The Alternative Transportation Advisory Committee (hereafter ATAC) has been meeting on a bi-weekly basis for approximately four months since its inception in November 2008. The ATAC’s charge is to make recommendations to the University and to the University’s internal communities relative to policies and programs that support alternative means of transportation to and from the YSU campus as well as policies and programs that might reduce the money and energy spent on individual and collective transportation costs. The Committee includes members representing faculty, students, staff and administrators at YSU.

The committee added three additional members in Q1 to bring specific skills and interest to the committee. Joining the Committee in February of 2009 were Thomas Finnerty from Urban and Regional Studies, Danny O’Connell the Director of Support Services (which includes Campus Parking) and Brandy Shumacher from the Andrews Wellness Center.

The ATAC was conceived when the price of gasoline was at $4.00 a gallon. It has since fallen by more than 50%. However, the committee’s reading of energy and economic issues indicate that the role of the committee is still strong and its work important. Energy and economics are obviously inter-related. Oil producers are now starting to push oil prices back up by adjusting production. We expect prices to continue to rise. The University is considering the elimination of over 1200 parking spaces with the possible demolition of the M2 parking structure. While some other spaces may come on line, the University would experience a net decline in parking spaces. Furthermore, if the University and the City of Youngstown move forward to improve the area around the University by making it more pedestrian-friendly, on-street parking will have to be significantly curtailed.

The current Federal administration is proposing the implementation of carbon taxes, which would also work to push fuel prices higher. Further, current economic slowdowns are depressing the discretionary funds available to most families and individuals. Given the spread-out nature of the region and the largely non-residential nature of the student body, transportation to and from campus is essential for students and employees of YSU. However, the ATAC believes that by providing students and employees with choices for alternative transportation we will give those same students and employees options for avoiding problems and for spending fewer and/or saving transportation dollars.

During the first quarter, the ATAC considered a number of transportation options that warrant comment. Some have actions recommended. They are:

**Bicycles:**
There are currently two significant issues with respect to bicycles being used to commute to the YSU campus … parking and policy. The committee recommends that both issues be addressed in the coming quarter. Parking is a matter of the identification of bicycle parking spots and the installation of bicycle parking racks at those spots. The spots should be in well-lit, high traffic areas and preferably under cover. This should be the responsibility of Facilities/Grounds. The committee also recommends that a bicycle policy for the YSU campus be drafted to address such issues as: the use of bicycles “on” campus as opposed to “to and from” campus (no riding in the “core”, securing bicycles to objects other than approved bicycle racks (forbidden), taking bicycles into buildings (forbidden) and registration of bicycles that are brought to campus (encouraged to discourage theft and improve returns if stolen).

Motorcycles:

There are three issues with respect to motorcycles used to commute to and from the YSU campus. The first is parking. There are four lots currently on campus. The most heavily used lot is between Cushwa Hall and the M2 Deck. Additional lots are located at the Moser hall loading dock, at Receiving’s loading dock on Rayen Ave., next to the M1 deck entrance at the V-4 lot and in the M-24 lot (access from Grant). A fifth lot is scheduled for the Mulch area by Beeghley Center. No lots for motorcycles are covered lots.

The second issue is parking registration. Since motorcycles are registered motor vehicles and require significantly more thought and resources for parking than do bicycles, motorcycles must have YSU parking registration and parking permits. As of this writing, there are only 24 registered motorcycles in Parking’s database, far fewer than we know are parking on campus at peak periods. The committee will work to inform motorcyclists that they need to register their bikes for campus parking and display a permit. However, enforcing this may ultimately require that we issue parking tickets. Once we have registrations close to the numbers of bikes observed parking on campus, then Parking can identify if it will deploy additional parking spaces for bikes on campus.

Finally, like bicycles, we need a policy for motorcycles brought to campus. The policy issues for motorcycles are similar to those for bicycles.

WRTA:

The ATAC discussed the use of public transportation at several meetings. Several of these were face-to-face meetings with officials and consultants from WRTA. WRTA recently received an increase of tax-funded income when Mahoning County voters approved an increase to its sales-tax-based levy. With anticipated increases to its revenues, WRTA has been planning restorations of, and even extensions to, its routes. WRTA’s planning process was the reason for our face-to-face conversations. During our conversations the ATAC discussed three issues with WRTA: visibility, park-and-ride and campus-supported ridership. These each require a small section. However, before moving forward it should be noted that the ATAC does not know what the effects of the
economic slowdown will be on WRTA’s levy-based income projections; we think that they will be greater than before the levy but less than WRTA fully expected to receive.

