

**Meeting of the Board of Directors  
TOPEKA METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY (TOPEKA METRO)  
March 27, 2017 – 3:15 p.m.  
Quincy Street Station - 820 SE Quincy St.**

**1. ROLL CALL**

PRESENT: Elsie Eisenbarth, Jim Ogle, Jim Daniel, Rodd Miller, Beverly Hall and Scott Tummons.

STAFF: Susan Duffy, Denise Ensley, Karl Fundenberger, Chip Falldine, John Cassidy, Alan Parrish, Patrick Blankenship, Terri Miller, Keri Renner and Adam Weigel.

Meeting called to order at 3:15pm by Chair Elsie Eisenbarth.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Rodd Miller made a motion to accept the minutes from the February 27, 2017 meeting. Motion seconded by Jim Daniel; motion carried unanimously.

- 3. KDOT EMPLOYEE INTRODUCTION** – Matt Messina, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator for the Kansas Department of Transportation was introduced to the board by Bikeshare Director Karl Fundenberger. Mr. Messina discussed the TA (transportation alternatives) program and indicated that KDOT's call for projects should happen late spring or early summer.

- 4. PUBLIC COMMENT** – None.

**5. ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCE REPORT**

**a) February Finance Report**

- February Finance Report - Chip Falldine presented the Finance Report and asked for questions.

Jim Daniel made a motion to accept the administrative/finance report as presented. Motion seconded by Beverly Hall; motion carried unanimously.

- QSS Boilers Contract – The evaluation committee recommends Central Mechanical be awarded the contract as their schedule would allow for an April 3<sup>rd</sup> installation date.

Jim Ogle made a motion to award the contract to Central Mechanical. Motion seconded by Rodd Miller; motion carried unanimously.

- Actuary OPEB – The evaluation committee recommends The Nyhart Company be awarded the contract as their bid was the lowest.

Rodd Miller made a motion to award the contract to the Nyhart Company. Motion seconded by Jim Daniel; motion carried unanimously.

## 6. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

- a) **Ridership Report** – Patrick Blankenship will be leaving Topeka Metro on April 12<sup>th</sup> to be the Operations and Scheduling Manager for the San Mateo, CA Transit District. There were no negative comments received for the 24-hour pass during the recent public meetings. Denise Ensley will be doing a second round of training with the bus operators on elimination of transfers. New fares go into effect on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Patrick discussed his snapshot February report. 1) For Route 29, we may consider a reduction in peak hours in August. 2) Standby hours will decrease and overtime numbers will increase as we move into vacation and event season.

Patrick gave a presentation on ridership and explanation for Topeka Metro dead head practices. This presentation will be shared with Operations supervisors to assist in explanation to operators.

- b) **Operations Report** – Denise Ensley reported that the “Stuff the Bus” campaign took in over 1300 pounds of food. As of February, Topeka Metro is a 100% designated stop transportation provider. Driver appreciation day was expanded to the entire week to honor our bus operators. A new relationship is being forged with Topeka Independent Living Resource Council (TILRC). General Manager Duffy was recently appointed by the Mayor to the Advisory ADA board for the City.
- c) **Maintenance Report** – Alan Parrish reported that the four OPUS buses will be retired soon.
- d) **Bikeshare Report** – Karl Fundenberger reported bikeshare usage for the winter months totaled 1800 trips with 2500 miles pedaled.

Karl recently attended the first annual Bikeways Plan conference in Lincoln, Nebraska and participated on a bikeshare panel.

Elsie Eisenbarth reported that Westar will be hosting a Lunch & Learn and Karl will present. He will also speak at the Washburn Wakeup as a WU alum.

## 7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) **Finance Committee** – Rodd Miller indicated the last committee meeting was focused almost entirely on planning.
- b) **Planning Committee** - Jim Ogle reported the committee created a “Where we Stand” document (please see attached).

