

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (ATC)

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Lane Transit District

3500 East 17th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Necker, Chair
Jan Aho
Scott Whetham
Bob Proctor
Kay Christopher

Gordon Wyatt
Aline Goddard
Evan Sloan
Tara Salusso
Kristine Sirmans

Dave Kleger, LTD Board

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Mark Phinney

Hugh Massengill

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ann Angvick
Ted Stevens

Kathy Jenness
Scott Whetham

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ann Lauver
Beth Mulcahey
Diana Gatchell
Marcia Maffei

Dave Braunschweiger
Fred Stoffer
Jean Jordan
Joan Taylor

STAFF:

Terry Parker, LTD Accessible Services Program Manager
Susan Hekimoglu, LTD Accessible Services Program Assistant

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Necker called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Mr. Necker introduced LTD Board President Gerry Gaydos who was present to recognize the work of the ATC and to discuss the future of LTD. Mr. Gaydos said that it truly was a pleasure to work with LTD, and the ATC members were part of the heart and soul of the organization and part of what made LTD operate and be significantly different than a lot of other transit districts around the nation and the world. He noted that he recently had been in Europe and had been amazed at how inaccessible Europe was from transportation to facilities. Twenty years ago, this community had the vision to have fully accessible buses, curb cuts, and other accessible amenities due in part to the work of the committee and the pioneering work of Dave Kleger. To be 100 percent accessible before being legally required to do so was one of LTD's proudest accomplishments.

Mr. Gaydos noted that Dave Kleger was retiring from his service as an LTD Board member. He said that Mr. Kleger had served well over and above the call of duty not only as a transit advocate, but also as an advocate for humans in every way he could. He added that Mr. Kleger was well spoken and took time to be deliberate and thoughtful. He began his career as an LTD Board member 12 years ago, which was an astounding commitment. Dave's participation had not only been a guideline for the Accessible Transportation Committee but also to the Board as well. Mr. Gaydos thanked Mr. Kleger for his many years of service.

Mr. Gaydos also discussed the recent resignation of General Manager Ken Hamm and his appreciation for the work Mr. Hamm had done during his six years with LTD. He said that Mr. Hamm would leave a legacy of collaborative leadership that would continue. The direction of LTD was set and would continue. LTD continues to serve the community really well, and that would not change.

He again thanked the Committee members for their commitment and hard work that enhanced LTD's ability to provide the service that it did, which enhanced its reputation not only on the local level, but also on a national level. The Committee had been charged with oversight of the Special Transportation Funds (STF), and as a Board member, he knew that ATC members paid attention and carefully considered the issues presented. Because of that, the Board generally approved recommendations made by the ATC. He used the recent mock-up exercises for the EmX vehicle that many ATC members participated in as an example.

Ms. Parker said that every year, there was an increasing demand for **RideSource** and other paratransit type services throughout Lane County, mostly by virtue of the aging of America. This increased demand caused the STF-funded budgets to increase. She said that she always felt somewhat apologetic when she went before the LTD Board to say that her budget was increasing between 10 and 20 percent. It was difficult in these financially strained times. But, she noted that what she had felt from the Board was a commitment and support for the services that were provided to seniors and people with disabilities. She appreciated that support and the Board's willingness to listen to recommendations from the Committee. She added that the providers and the ATC members worked hard to cut and streamline costs, but the need was growing exponentially. Because Mr. Kleger regularly attended the ATC meetings, he was able to speak with the Board about conversations that had taken place at the Committee level.

Mr. Gaydos said that it was very beneficial to have Mr. Kleger attending the ATC meetings, and the Board may want to appoint another member in a liaison role to the Committee.

Mr. Necker thanked Mr. Gaydos for his comments.

WINTER SERVICE ADJUSTMENTS: LTD Service Planner Ken Augustson was present to provide an overview of the fixed-route service adjustments that were planned to go into effect on Sunday, February 5, 2006. Mr. Augustson said that LTD had experienced a 13 percent increase in ridership in October. That large of an increase typically put a squeeze on running times and crowding issues for many of the routes. LTD usually made

minor service adjustments in February each year to address any problems that arose from the major adjustments made in the Fall. This year, due mostly to the increase in ridership, there were significant adjustments being made to running times, mostly by adjusting the departure and arrival times at the Eugene and Springfield Stations.

He reviewed some of the major changes, which also would be highlighted in LTD's Winter Update publications, including *BusTalk*, the LTD Website, and a printed update, which would be available in early January. Some routes would be lengthened in the time it took to make the trip from start to end, and some routes would experience changes in the bay assignments at the Eugene Station.

Ms. Parker said that one of the difficulties of route adjustments being made three times a year, is with the transit training and host program, which has to gear up for the changes each time. Alternative Work Concepts staff now would be included earlier on in the process.

VOLUNTEER ESCORT BUDGET: Ms. Parker distributed a summary of the budgeting issues associated with the Volunteer Escort Program (VEP), which was a county-wide program that included a proposal for allocation of funds. LTD had been awarded a two-year grant of \$98,000, through the State's Discretionary Grant Program for volunteer escort services. This was the first time LTD had pursued an operational grant to help support the program. The goals of getting the additional funding were 1) to determine if the mileage reimbursement for the drivers could be increased, and 2) to better meet the growing demand for the service.

LTD was looking at how best to allocate the money available for Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007. A committee had been formed and had met in two sessions to go over the program and prepare a budget proposal.

Several issues were considered. The Senior Companion Program had limited its round-trip mileage for their volunteers to eight miles per trip due to budgetary constraints. For rural residents, that was a significant cut. There also were equity issues based on where volunteers were stationed.

Another issue that would be of most concern to the ATC was the depletion of the Special Transportation Fund (STF) Out-of-District resources that typically were used for capital match expenditures. If more money could be brought into the VEP, the out-of-district allocations could be better preserved.

Ms. Parker explained how the budget was developed for the VEP by developing a cost model based on the direct costs for the services, which included administrative and maintenance costs. Another way to develop the budget was to include only those costs that were linked directly to volunteer escort and to assume that administrative costs were part of doing business and not reflected in the budget. The committee had used both of these methods to determine how to allocate the new funds.

The committee proposed increasing the mileage reimbursement from 36.5 cents to 40.5 cents per mile, (the current federal mileage reimbursement rate was 44-1/2 cents) to maintain the level of service that had been established in the first four months of Fiscal Year

2005 (July – October), and to include the Senior Companion sites that were non-S&DS specific in the regular volunteer mileage reimbursement process. The budget proposal would result in a \$44,030 budget increase for the program in Fiscal Year 2006. Ms. Parker said that this proposal would address the issues in this first year's budget, and then in March, when the ATC worked on the budget for Fiscal Year 2007, the remainder of the grant funding would be programmed in.

Ms. Gatchell said that because of the limited amount of funds and the increase demand, the non-S&DS senior companions had been limited to a seven-mile round trip, so many of those companions were going ahead and doing what the client needed regardless of the seven-mile limit, with the extra mileage being at their own expense. By definition, senior companions were low-income seniors to begin with. Ms. Parker said that it was unknown how many miles that would amount too, but the committee wanted to address the discrepancy.

Mr. Necker said that he thought the committee had worked out a fairly equitable solution.

Ms. Salusso asked where the \$98,000 in grant funding was located in the proposed budget adjustment. Ms. Parker said that \$30,000 was programmed for Fiscal Year 2006 to cover expenses, including those already incurred since July 1, 2005, leaving \$68,000. The same \$30,000 would need to be programmed again for next year, and that would leave \$38,000 to address the four-cent per mile reimbursement increase and to address the non-S&DS site discrepancy. It also was hoped that the funding would be able to reduce the amount of SFT Out-of-District funds needed for the program in order to preserve Out-of-District reserves that could be used for capital match for vehicle replacement.

Ms. Salusso also asked about the projected reduction in fares and donations for Fiscal Year 2006. Ms. Parker said it was based on the fares and donations that had been received during the first four months of the current Fiscal Year 2006. She added that the committee had been very conservative in that projection because of the uncertainty of receiving funds from the Older Americans Act (OAA), so there may be additional funding available through the OAA, which would be considered a donation.

