

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 17, 2008  
10 a.m. – Noon  
Lane Transit District  
3500 East 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

L. M. Reese, Chair, presiding	Mykal Taylor
Ann Angvick, Vice Chair	Bob Proctor
Kay Metzger	Mary Otten
Hugh Massengill	Kristine Sirmans
Aline Goddard	Mark Phinney

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Ed Necker	Dave Kleger
Scott Whethem	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jan Aho	Tara Salusso
Evan Sloan	

OTHERS PRESENT:

Gail Lundeen	Fred Stoffer
Bonnie Brown	Eleanor Mulder
Mike Huntington	David Braunschweiger
Ann Lauver	

STAFF:

Terry Parker	Rand Stamm
Susan Hekimoglu	Andy Vobora

**INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AGENDA REVIEW**

Mr. Reese called the meeting to order and those present introduced themselves.

Mr. Reese asked if committee members had received their EmX newsletter. Some members had not received the newsletter. Ms. Otten and Mr. Whethem asked to receive newsletters electronically.

**COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

There were no comments.

**MINUTES APPROVAL – APRIL 15, 2008 & MAY 20, 2008**

Ms. Metzger, seconded by Ms. Otten, moved to approve the April 15, 2008, minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Massengill, seconded by Ms. Sirmans, moved to approve the May 20, 2008, minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

For the benefit of those who were not at the May 20 meeting, Ms. Parker summarized a report from Charlie Simmons, LTD Facilities Manager, on Pioneer Parkway EmX extension. She said a topic of discussion was the design work on the roundabout at Hayden Bridge and pedestrian safety. She said LTD had developed an alternative design that moved station access away from the roundabout to improve safety, but the City of Springfield had not accepted that design. She would be talking to the disabled community about pedestrian issues associated with the increased use of roundabouts as a traffic management tool. She said maintaining a walkable environment in communities was an issue nationwide.

Ms. Otten asked if the roundabout was signalized. Ms. Parker said she understood it was a standard design and not signalized. She encouraged representatives from the disabled community who lived in Springfield to raise concerns regarding roundabouts in general with City planning staff.

**COORDINATED PLAN UPDATE**

Ms. Parker said that the Lane Coordinated Public Transit—Human Services Transportation Plan had been updated by adding sections that were not included in the first iteration. She said the updated plan included additional demographic analysis and a more specific needs assessment and strategies section. She said any future fund applications processed through the coordinated system would need to reflect some need or strategy in the plan. She added that comments were received from Lane Council of Governments and were incorporated in the plan. She invited comments from the committee and said the plan would be presented to the board on June 18.

Ms. Metzger, seconded by Mr. Massengill, moved that the Accessible Transportation Committee recommend to the LTD Board of Directors approval of the Lane Coordinated Public Transit—Human Services Transportation Plan, 2009 Update. The motion passed unanimously.

**JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE**

Ms. Parker noted that Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funds had been available from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) since 1998, but only to special districts as earmarks; the Eugene/Springfield metropolitan area now received formula funding that came through LTD and was allocated to projects on a competitive application process.

Mr. Kleger reported that following a public solicitation for applications, a JARC application review committee met on June 16 to consider applications from the Pearl Buck Center, LTD Commuter Solutions, and LTD Accessible Services. He said the committee decided because there was adequate funding available, to recommend allocating the full 3-year amount of \$407,000 and to work with the applicant agencies to incorporate JARC into a program that could be administered through the RideSource Call Center. He said the committee also cautioned staff to closely scrutinize the proposed match funds as JARC match requirements were somewhat complicated.

Ms. Otten, seconded by Ms. Angvick, moved that the Accessible Transportation Committee accept the recommendations for Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funding as presented by the JARC Application Review Committee and forward its recommendation to the LTD Board of Directors for approval.

Ms. Parker clarified LTD's role with respect to the JARC program. She said LTD was the direct recipient and could be an applicant for the funds, but was also required to assure that other agencies had access to JARC funds. She said it was often challenging for agencies to provide either the matching funds or administrative support to receive JARC funding and there had been discussion of creating one large program operated through the call center, which would streamline the process and maximize use of funds by allowing agencies to refer their clients to the call center. She said the call center application would be modified to accommodate the JARC program.

Ms. Otten asked if operating the JARC program through the call center would cause problems with ride timing, such as occurred with RideSource when transportation was significantly earlier or later than anticipated. She was concerned that people would need to be confident of timing to use the program for commuting to jobs. Ms. Parker distinguished between the RideSource program and the call center. She said the call center managed and administered a variety of transportation resources. Mr. Stamm added that each transportation service or program had its own rules and guidelines and care would be taken to assure that JARC provided reliable transportation to work.

