



Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District

Board Meeting

Friday, November 3, 2006

10:00 a.m.

AACOG Conference Room

8700 Tesoro

San Antonio, Texas

1. **Call to Order**

Notice was duly posted and a meeting of the Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District was held on Friday, November 3, 2006. Chairman Covington called the meeting to order at approximately 10:15 a.m.

Participants:

Sid Covington, Chair
Tullos Wells, Vice Chair
Tommy Adkisson
Lisa Birkman
Mary Briseño
Mariano Camarillo
Patty Eason

Fred Harless
Jennifer Kim
Dave Marsh
Al Notzon
Carroll Schubert
Jeff Wentworth

Other participants included Ross Milloy, Bill Bingham, Alison Schulze, Chris Blewett, Lonnie Blaydes, Clif Davis, and Allan Zreet.

2. **Chairman and Member Comments**

Chairman Covington thanked Board members and the audience for attending the meeting. Mary Briseño commended Mr. Covington, Rail District staff and consultants for an insightful and well done presentation to the VIA Board of Directors and noted the presentations to local jurisdictions are a good way to start the discussion in each community. Tommy Adkisson noted that on November 1st Bexar County issued transit cards to its employees that will allow them to ride VIA free of charge and will help reduce parking demand at County offices. Bexar County also challenged the top 100 employers to follow the County's lead.

3. **Consider Approval of September 8 Board Meeting Minutes**

Upon a motion by Al Notzon and second by Tommy Adkisson, the September 8, 2006 meeting minutes were approved.

4. Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee Meeting September 20, 2006

Finance Committee Chair Mariano Camarillo directed the Board's attention to the written summary of the Committee meeting included in the agenda packet. On September 20 the Committee reviewed the first draft of the cost-benefit presentation and provided input to the presentation team. The Committee also reviewed the FY07 budget, and recommended approval of the budget as amended by the Committee. The amended FY07 budget will be presented to the Board for action under agenda item 5. In addition, the Committee reviewed and discussed the Rail District's internal accounting procedures, and directed staff to hire an outside auditor to assist the District with its auditing functions and to review the District's accounting systems and make recommendations for internal controls as well as auditing systems and procedures.

B. Finance Committee Meeting October 18, 2006

Committee Chair Camarillo directed the Board's attention to the written summary of the Committee meeting included in the agenda packet. On October 18 the consultant team presented the revised cost-benefit presentation, and the Committee refined and fleshed out the presentation's message. Mr. Camarillo commended staff and the Carter-Burgess team for their hard work and noted the presentation team has a full calendar of meetings with local jurisdictions in the coming weeks. Mary Briseño reported that the presentation to VIA on October 24 was well received.

5. Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Revised FY07 Budget

Ross Milloy briefed the Board on the FY07 budget revisions approved by the Finance Committee. Based on two years of expenditures, staff identified costs (about \$20,000) that should be borne by the Rail District but were being absorbed by the Corridor Council. In addition, the Corridor Council's computer network can no longer accommodate Rail District files, so the budget includes the cost (\$3,800) of a new server for the Rail District. As a result of the above costs, the amount in reserve is reduced to \$24,000. The Finance Committee recommended approval of the revised FY07 budget. The Board unanimously approved the Committee's recommendation.

6. Presentation on New Mexico Rail Runner Express Implementation

Chris Blewett, Director of Transportation and Planning Services for the Mid Region Council of Governments (New Mexico), also serves as project manager for the New Mexico Rail Runner Express. Mr. Blewett briefed the Board on the practical implementation issues surrounding the New Mexico commuter rail system, which runs in existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) right-of-way and will ultimately connect Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Topics included:

- Project timeline
- Project scope
- Project funding
- Organizational structure
- Getting people on board
- Target markets

The New Mexico Rail Runner Express was championed by Governor Richardson and financed with state funds approved by the New Mexico legislature in August 2003. Federal funds were not used or pursued to finance the project, mostly because of the Governor's direction to implement the project in 2 years. Phase 1, which runs on existing BNSF tracks and includes 3 stations, opened in July 2006 and carried 200,000 riders in the first 12 weeks. By December 2008 the system will expand to 100 miles with 9 stations. Additional information on the New Mexico commuter rail system can be found on its website: nmrailrunner.com.

7. Presentation on Results of Cost Estimate Analysis

In May 2006 the Board directed staff to conduct an independent review of Carter-Burgess' conceptual-level capital and operating assumptions and cost estimates. Lonnie Blaydes was retained to perform the review and presented the results of his analysis. Overall, the total estimate of \$612 million is sufficient to support initial service, but not express service. For the most part, capital cost estimates are reasonable. Mr. Blaydes identified the following issues for consideration:

- Operating assumptions: The Initial Service Plan includes a relatively high level of service for a new system. Typical start-up service is usually more modest in terms of number of trains per day and initial length. Double tracking would be necessary to operate reliable express service. Higher emphasis should be placed on schedule reliability than on train frequency.
- The estimate for signals is reasonable for initial service, but is not sufficient to support a double-tracked system. Consider using a GPS-based signal system for safety issues.
- The estimate for support facilities (maintenance yard and shop, administrative facilities) seems low unless an existing yard is available.
- Grade crossing estimates are high from a safety and operations perspective; not all grade separations appear necessary for commuter rail operations; implementing quiet zones is a policy issue, not a safety or operations issue.
- Vehicle estimates are the largest line item and appear reasonable. Locomotive hauled trains should be considered instead of DMUs for cost savings and availability.

