

Selah City Council
Study Session
March 14, 2006

Mayor Jones opened the Study Session at 3:04. Representatives of Yakima Transit in attendance were Ken Mehin and Gary Kerr. They were joined by Yakima County Conference of Government Executive Director Page Scott.

Ken Mehin stated Yakima Transit is approaching its ninth month of service to Selah. He referred to a chart on the handout showing usage of the bus is reaching about 5,000, noting usage does not seem to vary with weather. He referred to pages 2 and 3 of the handout which illustrate some options, noting the rate is the same regardless of how many hours. He stated full service is shown on the upper right of page 2. He stated page 3 represents a full year of service, and again upper right quadrant is the "full meal deal." He stated the City could go as many hours as it likes. He stated the main issue is how you pay for the service. He stated the primary option to pay for the service is sales tax.

Council Member Brian Harris asked if the \$4,343.15 total at the right on page 1 represents the total collected from riders. He asked if \$937 a day is the actual cost to run the bus.

Mr. Mehin responded that is the amount that goes toward the 13% match.

Mr. Harris reiterated the \$4,343.15 is the total brought in from riders over a nine-month period with \$937 per day actual cost.

Council Member Schmid asked where the majority of riders get on or get off the bus.

Yakima Transit Project Planner Gary Kerr reported the bulk of Selah riders get on at the Civic Center and go through Transit Center in Yakima. He stated many attorneys go to the County courthouse. He stated Yakima Transit does not have a handle on the return trips. Certain times of the day high schools are more prevalent. He stated the cash fare is only part of the picture.

Mr. Schmid said that looking at the dollar figure vs. ridership, a lot of people must be buying bus passes, because about riders are about 3 to 1 over dollar figures. He noted before this project began, the Council considered how they would continue service once the two-year grant is through, and they recognized that the City did not have \$270,000 to subsidize this program.

Council Member Schmidt asked how much a bus pass costs.

Gary Kerr responded it costs \$17 for adult, \$12 for youth and \$5 for Seniors for a monthly pass.

He stated he was originally under the impression that the grant money would come directly to the project. Instead, money has gone from the state back to the federal transit administration who sent it back to us. He noted the total award \$520,000 to be accountable for. He noted they are not apportioning out the grant; instead, they are giving a lump sum payment. He stated they might be able to earn some interest or have enough to extend beyond the June 30, 2007 date. He noted when they bid the service to SEMAC grant, they did not factor in Dial-A-Ride service. Normally Dial-A-Ride service goes with it, even if it is an experimental program. He further noted Mr. Mehan's figures include \$20 a day for Dial-A-Ride.

Council Member Schmid asked if we have to provide Dial-A-Ride even if we have People for People.

Mr. Kerr responded affirmatively.

Ken Mehin stated People for People covers what Dial-A-Ride does not cover.

Council Member Schmid stated People for People serves Selah's senior meal program.

Mr. Mehin stated that might be a different service.

City Supervisor Frank Sweet asked what the average daily ridership is.

Mr. Kerr responded it is about 300 people a day.

The City Supervisor asked if people who are picked up in Yakima are included in our numbers.

Gary Kerr stated the bus is “dedicated” so all who ride this bus are counted.

Council Member Schmid asked if, when the bus leaves the Transit Center headed for Selah, it picks up anyone on the way here.

Gary Kerr responded the bus picks up riders approximately every two blocks on the way to Selah. He stated originally they were thinking about just staying on the freeway. He stated the majority get on the bus at the Transit Center.

Council Member Schmid stated this would include someone who got on at the Courthouse and off on north 1st.

Mr. Kerr responded affirmatively, noting it's a bus system.

Council Member Harris asked if the cost per day figure includes tires, fuel, repairs, insurance, cost of the bus, etc.

Gary Kerr responded the figure is all-inclusive. He noted he was surprised to see the numbers as high as they have been.

Ken Mehin stated on a local bus route, you need to stop where people want to get on or off the bus. Council Member Schmid stated it makes sense, but he just wasn't aware that was the way it worked. Mr. Mehin noted Route 6 duplicates Route 10 on north 1st Street.

Council Member Schmidt asked if there is a way to provide Saturday service for part of the year.

