

**Minutes
INTERCITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Regular Meeting
September 3, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Cox called the meeting of the Intercity Transit Authority to order on September 3, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. This was a hybrid meeting held at the Pattison Street facility.

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

Members Excused: City of Yelm Councilmember Brian Hess.

Staff Present: Emily Bergkamp; Pat Messmer; Dena Withrow; Katie Cunningham; Noelle Gordon; Nicole Jones; Jane Denicola; Daniel Van Horn; Michael Maverick; Rob LaFontaine; Jessica Gould; Peter Stackpole; Brenden Houx; Nick Demerice; Heather Dyson; Jesse Eckstrom.

Others Present: Jakub Kocztorz, Legal Counsel; Clair Bourgeois, Community Advisory Committee.

STAFF INTRODUCTION

A. Nick Demerice introduced Heather Dyson, Marketing & Communications Representative.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was M/S/A by Von Holtz and Goodwin to approve the agenda as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Larry Taylor of Olympia – Mr. Taylor represents several homeowners associations including Ridgeview 1-2, Nisqually Bluff, and Steilacoom Ridge. He spoke about the proposed roundabout near these communities. Taylor asserts the current intersection is safe as is. He contrasts this with data he's gathered about roundabouts, which he claims are not always safer. Taylor referenced a list of the 30 worst intersections in Washington state, claiming that four of the top six are roundabouts. He specifically highlighted the Marvin Road, Willamette Drive, and Britton Parkway intersection in Lacey, which became a roundabout in 2001. He said before 2001 there were only five accidents over a six-year period. After 2001 accidents increased dramatically, reaching a high of 55 in one year, which is an increase from less than one per year to nearly six per month. Taylor suggests that a recent decrease in reported accidents at this location is

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misleading. He attributes the decrease to the addition of a new lane and a police shortage, which means fewer accidents are officially reported. Taylor mentioned he will send an email with links to studies and reports, including the full 12-page report on the worst intersections in Washington, for the Board members to review. He has also provided physical copies of a letter and other documents for the Board.

APPROVAL CONSENT AGENDA

It was M/S/A by Goodwin and Von Holtz to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- A. **Minutes** – July 2, 2025, and July 16, 2025, ITA Meetings.
- B. **Payroll July: \$4,283,229.34**
 - 1. Warrant Numbers: 43070-43073 & 43184-43204 in the amount of **\$26,869.35**
 - 2. ACH Payment Amount: **\$4,256,359**
- C. **Accounts Payable July: \$5,288,563.61**
 - 1. Disbursed Warrants numbers 43074-43183 & 43205-43301 and voided warrant numbers 42839, 43032, & 43139 in the amount of **\$5,268,415.67**.
 - 2. ACH Payments: **\$20,147.94**
- D. **State Advocacy Contract (Noelle Gordon):** Authorized the General Manager to execute a one-year contract extension with Foster Government Relations to provide State Legislative Advocacy Services in the amount of
- E. .
- F. **Federal Advocacy Contract (Noelle Gordon):** Authorized the General Manager to execute a contract amendment with Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Relations to renew the contract for Federal Advocacy Services for a period of one year in the amount of \$96,000.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Vanpool Program Update.** Vanpool Manager, Lynne Cunningham provided an update on the agency's vanpool program. Cunningham, who has 32 years of experience in public transportation, describes vanpooling as a rideshare arrangement for groups of three to 15 people who commute to work together in an Intercity Transit van. The group determines their own route and schedule. Intercity Transit provides the vehicle, fuel, insurance, and maintenance, while participants pay an affordable monthly fare.

Cunningham continued with program impact and statistics:

- Environmental Benefits: In July 2025 alone, the vanpool program:
 - Reduced vehicle miles traveled by over 500,000 miles.

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- Eliminated nearly 15,000 vehicle trips.
 - Cut pollution by over 300 tons.
 - Customers saved over \$300,000 in fuel and maintenance costs.
- Program Growth:
 - The program began in 1982 with two vans and now has 156 active vanpools.
 - These groups serve 363 employers across the Puget Sound region.
 - The agency recently achieved a milestone in having all its vans in service, with a focus on keeping the waitlist short for new riders.
- Commuter Habits:
 - Forty groups have been operating for 10+ years, showing the long-term value of the service.
 - The average vanpool travels 83 round-trip miles a day, a higher average than other agencies like Pierce Transit due to longer commutes to urban employment centers.
 - Over half of all vanpool participants volunteer to drive, highlighting a high level of customer engagement.

Cunningham continued with Vanpool Fares and Fleet:

- Fare Structure: The current fare structure is a five-year demonstration project that runs through 2026. The agency is currently analyzing data to propose a new, pre-paid fare structure for 2027. This change is intended to reduce administrative burdens and encourage more frequent ridership.
- Fleet Updates: The agency used a grant to purchase 22 new hybrid vehicles (14 Toyota Sienna's and 8 Toyota Camrys) to replace older vehicles. The five-passenger Camrys are in high demand among riders.

