

MTA 'comfortable' with revenue heading into 2016

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The Mason Transit Authority Board took its first look at the 2016 MTA operating budget at a meeting Tuesday in Belfair.

Finance Manager Danette Brannin told the board that MTA is still figuring out the specifics of the agency's 2016 expenses, but that the MTA is "pretty comfortable with where our revenues are at."
"This is step one," she said. "Now it's about fine tuning until adoption time."

The first draft of the operating budget has the MTA bringing in \$7,470,519 in revenues compared to \$7,329,305 in expenses.

"We have made some assumptions about our revenue," Brannin said. "The expense side we are still working on — maintenance costs are the biggest costs."

"But we have a good 80 percent of our operating costs done."

Brannin said ridership outside of the county is slightly down from previous years, mostly due to lower fuel costs, but said ridership should pick

up in November when express services from Shelton to Olympia and Bremerton begin.

Brannin detailed other highlights of the draft budget in a report to the board:

■ Sales tax revenue is currently up 16 percent year to date over last year and are anticipated at year-end to be up 8 percent over last year with projected year-to-date sales tax revenue to be \$3,730,391.

■ It is assumed growth will continue in 2016 due to construction projects and lower gas prices. The MTA has assumed 3 percent growth in rid-

ership for 2016.

■ Tenant rental income at Mason Transit Authority's Transit-Community Center, which opened earlier this year in downtown Shelton, is expected to not be at full capacity until later this year. There are still two spaces available with upstairs tenants moving in to the space in the first quarter of 2016. Event rental is still uncertain so they took a conservative approach.

■ Grant awards were increased after the initial award announcement giving MTA additional revenue.

■ Wages and benefits are budgeted to increase in 2016; retirement contributions increased by 2 percent in July 2015.

John Campbell, who represents North Mason School District on the advisory board, expressed his pleasure with where the MTA is in drafting the 2016 budget.

"I am happy with what we have here and I look forward to hearing more," he said.

Brannin said she would set up a workshop for the advisory board as well as a public hearing before the board's next meeting in October.