

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 15, 2008
10 a.m. – Noon
Lane Transit District
3500 East 17th Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

L. M. Reese, Chair, presiding	Mykal Taylor
Ann Angvick, Vice Chair	Bob Proctor
Kay Metzger	Aline Goddard
Hugh Massengill	Jan Aho
Evan Sloan	

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Ed Necker	Dave Kleger
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MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mary Otten	Kristine Sirmans
Mark Phinney	Tara Salusso

OTHERS PRESENT:

Julie Fosback	Fred Stoffer
Scott Whetham	David Braunschweiger
Connie Soper	

STAFF:

Terry Parker	Rand Stamm
Susan Hekimoglu	George Trauger
Andy Vobora	

INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Mr. Reese opened the meeting of Lane Transit District's (LTD) Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC). Those present introduced themselves.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Mr. Reese solicited comments from the audience.

Mike Cetto discussed a problem he experienced at the University North Station when attempting to make a connection to the EmX system. He had been attempting to exit the vehicle, but the rear door was not lined up with the curb and he had fallen and hit a bus stop sign located on the sidewalk. He asked that the buses at that station be pulled up to the curb so both doors lined up with the curb and to have the bus stop moved off the sidewalk. He also asked to reduce the use of the beeper associated with the wheelchair lift. He thought the beepers on the buses were too loud and very stressful and suggested that the air from bus air brakes should be released into the traffic zone instead of onto riders.

Responding to a question from Mr. Stamm, Mr. Cetto said that the event happened at around 10 a.m. He was unsure of the route he had arrived on. Mr. Cetto apologized to the bus driver he offended.

Ms. Parker said that she would share LTD's resolution of the issue with the committee.

Ms. Taylor acknowledged that it was difficult to line up the bus with the curb at the station in question. In regard to the lift beeper, she said if it was not loud, it could pose a hazard for passersby who might otherwise not notice its deployment, as well as for others waiting for the bus who might be in close proximity to the doorway.

Ms. Parker indicated that she would take a look at the arrangement at the station. She suggested the committee members might wish to make a site visit.

Ms. Metzger noted her distribution of fliers for the Oregon Legislative Dialogue sponsored by Senior and Disabled Services occurring on January 16. She encouraged members to attend.

MINUTES APPROVAL – DECEMBER 18, 2007

Mr. Reese called for corrections to the minutes. There were none.

Mr. Massengill, seconded by Ms. Angvick, moved to approve the minutes of December 18, 2007, as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

FALL TRAINING SUMMARY

Ms. Parker called the committee's attention to the summary on page 10 of the packet and reported that the annual driver training was now open to all employees who were encouraged to attend. This year, Accessible Services was one of the training topics. She said this year's training had been an ADA review and open dialogue with employees that resulted in the development of a list of service issues most relevant to them. She said the discussion had demonstrated how much LTD employees cared about the issue and how much it was part of their daily work lives. She added that participants had identified some pressing issues that were listed in the packet. Ms. Parker briefly reviewed the issues, which included securement, hygiene/biohazards, customer outreach, and attendants.

Speaking to the issue of securement, Ms. Parker said she would like to form a work group to review the configuration on the buses with the assistance of a consultant.

Speaking to the issue of hygiene/biohazards, Ms. Parker anticipated that the bus operators would be provided with some hygiene aids, such as hand sanitizers, but she thought a committee discussion of such things as whether garbage bags full of cans should be allowed on buses would be in order. As buses became more crowded, she thought the problem would worsen.

Ms. Angvick hoped the operators did not use hand sanitizers on LTD patrons.

Ms. Angvick said that she heard of instances where her clients could not bring bags of groceries onto a bus and asked why people were allowed to bring on bags of cans. Ms. Parker clarified that people were not prohibited from bringing groceries on the bus but people were generally restricted to carrying what they could bring on one trip, which prohibited people from trying to make multiple trips to carry bags onto the bus, delaying the bus. In addition, people used multiple seats for their cargo.

Ms. Parker said the district had been amenable to people using the lift for shopping carts, but the lifts were now being extensively used, and the use of the lift for other than mobility devices is

becoming an operational issue. She said that consistent application of district policy was difficult for 200+ operators.

Ms. Taylor said she drove an old bus with an old lift, and if it was used 10 to 12 times in a day, it would not work the next day, which created operational problems for patrons. She thought that people should only be able to bring as much cargo as they could carry on the bus, acknowledging that meant more trips to the store. She had a difficult time asking people to stand because seats were occupied by bags of groceries or carts. Ms. Metzger said the cart was useful for those who could not carry their groceries. Ms. Taylor concurred.

