

Regional Transit Authority
Minutes of Board Meeting
June 10, 1994

The meeting was called to order at 1:45 p.m. by Chairman Pro Tem Paul Miller in the King County Council Chambers, 402 King County Courthouse, Seattle, Washington. The Board Administrator called the roll and the following Board members were present:

King County:

Don Davidson, Bellevue Mayor
Mary Gates, Federal Way Mayor
Greg Nickels, King County Councilmember
Cynthia Sullivan, King County Councilmember
Jim White, Kent Mayor

Pierce County:

Sharon Boekelman, Bonney Lake Councilmember
Ken Madsen, Pierce County Councilmember

Snohomish County:

Dave Earling, Edmonds Councilmember
Bob Drewel, Snohomish County Executive

Washington State Department of Transportation:

Sid Morrison, Secretary

The following Board member arrived after roll call:

Pierce County:

Doug Sutherland, Pierce County Executive

May 13 and May 20, 1994 Minutes:

It was moved by Ms. Gates, seconded by Mr. White and carried by the unanimous vote of all Board members present that the minutes of May 13, 1994 and May 20, 1994 be approved as presented.

Report of the Chair:

Mr. Miller:

I am sitting in today for Mr. Laing, as he is ill.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Drewel, Snohomish County Executive, and Mr. Locke, King County Executive, to today's meeting. Mr. Locke is not yet a voting member of the Board but this confirmation should occur soon. Mr. Sutherland, Pierce County Executive, will be arriving late for today's meeting due to a 12:00 meeting.

The Rules Committee meeting scheduled for next Friday, June 17 has been cancelled. The Rules Committee will meet on July 1 at noon.

Today's agenda indicates discussion and action will occur for item eleven (evaluation criteria for Phase I options). There will be discussion of this item, but no action will be taken.

Mr. White:

The public is invited to attend a meeting Monday evening at 6:30 p.m. in Kent at the public library. The subject will be suburban cities transportation for the 21st century. Bus service and advanced vehicle monitoring will be discussed.

Mr. Miller:

Mr. Stoner's contributions were acknowledged at the May 27 Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Board meeting. I would like to add my thanks to Ms. Karen Miller, Snohomish County Councilmember, for her service on the Board.

Public Comment:

Mr. Miller:

One person has indicated a desire to address the Board today.

Mr. Stanley Watanabe:

I live near SeaTac. I would like to address the use of light rail to Tacoma or Olympia and also on the Eastside.

What I have read and heard is that light rail is very efficient and fast. As a matter of fact, I have read about light rail on the East Coast, in Sweden and in Japan. The light rail cars have their own electric motors. This allows the cars to operate together with the main train or they may operate separately. The train can go down the rail and individual cars may stop at different stations without the entire train having to stop. The main train can continue down the track and on its way back, it can pick up the other cars. This would eliminate all the "stop and go" of the trains, making the service fast and efficient.

I advise the RTA Board to look at how these light rail cars are operated in the East, in Sweden and in Japan. You will then see what I am talking about.

Thank you very much.

Executive Director Report:

Expert Review Panel Meeting Report

Mr. Matoff:

The Expert Review Panel (ERP) met last week to review the technical work done to date by the staff and consultants. Mr. Aubrey Davis is not here today, but I will summarize that meeting. Mr. Davis may wish to provide a summary, from his point of view, at a future meeting.

This was the second in a current series of ERP meetings. There is another meeting scheduled on October 6, which would come by the time the data and analysis produced for the study options is available and before the time the Board is asked to make a decision. We reviewed the status of the options, our work schedule and the criteria for the evaluation and the evaluation procedures. I believe I can summarize the main points:

- 1) The panel, consistent with its charge from the state, is interested in assuring that the technical analysis is of the same quality as the previous work and that it provides an adequate basis for the Board's decision on Phase I in October.
- 2) Although we have only one more formally scheduled meeting with the panel as a whole between now and the Board's decision, it is clear the volume of work and the products to be reviewed are of such a magnitude that one

meeting will not be sufficient. It would be better to work continuously with some of the members during the course of the summer, particularly with the cost estimation, capital costing, patronage forecasting (for which there is a subcommittee), and references to environmental issues. We will be touching base with the members throughout the summer and into the fall as products are prepared and given to you that will also go to the panel members so that the meeting in October will be productive.

3) There was discussion of the evaluation methods, raised by Michael Meyer of Georgia Tech. We discussed the differences between the analysis and the methodology of pulling together the data in a decision-making context so the Board can have a clearly illustrated consensus of taking differences courses of action. Mr. Meyer has written a book on this subject and he will be sending some models.