Jim Ogle made a motion to approve the document. Motion seconded by Rodd Miller; motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Ogle will meet with union members per their request and share the Where we Stand document. The document will be shared with Shawnee County Commissioners, Mayor Wolgast, City Council and various department heads. It will also be distributed to all Topeka Metro employees.

**8. OLD BUSINESS** – None.

**9. NEW BUSINESS** – Bus wrap – Houck Transit Advertising provides one free bus wrap a year to be used for Topeka Metro marketing or initiatives. Jim Daniel inquired if Houck would have examples of free wraps. Jim Ogle suggested items from the Where We Stand document could be put on the wrap.

**10. GENERAL MANAGER REPORT**

- a) QSS Roof Replacement – Ms. Duffy requested an August/September timeframe to start the roof project. This will allow for the boilers project to be completed and the potential for KDOT grant monies to be obtained to assist with the roof replacement.
- b) New Fare Media Campaign – Ms. Duffy recognized CFO Falldine and COO Ensley for their efforts in the new fare media campaign.
- c) Director of Planning – Ms. Duffy recognized Patrick Blankenship for his two years with Topeka Metro and wished him well in his new endeavor in California.
- d) Linda Lewis Letter – Ms. Duffy read a letter to the board from LIFT passenger Linda Lewis thanking operators and scheduling staff.
- e) Congressional Bill Introduced – Ms. Duffy reported a funding bill has been introduced known as “Investing in America, a Penny at a Time”. \$206M is slated for transportation; \$730M is for state of good repair program.
- f) Meetings – Ms. Duffy reported three public meetings were recently held. National Night Out Kickoff coming up soon and Topeka Metro will participate.
- g) Ride Guide – The Ride Guide coming out in May will replace the current Map book format for one-fourth the price.
- h) ADA Standing Pad Dedication – The recent standing pad dedication was well attended and well received by the community.
- i) Transit Day at the Statehouse – The March 8<sup>th</sup> Transit Day was well attended by legislators.
- j) Southwest Transit Association (SWTA) President’s Award – Ms. Duffy reported she was honored at the February SWTA Annual Conference with the President’s Award.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- Jim Ogle made a motion for the board to recess into executive session at 5:06 PM for the purpose of having an attorney-client privileged consultation with our attorney to discuss confidential legal matters, and to discuss matters relating to employer-employee negotiations for purposes of ongoing discussions with ATU 1360. The open meeting session would resume at 5:25 PM. The motion was seconded by Jim Daniel, and the motion passed unanimously.
- At 5:25 PM the open meeting session resumed. Jim Ogle made a motion to extend the Executive Session for 15 minutes, with the open meeting session to resume at 5:40pm. The motion was seconded by Jim Daniel, and the motion passed unanimously.
- At 5:40 PM the open meeting session resumed. Jim Ogle made a motion to extend the Executive Session for 15 minutes, with the open meeting session to resume at 5:55pm. The motion was seconded by Jim Daniel, and the motion passed unanimously.
- At 5:55 PM the open meeting session resumed.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Leisa Shepherd  
Topeka Metro Board Secretary



## Where We Stand

For the past five years, our Board has challenged Topeka Metro's management to look at opportunities to achieve two goals:

- How can Topeka Metro provide better service?
- How can Topeka Metro do so at a lower cost?

We challenged management to move into a new era of transportation solutions befitting the capital city of Kansas. We believe the record supports management having done as we asked.

