

**SAN MATEO COUNTY TRANSIT DISTRICT (DISTRICT)
1250 SAN CARLOS AVENUE, SAN CARLOS, CALIFORNIA
MINUTES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING /
BOARD STUDY SESSION**

OCTOBER 12, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: R. Collins, M. Fraser, C. Groom, R. Guilbault, K. Matsumoto (Chair),
(Via Teleconference) D. Pine (arrived at 9:09 am), J. Powell, P. Ratto (Vice Chair),
C. Stone

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: C. Mau, J. Cassman, D. Olmeda, A. Chan, D. Hansel, S. Murphy,
C. Wegener, M. Tolleson, G. Moyer, J. Brook, D. Seamans

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL

Chair Karyl Matsumoto called the meeting to order at 9:02 am and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dora Seamans, District Secretary, confirmed that a quorum of Board members were present.

Director Dave Pine arrived at 9:09 am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Adina Levin said research has shown that SamTrans riders often use connections to other modes of transit. She said that better service integration is needed.

3. REIMAGINE SAMTRANS

Jim Hartnett, General Manager/CEO, noted the historical importance of the Board's contributions to the success of SamTrans. He expressed his appreciation to the Board and the District's executive team.

April Chan, Chief Officer, Planning, Grants/Transportation Authority, gave an outline of the presentations and what would be discussed.

Christy Wegener, Director of Planning, provided the initial portion of the presentation.

Thomas Wittmann, Principal, Nelson\Nygaard, reviewed the pre- and post-COVID-19 state of SamTrans service.

Director Rose Guilbault asked about improving the speed of service and how to reconcile traffic congestion on the ECR route and other routes. Ms. Wegener said they have a traffic signal priority project underway to provide travel time savings on the corridor by giving buses an extended green light and shortened red light when they are running behind. She said that they had also received grant funding from Caltrans to do a congestion impact study specifically on El Camino Real to look at other enhanced transit single-priority opportunities. She noted that the upcoming express lanes will also provide more reliability.

Director Guilbault asked for clarification on greater investment to provide service to schools. Mr. Wittmann said he was referring primarily to the high schools; he said the

challenge was providing only one or two trips in the morning and then again in the afternoon. Mr. Harnett said it costs more money and uses more operators and buses.

Director Marina Fraser asked if busses will be able to use the express lanes; Ms. Wegener said yes.

Director Charles Stone asked how buses used for school service could be repurposed between morning and afternoon runs and traffic management on El Camino Real. Ms. Wegener said they are looking at repurposing less-used community routes for the more popular routes. She said that they are working towards BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) in the future by implementing skip stops. Mr. Hartnett said it would be prohibitive to have full BRT on El Camino Real. He said the Caltrans grant could be used to make strategic investments about where to implement BRT in key areas.

Director Dave Pine noted the high concentration of service in the Daly City area both pre- and post-COVID. Chair Matsumoto noted that that area is highly transit dependent. She asked if the school districts contribute to any of the school service costs. Mr. Hartnett said no.

Director Peter Ratto said he thought signal priority would help with buses being on time. He noted that Daly City has always had a robust SamTrans ridership. He said that there are small ways to implement BRT to achieve the goals of speed and frequency.

Ms. Wegener discussed service tradeoff options.

Director Ratto commended the Planning Department for their extensive outreach to customers and potential customers.

Director Carole Groom asked how fares could affect customer tradeoff options. Ms. Wegener said they would consider that.

Millie Tolleson, Principal Planner, reviewed the proposed guiding principles and equity indicators for service and a transit use likelihood index on areas where people live. She introduced a group discussion exercise.

Director Stone asked if the outreach to customers included questions about fares. Ms. Tolleson responded that they had done a fare study about three years ago. Mr. Hartnett said that he is chairing a task force on a regional fare integration and coordination study, which will eventually provide a more current source of fare information.

Ms. Tolleson asked for Board feedback on the four guiding principles.

Director Guilbault asked what community engagement looks like currently. Ms. Tolleson said they plan to launch a more robust partnership with community-based organizations.

Chair Matsumoto said that English is a second language in the predominantly Filipino and Latinx communities she serves, and that the best way to reach this population is through churches.

Director Ron Collins asked about tools for improving the customer experience. Ms. Tolleson said real-time arrival information was key. Director Collins said that is true for signs in buses but was asking about digital signs at bus stops. Ms. Tolleson said this might be most important for neighborhoods where people were less likely to have smart

phones. Director Collins said that reliability was a very important principle and measure of success.

Director Stone asked if the data regarding riders with smart phones had been recently updated. Ms. Tolleson said that aspect had been raised in surveys as a barrier for a percentage of riders. Director Stone said that efficiency may improve with the elimination of cash fares. He asked if there was another alternative to moving towards a cashless fare system for customers without smart phones. Ms. Tolleson said the Clipper START program would reduce cash payments and dwell time at stops. Director Stone suggested a more aggressive discount plan. Chair Matsumoto said that her constituency could only pay for one week at a time.

Director Groom proposed a subcommittee for discussing different income-based fare options. Mr. Hartnett acknowledged that they could work on that.

Mr. Wittmann discussed envisioning SamTrans service in the future.

Director Collins asked if cities could be added as community partners; he inquired about starting an intra-city shuttle program. Director Stone said that it would be cost-prohibitive due to lack of interest.

