

KITSAP TRANSIT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES OF November 19, 2024

Board of Commissioners Present:

Driskell, Robert, Teamsters Local No. 589, *non-voting member*

Erickson, Becky, Mayor, City of Poulsbo

Garrido, Charlotte, Kitsap County Commissioner - *Absent*

Mockler, Anna, Councilmember, City of Bremerton

Putansuu, Robert, Mayor, City of Port Orchard – **Vice Chair**

Rolfes, Christine, Kitsap County Commissioner

Moriwaki, Clarence, Councilmember, City of Bainbridge Island

Stern, Ed, Councilmember, City of Poulsbo

Walters, Katie, Kitsap County Commissioner - *Virtual*

Wheeler, Greg, Mayor, City of Bremerton, **Chair**

Staff Present:

Sanjay Bhatt, Marketing & Public Information Director; Jackie Bidon, Clerk of the Board, Public Records Officer; Michael Bozarth, Operations Director; John Clauson, Executive Director; Bill Rich, Maintenance Manager; Steffani Lillie, Service and Capital Development Director; Charlotte Sampson, Executive Assistant/Deputy Clerk of the Board; Paul Shinnars, Finance Director

Also Present: David Weibel, Legal Counsel; Dylan Doty, KT Lobbyist

Select the video Zoom address below or copy and paste into your browser address field to hear the Kitsap Transit Board of Commissioners discussion of a specific topic, or the complete meeting. Note the video time stamp beside the topic.

https://kitsaptransit.zoom.us/rec/share/g9UR6nPRsCAu7f62PYslzM0RwgbkGn_TAH2PtIXbilNzizDY50qfy2u3KRLhmsj.jidO7RDzBdWVjhoN?startTime=1732032848000 Passcode: 0cNK#F=*

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Wheeler called the meeting of the Kitsap Transit Board of Commissioners to order at 8:31 AM.

2. AGENDA REVIEW

Upon review by the Board, the agenda remained unchanged.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS

0:01:50, Mayor Wheeler stated that this is the last mid-month meeting of the year, Board members had agreed on no second meeting in December.

4. FULL DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS

- a. Resolution No. 24-71, Approval Free Fares for Sunday Service Extension

0:02:28, Executive Director Clauson shared that the Board had authorized Kitsap Transit to provide free transit on Sundays to help passengers get familiar with and use the service. He stated that they extended the free service through the end of 2024 with the expectation Sunday service would start in Port Orchard, and it has. Kitsap Transit is planning to implement Sunday service on Bainbridge Island and would like the Board's approval to continue free Sunday service through 2025.

Discussion:

0:04:13, Board discussion included what the exact date Sunday service would start on Bainbridge Island and the proposed route.

0:04:27, Executive Director Clauson stated there is not an exact start date for the service. He added that Kitsap Transit is timing the start date around the bid cycles, but anticipates spring of 2025.

0:05:03, Executive Director Clauson stated that the route will include the BI Ride and the spine services connecting to the ferries.

0:05:27, **Councilmember Moriwaki moved and Commissioner Rolfes seconded the motion to adopt Resolution No. 24-71, authorizing staff to offer free fares for Sunday services county-wide from January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025.**

Motion passed unanimously.

- b. Presentation –
 - Update for 2025 Budget

0:06:12, Executive Director Clauson shared that the initiative on the ballot to rescind the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) failed and presented a revised budget to reflect the outcome of the recent election. He explained that the revised budget includes some of the previously paused Capital items, additional staffing positions for Maintenance, IT and a Courier position. Staff is asking to continue with the reserves but not to use them at this point. He stated that the Transit Budget has the potential for a deficit by 2030, where they may fall below the minimum reserves established by policy. He added that staff believes there is time to make sure that doesn't happen.

0:09:56, Paul Shinnars, Finance Director, briefed the Board on the revised 2025 Budget that included the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) funding. He outlined high-level changes, including the addition of \$21 million cumulatively in the Transit budget, which increased the local fund for the Capital program to just under \$40 million. The total local funding commitment is \$60.9 million, with a total budget of approximately \$148 million. He shared that some projects have been suspended until funding becomes more certain.

