Columbia City Council Work Session Minutes Wednesday, May 22, 2013 3:00 p.m. City Hall Building – Council Chamber 701 East Broadway

Council members present: Mayor McDavid, Fred Schmidt, Mike Trapp, Ian Thomas and Barbara Hoppe

Absent: Karl Skala and Laura Nauser

Mayor McDavid called the meeting to order at 3:12 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Transit - COMO Connect:

City Manager, Mike Matthes, explained that Public Works and Transit staff approached him with a proposal based on community feedback and similar practices in other cities. Public Works Director, John Glascock, discussed the future of transit in our area and the potential for a high speed rail system someday; he felt that the congestion of traffic in Columbia will increase in the future and that a solution was needed to be found for the future of transit. Public Works has heard many complaints on the existing system and staff presented a new model to help solve these issues. Drew Brooks, Transit Manager, discussed some things being worked on in the present including; upgrades to technology; GPS units on buses, mobile applications and texting ability, automatic passenger counters, auto annunciators for vision impaired riders and an internal sign for hearing impaired, google transit trip planners, improving paratransit efficiencies and going paperless with tablets on buses. In the future they hope to have "CoMo Connect" as a strategic plan to provide a service to everyone in the community using innovative concepts and processes, to be responsive to stakeholders and customers and a plan designed for growth. Objectives are to live within means with a customer focused approach. Mr. Brooks noted that they also want to restructure fares and passes to prepare for mobile payments. They intend to rename, rebrand and market a new CoMo Connect system. The system would be a complete fixed route system restructure by: adjusting hours, expanding route coverage, shorter wait times and a more efficient networked system. He showed a draft route but indicated fine tuning would be done over coming months with a lot of input and analyses from the community. The route consists of 2 Core connector routes and 7 neighborhood routes. Four or more buses running core routes with 15 minute wait times on peak hours and 30 minutes on off peak hours. Thirty minute wait times on neighborhood routes. He explained the expanded service area by showing a slide comparing current to proposed routes. Mr. Brooks provided detail on the coverage of the routes. Staff is looking for feedback on the downtown route areas. He noted the improved hours of operation being Monday through Friday from 6:30 am to 8:00 pm and Saturday from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm. They plan to propose an ordinance to raise parking garage and lot rates by \$10 per month increasing annual revenue to \$292,000, allowing Transit to increase FTA matching grant dollars. Parking tag holders would receive a Park and Ride bus pass for unlimited bus rides. Mr. Brooks suggested Council consider discontinuing advertising when the contract is up in December which would result in a loss of \$95,000.

Barbara Buffaloe, Sustainability Manager, noted that the TIGER Grant Fund award is \$473 Million and is being awarded at minimum amounts of \$10 Million with an

application deadline of June 3. The application will focus on strategic alignment with the U.S. Department of Transportation Strategic Plan, our Citywide Strategic Plan and Columbia Imagined. CoMoConnect looks to make a more livable community. We plan to have improved shelters that are more innovative; shelters that tell you where you are, where you are going, how and when to get there, solar powered with LED safety lighting, Connector routes with bike share systems or safe and covered bike storage racks, "smart" signage on connector stops with GPS data on where the bus is. There is also a need to improve the fleet to Compressed Natural Gas, which can save an estimated \$130,000 per year just on maintenance as well as an additional \$5,000 fuel savings per bus. Mr. Brooks noted that the goal is to have buses that rarely have 1 to 2 riders, but a full bus where everyone in the community can make a choice to ride an efficient system.

Staff summarized that this proposal will have; more connected routes with shorter travel times, more service more of the day throughout more of the city, live within our means, customer focused and strategic, innovative, responsive, designed for growth.

Council person Hoppe asked for a timeframe for this. Mr. Brooks replied that at a minimum it would be a year to 18 months. They need to bid out for shelters, etc. Longer phase would be analyses of current system and having public meetings. Mr. Matthes noted that elements are happening such as the RFP being completed for GPS equipment, etc. Ms. Hoppe asked about the connection with Stadium and Broadway. Staff replied that those routes will need to be flushed out and bus racks at bus stations should hopefully make it easier to get to route areas.

Council person Thomas commented that this is an exciting visionary plan for the future and stepping stone to growth that works within current budget with ways to expand. He felt that the public will be inspired to support this system and he liked the framework for routes and other innovative things mentioned including the upgraded shelter ideas.

Ms. Hoppe asked if there is a way to start this and begin to see how it works while we wait for other things to come along on funding, etc. Mr. Glascock replied that FTA requires public process on major changes to routes and would likely take around a year to change through their process. Ms. Hoppe asked if a consultant would be helpful for analysis, funding mechanism and comparison to other systems. Mr. Glascock replied that estimates for that type of work are \$125-\$250,000 so they are trying to do this inhouse instead.

Council person Trapp commented that this is an impressive effort from staff and the proposal seems right on track. He asked if the proposed gain from the \$10 increase in parking fees could all be potential match dollars. Mr. Brooks indicated that would get us very close. There is \$2.1 available for match, we would have \$1.8. Mr. Trapp hopes to capture all match dollars we can. The group discussed raising parking rates and it was determined that would be done through the budget process. Ms. Hoppe suggested we make sure we fully use the newly reformed Transit Commission. Mr. Glascock will use them for public process.

Council person Schmidt asked what the minimum time to change routes was. Mr. Glascock couldn't say for sure, but hoped to have it in place next August before students get to town. Mayor McDavid noted that it was uplifting to see the Transit approach move from utility to enterprise. He wants to make sure all stakeholders are at the table when designing downtown routes and fine-tuning other routes. He also wants to keep in mind the major groups of riders that would use system.

Mr. Matthes noted that the new proposal would actually allow him to take the bus to work on occasion as this would change his walk to a stop near his home, from an hour walk, down to a 5 minute walk. He thanked the staff that worked hard on this project and noted that there are two key Transit positions vacant and based on feedback today, he intends to fill them.

Ms. Hoppe asked when the input process would start. Mr. Glascock replied that the Interested Parties meetings will start as soon as possible and added that maps are available to take today with the draft routes. Mr. Matthes added that the technology portion will happen first since staff is already working on that. Budget items will come up during the regular budget process for October 1, 2013 implementation. Mr. Thomas added that there is a developer presenting a plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission who has expressed willingness to contribute money to transit in exchange for having fewer parking spots than required. He asked if anyone has looked into ZipCar or car share programs since that was successful in Champaign, Illinois with a Revenue Guarantee. Mr. Matthes replied that we have not, but will plan to look into it.

The entire presentation can be viewed at the following link: https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/bcmanager/downloadfile.php?id=10180

Other items the Council may wish to discuss: None.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:36 p.m.