



MUNICIPAL PARTNERS TRANSIT COMMITTEE
Council Chambers, Bangor City Hall
Wednesday, April 4, 2018
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Michael Crooker, City of Bangor
Jeremy Caron, City of Brewer
Karen Fussell, City of Brewer
Ron Harriman, City of Old Town
Linda Johns, City of Brewer

Jeremy Clay, Community Connector
Laurie Linscott, Community Connector
Amy Rau, MaineDOT (Via Teleconference)
Belle Ryder, Town of Orono
Sean Carrier, Town of Hampden

Staff Present:

Rob Kenerson, BACTS
Connie Reed, BACTS
Cindy Meservey, BACTS

Guests Present:

Martin Chartrand, Transportation for All
Marcia Larkin, Penquis

Call to Order: Michael Crooker called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of February 7, 2018 meeting minutes: Karen Fussell made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Belle Ryder seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

July 1 – December 31 Ridership Report: Connie shared ridership statistics by municipality for July through December 2017. She noted that the decrease in ridership locally is not unique, as bus systems nationwide are experiencing the same problem. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) report, *Understanding Recent Ridership Changes Trends and Adaptations*, lists four broad categories of factors relating to bus ridership decline: erosion of time competitiveness, reduced customer affinity and loyalty, erosion of cost competitiveness, and external factors. The report offered suggestions for goals and strategies that may help increase ridership.

Both Brewer routes have increased in ridership compared to the same time period last year, as well as the Stillwater Avenue route. Laurie noted that increase in ridership in Brewer can be attributed to PCHC creating a suboxone clinic at their Brewer location. All other routes have decreases in ridership. The

steeper declines are on the Mall Hopper and Mount Hope routes. This is not surprising given the closures of major stores in that area. The ridership on the Black Bear Orono Express shuttle has also declined significantly. Connie noted ridership on these routes should be carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure resources are being focused and operating in the most efficient and effective manner.

FY17 Community Connector Funding and Allocation of Costs: Laurie Linscott and Jeremy Clay prepared a presentation of the Community Connector fiscal year 2017 revenues and expenses. Laurie explained that the Community Connector accounting system is set up so that every municipality is organized as a separate department. There is a lot of data entry required for Laurie to break out individual expenses and then put them all back together for federal reporting. Some revenues and expense items are tracked and allocated to each bus and each community at their actual cost, while others are allocated based on a percentage. The costs and revenues determined based on percentage are broken down Bangor – 70%; Brewer – 10%; VOOT – 15%; and Hampden – 5%. These percentages haven't be reviewed or updated in several years. Instead of tracking revenues and expenses as if there were five separate bus systems, Laurie is hoping to have all system revenues and expenses tracked as a whole, and determine local share by using a simplified formula.

Linda Johns asked if the procedures are written in a manual. Laurie indicated that there was nothing written down to date.

Belle Ryder stated that fare revenue percentages could be based on ridership to account for routes that have increased ridership to be captured in fare allocations.

Michael Crooker explained that the City of Bangor, as well as BACTS, have been discussing developing a methodology to apply a formula to total system expenses, revenues and grant allocations to determine municipal share of local costs. Michael indicated that they have found that the percentages are very close regardless of how they are broken out. Connie noted that in her analysis, the percentages are fairly consistent as well, regardless of which factor, or combination of factors are used. Michael stated that he is working with Laurie and Debbie Cyr to pull out data and will meet with BACTS to compare findings and develop a proposed structure to present to this group for input. Mike will present the proposal to the Bangor City Council for approval.

Belle Ryder told the group that the Town of Orono has applied for a grant to get GPS technology for the Black Bear Orono Express so more detailed ridership data can be collected and real-time information can be provided to riders. The Town of Orono may be able to provide the required tablets for the BBOE driver if the grant is awarded. The Town will not know if the funds will be awarded until mid-May.

The City of Bangor was notified last week of the award of competitive Section 5339 grant for \$1.9 million to purchase five additional new buses for the Community Connector system. The funds must be obligated within four years. Laurie is looking at buying two buses in 2022 and three in 2023.

The VW settlement with the state will provide some funding for transit that may be able to be used for the required local match.

Community Connector Projects/Initiatives Update: Michael indicated that he is confident that the recently added two new buses, along with the planned new bus purchases over the next year will provide more

reliability within the system. Laurie noted that she has purchased the extended warranties with each of the buses bought recently.

