



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

City Council

Monday, February 18, 2019
5:00 PM

Work Session

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:05 pm.

Present: 7 - Ruffin, Trapp, Thomas, Peters, Treece, Skala, and Pitzer

This item is open to the public: Transit Follow-Up Discussion

Attachments: [Revised Transit Presentation](#)
[Transit Presentation](#)

Interim City Manager John Glascock stated that this is a follow-up discussion from late 2018 regarding Transit. Public Works Director Dave Nichols introduced Leah Christian, Transit and Parking Manager and Dale Lynn, Transportation Supervisor, to help present the information. Ms. Christian provided an overview of the agenda tonight.

Ms. Christian stated the short-term goals of the GoCOMO system are to: maintain a client base and clearly communicate upcoming changes, secure a long-term sustainable budget that meets 20% cash reserve goals, maintain limited Saturday service for the summer and upcoming year to see if other service cuts are sufficient to meet cash reserve needs, provide frequency over coverage, maintain 45 minute headways, and continue to examine strategic opportunities. Councilperson Peters understood that we had to let the FTA know about changes to the system. Mr. Glascock clarified that we are only required to have public input on route changes and give the public adequate notice of changes.

Ms. Christian reviewed the routes in the current system noting that there is no central hub or transfer point. She added that the current route is costly to operate and we don't have enough drivers to meet the capacity so overtime is offered and also mandatory. Reducing the system will help manage overtime costs.

Councilperson Skala felt that 45 minute schedules might be hard for users to follow. Ms. Christian stated that there is only one bus on each route, so 45 minutes is the best run time they can accommodate and having an hour wait is too long for some. She added that schedule books and signage should also help riders keep up with when the bus is coming on the 45 minute schedule. Councilperson Pitzer understood that to make the central point system work, all routes have to run on the same 45 minute headway and that makes it hard to try to increase the frequency during peak hours. Ms. Christian stated that in order to do that, they would need to have two busses on each route and there are not currently enough resources for that, or they would need to cut down to 4 routes. Mayor Treece asked if there is data to show where the riders live and ride and if increasing the headway would result in more riders per bus. Ms. Christian stated that if you increase the headway, you would get more riders. Mayor Treece asked if there is any

research to indicate having a route at the top of the hour versus quarter or half past, is more or less beneficial. Ms. Christian has not looked into that. Councilperson Thomas understood that in the past, the frequencies are higher in the morning and evenings, but the proposed routes show a similar ridership all throughout the day. Mr. Lynn replied that they looked at the monthly data for the routes and due to the shift in routes and having a dedicated route in and out, there will be more opportunities to catch a bus going either direction, so there will be less differences throughout the day.

Mr. Lynn reviewed the routes in the proposed system noting the estimated ridership expectancy and important destinations along each proposed route. All routes start at the Wabash Station, so the transfer process will be easier to navigate for users. The system will provide for a 45 minute headway on each route. Mr. Lynn noted on the Black Route, that bus stops on Providence were removed at the request of MoDOT or are unused due to safety concerns. MoDOT repaired a few stops, but these are not at safe locations for users and people will need to be able to safely cross Providence.

Ms. Christian explained some of the benefits of the proposed routes changes that would begin in June 2019 to include: consistent 45 minute headways for every route, the most popular route system among stakeholders identified through Olsson plan, sustainable long-term costs and less need for staff overtime, savings from reductions from free event services, a central, safe location for rider transfers, and for operator shift changes, better opportunity for communication between staff and supervisors, and increased opportunities for direct customer service.

Ms. Christian explained that estimated savings from the route and service reductions total \$985,223, but they are still \$1.4 million away from meeting cash reserve goals. We are currently not breaking even much less meeting cash reserve goals. FY18 ended \$200,000 under the cash reserve target. The gain of these cuts won't be seen until the FY20 budget. These proposed cuts will keep Transit funded through 2022. FY20 will be \$90,000 expenses over revenue. Ms. Christian stated that there is an additional cost to continue running a limited service on Saturday's which is estimated at \$148,071. This would allow a Saturday service with 90 minute headway's utilizing 3 fixed route drivers and 4 Paratransit drivers. Other cuts to weekday services could need be cut if we wanted to keep or increase Saturday service.

Ms. Christian briefly reviewed the Small Transit Intensive Cities (STIC) Funding for 2018. Benchmarks are needed to be met in order to receive STIC funding. Last year only one benchmark was met. As we begin to track ridership we may be able to better forecast ridership and potentially tap into these funds if more benchmarks are met moving forward.

Ms. Christian stated there are currently 29 bus shelters built and we have a goal of 40 shelters. There are 5 more slated for construction this spring. Some shelters were attempted but easements were not granted and some shelters were not built due to route changes. An additional 6 shelters will need to be built at some point in the future in order to meet the goal of 40 shelters.

