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## LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT SPECIAL BOARD MEETING/WORK SESSION

Monday, July 10, 2006  
7 p.m.

Springfield City Council Chambers  
225 Fifth Street, Springfield

### A G E N D A

Page No.

- |      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| I.   | CALL TO ORDER                                 |    |
| II.  | ROLL CALL                                     |    |
|      | Ban _____ Davis _____ Eyster _____ Gant _____ |    |
|      | Gaydos _____ Kortge _____ (Vacancy) _____     |    |
| III. | PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT        |    |
| IV.  | WORK SESSION: COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT            | 02 |
| V.   | WORK SESSION: MPO RESPONSIBILITY              | 16 |
| VI.  | BOARD CORRESPONDENCE                          | 19 |
| VII. | ADJOURNMENT                                   |    |

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## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

- DATE OF MEETING:** July 10, 2006
- ITEM TITLE:** INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT REPORT
- PREPARED BY:** Andy Vobora, Director of Marketing and Communications
- ACTION REQUESTED:** For information and feedback
- BACKGROUND:** As part of the District's Human Resources plan, *Looking to the Future*, LTD contracted with The Ulum Group to perform an internal communications audit. The audit was designed to elicit responses from as many employees as possible. To accomplish this goal, a number of survey techniques were employed:
- Department director and key managerial interviews. These one-on-one interviews provided an opportunity for the researchers to hear from supervisors about their experiences related to information flow within the District.
  - One-on-one interviews with selected employees who were seen as communicators within employee ranks. These are people to whom other employees look for information.
  - Focus groups within major functional areas. These included two bus operator groups, one maintenance group, and one administration/ Customer Service Center group.
- Each of these face-to-face interviews was designed to assist the researchers in developing a written survey instrument that would be provided to each employee. Written surveys were distributed by department directors, and employees were given an opportunity to win prizes if they turned in a completed survey.
- The Leadership Council and Board Human Resources Committee have met with staff and Ulum Group representatives to review the results and recommendations. Staff will be joined by the researchers to present the research and review recommendations.
- RESULTS OF RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Final plans may be updated to reflect changes desired by the Board.
- ATTACHMENT:** Summary report from The Ulum Group.
- PROPOSED MOTION:** None



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**Internal Communications Audit  
for the  
Lane Transit District**

**Prepared by Beverly Mayhew and Amber Williamson  
June 2006**

## Introduction

When we began this project several months ago, we were of mixed minds about what we'd find as we explored what people thought about the state of employee communications at LTD. On one hand, LTD was just coming off a rollercoaster period in its history – contentious union negotiations, the brief, but stressful strike and the transition from Ken Hamm to Mark Pangborn as General Manager. One of those factors alone could potentially trigger employee unrest and dissatisfaction with a host of internal activities, including communications; all three happening close on the heels of one another could likely lead to serious internal morale and communication issues.

On the other hand, it's been our experience that companies typically settle back to the proverbial bell curve pattern after a stressful period with most employees finding a place that allows them to "get along/go along." It's rare to find a company that is in a perpetual state of turmoil. With the exception of the outliers on either side of the curve, most employees recognize the need to mold their work life into something that is positive, or at least neutral, in order to survive.

We did anticipate that this audit would be more than simply a cut-and-dried analysis of *Inside Lane* or the communication style of individuals across departments. We knew that talking to staff at all levels would be like putting a finger on the pulse of the organization – that our discussions would take us on a circuitous route that touched on many subjects besides the one at hand. And that's exactly what happened. But it is those twists and turns in conversations, some off-topic, some on, that helped to paint a fairly clear picture about the status of internal communication and to lead to recommendations for improvement.

What we were after with this audit was pretty straightforward: Are employees receiving the information they need to do their jobs with a sense of security and purpose? Do they feel the current communication methods work well? Is the information received trusted? To get answers to these and other questions, we reviewed existing communications tools/activities, personal communications and the general attitude across the organization about internal communications.

Specifically, we conducted:

- Interviews with members of the Leadership Council to determine attitudes and beliefs about communications as well as individual styles and preferences.
- An analysis of all of LTD's existing internal communication tools and activities to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Employee interviews via focus groups composed of staff from specific departments – bus operators (two groups), administration (one group) and maintenance (one group).
- One-on-one interviews with a cross-section of employees, randomly selected within stratified groups.
- An all-employee survey to quantify issues that arose during the focus groups and one-on-one interviews, to test for the effectiveness of the current communications tools, to gain an overall sense of how employees feel about the level and effectiveness of the current communications environment and to test new ideas about improving communications.

As you read through the results of the various research activities, you'll see that in general LTD employees seem to fit into the second scenario described above. Staff is ready to put the strike and strife of the past year behind them. They are seeking ways to be positive and "look on the bright side;" it's fair to say that there seems to be a level of optimism, or at least hopefulness about the future at (and of) LTD. Of course, there are outliers, both individuals and departments, and there are criticisms and concerns, but we found the opportunity for improving morale and operational effectiveness through communication to be quite rich.

