

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS, LABOR & TRANSPORTATION

MINUTES: April 5, 2010

IN ATTENDANCE:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Chair: Ryan; Legislators: Jose Alvarado, Judy Myers, Vito Pinto, Marty Rogowsky, Alfreda Williams, Gordon Burrows,
BOL: Chairman Ken Jenkins and Legislator Tom Abinanti
Guests: Deputy Commissioner Harry Stanton, Westchester County Department of Transportation; Brendan Murnane & Katy Delgado, County Executive's Office.

With a quorum present, the Committee on Public Works, Parks, Labor and Transportation was called to order at 4:20 pm, and continued its review of the County Executive's Proposed Expense Reduction Plan for the Department of Transportation.

Chair Ryan introduced Harry Stanton, Deputy Commissioner of Transportation, who was in attendance to answer questions and provide additional information.

The members discussed the Committee's oversight process and confirmed that no position had yet been taken by the Committee or the Board of Legislators regarding the CE's proposed elimination of bus routes. Various legislators had expressed individual opinions or publicly announced individual positions. But no action has been taken by the Committee.

Legislator Myers described a legal opinion released by the County Attorney regarding the right of the County Executive to eliminate or cut funds approved by the Board of Legislators during the budget process.

Comm. Stanton presented a chart that showed \$3.6M in cuts made during negotiations on the proposed 2010 county budget. \$1.4M of the \$1.8M in budget cuts has already been achieved by DOT in route reductions and adjustments. Bennett Kielson's (BKSD Accountants) "revenue add" recommendation – increase fare box revenue by \$250,000 – is falling short and is contributing to the Department's projection of a revenue shortfall.

It was also noted that the approved 2010 budget included \$1.5M to be transferred to DOT in a budget amendment that has not yet been submitted by the CE to the BOL.

Federal funding of \$11.3M (A&C recently authorized acceptance) will be spent in part to balance the DOT's 2009 budget. The remainder will be used for preventative maintenance work on the fleet. The funds usually go into an account for future capital expenses. For example, \$78M worth of buses may have to be purchased in 2013. 2009 was the first year the County did a "capital conversion" using \$5.5M to balance last year's DOT budget and most of the remaining funds in operating expenses this year.

On the Route Evaluation Date Sheet, the green shaded routes are regional routes. Most of them go into the Bronx. The buses actually pick up about 20% of the riders in the Bronx and are the most efficient, that is, have the most passengers per mile. The yellow routes take riders to and from train stations. These commuter routes tend to be less efficient because of fewer passengers. Some routes that don't have alternatives will not be eliminated yet even though inefficient.

In addition, the Governor's proposed budget for 2010-2011 recommends a \$3.5M decrease in State Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) for Westchester County. A chart was distributed showing the history of STOA to Westchester and comparable counties.

Comm. Stanton clarified that the process of eliminating bus routes is not complete. Federal law requires a public hearing and public comment period prior to any decision-making on eliminating routes. The hearing and comment period may result in new ideas for savings. To achieve the savings proposed by the CE, the cuts must be in place in June. To meet that target, DOT must first go through all the required steps.

The legislators objected to not being brought into the process sooner. Mr. Ryan said the BOL appropriated money to provide public bus service throughout the county and the BxM4C express route into NYC was a feature of the system that the Board intended to fund for the benefit of county residents. There was a discussion of alternatives to the proposed total elimination of the route. Mr. Stanton was asked to determine other options and alternative savings that Liberty Lines could achieve.

On the motion of Legislator Burrows, seconded by Legislator Alvarado and with a vote of 7-0, the Committee on Public Works, Parks, Labor & Transportation adjourned at 5:23 pm.

AUDIO RECORDING ON FILE FOR REVIEW UPON REQUEST