



Minutes

Agenda

Cowlitz Transit Authority

*Dennis Weber (Chair), Chet Makinster (Vice Chair),
Lisa Alexander, Jeffrey McAllister,
Anthony Harris (Nonvoting), Nancy Malone (Alternate)
Arne Mortensen (Alternate), Mike Wallin,
MaryAlice Wallis (Alternate)*

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

4:00 PM

Virtual Zoom Meeting

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, in accordance with RCW Chapter 42.30, that the Cowlitz Transit Authority will conduct a virtual Zoom meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

All members of the public are encouraged to listen in to the meeting and participate via a moderator. For information about Zoom accessibility, please contact the Clerk of the Board's Office at (360) 442-5664.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86589607053>

Dial any of the following numbers:

1 253 215 8782

1 408 638 0968

1 669 900 6833

1 346 248 7799

1 312 626 6799

1 646 876 9923

1 301 715 8592

Webinar ID: 865 8960 7053

In response to COVID-19 and public health concerns, and in concert with Governor Inslee's emergency proclamation, the meetings of the Cowlitz Transit Authority Board will be viewed as ZOOM virtual online webinars.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Weber called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Dennis Weber; Member Mike Wallin (arrived at Agenda Item #10); Member Lisa Alexander; Member Jeffrey McAllister; Member (Alternate) MaryAlice Wallis (arrived at Agenda Item #9)

Absent: Vice-Chair Chet Makinster; Member (Alternate) Nancy Malone; Member (Alternate) Arne Mortensen; Member (Non-Voting) Anthony Harris

Staff Present: Amy Asher; Transit Manager, Ken Hash; Public Works Director, Jim Seeks; Transit Supervisor, Tabitha Hayden; Transit Supervisor, Elizabeth Halili; Clerk of the Board

Others Present: Betsy Despain; Paratransit Manager, Ken Pearrow; CWCOG

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

4. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES FOR THE DECEMBER 9, 2020 MEETING

A motion was made by Alexander, seconded by McAllister, to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2020, CTA Board meeting. The motion carried with all members voting in favor.

21-00017 December 9, 2020 CTA Board Meeting Minutes

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

A motion was made by McAllister, seconded by Alexander, to approve the Consent Calendar in its entirety. The motion carried with all members voting in favor.

20-0002 Invoice - Randolph Law Firm - December 1-31, 2020 \$900.00

20-0003 Invoice #20-4307 - Northwest Enforcement, Inc - Jan 2021 \$725.00

21-00011 2020 November County Treasurer's Report

21-00012 2020 November CTA Fund Balance Report

6. REPORTS

20-0004 2020 Annual Fixed Route Ridership

20-0005 2020 December Monthly Fixed Route Ridership

21-00013 2020 December LIFT Monthly Ridership

21-00014 2020 December CTA Ridership Graph

21-00015 PTBA Sales Tax Data 2020 vs 2019

21-00018 December 2020 Ridership by Hour

21-00019 Passengers per Trip Aug - Dec 2020

7. DECEMBER 2020 SERVICE CHANGE UPDATE

Amy Asher gave a brief update on the December 2020 Service Change:

- RiverCities Transit is currently operating at reduced service levels due to temporary staffing shortages;
- Fixed Route service was reduced to Saturday levels on December 28, 2020;
- The staff has worked hard to inform the public of the changes quickly. The staff reprinted and posted schedules and notices in all bus shelters. Public notices and schedules were posted online, in the buses, on FaceBook, in the newspaper, and on the radio;
- A minimum of 14 drivers is required to provide full-service levels each day. Due to increases in levels of staff on medical leave, the staff had 14 drivers available on the roster, one of which was helping to train three new drivers hired in November 2020;
- Driver shortages are happening all around the country. Most transit systems in Washington State that cut service levels in March 2020 have not returned to full-service levels;
- Asher noted that some larger transit agencies adjust to their shortages on an hour-by-hour basis when they are short-staffed. Asher stated that she does not think this model would work for our ridership community as

there isn't another easy and affordable transportation alternative. Traditionally, RiverCities Transit has cut service wholly rather than on day by day basis.

- RiverCities Transit returned to full-service levels in August 2020 because all necessary PPE and physical barriers were in place and staffing levels were sufficient to maintain these levels;
- The staff has been providing service Monday-Saturday to those impacted by the reduced service levels who need to get to essential services and jobs using Paratransit services. WSDOT, which partially funds the LIFT program, allows the staff to use grant funds to transport those needing rides even though they are not ADA eligible. So far, the staff has provided this service to six individuals;
- Asher expects to increase service levels by mid-February and return to full service by March 1, 2021.

The Board discussed messaging on the buses and suggested that the words 'Essential Trips Only' were keeping people from riding the bus if they thought their trip was not essential.

A motion was made by McAllister, seconded by Alexander, to change the Essential Trips Only be removed or reworded from the buses.

The board discussed the motion and offered suggested wording 'COVID Restrictions in Effect'.

The motion passed with all members voting in favor.

