

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING/WORK SESSION

Monday, May 11, 2009

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on May 7, 2009, 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/work session on Monday, May 11, 2009, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in the LTD Board Room at 3500 East 17th Avenue, Eugene.

Present: Mike Eyster, President
Greg Evans, Vice President
Michael Dubick
Dean Kortge
Ed Necker
Doris Towery
Tammy Fitch, EmX Steering Committee
Sonny Chickering, EmX Steering Committee
Mark Pangborn, General Manager
Jeanne Schapper, Clerk of the Board
Lynn Taylor, Minutes Recorder

Absent: Gerry Gaydos

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – Mr. Eyster convened the meeting and called the roll. He welcomed EmX Steering Committee members Tammy Fitch and Sonny Chickering.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT – Mr. Eyster thanked Board members for their outreach efforts to the Eugene City Councilors to discuss the West Eugene EmX Extension. He announced that LTD had been awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association. It is the fourteenth year that LTD has received the award.

Mr. Eyster noted that recent articles in *The Register-Guard* had described LTD's efforts to communicate with the public about the West Eugene EmX Extension and that the District is seeking the public's input on the University of Oregon bus service.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA – None.

BOARD CALENDARS – Mr. Pangborn noted that an employee potluck and barbecue would be held on May 28, and that the Board was invited to attend. He also remarked that an LTD Bus Operator Roadeo and Barbeque was scheduled for Sunday, July 19, and encouraged

Board members to stop by and watch the competition. He announced that LTD offices would be closed on May 25 and July 3 for holidays, but that transit services would continue.

WORK SESSION

West Eugene EmX Extension Project Update – Director of Planning and Development Tom Schwetz stated that the project's Purpose and Need Statement had been revised slightly at the request of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), which is a cooperating agency. He said that the revised language clarified that the implementation of a high-capacity public transportation service would utilize the adopted high-capacity transit mode identified in the Regional Transportation Plan, rather than specifying bus rapid transit (BRT). The USACE was concerned about the appearance that a conclusion had already been reached. Because the change was minor and meant to clarify the statement, it did not require formal adoption by the LTD Board.

Mr. Schwetz reviewed changes to the Amazon Alignment that eliminated the section west of Buck Street from consideration. Instead, the Amazon Alignment would connect with the West 11th Avenue Alignment Alternative at about Seneca Road. He said that these changes were made because the cost of a bridge to the south side of the channel would be very high, and the ridership would likely be low west of Buck Street due to a low level of development in the vicinity of the channel.

Mr. Schwetz stated that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement would be issued in January 2010, and a locally preferred alternative decision would be made approximately a year after that.

Eugene City Council Briefing on West Eugene EmX Extension Project – Mr. Schwetz presented a PowerPoint presentation that would be used to provide an update to the Eugene City Council on the status of the West Eugene EmX Extension project. He explained that the objective of the update was to establish a foundation for the Council to prepare its members for making a decision on a locally preferred alternative. He invited feedback from Board members on the information that would be presented.

Mr. Eyster proposed that the elements of BRT should be identified as an industry standard and not just as LTD's preferences.

Mr. Necker questioned whether the City of Origin and Destination slide should highlight the increase in Springfield trips. Mr. Schwetz said that the important message was the regional nature of transit. Mr. Pangborn noted that almost 80 percent of trips on the system included Eugene travel.

Mr. Kortge felt that there should be less effort in selling the concept of BRT in the presentation. He added that several of the slides that addressed the benefits of BRT, particularly increased EmX ridership, should be eliminated. He was concerned that particular information could deflect the discussion from the issues of selecting a preferred alternative, particularly if the question of free ridership on EmX was raised.

Mr. Eyster pointed out that 90 percent of EmX riders had paid a fare.

Mr. Evans said that the presentation should speak to economic development and transit-oriented development. It should also speak to the potential for BRT to be a specific catalyst for economic development and redevelopment outside the urban core and to become a factor in the revitalization of residential areas.

