

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 17, 2012
10 am – Noon
Lane Transit District
3500 East 17th Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Hugh Massengill, Chair
Kay Metzger
Mike Cetto
Annie Saville
Scott Whetham

Mary Otten, Vice Chair
Misty Brazell
Eleanor Mulder
Ruth Linoz

Gail Lundeen
Bill Morganti
Stefan Kwiatkowski
Reneé Van Norman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Aline Goddard

Ed Necker

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Jill Fish

OTHERS PRESENT:

Debbie Bonds, captioner
Beth Sutton
Kris Lyon

Beth Mulcahy
David Braunschweiger

Pete Barron
Dennis Turner

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu
Terry Parker

I. Call to order

Mr. Massengill called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order at 10:01 a.m.

II. Introductions, Announcements, Agenda Review

Those present introduced themselves.

Mary Otten arrived 10:03 a.m.

Mr. Morganti inquired as to why there had been no subcommittee meetings. Ms. Parker said that presently the Coordinated Plan Review was the only active subcommittee and that her work on the draft plan had been delayed by the opportunity to prepare another grant application for submission. She anticipated that the subcommittee would meet before the March meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee.

III. Audience Participation

Mr. Cetto spoke about air stagnation during December and said that he doubted LTD's concern for passengers who had to breathe the emissions from bus tail pipes. He said that he had spoken with a representative from the Environmental Protection Agency and he believed that LTD was recalcitrant on this issue. Ms. Parker responded that this concern had been discussed many times, that staff in the room were not the experts on this topic, and that Fleet staff was more knowledgeable. She maintained that the new hybrid buses were reducing the problem.

Mr. Barron identified himself as a bus rider who uses a mobility device who had been bumped from fixed route buses because of overcrowding. He believed that many riders failed to recognize that while they could stand, mobility device users needed one of the two securement spots. He sometimes had missed two buses in a row on the #51 and #52 routes, but the situation had improved since last fall. He thought that the change might be a result of improved driver communication with dispatch.

Ms. Parker clarified that while it was not a Federal requirement, LTD policy was to dispatch a bus for a rider who had been rejected by two consecutive buses due to lack of space. She said that an accessible van had been added to the fleet that could be sent out in such

situations, but it was sometimes problematic whether staff was available to drive. She added that frequently, by the time the additional vehicle arrived, the passenger was no longer at the stop.

Mr. Kwiatkowski said that the fall training the previous September seemed to have reinforced that drivers were responsible for calling dispatch when riders were unable to board.

Ms. Saville added that with more ridership, denied boardings could be expected to increase.

Mr. Barron noted that he typically rode between 8 and 10 a.m. and between 4 and 6 p.m. and that for him, things seemed to have improved.

IV. Minutes Approval, October 18, 2011

Mr. Kwiatkowski called attention to the last page of the October minutes and his mention of the problem with an accessible door at the Eugene Station. He noted that it had been fixed before Halloween.

Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Ms. Otten, to approve the minutes of October 18, 2011. The motion carried, 12:1:0, with Mr. Cetto abstaining.

V. Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative

The Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative (VTCLI) made funds available to finance the costs of implementing, expanding, or increasing access to local One-Call/One-Click Transportation Resource Centers to include veterans, active military, and their families.

LTD had submitted a successful grant application for \$1.088 million to fund an upgrade to the database, to purchase new scheduling software, and a new phone system for the RideSource Call Center.

A Veterans Transportation Work Group had been convened to identify and discuss the transportation needs of area veterans and their families. The committee included Mr. Massengill and Mr. Necker as well as representatives from Lane County Veterans Services, Roseburg Veterans Healthcare System, White Bird Clinic, and St. Vincent DePaul.

Ms. Parker noted that the grant included upgrades for both the 30-year-old software and the telephone system that call takers used to answer more than 750 calls per day. She thanked Mr. Braunschweiger for his efforts to keep the old software operational.

