Parking and Transportation Advisory Board (PTAB)

Meeting Minutes for February 22, 2022

Members present: Glenn Barrington, Jennifer Bennett, Niels la Cour, Robert Hendry, Jonathan King, Mike Knodler, Diana Noble, Sigrid Schmalzer, Amy Stout, Metin Yavuz, Gregory Wheeler

Previous Meeting Follow Up

- Citation fees fund financial aid office.
- Minimal amount of reimbursement from citation fees returns to Parking Services for various expenses.
- Still short on parking control officers, relying a lot on license plate recognition vehicles.

Sigrid Schmalzer Proposals

- Working with Transportation subcommittee of Environmental and Social Action Movement to promote ways to reduce carbon footprints and encourage alternatives to cars.
- What kind of events to launch? Tabling around Earth Day.
  - Bike lights- making sure lights are available to every biker who needs/wants one.
  - Bigger event in the fall- encourage new people on campus to adopt sustainable practices.
    - Reaching students during NSO to link them to possibilities before they bring their cars to campus in the first place.
- Jon- reached out to Pearson for NSO parking information
- Glenn- I suggest reaching out to Ezra Small regarding Earth Day.
- Sigrid- They aren’t doing any big Earth Day events this year, but the reason is under wraps
- Niels- There’s also the Chancellor’s Sustainability Committee.
- Mike- We should link people to information about the Valley Bike Share program.
- Amy- Should we be doing a parallel event with New Employee Orientation? Might be something new and interesting
  - Jon- Bill Brady is revamping New Employee Orientation and there is room for improvement
  - Amy- As someone who bikes to campus sometimes, it’s important to ask if there is somewhere to change/shower after biking to campus
  - Jon- We had looked into a transportation hub that would include showers/bike storage but we haven’t moved forward with that.
- Rob- We were close to becoming a certified ‘bike friendly’ campus, but there hasn’t been a new committee for promoting/figuring out logistics since the first one five years ago. People didn’t want their showers listed to the public, and you can shower at the rec center but you’d need the $30 monthly membership.
Mike- May is National Bike Month, and May 1 is National Ride a Bike Day. We had a meeting last week to talk about a micro-mobility hub/meeting. We have the gear (electric scooters, bikes, etc.), we just need the time and the place. We’d also be happy to cover the cost for as many bike lights as we’d like on campus.

Jon- You’re more than welcome to level six of the garage, but there’s not a lot of appetite for electric scooters on campus.

Greg- the idea of having an event has been proposed before, but it hasn’t been approved because of the weight load on the garage. But I’m happy to help find an alternative.

Amy- Just to circle back to the idea of showers, why do employees have to pay to use the rec center? We shouldn’t be adding cost to employees that want to bike to work.
  o Jon- I didn’t realize there was a cost for using the rec center.
  o Rob- We’ve tried to push people toward using no-cost showers like Totman and Boyden, but the people running those buildings didn’t want the public coming in to shower.
  o Amy- a partial solution might be to pay as you go for showers at the Rec Center. $2 per shower would be much better than paying $30 a month.

Glenn- The committee as a whole supports the idea of the Earth Day Event, and Transit would be more than happy to bring a bus to the curb. We can reach out to the Rec Center Director to consider Amy’s proposal.

Parking Services Update- Jon King

Lot 65 renovation was postponed at the start of the pandemic
  o Total repave of lot 65- $300k project
  o The only thing that might be prohibitive is the rising cost of oil- might turn it into a $350k project
  o 3 double head EV chargers (6 spaces). Can add more in the future.
  o Rework sidewalks around the lot.
  o Scheduled to be done before the start of the Fall semester.

Lot 28- dirt lot behind the Mullins Center will be converted into a student lot.
  o 412 spaces, purple lot for Residential Students (primarily CHC)
  o 2 double head EV chargers (4 spaces). Can add more in the future
  o Will be available to sports camps in the summer.
  o Approx $4m project. Campus is contributing $600k for lighting and sidewalk
  o Will be borrowing money from campus on a short term basis and will pay it off over the next couple years
  o Done Fall 2022
  o Jen- Will this impact Graduation Celebrations?
  o Jon- It shouldn’t affect graduation celebrations. We’re planning to get in there right after graduation and have it done by Fall 2022. Right now it’s primarily a dirt lot for contractors.