Mr. Necker said JARC required that funded programs be monitored and evaluated to assure resources were used effectively and appropriately. That would occur through the call center, rather than through a variety of agencies.

Mr. Whethem commented that he had several clients who used RideSource to travel to and from work with no problems.

Mr. Massengill asked if an annual report on JARC was required. Ms. Parker said the FTA required collection of data related to the number of trips and jobs accessed. She said JARC also could be used for job-related activities, such as getting children to and from daycare, job training and resume preparation. She described some of the rules surrounding matching funds and said the Oregon Department of Health and Human Services was a primary partner.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **ATC MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Mr. Massengill reported that six members' terms were expiring and all six had indicated an interest in being reappointed. He said if a member was completing a third term, he or she had to reapply for appointment; those completing their first or second terms did not. He said no other applications had been received.

Mr. Massengill added that the bylaws revisions consisted of changing the term "user" to "rider" and adding rider representative for paratransit riders, rather than just riders. He said the membership committee also recommended retaining Dave Kleger and Scott Whethem as community members and terminating Michael Thomas' community membership because he had missed three or more consecutive meetings. He said that left three community representative vacancies and several people had indicated interest.

Mr. Necker said he had been a community representative, but would become a representative of the LTD board when approved by the board on June 18.

Mr. Massengill said the current officers included L.M. Reese as chair and Ann Angvick as vice chair; both were willing to serve again.

Mr. Reese opened nominations for chair. Hearing none, he closed nominations.

Mr. Reese opened nominations for vice chair. Hearing none, he closed nominations.

Mr. Massengill, seconded by Ms. Otten, moved that the Accessible Transportation Committee approve the Membership Committee's recommendation that the current slate of officers—L.M. Reese as chair and Ann Angvick as vice chair—be appointed for another term, July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009. The motion passed unanimously.

## **PROGRAM UPDATES**

### *Lane Transit District*

Ms. Parker said that LTD had experienced several service animal issues raised in the fixed route service. She said problems related to an animal behaving aggressively. She said Mr. Stamm had been involved in training services animals and his experience had been helpful. She said that supervisors and security were being informed about when it was appropriate to excuse an animal from the bus until it was better trained. She said the rider could continue to use the bus, but could not bring the animal back on board until able to demonstrate it could behave appropriately towards other animals or people.

Mr. Stamm described incidents in which a dog that was an unusual breed for a service animal had behaved aggressively toward another service animal. He said animals had to be very well trained to be in a public transit situation.

Ms. Parker said that some people selected puppies as panic relief animals, but LTD generally did not allow puppies on board because they were not trained sufficiently to behave appropriately on the bus.

Ms. Otten urged the district to continue to be vigilant in prohibiting untrained animals from boarding the bus. She said the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defined a service animal as one that had been trained to perform at least one task; and intent to provide future training, such as for a puppy, did not qualify. She said one attack from a badly behaved animal could nullify tens of thousands of dollars of training for a certified service animal.

Ms. Angvick asked if companion and comfort animals were allowed on the bus. Ms. Parker said they were not considered service animals. Ms. Hekimoglu said the animal would have to be enclosed in a pet carrier.

Mr. Kleger commented that it was close quarters on a bus and those conditions were stressful for an animal. He said the situation could be hazardous if animals were not well trained.

Ms. Parker remarked that there always was a very large surge before the Country Fair of animals that people claimed were service animals. She said that presented a challenge for the district. She added that there were proposed new ADA rules to clarify service animals and those would be on a future agenda for discussion.

*Diamond Express/Oakridge*

Ms. Goddard reported that ridership was increasing due to gas prices and it had been necessary to add a bus to avoid leaving riders behind. She described a situation in which a rider wore rollerblades on the bus and almost injured herself when exiting the bus. She said on some occasions there were more people waiting to take the bus than the vehicle could accommodate and asked if there were policies regarding how to handle that situation.

Ms. Parker said it would be appropriate to review policies and it might be necessary to consider reservations because at this point there was no guarantee that a second bus would be added to avoid leaving people overnight in Eugene. She said riders were not allowed to stand because the corridor was long and had many curves.

*South Lane Wheels/Cottage Grove*

There was no report.

*Rhody Express/Florence*

Ms. Sirmans said Rhody Express was busy finalizing its dial-a-ride book and anticipated it would be available August 1.

*RideSource/Eugene, Springfield*

Mr. Braunschweiger said the call center was very busy and in its fifth week of handling all calls and administrative functions, as well as training for RideSource and private operator employees. He said the change in fares was a major issue on the horizon and he hoped to be able to provide information on the impact of fare increases on ridership at the next meeting.

