

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

SPECIAL MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING ON FARES AND SERVICE

Monday, April 12, 2010

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on April 8, 2010, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Board of Directors of the Lane Transit District held a special Board meeting/public hearing on service proposals on Monday, April 12, 2010, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in the Bascom-Tykeson Room of the Eugene Public Library, 100 West 10th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon.

Present: Mike Eyster, President
Dean Kortge, Secretary
Ed Necker, Treasurer
Doris Towery
Gary Gillespie
Mark Pangborn, General Manager
Jeanne Schapper, Clerk of the Board
Judy Burton, Minutes Recorder

Absent: Michael Dubick
Greg Evans, Vice President

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Mr. Eyster called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and called the roll. All Board members were present with the exception of Gary Gillespie, who arrived at 5:35 p.m.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT: Mr. Eyster remarked that this was a meeting for soliciting public input on two important topics: 1) LTD's 2010 Pricing Plan and 2) the Annual Route Review. He noted that the District was facing significant financial difficulties, along with more than 80 percent of transit districts in the country, where some combination of service reduction and fare increases were being considered. Mr. Eyster added that costs were higher than revenue this year, and there was no way to avoid the reductions that needed to be made.

Mr. Eyster said that a number of public hearings had already been held, and suggestions had helped shape the route changes. One suggestion had been to deficit spend, which he said was not a valid option. Another suggestion had been to stop spending money on EmX. Mr. Eyster responded that EmX was a long-term project that is funded by separate funding sources. The revenue available for that project would not be available to help with current fiscal problems.

Mr. Eyster mentioned that there were two informational handouts available in the back of the room. The first was an article from the American Public Transportation Association and it stated that 80 percent of transit districts in this country are dealing with fare increases; the

second handout was a *Register-Guard* article written by LTD's General Manager, Mark Pangborn. It explained why discontinuing EmX would not solve current fiscal problems.

Mr. Eyster said that the LTD Board of Directors believed in public transit, and that the Board was well aware that many members of the public were totally dependent on transit service for getting to the doctor, to work, to grocery stores, and to other essential destinations. LTD staff were upset about making service reductions, he said; however, they could see no other alternatives at this time. It was hoped that service could be expanded once the economy stabilized.

PUBLIC HEARING – FISCAL YEAR 2010-2011 PRICING PLAN: Director of Service Planning, Accessibility, and Marketing Andy Vobora reported that the 2010-11 Pricing Plan proposal was to increase monthly pass prices. He stated that approximately 23 percent of the revenue that was needed to operate the District comes from fares. A \$3 increase in the adult monthly pass price was being recommended, he said, with a \$1.50 increase in monthly half-fare passes. There would be no increase in day pass prices, nor in the cost for RideSource service.

Public Hearing on Proposed Fare Changes: Mr. Eyster opened the public hearing and called for testimony.

Drake Eubank, 3rd Street, Springfield, said that he had been employed in the past working with disabled people in Springfield. He remarked that those who would be most impacted by the rate increases were poor and who were the least able to defend themselves politically. They would have difficulty paying increased fares with their very small incomes.

There being no further testimony, Mr. Eyster closed the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING – 2010 ANNUAL ROUTE REVIEW: Mr. Vobora reviewed the updated route changes that had been made based largely on public comments from previous hearings. Some changes would be implemented in Fall 2010 and others in January 2011.

The change to Route 12 would go into effect January 2011. It involved a turnaround at Gateway Loop and would run in conjunction with the Gateway EmX line, which would cover the rest of the Gateway area. The Route 12 bus would travel north from the Gateway Station up to Gateway Loop, and return on Postal Way. It would then head back to Eugene, taking people as far north on Gateway as possible, thereby alleviating transfers to EmX at the Gateway Station.

A significant change in the Gateway area would be the frequency of service. Currently peak service is every 20 minutes and it would decrease to every 30 minutes. Sixty-foot buses would be used to maintain the capacity along that route. The other change would be inbound routing. All trips coming over the Ferry Street Bridge before 2:00 p.m. would exit at 3rd Avenue and provide some additional service to the Eugene Station that was lost last year with the routing change of Route 66.

