

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 19, 2010
10am – Noon
Lane Transit District
3500 East 17th Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

L. M. Reese, Chair, presiding	Kay Metzger
Hugh Massengill, Vice Chair	Kristine Sirmans
Aline Goddard	Eleanor Mulder
Bob Proctor	Annie Saville

LTD BOARD MEMBER (ex officio)

Ed Necker

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Bill Morganti	Mike Cetto
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OTHERS PRESENT:

Ann Lauver	Natasha DeSantis
Glen Adams	Mark Bernard
David Braunschweiger	Fred Stouffer
Kris Lyon	

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu	Rand Stamm
Terry Parker	Will Mueller

1. INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Reese called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order.

Ms. Hekimoglu introduced Janice Friend, who was doing open captioning for the meeting. She invited feedback on the open captioning. She also introduced Annie Saville, the new LTD bus operator representative on the committee. Mr. Reese welcomed Ms. Friend and Ms. Saville.

Those present introduced themselves.

2. Audience Participation

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

3. Action: Approval of October 20 and November 17, 2009, Minutes

Mr. Reese referred to page 6 of the October 20, 2009, minutes and corrected the heading of item E to accurately reflect that Ms. Goddard was reporting for East Lane County, rather than West Lane County. Mr. Reese referred to paragraph 5 on page 3 of the November 17 minutes and asked that the fourth sentence be changed to read (italicized text added; struck text deleted): “In the case of *off* an individual with a cognitive issue. . .” Ms. Parker referred to sentence 6 in the same paragraph and clarified that the issue of concern was Medicaid and Medicaid non-medical, and that the reference to Medicare should be deleted.

After brief discussion, the committee agreed that eight members constituted a quorum for action.

Mr. Proctor, seconded by Ms. Mulder, moved to accept the October 20 and November 17, 2009, minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Hekimoglu announced that Tara Sue Salusso had resigned from her position at South Lane Wheels, leaving a second ATC vacancy. Ms. Parker recommended that the Membership Committee be convened to consider how to fill the two vacancies. ATC members concurred.

4. LTD Updates

a. Grant Application Status Report

Ms. Parker referred the committee to page 16 of the packet, which included a memorandum on the topic, and provided an update on the status of outstanding grant applications. She anticipated that LTD would order seven vehicles this year and seven vehicles next year for replacements. Responding to a question from Mr. Necker about the vehicles to be replaced, Ms. Parker indicated that vehicles with the highest mileage and in the worst condition would be replaced first. She said she had not yet analyzed what the mix of vehicles was, but she suspected it was a mix of RideSource vehicles and others.

b. Rural Services Vehicle Replacement Plan and Capital Requests

Ms. Parker discussed the Rural Services Vehicle Replacement Plan, reporting that there were eight vehicles that would require replacing in the next two-year cycle. She recalled that LTD had money in reserves that came through the Special Transportation Fund (SFT) that is used to provide local matching funds for grants to purchase rural vehicles.

Ms. Parker reminded the committee that the Grant Review Committee had referred several rural capital project grant requests back to the ATC for consideration using STF Out-of-District reserves:

- Bus Stop Enhancements – Florence Rhody Express
- Computer System Upgrade – South Lane Wheels
- Replace Wheelchair Lift – South Lane Wheels

The budget for the bus stop project in Florence has been reduced because LTD was able to provide some used shelters that could be rehabilitated and used for the Rhody Express. The funding request was reduced from \$60,000 to \$29,000, of which \$20,000 had been set aside through a recent grant opportunity, leaving only about a \$9,000 funding gap. She thought that was a reasonable request for funding with available STF reserves. Ms. Parker said the two South Lane Wheels projects, a wheelchair lift and computer system replacement were on hold pending the agency’s compliance with Federal Transit Administration regulations related to documented policies and procedures and requirements for board review. LTD had notified South Lane Wheels that compliance with those regulations was necessary before additional grant funds would be made available. South Lane Wheels was working to address those issues.