The challenge is to make the necessary adjustments to communications now, while the window is open and people are receptive. Improving communications certainly won't mitigate concerns people may have about their personal back-pocket issues such as wages and benefits, but it can serve to increase the chance for collaboration and a speedier resolution of conflicts that currently exist or that may likely appear with time.

## **Research**

### **I. Review Existing Internal Communication Tools**

The Ulum Group reviewed and analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the following internal communication tools currently used by LTD:

- *Inside Lane*
- Internal Memos
- Internal E-mails
- Posters
- Board and Leadership Council Minutes

***Inside Lane:*** LTD's employee newsletter, *Inside Lane*, is published monthly and distributed to all LTD employees. The newsletter has a four-page, full-color layout that incorporates photos and graphics. Regular features include "Above and Beyond," which highlights employees who went the extra mile while performing their jobs, "Rumor Has It," which provides answers to rumors growing along LTD's grapevines, a review of recent accidents, employee anniversaries, and kudos and congratulations sections. In an effort to be of greater value and interest to employees, the *Inside Lane* was fairly recently upgraded and refined and now includes more articles of substance, including a regular column by Mark Pangborn.

**Internal Memos:** Memos are widely used by LTD's management to communicate policies and procedures, staff announcements, traffic conditions and other current LTD news-related topics. In general, memos are one to two pages long and are distributed to employees via e-mail, mailboxes and bulletin boards. Memos generally are very text-heavy and include limited graphics. With the exception of the date and subject line, there is little differentiation between memos in terms of look. Scanning the bulletin board in the operator's area, it is difficult to tell one memo from another unless reviewed closely.

**Internal E-mails:** E-mail is primarily used among administration employees. Only a handful of operators have access to LTD e-mail accounts (those who are operator trainers.) E-mail messages contain work-related and personal information. Not surprisingly, employees who have e-mail rely

on it heavily for internal communications; many of those who don't have it wish they did; others couldn't be bothered.

**Posters:** Posters are effectively used to primarily promote human resource and health and wellness programs at LTD. Posters are professionally designed and displayed in high traffic areas at LTD facilities.

**Board and Leadership Council Minutes:** These are sent to staff via e-mail and posted on clipboards in other employee areas. They were very infrequently mentioned as a valuable source of information.

## **II. Best Practice Research of National Transit District Internal Communications**

The following national transit districts were contacted for internal communications best practice research:

- Pierce Transit of Tacoma, Wash.
- Utah Transit of Salt Lake City, Utah
- Tri-Met of Portland, Ore.
- Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority of Atlanta, Ga.
- Memphis Area Transit Authority of Memphis, Tenn.
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority of Boston, Mass.
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority of Santa Clara County, Ca.
- Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority of R.I.

Despite multiple attempts at receiving information relating to transit authority internal communication policies and procedures from the above organizations, very little was obtained. We are disappointed by the lack of response from LTD's peer organizations.

## **III. Management Interviews**

LTD's top management employees were interviewed to determine attitudes and beliefs about internal communications as well as individual communication styles and preferences. Those interviewed include:

- Tom Brush, interim director of maintenance
- Diane Hellekson, director of finance
- Carol James, accounting manager
- Mark Johnson, director of transit operations
- Linda Lynch, government relations manager
- Mary Neidig, human relations manager
- Mark Pangborn, general manager
- Steve Parrott, information technology manager
- Sue Quick, transit services manager
- Charlie Simmons, facilities manager
- Jo Sullivan, administrative services manager and clerk to LTD's Board of Directors
- George Trauger, maintenance supervisor
- Stefano Viggiano, director of development services
- Andy Vobora, director of marketing and communications.

Interviews with LTD's top management employees paint an optimistic picture for internal communications at LTD. While acknowledging that LTD has specific challenges in communicating

with employees, managers identified many opportunities for improving future communications. It's obvious from their thoughtful answers that LTD's top management understands the importance of good internal communications and is committed to making changes for improvement.

Generally, LTD's top management employees describe themselves as being open, direct, honest, informal and approachable communicators. Most management employees prefer verbal communication (talking directly with employees) to written communication. Managers feel they have the necessary skills to communicate with their staff but are open to communication training, if needed.

Managers often supplement LTD's current communication vehicles with staff meetings, e-mails and face-to-face discussions. Department-specific topics are often communicated by e-mail and during staff meetings. Managers feel communication with their boss is open and good, citing frequent e-mails, one-on-one discussions and meetings as ways they frequently communicate.

LTD's culture of being open and providing lots of information to employees was identified as strengths for internal communications at the organization. Identified weaknesses include the perception that communication methods and messages vary by department and job function and the organization's difficulty in communicating its overarching vision.

