

**TRANSIT COMMITTEE
COUNCIL ROOM, CITY HALL
106 W. DIVISION STREET
TUESDAY, JUNE 25, 2024
4:00 P.M.**

The Transit Committee meeting was called to order by Chair William Neville. On roll call: William Neville, Daniel Clough, Kory Poeschel and Amber Vine.

Also present: Jessica Clark, Clark County Social Services; Peggy Jones, Abby Vans; Mayor Duane Poeschel, Director of Public Works Luke Friemoth and City Clerk-Treasurer Rex R. Roehl.

Chair Neville declared the minutes of the June 6, 2024 meeting approved as filed with the City Clerk.

Chair Neville stated that we are here to discuss costs, ridership and get information on Clark County as the lead agency.

Clark stated that rider fees have not changed in a long time and an increase would increase revenue, but you could also see less riders.

Jones presented rider count charts for January 1 through June 24, 2024 with holidays in yellow, weekends in green, blue being the core hours of service. Trip routes are higher in bad weather.

Neville asked how a trip to the grocery store is counted.

Jones stated a trip is one way-pickup/dropoff.

Clough asked how many people are actually being served. Are we benefitting a few people multiple times.

Jones stated there is a large number of different cliental. They have been asked why the taxi doesn't run after 10:00 P.M.-the numbers are not sustainable. It would be a disservice to seniors and disable to discontinue that taxi service, fares have not been increased for a very long time. Agency fares should be increased from \$5.00 to \$10.00. Trips out of town going 6+ miles takes a taxi out of service in the City and the current rate is \$1.50 per mile.

Neville stated if you double the fares, you could lose riders, the City does not get the full increase, the State and Federal gets half, we have to be able to afford it. How does what the City tax do affect the County taxi.

Clark stated it would affect the County. The County would raise the fares too. The City could reduce costs by cutting out holidays, reducing hours of service, increase the out of area rate per mile, increase agency fares. With additional revenue generated and costs reduced it will lessen the budget need. Baby boomers will be needing this service, if you decrease to much you will lose riders. Is there a need to operate outside of business hours.

Neville asked about renegotiating the contract.

Clark stated this has to be done through the DOT process-a public meeting, advertising, people have to be able to speak on the impact of the proposed change, etc.

Clark stated that within the next five years, the baby boomers are aging-will there be health issues, will they be able to drive, the taxi serves a large volume of different people, still some of the same people use it regularly.

Neville asked about the City going from two taxis to one taxi.

Jones stated you can't change in the middle of a contract.

Clark stated for such a drastic reduction, you would have to go through whole State/Federal bid process. The County taxi has two vans.

Mayor Poeschel stated that when the City fell below the 2,500 population threshold someone got creative to maintain taxi service.

Clark stated that she was not here in the beginning. In 2010 when the City fell below the 2,500 population, it was recognized that the service was being utilized in order to keep service within the County's borders. The County took over running the program and Neillsville could keep their service.

Jones stated the arrangement met the State/Federal requirements.

Mayor Poeschel stated what if the City says County take it over.

Clark stated that the County would not be interested and funding is not available within the Social Service Department.

Mayor Poeschel stated that if the City were to pull out, the County would not take over-there would be no service.

Clark stated the volunteer drive program only has 15 drivers, people eligible for Medicare/Medicaid would be eligible for medical only, not groceries stores, etc. It would only be a small amount of people that would be eligible.

Friemoth asked about Abby Vans and the Clark County taxi.

Clark stated Abby Vans is medical transport. The County taxi pays Abby Vans as the provider the same as the City at-\$42.45 per hour. The County doesn't own its own vehicles or employ drivers. She has been contacted by the City of Black River Falls as their taxi service went under, they would like to expand to the whole Jackson County, like we do. They are struggling-this is not the only transit meeting going on.

Clark stated she has been searching around-looking at an on-demand service with wheelchair accessibility. A New York Company wants \$200,000 base fee just to contract with them.

Jones stated the City is a shared ride system. Abby Van is a private pay system. You have to cover wages, insurance and is a real dilemma to find maintenance people.

Neville stated that Loyal and Greenwood are provided service through the Clark County taxi and the City pays nothing.

Clark stated they can't use the County taxi within their City-wide perimeter. The rider can go from Loyal to Neillsville, but they can't go from home to the downtown stores. The City of Stanley puts in a letter of support for the taxi service. The City of Neillsville pays for City service.

Mayor Poeschel stated that the City is paying for the City and paying for the County taxi too.

Clark stated she checked with the State and service provider rates have increased across the State, everyone is in the same boat.

Clough asked how can we make this work. Is it better use of the City's dollars to spend it on police, since the police benefit the whole community or the taxi service with limited affects. Increasing fares is not enough to save enough.

Neville stated that the State must have had a reason for setting the 2,500 population threshold, it may not be affordable under that.

Kory Poeschel not enough people maybe the reason we don't have enough money.

Neville stated the City's population is going down as well as getting older. We need to increase ridership. We are in year two of a five year contract, which can be terminated with a 90-day notice. Is there an opportunity to do a private service.

Jones stated you would get a ride only if someone is available and willing to take you, people have to get where they can go for medical appointments.

Clark stated the County volunteer drivers get \$.55 per mile.

Jones stated that Baraboo tried closing down it's taxi altogether, but got push back, they ended up with reduced service and increased fares.

Koey Poeschel asked what is the next step.

Neville stated holding a public meeting.

Clark stated she would contact the DOT to get the correct process. The City can reduce hours without changing the contract as the contract lists the maximum hours-you still have the public hearing. You can raise rates with a public hearing. The contract is for two vehicles, so you can't cut the second taxi without State/Federal input and public hearings. To eliminate the service requires a public hearing.

Discussion followed on setting the next meeting for Friday, June 28, 2024 at 2:30 P.M.

Clark and Jones left the meeting.

Discussion followed on increasing the fares to \$6.00 per ride on all ridership classes; reducing the extra miles from a five-mile radius to one mile radius increasing the additional miles to \$3.00 per mile over one mile; increasing parcel services to \$6.00; changing service to 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. everyday; no service on holidays; increasing agency fares to \$15.00 and dropping the second taxi.

Motion Vine, second Kory Poeschel, to adjourn. All Aye.

William Neville, Chair

Rex R. Roehl, Clerk-Treasurer