

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 20, 2007  
10 a.m. – Noon  
Lane Transit District  
3500 East 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

L. M. Reese, Vice Chair	Hugh Massengill
Ann Angvick	Bob Proctor
Kay Christopher	Scott Whetham
Aline Goddard	

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Mary Otten	Dave Kleger
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MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ed Necker, Chair	Tara Sue Salusso
Jan Aho	Kristine Sirmans
Kay Metzger	Evan Sloan
Mark Phinney	

OTHERS PRESENT:

David Braunschweiger	Beth Mulcahey
David Janicke	Fred Stoffer
Ann Lauver	Ed Durkee

STAFF:

Terry Parker	Karl Hayes
Rand Stamm	Mark Johnson
Susan Hekimoglu	Cosette Rees
Joe McCormack	Will Mueller
Ernie Turner	

**Introductions**

Mr. Reese called the meeting to order. Those present introduced themselves.

**Announcements and Additions to the Agenda**

Ms. Parker introduced Rand Stamm, LTD's new human services transportation specialist, briefly described his duties, and noted that he and his wife run Canine Assistance Partners, a non-profit organization that trains service and search and rescue dogs.

Ms. Parker provided background information about an accident experienced by Mr. Janicke, involving an unsecured mobility device. It was determined to be operator error, and the operator has been coached about correct procedure. There was some discussion about the fastening of security straps. Mr. Kleger said that some wheelchair users could self-secure, but that some would "fake it," a practice he said contributed to 90 percent of non-securement accidents. There was further discussion about what action to take. The incident was mentioned in a monthly LTD internal newsletter that reviews accidents and notes procedures to prevent future occurrences. Ms. Parker said she would take up the issue with Steve Rayack of the Safety Committee. Mr. Janicke said his goal was for all riders to be safe.

### **Minutes Approval – December 19, 2006, and January 16, 2007**

Because there was not a quorum, Mr. Reese deferred the minutes approval to the March meeting.

### **Appointment of Executive Committee**

Mr. Reese announced the appointment of Hugh Massengill and Bob Proctor to the Executive Committee.

### **Annual Route Review and Fare Increase – Staff Presentation**

Will Mueller, LTD's Service Planning Manager, provided a route review handout, noting that the route review was used to decide what services to provide in the following year. One public hearing had taken place on February 12; the next one would be on March 12. They also would take input via phone, mail, email, and via a suggestion box at the Hilyard Community Center. The Board would then meet on March 21 to approve the service package for the fall of 2007.

Mr. Mueller said LTD had budgeted for a two-percent increase in service, of which one-half of one percent (one-quarter of the availability funding) would be set aside for contingencies. He then reviewed the handout, noting that there were no deletions and four additions being recommended for 2007: (1) *The Breeze Shuttle* - a weekday 7:03 am inbound trip from Valley River Center; (2) Route 28 Hilyard – a Eugene Station connection added to most trips (the most requested addition); (3) Route 36 West 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue – four trips in the morning and afternoon to extend to the Willow Creek area; (4) Route 11 Thurston – ten-minute service intervals (instead of 15) between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The latter addition related to increased usage of the EmX and Thurston routes.

In response to a question from Ms. Otten, Mr. Mueller said the items listed under continuing consideration reflected service that was cut in 2001 and 2003 that would possibly be re-established when funds became available. It was clarified that the *Breeze* service would not be restored to half-hour frequency service on Saturdays.

Ms. Parker thanked Ms. Rees for gathering rider comments about the #28 Hilyard service forwarded by the Hilyard Center. After placing a comment box at the center, Ms. Rees said the only comment received was from a first-grader who said, "I love to ride the bus – it's cool!" An email was sent to all those who had commented about the deletion of the Eugene Station connection to the Hilyard Center, advising them that there likely would be improvements made to the route 28 service.

Staff are recommending that the restoration of the #28 service to Hilyard from the Eugene Station start with the summer service bid on June 17 rather than waiting until Fall 2007 when other service changes are due to go into effect.

Regarding proposed bus pass fare increases, Ms. Rees said LTD proposed increases to both the monthly and three-month passes, as follows: Adult monthly pass - \$38; Half-fare, youth & senior pass - \$19; Adult three-month pass - \$103; Half-fare, youth & senior three-month pass - \$51.50. These fares would become effective July 1, 2007. Ms. Rees noted that it had been four years since the last bus pass fare increase, and LTD did endeavor to keep pass prices low. Speaking to a question from Mr. Kleger about keeping to a target of 20 percent of costs, Ms. Rees said that the new fares were in line with that. Mr. Kleger explained to the others that LTD policy was to try to collect one-fifth of the cost of running the service from the fare box. He observed that this was a smaller share of operational cost than many other communities collected.

Ms. Rees reported that the fare increase would be addressed at the same public hearings mentioned above by Mr. Mueller.

Ms. Parker noted that the RideSource fare was attached to the regular adult cash fare and was at a \$2.50 maximum (double the cash fare). She said the cash fares have not changed since 2001, so there likely was to be a fare increase request next year, which would automatically affect the RideSource fares, as per policy. She added that discounts for RideSource were offered via ticket books, which reduced the fare to \$2.00.

