

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 16, 2010  
10 a.m. – Noon  
Lane Transit District  
3500 East 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

L. M. Reese, Chair, presiding	Bob Proctor
Hugh Massengill, Vice Chair	Annie Saville
Ann Angvick	Kristine Sirmans
Eleanor Mulder	Gail Lundeen
Aline Goddard	Scott Whetham
Kay Metzger	

LTD BOARD MEMBER (ex officio)

Ed Necker

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Bill Morganti	Mike Cetto
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OTHERS PRESENT:

Kris Lyon	Eva Pfeiffer
David Braunschweiger	Fred Stoffer

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu	Rand Stamm
Terry Parker	Andy Vobora
David Lindlelien	Jeanne Schaper

**1. INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AGENDA REVIEW**

Mr. Reese called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order. Those present introduced themselves.

Mr. Reese announced that Jan Aho stepped down from the committee because of her appointment as director of the Pearl Buck Center, Inc. He congratulated Ms. Aho on her achievement.

**2. Audience Participation**

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

Mr. Reese called for additions to the agenda. There were none.

**3. Action: Approval of Minutes of the January 19, 2010, meeting**

Ms. Metzger, seconded by Ms. Mulder, moved to approve the minutes of January 19, 2010. The motion passed unanimously.

**4. Authorize Expense for Vehicle Graphics Package**

Ms. Parker recalled the funding LTD received for the Route Around Town vehicle operated in Cottage Grove by South Lane Wheels. Money came through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). She said that the grant amount, however, was inadequate for all the vehicle features, including a vehicle graphics package. Subsequently, staff had the opportunity to secure \$5,000 to underwrite the costs of the package through a grant supported by the Jobs Transportation Act (JTA). Although the vehicle had arrived, and the JTA project approved the contract that would authorize the use of these funds has not been completed. A retroactive payment is not allowed. Rather than have the new vehicle sit unused for an unknown length of time LTD paid to have the graphics installed and get the vehicle into service. Staff requested the use of Special Transportation Fund (STF) – Out-of-District resources to pay for the graphics. There is a reserve that is typically used to pay for the match portion of vehicle purchases. Unlike most capital purchase grants ARRA paid 100% of the purchase price up to the grant amount and did not require matching resources. STF expenditures require committee approval.

Mr. Necker asked what remained in reserves in the STF. Ms. Parker indicated that there was \$150,000, which was higher than usual but included funding for the cost of match for vehicle replacement purchases for rural services in Oakridge, Florence, and Cottage Grove. She said that South Lane Wheels would pay for any costs above the \$5,000).

Mr. Massengill, seconded by Ms. Lundeen, moved to authorize the expense of \$5,000 in STF funding for the vehicle graphics package for South Lane Wheels.

Mr. Proctor recalled that the committee had discussed the benefits of the expenditure during its review of the budget.

The motion passed unanimously.

**5. STF Budget and Grant Updates**

Ms. Parker expressed regret that she did not have more detail to share with the ATC. She reminded ATC members that this fiscal year was the first year in a two-year grant cycle. Many of the discretionary grants awarded are two-year grants. As a result, LTD was finishing the first year of many projects. She would be predicting how much money would be available for projects based on current expenses. Generally, LTD budgeted 45 percent of grant funds in the first year to give some margin going into the second year. She anticipated a generally flat budget.

Ms. Parker reported that the State's allocations were estimates for the Special Transportation Fund. The State was concerned that its estimates had been too high, so State funding levels were uncertain. She noted that the percentage of STF moneys used by the different agencies varied, so the impact would be different for different agencies, but it was likely that allocations would be decreased. She believed overall, budgeting would be tighter, and reported that LTD was looking at budget cuts that would affect Special Mobility Services (SMS), which operated RideSource services.

