

Ozark Regional Transit
Board Meeting Minutes August 25, 2022
10:00 am at Ozark Regional Transit
Available VIA Zoom Conferencing

In Attendance

Board Members:

Ryan Carr
Rick Barry
Chris Brown
Jesse Hull
Zachery Birdsong
Doug Bryant
Peter Nierengarten

ORT:

Joel Gardner
Jeff Hatley
Kendall Luallen
Mindy Campbell
Karen Eccles
Tayler Clark
Gail Delancey
Bobby Tomlin
Steve Kinder
Willy Batres

Olsson:

Dennis Blind
Shawn Strate
Andy Brewer

NWARPC:

Tim Conklin
Nicole Gibbs

Northwest Arkansas Business Journal:

Jeff Della Rosa

Other Guests:

Thomas Brown – ORBTS (Ozark Rail and Bus Transit Society)
Chung Tan – City of Fayetteville

Proxies: Lionel Jordan submitted his proxy, requesting Peter Nierengarten as his representative. John McCurdy submitted for this meeting requesting Zachery Birdsong as his representative.

Board Member Positions: Ryan Carr was nominated for Board Chair. Rick Barry made the first motion to appoint Ryan Carr as the Board Chair, Zachery Birdsong made a second motion and all other Board members voted unanimously in agreement.

Agenda: Peter Nierengarten made the first motion to appoint approve the agenda, Rick Barry made a second motion and all other Board members voted unanimously in agreement.

Public Comments: Thomas Brown, representing ORBTS (Ozark Rail and Bus Transit Society) attended this meeting. The 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan addresses a plan to add additional lanes to I-49. Before this happens, he thinks the ORT Board should have a meeting to suggest other options. He also thinks the Board should have a discussion to address the A&M Railroad to partner or implement light rail to the 4 cities. Peter Nierengarten commented that he did not know much about the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, but he thought the best first strategy would be to change existing lanes to high occupancy lanes on I-49.

Olsson Bus Stop Survey: Shawn Strate with Olsson presented the Bus Stop Survey to the Board. Olsson compiled a Comprehensive inventory of all 420 ORT bus stops, evaluated the feasibility of infrastructure improvements and passenger amenities at each stop, and created a complete plan with recommendations to implement desired improvements. Peter Nierengarten made the first motion to accept the Olsson Bus Stop Survey, Rick Barry made a second motion and all other Board members voted unanimously in agreement.

April 2022 Board Meeting Minutes: The April 2022 Board Meeting Minutes were considered adopted.

July 2022 Financial Reports: Mindy Campbell, CFO, presented the Financial Notes for July 2022. Revenues at the end of the month were unfavorable at (\$4 K), due to unfavorable balances in Charter Revenue and Miscellaneous Revenue. Charter Revenue had an unfavorable balance of (\$6 K) for the month since there were no charters. However, year to date we have a favorable balance of \$40 K in Charter Revenue due to Cyclocross and the Garth Brooks Concert. Miscellaneous Income also had an unfavorable balance of (\$1 K). However, Contract Revenue had a favorable balance of \$3 K, which partially offset the negative balances. Expenditures were at a favorable variance of \$7 K. Wages had most significant positive variances of \$10 K. With revenues running unfavorably (\$4 K) and expenditures favorable \$7 K, there is a positive balance of just over \$3 K for July. Financial notes were considered accepted as presented.

July 2022 Ridership Statistics: Kendall Luallen, Systems Information Director, presented the Ridership Statistics Report for July 2022.

- Total passengers in July were 16,694, or 835 per day, rode ORT during July.
- Daily ridership is trending up. July is up 19.7% from last year.
- 484 total bikes in July.
- ODT service is still trending up and new riders are signing up every day.

