



Department Source: Public Works

To: City Council

From: Public Works Staff – Public Transportation Advisory Commission

Council Meeting Date: April 1, 2024

Re: Recommended Changes by Public Transit Advisory Commission (PTAC) Establishing Legislation.

## Executive Summary

Request from PTAC for Council to consider amending the establishing legislation in order to be more effective and consistent as an advisory commission.

## Discussion

The PTAC since its inception has historically had difficulty meeting quorum requirements. The result has been inconsistent monthly meetings and lack of effectiveness as an advisory commission.

The PTAC has discussed the establishing legislation in their recent meetings and has requested Council to consider amending the ordinances related to the PTAC to include:

- 1) Adding language that will include an annual report to Council regarding commission work.
- 2) Amending the membership requirements to eliminate most of the required membership and moving those individuals to the existing "consideration" section.
- 3) Amending the Quorum requirements that would replace the current requirement of seven (7) members with a simple majority of appointed members.

The above was discussed at the February 20, 2024 meeting and passed unanimously at that meeting.

Staff has no issue with items #1 and #2. However, it is recommended that PTAC officially reach out to Columbia College and Stephens College for their thoughts on this change.

In regards to item #3, staff is of the opinion that quorum should be a defined number to avoid confusion. While staff believes it is common practice to have quorum be one more than half of the total members, a discussion with the Law Department on that may be warranted. A reduction in total members is also an option that could be considered.

## Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: N/A

Long-Term Impact: N/A



# City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

## Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

### Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Inclusive and Equitable Community, Secondary Impact: Reliable and Sustainable Infrastructure, Tertiary Impact: Organizational Excellence

### Comprehensive Plan Impacts: 07/17/2023

Primary Impact: Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility, Secondary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Tertiary Impact: Inter-Governmental Cooperation

## Legislative History

Date	Action
05/20/2013	B96-13 City Code Chapter 2, Article V, Division 12, Sections 2-336 to 2-345.

## Suggested Council Action

Provide guidance to staff regarding the proposed amended language in the City Code to enhance the function of the Public Transportation Advisory Commission.

## Re: Recommended Changes to PTAC Establishing Legislation

To: Mayor and City Council,

Over the past few months, the Public Transit Advisory Commission has been reviewing and discussing our establishing legislation, including a review of history and minutes surrounding discussion of its establishment. For historical context, it appears this legislation was last significantly reviewed in 2013 when the commission was created from a former task force. In performing this review, the commission's primary goals were to 1) ensure that the duties of the commission listed in the legislation represent the work the commission is doing and would like to do in the future, and 2) to address our issues and concerns with regularly making quorum and being able to meet. In that spirit, and with a unanimous vote at our February meeting, we recommend the following changes to the city code, Chapter 2, Article V, Division 12, Sections 2-336 to 2-345.

Under Section 2-337 Duties, the commission would recommend the addition of a new point 8 (moving the existing point 8 down to 9), requiring an annual report to city council. The goal of including this duty is to regularly report the work the commission is doing to city council, in accordance with our other duties already established. We suggest the wording of this new point may read something like:

"Send an annual report to city council, within the first quarter of the calendar year, that includes: commission activity over the last year, commission plans for the next year, a report of the transit system over the last year, and any recommendations the commission may have for council."

Under Section 2-338 Membership, the commission would recommend a fairly significant generalization of members, eliminating most of the required membership and moving them to the existing "consideration" section instead. In reviewing the history of this legislation, there was considerable discussion around the composition of membership, with the mayor at the time (McDavid) being adamant that college and university membership be included in order to allow for collaboration and increase ridership among students. While the commission wholeheartedly agrees with the spirit behind this, we also have seen in reality some of the other concerns brought up by the council at the time - that these requirements could cause issues with membership and quorum (and that changes could be made in the future). As we have had issues with membership and quorum over the last few years, we suggest the shift of these members to the "consideration" section as a compromise, while keeping the MU representative as-is due to the city's existing relationship through the Tiger Line. We also recommend elimination of the one-year student term, as this has not only been the most difficult position to keep filled, but it's also been difficult for student members to become familiar with commission business and contribute while only being on the commission for one year. The commission suggests the wording of this new section may read something like:

"The commission shall consist of thirteen (13) members. One (1) member shall be a representative of the University of Missouri appointed by the University of Missouri administration. The remaining twelve (12) at-large members shall be appointed by the city council. Consideration shall be given to the appointment of a Columbia College student or administrator, a Stephens College student or administrator, an eligible Columbia Transit paratransit rider, an owner or representative of a business, a member of the disabilities commission, a member of the bicycle/pedestrian commission, a representative of the Columbia Public School District, and/or a representative of Local Motion."

Under Section 2-340 Meetings; Quorum; Rules, the commission would suggest replacing the quorum of seven (7) with a more flexible quorum consisting of a simple majority of the currently appointed members of the commission. As we've historically had issues with having a fully appointed membership, this simple change could have a significant impact on our ability to meet. In 2013, this exact idea was brought up by Mr. Schmidt, and Ms. Thompson indicated only that "the Council would need to make whatever was decided clear and concise in the ordinance" (with no further indication in the minutes as to why the current quorum was selected over that idea). The commission suggests a possible wording of this statement as:

"The commission shall meet at least quarterly. A simple majority of currently appointed members shall constitute a quorum to do business."

For council and staff benefit, I have included all of the legislative history we reviewed on the following pages. The Public Transit Advisory Commission appreciates the council's consideration in reviewing and updating this legislation.

Thank you,  
Matt Wright  
Chair, Public Transit Advisory Commission

### **City Council Minutes – 3/18/13 Meeting – REP42-13 Public Transit Advisory Commission.**

Mr. Matthes provided a staff report.

Mayor McDavid made a motion directing staff to bring forward an ordinance for Council consideration.

Ms. Hoppe commented that she felt the membership was too narrow as there was not enough of a public component and did not reflect the fact the City was working with the Columbia Public School District. She suggested expanding the membership by adding an equal number of public non-student residents and a member of the Columbia Public School District. She understood the draft ordinance included a representative of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission and thought a representative of Columbians for Modern Efficient Transportation (CoMET) should be included as they had been focusing on transit and had 3,000 members and 80 organizations committed to their initiative. She also understood the need for a paratransit rider because the City wanted to know if savings could be had with that system and thought a member of the Disabilities Commission was also needed for disabled persons that traveled on the regular transit routes. She thought a thirteen member commission might be needed instead, and believed subcommittees could be used to focus on particular issues. Mr. Matthes understood Ms. Hoppe was recommending four additional members as representatives of the Disabilities Commission, CoMET, the Columbia Public School District and a general member. Ms. Hoppe stated that was correct.

Mr. Trapp thought they risked the commission being too unwieldy when there were too many members. Mayor McDavid agreed. Mr. Trapp thought a nine member commission was large enough and noted the Council had the ability to appoint three members on whatever criteria they wanted.

Mr. Matthes pointed out the wording included a statement for consideration to be given to the appointment of at least one member who was an owner or representative of a business, and thought that approach could be taken with the Disabilities Commission, CoMET and the Columbia Public School District representatives as that would guide the Council in its decision making without it being required. Ms. Hoppe suggested the Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission be included as a consideration versus a definite member as it would allow for the membership to include a better general public component. Mayor McDavid asked if they were still at nine total members. Mr. Matthes replied his suggestion would be to leave it at nine members, but to add those specific descriptors for consideration. Ms. Nauser understood the number of years the members would serve would need to change since there would be four general vacancies instead of three. Ms. Amin stated that could be resolved by having two members with the same terms.

The motion made by Mayor McDavid directing staff to bring forward an ordinance for Council consideration was seconded by Mr. Trapp and approved unanimously by voice vote.

### **City Council Minutes – 4/15/13 Meeting – B96-13 Repealing Resolution 156-11 which established the Transit System Task Force; amending Chapter 2 of the City Code to abolish the Public Transportation Advisory Commission and to establish the Public Transit Advisory Commission.**

The bill was given second reading by the Clerk.

