

## Monthly Board Meeting – June, 2022

Thursday, June 16, 2022 – 5:30 PM

Location: Virtual

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### Minutes

#### In Attendance

#### Voting Members:

Randy Atkin, Mike Christensen, John Pearson, Chris Stout, Austin Whitehead

#### Non-Voting Members:

Curtis Haring

Meeting Called to Order at 5:35 PM

#### Agenda Items Discussed

#### *Introduction of new board members*

The meeting began with formal introductions of current and potential board members to UTRU:

- Chris Stout – Founding member of UTRU and an accountant by trade. Chris lives in the Millcreek area and noted that he used to frequently use the bus to access shops, dining, and entertainment due to high frequency, but now such travel has been restricted due to schedule changes. Chris is a strong advocate for increased service frequency so that people can have dependable and reliable transit.
- John Pearson – Went to school on the east coast, living in Boston and New York, where he became very familiar with what good transit can look like. He since moved to Utah, living in the Avenues, and takes transit to the University of Utah where he is a practicing anesthesiologist. John's interest lies in addressing the equity and health issues related to good and poor transit in communities.
- Randy Atkin – As a commercial real estate agent for nearly 40 years, Randy has worked with UTA on various projects over the years to help coordinate transit and transportation planning as new developments are being created. Randy wants to ensure that a system that exists that helps people effectively access transit in order to access jobs and the community.
- Austin Whitehead – Is currently setting down roots in Salt Lake City, living in the Central City neighborhood. Having worked in Park City, he understands how difficult transit can be in Utah's urban core. Austin would like to make sure that we have a transit system that allows people to go car-light or, ideally, car-free.

- Mike Christensen – Also a founding member of UTRU, Mike’s background is in urban planning where his senior project was on the feasibility of converting existing but unused Amtrack rail to establish a cohesive statewide rail network. From this, Mike founded the Utah Rail Passengers Association, which advocates for the expansion of heavy rail across the state, with a particular emphasis on making sure that rural Utah has access to transit.

Randy asked what the formal process was to become a board member, and Chris explained that, in the event of a vacancy, existing members can appoint interested parties to the board until the next nominating meeting, which takes place every October.

Chris, being the only active board member, then asked that all people in the meeting who were interested in being on the UTRU board to raise their hand. Randy, Mike, John, and Austin all raised their hand and Chris appointed them to the board. Their terms will be in effect until the annual nominating convention in October.

#### *Executive Director activities report*

Curtis provided a report of his activities since he started with UTRU in late February 2022. Items he highlighted were:

- With the help of Stephanie Gallegos, rebuilt the UTRU website so that it is now a useable resource for the organization.
- Reactivation of the UTRU Twitter account, where he tries to have 2 tweets a day scheduled to maintain engagement.
- Published the Q2 newsletter and is currently working on the Q3 newsletter.
- Engaged in board recruitment.
- Began membership recruitment.
- Held first membership meeting.
- Started building relationships by meeting with like-minded organizations. And has held meetings with:
  - Sweet Streets
  - Utah Rail Passengers Association
  - UTA
- Currently reaching out to more like-minded organizations:
  - Ogden, Salt Lake, and Provo Bike Collectives
  - UCAIR
  - HEAL Utah
- Increased the amount of earned media for UTRU
  - Will be a guest on the Red Line Podcast on 6/22
  - Added a blog section to the UTRU website to allow for rapid responses and publication of opinion pieces and information.
  - Twitter engagement and followers has increased dramatically.

- Created a YouTube channel and a TicTok account exists, though there are issues that are still being resolved as far as account access
- Has created basic administrative documents such as letterhead, business cards, advertising fliers, etc.
- In all, since February, Curtis has put in just under 40 hours of work for UTRU.

During the “Earned Media” portion of the report, Randy asked about the findings of UTA’s Free Fare February Report and, more specifically, the response lawmakers had to the report, who formally received the report the day prior during the Transportation Interim Committee meeting on Capitol Hill.

Curtis noted that lawmakers were tepid towards the idea of continuing FFF, preferring, instead to look into ways that UTA could expand service.

Randy asked if there was data available comparing ridership from February 2022 to February 2021. Curtis noted that such a comparison, though possible, is not a great data point due to the fact that COVID was very much a factor in ridership numbers. Chris added February 2020, a month before lockdown, also isn’t a good comparison because service frequency was constricted in April 2020 and has not been restored to pre-pandemic levels.

