

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, October 20, 2009
10 a.m. – Noon
Lane Transit District
3500 East 17th Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

L. M. Reese, Chair, presiding	Bob Proctor
Hugh Massengill, Vice Chair	Tara Sue Salusso
Ann Angvick	Kristine Sirmans
Eleanor Mulder	Gail Lundeen
Aline Goddard	Scott Whetham
Mark Phinney	Mary Otten
Kay Metzger	

LTD BOARD MEMBER (ex officio)

Ed Necker

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Bill Morganti	Tara Davee
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OTHERS PRESENT:

Kris Lyon	Sherry Clark
Cynthia Weiss	Natasha DeSantis
Mike Huntington	
Glen Adams	

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu	Andy Vobora
Terry Parker	Cosette Rees
Tom Schwetz	

1. INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Reese called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order. Those present introduced themselves. Ms. Hekimoglu reintroduced the new members present, Gail Lundeen and Eleanor Mulder. She noted Scott Whetham had been reappointed following a one-year absence from committee membership. Mr. Whetham was not yet present.

2. Audience Participation

Mr. Reese invited audience participation. There was no one present wishing to speak.

3. Action: Approval of June 16, 2009, Minutes

Mr. Reese recalled that the committee did not have a quorum at its last meeting and was unable to approve changes to the bylaws agreed upon at the June meeting. He indicated that approval of the minutes also would constitute approval of the bylaws revisions discussed and approved at that meeting.

Mr. Massengill, seconded by Ms. Otten, moved to approve the minutes of June 16, 2009.

Ms. Salusso indicated she would abstain from the vote because she had not been at the last meeting.

Ms. Parker called the committee's attention to the summary of the bylaw's changes, which were reflected on page 4 of the June minutes, and the explanation included in the agenda item summary. She reminded the ATC of its discussion about its relationship with the RideSource Call Center Advisory Committee, and its resolution to have the committee as a subcommittee of the group. She said the alternative would have been to have started another committee structure not connected to the ATC, which did not seem to make sense given that the ATC already reported to Lane Transit District's (LTD) Board of Directors.

Ms. Metzger commended the concept of an advisory committee for the RideSource Call Center.

The motion passed, Ms. Salusso and Ms. Mulder abstaining from the vote because they were not at the June meeting.

4. Action: Grant Review and Public Hearing**a. Special Transportation Operating and Transportation Act Grant Overview**

Ms. Parker provided an overview of the grant process, and noted that Mr. Massengill, Mr. Phinney, and Mr. Proctor participated in the Grant Review Committee and had forwarded the recommendation before the ATC. The Grant Review Committee would meet again after the ATC meeting following the receipt of public testimony if necessary. She reported that the grant applications were due October 30, and the ATC would not meet again prior to that time for any further discussion of the applications. However, the LTD board would be informed of the projects in November and would have an opportunity to make changes.

Ms. Parker noted that the project requests exceeded the amount available by about \$1 million. Most requests fell into the vehicle replacement or Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit operations categories. She reviewed the project requests, which were included in the meeting packet, and ATC members asked questions clarifying the information presented.

She noted that three rural projects that were not funded under the STO/JTA opportunity would be referred for further consideration of funding through the Special Transportation Fund (STF) Out-of-District carryover fund. Staff would gather additional information from the project applicants and reconvene the Grant Review Committee to prepare a recommendation for consideration by the Accessible Transportation Committee at a future date.

Mr. Whetham arrived.

Ms. Parker acknowledged a \$20,000 error in the spreadsheet related to the City of Florence request but she confirmed that the bottom line was correct and the spreadsheet was balanced.

Mr. Massengill, a member of the Grants Review Committee, commended the presentation for its thoroughness. He said that a considerable amount of money was involved and the level of detail provided to the ATC made him confident in the process. He asked if the grants would help to relieve pressure on LTD's operations budget. Mr. Necker said yes, providing funding for ADA Paratransit operations relieved the LTD general fund of money that otherwise would go to RideSource operations.

Mr. Proctor said the allocations also reflected the priorities in Lane Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan. He said that by providing for the Crucial Connections grant, the ATC was helping to fill an existing gap, which was to provide transportation to older adults and people with disabilities who were unable to get transportation through existing programs. He agreed with Mr. Necker that the grants indirectly helped maintain the fixed-route system.

Mr. Massengill acknowledged that the grant award schedule did not allow for presentations from providers but he hoped that such presentations could occur in the future as part of the grant review process.

b. Public Hearing on Grant Funding Recommendation

Mr. Reese opened the public hearing.

