

Minutes
INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Regular Meeting
September 4, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gilman called the September 4, 2024, meeting of the Intercity Transit Authority to order at 5:30 p.m. This was a hybrid meeting held at the Pattison Street facility.

Members Present: Chair and City of Olympia Councilmember Clark Gilman; Vice Chair and Thurston County Commissioner Carolina Mejia; City of Lacey Councilmember Carolyn Cox; City of Tumwater Councilmember Kelly Von Holtz; Community Representative Sue Pierce; Community Representative Justin Belk; Community Representative Don Melnick; Mark Neuville, Labor Representative.

Members Excused: City of Tumwater Mayor Debbie Sullivan; City of Yelm Councilmember Brian Hess.

Staff Present: Emily Bergkamp; Daniel Van Horn; Jana Brown; Jessica Gould; Jonathon Yee; Katie Cunningham; Michael Maverick; Nicky Upson; Pat Messmer; Peter Stackpole; Matt Kenney; Thera Black; Tammy Ferris; Brenden Houx; Jonathan Martin; Julie DeRuwe.

Others Present: Jeff Myers, Legal Counsel; Rachel Wilson, Community Advisory Committee; Jakub Kocztorz, Law, Lyman, Daniel, Kamerrer & Bogdanovich.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was M/S/A by Melnick and Cox to approve the agenda as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Valerie Lange provided comment asking the Authority to consider providing direct transit service to SeaTac. Perhaps begin as a pilot program. Gilman asked the General Manager to explain what service IT has available that may fill this need. Bergkamp said IT's Express service travels between Olympia and the Lakewood station as the northern most point we go, connecting with Sound Transit. Bergkamp will share the comment with the Planning staff, and they can respond accordingly as they have conducted research on the ability to provide service directly to SeaTac.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Accessible Wayfinding Pilot Project. Sr. Marketing & Communications Coordinator, Nicky Upson, provided an overview of the upcoming accessible wayfinding pilot project. Visually impaired individuals rely heavily on auditory and tactile cues to navigate their surroundings. Visual signage alone may not be accessible to them, making it challenging for them to locate bus stops, platforms, entrances, and other facilities within our transit system.

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Without adequate guidance, visually impaired individuals may struggle to navigate our transit centers efficiently and independently. Safety concerns such as navigating around moving vehicles or boarding the wrong bus are additional challenges these individuals may face while using our system.

This project will implement an accessible wayfinding tool designed to support our visually impaired passengers. By utilizing accessible QR codes, we will provide both wayfinding assistance and route information, addressing some of the challenges they encounter while navigating our transit centers.

Funds for this project are available in the 2024 budget. The project cost of \$8,700 will cover the costs of the codes and their use for 6 months. Our pilot can be extended for an additional 6-month period for \$299. This does not include the cost to produce and mount signs.

Upson shared the benefits and features of the NaviLens system:

- Provides real time bus information or any other information stored in code.
- Provides orientation (distance and direction) to the code.
- Provides audio in 34 different languages in the user's phone language.
- Code can be detected from up to 40 ft. away.
- Code is read and detected within a second.
- Can be read unfocused even when user is unaware a code is within range.
- Can be read from an angle of 160 degrees.
- Can be read in all light conditions.

Upson shared a demo of the NaviLens system currently in use in New York and then she provided next steps:

- Form a cross-functional team to work on NaviLens implementation.
- Develop, print codes and associated content.
- Recruit volunteers to test product prior to launch.
- Install at OTC and LTC.
- Pilot 6 months.
- Evaluate project.
- Could be expanded to include bus stops.

Discussion ensued among the Board members with several questions.

Can the audio playback speed on the NaviLens app be adjusted?

Yes, this is an easy adjustment in the settings of the app.

Are there any exclusive clauses in the contract?

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There are no exclusive clauses other than that the codes are to be used only for the scope of the project. There is nothing that would prevent us from trying multiple solutions at one time.

What are the costs after the pilot period?

