



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
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Meeting Minutes - Approved TRANSIT AND PARKING COMMISSION

**PLEASE NOTE: This meeting can be viewed in a live webcast of Madison City Channel at
www.madisoncitychannel.com.**

Wednesday, June 29, 2011

5:00 PM

210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Room 201, City-County Building
(City Council Chambers)

PLEASE NOTE: This Special Meeting was scheduled at the regular June meeting, to take timely action on proposed transit service adjustments.

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM.

Present: 8 -

Ald. Bridget R. Maniaci; Chris Schmidt; Ald. Lisa Subeck; Gary L. Poulson; Duane F. Hinz; Susan M. Schmitz; Kenneth M. Streit and Margaret Bergamini

Absent: 1 -

Jay B. Ferm

Excused: 2 -

David E. Tolmie and Amanda F. White

Please note: Schmidt arrived at 5:03, and Maniaci and Subeck arrived at 5:05 PM, just after discussion began on Item C.

B. DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS - None.

C. TPC ACTION ON PROPOSED METRO TRANSIT SERVICE ADJUSTMENTS

[22713](#)

Action on Proposed Metro Transit Service Adjustments, effective August 28, 2011

A motion was made by Hinz, seconded by Streit, to Approve Metro's list of proposed service changes.

Bergamini asked Metro Schedule Planner Colin Conn about the proposed adjustment to Route 18, which eliminated service to Reetz and Hammersley, and thereby eliminated service at off-peak times to the quadrant bounded by Reetz/ Whitcomb/Loruth Terrace over to Gilbert. Conn confirmed that service on Reetz and to this area would be eliminated at off-peak times, i.e., Saturdays/Sundays, mid-day and evenings.

Bergamini/Streit made a motion to table the proposed service adjustment to Route 18, in order to consider and take action on all the other proposed changes. The motion to table Route 18 and to consider approval of all other changes passed by voice vote/other. Poulson asked for questions about any of the other route changes. In response to a question from Poulson, Conn said

the distance from Barton & Gilbert Roads to Barton Road & Whitney Way was a little more than a tenth of a mile; and stops on Whitney would parallel current stops. The motion to approve all other services changes except for those related to Route 18 passed by voice vote/other.

Bergamini made a motion to maintain service on Route 18, as it was currently. Having no second, the motion failed. A motion was made by Schmidt, seconded by Hinz, to approve the proposed services change(s) to Route 18. When asked if she might have a compromise, Bergamini said she had heard at the last meeting that the change was designed to get the bus from one transfer point to the other in more timely fashion, and save two minutes on the route. At the time, she suggested adding an extra bus to the route; she understood how stressful it was for drivers if the route was not drive-able. On the other hand, she was concerned about eliminating service to a portion of the neighborhood that was transit-dependent, and where families were connected to other families along the route. She preferred to either leave the route the same, or add another bus. When she had asked about the fiscal impact of these changes, she was told they would be minimal.

For the benefit of members who did not attend the June meeting, Poulson asked Conn to explain the rationale behind the changes to Route 18. Referring to the attached maps for Route 18, Conn remarked as follows:

- Staff had made a comprehensive review of all the alternatives that they could do, to help the route get back on time.
- An extra bus currently ran (at a cost of \$38K/year), which (still) didn't make the connections. To get around this, buses left the West Transfer Point (WTP) early, to arrive at South Transfer Point (STP) on time; and buses at the STP left on time, to arrive at the WTP late, thus losing connectivity at the WTP.
- The extra bus didn't meet their goal, because riders were not making their timely connections.
- Staff looked at the pattern (for Via Coho) at the STP, using a new exit there to get onto the Beltline traveling to Fish Hatchery, which allowed them to maintain service in transit-dependent areas. The bus picked up a minute or more using the Beltline vs. traveling down Badger Road, because it eliminated stops/delays at some of the lights: at the left turn onto Fish Hatchery, at Emil Street, going over the bridge, and at the right turn onto Coho.
- Traveling Raymond and Whitney saved two more minutes.
- When dealing with a route this precise and this important to all of these neighborhoods, picking up three minutes was a big deal; this amounted to 10% of the entire travel time.
- Staff looked at what would happen if they pulled off of Coho Street; but they had too many boardings (867) on that loop and along the Frontage Road (856), vs. what they had on Reetz (225). Reetz was somewhat productive, but how many of these boardings were nearer Raymond vs. Hammersley wasn't clear; the change asked people to walk out of Reetz to catch the bus at Raymond.
- The goal was to get the service on time with the least damage to the route and to the people most dependent on the service.
- Not just a cost savings (due to taking a third bus out of the rotation), the change would produce 80-85% on-time performance, significantly better than now when nothing was on time.
- It was a matter of what could be done to get riders between West and South Transfer Points in 25 minutes, even when (for example) picking up someone in a wheelchair.
- It wasn't a perfect fix, but it was the best that could be done while not giving

up important portions of the route.

