

**MEMORANDUM
CITY OF LANCASTER, CA**

TO: City Council Members

FROM: Vice Mayor Marvin Crist
Council Member Sandra Johnson

DATE: April 22, 2014

SUBJECT: **Report on the Activities of the Board of Directors for the Antelope Valley Transit Authority**

Recommendation:

Receive a report of the proceedings and issues discussed at the March 2014 regular Board of Directors meetings of the Antelope Valley Transit Authority (AVTA).

Background:

The Antelope Valley Transit Authority is a distinct government entity created under a joint powers authority agreement between the City of Lancaster, the City of Palmdale, and Los Angeles County that provides public transit services. Vice Mayor Marvin Crist serves as the Vice Chair and Council Member Sandra Johnson serves as a Director on the AVTA Board for the City of Lancaster.

The following significant events took place at the January Board meeting:

- **Attendance.** Director Steve Hofbauer representing Palmdale was absent. Lancaster Council Member Ron Smith attended the meeting as an alternate to Lancaster Council Member Sandra Johnson.
- **Special Report.**
- The Board received a legislative update which included the President's Proposed FY15 Budget, Highway Trust Fund proposals, "LoNo" Vehicle Deployment Program and TIGER grant. The board also received a brief description of meetings and legislative sessions that were attended by Chairman Hickling, Director Lackey, and Executive Director Austin while at the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. They met with AVTA's newly hired lobby firm, the FTA Deputy Chief Counsel, Dan Nifosi and 5312 R & D Program Administrator, Vincent Valdes as well as Congressman and Majority Whip, Kevin McCarthy.

The Board discussed AB 1720 which concerns bus axle weight. Staff assured the Board the bill would not pertain to the electric buses that the AVTA recently procured.

- The Board received information on schedule and service changes to the TRANSpporter effective April 7th, 2014. This is to maximize the use of the two buses and to accommodate the schedule changes being made by Metrolink.

- **Contracts.**

- The Board approved Change Order No. 2 in the amount of \$92,247 with Avail Technologies, Inc., State College, PA to improve functionality of the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) project. This brings the total contract to approximately \$2.4 million.

- **New Business – Transportation Services for Veterans**

- Vice Chairman Crist presented a report regarding efforts by the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, and the County of Los Angeles to assist the Antelope Valley's veterans. Together, they have been actively working with the faith-based and social service communities to more effectively address homelessness in the Antelope Valley. The Vice Chair noted the following:
 - One of the first steps was to establish, and fund, an emergency Winter Shelter program at the A.V. Fairgrounds, which has literally meant the difference between life and death to some of our homeless citizens.
 - To gain more resources for the A.V., they recently met with LASHA – it was a very contentious meeting, and we didn't always agree, especially regarding the subject of the A.V. being woefully underfunded compared to other areas of the County.
 - One thing we did agree on, however, is the need to address homelessness among our veterans; we estimate there could be as many as 2,800 homeless veterans in the A.V.
 - To our pleasant surprise, LASHA not only agreed with us on this goal, but will be working with us to access funding specifically targeted towards veteran services and to alleviate veteran homelessness.
 - We need to provide more resources to our faith-based and service communities – organizations like Mental Health America (MHA), under the leadership of Judy Cooperberg, who already provide services to 500 veterans and their families in the A.V. through a \$1.5 million grant under the Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. This is specifically to prevent veteran homelessness and help those veterans who are homeless.
 - The Federal Government has an admirable goal of ending veteran homelessness by 2016; that is not good enough for the A.V. We are working towards ending veteran homelessness in the A.V. before 2016.
 - Based on our meetings with LASHA, it became apparent that we have a transportation problem when it comes to our veterans being able to travel to the V.A. Offices in Westwood to access the benefits and services they have earned defending our freedoms. This is a situation we cannot tolerate and one that we must alleviate.

The Board discussed available local and federal grant assistance. The Board directed AVTA staff to meet with representatives from the Veteran's Administration (V.A.), Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, Mental Health of America, and other veterans groups to develop a plan to coordinate transportation to and from the Veteran's Hospital in Westwood for A.V. veterans.

The Board voted to direct the AVTA Executive Director to immediately plan and implement as soon as possible a free, at least weekly, AVTA transportation service for Antelope Valley Veterans to travel to the V.A. Offices in Westwood.

- **Executive Director's Report**

- The Executive Director announced the resignation of Customer Service Representative Candice Rudolph. The Board thanked Ms. Rudolph for her 10 years of service with AVTA and congratulated her on her acceptance into the California Highway Patrol Academy.

- **Closed Session**

Conference with Labor Negotiators
Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9
Authority Negotiator: Executive Director
Unrepresented Employees: All Classifications