



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
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Meeting Minutes - Approved ADA TRANSIT SUBCOMMITTEE TO THE TRANSIT AND PARKING COMM

Monday, March 21, 2011

5:10 PM 115 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Room LL-130 (Madison
Municipal Building)

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Staff: Crystal Martin, Ann Schroeder, Chuck Kamp

Guest: Steve Hiniker

Chair DuRocher called the meeting to order at 5:10 PM.

Present: 8 -

Kenneth M. Streit; Lorry Bond; Jeanne M. Tregoning; Susan M. De Vos;
Mary E. Jacobs; Ida W. Nathan; Michael A. Huckaby and Carl D.
DuRocher

Excused: 1 -

Chris Schmidt

2. PROPER MEETING NOTIFICATION

The meeting was properly noticed.

3. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were made.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. DeVos moved to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Streit seconded. The motion carried by voice vote/other.

5. PUBLIC APPEARANCES

There were no public appearances.

6. DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS

There were no disclosures or recusals.

7. [21742](#) Overview of RTA Status & State Budget Implications for Metro Transit
- a. Steve Hiniker, RTA Board
 - b. Chuck Kamp, Metro General Manager

Attachments: [Draft RTA Plan1.pdf](#)

Mr. Hiniker said there is not a lot of good news right now regarding transit from the state or from the RTA. A short time ago people were optimistic about expanding transit with an RTA. About a month ago the Dane County RTA Board had a meeting to discuss whether there would be a referendum for a ¼ cent sales tax. They had worked hard to develop a plan. The RTA Board decided not to go forward. He voted against a referendum because the Board had put together the Plan for Transit and justified the sales tax based on implementing that plan. Days before the vote, they learned what the state budget would bring. It was clear that the RTA would not be able to implement the Plan for Transit. They could be accused of bait and switch. There wasn't enough money with that tax. They could have gone for a ½ cent sales tax – that could probably make up the difference in state aids cuts and also implement the Plan for Transit. But he did not think the Board would be in favor of that. The motion to go for a ¼ cent sales tax failed by about seven to one. The other thing going on in the background was a bill being circulated at the time (since introduced in the legislature) that would repeal the authority to have RTAs. State Rep. Robin Vos was going to move the bill as quickly as possible through the legislature, and the feeling is he will be successful. The Dane County RTA continues to exist. The group hasn't met since the referendum vote. They need to decide on next steps. They did take a vote to oppose the bill that would repeal authority.

Governor Walker does not like transit. He went out of his way to do things that would hurt transit in the state budget. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) proposed its budget to the Department of Administration (DOA) and it included things for transit that were then removed. Transit funding was moved from the transportation fund to the general fund. The transportation fund uses gas taxes and other fees that are used for roads, transit, etc. Now, transit has to depend on general funds. There is an increase in spending for highways, and transit has to compete with other general fund expenditures such as schools and other services that are being cut. If transit stays in the general fund, it will be cut further. We are working with a variety of entities to try to change that. Mr. Hiniker works with 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin, and they and other environmental groups are working on transit issues.

While the budget bill situation was going on in the legislature, there was a Legislative Fiscal Bureau memo that explained that this would cost \$46.6 million in federal grants because of federal protections for transit employees that require collective bargaining. Rep. Vos did not want an amendment that would exempt transit employees from the collective bargaining provisions in the bill. There are some ways transit systems can get around this at least for a while. So it doesn't look like Metro Transit will have a problem with federal funds the next couple of years, but it is just a matter of time before it becomes

a problem in the absence of collective bargaining for transit employees.

Transit is being cut despite the fact that aids for highway construction are going up about 15%. Local units of government are having transit aids and also local road aids being cut as well. Also, local governments cannot increase their property tax to cover these cuts (with very few exceptions.) The cuts from the state are meant to be painful if they are adopted in their current form. The increase in funding for highways is not just the \$107 million that used to go to transit, it also includes a new tax on the sale of automobiles. Instead of going to the general fund for things like schools, this tax will go to the transportation fund. It will be phased in over the course of 10 years and increase to over \$200 million annually for road construction. Money that used to go into the environmental fund now goes into the transportation fund. Money that used to be used to support recycling now goes into the highway fund. There is also new bonding authority for highways. The money for highways is over \$400 million. Meanwhile transit is cut pretty significantly.