Mr. Vobora noted that beginning in January 2011, Route 13 in Springfield would no longer connect with the Springfield Station. At that time customers will need to transfer to service either in the Mohawk area or at Centennial Station to catch the EmX going either north or south.

The proposed change to Route 17 would have new routing going east on Hayden Bridge Road to 19th Street and would provide service to the Albertson Shopping Center at 19th Street and Marcola Road before coming inbound with service along Q Street and back to the Springfield Station. This route worked in tandem with Route 18, he said, which would serve the high school/middle school area, Willamalane Park, the McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center, and then the Mohawk Shopping Center and Mohawk Marketplace.

Mr. Vobora continued by saying that Route 19/Fairview was originally proposed for elimination. However, following much public input, the Board had instructed staff to develop a plan for limited trip service with six trips throughout the day through this neighborhood. This would serve the entire Fairview loop and the Willamalane Adult Activity Center.

With the proposed changes, Route 28 in South Eugene would become a full-service route. It would run seven days a week and would service the East and West Amazon area, which will cover the loss of Route 25. The outbound service along 13th Avenue that currently runs across Broadway Street to Patterson would continue along 13th Avenue to cover for the loss of the Breeze service.

Route 36 in Southwest Eugene would be changed to travel to Bertelson Road on the west side and north to 11th Avenue to serve the Target/Wal-Mart shopping area, which was previously covered by Route 30.

Route 76 would travel to 11th Avenue and would provide two-way service on Oak Patch Road, running every half hour during peak hours and every hour during off-peak hours. This route also would serve the Wilshire/Warren area since the route that serves it now would be eliminated. The inbound service of this route would change by going into the Eugene Station on its way to the University of Oregon, rather than running along 13th East to the University Transit Station.

The proposed change for Route 78 is to have it operate two-way service on Bailey Hill Road.

The change to the River Road sector was that the service would be split between Routes 51 and 52 so that they both would have hourly service midday with doubled service during peak travel times.

Route 73 in South Eugene, which had been scheduled for elimination, would now run during peak hours as a commuter service connecting people from the South Hills to the University.

It was proposed to retain Route 85, which had previously been scheduled to be eliminated for summer service, because Lane Community College ridership has risen significantly.

Mr. Vobora explained the proposal regarding holiday service, saying that there would be no service on four holidays, which are New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day. He added that Saturday service would be offered for the day after Thanksgiving. This change, he said, would reduce costs by approximately \$75,000 annually.

In summary, Mr. Vobora said that staff had been asked to reduce expenses by 20 percent, and the current proposal marked a reduction of 19.34 percent, saving approximately \$2.5 million annually from the operating budget.

Public Hearing on Proposed Service Changes: Mr. Eyster opened the public hearing and called for public testimony.

Devin Ackley, Betty Niven Drive, Eugene, asked that if Route 25 were eliminated, how would riders get to Willamette Street since Route 28 did not go that way. He wanted to know how he would get to stores in that area.

Service Planning Manager Will Mueller responded that there was a transfer that could be made from 29th Avenue and Hilyard Street, transferring from bus #28 to bus #73 to get to the area he spoke about. In order to get to other parts of Willamette Street, however, one would need to go downtown.

Amy Butler, Orchard Street, Eugene, introduced her three children, saying they represented families who tried to do the right thing by using modes of transportation that are alternatives to driving cars. She said that every time service reductions were made, it became more inviting to use the car instead. She hoped that in the future, the routes being deleted now would be added back in.

Brad Chambers, 1st Avenue, Eugene, thanked LTD's Board and staff for the work they were doing. He mentioned that some of the changes being made were good. He added that he especially appreciated the service on the River Road sector to the Eugene Mission area, where a number of people used the bus service to get to the Veteran's Clinic and the Immigration Center.

