

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING
LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING ON FARES AND SERVICE

Thursday, February 11, 2010

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on February 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 service proposals on Thursday, February 11, 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
Greg Evans, Vice President
Dean Kortge, Secretary
Ed Necker, Treasurer
Doris Towery
Gary Gillespie
Mark Pangborn, General Manager
Jeanne Schapper, Clerk of the Board
Lynn Taylor, Minutes Recorder

Absent: Michael Dubick

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Mr. Eyster called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and called the roll.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT: Mr. Eyster stated that it was important for the Board to hear from the public regarding the proposed service reductions. He said that LTD was not happy about reducing service and would prefer to be expanding service. The problem is that, as the economy has worsened, payroll taxes, which are the primary source of operating revenue for the District, have declined as businesses have closed or reduced the number of employees. The Board has an obligation to maintain the long-term financial stability of the District and needs to find ways to balance the budget. He affirmed that the District was fully aware that many of its riders were totally dependent on the bus to conduct their daily activities, and reductions in service would impose a great hardship on them. The Board's dilemma was balancing the need to ensure that the District could continue to provide services while trying to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, imposing a hardship on its riders.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADDITIONAL TO THE AGENDA: None.

PUBLIC HEARING: ON 2010 ANNUAL ROUTE REVIEW: Director of Service Planning, Accessibility, and Marketing Andy Vobora explained that while service reductions were being proposed in three stages (June 2010, September 2010, and January 2011), the District was particularly interested in comments on the changes that would be implemented in June 2010. He emphasized that changes were not based exclusively on productivity of a route as the District had good productivity throughout the entire system. The criteria used to determine changes included the availability of alternative service along lower productivity routes. He used a series of slides to

illustrate fluctuations in payroll tax revenue and ridership growth. He provided an overview of budget cuts and pointed out that 83 percent of the District's revenue went toward operations. A \$6 million budget shortfall in Fiscal Year 2010-11 means that there has to be service reductions.

Mr. Vobora summarized the system-wide affects of the proposed reductions:

- Core routes would continue to operate seven days a week
- Span of service would remain intact
- Corridor service frequency would remain adequate during peak travel times
- Lower productivity service would be eliminated
- Loss of service in some neighborhoods would require a longer walk to get service
- Elimination of summer or mid-day service to some routes

Mr. Vobora explained the changes proposed for implementation in June 2010, and he listed the opportunities that would be available for customers to provide input and ask questions at upcoming open houses and public hearings. He encouraged people to inquire about their specific routes as changes might not be obvious in the informational materials. He noted that the #1 route was not being deleted.

Mr. Eyster stressed that the services changes were proposed, no decisions had been made yet, and comments from riders sometimes resulted in adjustments to proposed changes.

Mr. Eyster opened the public hearing on the service recommendations and explained the process for providing testimony.

Katherine Heer, Willamette Street, Eugene, said that she used the Breeze service constantly and was concerned that it was being eliminated. She added that it did appear that service would continue to be provided in some of the areas that she was concerned about.

K. C. Hanson, Timberline Drive, Eugene, described the variety of ridership on the #36B loop. He currently has to walk about two-thirds of a mile to catch the bus. If route #36B were eliminated, he would need to walk another mile and a half. He said that the loop served many students from elementary school through college level as well as faculty for Lane Community College and the University of Oregon. He works downtown, and being able to ride the bus has reduced his family's vehicles from two to one. Mr. Hanson stated that he would need to purchase another car if he were unable to ride the bus and that others in the neighborhood would likely have to do so as well. He said that a number of riders with disabilities were able to be self-sufficient because of bus service and that traveling the additional distance to catch the bus was not an option. He hoped that commuter-time routing could be an alternative to cutting the entire route.

Wendy Butler-Boyesen, City View, Eugene, observed that only school routes were being cut in the South Eugene area while elsewhere regular routes were being cut. She said that replacing the Breeze service with the #1 would not help people who had to get to work early in the morning. She added that elimination of some routes would increase RideSource usage, which would require additional budget balancing.

D. Maria, Pearl Street, Eugene, remarked that alternative transportation was important to those who were concerned with global warming and that it was essential for those who were elderly or poor. She expressed that she wanted to live downtown so that she could reduce her carbon footprint by walking or using buses for most of her trips. She added that many businesses encouraged employees to use alternative transportation by providing incentives, and she doubted

that those employment routes were being cut. She noted that LTD's mission included providing alternative transportation to benefit the planet and accessible transportation to those who need it, but asked what good her bus pass was if the bus stop was too far away for her to walk. She was able to walk to the Breeze route but not to EmX. She felt that service changes were made without consulting riders and that decisions seemed to follow the path of least resistance.

