

26 August 2020

Community Transit Board
7100 Hardeson Road
Everett, WA 98203

RE: Community Transit CEO Hiring Process

Dear Community Transit Board;

Joe Kunzler here and well aware you are hiring a new CEO so this is my public comment for the 3 September 2020 Board Agenda Packet on that process. I am asking you please commit to having the Community Transit (CT) Board interview for CEO at least two women and two people of color regardless of gender please. I understand others on their own letterhead will have their own thoughts also, but this is my only public communication on CT's CEO Replacement Effort to respect the process and allow us to please focus on policy not personalities.

I agree with the Democratic Party nominee for Vice President Kamala Harris that, "Racism is real in this country. Sexism is real in this country. ... Unless we speak that truth, we cannot confront that honestly." That's one reason why I am stepping forward to ask minority voices are guaranteed an interview.

Another is I have names to suggest upon request, including current Community Transit employees – plural – who have been helpful to me and I feel should be given an interview. I would rather keep those names discreet for multiple reasons; foremost being respecting the Board's responsibility to do *proper* vetting without a media circus. The sanctity of this process and ability to trust the outcome are both important to me.

On that note, last week I reached out to a British Columbia Chinese-Canadian political contact who has a bachelor's in engineering, a project management credential and a MBA - not to mention won key victories for her transit agency. The day after I reached out, she decided to run for another four years. I hope readers understand my desire to not publicly name her to prevent rumors that could hinder her election chances. I hope the fact I reached out to someone so credentialed and someone I consider a leader of leaders says only good things about Community Transit, the caliber of staff, and my confidence in Community Transit's future.

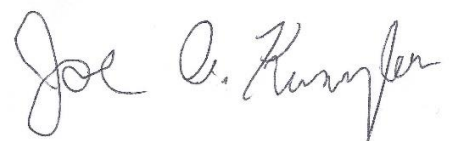
Repeatedly, Community Transit has been an innovator in Puget Sound public transportation. From Swift Bus Rapid Transit to cunning public comment rules to warning of Initiative 976 to reforming your Boardroom during the Covid19 medical-economic crisis; you have been a regional public transportation leader. This is Community Transit's next opportunity to lead our region.

Let's remember also that according to a January 2017 APTA Report, "Who Rides Public Transportation": 55% of public transit riders are women and, "Communities of color make up a majority of riders (60%)". I hope Community Transit has leaders who reflect ridership and take transit as I prefer leaders who take transit to represent the transit to the community.

One last thing: I decided to drop this letter shortly after Everett Transit updated the Everett City Council on a study about Everett Transit's future. I believe whomever you hire as CEO; that soul will have to address the Everett Transit fiscal crisis upon being sworn in for an extended time and expend substantial political capital + goodwill in the process. We learned today from Everett City Councilmembers that there is growing concern in the Everett community about a sales tax increase, and not a lot of outreach to defend Community Transit's brand other than some Joe opining to the Everett City Council. I also acutely note that Everett Transit's ultimate boss - Mayor Cassie Franklin - is a strong woman by any definition of the term "strong woman". *Who* represents Community Transit is going to be a factor in these negotiations that will impact the region's transit future.

Ultimately, I am asking for a CEO Replacement Effort that will interview for CEO at least two women and two people of color regardless of gender please. These shall be my only public comments on the matter to protect the process, but I urge the Community Transit Board to consider the current political climate. Finally, I have names to offer upon request of potential candidates.

Very respectfully;

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe A. Kunzler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joe A. Kunzler

Growlernoise@gmail.com

2 September 2020

Dear Community Transit;

Joe Kunzler here. A lot to write about and going to take a lot more than 400 words. Tomorrow’s public comment will be an oral summary of the below. I have decided to slide in a table of contents to make this easier to follow along and to create hyperlinks for those reading electronically to read more easily.

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CONCERNS ON BOARD COMMITTEE TRANSPARENCY

None of these comments are either personal or against staff. But as a firm reminder, the declaration of the Open Public Meetings Act:

[RCW 42.30.010, LEGISLATIVE DECLARATION.](#)

The legislature finds and declares that all public commissions, boards, councils, committees, subcommittees, departments, divisions, offices, and all other public agencies of this state and subdivisions thereof exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of this chapter that their actions be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly.

The people of this state do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created.

Two years ago, with an arm in a sling from a fall I had to remind you guys of this. At this point, I feel the above should be printed out on metal and hung in a few places like one in the Public Record's Officer's office, one in the CEO's office, and two in the Boardroom. This circa 1971 legislation clearly needs a renovation, and you can rest assured I'm working for that – among other projects. I mean back in 1971 the first e-mail was sent via... ARPANET. Yes, the beginnings of the internet we enjoy today. I'm sure no state legislator in 1971 could have foreseen Facebook or Zoom or any of the other internet tools we use today.

