

**CENTRE AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

MINUTES

February 23, 2004

4:00 PM

STATE COLLEGE BOROUGH BUILDING

Council Chambers, Third Floor

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Spychalski, Chairman
 Don Sherman, Vice-Chairman
 Richard Kipp, Treasurer
 Joe Davidson
 Gary Powers

STAFF PRESENT: Hugh Mose, General Manager
 Sherry Snyder, Operations Supervisor
 Judith Minor, Director of Administration
 Eric Bernier, Service Development Manager
 Jackie Sheader, Marketing Manager
 Terri Quici, Executive Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Humphrey, State College Borough Liaison
 Tim Geibel, CRPA, Transportation Planner

I. CALL TO ORDER

John Spychalski called the February 23, 2004 Centre Area Transportation Authority Board of Directors meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

II. PUBLIC HEARING TO RECEIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

Chairman Spychalski introduced Eric Bernier, Service Development Manager, and asked him for opening comments regarding his submitted report.

Eric stated that in the Board packets there is a two-page memo which outlines the preliminary service change concepts for the next year. He indicated that this is a list of some of the changes that couldn't be implemented this past year along with suggestions he has received throughout the year.

Eric further noted that this list is based on having no additional resources to add further service; it essentially fine tunes existing service in order to get the most effective and efficient service with existing resources. Eric then outlined the proposed service changes for the C Route, H & W Routes, B Route, F Route, M Route, K & S Routes, P Route, and X Route. Eric added that if CATA does receive additional funds, he would like to

increase the frequency in the N, V, and R Routes during the mid-day to early evening hours.

Eric noted that the plan is to receive comments today, include them with listed changes and return in March, either to the Budget Work Session or the Board Meeting, with refined recommendations.

Chairman Spychalski thanked Eric and then asked for public comment. Chairman Spychalski instructed individuals to step to the podium and state their name; and he asked that comments be directed specifically for bus service improvement.

- Arthur Goldsmith identified himself as a State College resident and addressed what he believes to be the inadequate frequency of the R and M Routes; he also stated that if CATA receives additional funding then high priority should be given to the R Route schedule.
- Christian Bechdel asked if there is a way to run the “shaded” trips on the timetables year-round to get more frequency of service. He further stated that he wondered why on the X route there isn’t more service to Bellefonte between 7:23 AM and 12:15 PM. He requested that we consider adding a trip about 9 or 10 AM so commuters would not have to wait so long.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

With no further suggestions, Chairman Spychalski closed the Public Hearing on Service Improvements and proceeded to receiving Public Comments.

- James Smith, State College resident, indicated that he owns property on North Atherton Street and that a study was conducted about three years ago to identify the best locations for a new bus terminal. Mr. Smith stated that the study identified 17 locations, three of which were on his property. He further stated that he was not talking about CATA services, but Greyhound and other cross-country bus services. He questioned what the purpose of the study was when it was then dropped. Hugh responded and explained that the study was conducted at the request of Penn State. He noted that a road was going to be constructed that would have rendered the terminal not workable; however the road was not built. Hugh stated that the study didn’t go away, and that University staff is taking it off the back burner and moving it forward.
- Arthur Goldsmith asked if the Board has noticed that bus stops are inaccessible because of the snow piles. Chairman Spychalski acknowledged that he noticed because he is a daily rider. He noted that it is a problem and explained that the Authority doesn’t have the resources to clear out all of the stops. Chairman Spychalski stated that the Authority is well aware of it but there is no sure, short term fix for it.

- Re-open Public Hearing at 4:45 PM. Diane Lichtman stated that she broke her elbow and has been forced to use the bus. She indicated that she spent 2.5 hours minimum to plan her schedule each week and that she easily added an hour to her normal car trip each day. Ms. Lichtman stated that it took 4 hours by bus when it could have been a ½-hour trip by car when she had to go out to Boalsburg from the hospital. She stated that taking the bus was not convenient for her; there is too much ice, it takes too long, and it is too difficult. Ms. Lichtman added that the bus is not always a viable alternative.

Hugh Mose conveyed to Ms. Lichtman that her concerns are well understood. Hugh stated that the routes to Boalsburg and Bellefonte run limited trips. Chairman Spychalski welcomed her comments and indicated there are sometimes ways that we can use them to make improvements.

Chairman Spychalski thanked everyone for their comments and indicated that all comments, as well as e-mail that has been received, will be entered into the record of this hearing and given careful consideration, whether CATA has the available resources to act on them or not, as Mr. Bernier previously stated.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Approval of Minutes of January 26, 2004 Board Meeting

Chairman Spychalski entertained a motion to approve the January 26, 2004 Minutes. Joe Davidson moved to approve the January 26, 2004 Minutes. Richard Kipp seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

B. January 2004 Finance Reports

Richard Kipp moved to receive the January 2004 Finance Reports. Joe Davidson seconded. Judi Minor noted that on the second page under Operating Assistance, the amount is higher because CATA received notice mid-way through the year that the grant was increased. Judi further noted that under Miscellaneous Non-Transportation Revenue on the first page the amount represents reimbursement expected for expenses incurred during the I-80 accident.

Hugh also called the Board's attention to a color-printed report regarding Centre Line ridership, noting that Tim Geibel had prepared this report for a meeting that Chairman Spychalski and Hugh had attended with Penn State staff.

Hugh further commented that the Ridership Report summary for January indicates an average weekday ridership of 164 on the A Route. This is in error and Hugh provided corrected copies.