Leslie Nunez, Pearl Street, Eugene, spoke on behalf of riders who use mobility devices. She resides at YA-PO-AH Terrace, and in that neighborhood there is a high population of people who use wheelchairs, scooters, or walkers when riding the bus. She said that route #1 currently served the area once an hour, which meant that there were only two spaces each hour for mobility devices, and riders sometimes had to wait almost an hour at the downtown station. She added that the #66 bus service to the area was eliminated last fall in favor of the Shadow View Loop off of Coburg Road, which was served 23 times during the day. She asked if some of those trips could be routed to 3rd Avenue instead of 6th Avenue in order to serve her neighborhood better. She had been told that the changed routing of #12 could include a trip to 3rd Avenue and questioned why that option was not included in the proposed changes to #12.

Barbara Oliphant, Pearl Street, Eugene, echoed the comments of the two previous speakers. She urged the Board to think of the elderly when making service reductions. She stated that elderly people had spent many years working and did not want to become inactive; bus service gives them independence and allows them to be helpful to others through volunteer service.

Peggy Robinson, Pearl Street, Eugene, YA-PO-AH Terrace resident, pleaded for continuation of the Breeze as it is a service that is used frequently by her and other residents, many of whom are transit-dependent. She said that it was difficult for some residents to walk to the downtown station to access other buses. She uses the Breeze to get home from evening meetings and classes, and she would be concerned about walking home after dark in the downtown area if the Breeze were to be eliminated.

Norma LeBard, Pearl Street, Eugene, YA-PO-AH Terrace resident, said that friends and relatives visiting Eugene for the first time had always marveled at the City's fine public transportation system, but now it seems that service is disappearing, especially for residents with special mobility needs. She sold her car in 2001 and remained independent until she developed knee problems and required a walker. She rode the bus and then later enrolled in RideSource. She used RideSource for a while but the travel times became too long, leaving her in pain and exhausted. She said that elderly and disabled residents need to feel independent and transit is essential to maintaining that independence. When people are confined they become frustrated and depressed and are more susceptible to illness, which adds to health care costs. She urged the Board not to compound the problems of residents with mobility needs.

Len Clark, Pearl Street, Eugene, YA-PO-AH Terrace resident, stated that he is a frequent user of the Breeze and that the #28 bus service was not used as frequently. He asked the Board to reconsider eliminating the Breeze.

Sharon Montana, Pearl Street, Eugene, YA-PO-AH Terrace resident, said that she did not own a car, and her only transportation is the bus or taxis. She is unable to walk very far and would not be able to get to the downtown station. She added that there were over 200 units at YA-PO-AH Terrace, and few residents have cars.

Marlika O'Connell, Charnelton Street, Eugene, informed the Board that she is a frequent Breeze rider and noted that the service provides access for a diverse population to access other parts of the communities for shopping, entertainment, and other activities. She asked the Board to consider other budget cuts, such as reducing employee hours, instead of eliminating service. She observed that public transportation in other countries was much better. Transit is necessary to people who could or did not drive, and people should not have to wait long periods to ride the bus. She added that the Breeze is a convenient and efficient service and should be preserved.

Paul Broderick, Jefferson Street, Eugene, said that he rides the #25 to church every Sunday. He hoped that no service would have to be cut as every route was important to the riders who needed it. He is disabled and unable to drive; transit is essential to his independence.

Marion Walter, Orchard Street, Eugene, relayed that she has been a bus rider for 32 years, never having driven. She said that cuts to the #27 would rob her of her independence, but realized that cuts would affect those who used the bus to get to work even more. She asked if LTD had considered the impacts of service cuts, such as increased traffic, parking demands, and an increased need for RideSource. She added that taxi service was expensive and unreliable. She encouraged the Board to consider other sources of revenue like contributions from Phil Knight or other large companies.

Josephine Co, West 15th Avenue, Eugene, remarked that she had ridden the bus for 27 years and thanked LTD for the availability of transit services. She said that transit access was a factor when she looked for housing because she did not own a car by choice. She spoke for the students, working class people, and those with disabilities who rode the #76 bus with her by proposing to restore some of the #30 service hours if route #76 service were going to be limited.

Emma Lou Scherf, Peppertree Drive, Eugene, stated that she is a frequent bus rider and is concerned about the elimination of the #30 bus. She suggested a cooperative effort among LTD, local schools, and employers. She also is concerned about people who rely on the Breeze, and she did not understand why a service that was so heavily used was being discontinued.

Mr. Vobora explained that the #30 service was being recombined so that there would be service on West 11th Avenue and West 13th Avenue with the #41 and #43 routes. Also, #36 was being rerouted to cover part of the #30 route further out.

Comment [JS1]: Amended, see minutes of April 21, 2010, Regular Board Meeting.

