

SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION FUND COMMITTEE MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

Thursday, January 24, 2019

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on January 17, 2019, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Special Transportation Fund Committee of the Lane Transit District held a meeting on Thursday, January 24, 2019, beginning at 12:00 p.m., at the Next Stop Center, 1099 Olive Street, Eugene, Oregon.

Present: Ruth Linoz, Chair
Pete Barron, Vice Chair (via teleconference)
Alan Baas
Hoover Chambliss
Ed Necker
Lise Schellman
Don Nordin (ex officio) (via teleconference)

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL — Ms. Linoz convened the meeting and called the roll.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR — Ms. Linoz welcomed those in attendance.

AGENDA REVIEW — No changes were made to the agenda.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION — No one wished to speak.

BIENNIAL GRANT INTERVIEWS — Accessible Services Specialist John Ahlen said this meeting would conclude the committee's interviews with grant applicants. He would update the committee's recommendations and present a final draft for approval at its January 25 meeting. He met with the LTD Board on January 16 to present an overview of 5310 and STF grant applications. He also presented the committee's recommendations for the award of 5311 and 5311(f) grant funds, which were approved by the Board.

Medical Transportation Management - RideSource ADA and Shopper — Reysha Oylear provided an overview of the Call Center. She said in 2008 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) were integrated for the first time. Since that time Call Center had grown from a staff of 13 handling about 1,000 rides per day and managing 16 external provider contracts. The Call Center now was a fully functional one-call center with almost 30 staff where an individual could make one call to connect with any type of transportation service they required. She said approximately 2,500 rides were scheduled each day and there were 27 external providers.

Ms. Oylear said in 2018 over 218,000 were provided. In 2017 LTD implemented a new software program that consolidated 18 different applications and databases into one system and was adaptable to the Call Center's future needs. Also in 2017 a new contractor - Medical Transport Management (MTM) - was brought on board. MTM brought nationwide experience to the challenging task of providing more comprehensive oversight to meet the state's compliance needs. She said live scheduling of ADA paratransit rides was also implemented and it was LTD's goal to schedule 100 percent of trip live.

Ms. Oylear listed the services provided through the Call Center, including complementary ADA paratransit service to fixed route services in the Eugene-Springfield metro area and Florence, the weekly shopper bus, NEMT services and many others.

Ms. Linoz clarified that the Call Center managed the services, which were delivered through a network of providers.

Mr. Baas arrived at 12:25 p.m.

Ms. Oylear said future plans for the Call Center included implementation of new software modules such as a passenger portal, provider mobile communications, and Lyft integration.

In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Human Services Transportation Coordinator Kris Lyon said mobile provider communications would be accomplished through an application that providers could install on their smart phone or tablet. The program would begin on a small scale with a few providers. She said it was yet to be determined if use of the application would be optional or mandated. She explained the benefits to riders and providers of enhanced communications and a passenger portal.

Ms. Linoz should be given sufficient lead time to implement the new communications application.

Ms. Lyon said Lyft integration would allow rides to be scheduled from the Call Center system directly to a Lyft application to increase metro area capacity. LTD had applied for a Federal Transit Administration grant and to Trillium Community Health Plans for matching funds.

Mr. Ahlen stated that LTD was required to provide ADA paratransit services complementary to its fixed route system. The STF Committee identified funding allocations for all of the other grant applications and any remaining grants funds were typically used for RideSource ADA services to offset the amount of LTD General Funds that were contributed to the services. The reasons were to prioritize auxiliary services and to minimize the impact on the General Fund of providing paratransit services. The more General Fund dollars required to support paratransit services, the less were available for the fixed route system, which in turn could shrink services for everyone.

Ms. Schellman asked about the non-LTD match. Mr. Ahlen said in addition to General Funds, the overall costs of providing service be could offset by farebox revenue. The fare of \$3.50 per trip was returned to the program.

Ms. Schellman noted there was no agency budget for MTM included in the application. Ms. Lyon said MTM was paid a flat administrative rate and the application contained only the budget for RideSource. Mr. Ahlen noted the application did contain a budget for the local portion of the service.

Ms. Schellman suggested the application be modified during the next cycle to clarify what was required.

