



ASSEMBLY PUBLIC WORKS & FACILITIES COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 4, 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 Hughes-Skandijs; Ms. Hall, Mr. Kelly

Members Present Online: Mr. Smith

CBJ Staff Present: EPW Director Denise Koch, City Clerk Breckan Hendricks, Chief Engineer John Bohan, Transit Lead Operator Matthew Carpenter.

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Agenda was approved

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. July 14, 2025 meeting Minutes - Approved with no changes.

F. AGENDA TOPICS

1. CIP Fund Transfers and Closeouts - Action Requested

Director Koch explained that they do this when they finish projects, have money left over, and have emerging needs that they sometimes did not anticipate, and come to the Committee to say they would like to closeout certain projects or remove extra funds from certain projects to other areas where needed. She asked if there were any questions on the projects listed of what they closed out, what they believe they have additional funds leftover for, or the three projects they have proposed.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs commented that this was great and made sense. She inquired about the Calhoun Pedestrian Bridge Replacement and how DOT cycles their bridge assessments and if it happened frequently after doing CIPs.

Mr. Bohan responded that DOT inspects all bridges annually in Juneau, and Calhoun has shown to be failing and contain larger pieces of the puzzle that would trigger a rebuild if they were to replace the components. He added that they keep up with all city bridges in a similar fashion, and he talked about some of those. He noted that they also have a Bridge Improvement CIP that takes care a lot of smaller work.

Mr. Kelly moved that the Public Works & Facilities Committee forward to the Full Assembly for approval the transfers noted in the table on Page 11 of the packet. He asked for unanimous consent.

The motion passed.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs noted the table was in the packet and the reason they did not name the individual projects was because there are 10 to 12 of them.

2. Appropriation of ADNR Recreational Trails Program Grant for the ORV (35 Mile) Park Trails – Action Requested

Director Koch voiced that they received a grant for work that was prioritized by the Assembly in the past for particular projects and the grant is almost \$300,000 and from State DNR. She said it requires a match, but they have that match available in the CIP for this offroad vehicle park. She expressed there was a lot of volunteer labor on this project, and it has been moving along quickly, which has enabled us to get more work done for the taxpayer dollars spent, and this grant money would offset local funding. She encouraged the Committee to approve and request the appropriation to the Full Assembly.

Ms. Hall moved that Public Works & Facilities Committee to appropriate \$299,970 to be forwarded to the Full Assembly for approval. She asked for unanimous consent.

The motion passed.

3. Capital Transit Operations Update - Information Only

Director Koch stated that for the first memo on transit, she stripped out the topics they already covered last time and left some of the items they still needed to discuss, which includes staffing and vacancy updates. She said they were limited by a shortage of drivers for a really long time, but they are fully staffed after almost three years. She shared that they still have backlog of maintenance, but they are moving in the right direction. She expressed that the electric buses are generally working well, but they still sometimes have buses that do not charge overnight even when plugged in, and it is not the same bus all the time. She said Gillig, the manufacturer,

mentioned that may be a software issue, and they are there today to start troubleshooting.

Director Koch moved on to the bus holiday discussion, where she mentioned that they added services on Memorial Day and Labor Day using marine passenger fees, as well as the marine passenger fees they used to provide enhanced Route 8 service to alleviate some of the overcrowding at the Downtown Transit Center largely from cruise ship tourists. She noted that their holidays with no bus services will be New Years Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. She voiced that providing service on the Fourth of July would be challenging due to all the traffic control that happens in Douglas and Downtown to accommodate the parades, and the cost of operating on a holiday is approximately \$27,000.

Director Koch talked about the suggestion of expanding free ridership, and she listed the groups that already receive free ridership, which is anyone who rides paratransit, VIP service, CBJ and Barlett employees coming to and from work, UAS students, seniors with sales tax exemption cards, children under 5, and clients of those social service agencies. She expressed that it is important to keep in mind when thinking about expanding free ridership to other populations. In regards to the discussion about allowing people 18 and under to ride for free, they believe that would result in a revenue loss of approximately \$73,000 in revenue. She said there was also discussion about making transit free on municipal and state/federal election days, and they think that would result in less than \$2,000 in fare lost per date. She noted that any of these expansions in free ridership would not be challenging operationally, but from the perspective of lost revenue. She preferred to have a replacement in revenue.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs expressed that when they are talking about losing revenue, that is a policy decision, and restriction within that section itself is not the only option, especially if the Assembly made the policy decision to subsidize it.

