



Pierce Transit
Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG)
Hybrid Meeting via Zoom
Minutes – Thursday, October 26, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 5:36pm

ROLL CALL AND ATTENDANCE

CTAG Member **Present:** Linda Moran (Chair), Tony Hester (Vice Chair), Deirdre Maxwell, Kye Robinson, Marlene Druker, Ben Yoder, Brandi DeCoteau (joined at 18:00), Don Green (joined at 18:15)

CTAG Members **Absent:** Maddie Merton (excused), Ivan Tudela (excused), Parker Hill,

PIERCE TRANSIT EMPLOYEES AND PRESENTERS PRESENT

Rachel Holzhaeuser, Ashley Baillie, Tammy Apthorp, Mike Griffus, Darin Stavish, Erik Jaszewski, Julie Stutzke, Chris Schuler, Christian Handsaker, Lisa McVay, Thomas Wittman, Tina Lee

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September minutes moved by Dierdre, Tony second.
Minutes approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mike Griffus, CEO

Quarterly Update:

Mike discussed: Update on ridership continues to grow 20% over last year. August 561,000 passengers. Most transit agencies are doing a reset on ridership, and not comparing to pre pandemic, but instead comparing to how many riders gaining to set a new baseline. Pierce Transit operator applicants has increased. Mike projects it's due to signing bonus and wage increase. Current operator class with 25 students and graduation is next Friday. Employee incentive for applicants that pass class has helped as well. Pierce Transit hired 3 more instructors to keep up with class growth, for a total of 12 instructors. Journey Level Mechanics are needed and there is currently a shortage across the nation. In 2023 hired 43 new maintenance positions and are 5 short. Pierce Transit is working on a 6-year strategic plan for the agency. Commissioners saw a draft plan in September and requested some changes. Suggested corporate agency dashboard to manage ridership, finance, employee retention. Currently working on community engagement and outreach. Hoping for board approval by the end of the year. On the Pierce Transit board, Mayor Roscoe (Fife) term ran out in October. no longer on board. Mayor Eidinger (Edgewood) stepping down at the end of the year. Edgewood able to put in for a replacement, have not done so yet. In 2024, Board will have a compensation review that happens every 4 years, based on population based on benefit area and board representation is based on population of the



cities. Runner service is going; Puyallup approved by board in October and will be live mid-November. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) turned into enhanced bus project, still planning on launching service next spring. Waiting for reply from Sound Transit if funds previously allocated to BRT can be used to Enhanced Bus Project. Installing transit signal priority on SR7 to help speed up bus service. Internal team is working on branding for enhanced bus to help customers identify difference between enhanced bus and regular bus as they will both be using the same stops. Pierce Transit is working on a service recovery project to get community input on how to reallocate resources and strategically increase transit services. Customer experience action plan in works to set out a goal map of how to address specific action items based on customer feedback. Priorities include, route frequency, convenience, communication, accessibility, safety, cleanliness. Pierce Transit met with JBLM about partnership. Pierce Transit needs property for CDL training and testing and JBLM is open to trying to help PT with that. JBLM received vehicles that are battery electric, but they do not have the infrastructure to charge them, and PT will be helping JBLM develop that infrastructure. Agency's United Way campaign started Monday and will go through November 15. Last year, PT employees raised over \$37K and hoping to beat that number this year. The goal is to help 15K families out of poverty by 2028.

Q&A:

Tony: Asked if we know when the partnership with the base will take place?

Mike: Working on an interlocal agreement, currently in initial stages.

Tony: For the enhanced bus, is everything on schedule to take place?

Mike: The enhanced bus is a multilayer process. It will start as an express bus service and then will build out to include stations. business access travel lanes, and roundabouts. Still on track to start March 2024.

Finance Team, Chris Schuler, Julie Stutzke, Lisa McVay

Budget Update:

Chris presented: Asked for feedback from CTAG on how they want the budget to be presented in the future. Chris presented a high-level overview on how board approval works for budget approval. Nov.13 is a study session and open for public comment; Dec. 11 budget will go to Board of Commissioners for a vote on approval. Budget items include the launch of the enhanced bus service; operator and fleet maintenance recruitment; behavioral health program for those in crisis at our bus stops and transit centers to provide resources to those in need; fleet electrification; Wayfinding at Tacoma dome station to help guide riders. Projections had to be made for 2024 budget. Sales Tax is 84% of funding services for Pierce Transit. Based on recent collections, increase of 2.48% from 2023, which is a conservative approach. Wage adjustments have not been finalized yet. Saw smaller increase in benefit cost than other public agencies, specifically medical benefit cost. Increasing fixed route service hours to help increase budget. Goal is to get to 500K operating hours. CARES funding for Covid will be billed out in 2023 for the final year. Funding from Pierce County Behavioral Health for behavioral health organization. Miscellaneous includes advertising, sale of buses that are old and need to be sent to auction, and sale of renewable fuel credits. Operating Expenditures saw an increase in benefits and wages, which will continue to increase as we fill vacancies. Increase in 15 new positions for the agency, some of which will be grant funded. Capital budget has approx. 74 projects that are ongoing. Bigger projects include Spanaway Transit Center parking lot expansion, Bus and Shuttle fleet replacement. Budget has 6-year plan to ensure expenses do not exceed revenue. Public meeting next month with more thorough information.

