

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on November 13, 2018 and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Accessible Transportation Committee of the Lane Transit District held a meeting on Tuesday, November 20, 2018, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Next Stop Center, 1099 Olive Street, Eugene, Oregon.

Present: Pete Barron, Chair
Scott Whetham
Stefan Kwiatkowski
Hoover Chambliss (by phone)
Paul Blaylock
Josh Haring
Ruth Linoz
Rachel Jacobsen
Ed Necker
John Ahlen
Kris Lyon
Loretta McNally
Resha Oylear
Deirdre Nail
Aurora Jackson
Camille Gandolfi
Robert Hendrix
Mark Johnson
Haven Purbaugh
David Nestor
Dan Ziller

Absent: Tim Shearer
Jason Higham

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL — Mr. Barron called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order. Those present introduced themselves.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR —

Mr. Barron announced that the RideSource building has been renamed the Ed Necker RideSource Center, in honor of Ed Necker. Mr. Barron commended Mr. Necker for his work, and everyone congratulated him.

AGENDA REVIEW — No further changes were made to the agenda.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION — None.

MEETING MINUTES

MOTION APPROVAL OF MINUTES — Ms. Linoz moved to approve the June 19, 2018, July 17, 2018, and the September 18, 2018 minutes of the Accessible Transportation Committee meetings. Mr. Kwiatkowski provided the second.

VOTE The motion was approved as follows:
AYES: Barron, Whetham, Kwiatkowski, Chambliss, Blaylock, Haring, Linoz, Jacobsen, Necker (9)
NAYS: None
ABSTENTIONS: None
EXCUSED: None

FIXED ROUTE SECUREMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY — Mr. Ahlen led a conversation about securement of mobility devices and accessibility on fixed route buses, including buckles, hooks, and the Q'Straint Quantum systems.

Mr. Ahlen explained that the current securement system consists of buckles, hooks and Q'Straint Quantum systems. He reported that he has been talking with drivers, mechanics, staff, and riders about the Q'Straint systems. Originally, they had many mechanical problems and were not reliable. Quite a few were repaired and replaced, and since then, mechanical operations are repaired and should be working, but some drivers still do not know how to use them. Q'Straint systems require a very specific method of operation, and drivers are still used to implementing work-arounds, but the systems are difficult to operate once you start doing those overrides. Increased training is needed on how the new systems are intended to be operated, but they should be able to be used effectively. Some riders are choosing not to use the Q'Straint systems because of past negative experiences. However, Mr. Ahlen emphasized that if we have securement in our buses, it should be easy, effective, efficient.

Mr. Ahlen continued by discussing securement belts versus hooks. He noted that there are pros and cons to each. A buckle-based securement system allows riders to secure themselves independently without a driver's help. Mobility devices are not designed to go on buses, so for many devices, buckles do not fit conveniently. Work-arounds include installing securement loops on mobility devices if customers stop in to the customer service center. Hooks should be able to hook onto any part of a mobility device, but that often requires help from the driver.

Ms. Linoz queried how drivers know if a rider needs help, and Mr. Ahlen added that the presence of loops on a rider's mobility device does not necessarily mean that the rider can do it themselves. It needs to be communicated between the driver and the rider unless it is immediately obvious.

Mr. Necker interjected that drivers know most riders and know who needs help, and riders are usually savvy and can communicate if they need help.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered, when doing transportation assessments, how to make a referral for a new rider to learn how to use the bus with a mobility device.

Mr. Ahlen responded that it depends on the circumstances. If someone is interested in travel training - routes, fares, etc. - they can go to Alternative Work Concepts. A rider can reach out

directly to Mr. Ahlen if they are new to using a mobility device or gets one that is new to them. Mr. Ahlen can send a 40-foot bus out to the person's house so they may practice boarding. The same can be done with a bus at the Downtown Eugene station, i.e. a person can practice boarding, become familiar with seating arrangements, using a ramp, etc. The best course of action is to reach out directly to Mr. Ahlen and ask for appropriate help.

Mr. Whetham interjected that Alternative Work Concepts can also refer people to a practice bus. They can also help a person with a new mobility device by setting up construction cones with the same dimensions as a bus and letting people practice moving through that space. If a person needs an attendant to help get on and off the bus, they can also practice with them.

Mr. Necker suggested that if a person is able, they should be taught how to back onto the bus.

Mr. Ahlen continued by asking what considerations should be kept in mind for securement systems in the future. He asked for input from people who have had experience with hook-based securement systems and any other feedback about buckle-based systems and Q'Straints.

Mr. Kwiatkowski queried whether it would be practical to put both hooks and buckles in new buses, and how the cost of that would compare to Q'Straint systems.

Mr. Barron mentioned that his own van has buckles plus a short piece that buckles on with a hook on it, so you can secure yourself either way. He also stated that he appreciates Mr. Ahlen talking to drivers, as there are four factors to consider: the person in the mobility device, their equipment, the equipment on the bus, and the driver.

Ms. Linoz asked if a bus is taken out of service when the automatic Q'Straint Quantum device is not working, and Mr. Ahlen responded that it is not, because that bay usually has alternative for forward-facing securement.

Mr. Necker wondered whether a rear-facing bay can be used without a working Q'Straint system, and Mr. Ahlen replied that it is not the best practice. Rear-facing securement works if the bar can actually come down and the Quantum device locks the person in place.

