

**Centre Area Transportation Authority
Board Work Session**

MINUTES

December 7, 2005

4:15 PM

CATA Conference Room – 2081 W. Whitehall Road, State College, PA 16801

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

STAFF PRESENT: Hugh Mose, General Manager
 Judi Minor, Director of Administration
 Joe Gilbert, Director of Transportation
 Amanda Jones, Human Resources Manager
 Tim Geibel, Transportation Planner

I. Call to Order

Chairman Spychalski called the meeting to order at 4:15 pm. Hugh Mose requested that the Board reconvene in Executive Session after the Work Session.

II. Public Comment

No comments were received, although a PSU Engineering student, whose name was not recorded, was in attendance for a class assignment.

III. FY 2006/2007 Budget

Hugh Mose asked the Board to think about some items for next year's budget and provided the Board with a memo outlining these items. Mr. Mose noted that with the passage of the new Federal Transportation Reauthorization Bill (SAFETEA-LU), CATA is in a position to consider addressing unmet needs for the first time in several years.

Mr. Mose first addressed the need to restore some of the service cuts from the past four to five years, such as the R route that has heavy ridership. Mr. Mose also discussed the willingness of the Benner Township Supervisors to support public transit for the first time. Mr. Mose reported that he and Eric Bernier met with Dave Breon, Benner Township Supervisor, to address current service not reimbursed and future service needs of the township. Before there was another opportunity to meet, Mr. Breon emailed Mr. Mose and said that the Supervisors had included \$2500 in their 2006 budget as a "start". Richard Kipp asked if additional service would be cost efficient based on the number of miles that would need to be traveled. Judi Minor and Hugh Mose explained that the formula places all route miles in one "bucket," which is then divided among the municipalities.

Mr. Mose next talked about the possibility of adding regional commuter service to the Moshannon Valley and/or Penns Valley areas, as well as from and to Altoona. Mr. Mose stated that funds may be available through the federal JARC (Job Access/Reverse Commute) program that would help start this project. Richard Kipp asked how far out of the region do we travel before it is considered commuter and there is a

fare differentiation. Mr. Mose said that was something the Board needed to think about as they discuss commuter service.

Tim Geibel and Mr. Mose also talked about another possible source of financial support for service expansion – federal CMAQ (Congestion Management/Air Quality) funding. Now that Centre County has been declared a non-attainment area for air quality, funds will begin to flow to our community, and often these CMAQ dollars are used to support public transportation projects. Mr. Geibel said that projects from the municipalities would be submitted to the MPO for consideration and a committee would decide what projects to fund. Mr. Mose suggested that CATA look ahead at these possibilities and be prepared.

Gary Powers asked Mr. Mose if his intent was to have the Board indicate any objections with these initiatives. Mr. Mose affirmed that was his intent. Chairman Spychalski noted that no Board member had any objections and indicated that Mr. Mose should proceed with the discussed opportunities.

IV. Staffing

Hugh Mose referred to the memo dated December 5, 2005 regarding current and future staffing needs that he had previously provided to the Board. Mr. Mose noted that the number of asterisks noted the importance (with three asterisks being critical) in rebuilding our staffing.

Joe Gilbert addressed Maintenance and Operations staffing needs. Mr. Gilbert stated that after an evaluation of Shop personnel, it was determined that if two non-skilled Maintenance staff could be added, it would increase the amount of work getting done and allow for another shift working Sunday through Thursday. Those two positions are his recommendation for immediate implementation. Discussion followed regarding job categories and advantages/disadvantages of hiring internally vs. externally. Mr. Gilbert stated that in FY 2005/06 he expected to recommend one more unskilled maintenance worker to help during the day to clean buses and a laborer/custodian to perform all levels of facilities work (now being done by skilled maintenance workers).

