



MUNICIPAL PARTNERS TRANSIT COMMITTEE

Bangor City Council Chambers

Wednesday, January 9, 2019

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Members

Jim Chandler, Town of Hampden
Linda Johns, City of Brewer
Amy Rau, Maine DOT (via phone)
Belle Ryder, Town of Orono
Karen Fussell, City of Brewer
Tom Spitz, UMaine
Rich Cromwell, City of Bangor
Debbie Cyr, City of Bangor

BACTS Staff

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

Guests

Tammy Tewhey, Penquis Lynx
Lisa Feldman, Transportation for All
Darcy Cooke, Transportation for All

Community Connector Staff

Laurie Linscott, Community Connector
Sherri Clark, Community Connector

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Karen Fussell. Introductions were made.

Approval of September 5, 2018 Meeting Minutes: Linda Johns made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Jim Chandler seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

New Bus Grants, Capital Cost Allocation and Bus Replacement Plan: Debbie Cyr gave a brief overview of the three current [FTA §5339b] discretionary grants received by Community Connector.

2016 Award: This §5339b discretionary award of \$1,441,600 for 4 30' buses. However, the City of Bangor determined it was in the best interest of the transit system to replace five buses and cover the additional costs through local share. This decision and funding application to FTA was made prior to the fiscal year 2017 and 2018 discretionary grant award announcements. In order to minimize the local costs, formula §5339a funds from fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018 in the amount of \$298,371, were combined with the FY2016 discretionary award increasing the amount of federal funding available for the five buses to \$1,739,971. Two of the buses have been delivered (in November 2018), one is anticipated to be delivered in April 2019, and the remaining two buses are expected in August 2019. The City of Bangor submitted an application to MaineDOT for VW settlement funds to cover the local match. However, Mary Ann Hayes sent notification on January 2 that MaineDOT would not be able to award funding for bus purchases already made. Debbie told the group that the City of Bangor will be funding the entire local share for the 5 buses purchased under this award.

2017 Award: This §5339b discretionary award of \$1,944,540 will replace five 30' buses. The estimated local share for this purchase is \$343,154. The City of Bangor submitted an application to Maine DOT for VW settlement funds to be used as the local match for this award. On January 2, Mary Ann Hayes sent notification that MaineDOT approved this request. The procurement of these five buses will be a piggyback on an existing contract with another agency and delivery of all five buses is estimated for December 2019.

2018 Award: This §5339b discretionary award is for \$2,730,000 to replace 7 buses and \$160,000 to purchase support equipment. The required local match is \$530,000. The anticipated timeframe for purchase of buses are December 2023 and July 2024. However, the City intends to hold off on moving forward on taking any actions on this grant until the transit study has been completed and recommendations have been reviewed.

Debbie explained that in order to meet capital needs for the bus system, all participants must start funding a replacement reserve on an annual basis beginning in FY2020. The bus replacement capital plan presented addresses replacing buses only and does not address any other capital needs. It is the intention of the City of Bangor to use the annual §5339a formula funds for ADA vehicles and miscellaneous capital costs. Debbie pointed out that the ADA paratransit van costs are included in the operating budget as those are leased vehicles. The lease is proving to be more advantageous for those types of vehicles than purchasing the vans, so it is likely that strategy will continue. As the BBOE does not have any federal funding and is funded entirely by the Town of Orono and the University of Maine, the buses for this route are detailed separately in the capital bus replacement plan. Belle and Tom asked that the BBOE bus replacement be a separate discussion. The City will work with Orono and University of Maine on replacing those vehicles. In 2017, a used bus was purchased for BBOE and is expected to have another four years of useful life left. Laurie will put options together and send them to the shuttle partners. This capital plan will be revisited each January at the Municipal Partners Transit Committee meeting prior to the municipal budget season start.

For those municipalities with existing capital reserve account balances, Debbie indicated that each municipality can decide how to shift the reserve balance to the capital savings plan in order to best meet the needs of local budgets. The entire amount can be shifted in the first year, or a portion of the reserve can be applied for a number of years, etc. As presented, the capital plan assumes a bus replacement cost of \$450,000 with no grant funding available for the replacement of buses after the FY2018 §5339b discretionary award. This plan also incorporates the cost for the local share of the FY2018. However, there may be additional opportunities for use of VW settlement funds as local match for this award. The City intends to apply for VW settlement funds as local match for the FY2018 award when the application process is reopened by MaineDOT.