Social Media/Marketing Near Me Update: Jeff Hatley updated the Board on ORT's Social Media. We have 1,500 followers on our three platforms for social media – LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram. In addition, we also continue to roll media over to our YouTube account. Marketing Near Me is continuing to help grow ORT's social media and we are receiving more feedback and zeroing in on what works. Marketing Near Me has also revamped our website and we are getting 100 visits a day on the website. We are still making tweaks and updating our website. We are translating everything into Spanish and adding a Marshallese section as well.

Community Engagement Subcommittee: Jeff updated the Board on the Community Engagement Subcommittee. Rick Barry, Jesse Hull, and Zackery Birdsong, Jeff Hatley and John McCurdy attended the July 20, 2022 meeting. Zachary Birdsong is working on the bylaws draft for the Subcommittee. They spoke about the bus discussion rides which were held in Fayetteville and Bentonville. They also discussed adding a trailer behind the bus to the bike trails. Jesse Hull proposed more discussion on getting people to museums in Bentonville. Rick Barry suggested using the "Jane" feature in Remix for social media promotion. Rick Barry followed up on the Springdale volunteer form, which is now available for citizens. John McCurdy suggested each city have a non-staff volunteer.

Open discussion on Transit Successes/Opportunities in Respective Communities: Ryan Carr mentioned that when he rode the Route 62 recently, the bus was full, and it was great to see. Tim Conklin mentions that many cities are working on sidewalk improvements right now. Joel asked if the cities are looking to coordinate and add public transportation into their plans. Tim said it was not memorialized, but the cities are looking at it with their projects.

Executive Director's Report presented by Joel Gardner:

- Joel gave the Board an update on the ODT Services. It is continuing to increase, and passengers are using it for work, entertainment, and shopping. Willy Batres, ORT's Road Supervisor, shared with the Board that it was challenging to get a ride due to the popularity of the service. We are making some changes to improve this, such as making the required distance of the trip longer.
- Joel updated the Board on the annual audit. The Annual Audit site visit has been completed and should be submitted to the Board in October.

- Joel informed the Board about the upcoming Razorback Football Charter. There are 7 home games this season that we will be working on.
- Joel let the Board know about the Format Festival which ORT has been asked to manage the transportation. Our goal is to brokers for the transportation and just add ground support. We have contracted with Village Charter, Dynasty Charter, and Big Brother Charter.
- Joel let the Board know about Cyclo-Cross which ORT has also been asked to manage the transportation. We will be subcontracting with Razorback, Dynasty, and Big Brother.
- Joel let the Board know about Hope Station that we will be working with Crystal Bridges and JTL Center for Non-Profits in Springdale from October 15 – 22nd. This is a culmination of all the work that we have done with Crystal Bridges. This is spearheaded by Octavio Logo and Lakisha Bradley. A variety of events are planned around creating a bus stop at the JTL building in Springdale that utilizes arts and culture to emphasize the need for public transit in NWA.
- Joel also informed the board that ORT is partnering with Crystal Bridges with vehicle wraps on the Ford Transit Vehicles. The first one has been completed and the others will be done in the coming months. We plan to have a ribbon cutting with each city on their related vehicle wrap.
- Upcoming Special Events:
 - Razorback Football September 3
 - **ORT Closed September 5**
 - Razorback Football September 10
 - Razorback Football September 17
 - Format Festival September 23 – 25
 - Springdale Bus Discussion September 28
 - Razorback Football October 1
 - Cyclo-Cross October 14 - 16

The next Board Meeting is on October 27, 2022, at 10:00. Zoom instructions will be forthcoming.

Tim Conklin informed the board of a grant opportunity from NWARPC for projects for carbon reductions program funding for items as sidewalks and trail projects. This is due mid-October.

Ryan Carr brought up the idea that we should start utilizing the ORT Executive Committee to meet on the off months to work on action items to improve ORT. Items that could be reviewed would be evaluating the Executive Director, Emergency Plan of Action or spokesperson from the Board, more in depth reviews of finance, pursuing other grants, finding training opportunities, and reviewing and revising bylaws. He requested that those interested in this to let him know.

Meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Ryan Carr.

An audio recording of this meeting is available upon request.