

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING ON FARES AND SERVICE

Monday, March 8, 2010

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on March 4, 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 fares and service on Monday, March 8, 2010, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in the Bascom-Tykeson Room of the Eugene Public Library at 100 W. 10th Avenue, Eugene.

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

Absent: Greg Evans, Vice President
Michael Dubick

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Mr. Eyster convened the meeting and called the roll at 5:31 p.m.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT: Mr. Eyster thanked the members of the public for their attendance and their input during the Annual Route Review process. He indicated that these are very hard decisions that LTD has been attempting to make in recent weeks. He noted that everyone who worked at the District was committed to providing excellent transit services to the community, and that it was very difficult for LTD as an organization to have to consider reducing service. He noted that the current budget shortfall was expected to last for at least the next two years, and that the current considerations of service reductions were being taken in order to protect the long-term financial integrity of the LTD system.

Mr. Eyster wished to clarify certain public misconceptions regarding the nature of funding for LTD's EmX system, and noted that the funding for the current EmX system and its future expansions could not be redirected to the District's operating budget. He stated that the EmX bus rapid transit system continued to be a highly effective means of transporting a large number of people in a very cost-effective manner.

Mr. Eyster noted that the current service reduction discussions were intended to address both the short- and long-term financial viability of LTD.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: Mr. Eyster briefly commented on the public testimony format to be used for the meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING – FISCAL YEAR 2010-2011 PRICING PLAN: Director of Service Planning, Accessibility, and Marketing Andy Vobora provided an overview of the pricing plan update. He noted that the LTD fare policy states that the District will evaluate changes in pricing on an annual basis to be adopted by ordinance. He further noted that the first reading of the fare ordinance would be conducted during the April 21, 2010, regular Board meeting. Mr. Vobora said that LTD had a policy of rotating fare increases and that system-wide fares did not change simultaneously. He reported that the current fare increases would only affect the monthly passes, which were last updated in September 2008. He noted that no fare increases had been recommended with respect to cash fares, daily passes, RideSource fares, or group passes.

The details of the proposed fare increases are as follows: 1) increase the adult monthly pass price from \$45.00 to \$48.00; 2) increase the adult three-month pass from \$122.00 to \$130.00; 3) increase the youth and half-fare monthly pass prices from \$22.50 to \$24.00; and 4) increase three-month youth and half-fare passes from \$61.00 to \$65.00.

Mr. Vobora noted that the methods by which the District determined fare increases had evolved over time and involved reviews of peer agency pricing structures. Mr. Vobora noted that the LTD fares compared favorably to a group of similarly sized transit agencies from around the country. He stated that LTD stayed relatively average within the pricing models of the transit agencies that had been reviewed.

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

Cindy Helvington, Marcola Road, Springfield, addressed the fare increases and noted that she could not afford the proposed monthly rate increase. She further maintained that insufficient time had passed since the most recent rate increase.

Michael Gannon, (street not given), Eugene, stated that he believed that LTD had not gone far enough in asking for help and support from the community with regard to fare increases. He believed that LTD needed to work harder at selling itself to the community as an efficient public transportation system. He further noted that the peer group fare comparison that Mr. Vobora had mentioned was not particularly effective for the public because it gave no indication as to what specific transit services were offered by other transit agencies.

Trudy Rodgers, High Street, Eugene, asked if the reduced-fare monthly passes also were being increased. Mr. Vobora restated that the cost of the half-fare, three-month passes would be raised from \$61.00 to \$65.00.

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

PUBLIC HEARING – 2010 ANNUAL ROUTE REVIEW: Mr. Vobora reported that LTD staff had conducted a number of public outreach events in order to provide information and solicit feedback regarding proposed LTD service reductions and route revisions. He further noted that valuable public feedback regarding the proposed service changes was still being collected and reviewed. Mr. Vobora added that LTD staff would present the final package recommendation on the 2010 Annual Route Review to the LTD Board at its regular Board meeting on April 21, 2010.

Mr. Vobora stated that the first phase of the LTD service revisions, totaling approximately 7 percent of the District's service hours, had been approved by the LTD Board on February 17,

2010. He noted that the first phase of service revisions would be implemented in June 2010. He further stated that, pending Board approval, the second and third phases of the service redesign would be implemented in September 2010 and January 2011, respectively.

Mr. Vobora displayed an LTD system map and provided a detailed overview of the proposed service revisions in each sector of the map.

Mr. Vobora reported that LTD was recommending the restoration of the midday service on Route 52 along River Road.

Mr. Vobora noted that Route 36 was expected to become the "workhorse route" in the West Eugene area.

Mr. Vobora said that, as the service revisions were implemented, many of the operating characteristics of the previous service coverage would be carried over in terms of the span and frequency of those transit services.

Continuing, Mr. Vobora noted that many of the service revisions in the Springfield area would be significantly affected by the implementation of the Gateway EmX service in January 2011.

Mr. Necker asked where LTD stood with respect to the negotiations with the City of Springfield on the two-inch overlay for the Gateway EmX expansion. Mr. Vobora replied that negotiations and discussions in that regard were ongoing and that various funding options for the overlay requirement were being explored. He indicated that City engineering staff had shown no indication that less overlay along the Gateway EmX expansion area would be acceptable.