Mr. Wittmann invited the Board to rank the relative importance of potential priorities. Mr. Hartnett said it would be useful to discuss priorities at a future Board meeting.

4. INNOVATIVE CLEAN TRANSIT

David Olmeda, Chief Operating Officer, Bus, provided the presentation covering zero-emission transportation options, including experiences from peer transit agencies.

Mr. Hartnett said that SamTrans' compliance with the state's requirements is more aggressive than what the state's requirements are. He said they are already ahead with the purchase of the Proterra buses. He said the CARB (California Air Resources Board) schedule was noted as being unrealistic in terms of investment in necessary infrastructure. He said each of the SamTrans implementation options is stricter than the state schedule. He said the options are a result of cooperation with peer agencies and staff.

Derek Hansel, Chief Financial Officer, discussed the projected costs, funding, and financing. He said the vehicles are more expensive than the ones being replaced. He said there is a limited amount of regional funding annually to support the grant funding for fleet replacement.

Chair Matsumoto asked if SamTrans had considered compressed natural gas (CNG). Mr. Olmeda said natural gas would not meet the California ICT (Innovative Clean Transit) rule.

Director Guilbault asked if SamTrans would realize any cost savings with implementation of the program. Mr. Hansel said the financial advantages would be reasonably modest. Mr. Olmeda said the reliability of the components may reduce the number of required maintenance workforce, thus creating a savings.

Director Stone said it would be important to have an administration that supports climate change. He and Director Groom said SamTrans needs to meet with Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE). Director Pine said they need to revisit forming a partnership with

PCE. Mr. Hartnett said they have been offered advice but no material financial assistance. Director Pine noted that there was a mixed opinion between SamTrans and PCE about how to implement infrastructure and technical aspects. Mr. Hartnett said that PCE does not have a role in what SamTrans needs to do, and that PCE would be a source of information but not financial support.

Director Stone said his experience with PCE is that they have not exhibited strong leadership in the past. Director Groom asked Mr. Hartnett if they should re-approach the subject offline. Mr. Hartnett said he thought it would be worth exploring a potential funding relationship. Director Groom said she would discuss with Director Pine and follow up with Mr. Hartnett.

Director Pine said all the options represent the fastest way to meet the ICT objective. He asked if staff is currently seeking direction about which options to pursue. He asked about the District's experience with Proterra. Mr. Hartnett said that staff could prepare a financial comparison of diesel versus Proterra. He said they are currently seeking the Board's reaction in anticipation of submitting a plan to the state in January 2021. He noted that the plan is open to being amended. He said the District in discussion with Proterra over issues concerning how the buses work, excluding battery electric technology.

Director Collins confirmed that no battery electric buses were in service. He asked if the newer diesel buses would be cleaner and more efficient than the 2009 models. Mr. Olmeda said there would be a slight benefit at replacement since the older models have reduced fuel efficiency at the end of their 12-year life cycle. Director Collins asked if the cost for battery electric buses would drop in the future. Mr. Olmeda said yes due to the technology improving quickly. He said in the automotive industry, there is a lot of research being conducted on battery improvements. Director Collins asked if cost projections were based on current costs of technology. Mr. Hansel said yes, but the degree of change is unlikely to impact the costs.

Director Stone asked about the use of solar panels to offset the cost of a zero-emission fleet. Mr. Olmeda said the infrastructure that supports the photovoltaic (PV) is also used to minimize the footprint and therefore put the charging systems and charging distribution across SamTrans' facilities. He said battery storage is not currently feasible but may be in the future. He said the question is how much energy can they store and then return to the grid. Mr. Hansel said solar and PV make sense, but the choices are independent from the acquisition of the electric vehicles themselves. Mr. Hansel said the infrastructure required to roll out a zero-emissions program is going to be expensive and it is independent of whether they install a PV system. Mr. Hartnett said that the reliability of the fleet is also an issue and that the buses need to be out on the road to support the service. Director Pine concurred that reliability was the primary issue.

Chair Matsumoto said that the South San Francisco water quality treatment facility has funding from Army Corps of Engineers to address sea level rise.

Director Ratto said that reliability is critical and was worried that none of the Proterra buses are currently in service. He said that customers care more about reliability than electric versus diesel buses. He said the two choices facing SamTrans are fuel cell or battery electric.

Director Josh Powell said we have to consider reliability with the aging diesel fleet. He said it would be difficult to avoid buying new diesel buses since the electric vehicles are not yet reliable alternatives.

Director Marina Fraser asked when Proterra buses will be in service. She expressed her concerns with spending money on technology with electric buses being out of service. Mr. Hartnett said that Proterra is working to deliver a suitable product, but that we do not have a timeline for delivery.

Mr. Hartnett said staff would be providing information that the Board had requested regarding zero emissions. Chair Matsumoto requested having a quarterly update on ICT.

Director Pine asked about forming an ad hoc committee for a discussion prior to bringing the issue back to the full board in anticipation of submitting a plan to the state by January 2021. Mr. Hartnett said that staff would consult with Chair Matsumoto offline.

5. ADJOURN

The Board meeting adjourned at 12:41 pm.

An audio/video recording of this meeting is available online at www.samtrans.com. Questions may be referred to the District Secretary's office by phone at 650-508-6242 or by email to board@samtrans.com.