Ms. Aho said that she supported compensating the volunteer drivers at a higher level. Ms. Parker added that another nuance of the program was the home to work mileage, which always had been a gray area. Under this proposal, all volunteer drivers would receive that reimbursement. Mr. Proctor added that all state volunteers received the reimbursement from their homes and back, and he agreed that this proposal would bring the senior companions closer to other programs. Other members agreed by consensus.

Ms. Gatchell asked if the budget adjustment needed to be approved by the LTD Board. Ms. Parker said that the LTD Board already had approved the grant application for this purpose.

LTD UPDATES: 1) Brokerage. Ms. Parker reported that she had discussed the brokerage with the LTD Board in September, and was given a cautious go-ahead to continue to pursue a brokerage through Special Mobility Services (SMS) and to engage SMS in the process. Staff did not yet have the go-ahead to write a contract, and the Board

asked that the program pay for itself. To date, staff had been attending the monthly statewide brokerage meetings in Salem. Those meetings were very informative as they also were attended by representatives from counties that already had brokerages in place. Also, Ms. Parker, SMS staff, and the LTD Information Technology Manager were planning to visit brokerage sites in Albany and Portland to see how other brokerages were using their software. SMS had submitted a draft staffing plan for the development phase, and Ms. Parker needed to get the computer plan in terms of dispatch software and call center equipment.

Once the development agreement and budget had been approved by the State, Ms. Parker said she would need to go back to the Board with an updated proposal.

2) Easter Seals Project Action (ESPA) Meeting. Ms. Parker reported that in late November, she had attended a meeting of the ESPA Steering Committee, of which she was a member. The Committee met three times per year. The agenda included information about SAFE-T-LU, the new transit authorization funding that recently passed through Congress; The New Freedom Initiative, which was included in that funding, which affected people with disabilities and our ability to get formula funding by encouraging transportation providers to go beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The New Freedom funding came with high requirements of coordination, and Ms. Parker planned to put together a workgroup of key providers and key agencies to develop a coordinated plan in order to apply for some of the funding.

Ms. Salusso asked how soon the providers would come together, and asked if public forums would be held to gather input. Ms. Parker said that the core work group would decide how to gather the input. She added that it depended also upon how much funding would be requested. Ms. Parker said that some of the funding would funnel through the State for the smaller communities. Funding for the larger communities would come directly from the federal government.

Ms. Parker said the rules had not been written yet, and she would continue to keep the ATC members informed.

Another issue that was presented at the ESPA meeting was the New Guidance and Resources that recently was published from The Federal Transit Administration's Office of Civil Rights, an advocacy agency to ensure that transit is complying with the ADA law. The Office of Civil Rights typically got involved via a complaint by a transit user, and they were now attempting to get transit agencies involved in problem solving earlier on in the complaint resolution process.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) also had issued written guidance on the use of the 2-wheeled "Segways" on Transportation vehicles. The guidance indicates that transit agencies are required to allow them aboard if it is being used as a mobility device by a person who has a disability.

Another guidance policy that the DOT had written was with regard to origin and destination of paratransit services that said that paratransit services had to provide a pick-up point that people could access easily. For instance, if people traveling from Valley River

Center, and the only pick-up location that the paratransit service offered was at the far end of the mall and riders couldn't easily get there, then that would not be acceptable.

Ms. Parker said the other issue raised at the ESPA meeting was about contracted 5311 funded service. Apparently, some 5311 funded programs felt that they did not need to meet the requirements of the ADA, but that problem did not exist here.

3) Ms. Parker also reported that she also was a member of the Oregon Public Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC), which advised the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC). The PTAC met recently to discuss *Connect Oregon*, an initiative to make money available through a bond program funded by Lottery proceeds. This program will invest in air, rail, marine, and transit infrastructure to ensure Oregon's transportation system is strong, diverse, and efficient. The committee also looked at and commented on the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP), which is the state's long-range multimodal transportation plan for Oregon's airports, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, highways and roadways, pipelines, ports and waterway facilities, public transportation and railroads. The OTP establishes policies, strategies, and initiatives for addressing the challenges and opportunities in the next 25 years and guides transportation investment decisions. The plan anticipated implementing road tolls to help pay for projects and called for integrating planning across all modes.