Management employees feel that LTD's communication environment is both formal and informal; many expressed that top-down communication is more formal with operators than with employees in other departments. The "grapevine" at LTD, which spreads word-of-mouth communication, is viewed as being strong, but not necessarily accurate.

The *Inside Lane* is viewed as effective, informative and well received by employees. Management employees recognize the recent effort to use the newsletter more effectively and feel it helps LTD develop a sense of community. Memos are seen as an effective way to communicate with employees, but frustration was expressed with bulletin boards that are stuffed with outdated memos.

Most managers feel employees trust the communication they receive from LTD's management team. Bus operators are viewed as being the least trusting group of employees of internal messages.

Managers' answers were mixed in responding to the question, "are messages from LTD's executive leadership clear and consistent?" Some managers feel that information is over-simplified while others cite a lack of consistency in communication within the organization.

Issues considered by managers to be most important to communicate include:

- Issues that impact the budget,
- Where LTD's at, where LTD's going and why,
- LTD cares for its employees and employees ideas/thoughts are heard,
- Successes of listening to feedback and making changes based on that feedback.

Management employee's ideas for improving internal communication include:

- Focus information,
- Organize bulletin boards,
- Build trust over time,
- Communicate regularly with employees,

- Identify opportunities for more one-on-one, verbal communications with employees,
- Find ways to lighten the atmosphere,
- Focus on customer service; treat employees as customers,
- Create a comprehensive plan on what it means to communicate effectively,
- Drop fears; don't be afraid to communicate with employees,
- Use paycheck stuffers more frequently to communicate with employees,
- Develop an Intranet for employees and provide more computer work stations for operators,
- Provide opportunities for the leadership council to interact directly with employees (e.g., weekly visits with employees in the operator lounges.)

(See Appendix A for interview questions and a compilation of all responses.)

#### **IV. One-on-One Employee Interviews**

LTD employees, selected randomly from bus operator, maintenance, administration and customer service departments, were interviewed to gain better understanding of internal communication strengths and challenges. Employee names are withheld to ensure confidentiality of their comments.

Notes from one-on-one interviews with employees revealed several unique ideas for improving LTD's internal communications. Internal communication improvement ideas include:

- Develop an Intranet for employees,
- Install more computer terminals in the operator break room,
- Frequently communicate face-to-face with employees to foster trust-based relationships,
- Use text messaging to communicate with operators,
- Managers should spend more time in the operator break room and riding buses,
- Give employees the right to use common sense when handling customer complaints,
- Acknowledge and respect each other; operators need to feel valued,
- Make LTD Board meetings friendlier and more welcoming,
- Plan organization-wide events,
- Stick to the facts when communicating.

Leading to those solutions, employees evaluated the effectiveness of current communication methods and messages.

- Staff meetings, e-mail and board meetings were described as the primary ways LTD communicates information to its employees.
- Employees identified tension between management, bus operators and the public, and expressed frustration over management's lack of follow-through in communication. Several employees mentioned that they first heard about LTD's latest general manager appointment in *The Register-Guard*.
- The *Inside Lane* is informational and widely read. Employees like the newsletter's accident reports and rumor control features. Although they concede it's recently been improved, some employees feel the newsletter contains too much "fluff" and needs to incorporate more news items. One employee felt it should be published more frequently.
- Bulletin boards are seen as being too cluttered with information.
- Verbal communication to operators from supervisors is often inconsistent.
- Employees don't trust the communication they receive from LTD's management; some question management's "real agenda," and feel they're often not told the whole story.



- Employees said most internally communicated messages are negative or manipulative. They would like to see more positive information and explanation of decisions reached.
- Employees are interested in a fresh approach to communication and are willing to let go of past grievances.

(See Appendix B for interview questions and a compilation of all responses.)

## V. Department Focus Groups

Department-specific focus groups were held to gain a better understanding of the current internal communications environment among each department. Between five and eight randomly selected employees participated in each group. Bus operators participated in two focus groups due to the comparatively large number of employees in that department; maintenance and administration/customer service departments participated in one focus group each.