Q&A:

Tony: Asked for copy of presentation in word format due to visibility. Asked how many buses and shuttles were



being replaced? Why are they being replaced?

Julie: 11-13 buses and 47 shuttles will be replaced.

Chris: Replacement is due to older buses aging out and the cost of maintenance being too high for PT to keep them.

Tony: Do we know where we are getting these buses from or is PT searching for a vendor?

Chris: Typically go through the state vendor

Tony:

Chris:

Tony: Are accessibility features factored into the total cost or does that come after?

Chris: Budget includes total cost

Linda: Asked the group if they want the budget feedback presented any other way.

No comments.

Darin Stavish, Principal Planner
Thomas Whittman, Nelson & Milgard
Bus System Recovery Plan Draft

Darin gave a brief, high-level overview of Bus System Recovery Plan.

Thomas discussed recovery plan steps and why the plan was started. Showed what data was reviewed through Fall 2022 travel patterns and cell phone data (not just with riders) and how that data was used to find the gaps in service. Future projections of where high-density housing and population is located, and where high travel centers are located, and what opportunities are there to service those areas and needs.

Discussed the two phases of outreach. First phase had stakeholder meetings, Design Your Own System Survey, Operator feedback from approximately 50 operators. More than 750 responses about priorities, highest response for Pierce Transit. Used data to develop two different scenarios, one focusing on more frequency and the other focusing on later evening services. Those two scenarios were presented to the public in 11 outreach events, including event tables at local events and farmers markets, virtual and in person open houses, and drop-in outreach at transit centers. Second on-line survey had over 300 responses, supported previous data of later evening and higher frequency services. From the public feedback and both phases of outreach, Nelson & Milgard recommend a phased implementation plan to include a mix of improved frequency and how early/late services runs. Six phases, depending on need for operators and mechanics. Phase 1-March 2024, implement Puyallup Runner to replace route 425 and the eastern portion of route 409. Expand Tideflats Runner to replace route 63 (will require a vehicle larger than a minivan). Expand Ruston Runner to replace Route 13. Phase 2 improve frequency on Route 3 to every 15-minutes on weekdays. Route 3 travels through high need areas and connects to high need routes at Tacoma Mall. Phase 3 improve frequency on Route 2 to every 15 minutes on weekdays, between 06:00am – 06:00pm. As increasing ridership on Route 2 will increase ridership on other routes. Phase 4 improve span of Frequent and Core routes. Core routes defined as highest ridership, highest productivity, and serve the highest need of PTBA. Frequent routes are 1, 2, and 3. Core routes are 4, 41, 48, 52, 54, 57, 2020, 206, 402, and 500. Phase 5 improve frequency on route 402 to operate every 30 minutes on weekdays and Saturdays. This would restore east Pierce County's primary route frequency. Also, operate route 100 one hour earlier on weekdays. Phase 6 improve Core routes frequencies, so they operate at 30-minutes service on weekdays and Saturdays. Next steps, presenting Draft Bus System Recovery Plan by end of November, Final BSRP by the board by end of December.



Q&A:

Tony: Asked if rides that increased frequency would go back to their original frequency after 6:00pm?

Thomas: Routes that currently have a frequency of 30 minutes would not change.

Tony: How long would it take for these service changes to take effect?

Darin: Completed by 2026 as changes only happen with route changes twice a year (March and September)

Tina: Dependent on operator availability, so these phases can happen sooner than later.

Tony: Are the routes being cut will the drivers be issued different routes?

Darin: Yes

Tony: How many operators are needed to move the plan forward?

Darin: Nelson & Milgard has calculated how many drivers are needed per phase. A matrix will be made for board presentation and can be shared with Tony.

Tony: This change should make connections better, are we able to see if that really did happen? What worked and what didn't happen?

Thomas: Ridership data will be provided monthly to present this data to see if ridership connections are increased.

Tony: Will timepoints change with the increased frequency?

Tina: Currently looking at our on-time performance issues and how we can make that better. We may look at fixes once this service is implemented, and how we can communicate that with the community.

Tony: Wondering if a plan like this can be implemented into something like the Shuttle service or would that need to be different as there are a lot of gaps? Gaps are timing issues waiting for pick up, drop offs, and route inefficiency.

Tina: Shuttle has a new shuttle software (which will be VIA, same as Runner) that will build more flexibility and opportunity to help with those issues.