4) John Basic, an engineer, brought up the issue of freight and commercial railroad uses. This is an important point; I think it is being addressed, but we need to illustrate that fact. Freight operation will not be hampered by commuter rail. We will address that situation.

5) Professor Rutherford of the University of Washington raised the question of the degree to which we are appropriately addressing legislative and federal requirements for major investment studies. We are preparing a technical memo in response to that question; I believe we are addressing that question.

6) Professor Hodge, Geography(?) Department at the UW, addressed the issue of phasing, particularly for Options I and II, and how this would actually work. If we begin with a lower capital cost light rail system, how do we upgrade that over time? What triggers the upgrading of the system and do we acquire right-of-way?

I have one additional issue to raise. In October the Board will also be asked to adopt the Regional Transit Plan (RTP) as a long-range document for transit development. Some parts of that plan were added subsequent to the time the ERP last look at the plan as a whole. Those additional pieces are being identified and reviewed by the panel as well.

This is a thorough approach, consistent with the previous work.

The second part of my report has to do with the commuter rail demonstration project the Board has discussed. This would provide service from Seattle to Tacoma for the Sonics games this fall. We have continued to give some evaluation to that project, and staff has brought some intermediate conclusions to the Board.

We are satisfied the option of this service is technically feasible. The necessary equipment is available and could be obtained by a lease from Los Angeles for use in the demonstration project between Seattle and Tacoma.

This project is institutionally feasible. The railroads are willing to operate the service.

Staff has established a gross operating cost of \$1.7 million to \$3 million. We have evaluated that from different angles and we are satisfied. We would operate two trains in each direction for each Sonics game. Funding of that cost is the main issue. We were pleased to find that in the context of a settlement of the petroleum products anti-trust litigation, the Attorney General has proposed a distribution plan for Washington State's share of the settlement. This includes funding for up to 50% of the total cost, up to a maximum of \$1.5 million for the state share. This would cover 50% of the cost of the service. Twenty-five percent of the remaining share can be obtained from the fares, and the remaining 25% could come from corporate sponsors, advertising and sale of promotional items or concessions.

As we have only four months to implement this service, at this time staff would like a sense of the Board that you would like to proceed with this. If that is the case, I will take action:

1) Staff and I will negotiate contracts for the cars and locomotives necessary to provide this service, preferably with bi-level equipment, and bring this back to the Board for approval.

- 2) Staff would negotiate contracts with Burlington Northern (BN) and Union Pacific (UP) to operate service within the environment of costs described and bring this back to the Board for approval. One of the issues will be to find a solution to insuring liability coverage for the railroad and the service.
- 3) Staff would negotiate agreements with the Attorney General, provided that the courts approve the settlement. If it is necessary to bring this to the Board, staff will bring this to the Board for its review and approval.
- 4) This is a major project for the RTA staff, a staff that is already busy. We would like to obtain, from a local agency, a loaned staff person to spend full time on this project for the next four to ten months.

(Board member Sutherland arrived at this time.)

- 5) Staff would like to negotiate an agreement for fundraising support so the 25% private contribution can be raised. Staff is proposing to negotiate a contract with an appropriate person to do this within the limits of my authority. I believe this expenditure can be funded with the commuter rail account. Some funds may have to come from the contingency fund, which would require Board action.
- 6) I am proposing to obtain a professional marketing analysis to get a better feel for the potential ridership and to be sure the service is sized appropriately.

Staff is seeking guidance from the Board today.

Mr. Locke:

I am pleased. My staff has been actively involved in this project. We initiated those conversations with the Attorney General. We had a friend alert us to the anti-trust settlement and we tried to seek inclusion of funds for this project. We are looking at operating two trains per day, one at 5:30 p.m. and one at 6:00 p.m. The trip would take 55 minutes, bringing approximately 2,000 passengers per game to within two blocks of the Tacoma Dome. This ridership would help reduce rush hour traffic and parking hassles. Without state and private subsidy of the service, the cost per rider would be approximately \$25 round-trip. With the state and private subsidy, we think the service could be priced very competitively and attractively at \$10 to \$15 per round-trip ticket.

This is an exciting project. It would be a demonstration to show that using commuter trains can be less stressful and more attractive than cars. This would test the public's acceptance and the feasibility of launching the next phase of the RTA.

I was pleased to work with Mr. Nickels and my own staff on this project. I think it will be critical that in the next four to six months we employ some outside marketing support. I would appreciate the support of the Board to authorize the Executive Director to negotiate some contracts and get this going. Time is of the essence. The Sonics begin their games in October. We need corporate and state support and we need to reserve the necessary trains.

