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## CITY COUNCIL REPORT

Public

DATE: February 11, 2015  
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers  
FROM: Interim City Manager, Jeff Meilbeck  
CC: Josh Copley, Jerene Watson, Leadership Team  
SUBJECT: Transit Service to Flagstaff Shelter Services

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At the February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of Flagstaff City Council, Councilmember Overton asked for an update on transit service to Flagstaff Shelter Services. Following is a memo that I wrote in May of 2014 as NAIPTA's General Manager. The situation has not changed in that ridership demand for service is still low, the service is not in the transit plan, funding for the service does not exist, and transit access is available on Route 66 at Fanning, albeit requiring a walk. Additionally, for people who are homeless and also have a disability that prevents them from walking to the bus, paratransit van service is available.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Mayor and Council Flagstaff Shelter Services.pdf

## Jeff Meilbeck

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**From:** Jeff Meilbeck  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 21, 2014 8:27 PM  
**To:** Jerry Nabours (jnabours@flagstaffaz.gov); Coral Evans; Celia Barotz; Karla Brewster; Jeff Oravits (joravits@flagstaffaz.gov); Scott Overton; Mark Woodson (mwoodson@flagstaffaz.gov)  
**Cc:** Kevin Burke (kburke@flagstaffaz.gov); Erika Mazza; Barbara Goodrich (bgoodrich@flagstaffaz.gov)  
**Subject:** Transit Service to Flagstaff Shelter Services

Mayor and Council:

The question of providing public transportation to the Flagstaff Shelter Services facility on 4185 E Huntington (FSS) has come up many times in the recent past. The purpose of this e-mail is to provide an update on NAIPTA's role in this discussion to date.

Public transit is seen as an obvious solution for helping FSS clients access services because the population, by definition, does not have access to private transportation. City wide, the needs of our homeless population are addressed by a variety of public agencies and non-profit groups. By extension, it seems reasonable to many that public transportation should be part of that solution. As it happens, NAIPTA is part of the solution because we provide dependable, affordable transportation to many residential, retail and educational destinations throughout the City. The fact that our ridership has increased from 100,000 in 2001 to 1.8 million in 2013 is evidence of the breadth and increasing effectiveness of the transportation service we provide. That said, we still have significantly constrained resources and do not travel all roads within the City, including the East Huntington corridor.

The needs of FSS and other stakeholders in the East Huntington corridor were known in 2012 and NAIPTA carefully evaluated providing service on Huntington while our 5 Year Transit Plan (adopted May 2013) was developed. Our outreach and communication included meeting with FSS staff prior to their facility opening, encouraging FSS and other East Huntington Stakeholders to participate in the 5 Year planning process, holding a special meeting with FSS and stakeholders in spring 2013, and meeting with FSS on May 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss recent concerns and look for solutions.

This planning and communication revealed that a number of solutions are available including 1) improving pedestrian access, 2) providing para-transit service for FSS clients who are prevented from walking to the bus, 3) providing a vehicle to FSS so they can shuttle their clients as needed; 4) relocating the FSS facility to be closer to a bus route, and 5) providing a new bus route to expand service to the East Huntington Corridor. We are working with FSS on the first three solutions but the last two solutions are the most difficult and expensive to provide. While I can't speak to the difficulties of relocating the Shelter, I imagine it would be a great and expensive challenge and am in no position to recommend it. Any possible relocation is clearly a decision for others, not for me. As to providing a new bus route on East Huntington I offer a few considerations:

1. There is no funding available. The 2008 Voter approved initiatives did not include funding for the East Huntington corridor and NAIPTA is tasked first and foremost with delivering on the promises we made to voters.
2. Although the area was carefully studied, the 5 Year Plan does not recommend service to the East Huntington Corridor for the following reasons:
  - a. It is largely an industrial area. There are few residences and few retail businesses that would generate transit ridership.
  - b. It is within walking distance of the bus stop at Route 66 and Fanning Drive.

- c. Over 1,000 people participated in the transit planning effort. The priority expressed was to make the overall transit system faster and more frequent. Extending service to a low ridership industrial area is not consistent with this direction.
3. Even if funding were available, the ridership would be low making the service costly and an inefficient use of limited taxpayer dollars. NAIPTA has worked hard to build public trust by delivering on promises made and by providing efficient, effective service. It is difficult for me to recommend providing low ridership service to an area that is within walking distance of a bus stop. That said, we stand ready to provide service if directed to do so and if funding is provided.
4. There are other less expensive, more flexible ways to meet transportation needs of the FSS. Public bus service costs approximately \$100 per hour, is inflexible by design, and comes with extensive and expensive regulations. Conversely, providing a shuttle to the FSS which can be operated according to their specific needs on their specific schedule is more affordable than a public bus. This “non-profit shuttle solution” was discussed with FSS and East Huntington stakeholders during the 5 Year Planning process and NAIPTA continues to stand ready to be a partner in the effort as we can.

I appreciate the transportation needs of FSS clients and the concerns of East Huntington businesses. NAIPTA has considered the transportation issues carefully through an inclusive and extensive public process and we continue to be available to help as we can. As mentioned, I met with FSS representatives (Lori Barlow and Phebe Payne) on May 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss solutions and I believe there are solutions available. I will also be attending the May 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting with area business so that I can be available to provide information and respond to questions.

Respectfully,

**Jeff Meilbeck**

NAIPTA CEO and General Manager

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