

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS, LABOR & TRANSPORTATION

MINUTES: March 29, 2010

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

BOL: Chairman Ken Jenkins and Legislator Tom Abinanti

Guests: Commissioner Lawrence Salley, Westchester County Department of Transportation; Ken Valenti & G. McKinstry, Journal News; Katy Delgado, Ned McCormack & Wasi Talib, CEO; John Tomlin from Sen. Stewart-Cousins office.

With a quorum present, the Committee on Public Works, Parks, Labor and Transportation was called to order at 11:08 am.

Bus Service

Chair Ryan introduced Lawrence Salley, Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, for the purpose of explaining the County Executive's Proposed Expense Reduction Plan for the department.

Comm. Salley explained that the proposed \$98.4M in the 2010 budget for operating DOT was reduced by a total of \$3,639,052 by the then County Executive (\$1.8M) and the BOL (\$1.5M service cuts & \$250,000 additional anticipated revenue). Additionally, the Governor's proposed 2010-2011 State budget recommends a STOA reduction for Westchester County of \$3.6M with a likelihood of additional cuts.

To date, the Air Link bus service and Route 12 north of Armonk were eliminated as of February 15 due to low ridership and alternatives. A \$2.63M gap remains without taking the governor's proposed cuts into account. For the remainder of the year and effective June 28, an additional \$2,063,483 in service cuts are proposed. A list of these route cuts was distributed.

Route 6: summer service to events at Kensico Dam.

Route 7: reduce mid-day service

Route 14: discontinue service to Bloomingdale Rd. in WP

Route 42: modify service along White Plains Rd. in the Bronx. Questions were raised by Legislator Jenkins about the NYC bus service between 233rd and 241st Streets to catch the subway, which may make it difficult for the 200 County residents who take the 42 bus to get to the subway stops.

Loop E: lightly used and there are alternatives to reach MasterCard and Manhattanville. The corporations were approached and will either run their own shuttles or let employees walk from bus stops. It is not possible for corporations or passengers to subsidize a route because the fares are set by MetroCard when we joined the system.

Loop T: eliminate because only business affected is Siemens on Benedict Ave. so DOT modified Loop F and Route 13.

Loops B, D & F: delete one trip per route

Route 92: seasonal service to Playland from White Plains because there are alternatives & a small ridership. It eliminates a driver on Saturday and Sunday. Legislator Myers was concerned about crowded buses on bus route 76 from Port Chester to Rye. Commissioner Salley said that just last week a larger bus was added to that route.

Between 2005 & 2008, Westchester was on par with Nassau County in the receipt of State Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) at about \$44M. Now Nassau is receiving \$10M more than Westchester. Legislator Jenkins pointed out that Westchester's Legislative Package included a request that our State Transportation Operating Assistance not be cut until Westchester's aid equal Nassau's aid.

Route BxM4C: discontinue route.

This route was instituted in 1981-82 when ConRail service was very poor. It reached its peak in 1995 when ridership was 800,000 per year. When Metro North service improved, ridership dropped to 400,000 in 2006. In 2007, with MetroCard fair dropping from \$7 to \$5, the ridership rose to 480,000 and held steady from there. However, ridership is evaluated by passengers per mile (ppm) carried which is 2.86 system wide. Route BxM4C is now .56 ppm because of the length of the trip. The most riders get on at McLean Avenue in Yonkers. The chart of riders boarding at each stop was handed out to the legislators.

The legislators discussed the alternatives to Route BxM4C. They requested information comparing costs and time differentials between the various possible routes. The extra cost and additional time needed because of connecting to other buses. Legislators will also receive the number of people who get on the 20 bus that runs along the same corridor.

Eliminating the weekend and off-peak would save less than \$500,000. Saturday ridership is half what it is on a weekday and Sunday ridership is reduced another 50%. The buses "dead-head" coming back in the morning and go down empty in the afternoon.

Mr. Abinanti observed that the State system does not allow us to raise the fare to meet costs on this route even if the riders were willing to pay the increase to preserve the service.

Comm. Salley gave the results of a survey taken in late 2007-early 2008 asking riders how they would make the trip if the route were eliminated: 32%-Metro North, 20% NYC subway, 14%-drive, 5.6%-carpool, 2.5%-NYC buses, 22%-taxi to railroad. People north of Hartsdale Ave. can get to a train station in less than 12 minutes.

But Mr. Burrows still felt that the 800 riders were left without a viable alternative. Mr. Abinanti proposed keeping the service by being sure the busses “deadhead” and don’t make stops for few people. He proposed sitting with Liberty Lines to find a way to save some of the service, especially weekdays.

Comm. Salley clarified that franchising or owning a route does not exist. Legis. Abinanti has heard differently and is concerned if it is permissible to eliminate a route at will.

Legislators are receiving e-mails, calls and even petitions asking for this route to be continued. Chair Jenkins will collect and forward all legislators’ e-mails and phone calls to DOT.

A public hearing is being held on these proposed cuts on April 14 at the County Center. Commissioner Salley is the hearing officer.

Parks

Commissioner Joseph Stout, Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, described the \$1.6M in cuts his department had proposed that would not significantly affect services or revenue. Some 13 positions will be cut by attrition at \$100,000 per position because a lot of veterans are retiring. It may mean things may not be done as quickly as before but not significantly. About \$20,000 will be returned in seasonal hourly. The vacancy factor adopted in the 2010 budget was 3. The 13 positions here are on top of those 3.

The pools and beaches will continue to open at 11am rather than 10 am, which was done last year without loss in attendance. This will be an additional \$200,000 in savings. Swimming pools are opening one week later, the last week in June, to save \$60-70,000. And the pools will open one hour later during the last week in August for savings of \$25,000.

Swimming pools make money on operations. Capital costs are not recovered.

Hourly workers can actually work 10-11 months without benefits.

Playland is a money-maker at night. So 1½ hours have been added on Friday and Saturday nights. The park will be open later in the mornings also and earlier only for scheduled camp and school group visits. Fireworks on Wed. and Friday nights increase the attendance on those nights. Employees come in one hour before the park opens so they can go through their check lists and so forth.

The Croton Point Park pool is used only by the people who have reserved cabins or campsites. It was little used because the campers usually used the beach. The pool is too small and not conveniently located to be opened to the public.

Efforts at savings in the department are even greater this year. The tax levy is down 28% over the last 3 years. Parks will be about 75% revenue supported, which is very different from most parks and recreation departments.

On the motion of Legislator Rogowsky, seconded by Legislator Myers, the minutes of February 22, March 1 and March 4 were approved as submitted.

On the motion of Legislator Pinto and the second of Legislator A. Williams, the following requested sewer modifications were voted out of committee and forwarded to the County Executive for action by the appropriate county departments:

- Request by the Town of Mt. Pleasant to remove 7 Charles Court from the Saw Mill River Sewer District.
- Request by the Town of Cortlandt for the return of 3272 East Main Street to the Peekskill Sanitary Sewer District.
- Request by the Town of Cortlandt for the return of 3262 East Main Street to the Peekskill Sanitary Sewer District.

Moved by Legislator Rogowsky, seconded by Legislator Pinto and with a vote of 6-0, the Committee on Public Works, Parks, Labor & Transportation adjourned at 12:45 pm.

AUDIO RECORDING ON FILE FOR REVIEW UPON REQUEST