Mr. Matthes provided a staff report.

Ms. Hoppe understood the Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission the Public Transportation Advisory Commission had asked for some revisions to this ordinance.

Monta Welch, 2808 Greenbriar Drive, read the March 25, 2013 letter from the Public Transportation Advisory Commission, which was a part of the packet. In the letter, the Commission suggested the Council wait to make changes to the constituency of the Public Transportation Advisory Commission until after a consultant review of the current system as they understood an RFP was already being prepared. If the Council decided to proceed with changes, the Commission asked that they change the name of the Commission, maintain the current membership, offer invitations to the desired academic groups, and only expand the number of members as each group accepted. They were uncomfortable with attention placed on attracting student representation without explicit guarantees that the proposed positions would be filled. In addition, they did not want to risk losing the collective knowledge held by the current members. The Commission was also concerned about the lack of a quorum during breaks in the academic calendar and the lack of quorum for three month during the reappointment process.

Mr. Schmidt wondered if the ordinance could be written so that if a seat was vacant for the summer that it would not count against a quorum. He asked if the quorum could be established by the sitting members versus the potential members. Ms. Thompson explained the Council would need to make whatever was decided clear and concise in the ordinance, and noted some students remained in Columbia over the summer months. Mr. Schmidt wondered if Steven

Hanson of the Public Transportation Advisory Commission had anything more to say. Ms. Welch replied she was only asked to read the letter and did not know.

Mr. Schmidt commented that while he appreciated the comments of David Heise, Chair of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission regarding the liaison relationships, he noted the reasons they were eliminating those relationships was due to attendance issues.

Mayor McDavid pointed out that if the changes created a quorum issue, the ordinance could be changed again to address those issues.

Mr. Thomas asked how the idea of this ordinance originated and why the existing Public Transportation Advisory Commission was not included in the process. Mr. Matthes replied this had been a three year process by the Council in terms of streamlining boards and commissions, and noted they had asked for and received input from all of the boards and commissions. This input resulted in the elimination of some boards and commissions that had not met in years and changed the make up of others. He pointed out there had been some quorum issues, the number of members varied, etc., so they tried to address the questions of Council and provide recommendations for changes. The suggested changes for this particular Commission had come from all of the transit conversations in terms of trying to include all of the different customer groups and focusing on transit rather than transportation as a whole. Mr. Thomas stated he did not believe the Public Transportation Advisory Commission was focused on anything other than the bus service. Mr. Matthes stated that was correct, but noted the input provided by the Commission as part of this process suggested an expansion of their purview to all transportation, which would include roads, sidewalks, airport, etc. Staff felt the focus should remain on transit versus a broader approach as transit needed intensive attention.

Ms. Nauser asked if there had been any collaborative efforts with the University of Missouri as it appeared the City and the University were competing for the same customer base, and as a result, would be providing a duplication of government services. She thought a common goal or mission between the City and University should be addressed prior to finalizing changes to the Public Transit Advisory Commission. Mr. Matthes commented that prior to this recent work, the collaboration essentially consisted of the University bidding out its transit services and the City being a competitive provider. The University could do the shuttle work on their own, but it generally consisted of connecting two parking lots to campus, so it was more of a commuting service than a transit service. He pointed out there were many other student riders, and noted almost half of the student riders were on the Black and Gold routes versus the commuter routes. The student customer base had grown significantly, but there were transit budget deficits. He stated there had been collaboration through the Transit System Task Force, whose membership included students and administrators, and that Task Force would be officially disbanded by this ordinance as well. The collaboration did not turn out as they expected, but one of the comments made was that the City did not include them on the Public Transportation Advisory Commission when it had been established, and that the City and the University were both making decisions in a vacuum. This was reflective of those comments and the attempt to reach out to the University of Missouri, Stephens College and Columbia College.

Kathleen Weinschenk, 1504 Sylvan Lane, stated she had previously served on the Public Transportation Advisory Commission, and regardless of the changes made, she believed a representative of the Disabilities Commission should serve on the Public Transit Advisory Commission.