FY2020 Budget Process/Timeframes: Debbie developed a three-year projected operating budget for the Community Connector, which was provided with the capital cost and bus replacement plan memo. These projections were developed based on trends going back six years. She doesn't see a significant increase in overall operating costs for those years. The assumptions used for the projection are based on worst-case scenario for the system. For fiscal year 2020 budgeting, Debbie told everyone they should

use the municipality's allocated percentage of local share of the net operating cost of the FY20 operating projection to determine the budget amount for transit cost. With the virtual turnover of the entire bus fleet, it is anticipated that by 2024 the maintenance cost should decrease by a couple hundred thousand dollars annually at that time. Karen Fussell requested that statements be sent to municipalities for fiscal year 2019 local share assessments for operating costs showing the current percentage allocation. Karen also expressed concern that the capital plan for bus replacement will be difficult for Brewer to accommodate in their budget.

Debbie told the group that the results of the transit study may influence this plan. One of the deliverables of the study is a fiscally sustainable five-year operating plan and another a ten-year capital plan. Laurie stated that right now they are maintaining a larger fleet of buses because of its age. There are 13 routes and 23 buses for the regular fixed route. Once the buses are replaced, the fleet size will be between 17-19 buses. Only front-line buses will be replaced. Linda Johns asked who will be making the decisions on recommendations in the study, how will changes be implemented, and what type of input will the municipal partners have. Rich assured the group that there will be a partnership with all the municipalities and any budgetary impact will be brought to the Committee for discussion. Deb assured the group that no drastic changes will be forced on anyone and will be worked out as a group. The transit study is due to be completed at the end of May. Rich stated the study results can be added to the agenda and be formally presented to the committee. Deb indicated that the company conducting the study, Stantec, will create a website for the project that will have information about the study, provide updates and solicit comments and feedback from the public. Once the project website is up, Rich will send out the information on how to access it. Rich also stated that the City of Bangor is having a Skype kick-off meeting with Stantec today (January 9) and they will be coming to the Bangor area in February. Rich will coordinate meetings between Stantec and municipalities when the schedule is finalized. If anyone has questions about the operating budget or the capital plan for bus replacements contact Debbie.

Interlocal Service Agreements: Laurie sent out a draft copy of the interlocal service agreements to the Committee members last night (January 8). She asked the members to look the agreement over and provide feedback. The BBOE shuttle agreement was not sent out with the municipal fixed-route service agreements. Laurie told the group that she knows it has been delayed, but would like to have the agreements signed within the month because she is responding to the FTA Triennial Review information request right now and it is an item that they are requesting. The group briefly discussed the term and whether or not the agreements would have any riders.

Connie told the group that an important thing to understand, and potentially be included in such an agreement, is that federal regulations require that before implementing a major reduction of service, that the public is notified and provided a comment period. If in mid-June, Town Council decides not to fund bus service in the next fiscal year that starts July 1, service will have to continue through the required public notice and public comment period according to the policy regardless of whether or not it extends beyond the fiscal year end. Jim Chandler asked if reference to those regulatory requirements and the public participation process could be included in the agreement.

Laurie pointed out that there may be HUD-funded projects that have a requirement that the

development must be on a transit route in order to qualify for the federal funding. The funding for these projects may be impacted if transit service is discontinued.

Because there was not enough time for members to review the document before the meeting, Karen suggested that committee members review the draft and discuss it with their municipal leadership and/or counsel and provide first round comments/questions/concerns to the group by replying to all on the e-mail Laurie sent within 30 days (Monday, February 11), with the intent of having the agreements finalized at the next meeting on March 6. Rich told the group that the draft agreement was reviewed by the City of Bangor's legal group.

ADA requires that bus shelters be cleaned out after storms. Most of the municipalities take care of their own through public works. Laurie will send out the ordinance adopted by Bangor.