- **Bus Operator Focus Groups:** The following summarizes anecdotal comments collected during the operator focus groups.
  - Memos posted on bulletin boards and distributed in employee mailboxes are cumbersome for employees; the bulletin boards contain lots of outdated information and are often cluttered, making it difficult for employees to determine what's new and what's old.
  - Face-to-face meetings with supervisors are scarce and usually in a negative context. Supervisors often cut into employees break and personal time for discussions. Also, frustration was expressed over having to use break and personal time to resolve complaint cards.
  - Recent updates to the *Inside Lane* were well received by employees.
  - Information provided in payroll stubs is viewed as irrelevant.
  - A recommendation was made to insert information on bus operators' job responsibilities and challenges in the Rider's Digest. Also, employees asked that LTD prompt customers to report positive interactions with their drivers, not just negative.
  - Some employees would like an LTD e-mail account and the ability to check that account from home. Also, employees would like additional computer terminals installed in their employee lounge.
  - Employees requested that meetings be held at varied times to allow employees who work outside the regular day shift the opportunity to attend.
  - Employees enjoy occasional light-hearted messages distributed on their radios.
  - Frustration was expressed over first learning about LTD's new general manager appointment from The Register-Guard.
  - More one-on-one communication opportunities with supervisors and upper management would be appreciated.
  - Communication between bus operators and the maintenance departments sometimes breaks down.
  - Employees would like route planners to spend a day riding the bus with operators.
- **Administration/Customer Service Focus Group:** The following summarizes anecdotal comments collected during the administration/customer service focus group.
  - Most internal communication is distributed via e-mail; the large volume of e-mails received is sometimes cumbersome to employees.

- Posters are viewed as being reminders of information previously communicated through different channels, and mainly directed to employees working night shift.
  - It was recommended to post current and past issues of the *Inside Lane* on an Intranet for employees.
  - Human resource information and policies are communicated via e-mail and payroll stubs; payroll stubs are viewed as an ineffective way to communicate since employees who directly deposit their payroll checks may not open their stubs for several weeks.
  - Verbal communication opportunities identified include staff meetings and listening sessions.
  - Employees identified the following issues and topics they'd like to be internally communicated:
    - Dissent isn't only accepted, but encouraged,
    - Prospective new projects and services.
  - Employees expressed frustration for not being recognized for offering new ideas and management's lack of follow-through with new ideas. Also, a lack of consistency in internal communication was identified among each departments; employees claim certain departments are privy to more information than others.
- **Maintenance Focus Group:** The following summarizes anecdotal comments collected during the maintenance focus group.
- Employees feel they receive very little internal communication.
  - Employees identified bulletin boards and verbal communication from bus operators as being their main modes of receiving internal communication.
  - Employees attributed lack of internal communication to the vacant supervisor position.
  - Frustration was expressed over first learning about LTD's new general manager appointment from The Register-Guard. Night shift employees also feel like they are forgotten or left out (an example was given of receiving leftover food from an employee appreciation event, which was scheduled during the day.)
  - Most employees don't have the opportunity to check e-mail or log onto the Internet.
  - Information presented during maintenance staff meetings seems tailored only to mechanics; "petty" topics should be cleared from the meeting agenda.
  - Employees would like more information on where LTD's money is coming from and how it's planned to be used.
  - Employees identified the following issues and topics they'd like to be internally communicated:
    - Honesty is respect
    - Trust needs to be rebuilt
  - The benefit fair is viewed as a successful mode of communication.
  - Employees were unaware of the Board listening sessions.
  - Morale among maintenance employees was classified as low and bad.

*(See Appendix C for the complete transcription of focus group notes.)*

## **VI. All-Employee Survey**

A written survey was distributed to all LTD employees (hard copy, not e-mail) to quantify issues that arose during the employee interviews and department focus groups, evaluate the effectiveness of current internal communication tools and test new ideas for improving communications. Answers and personal information provided by employees on the survey remain confidential.

Employees were offered the chance to win a \$25 gift card or an 18-count package of premium burgers, as incentives to complete the survey. Advanced Marketing Research analyzed data collected from the survey.

The Ulum Group received completed or partially completed surveys from 166 LTD employees. *A complete analysis of data collected from the survey, including an executive summary and data tables, is provided in Appendix D.*

Highlights from the survey analysis include:

### ***Inside Lane***

- 93 percent of LTD employees read the *Inside Lane*.
- 83 percent feel the *Inside Lane* Provides work-related information that is valuable to them.
- 38 percent of those who do not feel the *Inside Lane* provides work-related information feel that it is not relevant to them.

### **Posters**

- 94 percent of LTD employees read posters posted around the workplace.
- 88 percent feel posters provide work-related information.
- 32 percent of those who do not feel posters provide valuable work-related information feel there are too many posted.

### **Memos**

- 80 percent of employees regularly read memos posted on bulletin boards at LTD.
- 75 percent feel memos are effective in communicating work-related information.
- 15 percent of those who do not feel the memos are effective in communicating work-related information feel there are too many posted.

### **Payroll Stubs**

- 91 percent of employees read LTD-related information included with payroll stubs.
- 80 percent feel that information included with payroll stubs provides valuable work-related information.
- 53 percent of those who do not feel the information included with payroll stubs provides valuable work-related information feel it is not relevant or interesting to them.

### **Communication Overview**

- 90 percent of LTD employees read the *Inside Lane*, posters, memos and payroll stub information.
- Posters are felt to be the most valuable way to get work-related information.
- Posters and memos could be make more effective if they were posted in a timely manner and if old postings were routinely removed.

