarding the peer analysis, detail the activities and timeframe for the study and work with the transit board and staff to set guiding principles, goals and objectives of the study to ensure that the final product meets the needs of CyRide's staff, transit board and the community.

Mr. Wittmann shared his thoughts on what his firm was charged to accomplish, which is to identify transit demand and look for areas to improve CyRide's service delivery. He indicated that this would be accomplished with a series of public outreach efforts and the development of short and long range plans that are fiscally constrained within existing budget constraints and the needs identified through the public outreach efforts. He acknowledged CyRide's phenomenal growth trend and the fact that there would be more needs identified than dollars available. He indicated that at the end of the study, these needs would be documented for future service discussions.

A discussion regarding the City of Ames Land Use Policy Plan update scheduled to begin in two years and the effect of this new plan might have on System Redesign decisions, prior to the Land Use Plan being completed, was discussed. Trustee Gartin asked if the study could be fine tuned in a few years. Mr. Wittmann indicated that if there was a need they would be glad to revisit the recommendations of the System Redesign Study, but that typically staff can modify the recommendations with the tools provided by the System Redesign Study.

Trustee Schainker asked if the study would look at both expenditures and revenues. The consultant indicated that it would not include a revenue analysis, but that the current revenues and known funding changes would be used to determine if the service modification recommendations were fiscally constrained.

Trustee Schainker mentioned the decline in farebox revenue and the situation where, when CyRide increased fares, revenue increased temporarily, but had steadily declined since that time. He expressed a desire to create more community ridership and reverse this trend, but indicated it was challenging in light of the city's limitations on sales and property tax.

Trustee Madden shared his thoughts that CyRide's current farebox revenue is small in comparison to overall local revenues and asked what would happen to ridership if the system became fare free for everyone. The consultant indicated that his firm had assisted Missoula, MT in becoming a fare free system. He indicated that the University of Montana created a majority of their ridership. He indicated that when the transit system became fare free for everyone, their ridership rose between 30% and 40%.

Board members briefly discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a fare free system for everyone. Director Kyras shared that the big impact would affect CyRide's Dial-A-Ride service, which would also need to be free to the public and the cost per ride for this service is five times greater than the fixed route. Additionally, most likely ridership would grow on this system as well, further increasing costs for this service.

Trustee Schainker questioned how to determine whether a request was a "want" or "need." Director Kyras indicated that the surveys were designed to gain a better understanding of this through the questions and "trade-off" scenario contained in the survey.

President Haila arrived at 11:20 a.m.

President Haila indicated Trustee Valentino would need to leave shortly for another commitment and asked if he had any thoughts he would like to share with the board before he left. He indicated that he did not at that time.

The consultant presented information he had gathered from 2014 census information at the tract level regarding employment, income level and other demographic characteristics of Ames. President Haila indicated that the census data was not representative of the community at the tract level as areas with high employment included subareas with no employment. Director Kyras indicated that tracts were large land areas so the employment may be in only one portion of the tract. Mr. Wittmann indicated that this was one of many pieces of information that would be used to determine where service might be needed.

President Haila said the study needed to include future development in addition to where current populations reside. Director Kyras indicated that part of the study was to meet with the City's planning staff to discuss current and future development. She also indicated that where students currently reside is another important piece of information to consider in the study.

The consultant then talked about data collection efforts they would be conducting: rider on and off counts, ridership loads, on-time performance, route and system-level weaknesses and strengths.

Mr. Wittmann then explained the public outreach efforts: stakeholder meetings, transit driver meetings, pop-up meetings, on-line surveys, public meetings and what he anticipated gaining from each of these perspectives. He indicated that thousands of responses were anticipated.

Mr. Wittmann then presented the findings from the peer analysis of eight other university community transit systems. He stated that, overall, CyRide was operated extremely efficiently with more than 56 passengers per hour, which was significantly higher than its peers. He also stated that CyRide is a very well operated transit system, indicating that the cost to provide service in the community is less than its peers.

Mr. Wittmann pointed out one anomaly in CyRide operations compared to its peers - number of revenue miles per peak vehicles driven by CyRide. CyRide operates fewer miles on each vehicle, indicating that it typically operates only when ridership peaks demand the service, as opposed to a consistent schedule, which most systems operate.

Trustee Schainker asked Mr. Wittmann if he analyzed what the average rider pays and if the cost is equivalent for students versus non-students. Director Kyras indicated that the System Redesign scope of work did not include a fare analysis as it was a route structure study. Mr. Wittmann responded by clarifying where data could be gathered to analyze this question, indicating that the federal government's National Transit Database reporting had four fare categories that could be looked at - federal, state, local, farebox. He indicated that student fees are considered farebox revenue under this reporting method.