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

Jerry Buchanan, Marcola Road, Springfield, asked if Route 18 would continue to run on Sundays. Mr. Vobora responded that the service would continue to run on Sundays but that it had not yet been determined how late the bus would run.

Alice Pueschner, Barber Drive, Eugene, stated that she was a former bike rider and a regular rider on Route No. 25. She was concerned about how she would be able to travel to the Willamette Street and 29th Avenue area under the proposed service revisions to that route.

Pastor (no first name given) Turrell, Quinalt Street, Springfield, was very concerned about the changes to Routes 18 and 19 and their effects on the residents of McKenzie Village where he lived. He noted that under the service reductions, the closest LTD bus stop would be more than a half-mile away from McKenzie Village and noted that significant numbers of children, senior citizens, and disabled persons would be adversely affected.

Wendy Butler-Boyeson, City View, Eugene, thanked the Board for its work regarding the fare increases and the service revisions. She said that she was concerned about bus service in the South Eugene area, and she suggested that elongating the No. 76 or 78 routes might be a way to provide better service coverage for that area.

Chuck Hauk, Park View Drive, Eugene, spoke in his capacity as the Housing Services Director for Housing and Community Services Agency of Lane County (HACSA) and addressed LTD's

planned revisions to Route 19 that Pastor Turrell had mentioned earlier. He declared that HACSA's residents were extremely dependent upon Route 19 buses as that route was directly across the street from the administrative offices for Lane County's public and assisted housing programs. Mr. Hauk said that there were a large number of elderly, disabled, and low-income persons living at public housing facilities near Route 19. He further maintained that while LTD had cited low ridership figures as justification for the route revision, the riders along that route were entirely transit dependent.

David Wade, Villard Street, Eugene, asked how many of the LTD Board members used the District's transit services themselves on a daily basis. Mr. Gillespie and Mr. Necker responded that they used those services every day, and Mr. Eyster said that he used the service frequently. All three had traveled to the hearing that evening via bus. Mr. Wade stated his belief that the remaining Board members did not use LTD services enough themselves, and he encouraged them to change their behavior in that regard. Mr. Wade further advocated against the District's planned deletion of the Breeze bus service and stated that in deleting that service, LTD would inadvertently discourage the continued use of many other LTD transit services. Mr. Wade stated that he was an attorney, and he suggested that LTD could temporarily operate under a deficit in order to survive the current funding crisis without cutting services.

Lisa Sunseri, West 18th Avenue, Eugene, stated that she lived near the Churchill area and advocated against the service revisions to Routes 18 and 19. She also hoped that Route 30 and Route 25 would remain unchanged.

George Floyd, (street not given), Eugene, advocated against LTD service reductions in the Lane Community College area and believed that any such service reductions would adversely affect wheelchair users in that part of the community. He advocated for the continued maintenance of LTD transit services at current levels.

Mary Salinas, (street not given), Springfield, thanked LTD for continuing to provide the public with opportunities to respond to the proposed service revisions. She stated her belief that, while she was not directly affected by any of the proposed service cuts, LTD should be planning to expand its services rather than curtail them.

Clark Wilde, Pearl Street, Eugene, introduced himself as the legislative representative of Ya-Po-Ah Terrace and said that the residents of Ya-Po-Ah already had suffered a 70 percent loss of transit services due to previous service reductions and route changes. Mr. Wilde welcomed the newest LTD Board member, Gary Gillespie, and looked forward to his assistance in improving transit services for senior citizens and disabled persons in the community. Mr. Wilde stated his belief that routine economic downturns in the community were not adequate justification for service reductions. He maintained that during the recession, other service organizations had managed to maintain their services through funding increases and cost decreases, and he encouraged LTD to do the same.

John Parman, West 8th Avenue, Eugene, stated his opposition to the service revisions, stating that the LTD Board members had displayed a lack of accountability to the community in several of their comments with regard to the proposed service revisions. He found it irksome that the LTD Board had chosen to use American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to improve its transit facilities rather than maintain its services. Mr. Parman asserted that LTD could temporarily operate under a deficit in order to survive the current funding crisis without cutting services.

Mr. Eyster responded to Mr. Parman's comments. He noted that LTD had actually been able to preserve a significant amount of its services during the Fiscal Year 2009-10 because of ARRA funds that were used to expand LTD's maintenance facility. The ARRA funds had allowed other LTD funds to be repurposed in a manner that preserved services that had previously been marked for reduction or deletion. He added that the ARRA funds had allowed LTD to: 1) reduce the total service reductions during that year from 15 percent to 3 percent; 2) upgrade its maintenance facility in order to meet the demands of increased EmX use; and 3) preserve approximately 25 full-time bus operator positions.

Mr. Eyster noted that LTD representatives had recently visited Washington, D.C., to report on the positive effect that the ARRA funding had on the totality of LTD's system and to advocate for additional federal funding assistance.