It was moved by Mr. Nickels and seconded by Mr. Morrison that the Executive Director take the actions necessary to allow implementation of the commuter rail demonstration project, the Sonics Express, including identifying funds in the budget that might be available for doing the groundwork and negotiating the contracts necessary for other actions to be presented to the Board to allow this to move forward.

Mr. Nickels:

Many people need to be thanked for their work on this. Mr. Bob White of the RTA staff and the King County Executive and his staff have worked hard. Pierce County representatives, such as Mr. Miller and Mr. Madsen, have indicated an interest in putting the best face on their community and showing how we can move people back and forth. This is a good opportunity to show the public, prior to their vote next May, that we can run a railroad. We can take a transportation problem and find a solution. There will be 18,000 people per game

traveling to 41 Sonics games. If they are all depending on their single occupancy vehicles, there will be a mess. We can take 2,000 of these people and put them on mass transit and demonstrate that this institution can make things happen. Without this step, we would be missing the boat.

Mr. Davidson:

If, when this item comes back before the Board, will there will be a financial impact statement. What if there is little or no ridership on the trains?

Mr. Matoff:

We will bring back a risk analysis showing a range of potential financial outcomes associated with this project.

Mr. Morrison:

I would like to extend my congratulations. We were surprised to learn that this fund existed. We have had anti-trust litigation against major petroleum distributors in the past, but it was done on a collective basis; however, this particular fund was a group of western Attorney Generals filing an action related to the western region of the United States so the money was theirs to distribute. I congratulate whoever got in and made this sales pitch. I am enthusiastically in favor of this project.

As Mr. Locke indicated, it is a very positive opportunity for a demonstration. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is pleased because the Talgo trains are here and operating at full capacity. Once people see and feel the experience, they will see that it can work. Both for the RTA and transportation in general this is a real plus and we hope for a great service.

Mr. Madsen:

We once talked a little about having some options to continue this service after the conclusion of the Sonics season. Is that a part of this negotiation?

Mr. Matoff :

It is staff's intent to include some options for additional service and retention of the equipment.

Mr. Miller:

I would like to indicate my support for this measure. Many of us have worked on pulling this together. I view this less as a train to the Sonics games as an opportunity to resolve a very drastic transportation snafu affecting not only those going to the games, but Tacoma and Pierce County in general. It will be a demonstration project for those who will be riding the train to see what a regional transportation system that is rail oriented can do for this region. I hope we are building a market niche of those who will support our proposal and who will be our sales people. Contrary to Mr. Davidson's comments earlier, I asked about the possibility of the demand exceeding our capacity. I think we will find we have underestimated the demand.

With regard to the fare issue, I know there is a lot of work going into designing what this fare will be. The fare should be attractive, but it should also recapture sufficient money to make the proposal work. We must also look at what we are proposing in terms of commuter rail fares on the eventual system, and using that as a guideline by which we can judge the proposed fares on the demonstration project. The closer we are to that fare, the better off we are.

Ms. Gates:

I hope we always remember that transportation offerings are some of the best kept secrets. I hope we will pay close attention to the marketing of this service. Perhaps enclosures with the season tickets could be utilized, as

well as billboards along Interstate 5 southbound. I think it is important to be very attentive to making this information available and making sure people realize this service is up and running and available.

Mr. Davidson:

I want the record to reflect that my concern for the financial implications of this service do not indicate my pessimism; I am optimistic about this service, but I would like to understand the financial implications.

Mr. White:

If there is sufficient capacity on the trains, riders could be picked up in Kent.

Mr. Locke:

I hope it is the intent of Mr. Nickels' motion to authorize the Executive Director to enter into short-term or nominal contracts for marketing until the entire financial picture can be brought back for final Board action. Timing is of the essence, so it might be wise to be sure Mr. Matoff can enter into small contracts over the next couple of months.

Mr. Nickels:

That is the intent of my motion.

The motion authorizing the Executive Director to take the action necessary to allow implementation of the commuter rail demonstration, the Sonics Express, including the identification of funds in the budget that might be available for doing the groundwork and negotiation the contracts necessary and other actions to be presented to the Board to allow this to move forward was carried by the unanimous vote of all Board members present. It is the intent of this motion to allow the Executive Director to enter into short-term or nominal contracts for marketing before the full financial situation can be presented to the Board for final action.

Mr. Miller welcomed Mr. Sutherland to the meeting.