- Along with lengthy and difficult discussions in the Planning Unit, the proposal was reviewed by the Service Development Committee with Kamp, Gullickson and Marketing Dept. The idea was reviewed for months, with the conclusion that this was the best solution to a bad problem.

Metro Transit General Manager Chuck Kamp said that Metro had attempted to solve the problem (in 2009) by adding a bus in the afternoon; but even after doing this, drivers continued to identify Route 18 as the #1 route for causing them stress, trying to make the connections between South and West Transfer Points. Secondly, in not making connections at the transfer point, riders were waiting up to 20 minutes, which didn't help with the security issue; it was important to keep riders moving on to the next bus. Lastly, as previously mentioned, ridership on the route and its interlined routes had increased from 855,000 in 2005 to 1,046,000 in 2010. Route 18 was one of the most popular and fastest-growing routes. Kamp felt the message to the drivers should be to be on time. Even though extra time was currently built into the schedule, drivers felt a pressure to make sure riders made their connections and would try to push it. The proposed change would communicate to drivers that they could make the route in a reasonable amount of time. He acknowledged that there would be a segment of riders that would not be served evenings, weekends, and mid-day, which was why it took Metro so many months to review the route.

Conn explained what the added bus had tried to do. Metro had scheduled buses to leave the WTP at 22 on the hour (vs. 30), which created the situation where the Route 18 bus was already gone for riders wanting to transfer to it. The added bus allowed buses to leave early and still retain some semblance of half-hour service between West and South Transfer Points. The new driveway at the STP has had a very positive impact on Route 18 because buses can clear the transfer point so much faster. Drivers didn't have that benefit going in the other direction. Driver Sharon Williams had been very vocal in making suggestions, and Metro was leaning on her ideas to try to make this work. Though Conn couldn't guarantee that the change would solve the problem entirely, he felt sure the route would work better than it was now.

Bergamini said it sounded like the proposal would actually take a bus off the route. Though complex, Conn said this was essentially so; with so many buses on the street at 4 PM and with the interlining that occurred, it would be hard to say that a particular bus was being removed. But basically, one bus would disappear, due to multiple changes. On the other hand, we could point to 26-minute travel time and connectivity in the proposal, and say that two buses would provide that service.

Bergamini acknowledged Metro's effort and that this was a knotty problem -- for the people in that neighborhood as well. She felt (by approving the change) they would be saying that to give good service one way, we have to give bad service another way. Citing the 6/6/11 memo from Drew Beck re: the negligible fiscal impact of the changes, Bergamini wondered about the cost of putting a fourth bus into the rotation to provide night and weekend service. Conn said he wished they could. He said he did not look at saving \$38K (for the third bus). He looked at rider numbers: If 1,000 passengers/day rode the Route 18, and 20 got on at Hammersley, the change would benefit 980 with an improvement in timely service, at the expense of asking 20 to walk greater distances or use other opportunities to complete their trip. That's all he looked

at. This route was a problem since its inception. The problem was that the South and West Transfers Points were too far apart. Bergamini noted that the 890 were not walking any further -- they were (simply) waiting 20 minutes; while those in the Whitcomb Drive area would be walking 10 minutes to reach a bus stop.

Agreeing that this was a particularly transit-dependent neighborhood and the changes would produce significant challenges, Subeck wondered if there were any other spots on the route where changes could be made, which wouldn't have an impact on people who were already really struggling with transit needs. She wondered if there were other options for covering this area, if not on the Route 18, perhaps by adding some other coverage. Referring to the Route 18 boardings map, Kamp said staff had tried to minimize the impact so they weren't taking the route off areas with more ridership. For example, along Reetz, the boardings were 1.5% of all boardings on the route; and on Hammersley, they were 0.1% (vs. other segments of the route with higher %'s). Having added afternoon peak hour service in 2009, they had been working on Route 18 since. So they tried to do what she was suggesting, and perhaps there was a better way to do this; but this was the best Metro could come up with.