Bus stops, bus routes and the overall visibility of WRTA on campus was one topic of discussion. Some planning work has been done between WRTA and YSU on the identification of a significant bus stop on campus, but nothing firm has been decided. In addition, we asked WRTA to consider upgrading their current stops on campus to improve their visibility. Most university campuses have well marked stops around campus, with one significant, common stop for all buses inside campus. While there are bus stops on the edges of campus, we suspect that few students or employees know where they are. While all buses that are inbound to the city center are required to drop riders off on campus “on request of the driver” there is no similar mechanism for outbound buses to divert to campus “on request” for pickup. Buses do not regularly go up or down Lincoln Avenue. Overall, there is nothing happening to let students or employees know that bus transportation is an option. The ATAC will continue to work with WRTA to improve its visibility on and around campus.

The ATAC also discussed potential suburban “Park and Ride” possibilities with WRTA using small buses or larger vans for non-stop travel from suburban locations, such as malls and church parking lots, non-stop (or with very few stops) to YSU. WRTA is interested and has asked the PSI for demographic data on the home locations of students and employees. Next steps, assuming that levy income supports expanded operations by WRTA, would be to consider parking locations and potential funding models (open tickets, subscription based, etc.).

Finally, the ATAC discussed the potential to collaborate with WRTA in a project that is common among urban/metropolitan campuses and that is open-access to public transit. In an open-access model, University students and employees can ride public transportation for free, usually by showing a valid ID card. The University typically gives the transit authority some bulk payment for this service. The payment is usually predicated on some level of average ridership and some significantly discounted price per rider/ride. The ATAC (at several meetings and with several other key individuals) discussed several payment possibilities. It should be noted that these are just concepts, they can be mixed and matched and that there are a lot of essential details that would have to be resolved in all of the concepts.

The first is a student fee that, since the fee would only be collected by the University for WRTA, would not have to follow the restriction on fees as set forth by the Chancellor’s Office. This model would enable student ridership but would not address employees as riders unless contracts were modified to include an employee fee. The benefit is ease of riding free. The weakness is a fee being implemented before demand is established.

The second model is a “transportation” fee that connects parking, WRTA ridership and other transportation issues into one fee. Income from that fee would be applied to all needs. It is an enlightened model that appreciates the need to move money where it is needed. The weakness of this model is that parking costs do not diminish linearly when
use of parking spaces falls off. Parking has, instead, long-term capital costs repayment issues and on-going staff salary issues.

A third model is a subscription/discount-based model. In this simple model, WRTA tickets would be sold at a discounted rate or individuals could subscribe, at a reduced rate, to a service such as a park-and-ride. The benefit is that use is highly correlated with payments. The downside is that spontaneous use of WRTA is not as easy.

Finally, one could envision a use repayment model. In this model, YSU students and employees would have a smart chip affixed to their ID and WRTA buses would have smart chip readers. The chip would be scanned upon use of a WRTA bus. Data would be aggregated on a weekly/monthly basis and YSU would reimburse WRTA for the rides used. YSU would, in turn, have data to collect some portion back from the riders either as a bill, a credit card charge or a deduction from a prepay. The downside is that WRTA would have to establish a technology standard for reading chips and find the capital to implement that standard. In addition, YSU would have to plan ahead to set aside sufficient funds to repay WRTA for some or all of the use.

**Ride-share:**

Many campuses, communities and regions are setting up computer-based ride-share programs. These programs are opt-in programs, which means that those individuals who want to get rides or want to give rides have to actively create an account on a web-based service. Once they enter their data, they become an active ride-share participant. The programs correlate individuals and their home and work addresses with a mapping program such as Google Maps. If one needs a ride, one simply enters the address and one sees visually who lives or works near that address. Clicking on the individuals listed on the map yields contact information so that rider and ride-giver can coordinate pick-up and/or drop-off.

The ATAC feels that YSU should move forward aggressively to implement such a system. The committee will investigate software, looking for free software if possible. Funding for implementation will have to be quickly estimated and a funding source identified. If this were implemented locally (YSU only) it could be set up to be accessible via the MyYSU portal and portal log-on facility.

**YSU Awareness:**

The ATAC will work to communicate these issues to the YSU community as effectively as possible, using open meetings, targeted meetings with special groups (motorcyclists, bicyclists, etc), various media and discussions through the YSU hierarchy.