Ms. Metzger suggested that a size limit could be placed on things carried aboard. Ms. Parker concurred, adding that such a limit did not solve the problem for everyone.

Responding to a question from Mr. Necker, Ms. Angvick confirmed that in general, her clients were attempting to carry more than one bag. She said that asking her clientele to shop more than once a week did not work; otherwise, they would turn to RideSource, which was a more expensive service for LTD.

Ms. Parker said she would investigate to determine if there was a law precluding people from placing groceries in the aisles.

Ms. Aho liked the idea of limiting the size of items that could be brought aboard a bus and agreed with Ms. Metzger about the importance of carts to an aging population. She also agreed that in the absence of access to the fixed-route system, such individuals would turn to RideSource. She said the issue of the lift should be addressed by maintenance and should not drive away consumers. She thought a large garbage bag filled with cans might not be reasonable, but suggested that carts with cans might be a reasonable allowance.

Mr. Whetham arrived.

Responding to a question from Ms. Aho, Ms. Parker said that the carts were allowed, the question was the use of the lift. As more buses had lower floors, the problem would be lessened. Ramps were becoming faster and easier to use and maintain.

Mr. Necker thought it unreasonable to ask people making a living off cans to make multiple trips. Ms. Taylor observed that most of her customers who brought aboard cans had bus passes.

Ms. Parker suggested that operators should have discretion to limit carry on items during peak hours. She had seen big bags full of cans or other hard items attached on the back of wheelchairs as well, making it more challenging to secure the wheelchair, and operators had to negotiate around and under the bags, which often times were leaking. She acknowledged that on some routes, such as the 12 Gateway, there were no specific peak hours, but in fact the buses typically were full throughout the entire day.

Speaking to the issue of customer communication, Ms. Parker noted the challenges faced by the District in communicating with some consumers. She reported that an EZ Access newsletter was being developed as well as an EZ Access e-mail address (ezaccess@ltd.org) for input from those being served. She hoped to see a broader discussion from consumers about the problems they experience or for suggestions.

Speaking to the issue of perceived abuse of the attendant-ride-free policy, Ms. Parker said that LTD had made the application process much easier for consumers. The attendant issue may be more of an irritant than a serious problem, and she was seeking committee input. She cited as an example a consumer who all of sudden needed three attendants to go to a movie when they otherwise did not use an attendant and the attendants did not appear to be helping them. However, she was sensitive to the needs of those who needed attendants.

Responding to a question from Mr. Massengill, Ms. Parker said the ADA had a policy related to attendants on paratransit (*RideSource*), but there was no similar policy related to fixed route service and the attendants could be asked to pay. One middle ground was that the attendants pay half-fare.

Mr. Kleger said that when the LTD Board decided to allow attendants to ride free on the fixed route buses, it was because such riders frequently needed attendance at the end of the trip and members felt that the rider would not be able to make the trip without the attendant. He had seen nothing to change that but had witnessed people taking advantage of the policy. He did not want to turn the operators into cops and suggested that the District would have to put up with the abuse of the policy to some degree. If an operator was concerned, he or she should call a supervisor and have the supervisor follow up. Ms. Parker pointed out that there were times when supervisors were not available, and operators did not want to call supervisors for such small incidents. She suggested that the committee consider allowing attendants to ride free if they were travel attendants. Mr. Reese concurred. Ms. Parker thought that if the district provided training for such individuals, that might help alleviate the problem.

Mr. Necker suggested that passes could be issued after attendants attended the training.

Responding to a question from Ms. Metzger, Ms. Parker said that operators were responsible for the securement regardless of who actually performed the securement, and having trained attendants would be very helpful in that regard.

Returning to the issue of securement, Mr. Reese said that he had a chair that swivels and the EZ loops that were being used loosened his chair by pulling it to one side. Ms. Parker believed the entire securement strap system needed to be evaluated. Mr. Whetham observed that some chairs had a minimal number of places where straps could be attached.

Ms. Parker anticipated the formation of a securement work group that included committee members. She said the District wanted to be ready for the next major bus purchase, including EmX buses, which was scheduled for 2010.

Ms. Parker said she would share a copy of the EZ Access newsletter with the committee. In regard to the issue of travel attendants, she envisioned staff would propose some solutions with the operators. She also envisioned some limits being established for cargo.

Mr. Necker noted that service animals did not seem to be an issue of concern. Ms. Parker said that it came up but only when staff mentioned it to the operators. Ms. Taylor said that almost all service animals behaved as they were supposed to, while the occasional instance of a "Rottweiler on a rope" was addressed by the operators with assistance from a supervisor. Ms. Parker thought that good progress had been made.