How do we determine parking permit price increases?
  o Faculty/Staff- 1999 Omnibus Parking Agreement allows faculty/staff permit price to increase by the same percentage as the gross increase in wages paid across all unions from the previous year. There was no increase last year, and there is no increase this year or next.
  o Students- develop budget needs and increase accordingly. Generally 3%-5%. No increase last year or this year, 4% increase for next year.
Unaffiliated/visitors- increase equal to highest percentage of increase for faculty/staff or students. 4% increase this year.
Retirees- eligible to park in their former lot at a discounted price, or 20 free visits to the parking garage per year. Doesn't roll over to next year.

- Amy- Parking is a contentious issue with employees and unions. Why wouldn't we have the largest increase on the unaffiliated prices?
- Jon- Unaffiliated prices are incredibly high right now. The flat rate price for a Red Lot is $628, where an employee could range from $200-$500.
- Student demand this year was crazy. In 18-19 total permits were 3824. 21-28 was 5859. Lots were sold out and then some during the first week, which has never been seen before. We haven't surveyed the students to see why demand was so high, but I'm guessing it was COVID related. We could limit the number of freshmen that are able to purchase a permit. Usually freshmen purchase the least amount of permits.
- Mike- (regarding Lot 28 renovation) is there any discussion about improvements to the intersection of Mass Ave/Mullins Center?
- Jon- Not that I'm aware of. They will mostly be students that are not moving their cars during the day.
- Mike- The concern is more with camps in the summer.
- Jon- They had already been using the dirt lot, and UMPD had been directing traffic.
- Glenn- It might be better to have this lot, as it will reduce the number of pedestrians crossing over Mass Ave.
- Mike- People will also try to sneak through the lot when there is an event at Mullins center, but those will mostly be right turns out of the lot.
- Glenn- Might be good to look into improvements to Mass Ave and add it to the Five Year Plan.
- Niels- There's been a suggestion to bring Commonwealth Ave from 4 lanes down to two.

**Additional Transportation Options- Diana Noble**
- Various options for miscellaneous transportation options
- Alternate transportation info at [www.umass.edu/bus](http://www.umass.edu/bus)
- Zipcar- must be a member, but anybody who is 1.) affiliated with UMass 2.) has a UMass email 3.) is 18+ can get discounted rates.
  - Has been on campus since 2013, use dipped during the pandemic but is back up now
  - UMass drivers go further than the national average- likely students going home for the day
  - Zipcar tries to keep the number of cars on campus matching the demand. Demand went up in 2021 and they have 11 cars on campus right now.
  - Zipcar tries to make sure their utilization % is at least 50%
- Enterprise- more likely to keep the number of department vehicles down to a reasonable level.
  - Continuing to use MHEC contracted rates for all Business Rentals.
  - All Amherst business has been through Transit office space.
  - Looking for bigger on-campus office space.
  - Should be going back to using College Street office in upcoming weeks.
  - Online reservations at umass.edu/bus
- Fleet Services- all information for campus vehicles available online
  - Accident procedure for university vehicles/business travel
Glenn - What's the process for an accident?
Diana - It needs to be reported to the RMV if there is an accident with an injury or $1000 of damage. Should be reported to fleet services. And if there is an injury it needs to be reported to risk management/insurance.
Worth knowing what you need to do if you are on the phone with someone who has been in an accident.
Fleet Services maintenance staff is down to 3 mechanics, in charge of 500 vehicles and approx. 100 pieces of equipment.