Ms. Parker reported that LTD received grant funding in the amount of \$50,000 Innovations Grant to further develop the integrated eligibility program for the RideSource Call Center so that each

customer's abilities and needs were considered in a personal interview and they could be directed toward the appropriate services. She said the timing of the grant was good because LTD was just completing work on the RideSource Call Center Cost Model and similar work needed to be done for the eligibility project. She thought the effort could help determine whether this approach to conducting eligibility assessments could be applied in other areas in the State. She noted that there was interest from the Salem Call Center. Ms. Parker said the first task would be a cost allocation model for eligibility assessments so that LTD could continue to provide service in this way once the grant funding was spent. Allocation models are an objective method for spreading costs across programs that are pooled together. She was excited about having a consultant coming to do that work.

## 5. Wheelchair Securement on Fixed Routes

David Lindelien, Risk Manager, distributed workers compensation claims costs for by LTD over the last ten years to illustrate the impact of wheelchair securement-related injuries, which represented the first and fourth largest source of injury claims. He described examples of the injuries experienced by drivers and passengers. He reported that LTD was receiving five new articulated buses, which presented an opportunity to investigate the use of another securement system. The engineering manufacturer for Q-Straint would be at LTD the next day to discuss options that they provide.

Mr. Lindelien noted that users seemed to be happy with the independence the current system allowed. He described Q-Straint's system and suggested the drawback was the fact it eliminated much of the independence of the current system. He planned to ask Q-Straint if the release lever could be moved to the sidewall, where riders could more easily reach it. He suggested the possibility of an extension to go around chairs for restraint, which would allow more independence on the part of the user.

Mr. Lindelien observed that Dr. Joe Zaworksi, Ph.D. from Oregon State University had provided LTD with a design for rear-facing securement.

Mr. Whetham suggested that driver training could be improved to reduce injuries as he had observed that different operators had different procedures. Mr. Lindelien agreed that LTD could provide more education to drivers and users and noted that there was an article in the current edition of *Bus Talk* containing helpful reminders for riders.

Committee members briefly discussed how the current system worked.

Mr. Massengill suggested that moving from a sitting position to a more reclining position would be harmful. He questioned why there was no federal standard for wheelchair design and wheelchair securement design. Ms. Parker said it was easier to get bus companies to make changes than wheelchair manufacturers because wheelchair manufacturers did not acknowledge the use of their equipment in transit systems as a means to limit their own liability. She said that there was a need to fit the chair to the person, and as people got bigger, chairs got bigger.

Ms. Parker noted that LTD's securement system was developed prior to the adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and it was a two-point system not three or points that are found in most securement systems sold today.

Mr. Necker observed if every wheelchair user had to be strapped in using a four-point system, LTD would have to revisit its schedules.

Ms. Parker said that there were more people in mobility devices using the system who had never had training, and she thought there were things that could be done on both the consumer and driver side to reduce injuries, like the driver directing the user to turn power off during the boarding process.

Ms. Hekimoglu encouraged members to attend the next day's presentation.

Responding to a question from Mr. Whetham, Mr. Stamm confirmed that LTD could refuse passengers if they could not safely be loaded onto a bus due to size and weight that exceeded ADA requirements. Ms. Parker said such a ride could be a non-emergency ambulance trips for a person on Medicaid. Other users would face a very expensive trip. ADA used a 600 pound total weight limit of person and device. Lifts can labor or not lift weights that exceed the limit. She reminded the ATC that the ADA was written in 1990, and things had changed since then. LTD tried to order a special lift for the paratransit fleet to accommodate such trips and could not find a lift on the market (at the time) to fit a paratransit vehicle that could carry a heavier weight. RideSource vehicle lifts are suppose to lift up to 800 pounds.

Mr. Lindelien concluded he was hearing support for the direction that LTD was taking, that of making the system safer for the user and driver while maintaining user independence.

