

**Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee
Minutes
May 19, 2022**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am in Port Authority's Neal H. Holmes Board Room at 345 Sixth Avenue, Fifth Floor, Pittsburgh, with the following in attendance:

Via WebEx Board Committee Members

John Tague, Jr., Chairman
Jessica Walls-Lavelle
Ann Ogoreuc
Stephanie Turman

Board Members and Solicitor

Representative Austin Davis
Gerald Delon
Jeffrey Letwin
Jen Liptak
Representative Lori Mizgorski
Michelle Zmijanac

Opening Remarks

Mr. Tague, Committee Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance.

Approval of Minutes from the May 19, 2022, Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee Meeting

Mr. Tague, Jr. Asked committee members if there were any corrections to the minutes. There were none and members approved the minutes.

June Service Changes Overview (D. Huffaker, P. St. Pierre and Ellie Newman)

Mr. Huffaker stated that he wanted to address some of the schedule and staffing challenges that we've had over the past several months. These are an ongoing challenge for the PAAC and it's not something we can't overcome, and we are going to do that. The situation here in Allegheny County is not unique. Transit agencies nationally are struggling to hire enough operators to meet posted schedules. This has been our experience through the duration of the pandemic, and it's made it exceedingly difficult to reach the level of operations staff that provides a reliable experience each day for our riders. Many factors that played a part in the ongoing challenges including our requirements for operators to be vaccinated and a wave of retirements that hit us about the time COVID reached the United States. Earlier in the pandemic, when ridership was significantly less, this impact was much more manageable. Today, however, as many workers are returning to the office after two years, gasoline prices are high, and we are starting to see much more activity Downtown - we are seeing ridership increasing, demand growing and the strain on our operations force has been too great on some days.

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This is not acceptable, and it is our job to find ways to recruit, hire and train operators and employees to support the transit system. We have tackled that challenge and continue to promote our employment opportunities at every turn. We are starting to see results from those efforts and are currently training new operators and hiring more, and we have new operator classes starting every five weeks. In our June service change that you will hear about, we are taking steps to improve the reliability of our schedules. We will adjust some of our scheduled trips to temporarily improve overall reliability. This does not mean we are cutting service permanently and we are not eliminating any jobs. It is a temporary step to make sure that our schedules, which are our contract with riders, are reliable for them when they leave for work or school or go to a doctor's appointment. It's the right step for us to take as we fight through and out of this pandemic. The bottom line is the pandemic has been tough on all of us and knowing what is exactly ahead has been impossible. I will also note that our scheduling and staffing issues is not the fault of our operators. Most of our operators and maintenance staff have worked through the pandemic, many taking extra overtime to fill in gaps in schedules and shifts and abided by our directives to wear masks and get vaccines. Like our transit partners across the country and many other industries facing hiring challenges right now, we will find a way. We will figure this out so that we can deliver the transit service that you expect and deserve.

Mr. St. Pierre provided a brief overview of the June 26, 2022, service changes. Our goal was to improve service reliability for our customers. We reduced some service hours in total – it's about a four percent reduction in weekly service hours. So, that enables us to put more of our available work force on the extra board. These are the operators that cover planned and unplanned absences. We are projecting with this June service change that we should be very close being able to cover all scheduled work. Possibly up to two percent may be out of service. Our summary of service changes will be posted on our website <https://www.portauthority.org/serviceupdates> and can be found from our schedules tab on our main page. In total, 61 routes have changes - that is nearly two thirds of our routes.

We have some specific routing changes to discuss today:

- Route 29 – due to a culvert issue, we are not able to operate over on Mahoney Road and currently doing a detour that extends approximately fifteen to twenty minutes each direction.
- Route 38 – three different variants on this route. One of the variants is the C variant, it operates on one little area that provides coverage in the neighborhood

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on Swallow Hill Road and Orchard Springs. What we determined is that the ridership has not returned to sustainable levels just in that little portion of the route. To make it more effective we are going to convert three trips in morning and three trips in afternoon that operate the C variant, and we are going to convert those trips to what we call the G variant that goes out to Greentree.

- 61A/B are on long-term detours due to the Fern Hollow Bridge situation, due to the length of that detour, we are going to formalize that detour into our service change. This is going to enable our passengers to see where the buses are along the routes. So, typically when we have long term detours like this we want to try and get it into our service change so that the real time passenger information is updated, and customers will be able to see buses along that route.
- Route 55/56/59 – due to another construction project that is slated to be completed in July, we have a very lengthy detour in place. We had this detour built into our service changes and we are going to pull this out due to the completion in July of 2022.
- Route 69 will be extended out to Forbes Hospital.

Ms. Newman provided an analysis on the decision-making process to reduce service by 4 percent.

Major Service changes again these are things we weren't really going into these expecting to find but just some of the process of coming through every single schedule, trying to figure out how to do this as equitably as possible, we were able to find five areas where we could increase service by over 30% without really increasing our work force requirements. So, these changes were:

- Route 22 – McCoy, Weekday and Saturday
- Route 40 – Mt. Washington, Weekday
- Route 44 – Knoxville, Saturday
- Route 57 – Hazelwood, Saturday, and Sunday
- Route 81 – Oak Hill, Sunday

These routes will have an increase in service hours over 30% and will be put in as temporary pending Title Vi analysis, hopefully will bring this analysis to the board.

Questions from Board Members and Others

1. Mr. Tague asked Ms. Newman: can you give a clarification on equity, are you just talking about Title VI, because we obviously have different categories of equity. Or are we talking about the broader term that we use for equity?

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- a) Ms. Newman responded we are using the broader definition of equity for this, our equity index looks at eight different demographic variables; so, we look at percentage of people for poverty, percentage of households without a vehicle, percentage of population that does not speak English as a primary language. We have these different variables we average them all together and each route gets an equity score. A little bit more than comprehensive than Title VI because it only looks at minority race and low income and then that score determines basically anything that's scores highly on equity were trying as much as possible not reduce service on those routes.
2. Ms. Ogoreuc asked so we are increasing operators on the extra board, are all the folks on the extra-board are they trained as part of there orientation on all these routes. Are they going to be fine to go on all these routes and are they not going to know what they get on a daily basis, but they are prepared to operate what they are given?
 - a) Mr. St. Pierre answered yes when an operator is assigned or picks the extra board they are trained on all the routes and do route familiarization for that.