

Sept 30, 2020 NEPPIDAC Meeting Minutes

In attendance:

NEPPIDAC committee members:

- Shirin Chahal
- Russ Panneton
- Vera Schulte-Pelkum
- Tani Corvalan

Staff:

- Alex Hyde-Wright, Boulder County
- Karen Gerrity, Town of Nederland

Minutes:

Alex Hyde-Wright recounting transit service in 2020, current RTD plans:

- Bus service on Sat schedule, rail service on Sun schedule
- In Jan 2021, RTD proposing service changes. Minor changes in Boulder County (reductions on 205, 225, 228, suspend GS). All services reduced/suspended in April 2020 would continue as-is.
- No changes to the NB1/NB2 route (currently operating on pre-COVID Sat schedule for M-F)
- RTD projecting \$200M+ deficit in 2021.
- Ridership is 40% of pre-COVID, service is 60% of pre-COVID. RTD budget shortfall in 2020 covered by CARES Act. RTD sales tax revenue down 25%.
- RTD looking at hundreds of layoffs for operators, admin staff
- RTD will resume normal service change schedule in 2021: Jan, May, Aug

Fund Balance Scenarios

Alex Hyde-Wright presenting on fund balance scenarios

- With new EcoPass pricing structure, Ned EcoPass contract price could increase nearly 4x. Would result in very large negative fund balance.
- With ridership greatly reduced due to COVID, future contract price will decline (2020 ridership decline will show up in 2022 contract price)
- 2021 ridership will likely be down as well, will reduce 2023 contract price
- 2021 contract price determined by 2019 ridership, so no COVID impacts there
- Different fund balance scenarios are for different reductions in ridership (75% to 25% of pre-COVID levels). Roughly 40% of pre-COVID ridership levels would bring us to \$0 fund balance in 2023.
- Question from Tania Corvalan: Why do we go more into debt if more people ride? Hyde-Wright: with utilization, we are paying for each ride. No more discount for EcoPass trips- 2018 Pass Program Working Group/ pricing restructure concerned about wealthier EcoPass riders getting bigger discount.

- Question from Vera Schulte-Pelkum: What is current NB ridership? Hyde-Wright: Ridership is around 20% of pre-COVID
- Question from Russ Panneton: What is ridership trend in 2020? Hyde-Wright: Plummeted in March 2020, and slowly creeping back up ever since. Still down a lot. At current rate, won't reach pre-COVID levels again until 2022. AM/PM peak ridership is now gone.
- Question from Russ Panneton: Does NB ridership increase in winter due to Eldora? Hyde-Wright: Yes, but it doesn't quite show up in ridership data because RTD reports Aug-Dec and Jan-May ridership, so ski ridership is divided across two runboards.
- Don't need to make a decision on long term planning in 2020, but in early 2021 will need to decide if/when going back to voters for an extension.
- Likely we will still have positive fund balance at end of 2022. In early 2021, RTD should be able to project 2022 contract price. If revenues are insufficient, would either need funding from county or successful property tax increase from voters.
- Question from Russ Panneton: What effect will Gallagher amendment have on all of this? Hyde-Wright: If Gallagher not amended/repealed, district's revenue will continue to drop. If modified, impact will depend on what the modification is. Gerrity: Hard to know what changes will look like. May be a graduated adjustment.

Alex Hyde-Wright presented on proposed 2021 Budget:

- With two months of fare free transit in 2020, RTD is giving a 23% discount off of 2021 contract prices. This means we will actually have a price decrease from 2020 to 2021, down from \$139k to \$134,854.00
- 2022 contract price could decline again, based on 2020 ridership.
- We will dip into fund balance a little bit in 2021 with proposed budget.
- EcoPass remains best bulk pass program
- Question from Karen Gerrity: Is the \$13,485 amount what the district would pay the Town for 2021 admin? Hyde-Wright: Yes, town can invoice the County.
- Hyde-Wright recommends continuing with EcoPass program: RTD not cutting NB bus service, EcoPass remains best bulk pass program, decrease in ridership will show up as cost savings in the future, and existing ridership is all essential workers/those who need it the most
- Vera Schulte-Pelkum: this looks good, since RTD is not cutting service, and we might survive to 2023 with our current revenue.
- Tania Corvalan, Shirin Chahal, Russ Panneton agree.
- Vera Schulte-Pelkum: imagine applications for EcoPass are down. Gerrity: applications slowed down during Stay At Home, but once re-opened to Safer At Home, applications have mostly rebounded. Definitely still seeing new residents/renters coming in to Town office on Wed.
- In mid Oct will be presenting to BOCC, final budget adopted by BOCC in December.
- Vera Schulte-Pelkum moves to approve 2021 recommended budget, Tania Corvalan seconds. Motion passes unanimously

Alex Hyde-Wright presenting on EcoPass tap data

- All of tap data for calendar year 2018 for Ned EcoPasses

- Lots of categories for taps (local, regional, transfer upcharges, etc.)
- Tap data lines up with what would be expected: most taps on NB, followed by routes that connect out of downtown Boulder (FF, SKIP, JUMP, DASH, etc.). Doesn't look like too many passes are being used by Nederland alumnae (not lots of unexpected usage)
- Good news: not lots of alumnae using passes, bad news: not much utilization reduction likely to happen from portal audit effort.
- Gerrity: Staff have put in lots of work to clean up our portal, and make sure everyone with active pass is a current resident. Clean up really began in 2018. Hyde-Wright: big thanks to Town staff that have worked on this.
- Question from Vera Schulte-Pelkum: at some point, 40% of taps were local, which seemed to be a concern. Hyde-Wright: Data looks like what we would expect for a Nederland-based program. Local boardings not necessarily a bad sign (if you ride SKIP to NB to return, your first boarding is a local boarding, with the second being a local to regional transfer upcharge)
- Should now be able to get report like this for 2019.
- RTD has just signed a contract with a new CEO/GM: Debra Johnson. First woman to hold this position at RTD.