

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 18, 2008
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Lane Transit District

MEMBERS PRESENT:

L. M. Reese, Chair, presiding	Mykal Taylor
Ann Angvick, Vice Chair	Bob Proctor
Kay Metzger	Aline Goddard
Hugh Massengill	Tara Salusso
Evan Sloan	Mary Otten

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Ed Necker	Dave Kleger
Scott Whetham	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jan Aho	Kristine Sirmans
Mark Phinney	Michael Thomas

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ann Lauver	Mike Huntington
Beth Mulcahey	David Braunschweiger
Kris Lyon	Adam Reiner, OSU
Tim Kline, OSU	Gary Girmer, OSU

STAFF:

Terry Parker	Rand Stamm
Susan Hekimoglu	

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. Mr. Reese said that he had the opportunity to go to Salem to testify before the Transportation Committee regarding the efforts to increase the special transportation fund that help fund human service transportation. Mr. Reese also congratulated Ed Necker on his appointment to the LTD Board of Directors. Mr. Reese suggested moving the South Lane Wheels program update to earlier in the meeting to accommodate Ms. Salusso's need to leave the meeting early.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were no comments

MINUTES APPROVAL – DECEMBER 18, 2007

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

Mr. Massengill, seconded by Ms. Otten, moved to approve the minutes of January 15, 2008, as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

REAR-FACING WHEELCHAIR BAY PROTOTYPE

The senior engineering students from Oregon State University presented a prototype of a rear-facing containment bay for people who use mobility devices that they had developed as part of the Engineering Degree Senior project. The prototype featured a retractable arm on the outside that could be retracted for ease of entering the bay and protracted for additional containment safety after a rider was situated in the bay. In response to questions, the students said that the back rest on the prototype had been tested to 1,200 pounds and 1.5 g-force acceleration. The whole design is portable, so that it would be possible to keep the existing backrest. The bus operator also will have remote operation of the retractable arm for persons who are unable to operate it on their own. The retractable arm track would be flush mounted on the floor.

Ms. Parker said that LTD may test the prototype in the next EmX vehicle purchase. If the arm retracting motor were to break down, the arm could still be retracted by releasing the air pressure valve and pushing the arm to the upright position. The unit costs approximately \$4,000. The committee members thought that this design might work well for people who use the 3-wheel scooters that typically are longer than a standard wheelchair.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES BUDGET

Mr. Reese left the meeting. Ms. Angvick assumed the position of Chair.

Ms. Parker said that the Budget Committee had met earlier in the day to review the Special Transportation Fund (STF) revenue for Fiscal Year 2008-09 (FY09) and prepare a recommendation for the committee. She reminded the Committee that the FY09 budget was the second year of a two-year budget that the committee had reviewed the previous year. She said that the Committee would review this year's allocations and actual spending to mid-year and consider if the assumptions that the Committee made last year for FY09 were still accurate to be carried over to next year. The state had not yet issued its STF allocation for FY09, but had instructed agencies to assume the same amount or less. There were two reasons that the STF revenue could change. One was that the actual revenue was coming in at the same level or lower. STF funds came from a portion of the tax on cigarette sales; a lawn-mower fund, which was a tax imposed when people purchased gas with a portable gas tank, such as those used to fill lawn mowers; and portions of the Department of Motor Vehicle tax on ID cards. Due to new immigration standards, there was a probability that the DMV ID Card revenue would decline. The Accessible Services Fund was a much bigger budget that included LTD general fund and other grant funding, but because the committee had the authority to spend the STF portion of the budget, that was the portion that was presented.

Ms. Parker then reviewed the In-District and Out-of-District portions of the STF budget for FY09. There was no change to the STF funding that would go to metro paratransit services; no change to the mental health and homeless designation; a very slight decrease to the travel training and transit host program of \$500; and no change to the south lane designation. The Out-of-District revenue would change based on the budgets of the Out-of-District programs and additional revenue requests from the cities to provide local match for federal 5311 small city funding. The Out-of-District budget was conservative in order to maintain funds in the Out-of-District reserve, which typically was used as local match for capital purchases for vehicles.

