

MTA doing away with paid ads on buses

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Residents likely won't see any new paid advertisements in the near future on Mason Transit Authority buses.

MTA's Benefit Authority Board of Directors unanimously approved an agenda item Tuesday for the agency to move away from paid advertising. Instead, MTA has budgeted \$15,000 for a graphic artist with public relations experience to design branding materials, including positive messages about public transit, to run on the buses.

According to MTA, in the past few years it has received about \$70,000 in revenue from paid advertisers. Advertising contracts with businesses won't be renewed once they expire unless that contract expires soon, said

Danette Brannin, MTA general manager. In that case, staff will offer one additional renewal.

MTA's goal is to have all advertising off its buses by the end of the year, Brannin said. She said the revenue generated from the advertising is not something the agency relies on in its budget.

"The advertising distracts from buses and transit in general," she said at Tuesday's meeting.

Brannin added that MTA's new hybrid buses are on their way, so it would be a good opportunity to make the change.

Board member Sharon Trask, who is on the Board of Mason County Commissioners, asked whether MTA could have paid advertising and still add the new messages.

"That's a position," Trask

said about the potential lost revenue.

Brannin said revenue was split over two and a half years, so it was actually about \$28,000 per year MTA would lose.

MTA board member Kevin Shutty, who is the Board of Mason County Commissioners chair, agreed with making the change.

"We're not in the advertising business, we're in the transit business," he said.

MTA board member Kevin Dorcy — a Shelton City Council member — asked if anybody was "beating down the door" to advertise.

Brannin said there weren't many potential advertisers who approached MTA recently. She said other transit agencies are doing away with bus advertising because agency policy dictates what kinds

of advertising are allowed on buses.

MTA has its own advertising policy, which an advertiser could potentially disagree with.

"There's lots of opportunity for the policy to be challenged," Shutty said.

In other business, Mason Transit Authority has a new five-year plan.

The MTA board approved its 2019-2024 Transit Development plan and 2018 annual report during Tuesday's meeting at the Transit-Community Center in downtown Shelton.

The report serves as a blueprint for MTA's big purchases, projects and building improvements. It also gives an overview on the agency's priorities — the updated document includes quotations about various topics that resemble mission state-

ments such as "Stewardship: 'To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the transportation system.'"

The new document removes language about conducting public outreach in two sections of the 2019-2024 report.

It also includes budget projections for the next five years and a service map of the city of Shelton and Mason County.

MTA conducted public hearings about its Transit Development Plan and 2018 report on July 2 in the Transit-Community Center and July 10 at the North Mason Timberland Regional Library, but no citizens attended either event, according to a draft of the report.

A full draft of the document is located at <https://bit.ly/32lnsgu>.