



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

City Council

Monday, November 5, 2018
6:00 PM

Pre-Council

Conference Room
1A/1B
Columbia City Hall
701 E. Broadway

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:02 pm.

Present: 6 - Trapp, Thomas, Peters, Treece, Skala, and Pltzer

Absent: 1 - Ruffin

Transit discussion including:

- Review of Olsson and Associates Transit Report
- Transit budget
- Goals for transit system

Attachments: [REVISED Transit Power Point Presentation](#)
[Transit Power Point Presentation](#)

Dave Nichols, Public Works Director, stated that the intent tonight is to get out some basic information and to hear from Council. There is a longer two hour meeting that will include a deeper dive. Leah Christian, Parking and Transit Manager, introduced some of the Parking and Transit Advisory Commission members in attendance.

Ms. Christian stated that since 2008, the Transit operating subsidy has increased by \$1.04 million (74.2%). During that time the streets operating subsidy increased by 1.12 million (23%) and the airport subsidy increased by \$73,000 (65%). For FY 2019, we reduced transit operational spending by \$405,641 and transferred \$283,689 of the Transportation Sales Taxes we would normally save up to use as matching funds for grant funded capital projects into operations. If we continue to use up the capital funds we could also lose out on the 80% matching federal funds for capital transit projects because we may not have the 20% match.

The largest increase in the transit operating budget occurred in FY 2016 due to the shifting of funds from capital projects to operations as the City started leasing electric busses, versus purchasing busses. Other reasons for increases in the Transit operating subsidy have been due to rising fuel, maintenance, and personnel costs. The decrease in FY 2017 is due to one-time funding of the Olsson Report in FY 2016.

Transfers from TST for transit CIP have decreased \$316,966 since last year. The transfer amounts vary from year to year based on the amount of FTA grant funding received for equipment purchases and the amount of local match funds required from transportation sales tax.

Ms. Christian stated that the FY18 transit revenue breakdown slide has been updated from the one published with the agenda. She noted that the Transportation Sales Tax and

FTA revenues are quite close at 36% and 31% respectively. FTA funds are matched 50%. The other big revenue is from the shuttle system contracted with the University. Councilman Thomas asked if the 18% from the University generates a profit or is that about the cost of running the shuttle service. Ms. Christian stated that she believes there is revenue there, but she will need to analyze that further and bring that back next time for further discussion.

Councilman Skala understood there were some issues with some of the electric busses. Dale Lynn, Transportation Supervisor, stated that we work with a company that is looking at the current busses to make sure they are up to spec and can determine cost savings. Mr. Nichols added that we are on the hook to buy three more. This is an issue they are working on though.

Mayor Treece asked what the fares would need to be per rider to cover the actual cost of providing the service. Ms. Christian stated that fixed route fare makes up about 5% the revenue and para-transit makes up about 2%, so that would be a significant increase based on that. Mr. Lynn added that approximately 90% of riders also pay half fares. Staff will need to look into this further to get an exact rate per rider. Ms. Christian continued and reviewed the sales tax breakdown noting that they used to fund street lighting projects with transportation sales tax, so some of those dollars have shifted.

Ms. Christian reviewed the history of some of the boards/commissions relating to transit. The Parking Transportation Advisory Commission was created in 2009, followed by the Transit System Task Force in 2011. The Public Transportation Advisory Commission was renamed the Public Transit Advisory Commission in 2013.

Mr. Lynn stated that in 2014 the transit system changed to CoMo Connect. In 2015 we hired a firm to conduct a study of the system and make recommendations. They completed this work in July 2017. Scenario A included Revised Loop Routes with Flex Zones. It simplifies the current transit route system by modifying the alignment of certain routes. It also replaces a number of low ridership routes with Flex Routes that provide curb-to-curb service in areas with lower transit ridership (flex zones) or curb to bus stop outside of the flex zone. Scenario B is a Trunk System with Flex Routes. It transforms the system to one of 6 bi-directional linear routes that utilize the Wabash Station while also maintaining strong connections to the MU campus. It also replaces a number of low ridership routes with Flex Routes that provide curb-to-curb service in areas with lower transit ridership (flex zones) or curb to bus stop outside of the flex zone. Two other scenarios were provided but had very high costs.

As a result of requests for cost reductions during the FY18 budget meetings, the following routes were amended or removed from service, using data provided by the Olsson study, effective November 1, 2017.