Ms. Parker suggested that LTD could go forward with the Florence project pending resolution of an issue related to a shelter not on the Rhody Express route but that provided service to Porter Stage Lines as it traveled through Florence to Eugene.

Mr. Necker added that four stops in Florence were identified in the capital request, as well as treatments to bus stop poles to correct and stop the damage created by coastal salt air, the addition of bus stop information at heavier used stops, and some accessibility improvements. Ms. Parker noted that there was not much existing infrastructure for the service and some curb cuts would also be necessary to make the stops accessible.

Responding to a question from Ms. Metzger, Ms. Parker confirmed her recommendation to fund the Florence project as outlined in the meeting packet at a cost of \$29,000, of which \$20,000 was funded; Florence had allocated around \$3,000 for the project, leaving a \$6,000 gap. Staff would continue to work on the Porter Stages bus stop issue with Florence. She said that the South Lane Wheels request would be deferred.

Ms. Parker clarified that the source of funding was the STF Out-of-District (Rural) Reserve. She requested authorization to spend up to \$6,000 on the Florence bus stop project.

Mr. Massengill, seconded by Ms. Metzger, moved to approve the staff recommendation that LTD allocate up to \$6,000 in STF dollars for the Florence project. The motion passed unanimously.

Because Mr. Mueller was not yet available for scheduled agenda items 5 and 6, Mr. Reese adjusted the agenda by moving item 7, Program Updates, up in order.

5. Program Updates

a. ATC Chair's Report

Mr. Reese had no report.

b. RideSource Call Center

Ms. Lyon provided a brief overview of the services provided through the RideSource Call Center. She said that things were going well. Staff continued to see high call volumes. The call average was up to 750 a day. Currently, staff were working on adjustments to the Medicaid Waivered Non-Medical transportation service and getting information together to get the "Crucial Connections" program started to help those with an urgent transportation need but who had no resources available to cover the cost of the ride. She noted a recent example of a trip for a rural resident that would be a fitting use of the funds.

c. RideSource ADA Service

Mr. Braunschweiger reported that RideSource continued to grow. December 2009 had been busier than the previous December and January's numbers also were strong. He noted that RideSource currently was recruiting for drivers. Mr. Necker asked if riders or trips were increasing.

Mr. Braunschweiger said those numbers were pretty balanced, and promised to return with a report at the next meeting. Usually there was a correlation between an increase in rides and riders. He reported that RideSource recently had begun gathering information from drivers to support the cost allocation necessary for the various services provided, and those reports offered good information about wait and ride times.

Mr. Morganti observed that he normally took the bus but had an occasion because of a medical appointment to use RideSource services, and it had worked well for him.

Mr. Massengill asked if there was another funding source available for LTD's RideSource ADA responsibilities. Ms. Parker said no. LTD did considerable grant writing to fund services, but was required to provide ADA paratransit services by law. The LTD general fund contributed about 75 percent of the cost of providing the service. LTD tried to place other resources, such as grant funding, into the service to preserve general fund dollars for its fixed-route service given that fixed-route served a larger population that included people with disabilities.

Ms. Metzger noted that LTD had the support of its State legislative delegation in finding additional funding for the service. Ms. Parker said the Special Transportation Operations (STO) funding was new money from the State General Fund.

d. South Lane County

There was no report.

e. West Lane County

Ms. Sirmans had no report as she had been out of state for the last meeting.

Ms. Parker said the Florence Technical Advisory Committee was doing good work and was working with Florence City staff in preparing grant proposals. The committee also was involved in paratransit issues. There was a potential for the committee to evolve into considering broader transportation issues for the Florence community. She said that River Cities Taxi was the sole transportation provider in Florence and would soon take receipt of a new vehicle for the Rhody Express. Florence ridership seemed to be stable at this time. Ms. Parker said that a nice range of services was being provided in the community, although gaps existed for those living just outside the Florence city limits.