FY2018 Performance Report: Total annual operating costs increased by 6.83% from FY2017 to FY2018. Total system cost per mile increased by 5.7%, cost per hour increased by 7.35% and cost per ride increased 11.7%. The total annual vehicle revenue miles (VRM) increased by 1.07%, vehicle revenue hours (VRH) decreased by .65%, and total rides decreased by 4.29%. The amount of 5307 formula funding appropriated for Community Connector in FY2018 increased by 2.48%. The amount of STIC funding awarded to Community Connector increased by 5.74% in FY2018. The amount of 5339a funding increased by 36.44%.

Based on ridership reports, cash fares collected on buses in FY2018 decreased by 3.5%, but ridership has decreased by 4.2%. Contract Fares increased by 4.45%.

Community Connector Projects/Initiatives Update: FTA Triennial Review: Laurie is working on compiling information requested for the FTA Triennial Review. The completed package is due to FTA by Tuesday, January 15. However, FTA is not currently accepting documents because they are one of the federal agencies that are shut down. If there is no delay, the on-site portion of the Review is expected to be at the Community Connector Office for three days sometime between May and July.

Transit Study: Rich told the Committee that a kick-off meeting with City of Bangor staff and Stantec is scheduled for today (January 9) at 1:00 p.m. via Skype. Stantec will be gathering data during the months of February and March. They will also create a public portal where they intend to solicit written comments and visual feedback on maps. Rich will send the RFP and Stantec's response to the Committee.

Pickering Square Construction: No responses were received to the RFP for reconstruction of the Pickering Square Garage. Rich is not sure when it will go out again. The plans are in place and the temporary bus hub and facilities can be moved into place. The Pickering Square TIF budget will be paying for all the required temporary displacement costs, but Community Connector will have to pay for something permanent at some point.

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service: The City of Bangor has been operating the ADA Complementary Paratransit Service since October 1. Sherri reported that for the quarter from October

1 to December 31, there were 2,188 reservations with 362 cancelations and 1,766 trips performed. The system averages 36 rides per day during the week and about 10 rides per day over the weekend. They are running three vans. A letter was sent to the Bangor Daily News praising the service. It has not been a completely smooth transition, but it is going well. Automatic calls go out to riders when the van is on its way. A call is sent out the night before as well. This has reduced the no shows. All this is done through the tablets. The first full quarter, it has cost just under \$100,000 to run the service. It costs more to provide the service than contracting out, but fare collection from passengers has been better because they are being strict with the rules.

Municipal Events/Projects/Developments Update: Linda Johns told the group that the Brewer Waterfront Trail is being worked on. A big launch event is being developed for spring. The City may want to use the trolley for the event. Rich said the trolley is in storage but can be taken out if given enough notice.

MaineDOT Update: Maine DOT is still working on the Locally Coordinated Transit Plan. There will be two versions published: a full version and an abbreviated version with just the highlights. Amy Rau will be attending the Drug and Alcohol National Conference. Mary Ann asked Amy to remind the group that the three-party agreement between the MPO, Transit Provider and MaineDOT will be drafted soon and Performance Measures will need to be included in the updated agreement.

Other Business: Karen Fussell asked to confirm the percentage for the local municipal cost share allocation is based on the percentage of hours for fiscal year 2019. The fiscal year 2019 local cost share is based on the percentage of fiscal year 2017 total vehicle revenue hours and fiscal year 2020 local share will be based on the percentage of fiscal year 2018 total vehicle revenue hours. Given the outlined capital needs presented to replace the bus fleet in the future, Karen reiterated her request to invite a speaker who is knowledgeable about developing Transit TIF Districts to a meeting in the near future. Belle offered to share the Town of Orono's Transit TIF District information. Since Evan Richert worked on developing and implementing Orono's Transit TIF District, Connie will reach out to him to see if he would be willing to meet with the group to share insight and answer questions.

Last month, Bangor Green Drinks granted Community Connector funds to purchase bike racks for two buses that will accommodate three bikes, instead of two. Community Connector needs nine more. Laurie suggested that other groups may want to do the same.

Darcy Cooke from Transportation for All asked how the Transit Study Working Group would be convened. Rich stated that Jack McKay is the contact for Transportation for All and will be forwarded all information when it becomes available. There will be a minimum of two public hearings and public outreach will be done regularly through the online portal.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 6.

Adjourn: Linda Johns made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 a.m.