

Minutes

Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority

Committee of the Whole

February 9, 2009

Place: Room 204, County Administration Building
Time: 5:30 p.m. – 6:41 p.m.
Others Present: Eric Cook-WMUK Public Radio, John Gissler-Former Taxpayers' Association, Dale Hein, Adam Knott-MI Citizen Action, Michele McGowen-FOT, Connie Micklin-FOT, Gabrielle Russon-Gazette, Claudette Reid-Millage Committee Co-Chair, Bill Schomisch-Metro Transit Director, Jon Start-KATS, Jack Urban-County Commissioner, Judy Whitehurst-Gryphon Place, and Lori Pyatt

Chairperson Teeter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Paul Ecklund, Diane Kempen, Terry Kuseske, Jack Mekemson, Greg Rosine Char Sumney, Linda Teeter, Jan VanStratt

Members Absent: None

2. REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes from the annual meeting on January 12, 2009 as presented was made, supported and approved.

3. REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF THE REVISED '09 BUDGET

A motion to approve the revised KCTA 2009 Budget was made by Mr. Kuseske and supported by Ms. Sumney.

Mr. Hein stated that the budget was for a full year starting October 1, 2008 and Ending September 30, 2009. This overlapped the City's Fiscal year, which had calendar year start and end dates.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Ayes: All Present Nays: None Absent: None

The motion carried.

4. FOT PRESENTATION

Ms. McGowen thanked the Board for inviting her. She explained that although FOT sounded like a campaign committee, was a citizen group made up of a coalition of organizations and individuals who knew that public transit was a critical part of the economic and social infrastructure of the community.

Ms. McGowen said FOT formed the Transit Community and Education and Mobilization Project (TCEMP), which was designed to inform the public and encourage their support. Ms. McGowen went over her handouts and summarized the 20-minute and 1-hour presentations FOT had been doing in the community. She explained the various responses that were normally given in the surveys. She said that they were holding "Train the Trainer" sessions, which teach people how

to talk about transit (the next session was Feb 19), and their goal was to 500 people face-to-face with the program.

Ms. McGowen gave a brief history of the FOT, and said the members included: ISAAC Churches, Kalamazoo County Advocates for Senior Issues, many non-profits (Senior Services, Area Agency on Aging, MRC Industries, Interact, many United Way agencies, etc.), some staffing agencies, and individuals.

Video “Bus Riding 101: Everyone’s a Beginner Sometime” was shown to the Board. She stated that it would be on YouTube soon, and that it was also on the KCTA website. She added that Jack Urban worked very hard on the video.

Mr. Schomisch asked if the groups that were presented to were aware of the urgent need for transit and what would happen if the next millages weren’t passed. She stated that it depended on who the groups were, and that a certain group wasn’t aware that a millage wasn’t in place. But groups like area service agencies and young parents were clearly aware of what would happen.

Mr. Hein stated that the surveys proved to lead to dialogue and also led to many people to volunteer.

Mr. Kuseske stated that, as the Chair of the Kalamazoo Planning Committee, they would be looking to do something similar to what DKI did with focus groups to find what types of transit needs existed in the community. He said that the Planning Committee was interested in making downtown Kalamazoo more green, and transit certainly fit into that.

Mr. Mekemson asked what FOT saw as its role as the KCTA moved forward. She said that FOT would exist after the millage request, and they didn’t want to duplicate what the campaign committee was doing.

Ms. VanStratt asked what information FOT had that was geared to outlying areas regarding C-A-V and other available services. Ms. McGowen said they helped to arm people with where to call and what to do on the first trip. Mr. Urban stated that he took the ridership numbers for all jurisdictions and placed them on a map, and added that the areas of highest per-capita ridership were Cooper Township, City of Kalamazoo, and Vicksburg. He stated that he would send Ms. VanStratt the information. Chairperson Teeter thanked Ms. McGowen and Friends of Transit for their presentation.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE CITY MANAGER/COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TRANSPORTATION PROPOSAL

Chairperson Teeter gave an overview of the Proposal. She stated that the lack of a local millage would reduce transit services, since the millage made up about 1/3 of the funds. She went over the “Recommended Plan of Action” on pages 5-8, and the floor was opened for discussion.

Mr. Schomisch referred to #2 (raising fares), stating that the time frame suggested would not allow enough lead time in order to reprint materials, etc., so the May 1st deadline would probably not be attainable.

Mr. Kuseske stated that the February 23 Board meeting would need ballot language approved, because it would need to be to the County Clerk on February 24.