### **Favorite *Inside Lane* Feature**

- 39 percent of LTD employees selected “review of recent accidents” as their favorite *Inside Lane* feature, followed by “Rumor Has It...” (28 percent), “Above and Beyond” (20 percent), “human relations information (18 percent), “Message from LTD’s General Manager” (16 percent), and “employee anniversaries” (7 percent). The percentages above exceed 100 percent because some respondents circled more than one answer.

### **Internet & E-mail**

- 82 percent of LTD employees have access to the Internet at home.
- 66 percent of those who answered the question, “If computers were more accessible at work, I would log on to check work-related e-mail,” said “yes.”
- 26 percent of those who do not feel that e-mail is an effective method of communicating don’t use or like computers.

### **Internal Communication**

- The majority of LTD employees feel they are able to communicate effectively with their supervisor.
- The majority of LTD employees selected either “agree” or “neutral” on feeling that grapevine of word-of-mouth communication is strong, on trusting communication they receive from LTD’s management, and on feeling there are adequate ways for their voice to be heard.
- The majority of LTD employees selected “neutral” on feeling messages from LTD’s executive leadership are clear and consistent.

### **Improving Communication**

- 55 percent of LTD employees feel the most important thing LTD can do to improve communications with employees is to improve communications among departments; 22 percent feel LTD should provide more opportunities to meet with LTD’s general manager and other members of the leadership council; 16 percent feel LTD should expand use of e-mail among all employees; 10 percent feel there should be more opportunities to speak one-on-one with supervisors; 8 percent feel there should be more staff meetings; and 5 percent feel LTD should publish the *Inside Lane* more frequently.

### **Summary Discussion**

As noted in an earlier section, each of the research components served to build on one another. The management interviews set the initial framework for us to test key assumptions and ideas in the focus groups with non-management employees; the focus groups in turn gave us new information and ideas to test in a more intimate, one-on-one environment, and then the all-employee survey allowed us to quantify what we learned in the qualitative work.

In a nutshell, LTD employs all of the right communications tools in the proverbial communications toolkit. Communications vehicles run the gamut from oral (personal and group meetings) to written (memos, e-mails, minutes and newsletter) to visual (posters). Moreover, with the exception of a couple of work areas, the communication mix works quite well. The issue of trust is a bit of a mixed bag, and with one exception, people feel like they have the information they need to do their jobs well.

Intra-department communications came across in virtually every segment of the audit as needing improvement. Employees felt that “if they only knew” what X department was doing, they could be more efficient, or if they had the opportunity to contribute to a process that started in another department but ultimately affected their work, they could be far more responsive.

The work area with the most significant communication issues is the maintenance/fleet workers, at least those on the evening and night shifts. The focus group with this group painted a picture of employees who were distrustful of management (and of the communications from management); they felt very disconnected from the organization as a whole. This work group's lack of participation in the all-employee survey was a further indication of its disassociation. Of course, part of this response can be attributed to the constraints of working in off hours – by the very nature of the late hours, they are cut off from management and the goings-on in the administrative building. Part of the response is also from the group's perceived start and stop of an overall "plan" or "vision" for the department, a plan that was initiated by the previous director. The lack of a permanent leader for the group is no doubt the most significant contributing factor and it's our belief that the situation will be improved greatly once a new director is named.

Surprisingly, given the challenges of the recent year, bus operators as a whole are generally satisfied with internal communication. There are challenges to be sure, again in part by the nature of their off-site work, but not insurmountable by any means. In part a communications issue and in part an employee relations issue, bus operators appear to have a stronger need for recognition for their work than do the other groups.

As noted in the introduction, the change at the highest level of the organization coupled with the generally positive status quo, provides a ripe opportunity to make needed adjustments in internal communications before the next round of bargaining sessions begins.

### **Recommendations to Improve Internal Communications**

Following are specific recommendations culled from information gathered in the audit as well as general best practices in internal communications.

#### General recommendations:

- Craft a written communications philosophy articulating the organization's position of communication among the other management priorities and the structure of the communication function within the organization. This should be developed and approved at the Leadership Council level, discussed carefully with all existing and newly hired staff in supervisory roles and shared with all staff.
- Consider communication training for all management/supervisory staff who have direct reports. A good training curriculum can help identify weaknesses in individual styles and provide useful tips for improvement. Use the communications philosophy to set the tone for the training.
- Whether in articles in *Inside Lane* or during staff meetings, communicate the *whys* of a decision. Employees will feel more ownership for a decision, and can in turn be better external ambassadors, if they understand the process or background that went into a decision.
- Consider devoting the last 10 minutes of every Leadership Council meeting to communication, deciding on key points/messages that all participants will share with staff. This will help to ensure the consistency of messages from management.