Greg Ahrens, 1504 Sylvan Lane, explained he had served on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission for many years, and had substituted for David Heise as the liaison to the Public Transportation Advisory Commission several times or would stay at the meetings when Ms. Weinschenk was a member of the Commission. He stated he was supportive of repealing the Transit System Task Force as it had not met in a long time, and would be supportive of changing the name of the Public Transportation Advisory Commission instead of abolishing it and starting over in terms of the application process, appointing new members, etc., as there was a lot of important issues needing to be addressed. He thought it would be better to make significant changes after the budget process and after finding out how all of the schools would want to participate. He understood the University had a shuttle system that ran a similar route to the FastCAT route, which was handled through a contract with the City and used City buses, so it was competing with FastCAT. He suggested the Council table the ordinance or only make cosmetic changes to it if they planned to pass it.

Monta Welch, 2808 Greenbriar Drive, stated she was speaking on behalf of People's Visioning, which had a Transportation and Infrastructure group, and they would encourage the community to find a good solution for mass transit. She understood there was at least one representative of the University of Missouri on the current Public Transportation Advisory Commission so there had been some student input. She suggested the Council follow the recommendations of Steven Hanson of the Public Transportation Advisory Commission. She reiterated that from the perspective of the People's Visioning, they would like to see better mass transit in the community.

Mayor McDavid commented that he believed this was a good idea, but he was uncertain as to whether it would work. They had frequently discussed the frustration of having fragmented transit systems in Columbia in terms of para-transit, the core legacy route underserved and low income people needed, FastCAT, the Black and Gold routes, and the TigerLine, which was a commuter shuttle on the University campus. He pointed out he subtracted the TigerLine ridership from the total number of riders because he did not consider them transit riders, and this brought the number of annual ridership to one million per year, so the City had not grown in terms of transit riders in 20 years. He believed this was a result of the lack of collaboration with the University, and pointed out many other Midwest college towns had 80-100 rides per capita, while Columbia only had about 10 rides per capita. He thought this would only change with collaboration, and felt including students on the Commission was a good idea. He pointed out Stephens College had participated on the Transit System Task Force and had since made a commitment to purchase 500 transit passes at a discount for its students. He commented that the University of Missouri had hired a consultant regarding transit, and the consultant had determined GPS with passenger information technology needed to be added to the buses, a process between the City and the University needed to be established to find solutions to better meet student transit needs, University provided transit service needed to be optimized to meet student needs, service needed to be expanded further into the community adjacent to campus, later service needed to be added, the current underutilized services needed to be reallocated, a shopping/retail shuttle for students on or near campus needed to be implemented, transit marketing website information and social media communications needed to be improved, the ability for students to provide interactive feedback to transit operators was needed, and the relationships between the University of Missouri and Columbia Transit needed to be clarified and defined to ensure the optimization of service quality, control, training and contract terms to meet current and future transit needs of the University of Missouri student body. He agreed they could debate the mix of membership for the proposed Public Transit Advisory Commission, but thought they needed to allow for collaboration as he did not believe they could get to 80- 100 riders without students utilizing the service, and provided Cy-Ride in Ames, Iowa as an example.

Ms. Hoppe stated she believed the present Public Transportation Advisory Commission had some good recommendations and included some good and knowledgeable members, and thought many of the goals could be accomplished without dissolving the existing Commission. She suggested they not abolish the Public Transportation Advisory Commission, and that they rename it to Public Transit Advisory Commission. The duties in the proposed new ordinance could be kept the same as well. She thought they should allow up to 13 members as this would allow the addition of student representation from the University of Missouri, Stephens College and Columbia College. She understood Jim Joy was a University of Missouri representative, and currently on the Commission, so that issue had been addressed. She felt this would allow those entities to participate without losing the existing knowledge and momentum on the Commission. She commented that David Heise was currently serving on the Public Transit Advisory Commission as a liaison from the Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission, so they could keep that requirement or use that has a factor to be considered. She understood the suggestion had been made for a member of the Public Transit Advisory Commission to have a liaison on the Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission.