8. **RESOLUTION 2020-01 DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY - DISCUSSION**

Amy Asher gave a brief report on Resolution 2020-01 Declaration of Emergency and how it has been used since its adoption by the Board:

- Resolution 2020-01 was approved by the Board during a special meeting in March 2020;
- The resolution allows the Transit Manager to:
 - Modify service as deemed necessary to ridership demands and the needs of the public while giving as much notice to the public as possible;
 - Amend and modify fare collections in the interest of preserving public and employee health and safety;
 - Suspend any other policies and standard practices to the extent necessary to preserve the safety of our staff, riders, and the community at large.
- After the resolution was passed, the staff used it for the following:
 - All fares were suspended so that riders could board at the rear of the vehicle, allowing the staff to keep driver/passenger interaction short or non-existent;
 - Asher suspended typical purchasing practices that utilize price comparison and purchased large quantities of surgical masks from the Washington State Transit Association;
 - To expedite the purchasing process, the staff ordered driver barriers from a local manufacturer rather than gathering multiple quotes from vendors around the country;
 - The staff adopted necessary services changes to adjust to staffing shortages.

The Board discussed the resolution.

A motion was made by Alexander, seconded by McAllister, to authorize the removal of the Declaration of Emergency.

The Board discussed the motion.

The motion passed with all members voting in favor.

9. **ROUTE 57 ROUTING REQUESTS IN KELSO**

Jim Seeks gave a brief presentation of the Route 57 routing requests in Kelso:

- Route 57 Division Street Concern:
 - Eric Christensen of Kelso, WA, contacted staff to request a route change to Route 57 due to safety concerns. Mr. Christensen stated that the corner of Division and Bowmont is a hairpin turn; no stop, no yield, and across from a school. Mr. Christensen noted that this turn is a challenge for buses to navigate safely and that he is very concerned that a collision or accident will happen as he has

- witnessed numerous close calls;
- Staff agreed that this is a high-risk corner and moved service between N. 2nd Avenue and Bowmont Avenue from Division Street to Croy Street, effective January 11, 2021;
- The Bowmont Avenue and Croy Street bus stop will eventually need to be moved north of the corner as the Operators must pull past the bus stop to board or disembark riders;
- Jim Seeks stated that he will contact the City of Kelso about re-siting the bus stop located at Bowmont Avenue and Croy Street and installing a pad that meets ADA standards.
- **Route 57 Crawford Street Concern:**
 - Zack Sanders of Kelso, WA, contacted staff to request a route change to Route 57 due to safety concerns. Mr. Sanders stated that the block between N. Pacific and 3rd Avenue is five feet narrower than the rest of the blocks going up Crawford Street. Cars are able to legally park on both sides of the street, which only allows one vehicle to travel through;
 - Mr. Sanders has been in contact with the City of Kelso regarding the road's width in this block. Mr. Sanders would like to see the City of Kelso widen Crawford Street or for the staff to move this section of the route;
 - Jim Seeks contacted Mr. Sanders to inform him that the staff is not able to modify the route due to the following concerns:
 - Modification of the route to Columbia Street is not possible as it is just as narrow as Crawford Street for a greater length;
 - Modification of the route to Cowlitz Way would require a very high risk turn onto northbound Pacific due to the southbound lane striping.

The Board discussed the Route 57 routing change requests and the modifications made by the staff.

A motion was made by Alexander, seconded by McAllister, to make a request to the City of Kelso restricting parking on Crawford Street.

The Board discussed the motion. Member Alexander offered to take the parking issue to the City Council.

The motion passed with all members voting in favor.

10. **MANAGER'S REPORT**

Amy Asher gave a brief report:

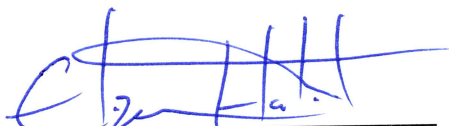
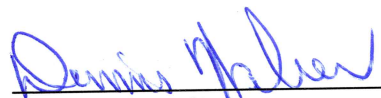
- RiverCities Transit will not receive any additional COVID relief funding from the recently passed Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021. The act states that the funds received by urban areas may not exceed 75% of their 2018 National Transit Database reported operating expenses between this act and the CARES ACT Grant. RiverCities Transit received just over 75% of the 2018 operating expenses from the CARES ACT Grant. No funds will need to be returned;
- Asher received notification from the Washington State Department of Transportation that partial funding of \$84,000 for service to Lexington has been received for this biennium. Asher anticipates that, as listed in the Governor's proposed budget for 2021-23, WSDOT will provide the upcoming biennium's remaining funding. Asher plans to purchase a bus with the funds that have been received and will watch closely to see that the rest of the funds are officially approved later this year;
- Governor Inslee issued guidance for Transit Agencies to follow in December 2020. The staff can now decrease social distancing on the bus from six feet to three feet, which means the buses can now carry more than ten passengers at a time. The new social distancing guidelines have reduced the need to run as many tripper buses;
- Masks are provided to the public on all buses;
- Tabitha Hayden has updated the Free Youth Pass application form, and the staff is encouraging interested youth to sign up.

Betsy Despain gave a brief report:

- Paratransit ridership numbers in November 2020 were 1614;
- Paratransit ridership numbers in December 2020 were 1610;
- Paratransit Ridership numbers are lower than those in June of 2020;
- January numbers are not trending much higher;
- 53% of Paratransit passengers are not riding.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 4:54 p.m.


Elizabeth Halili, Clerk of the Board
Dennis Weber, Chairman