



Westport Transit District Directors' Meeting Minutes

October 8, 2020 at 2:00PM – Held electronically pursuant to Governor's Executive Order No. 7B.

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

The meeting was called to order at 2:05PM.

Public Comment

There was no member of the public present.

Approval of Minutes of May 13th meeting

Director Cimarosa made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 18th meeting. The motion was seconded by Director Fox and passed unanimously.

Commuter shuttle and Door-to-Door ridership update

Mr. Fox commented that the detailed Westport ridership schedules had not been prepared in recent months due to limited resources arising from recent NTD staff changes and operational challenges resulting from COVID-19, but that Mr. Abbott had recently prepared a draft ridership report through August for review, which will be done after the meeting.

Mr. Abbott then made some general comments about ridership trends highlighting information previously provided to the WTD, which included the fact that Door-to-Door

ridership decreased significantly in March and April, but started to recover in May and June, with the most recent information showing Door-to-Door ridership is still running at least 30% below the prior year. Mr. Abbott then gave some statistics the on-demand service which temporarily replaced the WTD's commuter shuttle routes, including that ridership averaged about 5 trips per day in recent months.

FY20 financial update

Mr. Pentz reviewed the preliminary FY20 results in comparison with budget, which had been posted on the Town of Westport website and are attached to these minutes.

Mr. Pentz commented that the preliminary results are subject to completion of the annual audit, but that he does not expect any material adjustments to the numbers reviewed.

Mr. Fox noted that Mr. Pentz and the NTD prepared the financial statements and related operational statistics during the COVID period when there were many challenges and other priorities that needed to be addressed. He expressed his and Ms. Cimarosa's appreciation for all the effort involved in completing the financial statements.

Mr. Fox highlighted the fact that expenses were lower in the late March to June 2020 period because of the conversion of the WTD commuter shuttle routes to a less costly on-demand service as well as the lower demand for Door-to-Door services. He added that these reductions in expenses were partially offset by the absence of fare collections, an allocation to the WTD of unused driver capacity and the inclusion of a portion of certain Norwalk Transit fixed costs that had not been previously allocated to the WTD. Mr. Fox concluded the discussion of the FY20 financial results by indicating that the WTD's required assistance from the Town of Westport in FY20 was about \$40,000 less than budget. He then commented that the funding available from the Town of Westport and CTDOT should be sufficient to cover the WTD's operations and initiatives in FY21.

Wheels2U microtransit implementation

Mr. Fox said that since the Wheels2U Westport launch is scheduled for next week, he thought it would be appropriate to make some comments about what had been accomplished over the two years that the WTD and NTD have been actively considering and working on the extension of microtransit to Westport. On behalf of Ms. Cimarosa and the Town of Westport, he expressed appreciation for the enormous efforts of the NTD Team, remarking that much of the planning and preparation for the implementation had occurred during a challenging period of added COVID-related activities and management transition. He highlighted the dedication and contributions of Matt Abbott in helping bring the project to fruition. Mr. Fox also acknowledged the

significant contributions of the Via Team, including Rebecca Rubin, Bennett Coppozi and Ben McCabe, to the project.

Mr. Fox said that he believes that Wheels2U will be an excellent asset for Westport for the reasons cited in the press release about the launch of the service. He added that he believes that the service is a particularly good fit given the current situation of reduced commuting because the resources can be tailored to the level of demand over time. He said that it is understood that ridership will be relatively low when overall commuting is low, but having the service available in the upcoming period will (1) provide commuters with an opportunity to establish a new habit of riding public transit to and from the stations as commuting ramps up and as new people move to Westport and (2) enable typical start-up issues to be addressed and the fine-tuning of operating parameters before ridership increases significantly.

Mr. Fox remarked that Wheels2U Westport is an innovative service that the Team should be proud of. He noted that while similar services, including Wheels2U Norwalk, have been implemented elsewhere in the US and other countries, the Westport microtransit service is differentiated because it connects commuters with trains that do not run very frequently. This puts a premium on the reliability of getting commuters to their desired train on time. Mr. Fox concluded these remarks by saying that deciding upon staffing levels for Wheels2U in future months will continue to be challenging given the unpredictable level of commuting but he's confident that the WTD and NTD teams will continue to work collaboratively to determine a good approach.

Ms. Morton then said that she is really excited about the implementation of Wheels2U in Westport. She said it has been a great team effort and thanked Mr. Fox and Ms. Cimarosa for their contributions to the project. She indicated that she believes that Wheels2U is the long-term answer for Westport, as long as it is given it the right amount of time given the COVID circumstances. Ms. Morton remarked that she is confident that Wheels2U Westport will be a success story and an example of innovation for the public transit industry. She added that Mr. Abbott did a wonderful job on the project.

