



ASSEMBLY PUBLIC WORKS & FACILITIES COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 14, 2025 at 12:10 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar

<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/91849897300> or 1-669-900-6833 Webinar ID: 918 4989 7300

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge that the City and Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land and wish to honor the indigenous people of this land. For more than ten thousand years, Alaska Native people have been and continue to be integral to the well-being of our community. We are grateful to be in this place, a part of this community, and to honor the culture, traditions, and resilience of the Tlingit people. *Gunalchéesh!*

C. ROLL CALL

Members Present In-Person: Chair Alicia Hughes-Skandijs; Maureen Hall, Paul Kelly, Greg Smith

CBJ Staff Present: EPW Director Denise Koch, Lead Transit Operator Matt Carpenter, Utilities Superintendent Brian McGuire, Contract Specialist Cristian Crabtree, Harbormaster Matthew Creswell, Chief CIP Engineer John Bohan and Municipal Clerk Breckan Hendricks.

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Agenda was approved.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. June 02, 2025 Meeting Minutes - Approved with no changes.

F. AGENDA TOPICS

1. **State Revolving Fund (SRF) Pyrolysis Loan**

Director Koch discussed the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Pyrolysis Loan. She explained that this is connected to their CBJ Wastewater Utility, who create biosolids. She said every utility that has biosolids has some level of PFAS contamination, and all utilities are struggling with the best ways to treat those biosolids that are financially prudent and environmentally sound. She stated that the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is a partner with us in trying to solve those problems, and they provided us with SRF loan funding to design a pyrolysis unit, which is a type of treatment for biosolids, and then DEC found that they had additional money to loan that is for design and construction that is forgivable. However, federal dollars have a certain set of strings attached to them, and since this is a newer technology, there are some question about whether they would be able to find something that meets the federal strings such as Build America Buy America (BABA). She

added that is low risk to move forward, because even we can't meet the federal criteria and have to do a deappropriating ordinance later that there is no negative consequence from DEC. She asked the Committee to support this request and forward it to the Full Assembly for adoption.

Mr. Smith moved that the Public Works and Facilities Committee forward to the Full Assembly for adoption a resolution authorizing the application for a \$3, 391,000 SRF Loan for the pyrolysis unit at the Mendenhall Treatment Place. He asked for unanimous consent.

The motion passed.

2. Enhancing Transit VIP Pass Accessibility and Streamlining Certification

Director Koch talked about the Enhancing Transit VIP Pass Accessibility and Streamlining Certification. She stated they have paratransit and VIP passes, and the VIP pass provides free access to the fixed route system. She said it is pretty standard to have social service providers that have either staff for their organization or associations with other treating professionals that can attest if a person has a disability or problem that meets the eligibility requirements for the VIP pass. They recently received feedback from Gastineau Human Services that the list of treating professionals is too narrow and they have others familiar with these people's disabilities that they want to use to qualify people for a VIP pass. She commented that would have the consequences of expanding the number of people eligible, adding administrative burden, and not being able to quantify the exact reduction in revenue, but it would probably serve the community's overall goal in making Transit as accessible to as many people as possible. She voiced that if the Committee is interested, they would work with the Department of Law and finalize the language in the resolution and forward it to the Full Assembly to weigh in on.

Mr. Kelly asked if there was an estimate on the additional cost, but he said it sounded like they may not have that available.

Director Koch answered that they do not have a good way to estimate how many more people might be eligible and what the reduction would be, but that only had one social service provider has requested this, so she imagined it would be a finite group of people who would now be eligible and probably not be a substantial impact.

Mr. Carpenter agreed that they did not have a real way to estimate that, but he is not directly involved with the administration of the VIP program.

Ms. Hall commented that in the proposed revision it said add the words "but not limited to" before the list of licensed individuals, but in the current eligibility it does not necessarily say they are licensed professionals. She asked if they felt licensed professional needs to be spelled out.

Director Koch responded that is a really good point and they will touch base with the Department of Law on that. She said that for paratransit, there is federal oversight of what they do with it, but for the VIP pass, the language of treating professional or constellation of

professionals that can deem someone eligible for this service is up to the discretion of the Assembly, so they could add that language if they wanted to.

Ms. Hall expressed that she did not know if they should limit it, but she suggested getting more feedback from the social service providers to see if that would be helpful, and to see if someone like a housing navigator could do that instead of jumping through additional hoops by having a licensed professional complete that.