Trustee Madden said 93% of CyRide riders are students and that every student pays their fees; compared with 3.6% of revenues being generated through the farebox.

Trustee Schainker shared his thoughts that fare free programs dramatically impact ridership and the level of revenue generated, as the revenue per ride goes down the more that students use the service, which he believes will make the system unsustainable in the future. He pointed out that the commuter lot brings a lot of people into the center of the city, as opposed to traveling from bus stops near their residences scattered throughout the city. He acknowledged that this was an efficient way to operate CyRide, but that it also had negative impacts on the community. He asked whether the impact of this type of route design on the community would be studied. Director Kyras indicated that policy questions on community impact were not included in the scope of work.

The consultant shared his thoughts that having riders travel by car to then access transit is not the ideal model. President Haila and Trustee Schainker recommended looking at the Iowa State Center Park and Ride to determine if it was the best model for the community.

Ms. Gregory shared her thoughts about how the fare free program could be modified by indicating that the number of trips could be capped (i.e. 70 trips), but allowing riders to use these in any manner they desired. Trustee Schainker said CyRide has a responsibility to move people around the entire community and while it is convenient to travel to/from campus, it is not as easy to travel to other areas of the community. He encouraged the consultant to keep all customers in mind with the System Redesign.

Trustee Schainker suggested looking at each route's capacity, structure, and load factor. Mr. Wittmann indicated that the system's service is as effective as it can be, but that their work would include an analysis of each route.

Mr. Wittmann then discussed the overall study goal that was included in the Request for Proposal, "to determine if the current route structure/schedules are the most efficient and effective method of service delivery for Ames with a service demand of approximately 7 million rides." He asked board members how they would define this goal and what they believed was important for the community.

Ms. Gregory asked if there was a definition for "efficiency," indicating that it could mean more people, different areas served or the number of people boarding at a stop. The consultant shared an example of what he meant as efficient - that with the large number of buses operated on the Orange Route (up to 9 buses on one trip) that it was very efficient, but indicated there may be a better, more effective way to provide service to these customers.

Trustee Schainker indicated that there may be two objectives: one to provide more service to the entire community of Ames and another to provide service for students into and out of campus. Director Kyras shared two possible study objectives (contained in board material), based upon previous work of the transit board regarding CyRide's service level philosophy.

Trustee Schainker remarked that CyRide operates routes that travel through the community, as well as routes that only travel to/from the university. He indicated that the System Redesign Study should assist the transit board and staff in determining overall priorities for the system that take into consideration more than its efficiency so that less productive routes like CyRide's Yellow route may still have public transit access for its residents.

Trustee Schainker shared his thoughts that new development will dramatically impact CyRide's routes, with some needing service to the university and others to locations

around town. He encouraged the study to look at the growth in non-student development and their needs for transit as well. He also indicated that there are pressures for CyRide service not only prior to a development beginning, but once the development is completed by employees, tenants and owners. Director Kyras indicated that identifying transit corridors would assist developers in determining where to locate these new developments. President Haila shared his thoughts that the pressure placed on CyRide by new development was one of the reasons the System Redesign Study was recommended at this time.

Mr. Wittmann indicated that the study will ask the public questions that indicate possible types of service with costs. Individuals will then need to choose, and prioritize, what is most important for CyRide services. This approach will help guide potential recommendations.

A discussion regarding the university being the largest employer and the challenge to provide a quality service level to other employers located throughout town ensued.

Trustee Madden shared his thoughts that the university is not making enrollment projections at this time. He also indicated that the study will need to consider local preferences like the need to minimize transferring between buses and total travel time on a bus of less than 45 minutes. He indicated that he hoped that this study would provide a system that could address some of these non-student concerns in using the bus. He also shared conversations he had recently had with developers and their thoughts that student housing was "built out" and that they were concentrating more on non-student housing as Ames businesses grow.

Kate Gregory asked if there was an opportunity to lead development like in other communities where business and housing follow where transit operates. The example of Portland, Oregon and their Transit-Oriented Development projects was discussed. Mr. Wittmann indicated that a high level of transit service is needed to attract development.

President Haila acknowledged the need to get the staff, board members and consultant expectations to align at the beginning of the study so that there was not a frustration at the end of the study by one or more of the parties. He indicated the board members desire to be supportive of the students, but also that there is a greater community that also has needs that need to be met. He further indicated the community's support of the Research Park and the challenges of meeting the needs of new areas of town, such as the Industrial Park on the east side of Ames. He encouraged the consultant to help staff and the board to continue to provide a phenomenal service to the students while also meeting other needs in the community, in a manner that allows for sustainable growth.

Mr. Wittmann indicated that, based on his preliminary observations of CyRide's service, that he was concerned about whether the service was sustainable into the future. Director Kyras clarified his statement stating that his definition of sustainable, in this context, meant operationally sustainable as the operations division worked to piece together the service on a daily basis with the existing resources, as opposed to financially sustainable.