Mr. Vobora explained that the #30 service was being recombined so that there would be service on West 11th Avenue and West 13th Avenue with the #41 and #43 routes. Also, #36 was being rerouted to cover part of the #30 route further out.

Walter Rodriguez, no address given, thanked LTD administrative employees for taking a pay freeze, but said that LTD drivers had received a pay increase under the union contract. He blamed the union for budget problems and urged people in the audience to confront union leaders for the reduction of service.

Misha Seymour, Lincoln Street, Eugene, asserted that there were no working people in the audience because of the time of the meeting. He believed that there was no need for any service reductions at all since service had been cut by 20 percent three years ago. If the District really needed money, administrative staff should cut their salaries by 50 percent. He said that

PeaceHealth employees only paid \$7.00 per month to ride the bus and he had to pay \$45.00 per month. He suggested that there used to be a nice feeling on the bus, but now it was mean.

Mr. Vobora related that there had been a service reduction of slightly less than 9 percent in 2002 and a 4 percent reduction in 2004; since 2004 some service had been restored until 2009 when there was a 2.7 percent reduction.

Mel Barnes, C Street, Springfield, asked if the District had any prospects for receiving additional federal funding.

Mr. Eyster commented that the District was in a similar position last year with anticipated cuts of about 15 percent; federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided one-time funding that helped reduce service cuts to about 3 percent. He said that Congress was working on a jobs bill and that the District had asked Oregon's congressional delegation to consider transit in that legislation. He reiterated that the federal government had been generous with capital funds, but transit districts needed help with operating expenses.

Rhodes Erickson, Nixon Street, Eugene, a #27 rider, is concerned with disruption of the Breeze service and changes to #66 and #67 and followed by saying that the #25 was useful in getting to the new shopping center on Willamette Street.

Patrice Dotson, West 15th Avenue, Eugene, applauded LTD bus drivers for their customer service. She uses a walker and has found LTD drivers to be extremely considerate and helpful to disabled passengers. She asked what percentage of riders rode the bus for free. She said that if the District needed more revenue she would be willing to pay for service and felt others who rode at no cost would also be willing, if that would help the budget.

Mr. Vobora explained that fares for students and employees who participated in group pass programs were paid for by the schools and businesses. He said that those agreements produced a significant amount of revenue, and the people using those passes were not riding at no cost. He further explained that seniors were previously identified at 62 years of age and above; that was changed to 65 and above and now the only free riders were five years and under or 65 and above. He said that the District chose not to charge a fare for seniors to encourage them to use the bus instead of switching to RideSource, which was very costly. He estimated that if a fare were charged to seniors, it would result in around \$90,000 annually in revenue; the budget shortfall was \$6 million.

Katherine Heer (spoke earlier) asked if the District would consider the frequency of service or number of stops on the Breeze, instead of entirely eliminating the service. She currently rode for free but would be willing to pay if that would help.

Mr. Vobora said that retaining any of the Breeze service would mean finding more cuts elsewhere in the system.

Sharon Montana (spoke earlier) said that she rode for free but was willing to pay a \$2.00 fare as that was better than spending \$9.00 on a taxi.

Mr. Pangborn reiterated that the District established the "honored rider" program because it heard from seniors that it would be a great benefit to them; charging seniors to ride the bus, which by law was half of the regular fare, would not address the District's budget problems.

Marlika O'Connell (spoke earlier) suggested reaching out to people throughout the community to help support LTD in order to avoid cutting services.

Mr. Pangborn remarked that transit districts across the country were experiencing the same budget problems and revenue shortfalls were ongoing, not one-time issues.

Mr. Evans said that transit service was better in other countries because those countries made a commitment to public transportation many years ago. Funding for transit was a national problem, and no district wanted to be faced with cutting service.

Mr. Vobora clarified some of the issues raised during testimony. He said that the District was meeting with elected officials from Eugene, Springfield, and Lane County as part of its commitment to community involvement. He said that South Eugene also would experience service reductions, including #73 and #25. He encouraged people to be aware of the recombining of routes that would fill some of the gaps.

Kevin Clark, no address given, said that he would be willing to pay an additional \$.05 in gas tax to support transit. He volunteers at YA-PO-AH Terrace and sees how active and proud the residents are. Most did not own cars, and transit service was essential to their independence. He said that it would be difficult for most residents to walk any distance to access transportation and hoped that there was a way to maintain their use of buses.

Sharon Montana (spoke earlier) said that she would be willing to pay half fare, or even full fare, to ride the bus instead of paying much more to use a taxi.

Mr. Eyster thanked everyone who attended the meeting and those who spoke to the Board. He closed the public hearing.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.



Board Secretary