Ken Mehin responded that because we provide Dial-A-Ride service, we might not be able to provide seasonal bus service.

Page Scott, Executive Director of Yakima Valley Conference of Governments, reported YVCOG is the agency through which the SEMAC funds became available for this project. She noted she recently participated in a study session in Union Gap regarding providing a continuing fixed-route service. She stated the costs do go up because of Dial-A-Ride component, but if this is a tax measure the City wants to take before the voters, there is an extensive timeline. She indicated Union Gap has not made a decision on this issue, but a partnership might be a possibility. She urged the Council to call on the COG for any assistance they might need.

City Supervisor Frank Sweet stated by July 1, 2007 the City would need to be able to put \$119,000 into coffers in order to continue this five-day a week service for the balance of 2007. He noted if we want to continue it through 2008, that would be another \$240,000.

Ken Mehin responded affirmatively, noting sales tax can be used for this purpose. Sales tax up to a 9¢ maximum may be approved by a vote of the people.

Mayor Jones thanked the Yakima Transit presenters.

Ethan Ward, 102 North 12th, introduced himself and Thomas Hepner to the Council.

It took some time for the Power Point presentation to come up on the computer.

In the interim, Mayor Jones stated emergency preparedness is one of his major concerns, and in the event of an emergency, he wants to be able to move students from schools in an orderly manner. He stated in 1996 when we had the flood, we were relatively unprepared. Since then, we've purchased blockades and cones. He noted we have emergency power for every City building, as well as an emergency supply of water and MRE's. He noted Well 7 has an emergency generator so we can supply potable water for citizens in the case of an emergency. He noted he sits on the Emergency Management Board, and that group meets quarterly and tries to set up a drill at least once a year. He noted we now have a full ham radio system in his office which has the capacity to communicate with ham radios all around the world.

Ethan Ward reported to the Council that he and several other students have been working on this project to increase awareness and preparedness for natural and manmade disasters. He noted this is an eighth grade science project in competition for how it coincides with the eighth grade science curriculum.

He stated their first hypothesis is that the community is basically unprepared for a natural disaster. Their second hypothesis is that with scientific experimentation, they could create emergency preparedness kits that would suit our community.

He stated the recommended FEMA disaster list is very extensive, covering every natural disaster that could possibly happen in the United States, many of which are unlikely in our area. He stated his group's goal was to determine the level of preparedness within our community. To that end, 142 surveys were handed out to 8th graders 126 of which were returned. Students who returned surveys received candy.

Of those surveyed, 36% have a plan, 28% have a disaster kit, 79% have access to supplies, and 90% believe it is unlikely a disaster will occur in our area. He stated 90% say they will not take steps to prepare ,and 15% say they can't afford it but expect the government to take care of them in event of an emergency.

He reported they talked to the Director of Emergency Management Jim Hall, who said floods, snowstorms and hazardous material are the most likely disasters in this area, and the ones that would have the biggest impact are extended power outages, snowstorms and hazardous materials. In addition Mr. Hall said if Seattle were to have any kind of disaster, we would likely experience a shortage of supplies and be flooded with evacuees.

In conclusion, Ethan said residents need to prepare by having an accessible disaster kit, a family disaster plan and alternate heat source. He said his group is currently working on organizing community disaster response training. He stressed the eventuality of a disaster.

Council Member Keith Larson asked what a disaster preparedness kit would look like.

Tom Hefner said it would include clothes, prescriptions, water and food. The latter being the most important

Council Member Paul Overby stated the Red Cross has pre-made disaster kits available for around \$100.

Mayor Jones stated that is a great idea, noting there is a certain percentage of people you're going to have to take care of. He said his greatest concern is to keep traffic moving in case of a disaster on the west side.

Council Member Allen Schmid praised the point that people need to be able to take care of themselves for a minimum of three days.

Mayor Jones noted that twice in his tenure as Mayor the City has had to mobilize its EOC. He praised the work the students have done.

Council Member Herb Schmidt expressed his surprise that volcanic eruption not come up as a potential disaster.

Mayor Jones said they had a county-wide drill dealing with smallpox contagion, which extends as long as ten days after death. He noted morgues are not equipped to handle large numbers, and there is a potential for litigation with families of the dead.

The Mayor and Council thanked Ethan and Tom for their presentation.