Ms. Christian noted some of the efficiencies, savings and opportunities for the Paratransit system including: a new automatic call-back and scheduling software, functional assessments for Paratransit users, a reduction of service area and/or an increase in service fee, a donation option included in utility bills, and a good strategic partnership with Services for Independent Living (SIL) and Oats.

Councilperson Thomas understood that if someone did not qualify for Paratransit services and didn't live near a route, they would not have transportation provided. Ms. Christian

stated that is correct. Mr. Lynn noted that Paratransit users are spread out all over the city and county. There are currently around 300 Paratransit users served per day. About 600 are certified riders and some just use during inclement weather. Ms. Christian added that the fee for Paratransit could also be raised from \$2.00 to \$3.00. They are looking at changing the service area as there are many miles traveled on this service. Ms. Christian stated that they met with SIL and learned that they do require a CDL license for drivers allowing for quicker hiring time, easier recruitment, and higher employee retention. They also have the ability and expertise in fundraising and they manage more contracted services than service for individuals. Staff plans to continue meeting with SIL and Oats to identify service overlap and coordination opportunities. There may be an opportunity for a future contract for Paratransit service as well as an opportunity to integrate a flex ride system with Paratransit.

Ms. Christian stated that staff met with businesses in the community. The manufacturing industry stated a need for routes that accommodate their employees, but they were unable to assist in funding. Another revenue source is needed in order to fund a system that will accommodate a route to the manufacturing area. Mr. Skala stated that Roads, Airport and Transit are all funded by the Transportation system. He suggested potentially redistributing some of the funds from the Airport and Roads in order to be able to add 5% more to Transit. Mr. Lynn added that every dollar added to the Transit system can also be matched by the FTA, up to a certain point. Mr. Thomas agreed with that suggestion. Mr. Thomas suggested that a 50/25/25 split equates to \$3 million for Transit currently, and adding an additional 5% would be an extra \$600,000 per year not including the FTA match.

Mayor Treece asked if staff reached out to the student housing managers. Ms. Christian stated that she was under the impression that those entities have been approached before, but were not receptive to utilizing our system instead of the direct shuttle systems. Each complex wants their own branded shuttle.

Ms. Christian stated that there are innovative solutions being utilized in areas of On-Demand Micro Transit services as seen in Birmingham, Alabama, and van pools as seen in the KC Transit Authority. Additionally, Lyft and Uber have been partners in other cities for providing the first and last mile challenges. There have also been partnerships with bike and scooter share programs. Ms. Christian stated that she would like to look into these opportunities more and explore potential savings and will report back to Council. Mayor Treece asked the status of the scooters in Columbia. Mr. Glascock understood that Bird has left Missouri. We have not yet received their first payment.

Ms. Christian announced that they did receive \$392,000 from the VW settlement in Capital Funding for the replacement of 4 busses. Mr. Thomas felt that considering the budget constraints this is a good outcome with many good changes. It will provide challenges for some but he looks forward to the innovative ideas. He would like to know what we would lose in net revenue if we went fare free. Mr. Lynn added that if fixed routes go free, Paratransit must as well. Mr. Thomas felt that the marketing power of a free system might be worthwhile to at least consider. Ms. Christian will look into that. Council was in agreement that staff should begin to hold public input meetings on the new proposed routes.

Mayor Treece requested that a topic be added to the March 4th Pre-Council to have a discussion on the City Manager Search Work Plan. The Council hopes to complete the community profile by the end of the week.

This item is open to the public: Motion for the City Council to meet on Monday, February 18, 2019, in Conference Room 1A and 1B of City Hall,

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri, for a Closed Meeting to discuss legal actions, causes of action or litigation involving a public governmental body and any confidential or privileged communications between a public governmental body or its representatives and its attorneys as authorized by Section 610.021(1) of the Revised Statutes of Missouri.

At approximately 6:29 p.m., Mayor Treece made a motion for the City Council of the City of Columbia, Missouri, to immediately go into a closed meeting in Conference Room 1A/1B of City Hall, 701 E. Broadway, Columbia, Missouri, to discuss legal actions, causes of action or litigation involving a public governmental body and any confidential or privileged communications between a public governmental body or its representatives and its attorneys as authorized by Section 610.021(1) of the Revised Statutes of Missouri. The motion was seconded by Mr. Skala.

Yes: 7 - Ruffin, Trapp, Thomas, Peters, Treece, Skala, and Pitzer

This item is closed to the public: See Notice of Closed Meeting.

Attachments: [Notice of Closed Meeting](#)

At approximately 6:30 p.m., the City Council went into closed session pursuant to RSMo Section 610.021(1).

II. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:53 pm.