Drake Eubank, 3rd Street, Springfield, was curious about how many LTD Board members and staff had ridden the bus to the meeting today. A number of hands were raised, noting that they did use the bus. He expressed some concern that those working as bus drivers and customer service workers were being considered above all else in the budget.

Regarding the service changes being made, Mr. Eubank noted that the centralized bus system was basically formed around the interests of people other than those who actually rode the buses, with the exception of perhaps LCC routes. He expressed that for accessing core services in Springfield, a route from the Springfield Station directly to Wal-Mart would be important. He suggested decentralizing the system so that destinations could be reached without going through the downtown area where there were few basic services offered.

Mr. Eubank pointed out that entry-level employees working for LTD earned about \$53,000 per year and that there were many residents in Eugene who were totally dependent on the bus who did not make that much money. He expressed that it was important to consider these issues in terms of how choices were made for budget reductions.

Mr. Mueller responded that there would continue to be direct service to the Springfield Wal-Mart.

John Hickam, E. 11th Avenue, Eugene, remarked that because LTD was a private entity, he thought there must be other ways to raise revenue other than depending on payroll taxes. He figured that if residents had to go through more hoops in order to be able to drive their cars wherever they wanted then more people would ride the bus, and that would create more revenue.

Wendy Butler-Boyeson, City View, Eugene, said that this was the third hearing she had attended and thanked LTD and the Board for their work to keep routes open. She thanked the bus drivers for working hard even though many were facing job losses.

Emily Cornell, (street and city not given), had specific questions regarding some of the bus routes, especially the Breeze routes and Route 25.

Mr. Vobora responded that the Breeze was one of the most popular routes, although it was possible to restructure other routes to pick up those customers. Elimination of the Breeze accounted for reducing the budget by nearly 4 percent.

Mel Barnes, (street not given), Springfield, thanked LTD staff for keeping Route 19 going part time and said that he would let the Willamalane Park and Recreation District know. He said that Willamalane would be bringing their van to the Springfield Station part of the time to pick people up.

Eva Edelman, W. 11th, Eugene, commented that poorer people used the bus more than others, and they were easy to ignore. She stated that eliminating Route 30 would result in no evening service, making life very difficult for people in the area. She suggested that service not be decreased for the most vulnerable residents.

Bambi Lee, N. 5th Street, Springfield, remarked that reducing bus service caused hardship to many people who were dependent on buses for getting to work and other places and that all of the changes would be difficult to understand and adapt to.

Mr. Vobora explained that there would be plenty of public outreach occurring that would help educate the public regarding the service changes. He understood that it would take time for people to make adjustments in their lives.

Marion Walters, (street and city not given), commented that some older people would be forced to return to driving their cars in unsafe conditions because of bus service reductions. She also mentioned that the bus drivers were doing a great job helping riders.

Mike Setto, Copping Street, Eugene, said that he began driving buses in 1977, and he had seen a lot of changes in bus service. He expressed concern that LTD needed to move towards creating a smaller carbon footprint, and he volunteered to be involved with a focus group to look into the matter. He thought that smaller buses needed to be used for routes where buses were less than 25 percent full. Average vehicles, he said, emitted their own weight in carbon each year. Natural gas-fueled vehicles would last much longer. Natural gas could be transported through pipelines off the coast, he said.

Christine Nelson, N. 54th Street, Springfield, reported that some bus drivers were disrespectful of some people, especially those with wheelchairs and walkers. She did not approve of the policy of disabled riders having to wait to deboard until all other passengers deboarded, saying that it could make those passengers who had to wait late for appointments, etc. She thought that there must be a way that many of the foot passengers could exit through the back door, which could save time.

Mr. Necker said that it was usually important for walking passengers to get off first so that the ramp could be put down for wheelchairs and walkers.

Mr. Eyster thanked Ms. Nelson for her remarks and said that the situation would be looked into. He invited her to speak to a staff member after the meeting regarding any perceived misconduct of a driver.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Eyster adjourned the meeting at 6:26 p.m.



Board Secretary

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