Responding to a question from Ms. Mulder, Ms. Parker described the services provided from Florence to Eugene and back by Porter Stage Lines. She noted that casino users were provided with bus service from Eugene to Florence by the Casino as well.

f. East Lane County

Ms. Goddard circulated among members a photograph of the new 35-seat Diamond Express bus. She hoped to have three drivers qualified to drive the bus soon and for operation of the new bus to commence in January. She anticipated that the City of Oakridge would provide parking for the Oakridge fleet of vans at its public works facilities, and had assigned the bus to a bay as well. She reported that the Oakridge service was quite busy with Medicaid rides.

Responding to a question from Ms. Goddard about where she could refer someone who had no means to pay the fare, Ms. Lyon acknowledged that LTD had no money for that purpose right now but suggested that depending on the situation, Ms. Goddard could refer riders without funding resources to Senior Services or to the "Crucial Connections" Program¹. Ms. Parker observed that the issue came up for LTD bus drivers every day. She believed it was important that people pay the fare, or the system would be perceived as inequitable, which was not acceptable for a public service. It needed to be reinforced with drivers that people needed to pay the fare.

Mr. Necker suggested there was a need for more consistency among LTD fixed-route bus drivers as well when being approached by a customer claiming not to have the fare.

¹ Note, operational guidelines for this new service have not been developed.

g. White Bird Clinic

Ms. Lauver said White Bird had tightened eligibility requirements resulting in their having the ability to increase rides for people who really needed them. The agency was seeing more requests for rides after the bus service ended in the evening. If all options were exhausted taxis were dispatched. The agency was doing some training with taxi operators on dealing with seriously mentally ill people. Ms. Parker suggested the potential of coordinating and providing this training to all providers that operate through the RideSource Call Center.

Ms. Lauver noted that drivers could call the crisis team when they encountered a mentally ill individual and request assistance. She invited LTD staff to call and she would help set something up.

6. LTD Annual Route Review

Service Planning Manager, Will Mueller was present to discuss LTD's annual route review process, which results in service changes typically made in September of each year. He reported that LTD anticipated a 20 percent reduction in service for the next fiscal year due to budget shortfalls unless the agency received additional federal stimulus funding. He reviewed a list of proposed reductions and shared maps that illustrated the impact of reductions in various areas of Eugene and Springfield.

Responding to a question from Ms. Metzger about how the route reduction recommendations were reached, Mr. Mueller said that staff went to the community for input in a variety of ways, used input from the service advisory committee, which included bus operators. He acknowledged the pain of such a large service reduction, which undid much of what had been built over time. LTD's overriding concern was to do the least harm to the fewest number of people, and to do the greatest good for greatest number of people, which spoke to the productivity of routes. Those areas with the least ridership were examined first; other routes, such as express buses, would be at the top of the "chopping block" due to the fact that alternatives generally were available. LTD also looked at where bus frequencies could be reduced with the least impact.

The ATC briefly discussed the potential impact of route changes on people with disabilities not currently using RideSource services and the fact that decreased frequency on routes would increase the need for wheelchair bays while decreasing their availability. Ms. Parker said that LTD must meet the demand for paratransit services but the regulations gave little guidance in regard to what to do when fixed route service could not accommodate people with disabilities because of overload. She said that LTD monitored "left behind" data and suggested that if LTD found a pattern where a person who used a mobility device was consistently turned away from fixed route due to a lack of adequate wheelchair bays, LTD would have to evaluate that as a pattern and offer that individual a RideSource trip for that portion of the trip.

Mr. Mueller shared the dates of the upcoming public hearings and forums and promised to get the schedule out to the committee.

7. EmX Rear-Facing Securement Review

Mr. Reese adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m., to allow ATC members to go to the LTD maintenance shop to view the new dual rear-facing wheelchair bay configuration in the EmX vehicles.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)