

**GOLDEN EMPIRE TRANSIT DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**JULY 21, 2020
5:30 PM**

**1830 GOLDEN STATE AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301**

DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Carlos Bello
Rueben Pascual

Leasa Engel

Cindy Parra

DIRECTORS ABSENT:

Jim Baldwin

ATTORNEY PRESENT:

Jim Worth

STAFF PRESENT:

Karen King
Steve Barnes
Robert Williams
Sharon Pierce
Rocio Rodriguez

Deidre Brown
Candra Cheers
Victor Honorato
Yolanda Hamen
Jimmy Gregory

Jeanie Hill
Chris James
Amanda Villanueva
Nicholas Blanchard
Tiffany Tran

OTHERS PRESENT:

Bob Snoddy

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Director Pascual moved and Director Engel seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda (Agenda, Minutes of June 16, 2020, Accounts Payable Check Disbursements, and Capital Projects Update. The motion carried on the following roll call vote:

AYES: Bello, Engel, Parra, and Pascual
ABSENT: Baldwin

NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Yolanda Hamen spoke and submitted written comments (see Attachment A). Ms. Hamen's suggestions included: extend Route 41 to have last trip leave Bakersfield College at 6 pm going

out of service at East Hills Mall to service passengers in the Fairfax/Auburn area; allow buses to hold outside of hubs and terminals so passengers can make connections; have three supervisors available at all times; contact tracing at GET between all employees; Safety training meetings with set number of employees in attendance and ZOOM participation to establish protocols on how to handle situations; and a request that RYDE and Shadow Buses on Route 22 with permanent schedules be included in the upcoming bid for October-December work.

Ms. Frances Rubio submitted a written statement, which was read by Ms. Hamen (see Attachment B). Ms. Rubio's concerns included communication between management and employees, accessibility of restrooms on bus routes during Pandemic, availability of hand sanitizer and paper towels at Southwest Transit Center and Downtown Transit Center, and continuation of GET paying health insurance premiums for employees.

Mr. Nicholas Blanchard spoke and submitted his comments (see Attachment C). His comments centered around COVID-19 and face masks. He asked that 'Golden Empire Transit provide drivers with the necessary equipment to perform their job correctly and safely and to investigate masks that can be worn without discomfort.' He questioned the safety of placing two wheelchairs next to each other on buses.

Mr. Jimmy Gregory spoke and submitted his comments (see Attachment D). Mr. Gregory shared that he is extremely disappointed at the lack of compassion from GET. Examples he gave are: all managers' doors are shut; glass partitions went up between drivers and the dispatchers; tape was put on the floor telling employees where to stand. He shared his concerns about possibilities of getting sick, having a job, what happens if he gets sick, what are protocols when sick passengers come on board, and where to go for answers.

Ms. Tiffany Tran stated that she agreed with Mr. Gregory's comments about the managers and an open door policy. Employees have to call first to make an appointment. With the front office closed, customers cannot get passes or ID badges. Drivers are on the front line. When she transported a person who tested with COVID-19, she had to change her life and her mother's life when she had to be tested and wait for results. She was concerned that she had to find a place for her mother to live while she waited on test results. She felt that the drivers need more support.

JUNE 2020 FINANCIAL POSITION AND RESULTS OF OPERATIONS

Mr. Barnes reviewed the June 2020 financial reports. This was an informational item only.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS/BOARD COMMENTS

Director Engel commented that she is concerned about managers behind closed doors and how that can affect morale. She stated that we are all a team and asked that staff look at the comments made this evening.

Director Pascual would like staff to list and report on the concerns expressed tonight. What he heard tonight was that employees felt they are not being appreciated. If we take care of employees then they will take care of us. He acknowledged that GET has purchased 20,000 paper face masks that drivers can offer to riders who do not have a mask.

Director Bello asked about remote access to Board meetings for the public. He also agreed that employees who deal with the public are on the front line. He asked if staff has been trained on wearing masks.

Director Parra stated that drivers are front line employees and asked if restrooms for drivers is still an issue with COVID-19. She asked if employees are told when someone tests positive. Director Parra also asked if Operations could review stats on where we need shadow buses. On the topic of riders not wearing a face mask, she does not want to put drivers in the position of having to enforce.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT/COMMENTS:

Ms. King commented that a Special Board meeting is necessary prior to the next regular Board meeting in order to consider change order for four projects. She asked that Board members advise their availability on Tuesday, July 28, 2020 at 5:30 by Wednesday, July 22, 2020.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board moved into executive session at 6:40 p.m. to discuss Conference with Legal Counsel Pending Litigation– [Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(1)] and Conference with Legal Counsel –[Government Code Section 54957(b)(1)] – Discuss Performance Evaluation of the Chief Executive Officer. The Board returned to open session at 6:48 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

Attorney Worth stated that the Board met with legal counsel and staff on the items referenced in the executive session on the Agenda. Mr. Worth stated that no action was taken that requires disclosure under the Brown Act.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Director Parra moved that the meeting be closed. The meeting concluded at 6:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary of the Board of Directors

ATTACHMENT A

My name is Yolanda Hamen. I am a Coach Operator and Union Shop Steward.