Christian: The concerns you (Tony) raised will be addressed. The BSRP process will not be used as a format to address the Shuttle issues.

Linda: When requesting feedback from CTAG can it be done through a form?

Tina: Yes

Marlene: What is the timeline for these changes? Can phases be put together based on operator availability?

Darin: Timeline is to be complete by September 2026 and be implemented at service changes. Yes, they can be combined.

Tina: Phases can also be slowed down based on operator and mechanic availability.

Erik Jaszewski, Senior Planner

Runner Update:

Erik provided background on Runner service. To request a ride, riders can use an app or call-in service. Anyone can ride and is fully ADA compliant. Service available 7 days a week 7am-10p, goal is less than a 15-minute wait. Minivans and minibuses will be used as modes transportation. Same fares and payment methods as bus, except cash. Group or shared rides for efficiency and timelier pick-ups/drop-offs. Bike or stroller accessible as space allows. JBLM has limited hours, is call-in only, and serves stop to stop instead of curb-to-curb type service. Runner was implemented to fill gaps in transit network, to and from major hubs, first and last mile connections, off peak service, support or replace underperforming bus routes, also costs less than regular bus service. Runner performance has increased since implementation. Spanaway and Ruston/Tideflats have shown promising growth. Asked for more budget to increase the service. WSDOT grant received July 2023 for new



Puyallup Runner service. Pierce Transit received bids to find best on-demand services for a competitive price. Via was the chosen on-demand experience and will be managing and delivering all aspects of the Runner service under the agency direction. Via is a private company with over 100 deployments in the U.S. and is currently working with King County Metro and has an international portfolio. Pierce Transit will be rolling out a new app experience with an easy-to-use interface. Riders that have similar trips will be grouped into shared rides to reduce overall wait times. The algorithm in the software is designed to avoid taking riders away from the bus system, so if another transit option is nearby and arriving within 15 minutes, riders will be redirected to other transit modes if it is appropriate for their trip. App will be available a few days before Nov. 14, which is when the Puyallup Runner service will be available. Puyallup Runner projected to provide higher level of service than current route and will eventually replace Route 425 and shorten Route 409. To get the word out of the Puyallup Runner, Pierce Transit has put out paid digital and physical ads, subscriber lists, news releases, and is open to additional ideas from CTAG to promote community awareness. Spanaway, Ruston, Tideflats Runners will be transitioning to Via on Jan. 2, 2024. Phone number will remain the same.

Q&A:

Marlene: When unable to figure out transit options, Google is another option that shows transit routes. Will Runner be including a Google option?

Erik: Unfortunately, no as Google does not have any micro transit options. Pierce Transit is aiming to have the Runner in the Transit app as well.

Marlene: Does the Transit app work on a desktop or phone only?

Erik: Currently phone only but trying to get desktop capability.

Ben: Runner service is point to point, does that mean we can take from our house to another location on the zone?

Erik: 4/5 Runner zones are point to point, including Puyallup. JBLM is stop to stop service only. Spanaway is in zone and out of zone for specific locations like Spanaway Transit Center, Walmart, PLU, or any of those certain areas nearby.

Linda: When you use the app and put a pickup/dropoff destination will it show you if that is in the zone?

Erik: Yes, the new app will have this capability.

Tony: Has the new app had user testing for screen readers and other assisted technology?

Erik: Will have screen reading capability, high contrast mode, multiple languages, and web app available.

Tony: But do we know that actually works?

Erik: I am not sure how Via testing works internally. What they are doing for us is something that has been done more than 100 other times by them throughout the country.

Tina: I was testing the Via app for Seattle use. Are we able to have CTAG members do this for our Runner service and test the app?

Erik: I can look into that and see if it's possible.

Tony: I would be willing to test it with my voice over, etc.

Linda: Direct mailer sent out for initial Runner launch. Will the same thing be done for the Puyallup Runner?

Erik: No direct mail will be sent out as recommendation from Via.

CTAG Member Transit Talk

MEMBER DELIBERATION

CTAG Member Committee Reports

Tony: Update from Ausha on signage downtown. Had to switch vendors because Braille specifications were incorrect. Once new signs are created, we will be going out to community organizations to make sure everything is correct and we should be able to roll out testing soon.

Rachel: Extended offers to 3 new members for CTAG. Will be presented to the Board and if approved they will be starting in January. Reminder that next 2 meetings will be on the third Thursday, Nov. 16 and Dec. 21. If you have events going on in your sphere, please let us know.

ACTION ITEMS

Rachel to provide Word document of finance presentation to Tony.

Darin/Thomas to provide Word document for Thomas' presentation to Tony.

Rachel and Tina to coordinate quarterly presentations on BSRP phase implementations success.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:23pm

Moved by: Tony

Seconded by: Ben

Submitted by: Ashley Baillie

Approved by: