

**PIERCE TRANSIT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES**

March 13, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Walker called the special study session meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present:

Marty Campbell, Chair of the Board, Pierce County Councilmember
Olgy Diaz, City of Tacoma Councilmember
Daryl Eiding, Mayor of the City of Edgewood (*representing Puyallup and Edgewood*)
John Hines, City of Tacoma Councilmember
Ryan Mello, Pierce County Councilmember
Shannon Reynolds, City of Fircrest Councilmember (*representing University Place and Fircrest*)
Kim Roscoe, Mayor of Fife (*representing Fife/Milton/ Pacific/Auburn/Gig Harbor/ Ruston/Steilacoom*)
Kristina Walker, Vice Chair of the Board, City of Tacoma Councilmember
Jason Whalen, City of Lakewood Mayor

Commissioners excused:

John Hoheusle, representing ATU and IAM unions

Staff present:

Mike Griffus, Chief Executive Officer
Chris Schuler, Chief Financial Officer
Deanne Jacobson, Clerk of the Board
Brittany Carbullido, Deputy Clerk of the Board

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OPENING REMARKS AND HOUSEKEEPING

Vice Chair Walker welcomed attendees and gave instructions for meeting protocol.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION

1. Status Update of the Maintenance Operations Base Improvement (MOBI) Project

Sr. Project Manager Brian Matthews provided a PowerPoint presentation that detailed the operational benefits that the improvements will bring to the base, which included, but not limited to improved safety, added capacity for electric buses and other vehicles, reduce time required to service buses, ability to service articulated buses for future BRT routes, ability to support Sound Transit's articulated and double-decker buses, of which Sound Transit will provide funding for.

The Board received an aerial overview of the base improvements delineated by work that has been completed or is near completion as well as improvements that have not started or in early development. The Board also reviewed the improvements that have been completed or are close to completion and the project costs thereof.

Mr. Matthews reviewed the new Fuel and Wash Station, which is near completion, and noted that this improvement increases the fueling capacity and will ensure that the buses are washed regularly. Lighting and safety have been improved as well.

The Board was advised that the current base plan supports nine charging stations and an additional three charging stations. He reviewed the improvements that have already been made and/or scheduled to be made to Building 6, which will be the new Facilities Maintenance location.

Mr. Matthews reviewed the work that will entail reorienting the buses on the lot so that they line up with the fuel and wash station facing east and west.

The Board received an overview of the proposed new Maintenance and Operations Building. It was noted that the level of build out will depend on funding, and he reviewed the four phases of construction for the proposed Maintenance Building, noting the last phase will include demolition of the existing maintenance building.

Staff responded to questions about funding, with Chief Financial Officer Chris Schuler advising that the agency will apply for a TIFIA loan at the end of Q1 this year for up to \$140 million. He also noted the agency is pursuing additional grants and the project will be funded by local dollars, the TIFIA loan, and any grants received. Pierce Transit intends to borrow as little as possible.

Staff responded to inquiries about staffing needs to complete the project. Mr. Schuler advised that the agency anticipates needing an accountant-type position to assist with the administration of the TIFIA loan, which has already been built into the cost of the TIFIA loan. No other positions are anticipated to be needed during the construction phase of the project.

The Board requested that staff create a clear document that shows the funding and all the phases of the MOBI project and that the document be used as a dashboard to counter/check against what improvements have been done, the cost of each segment, and funding applied/funding received.

Staff responded to various design and construction phase questions, with staff confirming that a new Maintenance Building will be needed to service the articulated buses to support the Pacific Avenue/SR-7 Bus Rapid Transit project.

Staff also advised that the Zero Emissions Transition Plan study is nearing conclusion and recommendations from this Plan would need to be incorporated into the MOBI Plan.

2. Preliminary Discussion Whether to Pursue a Ballot Measure in 2023 to Collect Additional Sales Tax

Vice Chair Walker advised that the study session meeting will most likely creep into the 4:00 p.m. meeting and there will be a short break between the meetings.

Executive Director of Planning and Community Development Ryan Wheaton provided a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed the operating service levels pre-recession, past efforts of ballot measures, efforts to increase service levels, and obstacles that caused dips in service levels, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. Wheaton reviewed the current taxing authority of peer transit agencies, noting that Pierce Transit operates below its legal taxing authority rate.

The Board also reviewed the current sales tax rates of March 1, 2023, for Tacoma, Auburn, Pacific, and the other cities/towns in the PTBA. The data showed that all cities in the PTBA are currently at 10 percent or above.

The Board reviewed service improvements that could be implemented if Pierce Transit were to collect sales tax at its full taxing authority of 0.9 percent.

Mr. Wheaton shared the results from the surveys conducted from 2019-2022 for support of transit expansion, noting that support for expansion dropped from 2021 to 2022. He noted that EMC will conduct another Community Survey over the next two months and that information should be available for the April or May Board meeting.

Mr. Wheaton reviewed a timeline of milestones that would need to be completed for a proposal to be placed on the ballot in November 2023.

Chair Campbell provided comments in support of reaching the full taxing authority of 0.9 percent sales tax collection rate, noting that there is a need for more public transit, especially during the pandemic, and that public transit is an essential service.

Mr. Wheaton advised that Pierce Transit will develop an extensive planning document that will show what expanded service could be and the estimated costs for the increased service.

Commissioner Roscoe expressed that the Agency needs to be very clear that the additional tax monies would be used for service and not for the Bus Rapid Transit and MOBI projects.

Commissioner Hines noted that he would like to see the results of the surveys conducted in 2011 and 2012, when the Agency previously went to ballot, and requested a cost estimate for a current ballot measure.

Mr. Wheaton answered questions relating to Pierce Transit's readiness to prepare for a ballot measure in 2023, noting that it will be tight and that the Agency will need support from the cities/towns in the PTBA and other major community stakeholders.

Commissioner Roscoe inquired about opposition groups that might come out against the measure and noted that she would look to staff for assisting with identifying potential opposition groups.

CEO Griffus reported that staff is dedicated to the work that it needs to do in support of a ballot measure and expressed that the community needs service (*Commissioner Diaz arrived at 4:11 p.m.*) the service.

Commissioner Whalen expressed that he is supportive of additional service but is concerned with the capital projects that are ongoing. He noted that Pierce Transit needs to make sure that these projects go well and that the public has confidence in Pierce Transit.

Mr. Wheaton reported that staff will return no later than May with the community survey results.

Vice Chair Walker advised that the Board will take a five-minute break before starting the next meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Edinger and Campbell **moved** and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 4:17 p.m.

Motion **carried**, 9-0.



Deanne Jacobson
Clerk of the Board



Kristina Walker, Vice Chair
Board of Commissioners