Mr. Necker asked about project funding sources. Mr. Ahlen said \$280,000 was farebox revenue, \$194,000 in 5310 funds, \$1 million in STF funds and the remainder from LTD's General Fund, which was currently projected at \$3.7 million. The General Fund contribution was about \$250,000 more than in the previous biennium.

Ms. Linoz asked what impact receiving less grant funds would have on the program, such as not implementing some of the new software. Ms. Lyon said there would be no impact because LTD still had to fund the program. The impact would be a larger contribution from the General Fund. The software component was funded separately from a different source and not a part of the application. Mr. Ahlen said ADA service would not be impacted by less grant funding, but the fixed route service could be impacted if a larger contribution from the General Fund was required. He said any adjustments in grant funding of the other applications that the committee requested would also result in adjustments of the RideSource application proposed funding.

Ms. Linoz determined there was consensus to move the application forward as presented.

South Lane Wheels/City of Cottage Grove - South Lane Operations — Mr. Ahlen announced that Ms. Linoz was presenting the program application as the executive director of South Lane Wheels and would not be participating in determining consensus on moving the application forward.

Ms. Linoz said the application was seeking matching funds for the 5311 funds awarded to the program. She said the 5311 funds represented about one-third of the South Lane Wheels budget and securing adequate match was essential to securing those dollars.

Ms. Linoz said South Lane Wheels was based in Cottage Grove and had been in operation for 35 years. She reviewed a history of the program and the services it provided, which had evolved as new funding resources became available from service to seniors and people with disabilities to service for all riders. As the service evolved into public transportation the cost of operations had increased as the vehicle fleet expanded and drivers were now paid instead of being volunteers.

Ms. Linoz said South Lane Wheels was the primary provider in south Lane County with accessible vehicles, making it able to offer transportation to all users. South Lane Wheels was a subsidized service and had not changed its fares in 10 years, which meant that the need for subsidies had increased, particularly with the rise in trips it provided under the Medicaid program. She said operating the mobility on demand (MOD) pilot project under a separate contract would further expand ridership.

Mr. Necker asked how the fare rates were determined. Ms. Linoz said she used an annual cost model to determine the need for subsidies. Current rates were:

- \$3.00 for local service up to three miles (pickup to drop-off)
- \$5.00 for local service from three to five miles
- \$10.00 for local service from five miles to 10 miles
- \$15.00 for service to the Eugene-Springfield metro area
- \$10.00 for service from Creswell to either Cottage Grove or Eugene-Springfield

Ms. Schellman asked if changes to other programs would impact South Lane Wheels' services. Ms. Linoz said that MOD service would complement an existing service that had seen declining ridership because it did not meet some riders' needs. She said MOD was being marketed to the community and response had been very positive. She expected that demand for service would increase as the public became more aware of the transportation options South Lane Wheels offered. She was also applying for a State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) grant to

develop a 20-year transit development plan for south Lane County, which would be required when applying for future grants.

Ms. Linoz said South Lane Wheels provided service to the Lane County line. She clarified that MOD service was a separate program in the agency's budget and funded by STIF funds through a contract with LTD. This assured that STF funds were used only to support door-to-door and metro transportation services, not subsidizing MOD. She said the City of Cottage Grove contributed \$5,000 annually from its General Fund to support transportation services. The city also planned to contribute in-kind administrative costs to support the MOD project.

In response questions from Mr. Ahlen, Ms. Linoz said because the impact of the MOD pilot project on her agency's resources the budget included the flexibility to expand services and incur additional costs. She said the biennium budget planned for additional expenses in the second year of the biennium. She said 75 percent of the local service was within five miles of Cottage Grove.

In response to a question from Ms. Schellman, Mr. Ahlen said the City of Cottage Grove received its own independent allocation of 5311 funds and the application reflected only the match required for those federal grant funds.

Mr. Ahlen reviewed the proposed budget and determined there was consensus to move the application forward as presented. Ms. Linoz was recused.