Gary Powers asked if there are any updates on natural gas prices. Judi indicated that they have come down about 20 cents in the past four days; however, CATA has already purchased gas through April.

Chairman Spychalski called for a vote on the Finance Report. The motion carried unanimously,

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Auxiliary Revenue Opportunities

Hugh introduced the subject by noting that about a year ago there was discussion about expanding the sale of advertising. Jackie Sheader reported that she had done some research and provided a report in the packet, which included information on exterior bus advertising, interior bus advertising, shelter and bench advertising, public information advertising (i.e., publications, website), and non-traditional advertising aimed at the student population.

Don Sherman asked if CATA needs clearance from the Borough Council to do any exterior advertising on the buses. Jackie indicated that none of the municipalities have vehicle advertising specifically included in their ordinances. However, as a practical matter, CATA staff would have to go to each municipality and make sure that each one would support the exterior advertising plan. Chairman Spychalski asked about the LOOP/LINK services on campus and support from Penn State. Jackie indicated that Penn State officials would need to be involved with the types of advertising on the LOOP/LINK and free-fare buses, so as to avoid any conflicts.

Don asked Hugh if there is any history about others going to the municipalities to get a ruling on exterior advertising. Hugh stated that he was not aware of any; however, the subject did surface at a COG Finance Committee meeting about a year ago. Hugh noted that there was some opposition and it was not pursued.

Mr. Sherman confirmed with Jackie that the staff recommends the 3rd option, to maintain status quo and incorporate the agreed upon non-invasive forms of auxiliary revenue advertising into the mix gradually, beginning with public information and nontraditional advertising efforts. Jackie further noted she'd like to continue with our interior advertising and experiment with alternative means to advertise to students, as well as maintain a modest amount of advertising in brochures and on the website.

Chairman Spychalski commended Jackie and Eric on the thoroughness of the reports presented at this Board meeting. Chairman Spychalski noted to the Board that they be mindful of (1) CATA's image and the impact on that image that exterior bus advertising would project and (2) the staff time and efforts needed to manage this advertising initiative. Chairman Spychalski stated to the Board that this is an information item on the Agenda, but the Board can discuss the item and provide direction how to proceed.

Richard Kipp asked about options other than static graphics and wondered if anyone uses message boards. Jackie stated that there are message board options

and that information was initially considered, but there is not a lot of research out there. Hugh responded that exterior advertising with moving light displays would likely be in conflict with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.

Joe Davidson confirmed with Jackie that there are no local ordinances prohibiting CATA from exterior advertising. Jackie responded there were none of which she is aware. Eric also responded, stating that he personally contacted zoning officers not long ago and all are in agreement that there is no language that prohibits exterior bus advertising – but they were all in agreement that any exterior advertising would generate considerable discussion. Eric stated that CATA would want to go forward with obtaining their approvals before placing any exterior advertising on the buses.

Hugh noted that the big issue is whether there ought to be exterior bus advertising in our community, considering staff time and the effect on CATA's image. He stated that in this regard staff feels there are more negatives than positives. Secondly, Hugh said that there are many communities where shelter and bench advertising is prevalent; however municipal signage ordinances here precludes these options. Hugh further stated that we are unique in that we can effectively sell interior advertising in the absence of exterior panels. Lastly, Hugh stated that staff would like to explore and take advantage of the ability to connect with students through non-traditional advertising.

Chairman Spychalski asked the Board if there was a consensus among them to follow the staff recommendation. Don Sherman asked that if the 3rd option is adopted, would an advertising policy be written. Jackie indicated that an informal policy would be written with guidelines for what types of advertising would be accepted. Chairman Spychalski requested that the policy be brought before the Board for review. Chairman Spychalski again asked if there were a consensus among the Board and the response was affirmative. Joe Davidson noted that he has some concerns about advertising on the website. He supports recommendation #3 if we can keep the website intrusiveness kept to a minimum.

VI. Other Business

A. General Manager's Report

Hugh stated that over the past weekend CATA operated 24-hour LOOPS for Thon. Hugh indicated that ridership was extremely heavy. Hugh himself had gone out about 4:00 AM to see how the buses were running and to talk with the drivers, and he reported that there were always about a dozen people on each bus. Sherry Snyder, Operations Supervisor, stated that there were over 7,000 LOOP riders carried during the extra overnight hours.

Hugh reported on the TEA-21 Reauthorization proposal and the High Intensity Tier (for small communities with well developed transit systems). The Senate version is different than the House version in that it narrows the number of

communities that would benefit, which ultimately could mean more money for us - but the funding now will be for capital instead of operations.

Hugh mentioned that he will be out of town on Thursday, February 26th through Monday, March 1st. Judi Minor will be in charge.

Lastly, Hugh commented on the accident on Beaver Avenue involving a CATA bus and another vehicle. Initially, it was reported in the newspaper that CATA was at fault; however on the basis of witnesses who later came forward, the record was set straight. *The Centre Daily Times*, in a subsequent story, noted that the operator of the other vehicle was cited. Hugh thanked the newspaper for following up on the story and including the second write up.

B. Service Development

Eric Bernier noted *The Collegian* article regarding the 24-hour CATA coverage for Thon. Eric also mentioned that the Board member profiles were not completed in time for printing in the Spring/Summer Ride Guide, however they will be placed on the website in the very near future and will be incorporated into the August Ride Guide.

VII. Adjournment

Don Sherman moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:00 PM. Joe Davidson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.