The board meeting was paused for a lunch break at 12:37 pm.

Following the break, the consultant asked each transit board member what they would like the Ames Tribune headline to be six years in the future regarding transit. Further, he clarified, "Where do you want CyRide to be and what would that look like?" Each board member shared their headline/vision as follows:

- **Trustee Staudt** - CyRide is not only effective in getting students to campus, but to jobs on and off campus; more students are able to come to campus without a car. Students being able to get to where they want to go using CyRide.
- **Trustee Schainker** - CyRide remains one of the five elements that make Ames a great place to live. When people look at Ames, CyRide currently is listed as one of the reasons that make Ames great - it separates Ames as being special.
- **President Haila** - CyRide wins fifth consecutive award for quality of service and satisfaction, which includes students and across the community. This recognizes CyRide's top notch service currently with the desire that this continue and grow in the future.
- **Trustee Gartin** - CyRide continues to adapt as Ames moves forward. The growth of the university and Ames is a good challenge and opportunity to have as not all cities can say they are growing. There are many reasons for people to move to Ames, and CyRide is a critical component so we need to stay on task and manage it well.
- **Trustee Madden** - CyRide continues to be ranked as one of the best transportation systems in university communities in the country with Ames being ranked as one of the best towns to live in.
- **Katherine Gregory** - Ames wins for smart growth and a key reason is the transportation policy identified by the students, which supports the community as well.

Mr. Wittmann then turned the board's attention to the handout with the currently adopted service philosophy, potential study objectives and guiding principles, which, when completed, will guide the recommendations that are developed. He began with the key point of the service philosophy asking board members about the concept that everyone gets a ride, seated or standing and that no one is left at the bus top to wait for the next bus. Steve Schainker asked if this current philosophy was an unrealistic goal for the future. Mr. Wittmann said that he had never seen a system with a philosophy that

no one is left behind and he believed it was an expensive standard, but that it was what makes CyRide special. President Haila indicated that the philosophy also included a statement "within financial constraints," indicating it had a limit.

Trustee Schainker said that this current philosophy was utilizing resources that could be used for other needs identified in the System Study Redesign. The consultant indicated that to meet this standard in the study, it limits what can be accomplished with the System Redesign. He then asked board members if they wanted the design team to let the staff and board know what it would look like to NOT have this philosophy. Director Kyras urged board members to think through what the ramifications would be to not have this guarantee - students missing classes, public not getting to work/appointments on time, possibly more street congestion and parking issues and/or need for more parking structures. Trustee Staudt agreed and shared an example if a student was on one of the buses that no longer run and could not get to campus or would have to drive to the Commuter lot. He indicated that he believed that a different philosophy would not work.

President Haila shared that he would desire to hear from the consultant what he thought would work as an objective third party. He also indicated that he wanted to make sure the system remained working well for the students as CyRide was seen as having a moral obligation to get students to campus.

The consultant said that he could not currently give the board a good feel for these impacts as he needed more data before an informed analysis could be made, but he suspected at this early stage that CyRide was underutilizing 2 to 3 buses as a result of this guarantee. Trustee Madden asked the consultant's definition of underutilized, citing whether it was operating a bus for one person or half a bus. Director Kyras wondered if the reference to underutilized buses was as a result of the first two week of service, which operates more buses until travel patterns are established. Mr. Wittmann said that was part of it, but also if a person missed a transfer an unused bus at the time could pick up the person up to take them where they were traveling to, if they had time in their schedule. Mr. Wittmann indicated they would include the impacts of these types of policies on the overall cost to provide service. The consultant also indicated they would assess the impacts of other policies, such as bus capacity standards, when exceeded, required adding another bus.

Mr. Wittmann discussed the two proposed study objectives proposed of an efficient and effective transit system providing approximately 7 million rides per year and to provide recommendations for existing services (guideline #1 and #2) and to provide a list of unfunded potential service enhancements (guideline #3).

President Haila asked how "within financial constraints" would be addressed in the study. The consultant indicated that inflationary costs would constitute a "baseline" for the services and then enhancements to address growth would mirror CyRide's historical

increase of 5 - 8% per year. Trustee Madden indicated that this level of increase was subject to debate as this would be substantially above the rate of inflation. President Haila agreed indicating that construction increases have been in the 3 - 3.5% annually.

Director Kyras said this is challenge and encouraged board members to think through the ramifications of an increase at the rate of inflation. Further, she indicated that with flat federal and state dollars, the budget increase falls on local funding partners and, at the rate of inflation only, CyRide will most likely not be able to continue at current service levels. Trustee Gartin asked for clarification on steady federal and state dollars. Director Kyras indicated that operating funds were steady; however, capital dollars had been significantly reduced. Trustee Gartin indicated he anticipated strong city assessment values in the near future and stated he could support a maximum of 5% annual increases.