Chairperson Teeter agreed and added that Mr. Hein had been working with attorney Ammon to prepare the necessary documents. She stated that, if passed, the millage could be collected on the summer '09 tax bills, but the ballot language would need to specify that.

Mr. Ecklund reminded the Board of a concern Claudette Reid had at the previous meeting regarding separating the line-haul and the ADA required Metro Van on two different millages. Mr. Rosine stated that the KCTA would go first in May, and if that didn't pass then there would be no C-A-V services. Then Metro Transit and the TAB would have to see what millage rate they would need in order to support Metro Van and the apportionment of benefits was addressed; City residents would be paying the .4 mills and would receive Metro Van services for that millage.

Then millage length was brought up. Mr. Schomisch stated that the three year recommendation was probably driven by the numbers: the .4 mills over three years combined with using existing funds would drive the Fund Balance down to acceptable levels by the end of three years. Discussion ensued on the length of the millage, including the cost of having a special election, and keeping the focus on local issues, instead of state or national issues.

Ms. Kempen asked if there was a "Plan C" in order to keep C-A-V up and running for the most vulnerable citizens of the County. Ms. Teeter stated that without a local share the funds would indeed run out. Then the TAB would need to determine its next steps for Metro Van. Mr. Rosine stated that the potential that C-A-V would shut down was why the millage was so critical, and that no one else would step in and fund C-A-V.

The ongoing public awareness effort was then discussed (including where the dollars went, who it served, the degree to which it served them. The importance of sustaining the public awareness effort was also addressed).

Discussion then turned to the benefit of having citizens who were interested in local issues.

Ms. Teeter explained that she had asked Mr. Hein to research to get bids for local firms to help with public awareness. She hoped that a proposal would be at the next meeting to help shape that plan.

Discussion then turned to the importance of clear language on the ballot.

Mr. Schomisch stated that the City and the TAB wanted the KCTA to have as much input as possible. He added that a special meeting of the TAB would be held on February 18, at 8:15 am, in order to go over the proposed plan.

Ms. Teeter asked the members if they felt comfortable bringing back ballot language to the next meeting. She stated that a couple of scenarios could be brought regarding the length of the millage. They agreed.

6. CITIZENS' TIME

Ms. McGowen recognized Connie Micklin for her hard work with FOT.

Mr. Urban clarified that the countywide millage would cover C-A-V, all of Metro Van and line haul routes outside the City; the City's millage would cover line haul routes in the city. Mr. Schomisch added that City residents would be paying for their portion of Metro Van in the City via the countywide millage. That way the city residents would receive Metro Van AND C-A-V for the .4 mills they would pay.

Mr. John Gissler said he whole-heartedly endorsed going 2- or 4-years in order to keep local issues local. He added that the KCTA would benefit from Jack Urban's filmmaking interests, and it should show real people using the different services. He stated that his organization, Kalamazoo Citizen's for Responsible Government, had a membership of 51 people who were interested in local issues. (One of their first campaigns would be to ask government for total financial transparency). He felt that the proposal made sense, and if someone had told him that \$50 a year would help someone in his neighborhood have transportation, he would gladly pay it.

Ms. Claudette Reid thanked the KCTA for adding items to their website as mentioned in previous meetings, and said she appreciated the KCTA's efforts to remain transparent. She also liked the idea of keeping the millage renewal tied to local elections, and suggested making the current millage length 2.5 years or 4.5 years so that the renewal would happen on the less expensive November ballot.

7. MEMBERS' TIME

-Ms. Kempen commented that she had taken the FOT Commitment Letter to different area businesses and citizens and encouraged the Board Members to do the same.

-Mr. Mekemson thanked Ms. Teeter for coming to the Chamber of Commerce Transportation meeting the previous week, and added that the three Councils of the Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce present at the meeting (Public Policy Council, the Taxation Council, and the Transportation Council) supported the proposal. Next week, the Governing Council will establish the Chamber's position.

-Mr. Ecklund said it was nice to see that transit had such friends out in the community and the initiative that FOT was taking.

-Ms. Sumney said that it was time to put the plan into action.

-Mr. Kuseske stated that continued countywide intergovernmental cooperation was vital, and that the public education effort needed to continue and not just happen right before an election.

-Mr. Rosine said he would like to see the numbers under the different time lengths.

-Mr. Schomisch asked for the Board's concurrence on the idea of him speaking at a State legislative session and to local legislators regarding amending Act 196. (The Board Chair concurred.)

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41p.m.