Ms. Parker observed that the VTCLI grant was for capital projects only and provided no funds for direct service to veterans. It was based on the assumption that better coordination would allow improved outreach to veterans. The work group had met the previous week and was working to identify the transportation needs of veterans. One clear problem was that disabled veterans were unable to get to needed medical services. Oregon's only two fully functioning medical facilities for veterans were in Portland and Roseburg. The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization provided van transportation to those hospitals but none of the vans were accessible to people with mobility devices. Ms. Parker said that accessible van service once or twice monthly would be appropriate and the committee would be asked to allocate funds for that service when it considered the budget. Some of the Federal funding for job access could be reallocated toward this service.

Ms. Linoz asked whether there would be a new category for veterans and their family members would be required to have service from local providers. Ms. Parker said that she expected that a new program specific to transportation for veterans would be developed. That program would use whatever providers in the area were available through the RideSource Call Center, using the model of buying the most appropriate transportation at the least cost. The qualifiers for the participants would come through the brokerage and the Call Center, so existing service providers would not have to qualify.

Mr. Kwiatkowski asked about the source of the funding that would be moved. Ms. Parker explained that it would come from this year's allocation for Crucial Connections that was intended to fund rides when people lacked funds and had immediate need.

Mr. Kwiatkowski suggested that if a RideSource mini-bus was to go to Roseburg, it should stop at the Eugene or the Springfield Station on its way so a veteran who might normally be a fixed-route rider and needed to get to Roseburg could catch a ride. Ms. Parker said that currently there were some people who were eligible under Medicaid, who also were veterans and possibly also were eligible for ADA transportation who were being transported by RideSource to a location where they could pick up a van ride to Roseburg. However, none of those riders were using a mobility device because those vans were not accessible. Although an attempt had been made to lease accessible vans to the DAV, they preferred using their own vans. Mr. Whetham added that RideSource was being used to get those individuals to a location where they could catch the van shuttle to Roseburg or Portland.

Mr. Massengill asked whether the entire amount of the grant would be used or if some would be left over. Ms. Parker reiterated that the grant funds could only be used on capital projects and that the software would have to be integrated with the current system so there was a lot of development work to be done. About 50 percent of an IT specialist's time would be devoted to making the different systems work together and there would also be expenses for training, all related to the capital purchase.

VI. ACTION: Revised FY2011-2012 Budget and Recent Grant Activity

In order to facilitate additional transportation for veterans and their families, staff requested the transfer of \$5,000 from the Crucial Connections budget for this year to create a new veterans transportation resource.

Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Mr. Kwiatkowski, that the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee approve the transfer of \$5,000 from the Crucial Connections budget in order to implement a new resource for veterans' transportation.

Ms. Otten asked what would remain in the Crucial Connections line item if the motion passed. Ms. Parker responded that the original two-year allocation was \$17,500 and that \$7,500 had been allocated during the current year, with less than \$500 of that spent. The committee funded many different programs and had the ability to move money among them if it was not going to be spent for the original purpose within the two-year time frame. She considered the budget request part of a meaningful effort to provide outreach to veterans and to meet the goals of the grant. She pointed out that in the last fiscal year, 76 people were served by transportation to veterans' services and any growth in that number could be considered a service improvement.

Ms. Linoz asked about services for families of veterans. Ms. Parker explained that the needs for families were unknown at this time and that the Veterans Administration was the only service not represented at the work group meeting the previous week. She observed that many local service providers had dedicated services for veterans and they had numerous transportation needs.

Ms. Lyon pointed out that Crucial Connections money had been used to bring a veteran from Coburg to Eugene for medical services and that now that same service would be provided

under the new Veterans Services budget item.

The motion carried unanimously, 13:0.

VII. National Center on Senior Transportation Grant

Senior and Disabled Services recently submitted a grant application to The National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST) for mobility management projects that enhance senior transportation. If successful, the funding would be used for additional training of the RideSource Call Center Transportation Coordinators (TC's) and RideSource Customer Service Representatives (CSR's).

The NCST was a "think tank" creating and analyzing strategies for addressing the growing need for transportation for older adults. Research had shown that some of the strategies for younger people with disabilities did not work as well for older adults who often needed different kinds of services than those provided by public transit. Ms. Parker said that Senior and Disabled Services sought the grant in order to address some of the communications, problem solving, and coordination skills needed within the staff that worked in the RideSource Call Center. Customer services staff answered the phones, while Senior and Disabled Services and Alternative Work Concepts staff performed assessments in homes. Translating and using all the information that was collected in an effort to design an effective transportation plan for individuals is complicated. The work under this grant would help the different staffs communicate with each other and would meet a need identified in the focus groups conducted by Portland State University for their study.

