



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

**March 28, 2019 at 10:00 AM – Westport Town Hall, Room 201**

### **Attending**

Westport Transit District (WTD or District) Directors:

Patricia Cimarosa  
Martin Fox

Norwalk Transit District (NTD) Staff:

Britt Liotta, COO  
Kimberlee A. Morton, CEO  
Matthew Pentz, Director of Finance

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM.

### **Public Comment**

Members of the public who wished to address the Directors were asked to do so. There were no members present.

### **Approval of Minutes of February 7, 2019 meeting**

Motion for approval of the minutes of the February 7, 2019 meeting was made by Patricia Cimarosa, and seconded by Martin Fox. Motion approved.

### **FY19 YTD Ridership**

The attendees discussed the adjusted February ridership report prepared by Mr. Liotta, and discussed trends in ridership on certain commuter shuttle routes.

Mr. Liotta commented that the December 2018, January 2019 and February 2019 adjusted ridership reports he prepared include the estimated impact of “dumps” on ridership during such months and the respective YTD periods, to make the ridership data as accurate as possible. (“Dumps” are miscellaneous revenue recorded in the fare boxes that are not associated with recorded rides.)

Mr. Liotta also stated that all of the drivers have gone through extensive training in the past month, with a focus being the complete recording of trips taken by commuters with Unitickets. There was also a concentrated effort in the past month to ensure all drivers are checking to make sure that riders' Unitickets are for the current periods. Mr. Liotta commented that he expected that the recorded trips in the fare boxes will be very clean by the end of March.

The attendees then discussed potential reasons for the continuing decrease in Door-to-door trips, which mirrors a reduction in the number of Westport residents using the Door-to-Door services funded by Westport.

### **FY19 Financial / Budget Update**

Mr. Pentz presented the FY19 financials for Westport Transit through February 2019. He summarized trends in certain Operating statement revenue and expense items that he, Mr. Fox and Mr. Liotta have been tracking closely in recent months. He highlighted the following with respect to the February YTD operating results for WTD's commuter shuttles:

- Revenue is down 8% from the comparable prior year period, notwithstanding ridership being approximately even with the prior year. In January, the methodology for allocating tokens and ride cards was changed to be more representative of usage in the system.
- Driver payroll is up 10% over previous year due to the same factors discussed in previous meetings, including increased use of overtime due to adverse workers compensation and FMLA experience.
- Fuel expense is up 54% over the prior year due to increased fuel prices.

Mr. Fox then noted that that as a result of these factors, expenditures on the commuter shuttles in FY19 have been higher than the WTD budgeted, resulting in a higher required Westport contribution than budgeted for this component of the WTD's services. On the other hand, Mr. Fox highlighted that this negative variance to budget for the commuter shuttles has been more than offset by lower expenditures for the Door-to-Door services than budgeted due to lower than forecast Door-to-Door ridership. Accordingly, the required assistance from Westport through 8 months of FY19 is less than the WTD budgeted.

## **FY20 Connecticut Funding Update**

Ms. Morton commented that Connecticut Association of Community Transportation (CACT) is putting together a committee about funding issues. Ms. Morton then noted that the CT Transit Districts were given guidance by the CT DOT that the funding in FY20 would be approximately equal to FY19, but it's still unclear what the source of all the funding will be.

Looking further into the future, Ms. Morton said that even if tolls are implemented and generate increased revenues, the toll revenue can only be used for repairs to the roads the tolls are located on. Ms. Morton commented that she is hoping some of any toll revenue could also be used for transportation funding.

## **March 12<sup>th</sup> Westport Board of Finance meeting / FY 20 Budget Process**

Mr. Fox commented that on March 12<sup>th</sup>, the Westport Board of Finance ("BOF") decided to cut WTD's requested FY20 funding from the Town of Westport by \$115,000, which represents approximately one-half of the Westport support necessary to operate the current commuter shuttle routes in FY20. (Mr. Fox noted that the WTD's requested funding for Door-to-Door services was unaffected by this funding reduction.) On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the WTD will appeal the BOF's decision to the BOF. Mr. Fox indicated that he expects that the BOF will affirm its decision to cut the commuter shuttle funding at this meeting.

The WTD's presentations to the Westport Board of Finance on March 12<sup>th</sup> and April 3<sup>rd</sup> are attached.

Mr. Fox then noted that should the BOF affirm its decision to cut the WTD's funding on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, consistent with the provisions of the Westport Town Charter, the Westport Transit District will ask the Westport Representative Town Meeting ("RTM") to restore the \$115,000 in Town funding at the RTM's May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, which would require a 70% vote of the members present and voting. Prior to that May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, the WTD will presents its FY20 budget to the RTM Transit Committee, which will vote on whether to recommend restoration of the WTD's full proposed Budget to the RTM. Mr. Fox commented that the WTD plans to inform Westport residents and key constituencies of the potential consequences of the funding cut in a variety of ways – noting, in particular, that should the Town funding not be restored, it's likely that most or all of the Town's commuter shuttle service would need to be eliminated by the end of the calendar year.

## **Marketing**

Mr. Fox gave an update on marketing initiatives:

- In April and early May, the WTD is planning to send out 4 of the email messages it previously developed, which highlight the benefits of using the WTD commuter shuttles. These messages will be sent to a list of over 10,000 Westport residents.
- The District is continuing to work with a marketing professional, Rob Feakins, to develop new eye-catching emails to be sent to Westport employers to help promote the use of the S1 commuter shuttle by reverse commuters traveling into Westport.
- The WTD is also beginning to work with Mr. Feakins to develop new emails for Westport outbound train commuters highlighting some of the key mechanics of using the shuttles, such as how to pay fares and where riders can get on and off the shuttles.

### **Microtransit Update**

The Microtransit pilot program for the evening shuttles will be discussed in May after the budget process is completed.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Morton commented that Norwalk Transit is looking to add a full time data analyst / planner to help leverage the NTD's data to identify trends and better inform future decisions. The proposal will be presented later today to the Norwalk Board of Commissioners for their approval.

### **Next Scheduled Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting is Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 10:00 AM. The meeting will be held at Westport Town Hall, Room #309

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Fox  
Westport Transit District Director