Mr. Eyster suggested moving high frequency service to the second position on the Elements of BRT slide as that, and exclusive transitways were the most important components.

Mr. Kortge added that the increase of Franklin EmX ridership versus the #11 route was a powerful statistic and should be stressed as that.

Several Board members recommended changing the order of objectives on the EmX Contributions to Addressing Key Community Issues slide by listing in the following order, with the remaining objectives in no particular order:

- Reducing corridor-level congestion
- Increasing a region's attractiveness for economic development
- Developing sustainable regional mobility

Mr. Evans mentioned that a point that had been overlooked was the concept of BRT and that EmX mimicks the best attributes of light rail. Eugene does not have sufficient density at this point in time to sustain light rail, but BRT provided the capacity to move people rapidly through corridors in a similar manner. He advised that the Council needed to understand why light rail was not feasible and that the region needed a system that was appropriate for its size and density.

Ms. Fitch said that, in order to keep people engaged, it was important to create a balance between an executive summary and a detailed report.

Mr. Kortge suggested eliminating the slide on Creating Active Communities. He proposed that there should be a focused discussion of dedicated right-of-way, key criteria for selecting an alternative, and the decision-making process.

Mr. Evans remarked that the Creating Active Communities slide could address increasing access to transportation so that transit services could be expanded into more areas in the region.

In response to a question from Ms. Fitch, Mr. Schwetz said that the purpose of the presentation to the City Council was to ground councilors in the elements of BRT, update them on the status of the project, and determine how the Council would like to move toward a decision on a locally preferred alternative.

Mr. Kortge declared that the presentation still appeared to be more of a sales pitch. The intention of the presentation needed to be stated more clearly.

Ms. Fitch agreed that the beginning of the presentation should focus on what the Council would be asked to do.

Mr. Evans wanted to be able to synergize LTD's goals and objectives with the goals and objectives of the City Council and relate how the BRT vision would meet everyone's needs.

Mr. Dubick said that it was important for councilors to have information available to them that helped them discuss the project with constituents and feel comfortable defending the decision to pursue a BRT corridor in West Eugene.

Mr. Eyster commented that the presentation's format and content were based on advice to focus on the big picture of goals and objectives of BRT, and to stress that it was not about improving LTD; although he agreed that the presentation could be streamlined.

Mr. Necker suggested using a handout with talking points about the benefits of BRT.

Mr. Evans commented that there should be a bulleted list of points that identified BRT as a transportation solution for density, congestion, sustainability, and moving people rapidly and efficiently to their destinations.

Mr. Eyster listed benefits such as reducing vehicle miles traveled, reducing congestion, reducing dependence on oil, reducing greenhouse gases, contributing to economic development, contributing to effective land use, and making it easier for many people to use transit.

Mr. Schwetz said that the West Eugene Collaborative would be another element in the conversation. His memorandum to the Council tied the EmX Extension to the Collaborative's recommendations. The memo detailed how that the processes were consistent and the degree to which the project was compatible with the Collaborative's vision and the Council's goals. He stated that one option for the decision-making process was to establish a committee with representatives from the City Council, the LTD Board, and the Metropolitan Policy Committee, all of which would have to make a joint decision on a locally preferred alternative; however, the City should design a process that will meet its needs.

Mr. Dubick expressed concern that there could be a misperception that changes made to the Amazon Alternative would imply favor for a particular alternative. He said that it should be stressed that LTD was neutral regarding an alternative.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTHS – MAY AND JUNE 2009 – Director of Transit Operations Mark Johnson introduced Bus Operator Josh Schmit as the May 2009 Employee of the Month and Customer Service Representative Beth Dunlap as the June 2009 Employee of the Month. Mr. Johnson described the qualities that resulted in their nominations and commended them for their service to the District.