Responding to a question from Ms. Otten about being able to use tokens for day passes, Ms. Hekimoglu clarified that the small tokens were no longer being used, so one large token could be used for a day pass for EZ Access riders.

Ms. Angvik questioned the 8.1 percent increase of group pass rates proposed for 2008 when the rates increased six percent in 2007. Ms. Rees explained that the group pass rate had not changed in a long time and they were trying to "play catch-up" without doing the entire increase in one year. She reviewed the basics of the employer group pass program.

### **STF / Accessible Services Budget**

Ms. Parker said the Executive Committee would meet between this meeting and the next to prepare a recommendation for the Special Transportation Fund (STF) allocations for Fiscal Year 2007-08. She noted that it would be challenging for the committee to develop recommendations, as discretionary grant fund awards would not be known until May. Staff would prepare potential scenarios. She described some historical set-asides for rural services that had declined significantly and could not be depended upon for the future. The question was how to replenish the capital reserve out of the annual formula allocation for out-of-district funds that were used as match for capital (vehicle) purchases. Ms. Parker reported that at this time, the fleet was "very healthy," but it would be important to sustain that healthy level into the future.

Another challenge was that the allocation for Special Transportation Fund revenue for next year was down by about \$36,000 from this year.<sup>1</sup> The committee would need to determine

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<sup>1</sup> The actual decrease in STF funding from FY07 to FY08 was \$62,500.

how to manage that level of decrease. She added that STF money was “very integrated” as match funds for some other grants, and the discretionary grant funding could relieve some of the pressure on the STF funds.

Ms. Parker asked to add an agenda item. Kelly Brooks-Scanlan of Ulum Group was moving forward with the legislative proposal regarding the STF increase and was looking for participants and testimony. LTD would coordinate a vehicle to take people to Salem to testify or sit in on the hearing. Ms. Hekimoglu said the hearing was scheduled for February 26. Mr. Reese said he would attend.

Ms. Parker described the competing legislation relating to cigarette tax increases.

### **Program Updates**

#### **a) Lane Transit District**

Ms. Parker said LTD's updates were included in other presentations and in writing on page 23 of the agenda packet.

#### **b) South Lane Wheels / Cottage Grove**

There was no one present to comment.

#### **c) Rhody Express / Florence**

There was no one was present to comment.

#### **d) Diamond Express / Oakridge**

Ms. Goddard said they had had a problem in January with snow, ice, and cold weather. Because the bus was so large, it took a long time to heat up, and drivers' were taking the bus home to keep it plugged in overnight and to get an earlier start to warm it up. There was some concern because the diesel engine was so noisy, but the only complaint came from the father of one of the drivers.

Foul weather also caused them to miss one full day and three other trips because they could not get down Highway 58. Ms. Goddard updated the answering machine message daily as to whether the bus would be running or not, and said she had received no complaints.

#### **e) RideSource/Eugene, Springfield**

Mr. Braunschweiger said they looked forward to receiving new vehicles in March. Demand had increased significantly, with the past two weeks being record weeks. They were recruiting driver/operators to help keep up with demand.

#### **f) Call Center / Brokerage – Lane County**

Mr. Stamm said he had spent a lot of time over the last month working with Ms. Parker on a grant to help provide infrastructure for the call center facility. He attended the Call Center Managers' meetings in Salem and has visited various other call centers to “learn from their mistakes.”

Ms. Otten asked if they were evaluating the accessibility of the call center software in terms of disabled persons being able to work there. Mr. Stamm said that was a key part of what they were doing, but specific software had not yet been selected. He said the software would not only have to handle the eligibility portion, but also scheduling, reporting, and accounting. They were still in the planning stages, working with the Information Technology (IT) department to determine specifications. Ms. Otten suggested they not take a vendor's word for the accessibility of their software, but actually have someone test it. Mr. Whetham remarked that Mike Thomas would be a good resource. Ms. Parker said that some of the people who had worked at the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) IT Center at Oregon Health & Science University might also provide useful information.

Speaking to a question from Mr. Massengill about start-up funding for the call center, Ms. Parker said they had funding for the Medicaid part of it and were due to start integrating Oakridge in the next couple of months. The full call center would be implemented in increments because money for the full development of that call center would have to come from Discretionary Grant Program; an application is pending review.

Ms. Angvik asked about the Road to Freedom campaign. Mr. Whetham said it was on track, but they were still looking for a venue. He said Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA) was coordinating the project in partnership with other agencies and companies, with a view to creating another disabilities day celebration similar to the event at the Hilary Center that was held last year to introduce the EZ Access Program at LTD. LILA would be putting out a marketing brochure and arranging meetings and discussions.

Regarding page 27 of the information packet, Ms. Parker talked about the national youth with disabilities conference on July 27 – 28, which she described as a “wonderful opportunity for young people with disabilities to go to our nation’s capital, see other young people with disabilities as advocates, and get the younger generation moving and talking about what their needs are.” She said last year’s group was very energetic and full of enthusiasm, adding that the age range was up to 28.