Mike added that pre-pandemic, fare box recovery was approximately 15% of total revenue while it now sits closer to 10%. He added that UTA is starting to look into replacing its current fare box system as it is starting to age, so box removal might be an increased possibility compared to other times.

Randy then asked how UTA was able to fund FFF and how much it cost for the month. Curtis informed the group that UTA reports that it cost \$2.1 million to fund the program for the month with funds coming from governments, philanthropic organizations, and companies that chose to contribute to FFF that have a standing relationship with UTA to give away passes to their employees.

#### *Call for newsletter articles*

Curtis asked board members to start thinking about newsletter articles they would be willing to write<sup>i</sup>. He is looking for roughly 250 words on a topic of their choice and asked that the articles be a little “evergreen” so that, if they don’t make it to the upcoming newsletter, they can still be used down the road.

Curtis noted that he would like to have the newsletter completed and distributed by the end of the month, prior to 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend. He will be reaching out to board members<sup>ii</sup> to work with them on the project.

#### *Discussion: Fundraising suggestions*

Curtis opened up discussion about possible fundraising sources. John started by asking what our approximate budget is. Curtis noted that he is the biggest part of the budget at \$300 to \$400 a month. From there, things like advertising (flyers, business cards, etc.) and general “keeping the lights on” are expected to amount to an additional \$100 to \$200 a month at current activity levels, though this will grow as the organization grows.

Curtis reminded the group that we do ask board members to commit to contributing \$50 a month either through direct financial contributions themselves or by engaging in fundraising activities that helped reach this mark. Chris added that in the past board members were asked to donate \$1 for every \$1,000 they earn a year, with exceptions where this might pose a financial hardship.

In addition, Chris noted that we also had tiered membership levels where anyone can be a “member” of UTRU, but to be a voting member, they have to contribute \$5 annually. He noted that UTRU is a 501(c)(3), so donations are tax-deductible.

John suggested that we create tiered sponsor levels to help attract donors and provide incentives such as website logo placement. He also wondered if we could create swag and asked if UTA’s logo was trademarked. Curtis did a quick check and confirmed it was, though there might be opportunities to use things like route maps to create legal swag imagery. Curtis will investigate using UTA adjacent items legally<sup>iii</sup>.

Austin suggested selling ad space within our newsletter.

Mike suggested contacting URSTA (Utah Urban Rural Specialized Transit Association). He also noted that, as part of his non-profit work, he has found that donors tend to not want to fund administrative activities, preferring to fund projects instead.

Randy suggested that we reach out to companies that already pay for UTA passes for funding, since they have shown an interest in having their employees take transit, and that they could be open to the idea of having employees have a unified voice when it comes to representing their interests.

#### *Discussion: Organizations to Contact*

Curtis started a general discussion asking board members for the names of like-minded organizations to reach out to grow both membership and coalition build. He also noted that, now that everyone on the call is a board member, they have official titles and can speak on behalf of UTRU. John asked that Curtis create a filer he can use to distribute to groups. Curtis noted that he already has a filer and that he will send it to John<sup>iv</sup>.

Several organizations were proposed by the group:

- Rider meetups at stops and create “transit events”
- City economic development groups

- Alternative papers such as SLUG and City Weekly
- Local distilleries and breweries
- Coffee Shops
- Greenbike
- UCAIR
- ICH
- Salt Lake Climbers Alliance and other climate focused groups.
- Silicon Slopes
- KRCL RadioActive
- Spanish Newspaper
- NextDoor Ap.
- U of U and other college/university transportation groups
- Community/Local neighborhood events

*Open forum*

No additional items were discussed during the open forum.

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Meeting Adjourned at 6:30 PM

The next meeting will be Thursday, July 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 PM

Location: TBD

Action Items:

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<sup>i</sup> ALL – Write and submit article for the Newsletter in time for newsletter publication prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday.

<sup>ii</sup> CURTIS – Follow up with board members and assist with article creation.

<sup>iii</sup> CURTIS – Investigate what UTRU can legally use for UTA adjacent items.

<sup>iv</sup> CURTIS – Send flier to board so that they can distribute to organizations.