Ms. Salusso asked about the In-District formula for RideSource Medicaid Non-Medical, which did not exist prior to FY09. Ms. Parker said that the Medicaid Non-Medical had been included in the metro RideSource services budget, but had not previously been separated out as its own line item. Ms. Parker said that there are a number of programs that fall under the RideSource In-District program, such as the Lane County DD contract, which was not listed. Those RideSource

metro programs that were listed were the programs that typically required the local match for federal funds that STF funds were used for. In the RideSource program, there was nearly \$2 million from the LTD General Fund that also could be used for match.

Ms. Metzger said that her understanding in looking at the proposed STF revenue distribution was that nothing had changed from the previous year, other than separating out the Medicaid Non-Medical in the RideSource budget. Ms. Marker said that there some decreases in the proposed FY09 STF allocations due to some increases in other funding. One of the budget strategies is to spend the STF funds last after all other funding was exhausted in an attempt to preserve those funds in a reserve. STF was the most flexible money available in the budget. Every other discretionary grant was specifically designated and required local matching funds.

Mr. Proctor proposed that the ATC accept the revisions to the Fiscal Year 2008-09 STF budget as presented and forward a recommendation for approval to the LTD Board of Directors. Ms. Salusso seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Whetham abstained, but as a community representative member, he was not eligible to vote.

Mr. Reese returned to the meeting and resumed his role as Chair.

Ms. Parker said that she did have the full Accessible Services Fund budget, which showed all the funding streams. She said that if any members were interested to review the full budget prior to the Board Budget Committee meeting, staff would schedule a meeting. Ms. Hekimoglu suggested 9:00 a.m., on April 15, 2008, just prior to the next ATC meeting, which would be one week prior to the first LTD Board Budget Committee meeting and one month before the Board hearing and approval of the budget. Ms. Hekimoglu would remind members prior to the April meeting.

PROGRAM UPDATES – South Lane Wheels

Ms. Salusso announced that South Lane Wheels had been successful in securing a mobility management grant. The grant consisted of \$50,000 for a one-year project for mobility management. The grant would fund a position that would focus on building capacity and building relationships with businesses, agencies, and individuals in order to help impact their choices with regard to using public transportation. Businesses, for example, might be interested in a bus pass program for their employees, which would be a tax credit. There are 52 non-profit agencies in Cottage Grove, and building relationships with those agencies could result in better planning for transportation or building a community plan that addresses transportation of all the agency needs. This position would be surveying the agencies to gather data that could support a community plan, which could help in securing additional funding. The position would work with individuals who have barriers to accessing transportation, such as fear or transition from driving to not being able to drive, to try to help them access the bus. In addition, the position will work on capacity building, which will include raising awareness in the metro area by forming partnerships with end destinations, such as Sacred Heart Hospital.

South Lane Wheels also was recruiting six new Board members. Staff were developing ride rates for the RideSource Call Center. With LTD's adjustment to fares as of July 1, South Lane Wheels also was considering a rate increase. In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Ms. Salusso said that South Lane Wheels sells monthly bus passes for the *Route Around Town*. South Lane's fare revenue had decreased over the past two years as people were shifting to the *Route Around Town*. The route was economical for the riders, and also economical for South Lane Wheels to provide as it was cheaper to operate than the door-to-door service. Demand for services was increasing at a high rate, and South Lane Wheels was considering expanding its service and personnel. Currently, they were only able to take 60 to 64 percent of the RideSource Call Center trip referrals for south Lane.

PROGRAM UPDATES – RideSource Call Center

Mr. Stamm reported that the call center would be fully operational toward the end of May when the Oregon Health Plan Plus (OHP+) clients in the Eugene/Springfield metro area and the remaining parts of Lane County were brought in to the service. The only thing that could delay the full launch of the call center would be a delay in the implementation of the Department of Human Services software (MMIS) that would be used to interface with the brokerages for billing Medicaid trips. The interior facility design to add the call taker work stations is nearly complete. The next phase of the facility remodel will be the expansion of the employee and vehicle parking area. That construction will begin around May 1. Mr. Stamm said that anyone who is interested would be welcome to stop by to see the Call Center. Staffing is moving ahead. The Call Center Manager, Kris Lyon, was hired in December, and since then, the Lead Customer Service Representative and the Billing specialist have been hired. Special Mobility Services currently was recruiting for call takers. The provider contract was in the final stage of development.

