

PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
Local Transportation Subcommittee
Minutes of Public Meeting
August 18, 2003

Village of Downers Grove
801 Burlington Avenue
Committee Room

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Commissioner Martin Tully, Public Services Committee Chairman
Rich Mueller
Robert Kollmar
Lawrence Gress

ABSENT: Commissioner Marilyn Schnell

STAFF: Stan Balicki, Support Services Manager
Kirsten Coulman, Recording Secretary

Visitors: *Jeff Waxman*
Mark Ashby, PACE Suburban Bus Service

Commissioner Tully called the Local Transportation Subcommittee Meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

Approval of Local Transportation Subcommittee Meeting Minutes July 31, 2003

There were no corrections to the minutes from the July 31, 2003 meeting.

Mr. Kollmar made a motion to accept the minutes without changes.

Mr. Gress seconded the motion.

Motion passed 4:0

Old Business: Continued Evaluation of Grove Commuter Shuttle Service

Commissioner Tully referred to pages 9 & 10 of the July 31, 2003 minutes to start the discussions.

**Commissioner Tully will be taking notes on his laptop so that they may be attached to the minutes.

Commissioner Tully stated that what is documented will not be set in stone, but will be able to be revised so that it may be presented to the Village Council. What the Committee needs to think about is who is going to give the presentation; it should be a sub-committee member, but not Commissioners Schnell or Tully.

Mr. Mueller suggested having multiple committee members give the presentation to the Council.

Commissioner Tully stated it doesn't have to be decided tonight, but it's something to take into consideration for future discussion.

Commissioner Tully stated he wanted to make some comments with respect to advertising, specifically, regarding the agreement between PACE and Viacom that the Village is trying to join. There has been some progress and Commissioner Tully asked Mr. Balicki to comment on some additional information that has been provided.

Mr. Balicki stated there was a meeting with PACE on August 8th, which Mr. Ashby attended. The Village Attorney's biggest concern is the amount of control the Village could exercise over particular ads that the public might find objectionable. The legal staff is doing research on case law with regards to the advertising guidelines.

Commissioner Tully explained the agreements have clauses on what can be advertised. What the Village is hoping to amend in the contract is not allowing paid political advertisements to be on buses.

Mr. Gress asked what the Village expects to generate from advertising.

Mr. Balicki stated that it's been some time since he's looked at the estimates, but assuming a full utilization of the bus system, which is on the high side, a rough estimate would be between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per year. Again, it has been a while since the numbers were looked at, but remember also that it would fluctuate because not all buses have advertising on them at all times.

Mr. Gress asked if that number would include both interior and exterior advertising.

Mr. Balicki answered that it would include both interior and exterior advertising.

Mr. Waxman asked it would include the passenger side, street side and rear of the bus?

Mr. Balicki stated that frames for advertising on all three sides of the buses instead of direct application would be the best way to advertise especially due to the age of the buses and the potential damage direct application can cause.

Mr. Gress asked who would be responsible for the selling of the advertisements.

Mr. Balicki answered that Viacom will sell the advertising space.

Commissioner Tully asked when a proposal from PACE will be presented to the Village with respect to the option of taking over the routes all together.

Mr. Ashby, PACE, answered that PACE was looking at general terms, but will try to have something for the next meeting.

Commissioner Tully asked if a formal proposal would be presented at the next meeting.

Mr. Balicki stated that in a conversation with PACE it was asked if PACE could give a dollar amount to maintain the same service the Village is providing now and also if PACE could give a dollar amount to make changes to the current service.

Mr. Waxman stated that what should be added to the proposal whether a PACE operating division will operate the service or operated by a private contractor, operated with a transit coaches or school buses like some of the routes in Naperville.

Mr. Gress stated that the sooner the information comes in from PACE the sooner the committee can do an analysis. It's going to take PACE some time to make valid comparisons.

Mr. Waxman added that if PACE is going to have a contractor run this service, how often is the contract going to be up for bid? There could be many transitions.

Mr. Ashby, PACE, stated his executive director has concerns also and one is that obviously the transit system is struggling and if PACE comes in and theoretically takes over the service and operates it and then what has changed as far as the service. Only that PACE will take it over and it will still be struggling and failing. The concern is that PACE would fail. As part of the proposal, a commitment has to be made on the part of the Village and the community in order for this to work.