Mr. Smith inquired about Capital Transit's ridership revenue.

Director Koch answered that they talked about fare free transit about a year and a half ago, where they looked at the revenue loss, and it came to around \$425,000 in fares. She said in general, ridership has been on slow recovery post-COVID, so it may be slightly more now.

Mr. Carpenter added that he did not know for sure, but he asked about this a week ago, and he was told that fare revenue is at about \$500,000.

Mr. Smith expressed that he looked it up in the budget book and under transit it said charges for service was about \$500,000.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs stated that before going down a rabbit hole of adding more work for staff, she supported adding the words, as that was a good concern to be brought forward. She felt that as long as they have the words "but not limited to" that should be sufficient.

Mr. Kelly moved that the Public Works and Facilities Committee approve the expansion of treating professional by adding "but not limited to" and that we direct staff to work with Law to forward a code change to the Full Assembly. He asked for unanimous consent.

Mr. Smith objected for purposes of a question. He asked if the professionals doing this would have to say if someone meets the criteria and sign their name and title.

Director Koch responded that they fill out a form and put their professional credibility, say they are familiar with the person and their issues, give their best professional judgment, and sign their name to it.

Mr. Smith was good with the change and removed his objection.

The motion passed.

3. Capital Transit Operations Update

Director Koch gave information on the Capital Transit Operations update. She first discussed the impact on cruise ship passengers on our local ridership, which has always been an item of concern during this time of year. She said the summer of 2023 was the worst year, where Engineering and Public Works and Capital Transit were caught flat-footed due to changes in the private sector that resulted in many more passengers using the Downtown Transit Center to get out to the glacier. She said the main concern with that is that the buses would

fill up with tourists and be full and not available to local ridership, including at critical and popular stops such as Fred Meyer. She stated that in 2024, they requested and received marine passenger fees to augment the service and increase the Route 8 service to accommodate that, which generally went well, and then requested more dollars for marine passenger fees to expand the Route 8 service a little bit in 2025. She voiced that what really upset the community was when locals were being passed by full buses, and there are a couple of times a week they still pass local people, but generally when they are passed up they normally only have to wait another 15 minutes for a bus, so they have not seen very many rider complaints.

Mr. Carpenter added that it is hard to predict exactly when passengers are being passed up, but it seems to be largely weather dependent.

Director Koch then went over bus electrification and status update. She expressed that things are going well and they are moving in the direction of transportation to get electrified, even though there have been some speed bumps along the way. She said they are using GILLIG, who has a long storied history of producing buses and have changed as consumer demand has changed. She noted that getting the buses in the winter was great timing, as they could really see if they had range anxiety with them, and they recently finished the charging projects at Valley Transit Center and the Bus Barn so they can now charge more buses and have more of the newer fleet out on the road. She expressed that one or two buses seem to have a challenge charging in the evening, but the manufacturer thinks it is a software issue, so they are going to do a software upgrade. She said that overall they are working well, people can charge their phones on them, and they are pretty happy with them.

Mr. Carpenter shared that they have gotten a lot of positive feedback from the public and the drivers on these buses.

Mr. Kelly asked if any of our electric buses ever ran out of charge during a route and how they handle that if it does.

Mr. Carpenter answered that they have not had any buses that have run out of charge, but have had other intermittent issues where buses have failed on route due to software issues.

Director Koch gave an update on token transit and social services. She expressed this is another area that has been overall positive. She said in terms of the user experience, it seems pretty seamless and there are options to buy multiple fares, monthly fares, individual fares, and it has the fare capping aspect, which is really helpful for people who are more economically challenged. She stated one issue that has come up is that they have been phasing out the physical tokens, but the tokens they do have were provided to the social service providers and admin staff at Capital Transit has done outreach with different social service providers on existing options.

Mr. Smith voiced interest in making Capital Transit fare free on municipal and state/federal election days for all riders. He then did the quick math of \$500,000 being divided by 365 is about \$1400 of revenue loss. He asked for feedback or thoughts on how big of an

administrative burden that would be to be fare free on election days in terms of implementation for the team, drivers, and staff.

Director Koch responded that would operationally work well. Superintendent Ross told her that the biggest challenges drivers have with passengers are about someone who cannot find their pass or do not have the \$2, and how big of a stickler the driver will be in those situations. She said they also had conversations about fare free and operationally how difficult or easy that would be, and Superintendent Ross said that is actually easier than the situation we have right now.