Ms. Parker said the DRG Express pages included in the packet were intended to convey the information regarding federal legislation that would increase transportation funds.

### **EmX Operational Issues Discussion**

Ms. Parker introduced LTD Operations Director Mark Johnson, and said that last week, Ms. Otten, Mr. Whetham, and others had taken a lengthy tour of the EmX to look at issues that might relate to those with visual impairments. She welcomed questions and observations about EmX from everyone present.

Mr. Johnson described the many challenges of implementing the EmX program and joined Ms. Parker in inviting feedback from the group. He noted that Karl Hayes, Operations Supervisor, was present and said that Mr. Hayes was dealing with issues that came up on a daily basis.

Mr. Johnson said they were looking at specific procedures around ramp deployment. Initially, the front and rear ramps operated together and operators could not see what was going on at the back of the vehicle. They have since disabled the rear ramp and developed an operators' procedure for ramp deployment. They were still looking at how an operator

would determine if the ramp was needed at a particular stop and were considering a platform signal system.

Regarding announcements, Mr. Johnson said they had changed several times in the past month and continued to be evaluated.

Ms. Parker said they were also working on the forward-facing securement bay and still wanted feedback about how the rear-facing bays were working. They planned to request feedback via a newsletter to be sent to EZ Access customers.

Regarding how to signal a driver that the ramp was needed, Ms. Otten said she hoped they did not put the signal on the vehicle, as it would be harder to find there than in a fixed location at the station. She related an instance where an operator missed the approach and there was a gap between the curb and the bus, which would be a hazard for a visually-impaired person. Ms. Parker suggested that an interim solution might be to add a "ramp" card to the hailing kit. Mr. Johnson said the problem with that was that operators approaching the station were really not looking at activity on the ramp, so a card would be hard to spot. He suggested a light might be seen more easily. Mr. Whetham said a light would be "fun for kids."

There was further discussion about the process of ramp deployment and related operator training. Ms. Parker noted that EmX buses were supposed to kneel at both the Eugene and Springfield stations. Mr. Johnson said as riders became accustomed to the process, they tended to use the back doors where the ramps were not deployed. Mr. Whetham suggested putting the ramp message in the automated announcements.

In response to a question from Mr. Massengill about EmX stops, Mr. Johnson reported that EmX stops at every station except two in Glenwood; an announcement advises riders to press a button if they wish to stop at one of those. He said there was a large yellow square "stop request" button in the wheelchair bays and red buttons at each of the doors. The wheelchair bay button beeps twice, alerting the operator to the need for the ramp; the red buttons beep once. All buttons trigger a light in the operator's console. In the future, the button at the wheelchair bay will trigger a light that says "Stop requested. Ramp requested."

There was some discussion about the design of the EmX buses being more "rail-like" to minimize contact between operators and passengers and allow the trips to be faster. Ms. Otten and Mr. Whetham observed that the lack of contact created some of the problems under discussion. Mr. Johnson said the design was not likely to be changed, but they hoped to work out any issues via processes and procedures.

Ms. Christopher said she rode EmX from Springfield to this meeting, but did not hear any announcements for the Glenwood stops. She remarked on how speedy the EmX buses were. Ms. Christopher, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Hayes discussed the relative merits of various bays at stations for making bus-to-EmX transfers more efficient.

Ms. Parker asked Ernie Turner, LTD Maintenance Supervisor, when the pole stanchions would be installed on the forward-facing bays to eliminate the current tripping hazard. Mr. Turner said the vendor had not provided a delivery date. Mr. Kleger said all the wheelchair users he knew used the rear-facing bays exclusively because they were "a lot less hassle" and much easier to use than the forward-facing bay. Mr. Johnson said some riders preferred the forward-facing bays as a way to avoid motion sickness. Ms. Parker said

a long-term solution might be to make the bay on the left side either forward- or rear-facing to provide the option. In the meantime, it would be helpful if mobility devices had loops to help make securement easier in the forward facing bay.

Joe McCormack, EmX Project Leader, talked about the recent tour to evaluate the layout of the platforms. He said two things stood out: (1) audible pedestrian devices at crosswalks, some of which needed to be moved closer to a crosswalk, and (2) the need for detectable pavers on platforms to help identify boarding locations. Pavers were in place, but were not consistent between stations. Another lesson was the need to have furniture placement and canopies at stations be consistent among stations.

Mr. Kleger suggested that the seat release in the wheelchair bay be in a more convenient location. He said it was difficult to find and had a knob instead of a loop, which was harder to operate. Mr. Turner said he would fix that.

Mr. Johnson said that anyone who had additional suggestions or comments should get in touch with Ms. Parker or Mr. Whetham.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for March 20, 2007. Mr. Reese announced that there would be a celebration on the afternoon of that day, marking the Senior & Disabled Services Boutique reaching \$2500 in sales. The address is 1135 Olive Street in Eugene.

Mr. Reese adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

*(Recorded by Bernie Burson – City of Eugene)*