8. Presentation on Results of Seaholm Station Location Study

Allan Zreet, Carter-Burgess, briefed the Board on the Seaholm Station Location Study, which was initiated early in 2006 in response to impending redevelopment of the former Seaholm power plant area—site of the proposed commuter rail station in downtown Austin. The purpose of the study is to ensure right-of-way is preserved for the rail station as the site is redeveloped and to maximize intermodal connections with Capital Metro, CARTS and Amtrak. The study was jointly funded by the Rail District, City of Austin, and Capital Metro. Mr. Zreet presented information on site constraints, the Seaholm District Master Plan, emerging residential projects in central Austin, the six alternatives considered, and design and evaluation criteria.

The recommended alternative is east of Lamar Blvd., and was selected for the following reasons:

- Provides the best connections with Capital Metro's bus and streetcar operations, Amtrak, and the planned extension of the Pfluger Bridge pedestrian-bicycle path.
- Most compatible with the Seaholm Plan and other adjacent planned redevelopment projects.

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- Most cost-effective alternative with lowest capital construction cost.

Board discussion ensued on connections between the Amtrak and Rail District stations and the possibility of sharing a station, and the implications of abandoning the rail “Y” right-of-way on the Seaholm property.

9. Consider and Take Appropriate Action on 2007 Board Meeting Calendar

Alison Schulze presented the proposed 2007 calendar of Board meetings. Once the meeting dates are approved, staff will lock in specific locations for each meeting. Upon a motion by Fred Harless and second by Jennifer Kim, the 2007 Board meeting calendar was approved.

10. Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Board Policy Regarding Public Distribution of Agenda Items Prior to Board Meetings

Alison Schulze briefed the Board on the Rail District’s current procedures for distributing agenda items to the public prior to Board meetings:

- Board agendas are posted with the Secretary of State, Hays County, and on the Rail District website one week prior to Board meetings
- Agendas are sent via an e-mail distribution list to interested parties one week in advance
- Meeting minutes are posted on the website upon approval by the Board
- Draft agenda items and back-up material are available upon request after review and approval by the Board.

Dave Marsh noted that TxDOT posts Commission meeting agendas and minute orders on its website one week prior to Commission meetings. Upon a motion by Dave Marsh and a second by Fred Harless, the Board directed staff to review TxDOT’s policy and to the extent feasible mirror TxDOT.

11. Financial Report

Ross Milloy directed the Board attention to financial reports in the agenda packet. The Rail District is on or under budget in all categories.

12. Legislative Update

Ross Milloy encouraged members of the Rail District and jurisdictions in the Austin-San Antonio Corridor to approve resolutions of support for the Texas Rail Relocation Fund. Funding for the Rail Relocation Fund will be considered in the upcoming legislative session that convenes in January 2007.

13. Other Business

A. Status Report on Contract with TxDOT to Use Transportation Credits as Non-Federal Match for Funds Transferred to FTA

Alison Schulze reported that \$100,000 is being transferred to FTA from the District’s FHWA funds. The funds will be used to provide assistance to member jurisdictions with tax increment financing and transit-oriented development agreements. TxDOT provides the required non-federal match—in the form of transportation credits—for the District’s FHWA

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funds. The Rail District is executing a contract with TxDOT to transfer \$25,000 in transportation credits to FTA for the non-federal match for the FTA project. Chairman Covington signed the contract on October 24th, which will be executed upon TxDOT's signature.

B. Status Report on Meetings with Member and Local Jurisdictions

Ross Milloy briefed the Board on the interactive meetings with local jurisdictions on the costs and benefits of the commuter rail project. The first presentation was held on October 24th with the VIA Board of Directors and was well received; the remaining 15 meetings will occur between November and January. Mr. Milloy thanked Mary Briseño for her support and assistance in setting up the VIA meeting, and commended Chairman Covington, Senator Wentworth and Councilman Perez for attending the VIA meeting and for their eloquent comments on the need for the project. Mr. Milloy urged all Board members to attend at least one of the upcoming meetings. Alison Schulze distributed an updated schedule of meetings. Chairman Covington encouraged members to show support for the project by attending as many meetings as possible, and reiterated that Board members' presence visibly demonstrates regional support and interest.

14. Public Comment

Mr. Royce Hill spoke on the benefits of an elevated monorail system for high speed commuting.

15. Adjourn

Chairman Covington thanked Board members and the audience for their attendance and participation. There being no further items, the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.