- Develop a process among work units to share relevant information to other departments affected. There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to fix intra-department communication, but perhaps each department can first identify those departments that are most affected by their work and then together identify ways to share information back and forth.
- Formally increase the expectations at levels of management to spend more time out of the office, on all shifts, meeting with, eating with, riding the bus with, informally chatting with employees. *This is one of the most important recommendations* and it does not apply simply to the general manager. Employees would like to know all members of the Leadership Council. Consider this an expectation of the board as well.
- Seek more opportunities for one-on-one, employee-to-management communication.

#### Recommendations for existing communication tools:

- Develop a system to organize the memos, particularly aimed at bus operators, so that with a quick glance, readers can identify the most recent and top priority messages. Something as simple as writing the date in very large font size at the top of each memo and/or using a color-coding system to identify specific topics, reserving one color for MUST READ documents. Consider soliciting ideas from a small group of interested bus operators.
- Use posters more selectively. Draw attention to any new posters in the *Inside Lane*.
- Solicit employee authors for features in *Inside Lane*. Rotate among departments.
- Develop a template for a one-page edition of the *Inside Lane* to communicate late breaking/high priority communication – perhaps called the *Fast Lane*. Distribute immediately to all areas whose employees do not have access to computers and ensuring that evening/night shift employees see the communication upon arrival for their shift.

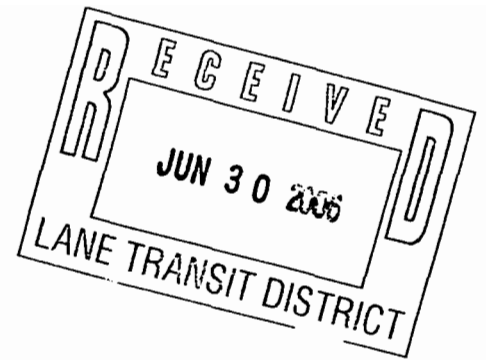
#### Miscellaneous recommendations:

- Develop a limited Intranet (archived board minutes; archived memos; employee events, etc.) to effectively test the waters before considering a more widespread use of e-mail among employees. Ensure adequate access to computers.
- Place “kudo” cards in the busses along with complaint cards to give riders the opportunity to acknowledge exceptional service or courtesy. Consider printing the positive written comments in the *Inside Lane* and/or posting the cards in a specially identified location in the operators lounge.
- Consider “marking off” bus operators for individual meetings, e.g., complaint resolution, with supervisors.
- In addition to standard employee activity celebration events, consider developing a budget and expectations for informal drop-in recognition events. This could be employee-driven,

with the expectation that at least one time per month a particular department or work group is informally recognized.

- Consider initiating a special “Night Owl” recognition event.
- Include bus operator responsibilities in Rider’s Digest.

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June 28, 2006



Board of Directors  
Lane Transit District  
PO Box 7070  
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ATTN: Will Mueller

Dear Member of the Board:

I write to protest the recent cuts in service to the Hilyard Community Center, and to ask you to direct that service be promptly restored.

My daughter Rebecca has a developmental disability. Nevertheless, she volunteers at the Eugene Public Library to maintain and restore the order of the books in the Children's Section of the Library. Last week I drove Rebecca to the Library in the late morning, so she did not become aware of the service cuts until she tried to get from the Library to the Hilyard Center for an afternoon social event. When Rebecca left the Library to return home, she was dismayed to find that the 28 did not run in the afternoon.

Rebecca returned to the Library, borrowed the use of a phone, and after trying two other numbers finally reached me on my cell phone. Apprised of the situation, I promptly drove to the Library and gave her a lift to the Hilyard Center. Because my wife, Rebecca's mother, passed away last month, I was Rebecca's only option in this situation. It would have been terribly inconvenient at best if I had not been working in Eugene that day, as my usual work station is in Salem.

For the duration of the service cuts, Rebecca has been able to rearrange her volunteer schedule to work in the morning rather than in the afternoon. She is thus able to catch the last morning run of the 28 to the Library, and return home on the 27. When her social group meets on Thursday afternoon at the Hilyard Center, I will need to escort her there, since she can no longer arrive from the Library on the 28. The alternative LTD proposed, of taking some other bus across town to the U of O and changing there for another bus, is an adjustment that just is not practical for Rebecca.

When I called LTD asked with whom I might discuss the changes in Hilyard service, the receptionist referred me to Will Mueller. Will was quite sympathetic and even apologetic about the change; he said it had been publicized, but he acknowledged it had not been specifically publicized at the Hilyard Center, which would have made sense under the circumstances. He said not that many people are affected, but the change is having a big impact on those it does affect. This is certainly true.



Mr. Mueller said fall service is now in place and the routes can't be changed before December because (1) the digest of routes is going to the printer's this week and (2) drivers bid to get the routes to which they are assigned, and the bidding and assignment is done. He said the situation might be revisited in December.