Mr. Gress stated that the purpose of this subcommittee is to provide options, alternatives and the pros and cons of each. The sooner the committee has the information, the better informed the committee will be to make decisions.

There was discussion regarding the fare structures of the Village buses and the PACE buses who would have ownership of setting the fares. Comparative costs and success measures were also discussed with the fare structures. Mr. Ashby will be presenting some numbers regarding the discussion at the next meeting. Mr. Balicki will also present a correlation between Metra and how many people ride the bus at the next meeting so that comparisons can be made.

Mr. Balicki referred to a report that was given in the packet of information provided to the committee members (attachment 1). It was given because the committee suggested that one aspect of the report should have certain benchmarks the bus system should attain.

Commissioner Tully stated the committee needs to know is ridership is going down and revenues declining because nobody's using it, because there isn't a need, because there isn't a desire to utilize it or is it because there are things that are not performing as well as the could. The benchmarks are important.

There was discussion regarding PACE and Metra and if Metra had ever funded a bus system like they have parking lots in the past.

Commissioner Tully introduced his rough outline of the report and is attached to the minutes (attachment 2). There was discussion regarding the citizen survey and surveys in general to find out who rides the bus and why others don't ride the bus. In addition, potential survey questions were discussed as to find out where the community ranks the service of the transportation system.

Mr. Balicki is providing survey questions to the committee at the next meeting. The first three questions relate to the importance of the transportation system.

1. How do you rate the importance of the Grove Commuter Shuttle as to the quality of life in Downers Grove?
Very Important Somewhat Important Not Important Don't Know

2. How do you rate the quality of the Grove Commuter Shuttle Service?
Very Good Good Neither Good Nor Bad Bad Don't know
3. In the past twelve months, about how many times, if ever, have you used the Grove Commuter Shuttle? Never Once or Twice 3-12 times 13-26 times More than 26 times

Mr. Balicki stated the second three questions were more open ended, which could prove valuable to measure.

4. What three things do you think Downers Grove needs to do to improve the shuttle?
5. What three things do you like most about the shuttle?
6. What three things do you like least about the shuttle?

Commissioner Tully stated that the questions regarding the relative importance, why people are using the shuttle, and what would it take to have people use the shuttle service are what the committee needs to know.

Mr. Balicki stated that there have been surveys in the past at the Main Street station and also the people on the waiting list for commuter parking permits should be included in the survey. In order to survey the waiting list applicants, about 800 letter would need to be sent out.

Mr. Gress suggested asking the people currently on the list if they wish to remain on the waiting list and if they want to remain on the list, would they please complete the survey.

Commissioner Tully referred to the outline (attachment 2) and started a discussion regarding advertising and marketing/promotions of the commuter shuttle service. See attached outline section III part B. Everyone contributed thoughts and ideas to the discussion.

The next meeting date is September 10, 2003.

Commissioner Tully asked if the commuter parking waiting list has ever been updated.

Mr. Balicki stated that he didn't know, but it is something that is handled out of the Finance Department at Village Hall.

Commissioner Tully stated that it would make sense to update the list periodically. Also, their email addresses should be collected.

Mr. Kollmar suggested giving free tickets away with the surveys to the people on the waiting list. The tickets should also be marked so that it's documented how many people actually used the bus service from the survey group.

Commissioner Tully suggested limiting the complimentary tickets to the residents.

Mr. Kollmar stated that there must be a way to increase the awareness and entice people to ride the bus.

Mr. Mueller suggested also sending out a sketch of the bus routes so that people would be able to determine if they could use the bus system or maybe a blurb at the bottom of the survey showing how much it costs to operate a car vs. riding a bus.

Commissioner Tully stated that there were too many ideas with regards to marketing and promotions.

Mr. Kollmar stated an action plan was needed.

Mr. Balicki stated that it would be helpful, but from staff's perspective, one of the most important things, personally, is to have the confidence to know that the service is something that the Village Council wants to and is interested in marketing and promoting and supporting. As long that's part of what the committee is saying, then it helps a whole lot in preparing the details for this report to the Council.

Mr. Balicki commented that at the last meeting there was discussion about where this committee will go once the report is presented to the Village Council. There is an alternative, that ties into the awareness of the service, might be part of the responsibility of the Parking and Traffic Commission. Naperville has an advisory board that hears concerns and discusses planning issues.