During the pilot, there is a \$299 fee for activation cost covering up to 36 codes for 6 months. We can extend for another 6 months for an additional \$299. After that, they quoted \$4.99 per month per code; the price decreases with higher volume, though they did not provide a scale with different costs.

How will volunteers be recruited to test the system?

There are individuals who ride our system that we can connect with, and Upson will work with the Capital City Council for the Blind, and there may be situations to reach out to non-riders, and work with Senior Services for South Sound to recruit low vision and sighted seniors to test the products.

Perhaps utilize the Bus Buddy program to reach more riders? Upson said training materials will be developed to roll out to the Travel Trainers and Customer Service so they can share how to use this technology.

B. Lacey Transit Center - Amtrak Drainage and Pavement Repairs. Tammy Ferris, Construction Projects Coordinator, presented a contract with Northwest Cascade, Inc. for drainage and pavement repairs at the Lacey Transit Center and Amtrak Station.

Intercity Transit is responsible for the maintenance and operation of the Lacey Transit Center and Amtrak Station. Since their construction, the drainage systems at these sites have not undergone any major upgrades or improvements. Currently, the existing trench drain system at the Lacey Transit Center is not functioning properly, leading to areas of pavement failure. Additionally, the biofiltration swale in the northern parking lot of Amtrak Station is not functioning correctly and needs to be repaired.

In early 2024, Intercity Transit issued a Task Order with KPFF under the On-Call Engineering Services Master Contract to conduct the initial site assessment and engineering design for the necessary repairs at both sites. KPFF finalized the design and construction documents in late July.

Procurement then advertised a Request for Bids on August 7, 2024, for the drainage and pavement repairs at the Lacey Transit Center and Amtrak Station. By the submission deadline of August 22, 2024, we received two (2) bids. The bid submitted by Northwest Cascade, Inc. in the amount of \$178,413 was determined to be both responsive and responsible. Bids range from a high of \$205,500 to a low of \$178,413. The low bid submitted by Northwest Cascade, Inc. is \$14,177 or 8.63% above the Engineer's estimate. Our analysis indicates that Northwest Cascade, Inc. is a

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reputable and competent contractor. Northwest Cascade, Inc. has completed similar projects and staff is confident in their ability to complete this project.

Therefore, staff recommends the Authority authorize the General Manager to enter into a contract with Northwest Cascade, Inc. for drainage and pavement repairs at the Lacey Transit Center and Amtrak Station in the amount of \$178,413.

The completed project will improve the drainage and pavement features at both the Lacey Transit Center and Amtrak Station. In the southeast quadrant of the Lacey Transit Center, final improvements will include the replacement of the trench drain system, storm pipe, and cement concrete sidewalk and curb. In the northern parking lot of the Amtrak Station, improvements will consist of restoring the existing biofiltration swale, replacing storm drain culverts, and installing cement concrete sidewalks and quarry spalls.

It was M/S/A by Melnick and Cox to authorize the General Manager to enter into a contract with Northwest Cascade, Inc. for drainage and pavement repairs at the Lacey Transit Center and Amtrak Station in the amount of \$178,413.

COMMITTEE REPORTS - None.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The fifth Operator class of the year starts Monday, September 9 and it will be one of the largest classes to date, with a possible 31 drivers. We look forward to this group starting their careers with us.

The service change taking place Sunday, September 8, 2024, marks the final step in a series of 17 incremental adjustments that began in June 2020, aimed at restoring service levels to those before the COVID-19 pandemic. With this latest change, we will exceed pre-pandemic service levels, reaching 102% of the service we provided prior to the pandemic. Routes 12, 13, 41, 62A, 62B, 65, and 66 will have late night service restored on weekdays and weekends. Route 41 will have extended late-night service on Friday and Saturday nights when The Evergreen State College is in session.

The exit conference for the annual state audit is scheduled for September 5, 2024, and was coordinated with the State Auditor's Office by Finance Manager Jen Amendala and CFO Jana Brown.