Finance Committee Report:

Resolution No. 30 - Amending RTA Budget to Reflect Interlocal Agreement Pass-Through Grants

Mr. Nickels:

Included in today's agenda packet is Resolution No. 30, which is presented for information only today. It will lay out for you some amendments suggested to the overall budget to reflect the pass through grants. It increases the RTA budget equally for revenues and expenditures. We think it is appropriate for those funds to be reflected in our budget as well.

Also included in the agenda is a report on the RTA's financial position.

With that report, I would be happy to answer any questions.

Rules Committee Report:

Mr. Miller:

The Rules Committee meeting of June 3 was cancelled, and the June 17 meeting has also been cancelled. The next meeting of the Rules Committee will be at noon on July 1 in the RTA Conference Room, 821 Second Avenue, Seattle.

Public Involvement Committee Report:

Mr. Earling gave the following report:

My report will cover three basic areas.

The Public Involvement Committee is assessing the first phase of the public involvement program; this information is reflected on the off-white sheet of material distributed with today's agenda (copy on file). The report indicates the kinds of techniques used and the reactions perceived from each of those, and the evaluation of whether or not those techniques were successful.

Board members should have received a complete volume of public input from the first phase of the public involvement program.

The blue sheet in the packet refers to the work in progress on Phase II of the public involvement program. We will be having a first meeting with the strategic planning consultants in a few weeks, assuming action is taken today to approve that contract. Some of the indications will be subject to their involvement with what we have in mind. You will note there are a variety of tools we are developing for the second phase. Of particular interest may be a briefing book which would give a good and clear outline of the three plans under consideration this summer.

The purple sheet shows the kinds of issues under consideration and the different audiences we will be trying to contact--voters, stakeholders and the general public--and how the tools will be used to reach those three audiences.

I would answer any questions.

Legislative Task Force Report:

Resolution No. 31, Authorizing the Execution of an Agreement for Strategy Development Consultant Services

It was moved by Mr. Madsen and seconded by Ms. Boekelman that Resolution No. 31 be approved as presented.

Mr. Madsen:

The Legislative Task Force, the Public Involvement Committee and the Rules Committee met in April to define what a strategist should do for this Board. On May 6 the Board adopted Resolution No. 19 which approved and suggested we go ahead and submit a request for proposals for a strategy development group. Last week, after going through the interview process, etc. we have recommended that the Executive Director be authorized to enter into negotiations for a contract with the consulting team of the Rockey Company, Taylor/Consulting, CT Associates, and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates.

Mr. Nickels:

I am very supportive of this action; I think this is a key ingredient and I am pleased we are moving ahead to fill that gap. I wonder if Mr. Madsen could talk about what strengths this proposal brought that the others did not.

Mr. Madsen:

I think we have, with Rockey Company as the main contractor, a company that has been around the area and involved in not only advertising, but campaigns as well. They have a good feel for the public in this area. We also mixed and matched and borrowed consultants from one proposal and put them in another. We asked the Fairbank firm to become a part of this because of their voter research polling and analysis. I think their strength was their analysis of what the polls said. This is something Mr. Earling has been desirous of for several months. I think this is a very strong combination that will enhance our positive image.

One of the things that came out in the interviews is that the RTA need to identify itself and create a credibility issue so people feel the money that will be taxed from them will be used as we say it will be used.

The other issue is that the RTA is not controlling the debate. I think the Rockey Company is capable of getting us in a position to control the debate. We interviewed four groups and they were all good. It was one of those situations where you have so much good talent, but you can only choose one team.

The Board Administrator called the roll and the motion was carried unanimously. (10 in favor; 0 opposed. Ms. Sullivan had left the meeting by this time.)

Mr. Madsen continued his report:

I have one additional item to report. Included in today's agenda is a copy of a memo to Mr. Laing, myself, Mr. Matoff and Mr. Matsuoka from Denny Miller Associates in Washington, D.C. Yesterday the full House Appropriations Committee met and the \$4.7 million for commuter rail is in that appropriation process.

In addition, I asked Denny Miller Associates to review all other items in the National Highway System Designation Act that dealt with the Puget Sound area, and to look at the Amtrak reauthorization bill. All of that information is included in this memo.

I would like to say our Washington, D.C. lobbying team has done a very good job. I didn't expect to get this appropriation.

In addition, I actually have a copy of the language in the mark-up bill that advises all of this and other money that deals with projects they did not fund. Copies of this available.

Evaluation Criteria for Phase I Options:

Mr. Matoff:

The list of evaluation criteria that has been distributed (copy on file) was originally presented in the draft document for study options provided on May 27. At that time, on a motion from Board member Hansen, this was removed for further review and discussion; it has been agendized for the Board today.