Marion Walter, Orchard Street, Eugene, said that she was a long-time rider of LTD buses and asked that, in their discussions, LTD Board members and staff carefully consider the length of wait time for riders that was often necessary to use the buses. She stated her belief that the increased wait times that riders would have to endure due to the service cuts and revisions would adversely affect not only LTD ridership figures but also the lifestyles of bus riders. Ms. Walter further suggested that the service reductions to the regular bus routes would significantly add to the cost of providing RideSource services to those riders inconvenienced by the regular service reductions. Ms. Walter added that the Breeze and EmX service routes were extremely popular not only because of their destinations but because of the frequency with which those trips were made.

Carly Schmidt, (street not given), Eugene, spoke on behalf of the University of Oregon Crew Team and said that she hoped LTD would consider protecting the Route 92 bus to the Lowell area. She stated that Route 92 was used by the crew team to travel to its early morning practices. She stated that her team might encounter serious financial and liability issues if the team members were forced to use their own vehicles or state vehicles as a result of the elimination of the route.

Trudy Rodgers, High Street, Eugene, noted her concern regarding revisions to Routes 66 and 67 and voiced her general support for the continued maintenance of LTD service levels.

Sandy Vaughn, (street not given), Eugene, spoke in her capacity as the Director of the Club Sports program at the University of Oregon. She noted that LTD service over the years had alleviated a significant amount of the risk involved in student transportation for not only the Crew Team but for many other University student groups as well. She advocated for the continuation of Route 92.

Juan Carlos Valle, (street not given), Eugene, stated that the previous service reductions had not proven to be a viable strategy for addressing LTD's budget shortfalls, and he asked why such a strategy was being continued. He suggested that if the LTD Board members and staff were to ride the buses themselves more often, they would learn a great deal about how and why many elements of the LTD transit system should be preserved.

Antares Welch, West 18th Avenue, Eugene, advocated for the preservation of Routes 36 and 30, saying that many of the people who lived on Oak Patch Road between 11th and 18th Avenues relied heavily on Route 30 for their daily activities.

Mel Barnes, (street not given), Springfield, agreed with Pastor Turrell's earlier comments regarding Routes 18 and 19. He further suggested other areas in the community where LTD services might be improved or expanded. Mr. Barnes noted problems with several crosswalk locations along various LTD routes.

Mr. Necker responded to Mr. Barnes comments, noting that the crosswalk problems were under the purview of the City of Eugene's Public Works Division and not LTD. He suggested that Mr. Barnes forward his concerns to the appropriate City officials.

Sandra Shotridge, (street not given), Eugene, commended the LTD operators and customer service employees for their service to the community. Ms. Shotridge noted her concerns about the proposed deletion of Route 30 and stated that the deletion of that route would present serious safety hazards to those who had to traverse that route on foot in order to access alternate routes. She further maintained that the LTD Board members did not ride LTD buses enough to adequately understand the impact of the proposed service revisions.

Rhodes Erickson, Nixon Street, Eugene, suggested that LTD provide a substitute for the midday and Saturday trips on Route 27 that were to be eliminated. He further suggested that Route 28 might be extended to Amazon Station in order to connect with Route 24 and provide ease of access into the downtown Eugene area.

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

Staff Comments: Responding to some comments given during the hearing, Mr. Vobora stated that LTD was legally prohibited under state law from operating under a deficit and legally required under state law to have a balanced budget each year.

Mr. Vobora said that he believed there were certain misunderstandings among members of the public regarding the service reductions and stated that LTD was not seeking to eliminate productive routes. He noted that the LTD Board and staff fully understand the magnitude of the changes represented by the service revisions and of the effects those revisions had upon riders. He added that LTD was doing its best to combine and reorganize its services in order to provide transit coverage to as many areas of the community as possible.

Mr. Vobora stated that the utilization of smaller buses did not generally represent sufficient cost savings as there were a number of other cost factors involved in the operation of each bus route.

Mr. Gillespie noted that he was a long-time rider of the LTD bus system and recognized that the service revisions would present challenges to himself and other users. He added that the Board and staff were not looking forward to making service reductions. He pointed out that the percentage of LTD Board members and staff who regularly used LTD services was actually higher than that of the community at large. He appreciated the comments and input that had been provided by members of the community and encouraged those who had done so to take their concerns to other government offices that address funding for public transit.

Mr. Towery commented that she did not ride LTD buses as often as she liked because she was a parent of two small children. She further commented that regardless of her own transportation choices, the LTD Board had worked tirelessly to understand and address the transit needs of the community as well as the needs of various non-profit and social service groups whose clients depend on LTD. She was pleased that many of the comments raised during the various public

hearings had commended the work of the LTD staff. She assured those present that the public's comments were not falling on deaf ears, and that the LTD Board and staff would continue to respect and carefully consider the needs of the community.

Mr. Eyster expressed that it had been very rewarding to work with the LTD staff as the complex 2010 Annual Route Review had been developed. He stated that LTD would continue to serve the community as efficiently and productively as possible.

Mr. Pangborn noted that the Board would meet on March 10, 2010, to review the public comments and that further discussions would follow at the Board's March 17, 2010, regular Board meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Eyster adjourned the meeting at 7:08 p.m.



Board Secretary

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