Ms. Parker informed the committee that there were 180 applicants for the grant funds and only eight recipients would be selected, so it would be significant if the grant application was successful.

Mr. Massengill commented that as a senior, he believed that seniors who continued to drive needed to have more information about available services.

Answering a question from Mr. Kwiatkowski, Ms. Parker explained that transportation coordinators performed in-person assessments to decide an individual's transportation needs and to look at what was available. Transportation coordinators were not transit personnel but were staff from Senior and Disabled Services and Alternative Work Concepts. This was not a typical model because usually transit organizations did not want to give up

control in deciding who would receive their services. Although it required time and investment, LTD believed that working together with S&DS and AWC would result in greater collaboration and overall success.

Ms. Linoz asked to have a presentation on the model and the role of service providers in the assessment process at the next Call Center Advisory meeting on February 15. She said that as a service provider, it would be helpful to know more about the overall process.

VIII. Accessible Issues: New ramps and driver assistance policies

All 15 of the new 40-foot hybrid buses were in service and the remaining 9 were being assembled at Gillig Corporation. These new buses had a number of positive features, such as hybrid propulsion resulting in better fuel efficiency; a more advanced camera system; three bike capacity racks; and better identification of the seating designated for older adults and people with disabilities. In addition, the new ramps had a 1 to 6 slope, (as opposed to the 1:4 slope on older buses) which made it easier to board in areas without sidewalks. This ramp system also had a greater load capacity (950 pounds), which was important due to the varying sizes and types of mobility devices that people use.

Training for customers would be available in one-on-one settings or in a group environment, as needed, and *RideSource* service would be made available for customers who may need a little more time to become comfortable with the new ramps.

Ms. Parker pointed out that the interior layout of the new buses included a small jump seat with more space to stow packages or a walker to try to “unclutter” the wheelchair bays. There are two jump seats instead of one. The stanchions for wheelchair securement area could not be adjusted in order to maintain optimal positioning of the securement straps used on mobility devices.

Mr. Barron suggested making the seats fold forward or back instead of against the outside walls. Ms. Parker responded that these features were dictated in part by what was available; what manufacturers were willing to produce.

Ms. Parker noted that some features of the new ramp may take some time to adjust to. The bus operators needed to use a different deployment sequence than they were accustomed to, and passengers would need to get used to a longer ramp with the new slope (1:6) and a shorter turning platform inside the vehicle at the top of the ramp.

Responding to a comment from Mr. Morganti, Ms. Hekimoglu clarified that LTD had received 24 new articulated buses, and all but 8 were in service.

Ms. Parker continued by saying that the ramp slope decrease illustrated the compromise of a low floor vehicle versus buses that use high floor lifts. When deployed onto a curb, the slope was manageable because of the six to seven inch rise of the curb serving to help flatten out the steepness of the slope. In an area without a curb, the slope is steeper. By changing the slope to 1:6, the ramp has to be longer and the bus might have to be out in the traffic lane at some stops in order to deploy the ramp.

Staff was analyzing an operational issue with the power connection between the kneeling of the bus and the deployment of the ramp. Testing of the ramp was continuing. Ms. Parker said that operators had been asked to save video of the use of the equipment in service.

Ms. Parker concluded that new equipment always presented some problems but it was natural to assume that manufacturers would have figured out how equipment would work for people who needed to use it. She had to question the manufacturer's testing of the ramp design and said that she had made an inquiry to FTA's Office of Civil Rights to ask about the requirements for testing such equipment.

Next the committee turned its attention to the Driver Assistance Policy and expectations and experience around operator assistance to people who had disabilities and older adults. Ms. Parker explained that it was LTD policy and an ADA requirement that bus operators, where necessary or upon request, assist individuals with disabilities with the use of securement systems, ramps, and lifts. If it was necessary to leave their seats to provide this assistance, operators were required to do so. If the bus operator was physically unable to render assistance, he or she must contact LTD operations.