Ms. Hall voiced that in regard to the discussion of if they add one, what do they take away, she believed seniors could be one to consider, as most seniors that would be low income riding regularly would probably be able to get a VIP pass, and if they considered adding their own kids, maybe the UAS students could come off. She asked of Director Koch to expand on the clients of social service agencies already receiving free ridership.

Director Koch stated that UAS students began to get free transit about a year and a half ago, which was part of a broader agreement between CBJ and the University that involved land swaps and other things. She explained that recipients of the tokens and bus passes were getting them from the social service agencies, but the social services agencies are paying CBJ for them.

Ms. Hall shared that she reached out to one of their nonprofits that routinely give out bus passes and tokens, and they said they had not had a chance to buy tokens yet, so they are having to turn everybody away asking for them. They also said they mostly see tourists paying with the app and a few people taking the bus to work, and that might be contributing to the homeless congregating over on Teal Street around The Glory Hall. She expressed that if the social service agencies understood not only licensed clinicians can help disabled people in regard to the VIP pass, that might be helpful for the clientele they serve.

Mr. Smith asked if they do free ridership, would that come back as a resolution?

Director Koch answered that they could either do a resolution or refer the topic out to the Committee of the Whole. She added if the Assembly moved that resolution, there would probably be other Assembly members being a part of that conversation.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs voiced that the question is what legislative tool would be.

Director Koch felt that a resolution sounded right.

Mr. Smith expressed that he felt good about the municipal and state election exemption. He stated that he got information back from Deputy Municipal Clerk Hirsh and was surprised to see how many people vote on election day, almost 4,000, and that made him more open to exempt fares on that day and state election days. He was not 100% on the student ID one yet, as it is a decent chunk of money, but also saw where removing cost for younger people would be good.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs reminded everyone where they are in the process, which is that a motion has already been made and passed in a prior meeting to bring back legislation that would exempt on just the election. She suggested either forwarding the resolution to the Committee of the Whole or to the Full Assembly. She felt very supportive of the election and preferred to move forward with that piece, but she was not totally sold on the youth piece yet. She voiced that in the past, she floated the idea of making fare free for everyone like they had in the pandemic, where they saw the potential benefits of it and how it affected ridership.

Mr. Smith was good with where they are now, and was trying to figure out if he wanted to look at free ridership for other groups.

Mr. Kelly supported either discounted or free fares for our youth, as riding the bus would be a good habit for people to get used to. He stated the more ridership they have on their bus, the easier it is to find housing and make Juneau more affordable. He was also looking at ridership on holidays and noticed it was not a popular idea with the drivers, and he wants to do what they can to keep their drivers. However, as

someone who grew up working in the service industry, sometimes people have jobs to get to on holidays, so he suggested having a reduced schedule on holidays.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs was supportive of that, but they have to make sure they can work that through with the drivers. She noted some people do work on holidays, and they have previously talked about how ridership to work is a main factor of our ridership. She said if they truly have people who depend on Capital Transit and they want it to be a service that is reliable to them, she was not sure that their message should be that if they can't get to where they need to be Christmas or Thanksgiving then tough luck.

Ms. Hall shared they currently offer overtime on holidays for CBJ employees, and noted that people who work in healthcare typically are working every holiday and they typically let people with kids get time off for things like Christmas. She knew it may be a shock at first to roll this out, but with the opportunity for drivers to earn overtime and understanding that may be the only form of transportation, she was in favor of expanding the holidays they do operate. She asked if staff has already voiced opposition to that or they was a sense that it might not be popular and difficult to get people to serve those routes on those days.

Matthew Carpenter, Capital Transit Lead Operator, voiced that he did not think they had talked directly to all of the drivers about holiday service, but they have discussed potentially running Saturday level service with the Route 8 Express, meaning they would not run some of the earlier morning commuter routes. He confirmed there is overtime for drivers on that day, and some drivers may prefer to work on those days, but that would be a conversation they would have to have with the drivers.

Mr. Smith understood there are people that need to get to work, as there are businesses open on those days. He asked if they decide to do Saturday service, would they ask for volunteers, and if there are no volunteers, what would they do.

Mr. Carpenter responded that there are different ways to approach that, which is adding it their shift bid process that they do twice a year or have a volunteer list.

