

SKAGIT TRANSIT
Public Meeting Minutes
Proposed Fare Increase
August 14, 2008
Sedro Woolley Senior Center

SKAGIT TRANSIT

Dale O'Brien, Executive Director
Dennis Digges, Operations Manager
Marylynn Fiscus, Planner

PUBLIC

John Doyle
Mike Heator

Dale O'Brien, Executive Director, opened the meeting at 6:30 pm with introductions of the Skagit Transit staff.

- I. Dale O'Brien presented power point slides to give an overview of Skagit County's public transportation servicing urban and rural areas. He explained there is a strong population growth projection in Skagit County by 2020 that will need a stronger base of local funding to assure positive impact to support the growth. Skagit Transit began serving Skagit County in 1993 with an emphasis on Fixed Route. Dial-A-Ride was originally funded by grant before it was brought in house in 1995. In 1999, I-695 was passed and reduced Skagit Transit operation funds by almost 50%. In 2001 a 0.50 cent fare was implemented. A ballot proposal to increase sales tax failed in 2001. As a result, severe cut backs were necessary in November 2002. Efficiency became the priority as Skagit Transit focused on the transit dependant Dial-A-Ride passengers. The majority of increases in service have been funded by state and federal grants. Dale showed a pie chart of the expense budget for 2007 and 2008. He explained that three of the five current operating grants will expire in June 2009. Dale also explained current capital grant projects that include Chuckanut P & R, the purchase of one Dial-A-Ride vehicle, one Fixed Route bus and MDT/AVL's, which is a computer system used to locate minute by minute bus location to increase efficiency for Dial-A-Ride. Dale continued to explain the major accomplishments since 2002 that include the operations of 38 vanpool vehicles, fixed route growth, DAR success, Skagit Station as a transportation hub, new fare system, County Connector and the Everett Express. Our vanpool program has been very popular and currently we have 22 groups waiting to join the program. Dale completed his presentation by welcoming comments, e-mails and letters mailed to him and the Board of Directors.

- II. Dennis Digges, Operations Manager, informed the public of additional service which could be added with the approval of Proposition 1, a sales tax increase of .02 of 1%. This would allow service increases in three phases. Phase one: Fixed Route operating hours would be expanded, Dial-A-Ride service will expand to complement Fixed route service with no additional bus requirements. Phase two would add additional service areas which could begin as soon as additional buses were available. Phase three: includes increased frequency in peak hours in the morning and evening focusing on work commuters. If Proposition #1 is approved Skagit Transit could start collecting the additional sales tax in January 2009, but wouldn't start receiving this revenue until March 2009.

Questions and Comments from audience

1. If the grant was awarded to the tribe how would the route work? ***The route would run about once an hour servicing LaConner, the reservation and the casino/Anacortes.***
2. Could the new 615 Route travel on Snee-oosh Rd instead of Reservation since it has more residential? ***That is something we can check into***
3. If the grant doesn't come through how and when will increased service happen for this area? ***It couldn't happen until phase #3 which would happen in 2010, since it would require an extra bus and driver, but we might be able to add Saturday service in phase #2 since it doesn't require an additional bus which would be around June 09.***
4. Will the 90X fare go up? ***No it is going to stay the same, but the 80X will go up to \$2.00, so that way both commuter routes are at the same price going the same distance.***
5. Can communications between driver be improved so I don't miss the mid route transfers in Mount Vernon? ***Currently we are struggling with this since the new wireless law went in effect in July, which affects the driver's ability to use their radios when driving. We will try our best to work on this situation.***
6. Don't the buses have AVL's, so you don't have to use the radios? ***No, we are currently working on having AVL's installed in the Dial-A-Ride vans, and maybe in the future we could have them installed for the fixed route buses.***
7. What will happen if Proposition #1 doesn't pass? ***The grant funded routes including: Saturday Service, Pocket service and the County Connector will go away.***
8. Why is Skagit Transit asking for a fare increase in October? ***The fare increase is necessary due to the rapid increase in the price of fuel.***
9. How long is the comment period? ***The comment period for service changes will remain open until November, but the fare increase will only be open until the board meeting on Wednesday August 20.***
10. Can the bus stops list only the times which the bus will arrive at the stop, instead of listing the times for the whole route? ***That is something we can look at when we install the new bus stop poles and signs***
11. Riding the bus from LaConner is a great idea, since it takes the same time to drive, just need more people taking advantage of the service!

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

The attending public proceeded to look at the proposed schedule and signed up for increased commuter service, Sunday service, earlier morning and later evening services. Comments and concerns were discussed with Skagit Transit staff.

Prepared by:

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