The question here was how much help was required. Ms. Parker said that operators had suffered injury when trying to assist people. She said that drivers should not try to manually move power chairs or chairs that are too heavy to move. LTD's expectation was that operators would help with securements and should call for help when power chairs need to be moved manually such as when a battery dies.

Answering questions from Mr. Kwiatkowski, Mr. Whetham said that a charging unit was available at the Eugene Station but not all chairs used the same size charger. It would not be

possible to put charging outlets on buses because they would require too much wattage. Furthermore, Mr. Whetham said that after they reached a certain age, batteries could no longer be fully charged.

Mr. Barron observed that at some point people needed to be responsible for their own equipment. He said that he took care to charge his chair battery before leaving home in the morning.

The group discussed experiences in getting help when it was needed. Mr. Whetham stated that each situation needed to be analyzed individually and the urgency of someone getting somewhere considered. He cited a situation in which someone was stranded at the Eugene Station when there was no way to transport the power chair that was not working. Ms. Parker said that in a couple of cases, Crucial Connections funds had been used to help when a power chair required repair.

Mr. Scott noted that Handi-Cab had a van that would load a power chair although their service was more expensive than a standard cab. Ms. Parker added that a taxi provider in Florence had purchased a ramped van.

Ms. Otten commented that the Eugene Human Rights Accessibility Committee had worked to get accessible taxi service in Eugene. Ms. Parker said that one company charging a higher rate for accessible taxi service had been told it could not do that.

Ms. Parker said that operators were trained that they must leave their seats to provide help if needed but that some operators may not be doing so. Specific problems relating to operators' provision of reasonable assistance needed to be communicated to staff. Mr. Whetham added that while incidents did not occur on a daily basis, it was important to know about them so corrective action could be taken.

Ms. Parker hoped that a short fall training session would use real life examples and allow operators to discuss in small groups how they would handle challenging situations. She believed that this type of discussion was more effective than simply presenting the rules. Mr. Whetham added that operators had to make quick decisions in the field when additional help might not be available and that they had to take into account schedules, other people on the bus, and things that were happening elsewhere in system.

Ms. Saville supported the idea of discussion of situations at fall training.

IX. Program Updates

a) ATC Chair's Report

Mr. Massengill had nothing additional to report.

b) Lane Transit District

At the November Board meeting, Accessible Services staff provided a comprehensive review of the various programs overseen by Accessible Services. The Board discussed the District's non-profit agency half-fare program and provided direction to staff for input in the updated Fare Policy to be presented in spring 2012. The Board also discussed the *RideSource* out-of-area service and directed staff to extend the pilot project and also to reduce the out-of-area fee from \$4.00 to \$2.00 per one-way trip to cover 50 percent of the cost of traveling and spending time outside the established *RideSource* boundaries. This brought the total cost for a one-way trip to \$5 instead \$7. Other conditions for participation remained the same. At its December meeting, the Board reviewed and accepted the independent audit report for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2011.

Accessible Services staff attended the Oregon Public Transportation Conference in Seaside, Oregon, on October 23-26. Human Services Transportation Specialist Rand Stamm and Ms. Parker were presenters in separate panel discussions focusing on coordination of transportation services and in-person assessments, respectively.

Ms. Hekimoglu announced that at the Conference Ms. Parker was honored as the Outstanding Public Transportation Employee by the Oregon Transit Association. This award honored an employee of a public transportation system who had made outstanding contributions to the public transportation industry. Marcia Maffei from LTD point2point Solutions also had been recognized for her work on the employer commute challenge.

Accessible Services staff recently met with point2point Solutions staff to discuss their respective program elements in an effort to determine where transportation coordination between the two programs would be possible. Several opportunities were discussed, and staff would continue to work together during the coming months.

c) *RideSource* Call Center

Ms. Lyon reported that for the month of December, calls were up to 18,000, and there were 13,000 rides. Four years ago, rides averaged 8,000-10,000 per month. Staff recently

completed training and more training would occur as the new veterans program came online.