The second RFP for ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Operator has been rewritten and published. Proposals are due at the end of April with a planned service start date of July 1.

In response to anticipated timeline for publishing an RFP for technology equipment and service for the buses, Michael indicated that the City is taking the approach of implementing the different elements of the project in phases. However, it is anticipated that the first phase will be to have buses equipped with tablets for collecting detailed data on ridership installed and working, barring any problems, by October. Real-time data and tracking will follow after the City has an opportunity to test the technology.

Michael also reported that, as part of the City of Bangor's Pickering Square revitalization project, they are developing an RFP to hire a consultant to do a bus hub and route study. They plan to have this RFP out at the beginning of July. They are hoping to get proposals from a consultant with a fresh view of the system. Rob Kenerson indicated that if the route study is properly planned and submitted for consideration for programming in the UPWP, BACTS may be able to allocate some funding for a short-range transit route study. Regardless of how the study is funded, Connie noted that any study needs to be documented in BACTS plans and/or programs. The UPWP for calendar years 2018 and 2019 was approved by the BACTS Policy Committee in October 2017. Once more information and detail is provided by the City of Bangor about the intent, scope and timeframe for the proposed route study, Connie will clarify procedures required to ensure the project is properly documented in the BACTS plan. Belle Ryder asked if it would be better to wait to do the route study until there is more detailed ridership information available (expected to be collected with the technology discussed above) for the consultant. Michael Crooker stated that they do have data that can be given to the consultant. Linda Johns asked if the routes would be planned around the bus stops or if the bus stops would be added to routes. Laurie explained that the data on stops only covers the current routes. Anything outside the routes will be missed. She's counting on the consultant putting the routes where the people are. Husson, EMHS, and PCHC have all indicated they want more service.

Belle Ryder asked if some of the costs of the bus service could be passed on to local businesses and organizations that are high ridership generators (customers and employees). Jeremy pointed out that the local businesses with the highest number of riders are Walmart and Hannaford. Currently there are no private partnerships or agreements to subsidize costs of providing bus service. Belle suggested municipalities might consider implementing transit-related impact fees that could be assessed for new developments similar to that which is assessed by MaineDOT in relation to traffic generation by new development.

Sean Carrier asked if Community Connector is included in the development and project review processes by municipal planning departments and/or Planning Boards. Michael indicated they are working on being included.

Municipal Events/Projects/Developments Update: Belle asked Laurie if she has received the latest schedule for the Park Street/Rangeley Road roundabout project in Orono. There is one more Advisory Committee meeting on April 12 at 1:00 p.m. in the Orono Council Chambers. They should be discussing the final schedule at that meeting.

Martin Chartrand from Transportation for All shared that they are almost finished compiling survey data collected about current bus usage and demand for bus service in the evening and weekends. . Approximately 400 people responded to the survey. Martin offered to present the survey findings at the next meeting if the committee is interested.

Public Outreach and Marketing: U.S. Cellular has changed their advertising policies and are no longer advertising using wraps on the Community Connector buses. The U.S. Cellular wraps have been taken off the buses, which is why some of the buses in the fleet look different. Laurie is working with ATA Marketing to identify an advertiser to replace the wraps. Laurie told the committee that if they know of any local businesses looking for advertising, or if the municipalities have advertising, in addition to wraps, there are spots inside the bus available for advertising as well. The City of Bangor is also looking at rebranding the Community Connector and changing the image of the bus system.

Other business: The meetings for the committee are set up for the first Wednesday of odd months, but since there has been shuffling and rescheduling of a few meetings to accommodate scheduling conflicts, there was discussion about whether or not the regular day and time was convenient for the committee members. Michael asked Connie to send a calendar appointment out to the committee so everyone could get the dates and times on their calendars. Linda asked if the meetings could start a little earlier. It was decided that the regular meetings would be scheduled for the first Wednesday of odd months with a start time of 9:30 a.m.

Future Agenda Items: The next meeting will be held on May 2 at 9:30 a.m. Agenda items will include a presentation of FY19 Community Connector budget and proposed formula for municipal local shares beyond fiscal year 2019. If ATA Marketing is available, Laurie will ask them to do a presentation. If they are not available, the advertising/marketing presentation will on the July agenda. Karen Fussell suggested that agenda items 5 through 8 should be regular items. Martin will also present the Transportation for All survey findings at the May meeting.

Adjourn: 12:17 p.m.