

Skagit Transit Community Advisory Committee
October 12, 2021 Minutes

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Members in Attendance

Staff

Chair Judy Jones

Planning and Outreach Supervisor Brad Windler

Vice Chair Chris Jones

Marketing & Public Affairs Specialist Cheryl Willis

Special Projects Assistant Joe A. Kunzler

Valerie Rose

Guests

Dick Phillips

None

Doris Brevoort

Robyn Gosney

The meeting began at 4:37 PM with a quorum, called to order by Chair Judy Jones. Roll was taken. There were no public comments.

Minutes for August and notes for September were moved for approval by Chris Jones, seconded by Valerie Rose. Motion approved unanimously.

Special Projects Assistant Joe A. Kunzler then began his presentation on the potential future of Skagit Transit 90X. Kunzler then explained that when the CAC wants to make requests of Skagit Transit time thru the CAC as a body to take to the Executive Director.

Joe then went on to explain that Community Transit – Snohomish County’s primary transit agency – was having a 2022 restructure. Furthermore, that the 90X connects Skagit with Everett and there needs to be resources plus time to ensure the best connection with Lynnwood Link light rail to Everett’s south in Snohomish County was made in 2024. Joe then explained current connection options from Everett to Lynnwood Link’s terminus at Lynnwood Transit Center.

Joe’s proposal was to ask potential riders of their preferences in regard to 90X’s future. One option would be to have some 90X alternate between speeding

to/from Lynnwood and some 90X go to/from Everett Station. Another option would be to ask for an express route from Community Transit to Everett Station.

The suggested means for rider outreach was to have postcards on the 90X and an online survey to ask riders what option would increase ridership, what ultimate destination riders take the 90X to and how did riders connect to the 90X.

Valerie thanked Joe Kunzler as did Chair Judy. Chair Judy also said she liked the final ask of an express route.

Brad Windler then explained that staff did put in an outreach request for more surveys and outreach. Brad said he considered 2022 as potentially 'get to know our riders year'. Skagit Transit will also have Umo electronic fare data plus new automated passenger counters and a few other efforts to figure out where people board and when, what time of day, and when plus where do riders disembark. Considers Joe's presentation timely.

Joe did say he was grateful but wanted to make sure that Community Transit time benchmarks were hit so Skagit Transit 90X riders were left behind.

Doris Brevoort then noted how the 10 minutes here, 10 minutes there on making connections with low frequency deter folks from taking transit. Recognized that Joe was looking for a faster and more doable commute.

Joe then affirmed this was a concern. Also a concern was the lack of good connectivity with the 70X.

Joe then asked for a motion to memorialize the discussion. Joe's suggested motion with the help of Chair Judy was to ask staff to make and continue outreach to Community Transit and conduct a survey by early summer of 90X riders' desires about the future of 90X. Robyn Gosney seconded. Joe was still concerned about making effective outreach to Community Transit and that 'We're plugged into the right cord and the right cord to connect our hardware to Community Transit'. Joe then said the motion summarizes what Brad told us and keeps the ball moving. Unanimous support.

Doris Brevoort then suggested vanpools from Mount Vernon to Lynnwood Link. Joe then said this was about fixed route but also see where the data leads on Doris'

suggestion to have some of the 90X stay on its current route and some 90X routes speed past Everett.

Brad then brought up the need for CAC route prioritization. Especially with operator shortages throughout Puget Sound public transit. First, splitting up the Route 300 – one bus as a in-Sedro circulator, the other to connect Sedro-Woolley Park & Ride with Chuckanut Park & Ride. Second would be giving Burlington its own circulator route – Route 101- to bring Skagit Transit to more Burlington destinations. 101 will also cover some of what the split Route 300 will drop. Third is having the Routes 513 and 615 to add more frequency. The Routes will connect to an Amazon facility, a new Skagit Transit headquarters, and a drug rehabilitation clinic. The 615 having more frequency will honor the Swinomish Tribe's request for more service.

Brad explained very clearly that Skagit Transit wants to add at least 15% more service and 23 new buses. The problem is adding more operators. CAC members discussed the situation regionally, and commended Skagit Transit for making all paratransit rides + an over 90% vaccination rate.

Vice Chair Chris Jones suggested that Skagit Transit reach out to Skagit Valley College to recruit students to work for Skagit Transit. Doris brought up the lack of truck drivers.

Brad promised to send out a list for voting next month to conclude the discussion. Chair Judy was supportive of this.

Brad then gave the staff report. The first item is that Skagit Transit and Whatcom Transit Authority's (WTA's) UMO systems are now synchronized so you can use a Skagit Transit fare card on WTA's buses and WTA fare cards on Skagit Transit buses. Western Washington University was helping the cost with a \$5,000 contribution for a 2-year period.

Skagit Transit staff also marketed services in the community. Staff also participated in the Skagit Valley College job fair.

Brad also brought up that pre-Covid19 pandemic Skagit Valley College students were 8-10% of monthly ridership. Skagit Valley College is now using the Umo bus system and having students trickle back into Skagit Transit ridership.

Also the Sedro-Woolley Food Bank pullout is almost complete but needed a bus shelter on the way. The Sedro-Woolley Park and Ride Driver Comfort Station construction was also still underway, despite supply chain problems.

Chair Judy then brought up the idea of reaching out to Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning integrating the alternative Burlington school and Skagit Valley College into Skagit Transit either as CAC members or more. Brad said that yes, Skagit Transit is looking for a bus stop at the high school. Especially as Burlington School District has been buying Umo passes for students to alleviate their operator shortage and help students get home from after-school activities.

Cheryl also said there is planning for a disability awareness event next year. Chair Judy was pleased.

Joe asked that Skagit Valley College students were made aware of the fact that the Special Project Assistant position will be vacant in January. Hoping for a new member from there who would nominate themselves.

Doris then asked about the 70X routing. Brad explained the 70X has a new route that goes out on Minkler Road, no longer travels on Lyman-Hamilton Road, and connects to the food bank but not some unused stops between Sedro-Woolley and Concrete. Only westbound does the 70X go through downtown Sedro-Woolley.

Valerie spoke positively of her ride on the 70X the past week. Valerie passed on the news that the 70X is a good commuter connector, but otherwise ridership is still building up. Brad explained that Skagit Transit has two modes of fixed route – local and commuters. Complete with different fleets for feeding both of them due to the need to comply with federal grants which fund purchasing those fleets.

Robyn then asked about the proposed 101 meeting up with the routes 208 and 300. Brad confirmed that was going to happen.

Cheryl then brought up attending the Concrete festival to advertise the express route. In return, Skagit Transit won the award for the best music in the parade. CAC members were overjoyed.

For Roundtable, Special Project Assistant Joe A. Kunzler mentioned after four years of his sincere intention to step down from that position. Joe then

mentioned that he was interested in serving as Chair since the CAC traditionally has chairs serve only one year and the aforementioned 90X + system expansion work. Joe then moved on to thanking staff for how they're handling things after the Covid19. Joe finally brought how he was able to put his bicycle on a bus and wanted to see cycling promoted next year.

Nobody had anything more for Roundtable so Doris moved to adjourned, Chris seconded. Meeting adjourned unanimously at 5:38 PM.

Respectfully Submitted and Approved on ___ November 2021,

Joe A. Kunzler
Special Projects Assistant