The decisions you make from here on are *political* decisions. You see, all you must do is just ask *politely* staff to please post the Zoom link on the agendas. You just direct staff to run the committee meetings like the SAO Audit Exit Conference was run on 1 September 2020 and I was able to post on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/Gc4IRvO3QFM>, also where these concerns were discussed. That meeting would be a good Zoom template for staff, just as we all use Word templates to keep consistent use of fonts & styles. You can – and should – take public comment at the end of the committee meeting after staff has presented. This way inputs to the Board are based on *data*, not emotion.

One last thing: I am not terribly wild about asking CT Public Records to hand me your committee notes every month when you should be posting them online anyway. OK, I admit – I actually read these agenda packets; maybe because I believe in reading about transit and transit being a good place to read.

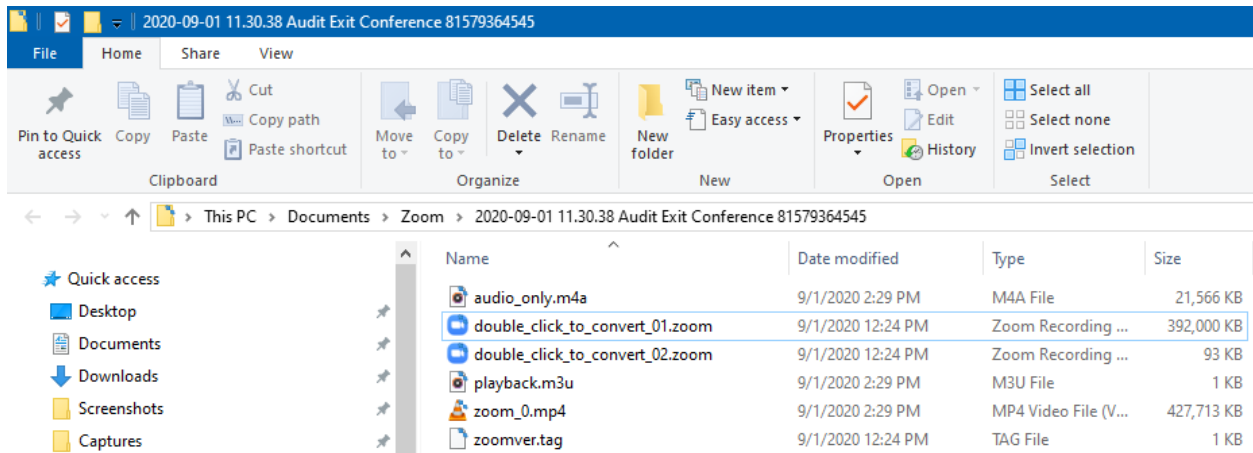
GETTING BOARD VIDEO ON THE WEB

Moving forward, I obtained [Appendix A](#) via Public Records Request #20-76. I am happy with the phases that were laid out there. But one thing did catch my eye – namely “the meeting live webcast option” and the “video recording posted to the web option”. You are already doing the former via Zoom for all practical purposes. I commend and greatly appreciate this.

Being able to see the raw data is important to me. Public transit is a public good but with the amount of taxation necessary to pay for public transit; public transit staffs need to have data-based public input and not just emotional inputs.

FROM ZOOM TO YOUTUBE

With that, I need to drop some technobabble into the record. To get the aforementioned SAO Exit Conference to YouTube, I just had Zoom convert the recording to a MP4 file. That option is done by double-clicking on the `double_click_to_convert_01.zoom` file in Windows Explorer and you get a `zoom_0.MP4` file as you see below:



OK, so you just tell one of your communications professionals to put that MP4 file on your YouTube channel [youtube.com/communitytransit](https://www.youtube.com/communitytransit). I would recommend disabling comments due to the fact anonymous people can post the most cowardly of comments, so I disable comments on most of my YouTubes while uploading.

All staff needs is the political direction to make this happen for *free*. All Boardmembers need is the political will to instruct staff to use the technology already being used to ensure the people remain, “*Informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created*”. Thank you.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING OF PUBLIC INPUT

Another decision that is clearly requiring a political prompt is you need to really sit down and craft with staff a social media doctrine (that you may have already). A social media doctrine that includes at a bare minimum requiring that public input opportunities to the Board are advertised at least a week in advance with one tweet per day leading up to the opportunity and several Facebook postings. Aren't you sick and tired of the only person commenting being... me? I am and I've noticed Community Transit Communications is *failing*, just epically

failing on advertising these opportunities to the public. It *appears* as if a *political* choice has been made by staff, the board or both to not do so. Frankly if there is a case for cuts to Community Transit staffing, I'd *start* with the oversized communications staff that *seemingly* cannot do a *simple task* like tweet out a public comment opportunity like a Board meeting. I worry this does not portend well for the Transit Development Plan hearing next month without your leadership.