Employer and Industry Trends

- Top Employers:
 - Washington State employees make up the largest number of groups (35), despite many having hybrid work schedules.
 - Federal employers (including JBLM, 3C Tech, TSA, and Washington Army National Guard) account for a combined 43 groups.
 - Hardel is the largest private employer, with 18 vanpools, even though they do not subsidize fares.
 - Intercity Transit itself has 11 employee vanpools, demonstrating staff commitment to the service.
- Growth in 2024: Most new vanpools formed in 2024 were from the government sector, including state, federal, and military groups.

Cunningham said in addition to the commuter vanpool program, the Community Van service was established in 2003. It leases eight vans to 501(c)(3) nonprofits and government agencies to address unmet community

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transportation needs. Examples include Sacred Heart Church, which uses vans to transport people experiencing homelessness to warming centers, and Nova School, which uses them for field trips.

Mejia requested an update on the vanpool fare structure pilot program. She noted the new, simplified fare system was intended to increase ridership and it seems to be working. Cunningham confirmed the new fare structure has made the service more attractive to customers, especially when compared to other agencies' higher fares. They are analyzing data from the pilot to develop a final proposal for a new, pre-paid fare structure for 2027. This change would not only maintain the affordability of vanpool fares with some changes but also reduce administrative burden and encourage more frequent use of the service.

Vanderpool expressed curiosity about how the vanpool program reaches out to smaller employers and individual commuters, given that most clients are large businesses and state agencies. Cunningham acknowledged it is easier to form groups at larger employers but explained they actively work to accommodate smaller groups and individuals. Senior Vanpool Coordinator, Kyle McPherson, helps individuals find open spots in existing vanpools, even if their workplace isn't the primary destination for that group. He also proactively looks for matches in the database to form new, smaller groups.

Bergkamp added they are actively marketing to downtown businesses to help employees from different small companies form groups. She noted the minimum mileage requirement for vanpools has been eliminated, which makes it easier to form shorter-distance groups.

Goodwin asked if the agency considered creating vanpools for healthcare workers, particularly those working different shifts, such as at Providence or Capital Medical Center. She shared her personal experience as a night shift worker and the difficulties of commuting alone. Cunningham confirmed they have been in touch with a transportation coordinator at Providence St. Peter's Hospital and successfully formed a vanpool there. She explained that once the first vanpool forms, it often creates a "snowball effect," leading to more interest and new groups. Cunningham will follow up with her team to see if they have reached out to Capital Medical Center. Goodwin emphasized the importance of convenience and safety for these workers, including designated parking for vanpools.

Bourgeois asked if any of the vanpool vans are wheelchair accessible. Cunningham said their standard fleet of vans (Sienna's and Camrys) do not have wheelchair lifts. Bergkamp clarified that a wheelchair-accessible van is kept in the fleet to meet federal regulations. This van is used by Dial-a-Lift supervisors but can be deployed for a vanpool group if there is a need. She explained that a major challenge is that vanpool drivers are volunteers, and a group would need to coordinate among themselves to properly secure a mobility device. Bergkamp noted that with the rise of remote and

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hybrid work since the pandemic, there has been a significant decrease in requests for these accessible vehicles, as many individuals with disabilities now have more flexible work options.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Community Advisory Committee (August 18). Clair Bourgeois said the CAC received a report on the Vanpool Program from Lynne Cunningham.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Staff are in the process of recruiting new members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Applications are due October 3. An on-line application is available on the CAC page of Intercity Transit's webpage, and printed applications are available on request for applicants who prefer that method. Candidates selected by the ITA will be interviewed Friday, November 7, and appointments will be made at the December 3 ITA meeting.

On August 17 Intercity Transit participated in the State Rodeo competition. For the driving portion, Dial-A-Lift Operator Dan Savage took first place in the Body-On-Chassis (BOC) category, Operator Clinton Jimenez took 5th place in the 40-foot category, and Operator John Clauson, who was a last-minute substitute for another competitor, took 7th place in the 35-foot category. Our Maintenance team of Richelle Loken, Sean Malay and Jonathan Reynolds took 2nd place overall in the Maintenance Division. ITA member Sue Pierce attended the Rodeo along with many staff to cheer them on, and she also attended the public transportation conference following the Rodeo. We also honored Excellence in Transit (Wall of Fame) staff Glenn Dreyer, Dean Taylor, and the Human Resources Team, for going above and beyond in their work this past year.