Ms. Goddard said that Oakridge was the first area to be phased in to the Call Center. She reported that clients in Oakridge were accustomed to calling her for rides, and it was a challenge to get people to change their patterns. Demand had increased, and just that day, they had five people on one vehicle going to five different appointments. Mr. Stamm said that Oakridge also would be the first area to test the new Web-based software module (EPC) being designed at LTD that will get trip assignments to providers.

Ms. Parker said that providers, such as South Lane Wheels and Oakridge, were somewhat caught in the middle in that they continue to do business partly the way they have always done business and now, partly the way they will do business once the call center is fully operational.

Ms. Salusso said that the Cottage Grove area had been the most recent area to be incorporated into the call center, and due to its larger size, had provided more challenges to the RideSource Call Center, but she wanted to commend the staff for their responsiveness, flexibility, and communication. She asked if mid May would be the time when the billing would go online as well. Mr. Stamm said that was the plan. Providers would be working off of the provider contract with the call center, sending their invoices through the EPC module to the call center. The call center will pay the providers and LTD as the brokerage would be billing the Department of Human Services (DHS). The completed provider contract should be available for review within a week or two. Mr. Stamm said that he appreciated the provider's who currently were working with the call center for their patience and flexibility.

Ms. Angvick said that she and her staff were case managers who called to arrange rides for their clients. She wanted to be sure that she would have ample time to train her staff on the new procedures. Mr. Stamm said that there was not a set date at this point until LTD got the final go ahead from the state. He said that he and Ms. Lyon were available to attend staff meetings, and encouraged people to contact him or Ms. Lyon to make arrangements.

Ms. Parker said that DHS actually would be writing a letter to individual OHP+ clients alerting them to the changes, but LTD realized that the case managers, care providers, and residential providers were not getting the information. LTD was in the process of compiling a list of those providers to ensure that the same information is shared with them as well. Mr. Stamm said that he and Ms. Lyon were attempting to get out to all interested groups.

Ms. Salusso asked if a new training manual would be available for the new EPC software. Mr. Stamm said that there would be written instructions, but the software had been designed to be very intuitive and easy for the provider to use. Ms. Salusso thought a small, laminated at-a-glance instruction sheet would be helpful.

Ms. Parker said as a reminder that the EPC was a computer-based system, so if a computer system was not operational, a back-up plan would be in place both for the call center and for the providers.

PROGRAM UPDATES – Rhody Express/Florence

Ms. Parker said that the Rhody Express service originally was designed to be a deviated fixed route service, meaning that if someone who lived near the route, but who could not access the route needed a ride, the vehicle would deviate up to three blocks to curb-side service for that rider. As the service has gotten busier, the ability to deviate effectively is getting harder to provide, which makes it look more like a fixed-route service (a fixed route with regular, timed stops), which requires a complementary ADA paratransit service. The transition to ADA complementary paratransit service was underway. The S&DS Senior Outreach staff person assigned to Florence would begin conducting ADA assessments in Florence. There were some recent cases of small city service that were highlighted at the national level. They were reviewed by the Office of Civil Rights, which said that those services really could not be considered deviated routes if they were not doing a certain level of deviations. LTD was working with S&DS and River Cities Taxi to get the Rhody Express service into ADA compliance.

Mr. Proctor said that the DHS Volunteer Coordinator had organized a meeting in Florence to talk about volunteer resources in the community. They met with staff from the hospital and several other community leaders to discuss how to deal with the increased ridership that likely will occur with the implementation of the call center. Another issue discussed was the Dialysis trips that currently were occurring to Eugene or Coos Bay with taxi trips that were very expensive. If there were more volunteer drivers available for those trips, the cost savings would be significant. Volunteer recruitment was discussed as well.