MY BENCHMARK FOR GOOD OUTREACH: TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A good way of finding out where the public truly needs bus service is asking for public input on the Transit Development Plan. You need diverse voices. I agree with The Seattle Times Editorial Board when they said in an editorial today about the lack of public engagement. Let me quote sections of it to you:

With health, safety, elections and job security on people's minds, it's easy to overlook what's happening in local government.

Yet residents of King, Pierce and Snohomish counties should catch up on what's happening with Sound Transit.

They are paying dearly for one of the world's costliest transit projects. It's now facing [massive budget shortfalls](#) and deciding which long-promised features to delay and possibly cancel.

One opportunity to engage is during an [online public hearing at noon](#) Thursday, accessible via SoundTransit.org, when residents can comment on projects happening through 2025. Paul Roberts, an Everett City Council member and vice chair of Sound Transit's board, will hear testimony and convey it to the board.

This annual reporting and engagement process is required by the Legislature, which authorized the transit tax district. It requires the agency to annually disclose how projects over the next six years will be funded.

...

Unfortunately, this annual reporting isn't as rigorous as it could be. It has become a formality, a box the agency quietly checks every year, with little public engagement.

This is especially apparent this year, as the Transit Development Plan 2020-2025 — the subject of the hearing — doesn't reflect recent changes to the agency's work plan, finances and ridership.

...

The promised "spine" linking Everett, Seattle and Tacoma must be completed. The needs of outlying areas that paid heavily into the system with little investment in return must also be addressed.

But substantial revisions to Sound Transit's work plan, including the current mix of rail and buses, may be needed.

...

Uncertainty is a given, and everyone needs to show patience as people and organizations work through the current muddle.

But it's still disappointing that a state law requiring additional transparency and engagement turned out to be toothless, and that Sound Transit didn't use this opportunity to gather more input and provide more clarity.

Even so, concerned residents should review and comment on what's in the works. Consider it the start of a vital, regional discussion.

I hope for just that next month for Community Transit also. Hopefully it will not require an Everett Herald editorial to that effect. That said, these documents are vital opportunities for the community conversations we need to have. Public engagement matters. We need to bring the public with us or there is going to be a lot more sniping, a lot less trust.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I want to conclude this document with a positive thought. All throughout this document, the fundamental goal of, “The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created,” has been woven in.

Community Transit in September 2020 more transparent than January 2020? Yes. But is there still work to be done? Absolutely.

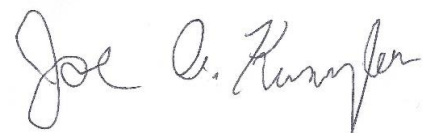
There are many tough political decisions ahead just on the freedom of information front, not to mention the CEO front and the budgetary front. But you are the decision makers who represent we the riders to staff.

But this is Washington State, the home of Heather “Newsbrooke” Brooke, Ph.D. Frankly it’s time for a Newsbrooke quotation from The Revolution Will Be Digitised: Dispatches From the Information War:

Citizens around the world have long declared a desire to be trusted with the formation of their own opinions, and that can only come when they have access to the facts. This is the essence of the information war. Do we trust citizens to communicate freely and come to their own conclusions, or do we believe those in authority have a right to restrict and manipulate what we know?

The task before you is clear. As they say on, “The West Wing”: “Decisions are made by those who show up.” Let’s get more riders giving feedback, ok? Thanks.

Very thoughtfully yours;



Joe A. Kunzler
Growlernoise@gmail.com

APPENDIX A: CT BOARD MEETING OPERATIONS REVIEW

Board Meeting Operations Review

July 24, 2020 Executive Committee

Objective

To study and make recommendations to the Executive Committee that provide expanded Board transparency and information to the public.

Road Map & Recommendations

A staff working group has developed the following recommendations outlined below. Recommendations are based on best practices, a peer review of council/board operations in 10 local jurisdictions, 5 peer transit agencies, a local utility district, and technology solutions that are reasonable and right-sized for the agency.

Discussion Guide



	Committee Meetings	Board Meetings	Meeting Materials	Other
CURRENT	Hold virtual committee meetings during COVID restrictions on gatherings			
PHASE A Implementation immediately	New: Hold virtual committee meetings permanently (in-person option could be available per chair's preference)	Continue as above until COVID restrictions lifted	New: Post <u>complete</u> Board packets on the web, including written public comments; retroactively to Jan. 2020 New: Audio recording of Board meetings posted to the web no later than next day	Continue as above until COVID restrictions lifted
PHASE B Implementation 2 months (meeting changes only after COVID restrictions lifted)	Continue as above	New: "Hybrid" meetings, with Board members and attendees in-person, with option for public to observe remotely	New: Update Board Meeting agenda template with hyperlinks to enhance readability of Board packets	New: Formalize virtual meeting public comment process and post to web
Phase C Implementation Late 2020/ Early 2021	Continue as above	Continue as above	New: Board meeting live webcast option New: Board meeting video recording posted to the web option	Continue as above

Recommendations below do not require an official Board action or an update to the bylaws. Implementation will be in phases (A, B, C) over the next few months.

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