Commissioner Tully suggested talking about increasing revenues as well as looking at the charter service at the next meeting. Fleet replacement options haven't been discussed fully yet.

Mr. Waxman asked if he could comment on the fleet replacement options. The VODG fleet has anywhere from 140,000 to 180,000 miles for 12 years is less than the average transit mileage. There are buses in St. Louis that are the same types of buses that the Village has that have 500,000 miles.

Mr. Kollmar stated that based on what Mr. Waxman presented, the average fleet mileage in Downers Grove for a 1992 Gilig Phantom is 106,900 miles, but the same bus in St. Louis has 575,000 which is 5.3 times the number of miles. The economics fall out of rehab. Absolutely, this fleet is far from being replaced.

Mr. Waxman stated that where the buses are now, with some rehab work, some bodywork and some engine work, could probably go another 8 years or so. If the buses were converted to CNG, could a grant be obtained?

Mr. Balicki said that the Village could try to get a grant for the work. The Natural Gas Vehicle Institute (NGVI.org) is a resource to find out about funding.

Mr. Waxman stated that PACE is getting ready to retire some 1990 O'Ryan 35 Foot Lift buses about maybe to see if they would be willing to transfer some of their retired buses to the Village of Downers Grove. PACE has done a good job of maintaining their fleet.

Mr. Kollmar stated the revenues have gone up and the riders have gone down since the last fare increase. Mr. Kollmar asked if Mr. Balicki had data to show the committee and if he could email the numbers.

Mr. Balicki stated that he does have the information and will provide it to the committee.

Mr. Waxman stated that if additional equipment is obtained, then additional charters can be done and the Village wouldn't have to be so restricted or turn anyone away.

Mr. Kollmar asked why the charter rates were different for non-profit Downers Grove and the Bristol Club rate is \$43.60 per hour and they are a community resident. Why are they different? Why are they charged a different rate? It doesn't have to be answered, but it just shows that the charter services in DuPage should be benchmarked because it seems out of kilter.

Commissioner Tully referred to the outline (attachment 2) and started a discussion regarding enhancing service; adjust timing, frequency and path of existing routes. There is a lot of data that has been collected to help plan the system with regards to the timing, frequency and the paths of the buses, but more data is needed. Mr. Ashby explained how PACE determines where the routes are run. Mr. Waxman asked Mr. Ashby for a copy of developmental guidelines.

There was a discussion regarding the current location of the routes, the duration of the routes and time of the routes for the various commuter shuttles. Mr. Waxman discussed his morning route.

Mr. Balicki asked Commissioner Tully, if a question of changing a route comes up for discussion, does the Council feel comfortable with delegating staff to make changes or is it something the Council should know about prior to changes being made. For example, PACE does public hearings when they are changing or eliminating a route.

Commissioner Tully stated that it's not any different than equipment purchases. When someone comes to the Council to request equipment, there are always questions. Most of the time the purchase is justified through the staff recommendation.

Commissioner Tully stated he would email a copy of the outline to everyone so that they may make adjustments or amendments on their own.

New Business

Mr. Waxman requested a copy of the minutes.

Mr. Waxman stated one of the Bristol Club riders informed him that the Woodridge Club is looking to stop their shuttle bus because of mechanical problems. Is it possible to look into the Bristol Club shuttle going from the Bristol Club to the Woodridge Club to the Belmont train station and both organizations share the cost and that would reduce the Bristol Club's cost on their service?

Mr. Balicki asked where the Woodridge Club is located?

Mr. Waxman stated the Woodridge Club is located off of Janes Avenue and 75th Street. It might increase the ridership of the Bristol Club.

Mr. Balicki asked Mr. Waxman for contact information so that he may follow up with someone from the Woodridge Club.

Mr. Kollmar has two items that are not related to buses, but are related to transportation and handed a list of questions to Commissioner Tully regarding the parking structure being constructed and requested answers at the next meeting. Mr. Kollmar drew a picture on the board of bike lockers and had a discussion regarding bike lockers at the train stations.

Approved September 10, 2003

Commissioner Tully stated that at the next meeting there will be a discussion about increasing the revenue. Commissioner Tully then asked if anyone had any other business. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Kollmar made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Mueller seconded.

Motion passed 4:0

Adjourned 8:26 p.m.