## **6. Annual Route Review for Fixed Route Service**

Andy Vobora, Director of Service Planning Accessibility and Marketing, provided an update on LTD's service restructuring. He said the LTD Board of Directors had adopted Stage 1 of the service reduction package, which would take effect on June 13, 2010. Staff was now working on the second stage of implementation and was accepting feedback and making modifications accordingly. He encouraged ATC members to visit the LTD web site. Mr. Vobora described some of the changes made in response to public input for service to southwest Eugene, River Road, and Springfield.

Members asked questions clarifying some of the changes being proposed.

Ms. Parker asked Mr. Vobora to discuss analysis of the route reductions and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act that prohibits discrimination or exclusion from participation in federally funded programs because of race, color or national origin. Also, low income and persons with disabilities. Mr. Vobora said LTD did its analysis on a system wide basis, looking at Title VI populations, service they received, and how service reductions affected those populations. He said that LTD fared better than other transit properties across all populations served, since much of its boundary included more upper class neighborhoods. The challenge was at the segment level. A three-block walk, for example, might be a reasonable expectation for ambulatory people, but might not be for someone with a disability, who's alternative then might be RideSource. Mr. Vobora indicated he had requested further board guidance on meeting the Title VI requirements. He said if the board wanted to move toward a coverage model system where everyone had access to buses, LTD would need to step back and look at its entire system. He also pointed out there were areas with similar populations currently without service.

Ms. Angvick expressed concern about residents living on 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue who relied on the bus to reach their destinations. It appeared there were other buses that could serve those individuals, but when she considered system wide changes, she had been concerned about the lack of service on holidays such as Fourth of July and Memorial Day. She pointed out that many businesses were open on those holidays and people needed the bus to reach their jobs. Mr. Vobora said now was a good time to raise those issues. That issue would be decided following the April 12 public hearing. The Service Advisory Committee had the same discussion and the reality was that boardings were low on those days and if things did not change dramatically, LTD would be making even more

reductions in Fiscal Year 2011-2012. He anticipated if further cuts were needed, LTD would likely look to days of the week and span of service.

Mr. Necker noted that LTD considered two factors when considering routes, that of productivity and coverage. At this time, the system was a split of 75 percent productivity and 25 percent coverage. He pointed out that any time LTD made a route change, it affected someone; it was the Board's hope to affect the fewest number of people possible.

Ms. Mulder suggested that the lack of service in the Ferry Street Bridge area did not encourage ridership, and a lack of ridership put the route at risk. Mr. Vobora said he recently heard from a rider who encouraged LTD to establish and promote core routes that did not change. In regard to the Ferry Street Bridge area, he agreed that ridership was at the low end for LTD, but LTD's low end was much better than other communities. One could have hard standards around the issue of productivity, but Ms. Mulder's remarks spoke to more of a coverage model. He said that LTD had not been in this economic situation before, making such discussions more challenging. Mr. Vobora anticipated that the Board will discuss the issues of productivity and coverage after the next round of cuts.

Ms. Lundeen determined from Mr. Stamm that the *RideSource* coverage area would not be reduced by the LTD service cuts. Mr. Vobora said that if LTD eliminated fixed route service on holidays, *RideSource* would not operate on those days either. Ms. Angvick asked how many people would have to switch to *RideSource* because they could not access fixed route service. Mr. Vobora did not know and said that could be studied over time so that LTD could make adjustments in the future. Ms. Parker said that those who became eligible for *RideSource* because of the distance involved to a stop could be transported to an accessible area, meaning such trips would be shorter. She said such ride-by-ride decisions were a challenge for the *RideSource* call takers.

Mr. Proctor left the meeting.

Ms. Parker noted that the next opportunity for people to offer comment to the board was at the public hearing scheduled on April 12. Mr. Vobora also encouraged e-mailed comments to [ltd@ltd.org](mailto:ltd@ltd.org).

The ATC discussed an issue raised by Ms. Parker regarding the *RideSource* boundary. She said that often, people were transported into the service area for pick up when it would be more convenient if they could be served from their homes. She asked what kind of problem solving LTD should do when someone living outside the boundary called in and requested service.

Mr. Massengill asked if that accommodation of someone living outside the boundary meant someone else inside the boundary would not be accommodated. Ms. Metzger suggested that LTD should evaluate capacity in the current system as a first step.

Ms. Parker asked if the ATC wanted LTD to do a case-by-case evaluation of calls for service from outside the boundary. Mr. Whetham thought it would be difficult to prioritize services for those outside the boundary when capacity was limited. He suggested that opening up the boundary was a "can of worms." Ms. Mulder suggested there was a question of equitability with the fixed route service. She asked if it was fair to serve people with *RideSource* service when LTD could not provide them with fixed route service.

Ms. Lundeen pointed out there were entire cities outside the service area that could seek *RideSource* service if they knew it was available. She cited Coburg as an example, where she speculated there was a considerable amount of need for the service that could not be met without going outside the boundaries. She suggested the issue could "snowball" on LTD.

Mr. Vobora agreed that LTD did not want to expand service outside the boundary at the expense of the fixed route system. He suggested that such riders might be willing to pay the marginal costs of expanded service for the time required to pick them up. Ms. Lundeen said that many people were traveling from those communities to RiverBend, and she anticipated increased demand for travel into that area, particular from the rural area.

Ms. Angvick encouraged staff to look at an out-of-boundary charge.

Mr. Massengill determined from Ms. Parker that if LTD offered the service outside the boundary for one, it would have to offer to all. Mr. Stamm emphasized the need for equitability.

Mr. Vobora reported that the Board also was evaluating fare recommendations. He reported that LTD staggered its fare increases and any increase would be effective in July.

## **7. Program Updates**

### **a. ATC Chair's Report**

Mr. Reese reported that because of the press of other responsibilities, he would be leaving the ATC in June 2010.

Responding to a concern expressed by Mr. Reese about a recent communication from Senior and Disabled Services to users of RideSource, Ms. Parker suggested his concerns be referred to the Eligibility Work Group, which was meeting later that day. Mr. Reese agreed.

### **b. RideSource Call Center**

Ms. Lyon reported that the RideSource Call Center (RSCC) continued to be busy. Staff had begun to implement the new S&DS community transportation (waiver) program county-wide, and had received requests for waivers from Junction City and Veneta. The RSCC hired an additional Customer Service Representative to deal with the increased call volume. Ms. Lyon said it did not seem rides were increasing, so she was unsure why the RSCC was getting more calls. The Center was looking into the software packages employed by other call centers for ride reservations and scheduling. She had visited Salem the previous day and saw some things that could be useful if employed in Eugene.

### **c. RideSource ADA Service**

Mr. Braunschweiger reported that RideSource had finished hiring and training its recent group of new drivers. He said that where in the past RideSource was the only source of rides for non-medical trips affiliated with Medicaid, there now were other providers who have contracted to do some of those trips. He said overall the service was busy. Ridership had been at 3,000 or above the last nine weeks.

### **d. South Lane County**

Ms. Pfeifer, interim executive director for South Lane Wheels, reported the agency was reorganizing, which was time-consuming. She noted that this year was the agency's 30 year anniversary.

### **e. West Lane County**

Ms. Sirmans said the new Rhody Express bus made its debut at the Home and Garden Show and was a distinct green color. She heard many positive comments about how nice the bus was.

**f. East Lane County**

Ms. Goddard thanked Ms. Parker for her work in securing the new bus. She reported, however, that on March 3 the new, larger Diamond Express vehicle was full and she had to dispatch another bus to pick up the people who could not be accommodated in the larger bus. She reported that the Diamond Express served 91 people that day and on average was serving 65 to 75 people a day. She reported she had been contacted by KMTR about doing a feature story on the new bus and she had referred the call to Ms. Parker.

**g. Whitebird Clinic**

There was no report.

**h. Other**

There were no other items.

The next meeting was scheduled for April 20, 2010.

Mr. Reese adjourned the meeting at 12:55 p.m.

*(Recorded by Kimberly Young)*