Cynthia Weiss, St. Vincent de Paul, expressed the agency's gratitude to LTD and the ATC for helping it provide transportation to 884 individuals who were older and/or disabled and who otherwise would not have transportation. She said that St. Vincent de Paul provided transportation to people who could not otherwise afford transportation and the transportation they were able to access to visit the doctor or buy groceries using LTD helped them avoid going into higher level of care facilities. She thanked the ATC for the nice vehicle the grant provided.

Mr. Reese closed the public hearing.

c. Committee Deliberation/Action

Ms. Salusso commended the recommendations of the committee and supported them. She asked for a presentation on Special Transportation Fund (STF) Out-of-District funds soon.

Ms. Otten, seconded by Ms. Salusso, voted to support the recommendations of the Grants Review Committee as outlined by Ms. Parker. The motion passed unanimously, Ms. Salusso and Ms. Goddard abstaining from the vote due to their roles as representatives of the providers receiving the funding.

Ms. Parker thanked the members of the Grant Review Committee for their work.

5. LTD Budget/Service Update

Mr. Vobora provided information on LTD's budget situation, saying that LTD was tracking all the variables that affected the next fiscal year's budget. He anticipated that staff would recommend no fare increase for 2010-2011 given the recent rather significant fare increase and the need to be sensitive to riders in the continuing poor economy. The major issue facing LTD continued to be payroll tax revenues, which had declined with the poor economy. He anticipated LTD would know more about trend lines when it received the next full quarter of payroll taxes. He said LTD was looking at a two-stage budget reduction process that would buy the organization more time to see what came out of the next reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Act. Mr. Vobora indicated

that LTD would continue to involve groups such as the ATC in the budget process and would continue to seek public input.

Mr. Vobora discussed the service reduction experienced by residents of Ya-Po-Ah Terrace, a senior housing development. He reported that the routing of the #66 had to be changed as part of the last service reduction package. Representatives of Ya-Po-Ah Terrace had expressed concern about the loss of the inbound service provided by the #66, and LTD staff, including RideSource staff, had subsequently had two meetings with residents and facility staff to answer questions. Participants had discussed other options for getting service back to the neighborhood in the future. Mr. Vobora suggested that the experience demonstrated the need for better communication with affected parties to ensure that they understood changes and had an opportunity to comment on them prior to their taking effect.

Ms. Parker noted the long timelines that accompanied route changes and said that such changes did not occur quickly.

6. LTD West Eugene EmX Update

Tom Schwetz and Cosette Rees were present for the update. Mr. Schwetz provided an update on the advisory committee formed to oversee planning for the West Eugene EmX corridor, and the status of the required environmental impact processes that LTD currently was undertaking.

Ms. Rees distributed a map entitled *Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Range of Alternatives Draft Design Options* showing the alternative alignments currently under consideration. She also distributed a process timeline entitled *West Eugene EmX Extension Project: Draft Decision-Making Process for Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)*. Mr. Schwetz called attention to the different alignments and briefly described the public process associated with the selection of the LPA.

Ms. Rees distributed copies of a chart entitled *West Eugene EmX Extension Project--Proposed Methods for Reaching Project Stakeholders by Project Milestones*.

Mr. Schwetz indicated LTD staff also would work with the Metropolitan Planning Organization Citizen Advisory Committee (MPO CAC) and a subcommittee formed of members of the Eugene City Council, the LTD board, and the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) to work through details of the public comment and the substance of the analysis and make a recommendation back to the three jurisdictions, which all have to agree on the locally preferred alternative. He noted that Mayor Kitty Piercy and councilors Andrea Ortiz and Chris Pryor would serve on the inter-jurisdictional committee, and LTD would appoint its representatives soon.

Responding to a question from Mr. Morganti, Mr. Schwetz described the manner in which he anticipated EmX vehicles serving west Eugene would leave the Eugene Station. He acknowledged that capacity at the station was starting to be an issue and there was a possibility LTD would need to expand it.

Ms. Mulder asked about the impact of charging fares on EmX. Mr. Schwetz said that LTD only had been charging fares for a month and was still determining the effect on ridership, which was complicated by the fact that in general, ridership system-wide had gone down. He thought that the data gathered in November 2009, would be useful and informative. He said the cost of collection was breaking about even with the fares. Mr. Schwetz pointed out that with respect to the Franklin corridor, 92 percent of EmX riders had bus passes or transferred from another bus. He reported that LTD now had a fare checker who randomly rode various EmX trips and that process seemed to be working well.

Ms. Lundeen determined from Mr. Schwetz that the Gateway EmX route would have a fare when it opened.

