

REDWOOD COAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY

MINUTES

APRIL 8, 2020 AT 12:00 P.M. EMERGENCY ZOOM MEETING

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER. ROLL CALL

Vice Chairman Gitlin called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Nicole Burshem conducted Roll Call.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Joseph Rye led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR- None

5. APPROVE MINUTES OF JANUARY 27, 2020 AND MARCH 27, 2020

On a motion by Director Berkowitz, seconded by Director Roberts, and unanimously carried on a polled vote the Redwood Coast Transit Authority Board of Directors approved the minutes of January 27, 2020 and March 27, 2020, as presented.

6. UPDATE ON RCTA CORONA VIRUS COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSES TO DATE

Mr. Rye reported RCTA has been doing everything in their power to keep up with the dynamic COVID-19 health and safety requirements. First Transit was able to guarantee nightly cleanings by adding this task to managerial staff instead relying on drivers to do the cleaning. Historically the drivers have done the best they can to clean around their daily routes. Since late February, Chuck and Fernando have been staying late every night to clean the interior of the buses. This is not a sustainable long-term solution. Mr. Rye reported that RCTA made a call to reinstate fare collection on April 7th, due to unanticipated abuse of the free fare concept by people taking obviously non-essential trips. No complaints were received, and buses are less crowded. Mr. Rye reported maintenance staff has designed a clear plexiglass panel to provide a sneeze guard separation for drivers from passengers. Once the materials come in, we will place them in a pilot bus to test how it works. If successful and vision is not impeded, the sneeze guards will be installed fleet-wide.

Since the March 27th RCTA Board Meeting, as feared three drivers chose to stop driving due to COVID-19 and RCTA implemented the reductions in service approved by the Board for this very purpose at the March 27th meeting. This reduced evening service to end earlier, reduced one daily round trip from both Routes 20 and 199, and eliminated all Saturday service. Director Gitlin asked how many drivers we currently have total? Mr. Rye responded that three drivers left and 12 remain, about eighty percent of our workforce remaining. Mr. Rye reported that RCTA is participating actively with Del Norte Health and Emergency Response officials, and that he spoke with Dr. Rehwaldt who expressed that Public Health didn't want RCTA to cut the service to Arcata because of regional medical needs. He would like us to practice social distancing onboard buses

for those services. Director Gitlin stated the follow up to that is we have two cases in Del Norte County, three cases in Curry County, and Humboldt has approximately 18 cases. The concern is unknowingly bringing the virus from Humboldt to Del Norte County. Director Roberts stated as of April 8, 2020 it is up to 50 cases in Humboldt County. Director Roberts suggested using the Dial-A-Ride service to and from Arcata. We could call it a reservation space instead of a trip. Director Gitlin stated Pelican Bay has no cases at this time everyone is going in and out clean. Director Kime stated we have cases to the north, south, and east of us and not sure shutting down an essential service would reduce the risk. People have needs and they must get down to Arcata for those needs. You have people on 101 driving through here getting gas and stopping at Safeway. We can't stop traffic and doesn't see the point in shutting down the service. Director Roberts agrees with Director Kime. Director Kime asked if Pelican Bay is allowing visitation. Director Gitlin responded they are not; all visitations will be verbal as of today. Director Roberts asked how many regular passengers are using Route 20 recently. Mr. Rye responded approximately 25 per day. Director Berkowitz is concerned with the risk of going out of the county. Dr. Rehwaldt shut down the hotels, campgrounds, and places to prevent the virus, but to keep the routes coming into the county seems counter-active. Director Roberts stated she personally thinks this is an essential service as far as shopping and stuff like that and important to keep it open with minimal service of going there once or twice a day. Mr. Rye mentioned that we had reduced the Arcata service from 3 to 2 daily round trips as of April 6th. Director Gitlin asked how the Dial-A-Ride system would work, if Route 20 and/or Route 199 were converted from fixed route to DAR? . Mr. Rye responded they would make a reservation to pick them up. Director Kime asked which vehicle would be used for this Dial-A-Ride service. Mr. Rye responded we would use one of the larger diesel vehicles, as they have the power to navigate the grades between Crescent City and Arcata. Director Gitlin asked if the Oregon transit service from Smith River to Coos Bay has changed at all? Mr. Rye responded the only changes they have made is that it is an essential trip only and Coastal Connection drivers are empowered to inquire about trip purpose before allowing riders to board the bus, as well as implementing social distancing inside the buses. Director Roberts asked if RCTA is requiring passengers to wear masks. Mr. Rye responded no we haven't yet.

The Redwood Coast Transit Authority Board of Directors had a 3-2 vote in favor to not shutdown the service to Arcata, but keep it limited and follow COVID-19 health and safety guidelines.

7. DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF INCREASED EXPENDITURES FOR SHORT TERM UTILIZATION OF THIRD PARTY TO PROVIDE INTENSIVE BUS CLEANING SERVICE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. Rye reported First Transit and RCTA has found a third party to provide intensive bus cleaning services during this COVID-19 pandemic. Palm Industries, Inc. is very knowledgeable of what needs to be done to protect our drivers and passengers during this time, and have several deep cleaning commercial contracts in the area. They will be paid \$450/day and they will come in and clean all 12 buses to the maximum at the end of each day. There is a seven day termination notice for both parties when their services are no longer needed after pandemic is over. Director Roberts asked how many of the buses still have fabric seats. Chuck Clarkson responded at least four of the buses have fabric seats. Director Gitlin asked in regards to using bus cleaning as a potential Community Work Service project to obtain affordable labor and provide an opportunity for the clients to complete hours. Chairman Fallman responded the Community Work Service hours have

been suspended at this time until further notice. Director Kime stated during COVID-19 we should not use general public and get a professional to handle the deep cleaning, but after COVID-19 we should revisit that option.

The Redwood Coast Transit Authority Board of Directors voted 5-0 to increase expenditures for short term utilization of third party to provide intensive bus cleaning service during COVID-19 pandemic.

8. DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF SHORT TERM PAY INCREASE FOR FIRST TRANSIT HOURLY EMPLOYEES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO SUPPORT RETENTION AND SERVICE CONTINUITY.

Mr. Rye reported since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Del Norte County RCTA has lost three drivers. As discussed and approved at the last meeting RCTA responded with reducing some lower productive services, which relieves some staffing pressure. However, if RCTA loses more drivers it will force us to reduce even more services and this is what RCTA and First Transit would like to avoid. We want to offer the drivers that remain with us through this crisis an incentive to do so. We have three options for the board to look at and pick one. Option one is to temporarily increase the hourly wage \$1.50-\$2.00 an hour until pandemic has gone. Option two is to have bonuses paid out every two weeks to hourly employees who continue work. Option 3 a one-time significant bonus paid out to employees who continue to work. Staff recommends the Board approve option one. Director Roberts likes the idea of option 1 of a \$1.50 increase in their hourly wage until pandemic has lifted. Director Kime doesn't feel that we should spend a monetary incentive to make people feel safe. We should reward them after the crisis is over if they decide to stick with us.

On a motion by Director Gitlin, seconded by Director Roberts, and a vote of 4-1 (Kime dissenting) the Redwood Coast Transit Board of Directors approves Option 1, a short term \$2.00/hour pay increase for First Transit hourly employees during COVID-19 pandemic to support retention and service continuity.

9. ADOPT RESOLUTION 2019-20-12 AUTHORIZING RCTA'S FY 2019-20 ALLOCATION OF LCTOP FUNDING

Dan Herron reported this item authorizes Mr. Rye to submit an application for \$50,000 for LCTOP funding. LCTOP is a program originated from the California Cap and Trade program with a mission to lower air pollution. In the past we have used these funds for shelters and the Free Fares Program. Caltrans denied RCTA's original project for this year, which would have extended the Free Fares Program another year, and steered RCTA to submit a new project. RCTA then submitted a new project for Electric Bus Infrastructure, where RCTA will install charging equipment in its Williams Drive yard, and procure two new buses to take the first steps of its fleet electrification project. A challenge with LCTOP is that it does NOT allow planning and design costs to be included, so RCTA needs to identify outside funding to cover these critical initial phases, before charging stations can be purchased and installed, and new electric buses ordered. Director Kime asked if RCTA will be procuring buses that are used or brand new? Mr. Herron responded new buses.

On a motion by Director Berkowitz, seconded by Director Roberts, and unanimously carried on a polled vote the Redwood Coast Transit Authority Board of Directors approved Resolution 2019-20-12 Authorizing RCTA's FY 2019-20 Allocation of LCTOP funding.

10. **OPERATIONS REPORT-** Chuck Clarkson reported he has been able to staff the reduced levels of service since the April 6th service reduction with the drivers that have on hand. Chuck believes the escalated cleanings, driver sneeze barriers, and premium crisis pay (all approved recently or today) will ensure that he can maintain adequate driver staffing. We at this time have been able to keep buses clean with Clorox wipes the best we can, but Chuck looks forward to the start of the Palm Industries contract in the next few days. Director Gitlin asked how the drivers are feeling about keeping their employment with RCTA? Mr. Clarkson responded the drivers that are left have gave no indication of discouragement or feeling of being forced to stay. The only concern they do have is if they will be keeping their jobs in the longer term, or if more cuts are in the future. Chuck has conveyed to them that he does not believe further reductions are planned.

11. **GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT** - There is nothing to report at this time.

12. **ANNOUNCEMENTS** –

The following Board of Directors commented on the following: Director Kime reported that the City would like to aid in helping fabricate the clear Plexi-glass sneeze guards for RCTA. Director Kime asked Mr. Rye to contact Eric Weir at the City to inquire about getting this started.

13. **ADJOURN** –

Redwood Coast Board of Directors adjourned the meeting at 1:11 P.M. The next regular meeting will be Monday, April 27, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Joseph Rye, General Manager
Redwood Coast Transit/TMTP/Herron Consulting