Discussion:

0:15:40, Board discussion included questions about prioritized projects, electric bus purchases, offsetting the cost of diesel, training facility and where training is taking place now, carbon footprint tracking, eliminating shuttle service from Gateway Park and Ride to Charleston Base, adding more shelters at bus stops, 2026 World Cup, waiving fares for World Cup, and Visa card use for fares.

0:26:36, Executive Director Clauson shared that, from the staff perspective on the issue of eliminating the shuttle for employees, it would increase the challenges they are going to face. He stated that they had to figure out a way to mitigate this the best way possible; they couldn't ask the employees to park off site, then tell them to walk or take a bus. The challenge is parking for employees and buses; with charging infrastructure construction to support the battery buses, it's going to impact the bus yard as well. The shuttle service is the best possible solution.

0:28:38, Executive Director Clauson addressed the lack of shelters at the bus stops, stating that it has become more complicated with the permit process and FTA requiring environmental assessments when choosing shelter locations. Another issue that this budget is facing is that Kitsap Transit is required to perform an ADA assessment, identifying the challenges in the area for sidewalks, intersections, bus stops, and shelters.

0:31:01, Mr. Shinnars spoke to the ORCA system and the use of Visa cards for fares and the World Cup. ORCA is talking about open systems, now, and has been at phase two of that implementation as well as the free fare.

c. Report from Kitsap Transit Lobbyist

0:33:21, Kitsap Transit Lobbyist Dylan Doty shared a recap of the November 2024 election results and implications for the state's political landscape. Mr. Doty spoke to increased discussions on road usage charge and retail delivery fee. He mentioned the potential for significant turnover in the Senate Ways and Means Committee and the possibility for a significant budget shortfall. He outlined the legislative agenda, focusing on preserving and maintaining current investments, supporting electric ferry technology and ensuring adequate service. Mr. Doty mentioned the potential for bonding and the need for a generic legislative agenda due to the uncertain budget situation.

0:42:29, Mr. Doty gave a recap of the previous year sharing that they passed transit-sponsored legislation to make a prospective exemption on Worker/Driver operators' eligibility for PERS. They succeeded in getting \$4 million dollars for the hydrofoil from the Climate Commitment Act (CCA), an additional \$5 million to backfill the State ferry route, an additional \$1.4 million for inductive charging, received a number of investments from Representative Nance and others, and studies with Western Washington and the economic impact study of State ferries. He shared that in the coming year, with the budget background and all the new faces, they are likely looking at a generic legislation agenda. Coming in the new year is the biannual request for toll credit authorization in the transportation budget in the amount of \$5 million.

0:44:25, Mr. Doty spoke to the question he receives from legislators each year: Why is this a proviso and not “baked” into RCW? He shared that the general reason for that is that it is easier to change the number in a proviso than it is in an RCW. A benefit of a proviso is flexibility, but there is a risk of it not getting in.

d. Discussion – 2025 Kitsap Transit Legislative Agenda

0:45:02, Mr. Doty stated that the WSTA Legislative Priorities List is somewhat generic, but it maintains flexibility for transit. It allows agencies to preserve, maintain and protect, maintaining everything that has been allocated, held in escrow and funded with mobility grants.

0:48:15, Councilmember Mockler asked how far in advance of the session does the legislative agenda need to be submitted?

0:48:21, Mr. Doty replied that they have the agenda finalized as early as November; for Kitsap Transit it could be December or January if there is no piece of legislature being sought.

0:49:08, Mayor Erickson stated that she would like to “bake in” the toll credit and somehow put a cost inflator in the legislation. She asked how the retail delivery fee revenue will be allocated.

0:50:25, Mr. Doty agreed with Mayor Erickson on the toll credit discussion. He stated that the allocation of the retail delivery fee is challenging and prompted a bigger discussion on weight fees. No decision has been confirmed.

0:51:27, Councilmember Stern asked if there is an opportunity to get better assistance for the fast ferries from the State?

0:51:47, Executive Director Clauson shared that Kitsap Transit approached this from a cost control position. Kitsap Transit made sure they weren’t losing money with the supplemental service to help WSF. They also did not approach it as a money-making opportunity.