Bergkamp recently received an email from a Thurston County Court Operation Officer sharing the success story of an individual she referred to as "Anna" for the sake of her privacy. Anna is a very recent graduate of Thurston County's Mental Health Court Program, which offers a two-year therapeutic approach to individuals living with mental illness involved in our local criminal legal system. This program helps build lasting health and recovery for participants, with the goal of criminal cases being dismissed, closed, or charges amended, avoiding further involvement with the legal system. The Officer wrote that while in the program, Anna "spent endless hours making her mental health and personal growth a priority, pledging to continue this path of success for her future." At graduation, Anna shared how the program not only connected her with resources to receive treatment for chemical dependency, mental health counseling, access to medical care and proper nutrition, but also allowed her to obtain her high school diploma through SPSCC's GED/High School Plus program. This achievement was a dream of hers and marked a significant milestone in her progress. In Anna's own words, "I have made huge changes in my life since starting this program, and a major one being my attitude towards myself and believing in myself." Anna specifically attributed Intercity Transit's free public transportation in Thurston County to playing a large role

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in her success. Riding the bus was how she got to her appointments and other places she needed to be.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) cites that nearly 2 in 5 people who are incarcerated have a history of mental illness (37% in state and federal prisons and 44% held in local jails). Many people with mental illness who are incarcerated are held for committing non-violent, minor offenses related to the symptoms of untreated mental illness or for offenses like shoplifting and petty theft. NAMI also states that investment in methods like mental health courts and other intervention strategies, can help reduce the criminalization of people with mental illness.

Public transit plays an essential role in giving people like Anna the mobility necessary to be successful on their path to recovery. Intercity Transit's zero-fare demonstration project goes one step further by simplifying access for more riders to get from point A to point B, supporting the concept that mobility is a basic human right. Nelson Mandela said, "A person is a person through other persons; you can't be a human in isolation; you are human only in relationships." On a bad day, coming up with \$2.50 can make or break someone with mental illness struggling to reconnect with the relationships in life most of us take for granted. Your work as board members and staff's work as transit professionals supports Anna and others like her on their journey to recovery every day, helping them to reconnect with our community and contribute to its well-being. As the Thurston County Court Operation Officer wrote in their email, "From all our court users and Thurston County District Court, thank you for providing a necessary and lifesaving service to our community."

AUTHORITY ISSUES

Pierce reported on her experience at the annual state conference. She noted the conference had an unofficial theme of communication. This included sessions on how staff could write clearer reports for their boards and other communication-focused topics. She also shared one of the most interesting sessions was a board game created by Whatcom Transit to help their transit board understand the complexities of route planning and service reduction. The game used a map of Bellingham and Lego blocks to represent ridership in different areas. Players were challenged to figure out how to cut bus service while minimizing the impact on ridership. Pierce is proud of IT staff providing the ITA with a lot more data and analysis before a similar game is even necessary. Pierce also attended a session on customer service improvements at Pierce Transit. She mentioned that IT already implements similar strategies and hopes to meet with Customer Service Supervisor, Jane Denicola, to compare notes and potentially arrange a presentation for the ITA from Pierce Transit.

Belk expressed gratitude to the IT staff for attending the Southwest Olympia Neighborhood Association's summer picnic. He acknowledged the staff braved the heat to be there and emphasized that the "West Side loves transit" and appreciated the in-

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person outreach and engagement with the community. He also thanked Vanderpool and other council members who attended the event.

Goodwin shared a positive story about an incident on Route 66. She witnessed an act of community kindness when a bus driver and several passengers worked together to help two community members in wheelchairs get onto the bus. The passengers helped by holding a service dog and assisting in turning the wheelchairs, and the driver was patient and helpful. Goodwin praised the bus drivers and the community members for their patience and kindness, calling it a "heartwarming" experience. She also had a question regarding a similar situation on the same route where a third person in a wheelchair was unable to board because the bus was at capacity for wheelchairs. Goodwin asked for information on the protocol for such situations.

Bergkamp explained the available options when a bus is at capacity for wheelchairs.

- **Waiting for the Next Bus:** If another bus on the same route (or a complementary route like the 62) is arriving soon, the driver might inform the passenger to wait for the next one.
- **Courtesy Ride:** If the wait is long, especially on a route like the 66 with 30-minute headways, the driver can contact dispatch. A road supervisor may then be sent to provide a courtesy ride to the passenger.
- **Coordination with Other Services:** Other options include coordinating with Dial-a-Lift or having a Dial-a-Lift van pick up the passenger.

Nicole Jones added it is standard procedure to report these situations to dispatch, whether it involves a person with a mobility device or a bicycle. While the typical outcome is for the passenger to wait for the next bus, dispatch will consider factors like weather and may respond quickly to ensure the passenger is taken care of.

ADJOURNMENT

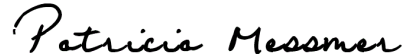
With no further business to come before the Authority, Chair Cox adjourned the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

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Carolyn Cox, Chair

ATTEST



Pat Messmer
Clerk of the Board

Date Approved: October 15, 2025

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