Mr. Schmidt commented that the liaison relationship could be addressed by appointing a person who had applied through the suggestion that consideration shall be given to members of the various commissions as indicated in the current language. He felt the liaison relationships could be allowed without requiring them.

Mayor McDavid stated the Council could pass the ordinance and allow it to be improved upon in the future. Ms. Hoppe commented that she would prefer not to abolish the present Commission. Mr. Skala thought they should table this to allow time to work out the issues prior to passing it.

Mr. Skala made a motion to table B96-13 to the May 20, 2013 Council Meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hoppe.

Mr. Thomas thought they might want to abolish the Transit System Task Force since it had been established for a specific purpose. He also felt the existing Public Transportation Advisory Commission should be central to the discussions with regard to how it could reinvent itself while the item was tabled. Mr. Skala agreed with regard to the Transit System Task Force, but understood it would be problematic to approve only a portion of the current ordinance. Mayor McDavid agreed they should table it in its entirety.

Mayor McDavid stated he wanted a substantial student role in the new Commission and did not want its role diluted. The motion made by Mr. Skala and seconded by Ms. Hoppe to table B96-13 to the May 20, 2013 Council Meeting was approved unanimously by voice vote.

**City Council Minutes – 5/20/13 Meeting – B96-13 Repealing Resolution 156-11 which established the Transit System Task Force; amending Chapter 2 of the City Code to abolish the Public Transportation Advisory Commission and to establish the Public Transit Advisory Commission.**

The bill was given third reading by the Clerk.

Mr. Matthes provided a staff report.

Ms. Hoppe made a motion to amend B96-13 per the amendment sheet. The motion was seconded by Mr. Skala and approved unanimously by voice vote.

Mr. Thomas commented that he did not believe the University of Missouri Administration and the Missouri Student Association (MSA) represented a distinct philosophy on transit, and preferred an at-large University of Missouri student, which would be appointed by the Council.

Mr. Thomas made a motion to amend B96-13 by changing Section 2-338(a) by removing the member that would be appointed by the Missouri Student Association and adding a member that would be a University of Missouri student appointed by the Council.

Mr. Thomas stated this would not preclude the MSA from promoting its candidates, but it would also allow for the appointment of a student at the University of Missouri that did not necessarily agree with the Missouri Student Association on transit.

The motion made by Mr. Thomas to amend B96-13 by changing Section 2-338(a) by removing the member that would be appointed by the Missouri Student Association and adding a member that would be a University of Missouri student appointed by the Council was seconded by Mr. Schmidt.

Mayor McDavid stated he planned to vote against the motion. He explained he believed part of the problem with transit was the lack of collaboration with the University of Missouri, and felt they needed the MSA at the table. He thought a strong collaboration between the City and University was necessary for the transit system to be successful as was shown through other Midwestern university community models. He commented that the requirement of a MSA representative did not preclude them from appointing a second University of Missouri student that was not associated with the MSA. He reiterated he wanted to provide an open invitation to the MSA to be at the table.

Mr. Thomas understood there was a growing interest in transit at the University of Missouri among students, but the MSA had not really supported this movement. He believed the University of Missouri student representative position should be open to any student that might be working toward establishing more discussion involving transit.

Ms. Hoppe stated this amendment would allow an MSA student to apply, but would also allow for the appointment of students from other groups if the MSA was not interested. She believed this would allow for more flexibility.

Mr. Schmidt noted the Council could contact the MSA and invite them to apply. If they declined, the Council could seek applications from other students. He stated he would support the amendment.

Mr. Trapp commented that what they had done so far had not been able to draw any significant support for transit, which was needed for a viable transit system. He thought they needed an MSA representative even though they risked the appointment of an obstructionist, and noted the obstructionist, if appointed, would be involved in the process. He believed they needed people who had power to do the things they wanted to do, and not necessarily the people who agreed with them philosophically. He felt they needed to broaden their base with regard to transit support, and as a result, he stated he would vote against the amendment.