Ms. Metzger suggested that in regard to communications, staff think of something other than print. Ms. Aho suggested an informational recording that people could access at the station. Ms. Taylor noted that the District communicated with people with sight impairments mainly via computer. She thought some workshops or similar form of outreach could be warranted as well.

ANNUAL ROUTE REVIEW

Mr. Vobora reported on Phase Two of the District's annual route review, referring the committee to the overview in the meeting packet. He noted the potentially affected routes and identified the route changes that could occur. Members asked questions clarifying the changes being proposed.

Responding to a question from Mr. Massengill, Mr. Vobora said the District continued to discuss the issue of service to Florence with representatives of that community, but there were other

options available to Florence, such as forming its own district to create a connection to the metropolitan area. There was much that community needed to do before service could occur. He pointed out that currently, LTD lacked the vehicles to serve Florence and would not be able to do so for some time, but he thought Florence needed one or two years to resolve the issue anyway.

Ms. Parker agreed that Florence had some homework to do. She said that Florence did not want to give up the Rhody Express, which was funded by federal money only available to such small communities.

Mr. Vobora invited the committee to call him with questions.

BUDGET TIMELINE—ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION FUND REVIEW

Ms. Parker said that LTD was in the process of budget development and she needed to submit her figures to budget staff by February 8. She reported that Special Transportation Fund revenues were flat, leading to possible service decreases because of expected increases in costs. She solicited a volunteer for a budget committee, noting that Mr. Reese and Ms. Angvick were members because they were chair and vice chair. Mr. Necker volunteered.

LANE COORDINATED HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Parker referred committee members to the draft memorandum on page 18 of the packet entitled *Lane Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) Update: Next Steps*. The memorandum outlined a process used by staff to identify and prioritize strategies for the Coordinated Plan, with an emphasis on employment, which was an area where funding was available. The memorandum included a matrix identifying needs/gaps and associated potential transportation strategies developed by Ms. Soper. She anticipated there could be other non-transportation related solutions, such as transportation hosts.

Ms. Parker reviewed the needs/gaps matrix. She invited feedback. Mr. Proctor said the volunteer program could probably be added to several of the category areas, such as the Un-served or Underserved category, Lack of Availability category, and the Cost of Public Transportation was Difficult for Some category. Ms. Taylor noted the category area failed to mention user groups and she said that those should be added as well where appropriate, such as to the Un-served/ Underserved category.

Ms. Parker referred the Committee to the evaluation criteria on page 22 of the packet. She reviewed the criteria and invited feedback. Mr. Necker and Ms. Aho offered some minor wording changes, which Ms. Parker recorded.

Responding to a question from Ms. Parker, Committee members indicated that they found the criteria useful.

Ms. Parker indicated that the next step was to examine the process of project solicitation and determining who oversaw project selection. She had hoped to involve the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) as an impartial party to assist in the evaluation process, but LCOG staff were reluctant due to heavy workloads. She had not yet figured out how to make that happen and invited suggestions. Ms. Aho suggested United Way as one possibility and provided Priscilla Gould's name as an agency contact. Ms. Parker indicated she also would consider the Human Services Commission as an alternative. Ms. Metzger indicated she would follow-up on Ms. Parker's behalf with LCOG. (Note: There have been subsequent conversations with LCOG acting as the Metropolitan Planning Organization about their role in reviewing the process and utilizing the Transportation Planning Committee to assist with the process).

PROGRAM UPDATES

a) Lane Transit District – included in packet

Ms. Parker noted that the previous day marked the first full year of service for EmX.

b) South Lane Wheels/Cottage Grove

There was no report.

b) Rhody Express/Florence

There was no report.

c) Diamond Express/Oakridge

d) RideSource/Eugene, Springfield

RideSource Manager David Braunschweiger provided some ridership figures for RideSource and Diamond Express for the last six months that demonstrated considerable growth for Diamond Express since its inception.

e) Alternative Work Concepts

Mr. Whetham reported that the Transit Host Program was going well and was averaging more than 1,000 transfers monthly. Travel training on fixed-route buses also was quite busy, however, EmX training had dropped off significantly. Staff were still having discussions about EmX issues, such as the tie down for wheelchairs and boarding announcements. LTD continued to receive lots of referrals for travel training without having to do any outreach. Mr. Whetham said that LTD was updating the data base of who had been trained since 1998.

The next meeting was scheduled for February 11, 2008.

Mr. Reese adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)