Mr. Kleger asked if anyone had any experience using the Porter Stage Lines, which operated a route from Coos Bay through Florence and Eugene to eastern Oregon and back every day. | Ms. Parker said that she had not experienced the service personally, but when she mentioned the availability of that service to people, she often heard that it was too expensive and took too long. She thought a rider could use the service to get from Florence to Eugene and back in one day, but it would require a flag stop at 8:45 a.m. in Florence and not being able to get back to Florence until 6:30 p.m., making it a long day for the rider. Mr. Kleger said he often saw the Porter vehicle on West 11th coming into Eugene, and it appeared to have very low ridership. Ms. Parker said it was funded with federal inter-city grant funds. Mr. Kleger thought it was a resource that ought to be looked into to determine why the ridership is so low and if there was something that could be done to make the service more accessible. Mr. Proctor said that if it were a Medicaid Medical ride, the ride would be paid for. Mr. Necker said that he had looked into taking the Porter service to the coast some time ago, and had found out that for wheelchair service, Porter needed 24-hours notice. He was not sure that their vehicles were wheelchair accessible. Mr. Kleger said that as of a few years ago, Porter had one wheelchair accessible vehicle in its fleet. Ms. Parker said that it was a potential ride for a person who could handle the trip. It is similar to someone who receives Medicaid benefits using the Diamond Express. If the client is ambulatory and can use the Diamond Express, it makes sense to have them use it.

Ms. Salusso asked how the ADA assessment work would be funded. Ms. Parker said that River Cities Taxi already provided some taxi trips on a program that was grandfathered in years ago, but its service area was broader, so the same money would be used, but the service area would be restrained to meet the ADA requirement. Also, expanded assessments would be done as part of the county-wide mobility management project with Senior & Disabled Services.

PROGRAM UPDATES – LTD

Ms. Parker said that Senior and Disabled Services staff were working on transportation case management. In Oakridge, the Senior Outreach staff member had begun doing assessments as part of her outreach efforts that would include transportation assessments that would determine which service or services a person could access based on their abilities and the transportation resources available to the client. Those assessments would inform the call center about the person's eligibility and how the rides would be billed or paid for.

Ms. Parker thought that when the transportation case management system shifted to South Lane County, it might dovetail on the mobility management grant work that Ms. Salusso had discussed

in terms of there being someone in the Cottage Grove area who would be assessing people's transportation based on the pool of transportation services that are available in Cottage Grove for people who are Medicaid eligible and others through the Senior & Disabled Services office. Ms. Metzger agreed that as the SLW mobility manager was meeting with consumers about their barriers, it would be a good opportunity to introduce the transportation case management system as an education piece, and also to be connected to make referrals to the S&DS Senior Outreach staff person.

Ms. Salusso left the meeting.

Ms. Parker said that a team from Lane County had been selected to participate in the Easter Seals Project Action Mobility Planning Institute in late April in Washington, D.C. The team members included Ms. Parker, Ms. Metzger, Mr. Whetham, Richard Whitwer of the Department of Human Services Self Sufficiency Program, and Walter Rosenthal from Lane County Mental Health. Liz Fox, also from Alternative Work Concepts also would be traveling with the team to assist Mr. Whetham with the written materials. The team was looking at how to use the time at the Institute to focus on the projects that had been identified, and the team would act as the base for the RideSource Call Center Advisory Committee. The Institute provided technical assistance to mobility management teams from across the country in developing action plans around pre-identified issues.

Ms. Parker also reported that the federal Office of Medical Assistant has issued some draft rules that if adopted as written would eliminate medical transportation as a benefit under Medicaid. There are several national organizations that understand the issue and are writing letters about it. For those who receive Medicaid who live in a rural area where there is no doctor or specialist, it would eliminate access to medical services for those who had no transportation.

Ms Parker discussed another concern with regard to people with disabilities who, due to behaviors, were being denied bus service. There had been several recent incidents where she was made aware of the situations, and through her involvement, she realized the importance of intervening as early as possible to develop a plan to help the person achieve reinstatement of bus services. One of the issues that came up was how to go about involving an advocate for the rider, such as a case manager, who could help develop a plan, which could include training or which could identify the need for an attendant in order for that person to ride the bus, for example.