Rather than recommending action, staff has proposed that the Board take this subject up in a workshop setting. It is clear that the evaluation criteria and methodology are an issue with the ERP, and that the equity issue, in the context of evaluation alternatives, is a major issue. But there are other issues as well. Mr. Laing suggested a Board workshop on issues relating to technology, such as heavy rail, conversion, etc. The Finance Committee has recommended a workshop to discuss reliability of assumptions regarding state and federal funding relative to the three options. There is the issue of the development of integrated fares and service structures and how that would work. The issue of how the RTA might evolve into an umbrella agency to achieve some of our other objectives has been raised. This will be a major discussion that will require some focus. Rather than recommending action today, staff would like to recommend that the Board authorize staff to set a series of three additional workshops relating to equity, funding and development of alternative technology and focus on them in a setting that encourages additional understanding rather than seeking action today.

Mr. Miller:

I had a meeting with Mr. Matoff on Wednesday. I believe there are a specific number of workshops we should plan on so we don't come to the fall and find ourselves trying to make decisions with questions still outstanding.

Among those issues to be discussed in workshops is equity, which may take more than one workshop. The Finance Committee, at its last meeting, held a discussion and the Chair recommended workshops through the summer to review the numbers from a funding status of state and federal reliability, and a review of component

pricing of the elements of the system. There should be a clear understanding that those workshops would be open to the full Board. We will ask Mr. Matoff to come back with recommended dates and topics for these workshops, as well as preferred days and times.

Ms. Gates:

One of the concerns we heard last time was from Mr. Matoff indicating he felt we should at least deal with the equity criteria early as opposed to later. If we are ordering these issues in some manner of when to do the work, I would suggest the equity and evaluation criteria be settled first. Some of these topics may be interactive, but those issue should be dealt with sooner as opposed to later. I expect it will take some time to do this. We have some new membership on the Board, and it is important to obtain those viewpoints.

Mr. Earling:

I wonder if it might be advantageous to have staff of the various transit agencies meet with the RTA staff prior to these workshops. The staff in Snohomish County has raised a variety of issues. Perhaps a meeting would clear some of those issues up so they wouldn't have to be addressed in the workshop.

Mr. Miller asked Board members' preferences in scheduling these workshops.

Mr. Miller:

We are tentatively discussing three workshops throughout the summer, in addition to the Finance Committee's workshop. The topics are equity, evaluation criteria, state and federal funding levels, technology issues including light rail versus heavy rail and what actions might be used in terms of criteria determining where each would be most appropriate and how to transition between one system and the other.

Mr. Matoff:

The strategic development of the RTA should also be discussed; will it become an operating agency or an umbrella agency?

Mr. Miller:

The relationship to existing transit agencies should also be discussed. Are there other topics to be included?

Mr. Matoff:

I will work with the Board Administrator to select the dates for the workshops.

Mr. Miller asked for other comments about the evaluation criteria at this time; there were none.

Other Business:

Mr. Miller:

I would like to thank the WSDOT for its efforts in putting service in place on the Talgo trains. I recently utilized this service, and it was a pleasurable and enjoyable experience. It was truly and easily a similarly comfortable ride as any plane ride between the two cities.

Mr. Morrison:

I believe the public agrees with Mr. Miller; this service has been sold out on the weekends and operates at 80% capacity on the weekdays. This is much higher usage than the Amtrak service. I think the public will respond if they are provided quality, convenient service with a reasonable price.

Ms. Gates made the following remarks:

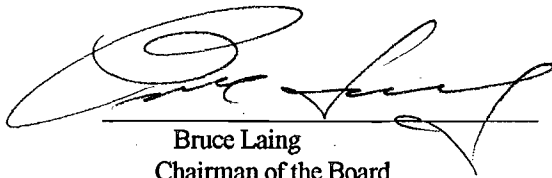
I recently attended the Chamber trip to Toronto and rode some light rail cars that are 40 years old. They are still working well. This pointed out the ability of these cars to be very low maintenance and not needing replacement as often as buses. To actually experience this service is important. We saw some intermodal facilities with taxis right next to the park and ride lots and buses and commuter rail and light rail. We got to see the system working and working very comfortably. We know there are places elsewhere it works well, but I wanted to share this with the Board. The operation and costs of the equipment is very long lived.

Future Meetings:

June 24 in the King County Council Chambers,
July 8 in Snohomish County
July 22 in King County

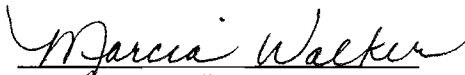
Adjournment:

As there was no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.



Bruce Laing
Chairman of the Board

ATTEST:



Marcia Walker
Board Administrator

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