I have a few suggestions...

- 1) Extend route 41 to have a last trip leave Bakersfield College @ 6pm going out of service @ East Hills Mall to service passengers in the Fairfax/Auburn area.
- 2) Allow buses to hold outside of hubs & terminals so passengers can make connections as per the "Mission Statement" at G. E. T.
- 3) Have 3 supervisors available at all times to help drivers feel better assisted when incidents occur.
- 4) Contact tracing at G.E.T. between all employees.
- 5) Safety training meetings similar to this with a set number of employees in attendance and ZOOM participation to establish protocols on how to handle situations.

Thank you for your attention & consideration to these suggestions.

Yolanda Hamen



ADDITION :

THE DRIVERS ARE REQUESTING OPERATIONS TO INCLUDE
IN THE UPCOMING BID IN AUGUST FOR OCT, NOV, DEC. WORK-
RYDE - WHICH IS BEYOND ITS PILOT PROGRAM

RT. 22- SHADOW BUSES WITH PERMANENT SCHEDULES.

July 21, 2020

Re: Board meeting

My name is Frances Rubio, I have been employed at GET for 24 years, I've been a shop steward since 2016 and a board trustee @ Teamsters Local 517 for 2 years.

Through my experience listening to members' concerns, there is a lack of communication between management and their employees.

We've asked numerous times to listen to our suggestions because we are on the front lines of this operation.

At the beginning of the pandemic, restrooms were a big concern for drivers. Some routes had no where to go due to mandated closures. Management needs to do more to talk to businesses to allow drivers to use their facilities.

Due to the germs we are exposed to on a daily basis, drivers would appreciate hand sanitizer & paper towels at the Southwest Transit Center & Downtown Terminal.

We are also asking the board to consider approving G.E.T. to continue paying our health insurance as they have been since April during this pandemic.

Frances Rubio

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Frances Rubio', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

My name is Nicholas Blanchard I am a coach operator at Golden empire Transit and a union shop Stewart.

there's been a lot of discussion about this covet 19 and the use of masks that the governor has given an order for everyone in California to where. The problem that we foresee is what is the correct material which we are to use and which are most effective.

drivers have been buying their own masks which are ineffective to help with the spread of covet 19 The masks are decorative cloth some are of a vinyl type material some are even paper.

Golden empire has provided us with a mask that is of cloth material and currently is giving passengers a paper mask to use.

as everyone knows these are uncomfortable and are bringing health issues on drivers being able to breathe while driving fogging up their glasses not being able to see getting rashes around their mouths and noses and cleaning of the masks.

in order to have a clean mask every day you would have to have at least five masks so that you can wash and have them ready when you need them.

I propose Golden empire Transit provide drivers with necessary equipment to perform their job correctly and safely investigate masks that can be worn without discomfort.

drivers are also worried about not wearing the masks while driving due to their health issues and the threat of being written up or even being terminated is on their minds so our question to the board and to the operations department will drivers get fired if they do not wear their mask? lastly we have been told by the governor not to have more than 10 people in a crowd but yet the operations department is telling drivers through dispatch that we have to load as many as we can 15 being a number that was put out there also the handicapped area for the wheelchairs is unacceptable to load two on a bus that is not called social distancing the distance between the two passengers would be less than two feet we will not load more than one on the bus.

the CDC and the ADA have made recommendations on this that the operations department should research before telling drivers to put them in harm's way lastly the health department in Bakersfield's concur that this is a procedure that should be followed.

Nicholas Blanchard

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'NB' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

7-21-20

My name is Jimmy Gregory

Employee for 15 years, I've experienced

- complete changeover of management
- overhaul of routes
- 5 week strike
- **Replacement of the entire board of directors**

Extremely disappointed at the lack of compassion from GET

- All managers doors are shut
- **Glass partitions went up between us and the dispatchers**
- Tape was put upon the floor telling us where to stand
- I felt like I was the one who had it and all my managers were hiding from me

The coronavirus has got us all on edge. I'm filled with doubt, anxiety, and fear

- Am I going to get sick?
- Are any of my co-workers going to get sick?
- What will happen if we do?
- Am I going to have a job?
- Am I going to die?

We got no protocol on what to do if

- a passenger comes on board coughing and refuses to wear a mask
- how to react when someone enters the bus unexpectedly and coughs or spits on us or tries to touch us
- if someone comes aboard and flat out tells us they've got the virus

I don't know who to go to for my concerns.

- **Managers doors closed**
- Route supervisors can't tell me anything
- Union can't get answers
- Board of Directors don't answer emails

Memos and Videos are irregular and misleading

- seven different spots where memos are posted
- **not timely informed when an employee tests positive**
- hear it on the news before it's posted
- Told that no cases are contracted from the job when I personally know someone who has

