



Westport Transit District Directors' Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2020 at 10:00 AM – Westport Library, Room 212

Attending

Westport Transit District (WTD or District) Directors:

Martin Fox

Patricia Cimarosa

Norwalk Transit District (NTD) Staff:

Kimberlee Morton, CEO

Matthew Pentz, Chief Financial Officer

Matthew Abbott, Transportation Planner

Francis Murray, COO

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

Public Comment

RTM member, Sal Liccione, requested that the Directors review the possibility of installing shelters along Route 1 to accommodate Coastal Link customers. Director Fox and Ms. Morton engaged in a discussion regarding previous efforts to secure shelters in the Town of Westport. Mr. Fox indicated to Mr. Liccione that bus shelters are not an area that the Westport Transit District Directors can focus on. Ms. Morton added that funding previously available for the shelters was no longer available.

Approval of Minutes of September 12, 2019 and notes of November 21, 2019

Director Cimarosa made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2019 meeting and the notes of the November 21, 2019 meeting held in lieu of a legally convened Directors' meeting due to the lack of a quorum. The motion was seconded by Director Fox and passed unanimously.

FY20 YTD Ridership

Mr. Fox discussed the reported FY20 YTD decline in commuter shuttle ridership as compared to the prior YTD period. Mr. Fox noted again that commuter shuttle ridership correlates inversely with the quantity of railroad parking permits issued and the size of the railroad parking permit waiting list. Mr. Fox advised that some additional parking permits were issued in the Fall and approximately 160 people (about 2/3 of which are Westport residents) were recently offered permits, although the number of commuters who will actually purchase the permits will be much lower.

Mr. Fox then questioned whether the reported year-over-year reduction in commuter shuttle ridership in FY20 is an accurate reflection of ridership trends – noting that commuter shuttle fare revenue is approximately equal to last year. Mr. Fox then said that for the FY19 December YTD period, ridership was approximately flat and revenue was down compared to the prior year – so he suggested that it's possible that FY20 December YTD ridership is fairly stated but FY19 December YTD ridership was overstated. Ms. Morton then wondered whether the reported ridership drop could possibly be caused by lower average utilization of each Uniticket due to reduced frequency of commuting. There was then a lengthy conversation on this topic. It was determined that the next step would be Mr. Pentz taking a deeper look at ridership by each form of payment for the commuter shuttles.

A full report on paratransit door-to-door services could not be given due to a reporting inconsistency recently discovered. The problem is expected to be fully rectified by the next reporting period.

FY20 YTD Budget Update

Mr. Pentz presented the YTD December Westport financial results. He then noted that commuter shuttle revenues were flat vs prior year. He reported that total expenses were up 6% vs. a 6 month proration of full FY19 results. This increase was driven by fringe benefits being up 9% YTD vs. a proration of the entire FY19, which in turn is primarily due to an 8% increase in medical insurance costs and uniform replacement costs that occur once every three years. In addition, mechanics salaries increased due to higher than normal medical-related absences, which required overtime. Other expenses were in line with expectation, with some timing issues noted.

Connecticut Funding Update

Ms. Morton then gave the Directors an update on State funding. Ms. Morton reported that our state public transit association continues to monitor the status of the CT FY21 budget and as a group Connecticut public transit districts advocate for funding and reasonable subsidies to support existing and new services.

Marketing

Mr. Fox reported that WTD's new marketing initiatives are being implemented as planned. Mr. Fox said that he has been discussing getting the assistance of two student members of the Sustainable Westport organization to help promote Westport Transit commuter shuttles on social media and distribute flyers to reverse commuters at the Saugatuck station, all as part of the WTD's marketing initiatives. Mr. Fox added noted that the recent marketing initiatives have resulted in increased visits to the Westport component of the NTD website.

Microtransit

Mr. Fox reported that the microtransit simulation project continues to progress, with number of factors being analyzed. Next steps will be determined on conclusion of the simulation results.

Proposed FY21 Budget

Mr. Fox indicated that the formal Town of Westport FY21 budget process is scheduled to kick off with Westport Board of Finance informal budget workshops on February 13th. This will be followed by the WTD's formal presentation of its proposed FY21 Budget to the Board of Finance on March 10th, and later by consideration of the Westport RTM. As part of this process, Mr. Fox will also be advising the Board of Finance in advance that in September, when budget carryover requests are considered, the WTD expects to request approval of the carryover of a projected \$35,000 in unused FY 2020 funds into FY 2021 to help fund the startup of microtransit in Westport.

Other Business

Mr. Fox wanted to take this opportunity to recognize the recently deceased former Westport Transit District Director, Gene Cedarbaum, for his contributions to public transportation and his many years of dedicated service to the Westport Transit District and the Town of Westport.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting, which is scheduled for April 7, 2020 at 9:00 AM in Westport Town Hall Room 201.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Fox
Westport Transit District Director