Ms. Parker noted that Rand Stamm was meeting with legislators in Salem that day. Budget issues were affecting the Department of Human Services and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) which was proposing a statewide Medicaid medical transportation program that would presumably result in less service for customers and would not reduce costs for the department. Ms. Lyon added that a single proposal for a Medicaid brokerage from one for-profit company that had call centers in Florida and Denver had prompted the proposed change.

d) *RideSource* ADA Paratransit

Mr. Braunschweiger reported that the only slow week had been between Christmas and New Year's and that while demand continued to increase, this year's increase was expected to be smaller than last year's. He said that taxis had been used for the past four months and that some people were confused when a taxi arrived instead of a *RideSource* bus. He noted that will-calls trips (a trip with an indefinite return time) were not an efficient way of doing business because they did not allow for prescheduling rides. The number of will-calls had flattened out recently.

Responding to Mr. Kwiatkowski's inquiry, Mr. Braunschweiger said that a redesign of the *RideSource* Shopper seemed to have made it more interesting and increased ridership. Its mileage had increased because it was going to more stores that were farther away from people's neighborhoods and people seemed to like the changes. He considered the Shopper an efficient way to meet needs for people who otherwise might be using the *RideSource* system for individual trips.

e) South Lane County (Cottage Grove)

Ms. Linoz noted that the vehicles had a few bike racks but that no one with a bicycle had ever been transported.

f) West Lane County (Florence)

Ms. Hekimoglu had attended some meetings in Florence. The City of Florence is working on updating its Transportation Systems Plan (TSP).

g) East Lane County (Oakridge)

Mr. Braunschweiger noted that the State had not sanded Highway 58 the previous day so the trip had been slow. Despite slick conditions, the bus had made its runs the past two days. The new vans were being used primarily for Medicaid transport.

h) White Bird Clinic

Ms. Georgi was not present to report.

i) Other

Mr. Massengill remarked that a great deal of information was provided during the meetings, and he wanted to see it shared more broadly with the community. Ms. Hekimoglu said that the minutes would be posted on the website in the future.

At the last meeting it was reported that the announcements on the EmX system when entering Glenwood were coming too late to allow people time to press the button for the first stop just east of Glenwood Blvd. In addition, it was reported that the stop request button was not working. Both of these issues have been resolved. The driver side rear-facing wheelchair station is being installed this week on the older EmX buses.

X. Real-time Signage at UO

Angie Sifuentez, from LTD's Service, Planning, Accessible Services, and Marketing (SPAM) Department reported that testing was underway for the planned real-time signage for the UO Station at 13th and Kincaid. Before installing the displays, she wanted the committee to provide feedback on the proposed appearance of the signage.

Ms. Sifuentez showed the proposed display that included a 47 x 27 inch LED screen with a list of the routes departing from the UO station, their destination, the bays they departed from, and the next time of departure. A scrolling message could be added to the bottom of the screen, such as "Ride the bus to the Oregon Country Fair" with the dates and a note to see the Website for more information.

The committee discussed variations on the screen size, color, and content and reached consensus on the following:

- use a high contrast color scheme (white letters on blue background);
- alternate the background color of the lines (blue and black) to make it easier to read across the screen;

- the list of routes should be stationery regardless of which route had the next departure;
- review the ADA for sign height requirements, graphic standards for signage (use a non-serif font);
- move the information so the columns listed route, destination, departure time, bay (from left to right);
- use standard, not military time;
- continue also to display printed signage that lists all routes and information.

Other suggestions included the following:

- Add a telephone jack so people with visual impairments could plug in and listen to the information or provide a loudspeaker to announce the information.
- Position the sign so that glare and sunshine at certain times of the day will not reduce the visibility of information.
- Install a sample display and solicit feedback during a test period (committee members should make a point of visiting).

Mr. Cetto asked for improved Braille signage and said that the kiosk at the Eugene Station was hard to find, that it only provided route numbers, and that it should provide more information.

XI. Adjourn

Ms. Mulder commented than signage along routes was more legible than it had been previously.

The committee would not meet in February. The next regularly scheduled meeting was set for March 20, 2012.

Mr. Massengill adjourned the meeting at 11:56 a.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)