Mr. Carpenter felt it would be fairly easy on the transit side to implement that, but the bigger challenge could be getting the word out to the public .

Mr. Kelly shared that he would support the idea of fare free on election days and would possibly be interested in further expanding it. He realizes that voters in Juneau have more options with voting by mail and dropboxes, so it may not be necessary for the October election day, but was entertaining amending Mr. Smith's motion to include our annual October elections.

Ms. Hall asked if the tokens currently are being given at no charge to the social services providers or if they purchasing them and then handing them out to patrons.

Director Koch believed they were charging the social service providers for the tokens but she said she would verify and get back to the Committee on that.

Ms. Hall agreed that having a more expansive ability to issue the VIP passes would also help with the transition, as she hears concerns from the people being served by some of these agencies that do not have access to a phone or banking ability to pay for their own passes.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs echoed that, and added that as they get further along, she is sure they will here again from social services.

Mr. Smith moved that staff bring back to the Public Works and Facilities Committee legislation that would exempt fares on the municipal election day and the general election day. He asked for unanimous consent.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs objected for a comment just to say that they will just start with these days and see how many days they can get to.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs removed her objection.

The motion passed.

Mr. Smith expressed he was reached out to by community partners about all school-aged children riding the bus for free. He said he would need to do a little bit of work back and forth of the impetus, but it looks like youth 6-18 pay a reduced fare right now. He asked if they were to exempt all people under age 18 what revenue loss would they have.

Director Koch answered that it they could probably come up with an estimate on that, but they would not have real data, as she did not know how much they discern between the ages when counting passengers. She brought up that children could use their school IDs as proof.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs inquired about the administrative level of tracking based on how they track ridership and all the places people can purchase fares. She asked if they get any data from this about what people are purchasing or if there is a way to chunk out our ridership.

Director Koch responded that there is a lot more quantifiable data about token transit because there is a different fare for adults versus a child so they have a partial view in term of data, but we would have to make some estimates and assumptions.

Ms. Hall commented that when she has purchased passes, she did have to specify youth or adult and it states that on the receipt, , but she did not know about the accessibility aspect.

Mr. Smith said maybe this no fare for youth is something he can work with Director Koch on and bring it back.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs expressed that she supported him talking with staff more on it and getting it on a future agenda to discuss.

Mr. Kelly was also in support of that.

Ms. Hall voiced that she would be interested in learning a little bit more, as currently under the McKinney-Vento Act, students experiencing homelessness are already eligible for themselves and one family member to have monthly bus passes. She wondered if there would be an easy way to tie it to students that qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Director Koch expressed they are in a good place in terms of staffing for drivers and finally staffed on mechanics. She stated that in terms of bottlenecks, if someone wanted to expand services or not, it is not limited by drivers or mechanics, but by buses that are broken down. She said the next memo talks about the potential for expansion in route service in different areas.

Mr. Kelly was curious about the potential to expand coverage. He said he was thinking about the potential that public transit has to have an impact on housing in Juneau and what it would take to have more frequency downtown or expand into other areas of town where they do not have a lot of coverage that could be potential for housing.

Director Koch responded that those are good questions because they have finite resource and are always making tradeoffs. She mentioned that when contracting routes, because they are low on labor or expanding routes, they are doing that in mind with actual ridership and they have information on ridership. She added that the bus drivers are a good resource in saying where are people are getting on and at what particular routes. She shared that when they contemplated changes to the system a few years ago, they worked with Rain Coast

Data to do a survey for riders and asked them to make tradeoff decisions, and there was a resounding response from the riders that having more and consistent core routes is what was important to them, so they are always thinking about that when making decisions.

Mr. Carpenter voiced that in transit planning, there is always tension between geographic coverage and ridership and how to allocate the finite resources. He stated if they did expand services into areas, they could get some ideas based on population density, but it is challenging to predict what sort of ridership they might achieve.

4. Capital Transit Route Status and Future Plans

Chair Hughes-Skandijs voiced they would hold this until the next agenda due to the time, as well as the staffing vacancy update and bus holiday policy discussion.

G. PWFC 2025 ASSEMBLY GOALS

1. PWFC Milestones

H. CONTRACTS DIVISION ACTIVITY REPORT

1. May 21, 2025 to July 7, 2025

I. NEXT MEETING DATE

1. August 4, 2025 at 12:10PM

J. ADJOURNMENT

The July 14, 2025 Public Works & Facilities Committee Meeting was adjourned at 1:12 p.m.