- 1) Management significantly reduced scheduled overtime.** The savings achieved in reducing overtime came from relieving operators in the field and not just at Quincy Street Station. By spending a few dollars driving operators to switch shifts mid-route, we are saving thousands of dollars in scheduled overtime.
- 2) Management operates the fixed route system with fewer buses.** This was accomplished by improved scheduling of both operators and equipment. This reduces both operating and capital costs.
- 3) Management responds to customer requests.** Our surveys showed customers' top requests were more service later in the day and more service on weekends. The decrease in scheduled overtime and reduced operating costs allowed management to expand weekday and Saturday service (Oakland route) with no increase in tax dollars. The Board will continue to ask management to survey customers for their input and make changes that support customer needs.
- 4) Management is improving bus stops, benches and shelters throughout the Topeka Metro system.** Management has converted the entire fixed-route system to designated stops, which should result in fewer buses running late and will open the door to new technology, like a "Where's my bus?" app for smart phones. Significant improvements have been made to the bus stops themselves, both improving customer experience and beautifying Topeka's streets. Multiple new shelters have been erected. New, park-like benches have been placed at several stops, with more to come. Most importantly, concrete pads are being laid at designated stops throughout the city. Previously, benches and shelters were often located in places that made it impossible for persons using wheelchairs to use Topeka Metro's fixed route buses. Even persons without disabilities often found our bus bench and shelter locations challenging. Topeka Metro's new, fully-accessible concrete pads, bus benches and shelters have expanded access and convenience for all customers on our fixed routes.
- 5) Management reduced cost of paratransit (Lift) service.** By providing free fixed-route service to eligible paratransit customers through the FREEdom Pass incentive, management has enhanced the rider experience for those customers while reducing costs. A customer need not pre-plan a fixed-route trip a day in advance, as with a paratransit trip. Since every paratransit trip costs over nine times the cost of a ride on the fixed route system, moving some paratransit customers to the fixed route allowed management to save operating costs and reduce the number of our Lift buses from fifteen to ten.



- 6) **Management utilized innovative partnerships and grants to help fund bikeshare.** Management expanded our customer's transportation options by establishing the FIRST bike share in Kansas. A substantial amount of the cost of Topeka Metro Bikes (TMB) has come from new partnerships and grants. In its first year, TMB had more riders than Kansas City's bike-share system. This bike program expands the service area by providing customer flexibility to share a bike and journey beyond our bus stops and complete the first or last mile of a trip. Civic leaders have hailed TMB as an important "Quality of Life" improvement in Topeka.
- 7) **Management works to fairly compensate all employees.** The Board directed management to conduct market comparisons on the salaries for all employees, both those represented by the Union and those not represented. Based on that comparison and some salary adjustments, we believe compensation levels accurately reflect the employment market and skill set for each position—represented or non-represented.

Topeka Metro has achieved these advances through a broad vision for transportation in our community and effective fiscal management of the agency. The Board has not asked for, nor received, a mill-levy increase in seven years.

We achieved these milestones while still offering all employees company-paid health care and other benefits, including a \$500 reimbursement for sleep apnea treatment. While other employers have raised the employee contribution for health insurance, the Topeka Metro Board has not. Wages and health insurance are Topeka Metro's largest investment each year. The Board hopes to maintain these generous benefits, although it may be difficult.

The Board further challenges the idea that the only way to run the Topeka Metro is as a publicly operated entity. To this end, the Board voted unanimously to begin the process of inviting private companies to tell us if they can operate our system more efficiently, less expensively and with better service than we now provide. We expect many responses to our recent Request for Information (RFI).

It is an ongoing process realizing our vision. The accomplishments outlined here did not happen overnight and they did not happen without the hard work and dedication of all Topeka Metro employees. These accomplishments were only possible by constantly seeking ways to improve service, create efficiencies and reduce operating costs.

We live in a dramatically changing transportation landscape. Our answer to providing transportation solutions for Topeka means we must operate differently from how we did 30, 20 or even 10 years ago.

In this challenging environment, management repeatedly reached out to Union leadership seeking to work together to improve scheduling, customer service and to find ways to reduce inefficiencies. These efforts have been met with rejection time and time again. Just one example is management's offer of a work week for some operators of four ten-hour days, to improve employee satisfaction while creating sustainable operating efficiencies. The Union grieved this effort despite its obvious benefits to operators and Topeka Metro.

The Board hopes the recent letter from Union leadership indicates a new willingness to work with management to make changes necessary to deliver better service to our community, provide great working conditions for employees, and achieve on-going operating and cost efficiencies.

**Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority**



Elsie Eisenbarth, Chair, Board of Directors





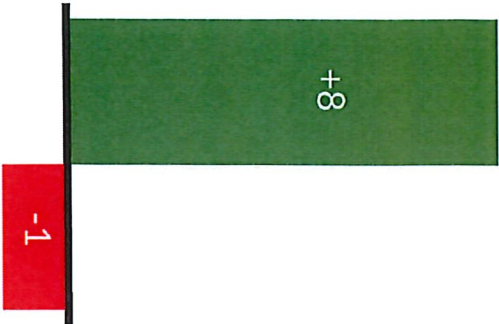
## Topeka Metro Accomplishments

**Topeka Metro completed the following without a mill levy increase in seven years:**

- Improvements at bus stops - concrete pads, shelters, benches, bike racks, etc.
- Improved ADA access throughout the system
- Extended the #29 route to Urish Road to reach several high demand medical facilities
- Added a new route, the #7 Washburn, providing north-south service to mid-town
- Added the #1 Oakland route on Saturday
- Extended evening service hours
- Service to Amtrak station connects passenger rail with bus service
- Started the FREEdom Pass incentive, moving Lift customers from the more expensive service to less expensive, fully accessible fixed-route buses, reducing the overall number of buses in our fleet
- Implemented an income-based, reduced fare initiative, increasing access to those most in need of transit services
- Implemented Camp Metro bus ridership training program for community youth
- Fostered new partnerships with Washburn, Washburn Tech, and USD 501 to get young customers on the bus
- Provided transit education at school enrollments, orientations, and other school activities
- Created FTA award-winning "Kids Ride Free," promotion
- Nationally recognized community collaboration to "Remember Rosa," with mobile museum and programming throughout 2015-16
- Participated in numerous community events such as National Night Out, Spirit of Kansas, Girls State, Shrine Bowl, Food Truck Festival, Up With People, etc.
- Implemented promotions throughout the year, honoring voters, veterans, seniors, volunteers, families and others
- Fostered Shawnee County District Court partnership for jurors to ride the bus free
- Numerous public meetings, and education and outreach efforts
- Created Kansas' first bikeshare system, with great success, introducing thousands of new customers to Topeka Metro's array of transportation services
- Procured 3-bike bicycle racks for all fixed-route buses
- Designated Stops on all routes, with real-time bus tracking soon to follow
- Operating a modern fleet of low-emission buses
- Procured new "smart" fare boxes and ticket vending machines, and implemented new fare media

1

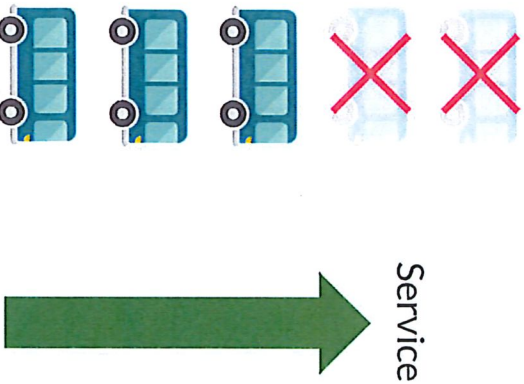
Operator relief in the field reduced wasteful overtime costs



Savings from reduced overtime is 8 times the cost of relieving operators in the field.

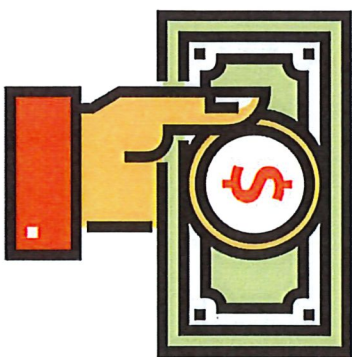
2

Reduced number of buses and increased service



3

Cost savings helped avoid a tax increase



TMTA has not asked for or received a mill levy increase in 7 years.