

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS, LABOR
& TRANSPORTATION
MINUTES: February 22, 2010**

IN ATTENDANCE:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Chair: Ryan; Legislators: José Alvarado, Judy Myers, Vito Pinto, Marty Rogowsky, Alfreda Williams

BOL: Chairman Ken Jenkins

Guests: Deputy Commissioner Harry Stanton, Westchester County Department of Transportation

With a quorum present, the Committee on Public Works, Parks, Labor and Transportation was called to order at 4:25 pm.

The minutes of January 19 were approved as submitted.

On the motion of Legislator Pinto and the second of Legislator Alfreda Williams, the requested modification of the Peekskill Sewer District – with the addition of property at 14 Laurie Road, Town of Cortlandt – was voted out of committee and forwarded to the County Executive for action by the appropriate county departments.

Chair Ryan introduced Harry Stanton, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, for the purpose of explaining the status of the installation of bicycle racks on BeeLine buses. Mr. Stanton explained that in 2009 the county researched and purchased two bicycle racks for the purpose of testing on a north county bus route. However, it quickly became clear that there would be no transportation aid to purchase additional racks. In the short term, all funds must go to basic operating expenses. Also, there is a risk of misleading the public that system-wide racks would be installed. If significant cuts have to be made to routes, installing bicycle racks would not be understood or appreciated by those riders whose routes were eliminated.

The Governor's proposed state budget eliminates \$3.6 million in State Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) to Westchester County. The cut will create a deficit in the County's DOT budget for 2010. Any grant money received this year, if it is possible, should go into the operating budget. The DOT is also predicting a long term deficit in federal funding for capital expenditures to purchase buses.

Buses coming from Rockland are the high bed ones that have storage underneath that can accommodate bikes. The low, hybrid buses that the County buys do not have room for these storage compartments.

The fare rates increased a year ago to conform to the MetroCard. In theory, a ride costs \$2.25; but with all the discounts available, the average paid is \$1.48. Fares traditionally cover approximately 50% of the \$4.00 per ride operating cost. Some routes only return 9% of the operating costs because of low ridership.

There are now 347 buses in the fleet after removing 11 of the oldest buses this week. Currently, the oldest buses are from 2002. The heavy duty buses have a 12 year or 350,000 mile life span. The bus fleet is close to 100% in compliance with emission standards. The hybrid buses sit lower to the road and the design eliminates some seating since the wheel well comes up into the setting area.

Legis. Alvarado and Legis. Jenkins requested information on maintenance of the bus shelters and bus stops after receiving complaints from constituents of poor snow removal. Mr. Stanton reported that traditionally & legally the local community is responsible for snow removal. However, DOT does operate a crew of six maintenance people to keep the system going during a snowfall. He will provide a list of locations that are maintained by private contracts and of property owners who maintain the bus stops and of how revenue from advertising on the shelters is shared with the communities that are under contract to maintain the shelters. The advertising revenue is down to \$1M from a high of \$2M.

Board Chair Jenkins urged that the bike rack trial proceed because the racks were purchased, the route identified, the garages adapted to accommodate the buses with racks, and the advocates are very strongly in favor of the racks.

Chair Ryan suggested, and it was agreed, that DOT first get back to the committee with cost estimates and an overview of the operational problems posed by the bike rack trial. This information is needed before the Committee can make a decision to have DOT proceed with the trial.

Moved by Legislator Pinto, seconded by Legislator Rogowsky and with a vote of 7-0, the Committee on Public Works, Parks, Labor & Transportation adjourned at 5:22 pm.

AUDIO RECORDING ON FILE FOR REVIEW UPON REQUEST