

**University Transportation Committee  
March 11, 2005**

Present: Peter Dewey, Transportation Services  
Mae Diligencia, ASUW Rep  
Diana Perey, Transportation Services  
Carl Root, Parking Services  
Paul Roybal, Transportation Office  
Scott Rutherford, CEE  
John Schaufelberger, Construction Management  
Helen Shawcroft, UW Medical Center  
Vicky Stormo, UWPD  
Matt Weatherford, Arts and Sciences

Absent: Paul Brown, HFS  
Jeremy Fichter, GPSS  
Jeanette Henderson, Real Estate Office  
Kerry Kahl, Purchasing and Stores  
Danny Kraus, HR – Labor Relations  
Chip Lydum, ICA  
Jerri McCray, Facilities Services  
Ali Tarhouni, Finance and Business Economics  
Kathryn Waddell, Health Sciences  
Kathryn Wilham, Social Work

Guests: Theresa Doherty, Regional Affairs  
Ray Whitmier, UWPD

**Introductions**

Introductions were made around the table. A member list was distributed showing two changes in membership. Ken Anderson reduced his workload to half time and has shed some of his ancillary duties and has resigned from the committee. He has been replaced on the Committee by Kathryn Waddell. Ken Winstead's job duties have been changed and he has been replaced on the committee by Chip Lydum, who is also from ICA.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the 1-31-05 meeting were approved (with two typographical amendments).

**Report on the 2004 Transportation Survey**

Mr. Roybal distributed a handout titled *2004 U-PASS Transportation Survey*, which summarized findings from the biennial transportation survey conducted in the fall 2004 (attached). The findings included information on commute mode split to the University of Washington by faculty, staff, and students; data on U-PASS purchases and use; and transit ridership by U-PASS purchasers. Questions were asked for clarification of the data presented.

(Data included an estimate of the total number of transit rides taken to UW daily which was incorrect: Rather than 24,500 trips, which was based on travel to UW each day, the correct number should be approximately 19,600, since people only travel to UW on average about 4 out of 5 days.)

A discussion the drop in awareness of U-PASS services raised questions about how the U-PASS program is marketed to educational outreach students. It was agreed that the transportation office would review how all student groups learn about the program and make improvements to better reach all students groups, including educational outreach.

Ms. Doherty asked if the data have been analyzed regarding the University's performance with respect to trip limitations imposed in the Campus Master Plan. Mr. Roybal explained how the number of trips is calculated, based on data from the biennial transportation survey, and that the current data show trips to and from campus are generally below targets by about 15 percent. Specific numbers will be presented at the next committee meeting and a presentation will be made to CUCAC on this subject at their next meeting in April.

There was general agreement by the committee that the survey data show the program has been successful in reaching its trip reduction and mode share goals, and that the program is headed in the right direction. However, Mr. Dewey pointed out that the recent increase in transportation fees may have an impact on U-PASS sales that is just beginning to show up in lower participation rates among students: During the Fall 2004 and Winter 2005 quarters U-PASS sales to students declined slightly for the first time in recent years.

## **Future U-PASS with Smart card**

### Goals

Mr. Dewey distributed a paper listing two sets of goals for the Smart Card project. In the first set, circa 2/04, UW staff identified five goals for the smart card program, generally in priority order: cost containment, peak period trip limitation, equitability, off peak period trip limitation and ease of understanding. Mr. Dewey noted that the equitability goal was something that the UTC spoke about extensively last winter, in conjunction with the high cost difference between Community Transit bus trips and Metro bus trips (Sound Transit trips cost in between) and this was the reason for development of the Maximum Transit Value idea, discussed at the last meeting and below.

The second set of goals is embodied in the 2004-7 University-Metro-Sound Transit contract. Mr. Dewey noted the goal of consolidating contracts into one, which seems like a key objective of the transit agencies.

### Analysis of Two Tier U-PASS Fees / Maximum Transit Benefit

Mr. Dewey distributed a "PRELIMINARY Analysis of Two Tier U-PASS Fee". He noted that when discussing the idea of a maximum transit benefit value with others, several asked for an idea of what the University would get out of implementing such a system, with its obvious complexities and apparent high cost of administration. The attached model is intended to provide this analysis and to get a rough idea about the costs.