Ms. De Vos said that her understanding was that although the state had authority over that funding, there can be a wheel tax without the state having to give authority. If the state takes away the authority to use a sales tax for transit, the public might be persuaded that there is no alternative other than to use a wheel tax, although it is much less popular than a sales tax. Has the RTA considered changing the source of revenue? Mr. Hiniker said any wheel tax would have to be approved by a city council and not the RTA Board. The only authority the Board has is up to a ½ cent sales tax in the region. There is no other authority that the RTA Board has. He doesn't know how much money the wheel tax would bring in this area. He doesn't know what the governor would think; he could outlaw that as well.

Ms. Nathan asked what constitutes road aid. Mr. Hiniker said there are different classifications of concrete and asphalt. There is a distinction between highways and roads – people think of roads as Mifflin or East Washington. But the governor is funding large expansions of highways. The streets in counties and municipalities are eligible for a portion of the transportation fund. They are funded in part by the state and quite a bit by local property taxes. This bill decreases state aids to local governments, meaning more funds will go to interstate projects. There will be fewer dollars to cover costs for local streets, and municipalities can't raise taxes to pay for them. So although there is more "roads" money, there will be more potholes.

Ms. Nathan asked why the governor doesn't like transit. Mr. Hiniker said he talked to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel editorial board. The governor had just been interviewed by them. Ernie Franzen who works for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel said the governor said highways pay for themselves, but transit doesn't pay for itself. But that's not true otherwise he wouldn't be going into the general fund to pay for highways. There is a substantial amount of transit covered by fares. We also have different needs for different modes of transportation. The governor once said he wanted everyone to have a car.

Mr. Huckaby asked how local projects might be affected. There are only one or two phases left of the East Washington Avenue rebuild. Mr. Hiniker said the East Washington project has a lot of federal money. He doesn't know how this will impact that reconstruction. There will be some impact because stimulus

money was funding a lot of highway construction over the past year. There is certainly going to be a downgrading of the quality of our streets. There are four new major projects included in the budget. One is the Verona Road interchange. All of a sudden there is \$200 million for that project, but not for potholes or transit or other things. The road builders gave very significant donations to the governor's campaign, and they are the big winners in this budget. This is at a time when everyone else is asked to do with less.

Mr. DuRocher said Paul Soglin recently commented that one of the opportunities in the repeal of the RTA is a chance to bring it back redesigned somewhat. He wondered if Mr. Hiniker saw that as a possibility and asked how we might want to redesign it. Mr. Hiniker said the RTA could be redesigned many different ways. Mayor Dave and others met with Rep. Vos and asked for support for changing the RTA if necessary but not doing away with it. He doesn't want to see it changed, but taken off the books and then recreated the way he wants. That's fine. Some of the ideas he has will make it difficult for an RTA to work. Rep. Vos wants to add local roads as an eligible expense. Then, for example, instead of up to \$40 million for transit, there would only be \$30 million because some would go to roads. There is already a funding mechanism for roads. Rep. Vos also wanted a way for communities to opt out. We have that now with Maple Bluff and Monona. If you introduce that into the legislation, it is not an RTA. It is a fragmented authority. It could be re-created in some form. Mr. Hiniker is skeptical about how interested Rep. Vos is in making an RTA work.

Mr. Kamp said as a transit manager it is a challenge to be truly regional when you are serving a system that has a number of limitations. One example is that we operate mostly closed-door service through Monona. Right now we have a request to open doors in Monona for service to two new clinics. Mr. Kamp said the RTA side of him says yes. The budget equity side says I don't know how we will deal with that. Another example is that a few years ago the Town of Madison struggled with their contribution for bus service in their municipality. We found ourselves looking at how to cut service so it made sense and the Town of Madison could afford it. But we would not serve the community well if we made certain cuts. Half a dozen budgets in different municipalities have to be managed rather than one as a regional entity. Mr. Kamp sees a lot of value in being one entity with one budget.

Mr. Kamp said that also the Transit and Parking Commission (TPC), Common Council and other groups were involved with a Long-Range Metro Transit Planning Ad Hoc Committee plan that was approved in 2008. One of the most important recommendations was that to be truly regional, we needed to look at an RTA. Looking at our peers around the country with a similar population level or similar service level, we are the only municipally owned transit system that is not an RTA or a regional transit district. That is clearly the way to go from a management standpoint in order to serve all of our customers in all municipalities.

The federal government allows us to eliminate collective bargaining, but the consequence is that we would not be eligible for federal transit grants that require collective bargaining. It is similar to federal funding tied to other regulations. For example, if Wisconsin chooses to have a speed limit different than the federal recommendation, we could do so, but we would lose the

funding tied to that. With approved union contracts that are in place for this and next year, our best analysis is that we should be ok for those years. Contracts have been extended through March of 2014. The Teamsters voted in favor of that, and this will go to a special Common Council meeting. That would give us some extra breathing room. That federal money is a significant chunk of funding, so we want to be in compliance.

From the management perspective, it is interesting to note that although transit funding was moved out of the transportation fund, there are other transportation services that stayed in the transportation fund like elderly and handicapped services and water port transportation. There are other transportation modes that are still in the transportation budget. Why is the proposal to remove only public transit from the transportation fund? If we move from a source of funding in a segregated fund to the general fund, the stability is compromised. State funding is 36% of our budget. The 10% cut is a \$1.8 million reduction in 2012 if the governor's budget is approved. We are also vulnerable in local funding. When state funds are provided to local municipalities like Verona, Fitchburg, etc. they are also dealing with a 10% cut. It will be difficult for them to maintain the amount of property tax dollars coming into Metro. The RTA has gone from one that is focused on expansion to one that is focused on maintaining. We will need an RTA or some mechanism like that to make those long-range plan recommendations a reality.

Mr. DuRocher asked Mr. Kamp to list individually several things that are on the horizon that will have a negative effect on transit. He mentioned the cuts to state funding and the statewide brokerage. He wondered if there were others. Mr. Kamp said the 10% cut in state funding is about \$1.8 million each in 2012 and 2013. The federal funding that could be compromised in the future is \$7.6 million. This year we will use about \$5.5 million of federal funds for the operating budget. We can use it for labor and parts to maintain our buses. Worst case scenario by about 2014, we would be facing the issue of a cut to \$5 or \$6 million in operating funding and no capital funding. The next issue is that the MA Waiver funding is vulnerable. We are getting \$3 million currently. The broker issue causes us vulnerability. The reduction in state shared revenue to local municipalities is also an issue.

Mr. Hiniker said these are draconian cuts. They are unfair. They are politically damaging to the people putting them forth. We all have opportunities ahead. He hopes we are all active and vocal. There will be finance hearings. They will only consider in-person testimony. They will probably make you wait, but you can have more of an impact than you think. The hearing times have not been announced yet, but non-profits will get the word out as much as they can. Let legislators know this is important, but let the governor know as well. He has been ignoring people, but that is wearing thin. People are going to say that it's time to start listening. Mr. Hiniker urges everyone to make their views known, connect with elected leaders and connect with the press. Call the governor's office. Go there in person. Go to the front desk and say you want to leave a message for the governor. He has tried calling the phone number for the capitol, but the mailbox is full. Show up and say there is no other way for me to get this message to you, so I'm here at the governor's office. Say you want to see the governor, and when they say no, say you want to leave a message and do so. But don't give up; it's too important.

Ms. De Vos said she wanted to go back to the wheels tax issue. She is not very clear on county level issues. If the state budget is slashing human services, but the budget is still funding specialized transportation, there is an argument that could be made about public transit being related to human services in a way that could tie funding for both fixed route and specialized transit. That is why she is belaboring the issue of wheels tax. That is something within the county's authority and outside the state's authority to limit as a possible source of funding. She knows it is not popular and people say sales tax makes more sense. But if the sales tax possibility is taken away, there may be no alternative. That may be a persuasive argument to the electorate. That is her reasoning at this point.

Mr. Hiniker said the only ability the RTA has is what the state has granted. He doesn't know how much a wheels tax would generate, but he would not give up on the whole thing. Transit is not just a human needs issue, but the heart of what makes a community work. Let's just have a good transit system for all the reasons transit is good. He's sick of this divide and conquer mentality.

8. [21743](#) Accessible Services Icon @ www.mymetrobus.com

Attachments: [WebPage Accessible Icon.pdf](#)

Ms. Martin said we have a new icon on our website. There is a new wheelchair icon which is the international sign for accessible services on the site. This was a recommendation in our 2009 Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) management audit. They recommended that we put the symbol on our website to direct people to the accessible services we have available. We made the request to City Information Technology at that time; last month that was completed. You can get to this information from a link on www.cityofmadison.com or go directly to www.mymetrobus.com. It talks about bus announcements, timing of announcements, limited stop zones for express buses (commuter buses) announcements for recommended transfers. It also talks about how the buses kneel, the wheelchair securement area, paratransit service with links to the application and hours of service. It also notes that information is available in audio format, and gives information about no show appeals, personal care attendants, ADA and service animals, and an introduction to our videos. Ms. Nathan said it would be helpful if when there is express service, there would be some indication on the bus stop sign. She would not have bought the condo she did if the bus stop sign near there had indicated it was commuter service only. Bus stops in New York that are limited service have a big "L" on them. Those are small things that could be done without a lot of cost.