0:53:49, Commissioner Rolfes stated that she wants to push back on the idea of putting the toll credits in statute. It needs one vote to get it on the transportation budget.

0:55:12, Commissioner Rolfes shared that she had not heard about the bond vote. She recommends that they have some projects ready in case they are going to do any new projects in the budget.

0:56:30, Commissioner Rolfes stated that if environmental studies are needed for ferries, they would want to ask for a proviso. Since CCA has funding, there may be some available for environmental studies.

1:00:41, Mr. Doty will develop a draft legislative agenda with flexibility, bringing it to the Board at the December meeting for review.

1:05:32, Commissioner Rolfes asked if they could ask for a proviso in the transportation budget for EV Charging stations at park and rides and at the Kitsap Transit Harborside building. If the funds are earmarked, there will be no need to go out for competitive grants.

1:07:26, Mr. Doty shared that he would explore funding opportunities via the CCA funding dollars.

e. Discussion – Representation for Regional Fare Forum

1:10:12, Executive Director Clauson discussed the upcoming Regional Fare Forum, emphasizing the need for representation and the potential for multiple representatives.

1:12:36, The Board agreed that Mayor Putaansuu will represent Kitsap Transit and Commissioner Rolfes will serve as the alternate representative at the Regional Fare Forum. Mayor Erickson asked to be copied for the PSRC.

f. Discussion – Acquisition of Gillig Fuel Cell Buses

1:13:30, Executive Director Clauson stated that Gillig is moving forward with the development of a hydrogen fuel cell vehicle. Gillig is looking for commitments for a hydrogen fuel cell bus in 2026 and asked Kitsap Transit to be one of the first agencies to commit. Clauson highlighted the need for a hydrogen source and the potential benefits of fuel cell technology. He encouraged the Board to consider these options and promised to share more information as it becomes available.

g. Discussion – 2025 Goals

1:18:59, Executive Director Clauson shared a summary of goals for the coming year. He emphasized the importance of increasing ridership, proposing a 5% - 10% increase in ridership and a goal of hiring 20 more operators to support the level of service provided. Other goals include begin construction on the park and ride at Ruby Creek Park and start construction of the electric ferry. He expressed concern about federally funded projects and the need to commit these funds as soon as possible. Executive Director Clauson discussed the challenges with the automatic passenger counting system and the implementation of a new payroll software system, with the goal to have both systems operating and certified.

1:22:27, Board discussion included increasing ridership, the need to determine the typical density of downtown Bremerton and other district centers to establish a more appropriate distance for public transit stops, APC/AVL/AVA software operating with data presented to the Board, develop methodology to adjust walking distance based on density, employing a data analyst, and field trips to the Seattle POF terminal and to a haul-out for vessels.

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ITEMS

1:35:55, Executive Director Clauson discussed the time change for the first Board meeting of the month and if the Board would like to apply the time change to the second meeting of the month. The Board decided that the second Board meeting will remain the same, beginning at 8:30 AM.

1:36:30, Executive Director Clauson announced that Mr. Robert Driskell has agreed to be the non-voting Board member for the next two years, representing the Teamsters Union.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

1:37:05, Stephanie Harris-Uyidi of Kingston asked if there has been any discussion regarding transportation and the influx of visitors to the region during the 2026 World Cup.

1:37:55, Mayor Wheeler responded that the Chambers of Commerce have had a preliminary meeting, and this will be a priority in the coming year. Stephanie was encouraged to contact Commissioner Walters for further updates.

7. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:

1:41:09, Mayor Putaansuu announced that they have secured the funds to replace a culvert connecting the Ruby Creek Park and Ride to the multimodal improvements along the corridor.

8. ADJOURN: At 10:12 AM, Mayor Wheeler adjourned the regular meeting.

ADOPTED by the Board of Commissioners of Kitsap Transit at a regular meeting thereof, held on the 7th day of October, 2025.

Attest:

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Jackie Bidon
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Jackie Bidon, Clerk of the Board

Signed by:
Rob Putaansuu
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Rob Putaansuu, Chairperson