

**Public Transportation Committee
Minutes
March 13, 2013**

Present: Jamin Carroll (VATCO), Tom Narrigan (VATCO), Laura Hanson (DPW) & Jim Nash
Absent: Leslie Stein (TPC) & John Norton (Resident)

1. Public Comment: Ellen Hirschberg (school nurse at the Northampton High School-NHS) attended the meeting as a representative for the NHS Civil Rights Committee. She advocated for equal access for everyone at the NHS and JFK Middle School to have access to the after-school activities, and is interested in finding out if the PTC can help with this request. She mentioned that public transit is a practical solution for those that cannot afford the expense of driver's lessons, car insurance, and owning a car. She stressed the importance of providing equal opportunity for students from all economic backgrounds, and getting younger people familiar with using buses earlier in life so they are more comfortable with the transit system.

Hanson asked Hirschberg to specify the hours of concern...(Answer: The NHS is dismissed at 2:00 PM and has activities until 7:00PM). Hanson stressed that the selling point to the students is that they would be gaining independence and wouldn't have to ask their parents for too much money. Nash agreed and stated that his special needs students are more comfortable using the buses compared to most other students. The program that Nash runs incorporates transit training for those with special needs and teaches young adults a practical tool that has proven to be very useful and successful. Nash volunteered to help Hirschberg with planning/outreach/ meetings to help get a program started for the Fall 2013.

Narrigan concurred with Carroll that the R42, R43 and R44 run service until 8:00PM in the City. He mentioned that their bus service tries to get students within 0.25-0.75 miles from their homes but does not give door-to-door drop-off for students. Currently, both Holyoke and Chicopee participate in a "School Tripper Program" where the City pays TAPCO a fee for making smaller buses available at the schools for students, and cities have found that it is cheaper than school buses. Students are given a special token to use for these trips. Everyone agreed that there is great potential for this "tripper system" since there was an article published in the Daily Hampshire Gazette (today) stating the busing to the NHS is under investigation for possibly getting cut from the City budget.

Hirschberg stated that a map showing the bus routes would be helpful but she was having difficulty obtaining a paper copy. Narrigan suggested working with the PVPC and the NHS to create a figure that would show addresses of students with a circle showing a distance for walking (ex. 0.5 mile walking radius from a certain stop on King Street). Everyone supported the idea of having a map to show potential users within a certain area that could suggest a tripper stop, and thought this would be a good starting point for a meeting.

There was overwhelming support for trying to get a plan set to increase the use of public transit at the NHS that could be shared with the JFK. Hirschberg, Carroll, Narrigan, and Nash agreed to try and set a meeting to brainstorm ideas with the School Principal's and PVPC representatives. They will share their progress report at the next PTC meeting.

2. Minutes of February 13, 2013 were unanimously approved (Nash-1st/Hanson-2nd).

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3. Public Comment: Owen Mohan of Jackson Street joined the committee meeting again to inquire about the house at 256 Jackson Street. Mr. Carroll stated that he had met with the owners and they were fine with the sign getting installed in front of their building.
4. Progress on signage: Carroll noted that bus stop sign installation process will begin again before the next PTC meeting. Phase III Signage (5-6 signs along Jackson Street) has been advertised already and will move forward with obtaining a DPW Trench Permit. Hanson noted that the trench permit season will open around April 1, 2013 since it is coordinated with the opening of the pavement plants. Hanson and Carroll agreed that 2-3 signs on Jackson Street will be installed on existing posts (TAPCO has been given permission from DPW to replace the existing posts with longer posts). Phase IV Signage (10-15 signs) will begin with installing the yellow-advertising signs on the R44 Route (with a few in the center of Northampton) prior to the next PTC meeting to give the public an opportunity for comment at the next PTC meeting.
5. Hanson mentioned a comment from Stein's email (dated 3/12/2013) regarding a request from Wayne Feiden (City Planning Director) for a needs assessment by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) for a City Multi-modal Center. Hanson mentioned that she and Feiden had recently met with the PVPC to discuss a study of Main Street (South Street to Hawley Street). The Mayor will be sending a letter requesting this study be completed in Fall 2013 as part of the Unified Work Program (UPWP) to analyze a complete street approach incorporating all modes of travel, age groups, business demands, bus stops (pulse points), sidewalk needs, traffic signal adjustments, and snow removal.
6. Hanson mentioned a comment from Stein's email regarding a request from Mike Sullivan (resident on the Bike/Pedestrian Committee). Sullivan would like to see the bus schedule on Route 43 adjusted 1-2 weeks earlier for students returning to college in late summer. Narrigan recognized this comment and will look into the scheduling details.
7. New Business: (a) Narrigan reported that PVTA has purchased four (4) articulated buses that will be used to manage the overcrowding on Route 43! PVTA (2 buses) and VATCO (2 buses) are arriving in May and will be available for service in August 2013. We may see them driving around as they practice their routes during the coming months since two buses will be driving into Northampton. (b) Hanson requested TAPCO to consider parking changes needed for the articulated buses sooner rather than later since an Ordinance change requires 4-6 months. Carroll suggested adding another space in front of Edwards Church on Main Street for the current bus stop. Hanson requested an email suggesting this parking change so she could pass it along to Nelson-Nygaard who is currently looking at the Main/South/New South/Elm intersection for pedestrian/timing/parking improvements. Carroll also requested deleting one parking space in front of the Academy of Music (prior to the crosswalk) for the extra long articulated buses. Hanson requested an email suggesting this parking space elimination so she could forward it to the PVPC who will be evaluating Main Street in the coming months. (c) Narrigan discussed funding updates with reference to Governor Deval Patrick's proposal for increased taxes. If tax changes were instituted, then it could positively influence funding for transit and education for several years. It is unknown if these proposed changes will pass, however, there was recognition by the State for transit authority and education needing funding.