Of interest to the ATC would be the priority for use of additional discretionary funds. Apparently, there was more money in the discretionary grant pool than originally anticipated. For instance, LTD had applied for 18 replacement vehicles and was granted funding for 12; however, now with the additional funds, LTD could receive additional funding for more of the replacement vehicles. LTD's strategy had been to replace vehicles earlier in order to have a healthier fleet for the providers and to have better used vehicles to offer to agencies that typically were turned down, such as Pearl Buck and Lane County Mental Health. The Public Transit Division indicated that they were gathering information about the unfunded projects.

4) Ms. Parker reported that the National Council on Disability had released a report on the Current State of Transportation for People with Disabilities in the United States. She said that the ESPA Steering Committee had reviewed the publication, and Ms. Parker thought it provided a good framework for the ATC to go through and determine how Lane County measured up. The report suggested that there were approaches that resulted in improvements in public transportation. The document was well received, and people thought it was well written.

5) Ms. Parker announced that Mobility International would be celebrating its 25th anniversary in Eugene on June 26 through July 1. Mobility International was getting some support from the Office of Civil Rights, which could present an opportunity for some regional dialogue as part of their conference. Mobility International focused on transportation for people with disabilities on a global level, and there would be people from all over the world at this event. The ATC would be talking more in the coming months about how we might be involved in this event.

6) The LTD Board approved a change to the monthly pass expiration date. Instead of expiring on the last day of the current month, the Board has approved a grace period to

continue using the current month's pass through the third day of the following month to allow for people who rely on Social Security checks, etc., to get their checks in order to buy their next month's pass. This applies to Reduced Fare stickers as well.

7) The Transportation Research Board (TRB) will hold a national conference on rural public and intercity bus transportation in Stevenson, Washington, on October 25 to 27, 2006. The rural providers that receive 5311 funding should have this conference on their calendars. It is rare that a conference of this magnitude occurs on the west coast.

PROGRAM UPDATES: 1) Diamond Express - Oakridge. Ms. Goddard reported that the *Diamond Express* ridership was good and that Medicaid rides had been increasing in Oakridge.

2) South Lane Wheels (SLW) – Cottage Grove. Ms. Salusso reported that SLW recently held its 25th anniversary event, which was well attended. Speakers included Jack Robertson from Lane Metro Partnership and Diana Gatchell, who had been the first director of SLW and had been involved in the development of the service. In addition, SLW recently promoted an employee who had started as a volunteer to do vehicle maintenance, which has brought vehicle maintenance to a whole new level. South Lane Wheels was experiencing higher expenses related to maintenance. SLW also was getting ready to launch a public awareness campaign to talk about how SLW served the general public in Cottage Grove, Creswell, and rural areas. The campaign would include photographs of destinations that people could access. Ms. Salusso added that 96 percent of SLW riders earned less than \$15,000 per year, and 62 percent earned less than \$10,000.

3) Rhody Express – Florence. Ms. Sirmans reported that the Florence Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was gearing up for the holidays, and the Rhody Express would once again offer a Saturday shopper service, which was provided by the City of Florence.

4) City of Eugene Human Rights Commission. Mr. Massengill reported that the Accessibility Committee was involved in campaigning for audible traffic signals, and recently had met with the Eugene Traffic Engineer to discuss the signaling at the 10th and Olive intersection. With the EmX service going in, there was an opportunity to add audible signals as new signal devices were installed. The Accessibility Committee wanted to be included in the design processes of intersection design. There currently was an audible signal at 26th and Hilyard. Mr. Massengill thought maybe some New Freedom funding could go toward audible signals. Ms. Parker said the Accessibility Committee had done good work in it's efforts to ensure that 10th and Olive remained a lighted intersection rather than being converted to a 4-way stop. She added that ESPA was working on a project around good practice around pedestrian environment. There would be a workshop in Portland about good pedestrian environments sponsored by the National Transit Institute. She hoped that someone from ATC and someone from the Human Rights Commission could attend. She was communicating with Karen Hyatt at the City of Eugene about this opportunity.

ADJOURN: There being no further business; Mr. Necker adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 17.