Trustee Madden said that student fees have been increasing at the rate of inflation (2.5% - 3% per year) and that they have placed more of their available fee dollars toward CyRide as it was a priority, but was not sure if this could continue in the future. Trustee Staudt shared his views of the pressures regarding student fees to accomplish other student priorities, but indicated that he believed that students might accept as high as 7% increases.

Trustee Madden indicated that he believes that ISU's Senior Administration would find it difficult to accept a 5-6% increase per year.

Trustee Madden shared that the number of students bringing cars to campus is lower, from a high of 70% to 50% currently, which may put more pressure on CyRide.

Mr. Wittmann asked if there was a consensus of a 5 - 7% per year increase to be used for the study. Trustee Gartin shared that he was not comfortable going with more than 5%. Mr. Wittmann indicated that the study would show what the value of the investment was for the community for the funders/community to decide if there was sufficient benefit for the cost. There was a consensus of planning for 5% increases in the study.

Mr. Wittmann then shared another proposed guiding principle, which was to design the system to increase non-student ridership, as well as address student needs. No board members commented on this proposed objective.

The next proposed guiding principle that was discussed was to design a base system of 20 minute peak - 40 minute off-peak service as was currently operated. No board members commented on this proposed objective.

Mr. Wittmann then described the next proposed guiding principle, which was to provide geographic coverage to 85% of Ames residents within 1/4 mile of a fixed-route service.

Mr. Wittmann recommended changing this objective to "85% of residents in transit supportive areas are with 1/4 mile of a fixed-route." Board consensus was to change the language of this guiding principle.

Mr. Wittmann then described the travel time guiding principle of getting from A to point B in no more than 45 minutes. He indicated that most likely every trip will not meet this principle, but that the goal would be to develop a system where the average was no more than 45 minutes so that it was somewhat competitive with the automobile at approximately twice the travel time. Trustee Gartin asked if the day and time of day was a factor as Sunday afternoon trip length time is less important than on a Monday morning at 8:00 am. Mr. Wittmann indicated that the focus was on traditional work commute times.

Trustee Gartin asked about whether the study would address whether the road was constructed to bus strength. Mr. Wittmann indicated that this would be addressed if there was a recommendation to change a street CyRide operated on.

President Haila reiterated the concerns about travel time, indicating that the maximum travel time from south Ames to North Ames was only at 11-12 minutes and that a 45 minute bus ride would not encourage residents to use CyRide. Trustee Gartin agreed and requested that the average travel time be less. Mr. Wittmann indicated it was a maximum, not the average.

Trustee Madden asked if express bus route would be considered as part of CyRide's future service. The consultant indicated that express routes would be considered as a possible route structure.

The travel time guideline was revisited with additional clarification regarding the issue, such as north Ames residents traveling to the Research Park and individuals moving into the community from larger cities desiring public transit. Trustee Staudt stated that the Research Park jobs are going to be higher paying positions and indicated that this clientele would not be as receptive to riding the bus due to their income level.

Mr. Wittmann indicated that the last guiding principle concerned safety - rider and public safety. It is also an opportunity to reduce congestion. There were no board member comments on this guiding principle.

The consultant then provided an overview of tasks in the next two to three weeks, specifically mentioning the online survey that would include tradeoff questions and asked that board members to take the survey and pass it along to others, as it will be a community wide survey. Trustee Schainker raised a concern that asking questions about unmet needs would create an expectation for service and that this provides a lot of pressure to meet these needs. Director Kyras suggested using different wording to try to reduce this pressure similar to the Long Range Plan terminology of "illustrative"

projects. Mr. Wittmann shared his experience in other systems and indicated that people will want to be heard and have their needs acknowledged, but that this does not mean that the Transit Board will need to act upon any or all of these suggestions. He also indicated that some maybe service changes may able to be accomplished through reallocation of resources.

Trustee Madden ask how current versus future demands are addressed in the study using the Research Park growth as an example. Director Kyras indicated that through discussions with the City's Planning Department, that this type of growth should be identified and be included in the list of future possible projects.

Mr. Wittmann ended the discussion with the schedule of activities, indicating a completion date of June 2017. President Haila indicated a concern with developing a set of recommendations and then requesting public input prior to meeting with the Transit Board. Director Kyras indicated that recommendations would be brought to the Transit Board before they were available to the public.

Trustee Madden made a motion to adjourn at 1:50 pm. Trustee Staudt seconded the motion. (Ayes: Five. Nays: None.) Motion carried.

John Haila, President

Joanne Van Dyke, Recording Secretary