The motion made by Mr. Thomas and seconded by Mr. Schmidt to amend B96-13 by changing Section 2-338(a) by removing the member that would be appointed by the Missouri Student Association and adding a member that would be a University of Missouri student appointed by the Council was approved by voice vote with only Mr. Trapp, Ms. Nauser and Mayor McDavid voting against it.

Ms. Amin asked for clarification regarding the term of this student position since that person would be appointed by Council. Prior to the amendment, the MSA would have made the appointment and determined the term of appointment, but since Council was making this appointment, clarification on the term was needed. Mayor McDavid suggested the term not last longer than a year. Ms. Amin understood the initial appointment would have a term ending March 1, 2014, and it would be a year term from that point forward.

Steve Hanson, 2105 Doris Drive, stated he was the Chair of the Public Transportation Advisory Commission, and commented that the twice amended ordinance had met most of the concerns of the Commission. He thought the quorum requirement of seven people might create difficulties if the ordinance was passed tonight since they would lose the representatives of the Disabilities Commission and Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission. Ms. Thompson explained the amended bill included a new Section 3, which provided for staggered terms of the existing members to remain on the



Commission, and listed those members and terms. She pointed out they would have eight members while they waited for appointments from Stephens College, Columbia College and the University of Missouri. Ms. Hoppe understood this would alleviate the concern. Mr. Hanson stated that was correct. He pointed out there was a concern with removing the requirement of a Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission and Disabilities Commission representative in terms of their interest if they had to go through the application process for appointment. He felt the input of those representatives had been helpful in terms of experience and knowing how the City operated.

Greg Ahrens, 1504 Sylvan Lane, commented that he was concerned with enumerating the consideration of a representative of Columbians for Modern Efficient Transit (CoMET) by ordinance as it was an advocacy group. He felt that was a bad method to use in creating a law even though it was only a consideration.

Mayor McDavid understood this did not require the appointment of a CoMET representative. It only required consideration of that appointment. Ms. Thompson stated that was correct. Mayor McDavid reiterated there was no requirement for a member of CoMET be on this Commission.

Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Ahrens if he saw the provision for a CoMET member to be considered different from the provision for appointees of Stephens College, Columbia College or the University of Missouri. Mr. Ahrens replied the colleges and University were not really advocacy groups as they were established institutions. He considered CoMET a campaign issue group.

Abigail Thomas, 1511 Richardson Street, stated she was a student at the University of Missouri and believed there was value in having an MSA representative on the Commission. She explained MSA was the organization that was meant to represent all of the students. In addition, they had the means to take polls of students and organize students to form an opinion that represented the majority of students. While she understood the argument of having a general student on the Commission so it opened membership up to everyone, she also believed an MSA student representative was warranted since that was their role at the University. It would also guarantee the student would be knowledgeable on the issue and able to represent the entire student body instead of just his/her own opinion as that person would be required to speak on behalf of all students. She felt there was validity to having an MSA representative on the Commission over a general student.

Monta Welch, 2808 Greenbriar Drive, commented that she believed they needed to be watchful of the issue Mr. Ahrens had mentioned as they made decisions for the community.

Mayor McDavid stated he planned to support this ordinance as he believed a stronger Commission was needed as there was a lot of potential in terms of transit. He commented that the personnel in transit were smart and bright, but the transit system was not creative or innovative. He looked forward to unstifling this creativity as there were models of successful collaborations they had the potential to mimic. He stated he also looked forward to this Commission being more empowered and to the transit work session later in the week.

Mr. Trapp commented that he felt it was important to reach out to the MSA to have someone apply due to the amendment that had passed.

Ms. Hoppe stated she agreed this change strengthened and improved the Commission and hoped its members would attend the work session on Wednesday, May 22 at 3:00 p.m.

The vote on B96-13, as amended, was recorded as follows: VOTING YES: HOPPE, MCDAVID, SCHMIDT, TRAPP, SKALA, THOMAS, NAUSER. VOTING NO: NO ONE.