Ms. Bond said when buses detour off of the square, it would be nice to note on the detour sign if the buses are going north and east or south and west for those who have directional challenges.

9. [21744](#) Reports
- a. Transit & Parking Commission
 - b. Commission on People with Disabilities
 - c. Dane County Specialized Transportation Commission

- d. Transportation Planning Board (MPO)
- e. Other Community Meetings
- f. Performance Indicators
- g. Report from the Chair
- h. Staff Report - LogistiCare Meeting of 3/15/11

Attachments: [Para Indicators Jan11.pdf](#)

a. **Transit and Parking Commission – Mr. Streit said that the budget issues Mr. Kamp talked about here were also discussed at the TPC. For this committee it's probably more protected than other service. But it's still a long ways off about how it's going to play out for fares and service cuts and such. Mr. DuRocher said paratransit service is complementary, so he doesn't see how it is more protected. Ms. De Vos said this committee is not just about paratransit service. Mr. Streit said to the extent that there would be any reduction in service that would be shared by everyone including wheelchair users. To the extent that you would have other services using other kind of vendors, he would guess that possibly the whole thing with the statewide MA service might be a bigger issue than some of the cuts in the budget bill itself. Bulk ticket sales did get discussed at TPC. They decided it was an administrative item and staff should take care of it as they see fit. If there was a lot of friction later, they could deal with it.**

b. **Commission on People with Disabilities – Ms. Bond said Ms. Martin came to the last meeting to discuss what she had presented at this meeting as well.**

c. **Dane County Specialized Transportation Commission – Mr. DuRocher said there will be a meeting this week. There was a report on budget items the county would be looking at and a brief discussion about bulk ticket sales that we discussed here.**

d. **Transportation Planning Board (MPO) – No report. Ms. De Vos said there is a movement in the federal government to put the regional transportation agencies in regional planning councils that plan everything, not just transportation. In that case, the MPO would get subsumed in a larger planning entity.**

e. **Other Community Meetings – Ms. Nathan said that last week she reserved a ride to go someplace and then go home. She decided she didn't want to go and cancelled the rides in time. That evening about 8:00 PM she got a call from someone at the function because her ride to go home showed up. She was concerned if that would be considered a no show. Today when she was talking to someone, she asked how that could happen. She said there is poor communication on weekends with the driver. She doesn't understand why that is. Mr. DuRocher asked if she cancelled with the provider or with Metro. She called Metro. She talked to a live person. She was later told that it was listed as cancelled, but the driver showed up. A no show, should she get one, would be dismissed.**

Ms. Martin said there are a couple of things that can happen. Sometimes Metro calls the provider and tells them there is a cancellation but they are busy and

forget to tell the driver. Sometimes Metro marks a cancellation and the phone rings, and then we forget to call the provider. In that case we do pay the provider a no show fee but don't charge the customer. Sometimes we send a list and the provider misses a ride. Ms. Nathan was concerned that is a waste for the driver. Ms. Martin said it doesn't happen often.

f. Performance Indicators – Ms. Martin said that these are January performance indicators. There are no trends. It's just the first month of the year. There were no big snowstorms. Mr. DuRocher said the cancellation rate of January 2011 was lower than 2010, so that says there were more big snowstorms in January 2010. Ms. Nathan said she likes Abby Vans. The drivers arrive consistently early and bring out a large, sturdy footstool. Other vendors either don't carry a stool or it is rickety and the driver doesn't stand by. Abby Vans' drivers are very courteous. The front seat is very comfortable. But it is difficult to get in and out of the back seat. The drivers she has talked to said people complain about that. They have been suggesting that you sit and slide out of the van. That works but it is very annoying. She notices that they have more complaints. She is curious because except for the back seat thing, she thinks they are terrific. A driver told her they are given extra time between rides, so it's not crowded. She likes them very much.

Ms. Bond said one complaint for Badger Bus is that they tend to overbook. Once a driver had three people to pick up at one time and more people to pick up 15 minutes later. That will impact the timeliness of service and the number of complaints for a company. She was glad to hear that Abby Vans has extra time.

Ms. Nathan said Badger Bus gets their schedule from Metro. So why does this computer over book and not allow them to get from east to west in a reasonable amount of time given that they have to go through town or whatever? Ms. Bond said Metro may send six riders to be picked up at 10:00, but when Bader Bus assigns it, they could farm that out to more drivers. Maybe they need to hire more drivers so one person isn't expected to be in three places at once.