Mr. Gilbert also stated that in Operations he planned to recommend Safety/Training and Clerical positions in FY 2006/07. Mr. Gilbert indicated that there is a lot of training needed that includes new technologies and new regulations. Gary Powers asked if the Safety/Training person would train drivers at the Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology; Mr. Gilbert responded that this person would be an in-house trainer. Mr. Gilbert stated that Operations staff now does their own typing, filing, etc. and the department needs someone to provide clerical support so that supervisors can be on the streets. Joe Davidson asked if there is sufficient office space to add a clerical person and Mr. Gilbert indicated there is plenty of room. Mr. Gilbert also discussed further development of the Operations Manager to include responsibilities in Maintenance, which may suggest that the position be reclassified as Assistant Transportation Director, a change which would be handled administratively.

Judi Minor next talked about positions in Administration. She indicated that there is an immediate need for a full-time Human Resources Specialist who could take over day-to-day routine human resources responsibilities. Ms. Minor indicated that otherwise there isn't enough time to train the Human Resources Manager as her successor. If the Human Resources Manager takes on additional responsibilities in Administrative areas other than human resources, a more appropriate title of Assistant Administration Director may be in order. If so, Ms. Minor will handle the administrative change. Gary Powers asked what experience Ms. Minor is seeking in an individual. Ms. Minor indicated that it could range from someone with little experience who just graduated with a related degree to someone with less education who has worked at a lower level in the human resources field. Ms. Minor believes that someone who can grow into the position can be attracted at the pay range we expect to offer.

Hugh Mose stated that there is an immediate need for a full-time Receptionist. Mr. Mose noted that when the last full-time Receptionist was laid off, the Executive staff more or less became part-time Receptionists to cover the front office. Mr. Mose said that bringing back a full-time Receptionist would give the Executive staff their time back to concentrate on their jobs and free up time for the Executive Assistant to work on other responsibilities, such as the RideShare program.

Mr. Mose also stated that in the FY 2006/07 Budget the Board may be asked consider an Executive Services Director who would handle many internal processes, but not necessarily day-to-day operations. Mr. Mose noted that other positions to consider in the future are RideShare Coordinator and Information Technology Manager.

After brief discussion Chairman Spychalski summarized that the Board was supportive of the staff's recommendations for those positions that would be filled immediately. However, he directed the Mr. Mose to place the matter on the agenda for the next Board meeting, so that the Board could take formal action.

V. Advanced Public Transportation Systems Initiative

Hugh Mose provided a summary of the development of the Advanced Public Transportation Systems (APTS) Initiative over the past six months and the plan to solicit proposals for two different approaches. Mr. Mose stated that over time he staff has come to the realization that CATA should first make a decision on which approach to use, then solicit proposals for that one approach.

Tim Geibel referred to a memo which had been provided to the Board, in which he discussed in detail three options on how to proceed with solicitation of technology equipment and integration. Mr. Geibel stated the three options are: (1) Solicit proposals for both end-to-end Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) systems and/or component hardware; (2) Decide up front to use Avail's integration software to build a "best of breed" AVL system; and (3) Allow Avail to provide all system components as a sole source. Mr. Geibel said that staff is confident that Avail will give CATA the time and attention we need and therefore recommends Option 2, which is to use Avail's integration software to build a "best of breed" AVL system.

Mr. Davidson asked what level of work is involved from a staff perspective in relation to the three options. Mr. Mose indicated that Option 3 would represent the shortest timeframe to implementation of an AVL system and represent the least level of staff involvement. Mr. Mose then stated that as stewards of public funding he was not comfortable with CATA undertaking a sole source procurement and completely eliminating competition for the project. Mr. Mose stated that Option 2 represents the middle-of-the-road in terms of staff involvement but affords CATA the ability to build a true partnership with Avail.

The Board indicated general support for the staff's recommendation that CATA work with Avail to build an AVL system around their "back end" software. Mr. Geibel concluded the discussion by stating that staff would bring back to the Board a recommended contract with Avail for the necessary services. At that time staff would look for the Board to approve the release of the RFP and begin the technology implementation phase of the project.

VI. Earmark Requests

Mr. Mose stated that the timeframe for making federal earmark requests is in the early spring, before CATA's budget process begins, so it was important to discuss at this time what, if any, earmarks should be requested in the coming federal fiscal year. Mr. Mose added that he felt that we should continue to request capital funding each year, and that we should have an understanding of what our capital funding

priorities are. He stated that the staff's highest priorities for federal discretionary funding are (1) to complete or extend the technology initiative; (2) expand the bus storage area; and (3) begin replacement and/or rebuilding of the core bus fleet. Mr. Mose indicated that the staff recommendation is to request technology funds in 2006, seek funds to expand the facility in 2007, and then embark on a multi-year effort to replace/rebuild buses.