I understand the Board is not scheduled to meet in July or August. However, December is a long way off for anyone who depends on LTD service to get to events along Hilyard. As to Mr. Mueller's reasons why change couldn't happen till December:

(1) In looking over the new schedules I find a full schedule that was published in late 2005, a booklet of changes published in February 2006, and a 2-page flyer announcing the change that has just occurred. It seems to me that if the LTD Board decided to resume service to Hilyard, it could simply publish another 2-pager.

(2) As for the bidding process of the drivers, it does not seem that that process could be so complex that it couldn't be re-done to accommodate a change in service.

Finally, as to the notion that the change does not affect very many people, the fact is that as Mr. Mueller acknowledges, the impact on those affected is quite substantial. And although I'm sure he was conveying the truth as he understands it, I'm not at all sure those affected may not be more numerous than Mr. Mueller thought.

Please promptly restore service to the Hilyard Center as it was before the recent change. Thanks very much for your consideration. Please let me know what action you take on this matter.

Sincerely,



cc: Mark Pangborn, General Manager

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

**DATE OF MEETING:** July 10, 2006

**ITEM TITLE:** LTD BOARD UPDATE

**PREPARED BY:** Mark Pangborn, General Manager

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Information only.

**Board Updates** - The primary purpose of this report and previous updates is to keep the Board current on LTD matters. If you read anything in an update that does not make sense, raises a concern, or begs for additional information please contact me, Linda Lynch, or the appropriate department director for additional information.

- **Assistant General Manager Recruitment** - On Monday, June 26, three finalists for the position interviewed before three separate panels. The three finalists included Mary Neidig, Stefano Viggiano, and the current General Manager from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Dwight Brashear. The panels consisted of LTD employees as well as three community members: Lane County Commissioner Bobby Green, Springfield Assistant City Manager Cynthia Pappas, and local businessman Marvin Revoal. I am now in the process of considering the assessments of each of the panels and intend to quickly make a selection.

- **Legal Representation** - I recently had a conversation with Roger Saydack about his future plans. Roger is planning to leave the law firm of Arnold, Gallagher, Saydack, Percell, Roberts and Potter to become legal counsel for the Oregon operations of Peace Health. While Roger is excited about the challenges this new job presents, he expressed a heartfelt regret of the loss of continued service for LTD. John Arnold, a former City of Eugene attorney, will be assuming the role as lead attorney for LTD. John is thoroughly familiar with LTD, and I anticipate no disruption in legal services during this transition.

- **Fares for Homeless Persons in Eugene** - The FY 2006-07 City of Eugene budget includes \$50,000 to purchase transportation services for homeless persons in the City of Eugene. Andy Vobora has been in discussions with Richie Weinman from the city on how this money could be used. LTD is focusing on what we are equipped to do, i.e. provide the transportation part of the service. Richie will be working with local private not-for-profit organizations on identifying and qualifying homeless persons to provide them with tokens purchased from LTD that would be used for bus service. We are also working on using a portion of this money to leverage additional grant funds to purchase additional tokens to be used in the service.

- **Implementation of Summer Service** - Summer service was implemented smoothly with one exception. As part of our service reductions due to low ridership, the # 28 route was terminated at the University of Oregon instead of the downtown Eugene Station. What this means, and service planning did not anticipate at the time we recommended this change, is that bus riders with mobility handicaps no longer had direct service from the Eugene Station to the Hilyard Community Center. Last year, on average, there was one rider for every two bus trips to the community center. With this change, those riders going to the

center have transferred at the UO or have been qualified to use Ride Source from downtown to the center. We have worked hard to make this change work for everyone, and it appears that the initial concerns have been addressed. If you receive any feedback or need additional information, please contact me.

- **Franklin EmX** - The construction continues at full speed. We are just about done pouring concrete and will start working on the stations. The City of Eugene has approached us about doing more paving than was originally in our contract as part of the project. The city would pay the extra cost of paving and we would include the work in our contract. The EmX vehicles are about to start down the production line and we will be sending a staff person to Winnipeg, Canada to oversee that start-up.

**ATTACHMENTS:** None

**PROPOSED MOTION:** None



June 22, 2006

Commissioner Bobby Green, Sr.  
Lane County  
125 E. 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Commissioner Green and Members of the Metropolitan Policy Committee:

The transportation system in the Central Lane Transportation Management Area is vital to the health, welfare and economic well-being of all citizens of Lane County. Our children go to school, our citizens travel to and from work and play, ambulances respond swiftly to emergencies, and goods travel from our factories and into our stores, across a vital web of highways and streets. Bike and pedestrian paths provide for alternate modes of transportation to meet federal and state requirements and afford recreational opportunities for our citizens. Transit services efficiently move people throughout the area.

