

Skagit Transit Community Advisory Committee
August 10, 2021 **DRAFT V1** Minutes

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Members in Attendance

Vice Chair Chris Jones
Special Projects Assistant Joe A. Kunzler

Louise Edens
Dick Phillips
Doris Brevoort
Robyn Gosney

Staff

Planning and Outreach Supervisor Brad Windler
Marketing & Public Affairs Specialist Cheryl Willis

Guests

None

The meeting began at 4:35 PM with a quorum. Joe A. Kunzler was the senior officer and therefore Emergency Chair. Chris Jones arrived during role call and was asked to take over as Chair at 5:05 PM as the Emergency Chair had a schedule conflict due to a fellow transit advocate in *the* Lindsey Boylan needing his help.

Public comment was sought and no one offered public comment. Emergency Chair Joe then closed public comment.

Minutes for July were delayed due to schedule conflicts, and the approval of the minutes postponed.

At 4:38 PM, on time, the Transit Development Plan (TDP) discussion began. Brad explained that the TDP is a review of the previous year in transit and a preview of the next six years with the first year fiscally constrained as is required by state law. Fiscally constrained meaning financially realistic within an expected budget. The TDP also lays out the state of the transit discussing organization and funding, ridership and service connections. Also discussed are planned activities for the transit, where the managers of Skagit Transit add their plans to the document. The intent is so the TDP serves as the basis of winning grant assistance from the state government and federal government.

Brad explained how the TDP covered how Skagit Transit responded so far to the Covid19 pandemic. Service reductions at first, and then restorations plus additional service like helping food banks. Also electronic fare payment was implemented.

The TDP also addresses potential purchases of buses, bus shelters and other equipment by Skagit Transit. The TDP also addresses Skagit Transit's financial and growth projections for five years such as Skagit Transit growing 12,000 service hours in 2021 & 2022. Skagit Transit also projects to add two buses.

After asking colleagues if they had questions, Emergency Chair Kunzler asked Brad Windler about the four NABI buses planned for retirement. Brad said the buses would not be replaced next year due to having too many spare buses, and consolidation of the Skagit Transit fleet into different lengths of Gillig buses. Joe then asked about the possibility of an electric Gillig and Brad explained that as special charging infrastructure would be required there is the risk of it being left behind as Skagit Transit moves to a better MOA campus.

Joe then changed subjects to the 48.8% drop in ADA/paratransit service in 2020 asking how much due to Covid19 and how much due to a new fare requirement imposed by a Board vote in August 2019? Brad felt it was too early to answer that question with a 60 to 70% drop in fixed route.

Joe then asked about the pilot project of a summer ferry connector of an express ferry connector from Anacortes to Burlington & Mt. Vernon. A route to see for the peak San Juan ferries runs to get drivers can be recruited to become walk-on WSF passengers and land-based transit riders. Joe and Doris Brevoort were very excitedly supportive. For Doris, this would give her the option to not fight to get her car on the ferry and make the ferries more accessible to Skagitonians. Brad then explained Skagit Transit wanted to do a pilot before committing to year-round service due to the financial commitment. Doris wanted a poll done to see who was riding the service during the pilot.

Vice Chair Jones asked when the service was expected? Brad said next summer between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Joe then asked about what days of the week would the service run. Brad said the amount of sales tax revenue plus having sufficient drivers. Some service changes intended for September already were

pushed back to January 2022 with doubt there would be sufficient drivers for the new routes. Normally Skagit Transit has 17 backup drivers but now has 6. Also there is a training class concluding with 3 new drivers. 12 people applied to that class, 11 people video tested, eight who passed interviewed and job offers made to 6. The process takes two to two and a half months.

At 4:59 the Emergency Chair Joe Kunzler wanted to hand over the gavel to Vice Chair Chris Jones because the sound was cutting out and he had an aforementioned commitment elsewhere. Joe asked that the Community Service Award be discussed.

Cheryl Willis explained that Skagit Transit got a Community Service Award. Brad Windler added it was from the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce for helping in the food drives for pets and delivering food to the housebound.

Brad then discussed the upcoming service changes. For instance, Skagit Transit would have the Route 207 having 30 minute frequency for most of the day. The Route 717 would become a deviated fixed route service while a new express route in the 70X would operate six days a week connecting Concrete & Sedro-Woolley directly with Skagit Station, the Mount Vernon transit hub. There is also underway efforts to build a new pullout for the Helping Hands Food Bank and a new restroom for drivers/operators at Sedro-Woolley Park & Ride.

Vice Chair Chris Jones then asked Brad about the frequency changes on Route 207. Brad explained the driver shortage was a factor in why 30 minutes frequency was only for part of the span of service of Route 207 from only 9 AM until 6 PM.

Vice Chair Jones then changed to the next subject of January service changes sliding into May due to lack of available drivers. With the amount of potential drivers getting thru the training less and less even with a starting wage of \$20/hr for paid training with benefits, there is some management anxiety about being able to have enough drivers for the new routes.

Joe Kunzler then came back to the Zoom call in time to give the regional subcommittee update. Joe mentioned the ST3 realignment bringing light rail to South Everett by 2036 and Everett Station by 2041. Joe then made some suggestions on service change timing.

Vice Chair Jones then took the CAC meeting to roundtable. Doris Breevort brought up The Seattle Times coverage of the cost of light rail.

Chris Jones then brought up the idea of Skagit Transit doing Disability Awareness Month in October. Brad indicated that Skagit Transit would be receptive to having electeds and staff do a disability simulation. Chris also brought up recruiting disability organizations to help.

Joe then chimed in for roundtable. First thanked for the group for letting him be emergency chair. Then Joe reiterated his desire to stay on the CAC until at least January 2021 and that the Special Projects Assistant be used as an incentive to recruit younger members.

Joe then pivoted to discussing the Community Transit Long Range Plan. Making sure that Skagit Transit 90X integrated with Community Transit's plans to connect to Lynnwood Link in 2024 in a way 90X riders can support.

Joe concluded with his worries about Covid19-Delta. Joe supposed the mask mandate only to prevent another shutdown plus loss of transit ridership, Cheryl let the CAC know that masks were required anywhere on Skagit Transit property. Joe said he supported it but felt the masks were a reminder of how those who choose to not vaccinate lack compassion for their country and disabled citizens.

Chris Jones then checked to see if any further discussion.

Joe reluctantly made a motion to adjourn, noting he could go on for another 15 or 20 minutes. Doris seconded, the CAC voted to adjourn at 5:36 PM.

Respectfully Submitted and Approved on ___ October 2021,

Joe A. Kunzler
Special Projects Assistant