



**DRAFT**

## **Westport Transit District Directors' Meeting Minutes**

**March 28, 2018 at 10:00 AM – Westport Town Hall, Room 201**

### **Attending**

Westport Transit District (WTD) Directors:

Patsy Cimarosa

Martin Fox

Norwalk Transit District (NTD) Staff:

Kimberlee A. Morton, CEO

Britt Liotta, COO

Public: None

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM.

### **Public Comment**

Members of the public who wished to address the Directors were asked to do so. There was no member of the public in attendance, so no comments were offered.

### **Approval of Minutes of January 31, 2018 meeting**

The minutes of the January 31, 2018 meeting of the Directors were approved with one correction noted by Mr. Fox for the date the Westport RTM approves Town budgets.

### **FY18 YTD Ridership**

The FY18 Ridership was reviewed by all present. Key comments on the ridership were:

- Shuttle ridership remains low. As noted in previous meetings, shuttle ridership has been impacted by the issuance of additional RR parking permits and the associated decrease in the RR parking permit waiting list.

- Mr. Fox commented that the year-over-year shuttle ridership trends improved in January and February as evidenced by them becoming less negative (for example, February daily ridership was 6.7% below the prior year as compared to the January YTD period when ridership was 19.4% below the prior YTD period). However, he noted that this was because the prior year's January and February ridership was more negatively affected by RR parking permit issuance than earlier months in Fiscal 2018.
- Mr. Fox noted that he had further analyzed monthly shuttle ridership trends in recent months by comparing the Fiscal 2018 numbers with the Fiscal 2016 figures (two year trend). He found that there was little difference in the two year monthly shuttle ridership trends in recent months.
- G-1, G-2 and Imperial Lot year-over-year ridership trends for February showed a reversal of the trend in recent months. Mr. Liotta commented that he is continuing to watch the ridership metrics on these routes, and will perform internal reviews of the accuracy of the measurements if the March numbers show similar trends.
- Overall Door to door ridership trends were less negative in February than in recent months, with some new riders introduced into the system

Mr. Liotta added that once the new NTD vehicles (equipped with cameras) are released for the road, they will be utilized on the Westport routes which will facilitate looking for any shrinkage. Mr. Fox commented that he will continue to run the 2018 versus 2016 shuttle ridership comparison and will expand the analysis to analyze two year trends by individual routes.

Those present then discussed "no-shows" for Door-to-Door services as well as the existing WTD and NTD policies about the continued ridership for residents who have repeated no-shows, which are very costly to the WTD and NTD. Mr. Liotta commented that the NTD plans to remind the public of the existing policies for Door to Door services at an upcoming public hearing.

Mr. Fox then commented that the WTD could discuss these policies when the District holds public hearings about fare increases before the planned 7/1/18 implementation. Mr. Liotta commented that he will set up a meeting next week for NTD to discuss public hearing items and that he will share this information with the WTD Directors, which will help Westport with its process.

### **FY18 Financial / Budget Update**

Ms. Morton commented that the CTDOT TOD for Westport has been inaccurately reflected on the monthly financials. After reviewing the TOD information, the NTD determined that the amount for FY18 should be \$578,960, which is \$7,292 lower than

the previously stated \$586,252. Mr. Fox commented that should CTDOT implement their December 2017 guidance on reduced State support, the extrapolation of this TOD difference into FY19, coupled with the \$12,000 increase in annual fuel expenses due to the recent change in allocation methodology, could put pressure on the WTD's FY19 budget depending upon the outcome of other variables.

Mr. Fox then reviewed the February 2018 YTD financials. He noted that the Required Westport Assistance continues to be well below budget due to (1) very low Door-to-Door ridership and (2) continuation of existing CTDOT funding arrangements into FY18. (He noted that the FY18 budget submitted to the Town of Westport last year assumed some reduction in State funding.) Mr. Fox then noted that FY18 payroll is tracking on budget, but fuel and supplies are above budget, with fuel costs increased by the change in allocation methodology. Mr. Liotta commented that supply expenses are up from previous year due to the NTD being understocked in repair parts in FY17, which has been corrected in FY18.

Mr. Fox commented that we will need to evaluate the MGP funding assumption in future monthly financial statements, as the full annual allotment of \$31.6K will probably not be available due to the low Door-to-Door ridership, which in turn will likely reduce the Westport matched funding below the FY17 level. Ms. Morton commented that the MGP application for FY20 needs to be submitted by May 18<sup>th</sup>, which requires the budget for covered services and the required certifications from Town of Westport officials.

### **FY 2019 proposed budget**

Mr. Fox noted that the Westport Board of Finance approved the proposed WTD FY19 budget at its March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. The next steps will be: (1) the entire Town Budget will be considered by the Board of Finance in early April, (2) the WTD budget will go to the RTM Transit Committee for review and (3) the WTD budget will go to the RTM for final approval.

Mr. Fox then noted that after the summer, the WTD is planning to do an abridged survey on Westport citizen attitudes about the future operation and funding of the WTD commuter shuttles. He added that the WTD Directors then plan to make a presentation about the WTD commuter shuttles to the Westport RTM Transit Committee and the Westport RTM in the November / December to get their input about the future direction for the commuter shuttles.

## **Connecticut funding update**

Ms. Morton commented that the State is still reviewing the funding of municipal sponsored transit districts. Commission Redeker has been meeting with several communities to hear feedback from the public on the impact funding cuts to their communities. He is scheduled to be in Norwalk on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Morton commented that NTD is one of several Transit Districts that has been very outspoken about the funding cuts, and that NTD has done many outreach activities to inform the public about the funding cuts and the CT DOT hearings. She also stated she will be in attendance at the Norwalk meeting to make a presentation on behalf of Norwalk.

As part of these efforts, Norwalk's Mayor Rilling forwarded a message from the NTD to the Transportation Committee of the General Assembly addressing the concerns about the funding guidance the CTDOT provided to Transit Districts in December, which included a 15% reduction in the funding cap in FY19, followed by additional reductions. Ms. Morton thanked Mr. Fox and Ms. Cimarosa for the letter that First Selectman Jim Marpe also sent to the Transportation Committee addressing these issues.

## **Marketing Campaign**

Mr. Fox gave an update on the WTD's marketing program. Mr. Fox said that the WTD Directors have received many positive comments about the new emails, posters and cards and they are very pleased with the new marketing program overall. He commented that the campaign has raised awareness of the service, as evidenced by approximately 1,000 additional visits to the WTD website since the campaign started.

The WTD has already completed two rounds of eight emails highlighting key benefits of the shuttles to people on the Railroad parking permit list, Railroad parking waiting list and the Westport Parks and Rec list – with a third set of emails targeted for approximately June. Mr. Fox commented that the District is also evaluating other possible avenues to raise awareness of the commuter shuttles:

- Advertising in Westport Now
- Advertising on Facebook
- Sending targeted emails to commuters within close proximity to the routes reminding them of the specific shuttle route they could utilize
- Sending emails to commuters highlighting the various ways of paying for the shuttles

- Working with the Westport Chamber of Commerce to encourage employees of local businesses to use the commuter shuttles to get from the Saugatuck train station to their place of business in Westport.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Morton commented that a new Director of Finance for the Norwalk Transit District has been identified. She noted that a verbal offer was accepted, and that the NTD is in the process of going through the remainder of the hiring process with the candidate. The candidate's expected start date is April 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **Next Scheduled Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting is Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at 10:00 AM. The meeting will be held at Westport Town Hall, Room #309

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Fox  
Westport Transit District Director