In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Mr. Stamm explained that training for other providers was going well, with five taxi companies contracting with the call center. He said a problem arose when agencies were issuing bus passes in conflict with call center requirements; agencies were verifying medical appointments on an annual basis, but by contract, the call center was required to conduct monthly verification. He said that was being resolved with LTD's assistance.

Ms. Otten asked if training for taxi company employees was likely to result in an increase in accessibility for people using power-assisted wheelchairs or other mobility devices. She also asked if there had been any negative feedback from the public regarding the impact of RideSource on LTD's budget. Mr. Stamm said there was no indication that taxis were becoming more accessible, but he had noticed that more companies were beginning to recognize the value of having accessible vehicles. Ms. Parker said LTD had not received any negative feedback on RideSource.

*Alternative Work Concepts*

Mr. Whetham said that the transit hosts were introducing clients to new drivers. He said sensitivity training was going well. AWC was providing the sensitivity portion of the training to the contracted call center transportation providers.

Ms. Brown said she had attended new operator training (LTD new bus operators) with one of the transit hosts and it was interesting to hear the presentation and answer questions about Alternative Work Concepts services.

Ms. Taylor asked Mr. Whetham to make a presentation on Alternative Work Concepts at the fall training for regular operators. Mr. Whetham said he would be there.

*Committee Chair*

Mr. Reese announced that cake was available to celebrate the beginning of summer and the last committee meeting of the fiscal year. He thanked the committee for re-electing him as committee chair.

## **LTD BUDGET UPDATE**

Mr. Vobora, LTD's Director of, Planning, Accessible Services, and Marketing distributed a handout describing the proposed fare changes to be considered by the Board. He said there would be a public hearing on June 18, followed by a regular board meeting. He briefly explained the fare changes under consideration and asked for comments and questions from the committee.

Mr. Necker asked if the elimination of three-month passes meant elimination of the sale of three one-month passes to Easy Access riders. Mr. Vobora said that was correct.

Mr. Necker said there were people who rode the fixed route who had difficulty handling money. He asked if tokens would still be available for full fare. Mr. Vobora said they would not be available under the proposed changes, but tokens would still be sold to agencies. He said there was some discussion about whether tickets might be easier than tokens for agencies to manage and LTD to track.

Ms. Otten asked if people would be able to use the tokens they already had. Mr. Vobora said there would be a grace period, such as 18 to 24 months, during which token supplies could be used.

Mr. Kleger asked if LTD was forfeiting more than it was saving by eliminating the fare from 65 to 70 years of age. Mr. Vobora said the district likely would benefit from full fares for riders 62 to 64 years of age and the impetus for lowering the age for free fares to 65 was to promote use of the bus to those riders before they required RideSource. Ms. Parker said encouraging people to ride the bus earlier before they needed RideSource would take some pressure off RideSource from people who stopped driving and converted immediately to RideSource.

Ms. Parker asked if there had been any negative comments from the public about the high cost of RideSource or backlash against providing services for seniors and people with disabilities. Mr. Vobora said he had heard nothing like that and people seemed to understand the impact of fuel price increases.

Ms. Parker asked if the committee could be involved in the board's process to identify how to maintain services in the face of budget constraints. Mr. Vobora described the various strategies for developing budget scenarios based on fuel prices, revising the schedule for capital projects, cutting services and redesigning the system. He noted that some services would be added in the fall of 2008, but cuts were likely in 2009. He said the additional services had been pre-approved and most related to serving the PeaceHealth Riverbend complex. He said there would be many opportunities throughout the summer and fall to provide input on budget scenarios and service changes.

Ms. Otten asked what drivers were behind potential service cuts. Mr. Vobora said that cuts were guided by board policies, equity, and Title VI issues and productivity. He said the goal would be to leave system structures intact and remove service elements that would be easy to replace when financial conditions improved.

Ms. Otten asked if it would be helpful to use smaller vehicles on some routes. Mr. Vobora explained that there would be little cost saving because there would still be the expense of a driver and fuel.

Mr. Kleger commented that any fuel saving achieved by using a smaller, lighter vehicle would be offset by the need to replace that vehicle more frequently and increased maintenance costs.

Mr. Necker said there was a possibility of purchasing hybrid buses in the future, which would offer savings in fuel.

### **ATC SUMMER SCHEDULE**

Ms. Parker announced that the committee's next meeting would be in September or October and asked Mr. Vobora to provide an update at that time. She wished everyone a pleasant summer.

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

*(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)*