Federal and state transportation funds provide ongoing support to this regional network of highways, streets, paths and transit. These road, path and bridge construction and maintenance projects bring millions of dollars into the county which create and sustain hundreds of jobs.

It is the responsibility of the MPO to ensure federal transportation requirements are met to ensure this system and the funds to support it continue. When the LCOG Board delegated its MPO responsibilities to the MPC, it was with the understanding that the MPC would diligently carry out its delegated tasks. To ensure the LCOG Board would not fail in its MPO responsibilities, it required on-going oversight and reporting of MPC actions on a regular basis.

Since November 2005, the LCOG Board has watched with concern as the MPC has failed to pass an FY06-09 MTIP. In February 2006, the LCOG Board asked the MPC Chair to personally report on MPC's situation. At each subsequent LCOG Board meeting, the LCOG Board has directed staff to bring it a report of MPC's progress, and to take a report of our concerns back to the MPC.

We still believe the MPC is the proper body to carry out the duties of the MPO, but we will not allow this region to lapse in federal funding. We owe that to the citizens we all serve.

Since November, the MPC has failed to find a way around its impasse. This puts the region at risk of losing federal funding. The MPC has many options available to keep the process moving. These options might include:

- Alter the FY06-09 MTIP to make it acceptable to the group; or

Bobby Green, Sr.  
June 22, 2006  
Page 2

- Negotiate a package agreement which provides for passage of the MTIP; or
- Alter the MPC bylaws to prevent a small minority from freezing your process indefinitely; or
- Request outside assistance to mediate your dispute; or
- Defer the question to the LCOG Board for final resolution.

And yet, the MPC has failed to move forward on its delegated MPO responsibilities.

Let us be clear, the LCOG Board is not taking a position for or against any project or series of projects. That is your responsibility. But the LCOG Board insists that the duties of the MPO be carried out in a responsible and timely manner. We owe the public nothing less.

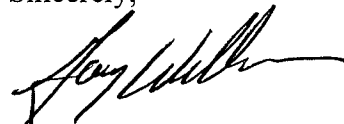
We have given the MPC sufficient time to find a solution without result. MPC is the designated conflict resolution body for the Metro Area. You are charged with the responsibility to find solutions to conflicts. The LCOG Board of Directors, as the designated MPO for the Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Area, requests that the MPC do the following:

- 1) At your July 13, 2006 meeting you will pass an FY06-09 MTIP. Its composition is left to MPC to decide; and
- 2) Not later than the January 2007 MPC meeting (6 months), the MPC will develop a dispute resolution process for delegated MPO duties which ensures MPO responsibilities will be met. This process and supporting changes to MPC bylaws must meet the approval of the LCOG Board.

Failure to comply with these two requirements will force the LCOG Board to take necessary intervention steps up to and including rescinding our delegation of MPO responsibilities to MPC.

In conclusion, the LCOG Board still believes the MPC is the proper body to discharge the duties of the MPO. We are willing to work with you to ensure your success, but will no longer sit idly by while the region's well being is put at risk.

Sincerely,



Gary Williams, Chair  
Board of Directors

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

**DATE OF MEETING:** July 10, 2006

**ITEM TITLE:** MPO RESPONSIBILITY

**PREPARED BY:** Mark Pangborn, General Manager

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Discussion only.

**BACKGROUND:** The Lane Council of Governments Board is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area. The MPO has responsibility for the planning and distribution of federal transportation funding. LCOG has delegated its MPO responsibility to the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC).

As you know, MPC has been unable to reach agreement on a new Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) because of disagreement regarding the West Eugene Parkway. The MPC bylaws require that approved motions have a majority of the vote and at least one affirmative vote by a Eugene representative, a Springfield representative, and a Lane County representative. Thus, one jurisdiction can essentially veto a motion by having both of its MPC representatives vote against it. This veto provision is responsible for the stalemate on the MTIP.

The LCOG Board is concerned that MPC has not been able to approve a new Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program, and is concerned that federal funding could be affected if the MTIP is not approved soon. On June 22, 2006, the LCOG Board approved sending a letter to MPC that stipulates that the MTIP must be approved in July 2006, and that by January 2007 the MPC must amend its bylaws to eliminate the possibility that this sort of a stalemate can occur in the future. A copy of the letter is attached. If these conditions are not met, LCOG may choose to take back the MPO responsibility from MPC.

LTD projects that use federal funds (virtually every capital project) must be listed in an approved MTIP. Thus, a lapsing of the MTIP could have an impact on LTD projects scheduled for FY 08 or beyond.

This issue will be discussed at the MPC meeting scheduled for July 13, 2006. The Board is asked to discuss the issue and provide direction to MPC representatives Susan Ban and Gerry Gaydos.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Letter dated June 22, 2006, from the Lane Council of Governments to Commissioner Bobby Green and the Metropolitan Policy Committee.

**PROPOSED MOTION:** None