Mr. Eyster presented Mr. Schmit and Ms. Dunlap with their awards. He congratulated them on behalf of the Board and thanked them for their service.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Josef Siekiel-Zdzienicki, Eugene, commented that LTD needed to defuse the issue of free EmX ridership as it was a frequent topic of discussion in the community. He noted that the City of Eugene had extended the multi-unit property tax exemption to West 6th and 7th avenues and the Trainsong neighborhood, which would encourage development on the West 6th and 7th Avenues Alternative. He asked if the change to the Purpose and Need Statement required a public hearing even though it was a minor amendment. Mr. Schwetz replied that a hearing was not necessary because the change was simply a clarification.

Mr. Siekiel-Zdzienicki asked how the 20-year ridership projection in the draft environmental impact statement was determined. He said that the Lane County Planning Commission was addressing the issue of population forecasts because the forecast numbers provided by Portland State University were lower than Lane Council of Governments' forecast numbers. Mr. Schwetz replied that a forecast had not yet been developed, but when it was, the most current forecast would be used.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AT THIS MEETING

Legislative Update – Assistant General Manager Stefano Viggiano provided a status report on three key legislative issues: Elderly and Disabled (E&D) Transportation funding, West Eugene EmX funding, and the payroll tax.

Mr. Viggiano reported that LTD had requested \$30 million in lottery funds for the local match to federal funds to build the West Eugene corridor. That legislation, House Bill 2396, was currently in a subcommittee of the Joint Ways and Means Committee and it appeared that lottery fund requests would be dealt with towards the end of the legislative session. He felt that LTD's request had an advantage because the amount requested in the current biennium was small, with most of the funds requested in the next two bienniums. He noted that a key person on the Committee was Representative Nancy Nathanson.

Mr. Viggiano explained that the payroll tax had been separated from the rest of the transportation bill and was now by itself in Senate Bill 34. The bill had been passed by the full Senate and had moved to the House for consideration. He said that prospects for the bill were positive, although action might be deferred until the other elements of the governor's jobs and transportation legislation had moved forward. A major issue in the transportation package was an increase to the gas tax, and the House was considering a six-cent increase, which was larger than the governor's proposal.

Mr. Viggiano stated that E&D funding was a statewide priority, and the intent was to obtain an additional \$15 million in funding, which would provide LTD with about \$1 million annually. He added that the original request was for a 7-cent increase in the tobacco tax. However, the problem with the tobacco tax was a reduction in consumption that would result due to the 61-cent increase in federal tax. It would then require a similar increase in the state's tax just to offset the loss of revenue from lower consumption.

Mr. Viggiano added that a seven-cent tax would net about \$400,000 annually for LTD; originally the estimate was about \$1 million, however, the revenue total has been reduced due to the federal 61 cent increase implemented earlier this year. He said that He said that if the state imposed a similar cap, it could generate significant revenue. Another option for revenue is the flexible federal money under the Surface Transportation Program.

He also mentioned that the payroll tax legislation included both an increase in the tax and the acceleration rate. He remarked that the District would need to demonstrate that the economy could support an accelerated increase, and with the current financial situation, it was doubtful that an increase could occur in 2010.

Mr. Kortge asked what would happen if funds for the EmX Extension local match were not forthcoming. Mr. Viggiano replied that the project could not move forward without a local match from sources other than the District's general fund.

Mr. Pangborn remarked that \$1.6 to 1.8 million were required for the next biennium, but that LTD wanted a commitment for the full match in order to leverage federal funds. He said that if only funds for the next biennium were authorized, the District could approach the legislature in 2011 for the remaining match, or ask the local community to consider a bond measure to provide the match.

Mr. Viggiano informed the Board that the legislature had been well-educated by transit districts about the need for E&D funding and members were generally supportive. He was optimistic that some additional funding would be available.

ADJOURNMENT - Mr. Eyster adjourned the meeting at 7 p.m.

Board Secretary