After discussion Chairman Spsychalski indicated that the Board was supportive of the staff's recommended approach. He also indicated that the replacement or rebuilding of the existing fleet would be a major undertaking and that CATA will need to begin this process soon as the Orion fleet is nearing the end of their useful life.

VII. Legal Services

Mr. Mose noted the Board's concern two years ago when Bob Martin went to work for McNees, Wallace and Nurick (MWN) out of Harrisburg. Mr. Mose stated that staff has monitored the performance of the new firm and is pleased to report extreme satisfaction with the work that Bob and his team have provided. Mr. Mose strongly recommended continuing CATA's relationship with Bob Martin; he knows CATA, our people, our Union, our culture and our history.

Mr. Kipp questioned the fee structure CATA would likely see with the continued use of Bob Martin's services. Mr. Mose indicated that although Bob Martin's fees are likely to go up, that they would still be in line or similar to any other firms' pricing should CATA seek legal representation elsewhere. Even if Bob Martin's costs were slightly higher than another local firm, CATA would have to go through the growing pains of learning to work with another firm who may or may not be familiar with the specific needs of a public transit authority. Chairman Spsychalski stated that when CATA originally retained the services of Bob Martin there were very few, if any other companies locally that had transit litigation experience.

Recognizing the advantages of keeping our current legal representation, the Board indicated a willingness to consider continuing with McNees Wallace and Nurick, if an agreement can be reached on a compensation package that is within a range considered to be in the range of what other firms would charge for similar work. Mr. Mose indicated that after the first of the year he and the staff would engage Bob Martin in a discussion of a possible contract extension.

VIII. Vision and Mission Statements

Mr. Mose stated that recently, when he attended activities of the Governor's Transportation Funding and Reform Commission, he was sensitized to the importance of having a clear vision or mission statement. Mr. Mose explained that seven transit systems gave presentations to the Commission. When they were each asked what their vision was, no one was able to state clearly what they wanted public transportation to become in their communities.

Mr. Mose indicated that the Employee Handbook Joe Gilbert and his staff had put together in 2005 and the Strategic Plan CATA had completed a year earlier would act as good starting points in building mission and vision statements for CATA. Mr. Mose concluded by asking the Board to consider including the establishment of formal vision or mission statements as one of the goals for the General Manager to complete over the coming year.

IX. Employee Healthcare Coverage

Mr. Mose stated that each March CATA either solicits proposals or renegotiates terms for health insurance coverage. Mr. Mose explained that for the past several years CATA has faced double-digit

increases in health-care costs and it was decided to explore other options. He stated that Amanda Jones has been working with a group of her counterparts from the Centre Region municipalities to determine the feasibility of forming a health insurance purchasing cooperative.

Amanda Jones referred to a memo that she had previously provided to the Board that included information on forming a cooperative and partnering with an employee benefits consulting firm. Ms. Jones stated that the Benecon Group is a company that has provided employee benefit consulting services for 13 years to municipal cooperative groups including 86 Pennsylvania municipalities. Ms. Jones outlined the principal components of a self-funded plan and recommended that CATA continue to move forward with gathering information about a cooperative, as well as requesting proposals from other health insurance providers. Ms. Jones stated that in the end there should be sufficient information to make a well-informed decision regarding which approach to take. Ms. Jones added that no information has been uncovered to-date that appears to be detrimental to CATA or the benefits offered to employees.

Mr. Davidson asked what timeframe the Centre Region municipalities are working under and does that coincide with what Benecon is proposing. Ms. Jones stated that the municipalities along with CATA would be meeting again with the Benecon representatives in January. At this meeting she would receive an update as to the status of an implementation date for service, but that that was not known at this time. Ms. Jones reinforced that CATA is pursuing this alternative as an option for healthcare coverage and that once all the information is complete, the Board would receive a full report.

X. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm, at which time the Board reconvened in Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.