- The # 7 Dark Green was eliminated, with a section being added to the #8 Light Green (Eliminated one bus).
- The #6 Pink route was eliminated, and this area was used a Pilot program for a Flex Zone. (Eliminated one bus).
- In an effort to maintain transportation in the remaining neighborhood routes, the #3 Brown route, the #4 Orange routes, the #8 Light Green route and the #9 Purple routes were designed to alternate during all service hours. (Eliminated two buses). These neighborhood routes were determined to have some ridership, however passenger counts were lower than expected.

Recent cost reduction changes were made starting in FY19 including the discontinuation of the flex route that replaced pink route due to very low ridership (began Oct. 1, 2018);

and service ends at 7 p.m. rather than 8 p.m. on weekdays and Saturdays (began Oct. 1, 2018). Other planned changes for FY19 include adopting Olsson recommendation Scenario B with modifications: 6 New Trunk Routes utilizing Wabash Station as hub (beginning June 1, 2019), and to discontinue Saturday service and event services (beginning June 1, 2019).

Mayor Treece stated that he has spoken to plant managers out on the blue line who are having issues with employees being able to get to work. He asked if there is an intent to reinstate that route. Mr. Lynn stated that there is not, but something could be looked into for a customized route for those businesses. At the time this report was conducted, that route had very minimal riders and service was not offered for employees to get to work for multiple shifts. Mr. Lynn stated that customized routes or shifts will be looked into. Mr. Thomas added that in other cities, larger organizations buy passes for each employee. Mr. Lynn added that there are federal rules that state we cannot create a route just for those businesses, as we cannot create a charter service. Staff will continue to look into options on this issue.

Ms. Peters understood we are looking for matching funds for capital transit projects and she asked what projects are included in that. Mr. Nichols stated that busses and stops can be included, but we are using local money for stops and federal money for the busses. Mr. Nichols added that grants have not been coming in as much, so some of the funds used for grant matching purposes have been moved over to operating costs in recent years.

Councilman Pitzer understood many student housing complexes offer their own shuttles and if there is room to work with them. Mr. Lynn replied that it was not efficient for us to offer shuttles running just to the apartments and campus. The apartments wanted their own shuttles to transport residents to and from campus. There are some opportunities to do a fixed route along this corridor which would not just be for students, so it would not be a charter. Mr. Matthes added that one of the cost savings the apartments had were not having to follow federal rules by offering their own private shuttles. They run the shuttles cheaper than we could and they could wrap their own ads on their shuttles.

Mr. Thomas asked if she has looked at operating budgets in comparable cities. Ms. Christian stated she has not yet. Mr. Thomas stated that many university cities pay \$100 per student enrolled, which adds up to a large amount toward the transit system and every student knows they have free ridership on any route. The University of Missouri has not been interested in that but he suggested that perhaps the larger businesses would. Mr. Lynn added that another challenge is a shortage of drivers. Mr. Pitzer asked what a partnership with the public schools might look like. Mr. Matthes stated that now any rider under 18 rides for free. There may be some contribution from the public schools toward the system, but that would all need to be looked into further and additionally we don't cover the entire school district territory. There would likely be a pilot to service the three high schools, but would still allow riders from the general public.

Mr. Matthes asked if there are other items council would like more information on. Mayor Treece stated that he would like to know more on para-transit needs, specifically an on-demand option. Mr. Thomas suggested contracting para-transit services with places that can do it cheaper than we can, such as OATS. Mr. Skala suggested considering cost savings by downsizing the busses. Mayor Treece asked how many annual users we have. Mr. Lynn stated about 1.8 million rides annually, approximately less than 1% are paying the full fare. Mr. Thomas did not feel there is much cost savings by using smaller busses, but the cost comparison would be helpful to see. Mr. Thomas added that if Prop D passes, a portion of the gas tax revenue would be phased in over four years which

could be applied to transit. Mayor Treece stated he is opposed to that since the ballot states that is for street repair and maintenance. Mr. Thomas stated that we could use those dollars for streets which would free up money to move over to the transit operating budget. Mr. Matthes stated that options will be analyzed should Prop D pass. Mayor Treece added that the one of the scooter companies is presenting itself as a first mile/last mile solution. He suggested that be considered as we move forward. Mayor Treece asked the status of the bus shelters. Mr. Lynn stated that there are 24 installed and we are waiting on right-of-ways for 4-5. There is one being installed at Whitegate.

II. ALL OTHER ITEMS THE COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS

None.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 pm.