Mr. Massengill said what to do if someone came into the Human Rights office and asked for help because they had been kicked off the bus. Ms. Parker said that the first thing to do would be to determine the reason the person was denied bus service, and if warranted, to schedule and attend a meeting between the rider and the security staff to design a plan of action toward earning reinstatement for the rider.

Ms. Lauver said that her staff had difficulty getting a response from LTD when they attempted to advocate on behalf of their client. Ms. Parker said that if they felt that the reason for the denial truly was related to their disability, the staff could call someone in Accessible Services who could help organize and facilitate a meeting, but that Accessible Services staff would not advocate for one side or the other.

PROGRAM UPDATES – Oakridge

Ms. Goddard said that March 17 was the 5th anniversary of the Diamond Express. Ridership continues to increase.

PROGRAM UPDATES – RideSource

Mr. Braunschweiger said that RideSource continues to be busy. New operators are being added this month to help meet demand. In addition, a couple of operators were being cross trained to transition into the call center as customer service representatives, which would give them full-time employment. The development of the call center has taken much of the staff focus away from the RideSource service, but that would change once the call center is operational. Most of the office staff were becoming accustomed to having RideSource staff and call center staff sharing the location and making that work. While the operators had not been as directly impacted, they definitely noticed the changes with the new office layout and the technological changes, such as the new phone system. It will be interesting to see how the fare increase, should it be approved, impacts the demand for the service. In response to a question, Mr. Braunschweiger said that the automated scheduler is now being used seven days each week. They first measured its success by the kinds of customer feedback they received, and now they were measuring success based on how long it took staff to complete a schedule, which was getting shorter. Previously, a scheduler might work until late into the evening preparing the next day's schedule, but now the schedulers were able to complete their work much earlier. The major issue with the schedules was not the passenger experience, but more finding the load balance between different drivers. The staff who are using it are now cross training others.

PROGRAM UPDATES – Alternative Work Concepts

Mr. Whetham reported that staff continued to cover the afternoon shift as Kevin Lively had not yet returned to work. The number of scheduled transfers had increased to about 1,200 per month. Staff were working to bring the other service numbers up, such as acting as extra eyes and ears for the security service and as on-platform customer service extension. They track their interactions. The wait list for travel training is at a manageable level. Two of the newer travel trainers went to a three-day Easter Seals Project Action Training workshop in Portland. They came back with a lot of energy and excitement. We learned that we are doing a lot of things right, but they also provided some ideas for improvement.

PROGRAM UPDATES – White Bird Clinic

Ms. Lauver said that White Bird had been arranging a higher number of trips for people to return to their home communities where their support system existed, such as family members, case workers, etc. She explained that often a person with serious mental illness will get an idea to travel. They arrive here, and within four to six months, they are in serious trouble, and getting them back to their home community to the services and people they are accustomed to is helpful.

Ms. Parker said that several years ago, the City of Eugene had provided \$50,000 to LTD to address transportation issues for people who are homeless. LTD had divided the money into two programs, one that provided a deeper discount for agencies that currently purchased fare instruments at a 50% discount, to purchase fare instruments at a 75% discount for their senior clients and their clients who experienced disabilities and who were homeless or approaching homelessness, and the rest was used to increase the White Bird Clinic's contract to provide transportation to people with mental and emotional disabilities who are homeless. The city funding had been spent, and the non-profit 75% discount program would end on April 1. Because the non-profits had been able to increase the number of fare instruments they were distributing, the end of the 75% discount program could result in more referrals to White Bird Clinic.

Ms. Parker said that the end of that funding would centrally locate the pressure to White Bird to provide transportation for homeless individuals. Ms. Lauver said that program gave them the opportunity to check in with other areas of their clients' lives and determine if they had other services that they utilized, and being able to give them a bus pass to access those services addressed a great need.

There being no further business, Mr. Reese adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m. The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 15, 2008.

(Recorded by Susan Hekimoglu)