Ms. Otten asked about the cost of the different alternatives in west Eugene. Mr. Schwetz said staff were just beginning that analysis. He said that different alignments would require different approaches that would affect the cost of each one. For example, a route along the Amazon could require geotechnical support not necessary for operation on a street; a route along West 11th Avenue might require LTD to buy existing buildings. Mr. Schwetz said that it was hard to say which alternative was more expensive at this time, but that information (capital cost and an estimate of operating costs) would be part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Ms. Rees suggested that staff provide additional updates to the ATC when LTD had reached some milestones, such as the preliminary analysis due in February and the release of the DEIS. She encouraged the ATC to become involved in the public process, and reported that staff were presenting design reviews that showed how EmX would interact with the other traffic and transition from downtown to west Eugene along the different alignments. They were occurring every Thursday at the Eugene Station from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Maps of the corridor would be available. She said that staff also were conducting a number of one-on-one meetings with people along the proposed corridors. Ms. Rees anticipated that LTD would convert the former police substation at the Eugene Station into an EmX general information center with a couple of drop-in days scheduled to happen each week.

Ms. Parker thanked Ms. Angvick for her work on the West Eugene EmX Corridor Advisory Committee.

Speaking to the fact that fares were now being charged for the EmX Franklin route, Ms. Parker indicated that residents who were homeless and indigent could seek bus fare assistance through LTD's own non-profit program or through Whitebird Clinic.

Responding to a question from Ms. Salusso about LTD's use of Facebook and Twitter, Ms. Rees said that LTD began using Facebook about four months earlier and Twitter soon after to help keep riders more engaged, informed, and up-to-date. She suggested that those sources were the best places for information about route detours.

Ms. Otten suggested that many older adults and persons with disabilities would not use Facebook or Twitter and that in general, people without many resources would not have computer access to find out about such things as route alterations. She asked if there were other ways to get out what she termed "need to know" information. Ms. Rees indicated the Web site was updated with the same information; she acknowledged that the Web site did not have the ability to alert people of information. She said that LTD had talked to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) about using Facebook and Twitter as a way to reach Title VI clients and the FTA had approved the approach because many people had a cell phone and could be reached through that avenue. She agreed with Ms. Otten in general, however. She said information always was available at the Customer Service Center, but wasn't sure how to alert people without computer access to the fact that there was new information available other than the traditional means of the monthly newsletter and having information available upon request. She welcomed suggestions.

Ms. Salusso asked what kind of comments LTD was getting, and noted that her mother, a senior citizen, had introduced her to Facebook. Ms. Rees indicated that LTD had Facebook "groupies" who were regular visitors to the site. They shared input about things such as LTD advertising.

Mr. Reese reopened the public hearing on the grant application to accommodate a late arrival.

Nola Xavier, Council President of the Florence City Council, invited questions on the grant proposal that Florence submitted for bus stop improvements. She expressed appreciation for the opportunities Florence had to work with LTD. She thought that Florence did a good job in providing transit now but needed some improvements in the shelters. She spoke to the concerns expressed about the shelter at the middle school, and said it was directly across the street from St. Vincent de Paul's Oak Street center and store. The shelter served that population but very few, if any, middle school students rode the bus. In regard to the costs of the shelters, Ms. Xavier provided a breakdown of the costs from Florence's Public Works Department. It appeared a large percentage of the cost was attributable to making the facilities ADA-accessible, which involved a lot of concrete work that needed to be redone. She reminded the committee that more than 50 percent of Florence residents were senior citizens and she wished to ensure they were served. She offered to make that information available.

Ms. Parker said that the ATC had agreed to fund the initial part of the project at \$20,000 out of the grant funds, and the remainder of the proposal would come back to the ATC for further review and action. She asked the members of the review committee to remain after the meeting to discuss next steps.

Mr. Reese closed the public hearing.

7. Program Updates

a. ATC Chair's Report

Mr. Reese reported on his recent visit to Oakridge to view operations.

b. LTD Update

There was no update.

c. RideSource Call Center

Ms. Lyon noted a steady increase in telephone calls, particularly on Mondays, when the center was receiving between 850 and 900 calls. She said that was not necessarily translating into more rides, at least on the Medicaid side. RideSource was in the process of expanding services and call volumes for people on the Medicaid non-medical program in other areas of Lane County, and was working on the Crucial Connections Program.

d. RideSource Paratransit Service

Mr. Adams reported that RideSource had expanded its preschool program by one bus. RideSource had also hired a few drivers and continued to stay busy.

e. South Lane County

Ms. Goddard said that she had been delighted to host Mr. Reese's visit, noting he had spent all day in Oakridge on his visit. Oakridge staff were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the new bus for the Diamond Express.

f. West Lane County

There was no report.

g. East Lane County

There was no report.

h. White Bird Clinic

There was no report.

i. Other

Ms. Hekimoglu announced that Jan Aho had resigned, leaving a Metro Provider Position vacant. She indicated she would discuss recruitment for the position with the Membership Committee.

Mr. Reese adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)