Mr. Dewey explained some of the limitations of the model, e.g., transfer trips are counted as two trips and the model does not do a good job at distinguishing these trips. Nevertheless, the model provides some idea about the effect on revenues for the two tier system. Two different scenarios were analyzed. In the first, it was assumed that those using more than \$72 per month in transit trips would pay a premium on the cost of U-

PASSes of 25%. The model showed that because there are relatively few people who use more than \$72 per month in transit (about 1,500 of the 38 thousand U-PASS holders), and because U-PASS revenue only provides half of the cost of transit, the premium U-PASS fee would generate only a small amount of additional revenue, about \$66 thousand annually or 1% of U-PASS revenue. In the second scenario, it was assumed that those using more than \$50 per month in transit trips would pay a premium on the cost of U-PASSes of 25%. The model showed that while this would generate more revenue (about \$259 thousand annually, or 4% of U-PASS revenue) this would mean that basically everyone who traveled on transit both ways every work day in the month would have to pay the premium U-PASS fee.

Ms. Shawcroft noted that this analysis shows that this two tier system wouldn't address the all of the goals previously discusses (circa 2/04), namely that while some might consider this more equitable, it didn't do much for cost containment and probably would also adversely affect attainment of trip limitation goals. Others noted that having a limited use U-PASS that failed to cover the cost of every-day Metro commuting didn't seem to be providing enough.

Mr. Schaufelberger inquired whether there might be a simpler system that would provide a way to charge more to those with more expensive transit, for example saying that anyone who lives in Snohomish county who wants to purchase a U-PASS would be required to pay more. Ms. Perey noted that we do not have perfect information about the residential location of employees and particularly students. Mr. Dewey noted that something like 25% of Community Transit trips are thought to be used by those living in King County.

Mr. Schaufelberger asked about the ability to use the transit electronic purse on the Smart Card as a means of recovering more cost from transit users who take a greater number, or more expensive, trips. Mr. Dewey explained that trips made using the electronic purse would be charged at the retail rate, rather than our much more favorable discounted rate.

Further, there are increased administrative difficulties in tracking money placed on the purse by the University or by the individual.

So there does not seem to be a simple system of recovering more costs from those who use more transit.

There seemed to be a consensus that while the two tier system had some appeal, pursuing it any further did not seem warranted.

#### Other Smart Card transit Options

Ms. Perey suggested that another way to limit the amount of subsidy of transit might be to eliminate the subsidy on weekends. Mr. Dewey stated that the UW pays about \$800 thousand annually on weekend trips. Ms. Stormo noted that eliminating weekend transit benefit would likely mostly impact students who study or take classes on the weekend. Mr. Rutherford suggested that this might also lead more students to think they need a car to deal with weekends and that owning cars might lead more to drive during the week. Nevertheless, Mr. Dewey said that he would do some more exploration about this option.

Mr. Dewey discussed the effects of a smart card that continued to provide the current unlimited right-to-ride benefit. He noted that as transit costs increase, the cost of the U-PASS would have to increase to both generate revenue. This would also have the effect of making to cost prohibitive to some who don't perceive the value given the cost, because for example they don't take the bus much. There was some speculation about how they would then commute and no conclusions were made. Mr. Dewey suggested that there may be a way to highlight and enhance non-transit benefits as a way to continue the high sales level.

There was some discussion about why changes to the transit benefit needed to be made at this juncture, as it was noted that we would be getting more information about travel behavior with the smart card. Mr. Roybal confirmed that the project had the capability of

generating more data, but it was unclear whether it would be easy to interpret and useful. There is risk in waiting to get the data because we may take years to make a decision to change the transit benefit and or fee system and in the mean time we would be on the hook for unexpected costs. Further, a change later may also require re-issuing the smart card, or requiring that people come in to have their card reprogrammed. These factors have led us to consider changes now.

### **Other**

Mr. Whitmier noted that the UWPD would like to discuss motorized scooters at a future meeting.