Mr. Smith said he pulled up People Mover in Anchorage, and they have a lot of holidays where they are closed, but he was not sure if that meant buses did not run or just the offices were not open. He commented that it is a balance, because they are getting better on staffing for the Capital Transit and they do not have an easy job. He heard what the Committee was saying on this, but wanted to make sure they keep their drivers and not lose more staff and have to cancel routes altogether.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs stated that it was helpful to know that Capital Transit was already operating on all these other days, and it would only be holiday at this point

that they are talking about. She said they all desire to have full staff and happy drivers and mechanics, so they will not rush into anything.

Mr. Kelly moved that the Public Works & Facilities Committee direct staff to bring back to the Committee a memo demonstrating what it might look like with the reduced schedule for holidays. He asked for unanimous consent.

The motion passed.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs asked why they did not have full-time listings for their drivers.

Mr. Carpenter answered that currently all of the drivers typically start as part-time drivers and then as full-time positions become available, they move into those, which is historically how it has worked. He added that typically the part-time positions are the ones unfilled when they have openings.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs inquired if there was a good success rate if someone starts as part-time and move into a full-time position as they become available.

Mr. Carpenter responded that if a full-time driver leaves, part-time drivers are allowed to apply, and they typically do not have a hard time getting people to apply for those.

4. Capital Transit Route Status and Future Plans - Information Only

Ms. Hall asked what route covers the Teal Street area.

Director Koch responded 6, and added that is their airport route.

Ms. Hall inquired if that is the route that used to go behind the Nugget Mall.

Director Koch answered yes. She added that before they suspended that route, there was a lot of desire for them to run that route, but almost nobody actually rode it.

Ms. Hall wondered if that was because they did not have access to tokens. She said the whole rerouting of that was to go down past the shelter and get more opportunity to move people around that did not have transportation.

Director Koch did not believe the case was that clients did not have money or tokens, as there was a lot of interest by members of the community because they thought there would be a high percentage of ridership, but that is not what happened.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs said she did not see a reference to a North Douglas route.

Director Koch confirmed that was correct. She stated they used to have a route run to North Douglas, but it was pretty limited service, with only four or five riders per day. She added how they allocate limited resources with bus riders was important in their decision making, and they did use Rain Coast data to do a survey on the bus, where Transit passengers overwhelmingly said they prefer core services over commuter routes.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs voiced that they may want to look at this a little bit more in the future and said she could follow up with staff offline about what they are trying to accomplish with Capital Transit. She added that it is not surprising that if they have hundreds of people on the 1, 3, and 4, and asked them if they want great service on the 1, 3, and 4 routes versus commuter service where they do not live, of course they are going to answer they want great service for their routes, and they are not going to get the people on North Douglas who are not on that bus, because service was cut to it a long time ago. She said they may have to decide if it is equitable, fair, or makes sense to call people's service in different parts of town, who pay their taxes and fund this service, boutique just because they don't have as many riders. She said from where she is sitting that answer is no.

Mr. Smith shared his general thought questioning how much the Assembly and their members should be getting into routes. He said he was not informed enough to say which routes to do.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs commented that they always have to be careful going into the weeds, but also have to be mindful that they are citizen representatives who are supposed to give voice to what they hear from their constituents.

Mr. Kelly stated he maybe would have certain ideas on how they could make North Douglas work, but did not want to get in the weeds; however, he also agreed that everyone here is a taxpayer and paying for this service, and we owe it to them to at least look into if it is practical to provide this service. He believed that would be a reasonable ask of this community for staff.

Chair Hughes-Skandijs added that when she speaks about looking at this holistically, she agreed that it is never our place to try to dictate routes, but it is about making sure that they are making their citizens happy.

G. PWFC 2025 ASSEMBLY GOALS

1. PWFC Milestones

Director Koch shared that the PEL has been finalized for the Juneau-Douglas North Crossing, which is a big milestone, and DOT is working up an RFP to hire a contractor to help with the NEPA process, and CBJ will be a part of that Procurement Evaluation Committee. She noted moving into the NEPA stage is where they are going to get some depth on the environmental data that people were searching for in the PEL.

H. CONTRACTS DIVISION ACTIVITY REPORT

1. July 25, 2025

I. NEXT MEETING DATE

1. September 8, 2025, at 12:10PM

J. ADJOURNMENT

The August 4, 2025 Public Works & Facilities Committee Meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.