Mr. Fox then reviewed the communication program supporting the launch of Wheels2U Westport. He mentioned that the WTD's email blast announcing the service the previous day was opened by over 6,000 residents and that the press release was going out the day of the meeting. He added that another email blast would go out on October 12th highlighting the launch of the service on that date, and then approximately 6 additional weekly email blasts highlighting the benefits of the service are planned before the holidays. Mr. Fox added that Wheels2U posters have been designed for the two train stations, which are expected to be installed in November. He concluded by noting that consistent with a "soft opening approach," the WTD is deferring some marketing activities until commuting is greater.

Ms. Morton and Mr. Abbott then said that everything is ready operationally for the launch.

Connecticut Funding Update

Mr. Pentz stated that the NTD had gotten the customary annual Operating Agreement (TOD) from CTDOT for FY21, and that funding would be about the same as FY20. He noted that this flat funding would be during a period of escalating costs, but he commented that he expects that the federal funding from the CARES Act would provide the needed additional funding for FY21.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for November 17th at 9:00AM.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Fox
Westport Transit District Director

WESTPORT TRANSIT DISTRICT -- PRELIMINARY FY20 UNAUDITED RESULTS (1)
COMMUTER SHUTTLES

Exhibit 1

(\$000)	<u>FY20</u>		
	<u>FY19 Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Unaudited results</u>
Fares	\$68.9	\$65.5	\$52.7
CT Assistance	<u>563.7</u>	<u>574.8</u>	<u>554.8</u>
Subtotal	632.6	640.3	607.5
Salary and fringe	683.6	693.2	590.3
Fuel, parts, supplies and fixed costs (2)	157.7	164.8	237.8
Marketing and Other (3)	<u>20.0</u>	<u>20.0</u>	<u>20.0</u>
Total expenses (2) (3)	861.3	878.0	848.1
Westport Assistance for Shuttles	<u>\$228.7</u>	<u>\$237.7</u>	<u>\$240.6</u>

(1) Subject to change when NTD audit is completed. FY20 operations and results were significantly affected by COVID-19.

(2) FY20 unaudited results include an allocation of certain Norwalk Transit fixed costs not included in the WTD FY20 Budget or previously allocated to the WTD.

(3) Includes carryover.

October 1, 2020

WESTPORT TRANSIT DISTRICT -- PRELIMINARY FY21 UNAUDITED RESULTS (1)
DOOR-TO-DOOR

Exhibit 2

(\$000)	FY20		
	<u>FY19 Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Unaudited results</u>
Fares	\$13.6	\$18.0	\$8.2
CT Assistance	<u>19.8</u>	<u>31.6</u>	<u>33.7</u>
Total revenues	33.4	49.6	41.9
Salary and fringe	59.4	102.6	74.5
Fuel, parts, supplies and fixed costs (2)	9.1	16.1	20.4
Purchased transportation	<u>27.8</u>	<u>48.1</u>	<u>20.3</u>
Total expenses (2)	96.3	166.8	115.2
Westport Assistance for Door-to-Door	<u>\$62.9</u>	<u>\$117.3</u>	<u>\$73.3</u>

(1) Subject to change when NTD audit is completed. FY20 Door-to-Door operations and results were significantly affected by COVID-19 and lower than budgeted ridership.

(2) FY20 unaudited results include an allocation of certain Norwalk Transit fixed costs not included in the WTD FY20 Budget or previously allocated to the WTD.

WESTPORT TRANSIT DISTRICT -- PRELIMINARY FY20 UNAUDITED RESULTS (1)
CONSOLIDATED

Exhibit 3

(\$000)	FY20			Westport Assistance
	<u>FY19 Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Unaudited results</u>	<u>FY21 Budget (3)</u>
Fares	\$82.5	\$83.5	\$60.9	
CT Assistance	<u>583.5</u>	<u>606.4</u>	<u>588.5</u>	
Subtotal	666.0	689.9	649.4	
Operating expenses (2)	937.6	1024.8	943.3	
Marketing and Other (2)	<u>20.0</u>	<u>20.0</u>	<u>20.0</u>	
Total expenses (2)	957.6	1044.8	963.3	
Total Westport Assistance	<u>\$291.6</u>	<u>\$355.0</u>	<u>\$313.9</u>	<u>\$320.4</u>
Shuttles	228.7	237.7	240.6	
Door-to-Door	62.9	117.3	73.3	

(1) Subject to change when NTD audit is completed. FY20 operations and results were significantly affected by COVID-19.

(2) FY20 unaudited results include an allocation of certain Norwalk Transit fixed costs not included in the WTD FY20 Budget or previously allocated to the WTD. Marketing and Other includes carryover.

(3) The individual line items of the WTD FY21 Budget were not redone after the Town of Westport reduced the WTD's FY21 Budget request from \$359,000 to \$320,400.

October 1, 2020