Transportation Services Update - Glenn Barrington

- PVTA purchases all of the capital equipment- UMass doesn’t pay for new buses
- Ridership has increased from FY21 to FY22. Amped up Spring 2021 when 5,000 students came back to campus.
- Already at 1 million riders, and should be at 2 million by the end of the semester. Used to have 3.5 million riders per year.
- Passengers likely dissuaded by mask requirement, but buses are still fully loaded around class change.
- CDL driver shortage is also affecting Transit and we are continuing to struggle to recruit students.
- Starting post-training pay rate increased to $18/hour.
- Hired and trained 15 new drivers over winter break, 14 have gotten their licenses and are in the process of completing training.
- Working with MBA students from Isenberg to look at training/recruitment/marketing process to improve our recruitment process.
  - Group meets every Friday over Zoom, will be riding buses, visiting Transit facility, and shadowing Training process
- Currently have 117 CDL drivers, 155+ drivers necessary to return to regular full service.
  - Lose 25-45 drivers at graduation
- 103 permanent open (unassigned) shifts per week. Have not lost any scheduled service to date, but we have come close. Other factors add more open shifts per week;
  - COVID call outs with 5 day isolation periods contribute to opens, with an average of 2 COVID call outs per week, which is less than the beginning of the semester.
  - Call-outs for academic purposes, family emergencies, and sickness
- Still running on a reduced schedule- buses on core routes every 20 minutes, as opposed to 15 minutes during full service.
  - Removed Route 39 from service, as well as one bus each on the 30, 31, 34, and 35
  - B79 ridership is low. 1-3 riders/day
- TSA mask requirement extended through March 18, 2022. Not sure if it will get extended as we close in on the date.
- Buses are considered “fully loaded” once all seats are occupied with standees in the aisles.
- Passengers are boarding through the front and rear doors
  - Must remain behind “standee line” at all times, and are separated from the driver by polycarbonate barrier that the driver has to open and close.
- Working with PVTA to install air purifiers this coming summer.
• PVTA projects
  o Installed 2 electric bus chargers. Still waiting for our generator- the pad is already in place.
  o Jon- What is the generator going to run off of?
  o Glenn- a 2000 gallon diesel tank.
• Chancellor Subbaswamy, Shane Conklin, and PVTA Administrator Sandra Sheehan came to visit in December.
  o Talked to our mechanic Tom Vincent, who is a wealth of knowledge and we are lucky to have him
• The electric bus is nearly silent and it’s exciting to watch as it whispers down the road. Drivers are very aware of pedestrians, and are trained to remain vigilant and make sure that no one is walking in their blind spots. The bus still makes noise with the tires on the ground etc.
• Driver safety barriers are being installed starting Monday March 7
  o Should take a week to have them installed on all New Flyers.
  o Keeping polycarbonate barrier on Gilligs
  o 5 2008 Gilligs will be replaced with 2 Electric and 3 Diesel new flyers this summer.
• PVTA applied for an FTA grant to expand the Transit maintenance area to allow for lifts to accomodate the 60 foot articulated buses.
• Sigrid- Will we regain service lost from COVID? Is service reduction being talked about as a temporary measure? It would be nice to know if we are successful in ramping up ridership we will be able to offer adequate services.
• Glenn- Getting people to want to drive is a huge challenge. The medical certification process is pushing people out of the industry. If you don’t have the personnel to drive the buses it doesn’t matter how much you improve the infrastructure. Also I will say, being a bus driver is not easy. There are constant incidents, and some of the stuff that happens on buses is truly unbelievable. I take pride in the work that we do here, but when we don’t have enough drivers we don’t enough trainers, dispatchers, etc. We survey our workforce every spring to see who is coming back and we will take a look at our numbers to see if we can get back to 15 minute headways, but I can’t give you a definitive answer on when we’ll have enough drivers to do that.
• Sigrid-This is really eye-opening because I had been assuming that the decrease in service was due to decreased ridership, not decrease in drivers. The on-campus buses are important, but so are the other buses run by the PVTA, like the B43. Are those reductions also driver related?
• Glenn: They are driver related. PVTA has the finances, they don’t have the bodies to drive the buses.

Meeting adjourned 1:40pm