Bergkamp shared she was interviewed by Transportation Choices Coalition Executive Director Kirk Hovenkotter & Policy Analyst, Nivya Murthi for a future blog about topics of Transit Safety and Workforce shortage. Bergkamp shared key points about Intercity Transit's motto of "Safety, Service, Schedule." This is a training tool for all bus drivers that emphasizes Safety first, followed by Service to our customers, placing the pressure they sometimes feel to keep to the timeliness of their Schedule as last. The safety of and

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service to our customers is paramount. This includes safety on the road and taking the time to answer questions about our service.

Bergkamp shared Intercity Transit has comprehensive “Rules of Conduct” for our riders that we carefully uphold. Bus drivers inform passengers of the rules of the ride if they encounter passengers not following them, and always have the option to refer the enforcements of these rules to our Road Supervisors if they encounter a chronic issue.

Bergkamp said another big cornerstone of the safety of our service is that Intercity Transit has cameras on all revenue vehicles, as well as being a Zero-Fare system. Nationwide, the number one cause of assaults on bus drivers is disputes over fares, and we simply don’t have that.

Another point Bergkamp included during her interview with TCC is the difference between feeling unsafe versus feeling uneasy. Transit serves a diverse group of people from all walks of life, backgrounds, and lived experiences. Riding public transit offers the unique opportunity to ride with the general public and that means encountering others who don’t look like or behave like us, or speak the same language and there can be a discomfort from being around others different from ourselves, but that doesn’t constitute unsafe conditions.

Bergkamp was happy to report during the interview that Intercity Transit is no longer experiencing the workforce shortage challenges COVID brought to the industry. She said we integrate transit hiring practices with workforce development programs in Washington state. IT began to gain traction when HR partnered with WorkSource. WorkSource streamlined the application process providing access to folks who are actively seeking work. IT worked hard to shorten the timeline from when people apply to when they are offered a position. IT used to have applicants apply, then attend a separate customer service test session, then bring them in for an interview, and sometimes have them come in separately for a practical fit test. Using this new model, candidates are brought in for a day-long hiring event to get all of these parts of the recruitment process done on one day.

The Zero-Fare survey is wrapping up on September 5. Intercity Transit's bus and Dial-A-Lift services have been zero-fare (fare free) for a few years, and our goal is to continue to share and promote the ease, convenience and equity this service provides. Over the last few years, IT staff attended local events and talked with many members of the community, and we've seen that many still don’t know that riding all Intercity Transit bus routes is free, and we want to change that. The link to the survey can be found on the website: <https://www.intercitytransit.com/news/rider-survey-zero-fare-demonstration-project>

Stately Speakers Toastmasters (in partnership with Board member Carolyn Cox) is hosting an Open House at Intercity Transit Thursday, September 12 during the noon hour so employees and anyone from the community can learn the many benefits of

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Toastmasters. The club will hold a hybrid meeting weekly at Intercity Transit every Thursday from 12:05 p.m. to 12:55 p.m. Toastmasters is a learn-by-doing workshop where participants hone their speaking and leadership skills in a no-pressure atmosphere. There is no instructor in a Toastmasters meeting. Instead, members evaluate one another's presentations. This feedback process is a key part of the program's success. Meeting participants also give impromptu talks on assigned topics, conduct meetings and develop leadership.

Those interested should plan to arrive at 11:45 a.m. to learn about the club and how to join, ask questions, plus have the opportunity to socialize and enjoy some light refreshments. Intercity Transit will cover the cost of employees' membership if they choose to join. Professional development is priceless, and joining Toastmasters is one of the best investments you can make no matter what your career aspirations.

AUTHORITY ISSUES - None.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Authority, Chair Gilman adjourned the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Clark Gilman

Clark Gilman, Chair

ATTEST

Patricia Messmer

Pat Messmer
Clerk to the Authority

Date Approved: October 16, 2024

Prepared by Pat Messmer, Clerk of the Board/Executive Assistant, Intercity Transit.