Subeck said that when she asked her question, she wasn't so much thinking about the number of people affected, as she was thinking of who would be affected; i.e., the transit-dependent people in the neighborhood who traveled with small children and used strollers, for whom a longer walk would be a greater hardship than for those in some other areas. These were people dependent on the bus for grocery shopping; while in other areas, people might ride the bus to work but weren't as dependent on it for things that made walking further to a stop more difficult. Her concern was that this would hit the people who would be hardest hit by a change; though a smaller number of people, the impact on them was greater in magnitude.

Bergamini pointed out that this was an area soon to be impacted by construction on Verona Road. This construction would involve/obstruct the Southwest Bike Path, used by people in this neighborhood to walk to/from the grocery store. The time it now took for people to walk the distance was around 10 minutes, about as long it took the bus. But with construction, walkers would have to loop around to get through the construction. Metro would probably have to re-work their schedules to deal with the construction too. Bergamini also noted that the boardings data was pulled from the month of September, a time of good weather when the many elderly in the neighborhood could get around better. But in the winter, they called cabs, and she wondered how many of them were Category 2 Metro Plus riders. She wondered if there would be enough of a savings to justify the change. While appreciating how hard staff had worked on this, she really wanted them to go back to the drawing board on this.

Streit said that a utilitarian approach weighed the issue of the many people who weren't making their transfers against the possible loss to a small group. He was concerned about not serving the larger group, who were frustrated about missing their bus and might choose not to take the bus; as well as the drivers, who were likely internalizing that stress when they heard rider complaints, which included waiting a long time at a transfer point, or not getting to work on time, or having to leave a half hour earlier every day, thus

making their weekly travel time longer.

Poulson echoed Streit's concern: This was not a good situation; and Metro had acknowledged this through their long struggles. But this was what they had come up with as the best solution. He wondered if in the future the Commission would have to deal with a lot of different kinds of cuts that would hurt a lot of people. He said that this change was one he would support if he had to vote.

Schmidt said that as with everything, this was a balancing act. Metro had made a reasonable case for adopting this change, esp. looking at the 11 boardings/day on Reetz vs. the impact of route performance on several thousand other riders using the route. A lot was being asked of the route. Maybe with more resources, in the future they wouldn't have to ask so much of one route. But in the balance, he thought members should go with what staff recommended.

Agreeing that it was likely that the Commission would be looking at much more difficult cuts than this, Bergamini noted that adding one more bus to this route added a cost of \$35K/year in a total budget of \$46 million. Members didn't have a cost comparison of what this change would do to Metro's paratransit service, or of what it would do to those household incomes that would have to rely on taxis to get to the grocery store, etc. It wasn't always equivalent between choice riders and transit-dependent riders, and she hated to have to play these two groups off against each other. She thought a cost of \$35K was worth it to add a fourth bus to the rotation.

Poulson asked that if the motion to adopt the proposal passed, that Metro staff keep the Commission apprised of the fall-out from the change, since this was the one that startled everyone a little bit. Members wanted the system to succeed, but they knew there were some problems here. As a result, members would appreciate frequent updating on the route.

Poulson called the question. The motion to approve the proposed service change(s) for Route 18 passed by the following vote:

Absent: 1 -

Ferm

Excused: 2 -

Tolmie and White

Ayes: 5 -

Ald. Maniaci; Schmidt; Hinz; Schmitz and Streit

Noes: 2 -

Ald. Subeck and Bergamini

Non Voting: 1 -

Poulson

Noting that this was Duane Hinz's last meeting, Poulson expressed appreciation for his service, not only for providing a lot of insight into Parking, but also for his contributions to Metro. Speaking on behalf of the entire Commission, Poulson said members would miss Hinz a lot. (Hinz was given a hearty round of applause.) Hinz responded by saying that it was a pleasure serving on the Commission and that he was not leaving because he wanted to.

He had asked not to be reappointed because of a particular health situation in his family. He was leaving with great regret.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Hinz, seconded by Streit, to Adjourn at 5:34 PM. The motion passed by voice vote/other.