Lane Council of Governments, Senior and Disability Services - Transportation Assessments — Rachel Jacobsen, Senior Connections unit manager, continued with the presentation begun at the committee's January 15 meeting. She introduced Kate Scott, program analyst, and

Mr. Ahlen said the transportation assessment (mobility management) program was a mandated service and assessments determined a rider's edibility to use RideSource service. He said the service was supported through several funding sources, including Medicaid, and that was included in the spreadsheet.

Ms. Jacobsen said functional assessments of paratransit eligibility were typically conducted in a person's home. She described the comprehensive assessment process and said it also helped staff identify eligibility for other programs and services. Approximately 2,000 assessments were conducted each year.

Mr. Necker asked why no STF dollars were included in the budget. Mr. Ahlen explained that LCOG would provide the match of a fully burdened labor rate, which eliminated the need to use STF funds.

In response to a question from Ms. Schellman, Mr. Ahlen said an increase of 10 percent over the biennium was related to the increased costs of labor, including salaries and benefits. He said the budget was based on reimbursement of actual costs. LTD was responsible for providing assessment as part of its paratransit services and the budget reflected the best estimate of those costs over the next biennium in order to use grant funds rather than General Funds. The estimate was based on program costs for the past several years and the cycle of reassessments.

Ms. Linoz noted that 200 more assessments were projected in the second year of the program. Ms. Lyon said a client was reassessed every three years, which made it difficult to look only at the previous biennium in order to project service levels.

Ms. Linoz asked if there was any concern with having clients on a three-year reassessment cycle. Ms. Jacobsen said a reassessment could be done more frequently if staff determined there was a need based on changes in a client's status. She said LTD provided 30 days of medical rides in circumstances where a reassessment had been requested due to a change in the client's circumstances.

Mr. Ahlen pointed out that LTD's approach to mobility management was unique to the community in that it involved partnerships among many agencies that allowed resources to be leveraged and more services delivered than other districts were able to do with the same amount of resources.

Mr. Ahlen determined there was consensus to move the application forward as presented.

Lane Council of Governments, Senior and Disability Services - Volunteer Escort Mileage Reimbursement — Ms. Jacobsen said the Volunteer Escort program provided two separate types of rides. There was a partnership throughout Lane County of SDS, the Senior Companion program and RideSource to provide volunteer driver rides by a person's matched senior companion. She said the rides could be for medical and non-medical purposes. She said the Senior Companion program recruited and trained volunteers, who were themselves lower income, older adults who received an hourly \$2.75 stipend for their services. They worked 15 to 40 hours per week and received reimbursement for miles driven their clients. Program clients had to be eligible under the Older Americans Act (OAA).

Ms. Jacobsen said the other service was the Medical Escort Program and was only provided to residents in rural communities for medical trips. She said drivers were volunteers and were recruited, trained and supervised by her staff. She said escort programs provided approximately 18,000 one-way trips per year. She described eligibility requirements for the program and standards for volunteer drivers. Medical escort drivers did not receive a stipend and were only reimbursed for mileage when a client was in the vehicle.

Ms. Jacobsen said the funding request had been increased for the next biennium to help attract and retain volunteer drivers and to cover staff time spent in coordination of the volunteer escort programs.

Mr. Ahlen asked if LCOG's annual contribution of some OAA funds to LTD would continue. Ms. Scott said the contribution would be discussed with LTD when the next payment was due.

Mr. Ahlen stated the OAA funds transfer and the \$0.10 per mile increase were commemorated in intergovernmental agreements between LCOG and LTD, which were separate from the committee's deliberations, but the committee would be making budget assumptions based on that agreement and its recommendation should recognize the budget was based on an estimate of services over the next two years. The issues of mileage and OAA funds would be discussed by the agencies at a later date.

Ms. Linoz asked about the turnover rate of volunteer drivers. Ms. Jacobsen said there was a large loss of drivers during the turnover of RideSource providers and the mileage reimbursement was a

factor. She said many of the drivers were low-income and SDS subsidized them in other ways such as seeking funds for vehicle maintenance. She hoped an increase in the reimbursement rate would help with retention of drivers and vehicle maintenance.

Mr. Ahlen determined there was consensus to move the application forward as presented.

NEXT MEETINGS: Thursday, January 24, 2019, at noon.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Linoz adjourned the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)