Ms. Martin said Abby Vans had more complaints in January because it was their first month of service. We anticipated that because for a new provider customers call and there is a learning curve. We expect that they will come back in line with the normal amount of feedback items. Don't take it as a bad thing that there were a lot of complaints in January. They have been very responsive. That's how we learn; we get feedback from customers.

Regarding Badger Bus schedules, we use the same criteria Metro Plus buses use. That is because we pay them by the hour. Other vendors we pay by the trip. We don't schedule them to pick up 6 people at a time unless it is the same location. But there could be 3 people that the computer estimates we will pick people up within the 20 minute window. So for three people with a 2:00 PM pick up time, the computer figures it can pick up someone at 2:00, someone at 2:08 and someone at 2:16. We've gotten very good at doing templates because sometimes the computer doesn't schedule realistically. We've eased some of those problems because we use more templates and rely less on the computer. But there are still days when some rides aren't acceptable and we fix those on that day. If Badger Bus lets us know, we work with them. Ms. Martin said

Metro sends a manifest to Badger Bus. They don't make it up themselves. But we have to rely on their drivers and dispatchers to review the schedule ahead of time to tell us about problems and let us make corrections.

Ms. Martin gave an example of a recent Sunday. Typically, there might be 100 reservations. On this recent Sunday there were reservations for an additional 40 wheelchair rides, 80 ambulatory rides as well as many plus ones. On days like that, even as much as you plan, that might be a day that we didn't have a lot of notice for problems. The schedule would have been packed.

Ms. Jacobs said she thinks the Abby Vans started out with a big positive, but lately she's been hearing more concerns. The drivers coming early can be a good thing, but some people feel rushed or some drivers can be rushing people. The driver may leave early if the person is not ready early. Her biggest concern right now is in the past week with the same person they have had the person be given a no show leaving from work and Abby Van was a provider. The person was at work and was at the door. Staff went over there at 1:45 for a 2:00 PM pick up time. The ride didn't come and there was a no show when they called. So then the person has to wait, perhaps a long time, for another ride to be available. Ms. Martin said this is probably a situation of the driver going to the wrong entrance.

Ms. Nathan said in each case when the Abby Vans driver was early, they told her not to rush because they are early. She hasn't found in any case that they are rushing her. They were so laid back she felt it had to be because they were not rushed. Also, she wanted to mention that the vans are immaculate. They look like they are washed and vacuumed every night. She hopes this vendor stays. They are so much better than Capitol Express and Transit Solutions.

g. Report from the Chair – No report. Mr. DuRocher asked about detours due to construction on Williamson Street. Most buses turn right at the Jenifer Street cul de sac. But there will be one-way traffic so that buses can get to where Jenifer Street starts. City Engineering plans to put up signs saying no right turn onto Williamson Street except for buses. Does that include provider vans for paratransit? Ms. Martin said we will tell the vendors that they are considered included with the buses that can turn there. She will talk to our planning staff to work with the police officers so they know this. However, cabs are not allowed to turn there.

h. Staff Report – LogistiCare Meeting – Ms. Martin said there was a LogistiCare general meeting for paratransit providers. They are taking over doing Medicaid common carrier rides July 1st. There will be individual meetings with providers over the next month. They are going to do facility outreach the week of April 11th including webinars about how to do billings and how to request services. They will have an orientation for transportation providers the week of April 18th. They will provide training to staff the week of May 16th. There will be customer mailings the week of June 4th. July 1st is the go live date. Then two weeks after July 5th they plan to have staff available statewide to assist providers regarding how to do the billing. They found out the day before the meeting that the state also expects them to do Medicaid ambulance service. Part of the goal of the state is to bring common carrier transportation providers like Metro, Badger Cab, and Union Cab up to specialized medical vehicle (SMV) standards which are more extensive. Fran

Genter, Norah Cashin, and Jen Sutherland from Dane County as well as representatives from Monroe Human Services, Ryan Brothers, Badger Bus, Badger Cab, Union Cab and a couple other providers were all at the meeting. Companies that we're familiar with are getting information. Ms. Martin read something but hasn't gotten confirmation that the program may have been expanded to include Milwaukee county and the six southeastern counties in the state that were previously exempted. Nursing homes are still exempt.

10. [08706](#) Other Transit Related Announcements

Ms. De Vos let people know that April 16th is the Isthmus Green Day Fair at Monona Terrace. The Nelson Institute Earth Day conference is the following Wednesday at the Wisconsin Institute of Discovery this year instead of Monona Terrace.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Huckaby moved to adjourn. Ms. Jacobs seconded. The motion passed by voice vote/other, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:49 PM.