



Westport Transit District Directors' Meeting Minutes

May 16, 2019 at 10:00 AM – Westport Town Hall, Room 309

Attending

Westport Transit District (WTD or District) Directors:

Patricia Cimarosa

Martin Fox

Norwalk Transit District (NTD) Staff:

Britt Liotta, COO

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 March 28, 2019 meeting

Motion for approval of the minutes of the March 28, 2019 meeting was made by Patricia Cimarosa and seconded by Martin Fox. Motion approved.

FY19 YTD Ridership

The attendees discussed the adjusted March ridership report prepared by Mr. Liotta and discussed trends in ridership on certain commuter shuttle routes. Mr. Liotta commented that March commuter shuttle ridership demonstrated continued improvement in year-over-year ridership trends in recent months.

Mr. Liotta indicated that the past issues with the dumps have been successfully addressed through extensive additional driver training. Mr. Liotta added that he is confident that any issues with underreporting of trips will be minimal going forward.

Mr. Fox asked that Mr. Pentz update the report that he produced earlier in the year showing the number of trips by fare category as a tool to help analyze the updated ridership reports. Mr. Pentz and Mr. Liotta agreed to work together to update the report through April.

FY19 Financial / Budget Update

Mr. Pentz presented the FY19 financials for Westport Transit through March 2019. Mr. Fox noted that operating trends in the key revenue and expense line items in the March YTD period were similar to the February YTD financials, which had been reviewed in detail at the March 28th meeting of the WTD Directors.

A brief review of the March 2019 YTD financials shows a total of \$210K of Town of Westport Assistance required to support WTD operations (excluding marketing and miscellaneous expenses funded separately by the Town of Westport). The \$210K of Westport funding is comprised of:

- 163K of Westport funding applied to fixed route services
- 47K of Westport funding applied to Door to Door services

FY20 Connecticut Funding Update

Mr. Pentz commented that the NTD has not heard of any changes to the funding the State will be providing for FY 2020. He stated that the 4th quarter estimated funding owed to the NTD is expected today. He updated Ms. Cimarosa and Mr. Fox on positive developments for NTD's funding for the coming fiscal year, specifically: the City of Norwalk approved the NTD's requested financial support for the coming fiscal year and the NTD's credit line was extended for another year. Mr. Pentz also commented that the CT DOT operating budget for the NTD is due to the State by June 3rd.

FY 20 Budget Process

Mr. Fox spoke in detail about the efforts of the WTD and others to seek the Westport RTM's restoration of \$115,000 of FY20 funding for the WTD commuter shuttles that the Westport Board of Finance had cut at its March 12th meeting. (The Board of Finance affirmed its decision at its April 3rd meeting). Mr. Fox reported that after taking into account (1) the WTD's presentation to the RTM about its operations, current initiatives, results of its Town-wide survey and future plans, (2) numerous letters, emails and public comments by Westport organizations and residents in support of the commuter shuttles, (3) the reports of the RTM Transit Committee and the RTM Finance Committee, which both voted in favor of restoration of the \$115,000 of funding in late April meetings and

(4) discussion among the RTM members – at its May 6th meeting, the Westport RTM voted overwhelmingly to restore the \$115,000 of Westport funding for FY20. The vote was 32 in favor of restoration, 0 against restoration, with 1 abstention.

Mr. Fox commented that after the WTD Directors informed the public about the Board of Finance funding cut and the WTD's current initiatives and plans for the future, the Directors were gratified that many Westport organizations and Westport residents, including numerous commuter shuttle riders, demonstrated their strong support for WTD operations by writing letters and emailing the RTM members and attending Town meetings. Mr. Fox expressed his and Ms. Cimarosa's appreciation for the NTD's support of the WTD's efforts, noting in particular Mr. Liotta's and NTD Operations team's assistance with the distribution of informative flyers to the shuttle riders.

Mr. Fox concluded his review of the RTM's decision by saying that Peter Gold, head of the RTM Transit Committee, deserves special thanks for all of his efforts to support restoration of the full WTD funding for FY20. Mr. Fox noted that, among other things, Mr. Gold met with virtually every RTM member to discuss the WTD commuter shuttle services and answer questions, which allowed the RTM to make the most informed decision.

Fare Cards

Mr. Liotta commented that the 10 ride fare cards are in the initial stages of production and should be available for use in July. Mr. Liotta will be able to provide a more refined date once the samples are sent back to the NTD, tested, and approved for production. Mr. Fox expressed the WTD's appreciation for Mr. Liotta's efforts on this project, and noted that this fare card will be of great benefit to commuter shuttle riders who don't travel enough to make the purchase of a Uniticket worthwhile. Mr. Fox added that the WTD plans to promote the new fare cards in the next phase of the WTD's marketing campaign.

Marketing

Mr. Fox gave an update on marketing initiatives:

- In April, the WTD sent out 3 of the email messages it previously developed, which highlight the benefits of using the WTD commuter shuttles. These messages were 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 working 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

Mr. Liotta updated the Directors about the RFP that the NTD released in April for the Microtransit program. While he was unable to describe the bids being evaluated, Mr. Liotta commented that he believes that the NTD has several strong proposals to consider. Mr. Liotta said that the WTD Directors' vision for incorporating Microtransit into its operations is part of the scope of the RFP and Westport's needs will be taken into consideration when deciding upon the winning bidder.

Other Business

Mr. Liotta spoke about the recent Route Match tablet project that the NTD is implementing. He said that key benefits of the use of this technology are paperless manifests for the drivers and cleaner data for reporting.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is Thursday, September 12th, 2019 at 10:00 AM. The meeting will be held at Westport Town Hall, Room 201.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Fox
Westport Transit District Director