Ms. Jacobsen asked if riders are taking the opportunity to practice using the functioning Q'Straint Quantum systems, and Mr. Ahlen said that they are, and people should always have that choice, just as riders always have a choice between forward and rear-facing securement in buses that have both. Rear-facing may never work for some people, so forward-facing always needs to be an option. The intention with the Quantum is for riders to be able to board and secure themselves completely independently. Mr. Necker added that this system is more convenient for a person who is not able to back onto a bus.

Mr. Barron reported that he always asked to use the Quantum system when it first became available, but drivers would always say it didn't work. Mr. Ahlen stated that now that mechanical issues have been worked out, the drivers need more training, and that is a work-in-progress. In response to a question from Mr. Necker, he said that the operating buttons for the riders to use should be functional.

Mr. Kwiatkowski shared that most of the times he has observed the Quantum devices being used, they have worked well.

Ms. Linoz wondered what the forecast is for the evolution of mobility devices so we can predict securement systems that will be needed. Mr. Ahlen noted that mobility devices are not usually built with buses in mind, so we have to catch up. The trend is that they are getting bigger and heavier, so newer RideSource vehicles are coming with lifts that can lift heavier devices. Q'Straint is a major manufacturer continuing to develop new technologies. On mobility devices, there is an increased use of symbols on frames indicating how to secure the devices. Often those are designed with hook-based securement in mind, so after-market modifications still need to be made to adapt to buckle-based securement.

Mr. Barron mentioned that he flies a lot, and there is a push for passengers to be allowed to roll their wheelchairs onto airplanes and strap them down the same way they do on buses. There are standards wheelchairs have to meet to make this possible, and people are pushing to make those uniform for certain types of chairs. Airlines did recently upgrade their standards, so things are slowly becoming better.

Mr. Necker wondered if the loop attachments that adapt to buckles are a Q'Straint product. Mr. Ahlen said he is not familiar with them, but he is going to look into it because having a securement system with two attachments - both a buckle and a hook - would be ideal, so each person can choose. He added that if there are various options, drivers would need to be well-trained in all the options and how to make decisions based on mobility devices. He asked the group for feedback about how that decision should be made if a loop is installed on a device and both options are available.

Mr. Chambliss opined that the driver should always ask the rider's preference.

Mr. Ahlen asked Mr. Barron if having two attachments gets in the way. Mr. Barron said they don't, but you need to have a Q'Straint inertia rail to release the pressure to get the hook off (but you do not need it for a belt). It would be easy to put both a hook and belt on so people can use one or the other. A rider could use it independently, but even if a driver has to help, it tightens itself easily. The hook and belt buckle can be on the same strap.

Mr. Ahlen continued by noting that when speaking with drivers, one thing that was reported back is that occasionally, riders choose to unsecure themselves while the bus is still in motion. This is not a good idea for safety reasons. He wondered if there are thoughts on how to address that. He also reported that he has noticed that the ramps on the 1100 series buses are not working for all types of mobility devices. These ramps have a bit of a divot if the bus is knelt, but they are straight when a bus is not knelt. There are work-arounds and tricks to help accommodate people, but he wonders if there are mechanical adjustments that can be made to the ramps to fix this problem.

Mr. Necker mentioned that the ramps have a short turning radius as well. Mr. Ahlen agreed that this is a problem because if the ramp is not completely straight, people are hitting full power to get up the ramp over the divot, and then they hit the fare box.

Mr. Barron suggested that drivers be told to kneel the bus to deploy the ramp, and then to bring the bus back up to where angle is correct and there is no divot. Separately, he stated that there is no standard that someone has to wear a belt to strap into their mobility device. If a device does

not have a belt, securing the mobility device alone will not help, because the person can still fall out of their device.

Mr. Ahlen shared that regulatory language provides that we can only require a person be secured if we require that everyone be secured. Hopefully the configuration of the bus prevents people from going flying. Any individual may choose to secure themselves, but it is not required because not everyone is required to do so.

Mr. Necker added that since seat belts are available, drivers might ask if a person in a mobility device wants a seat belt. Mr. Ahlen confirmed that any driver can receive additional training on how to use all securement options, including seat belts. Mr. Necker said that drivers should be reminded to ask.

Mr. Hendrix asked if bus operators have a plan B in case a permanent device fails. Mr. Ahlen responded that if there is a mechanical failure, the bus can be parked and another bus can be sent out. Anything that is deemed unsafe will be replaced.

Mr. Ahlen announced that he would take all feedback to the operations team and will check in again once in a while as new vehicles are introduced.

Mr. Hendrix wondered how long it will be until the oldest buses are put out of service. Mr. Ahlen replied that the vehicle replacements are typically one-for-one, so it can take a while to cycle a whole generation out of the system.

Mr. Barron asked about trying a full electric bus. Mr. Necker reported that there was a pilot bus, and errors were identified and corrected. It has been tested some and has passed inspection, but he is not sure what the plans are to put it in service.

Mr. Johnson confirmed that LTD has one electric bus, and they are in the process of accepting it, but it probably will not be in service for a couple more months. Four more will be delivered early next year. The problems in the pilot bus have all been corrected.

GRANT OVERVIEW —

Mr. Ahlen announced that the STF committee is now reporting directly to the LTD Board (instead of being subcommittee of ATC). STF's first meeting was scheduled for later that day at 4:00 pm, and it is a public meeting.

The timeline to return grant applications to the state is more relaxed in this biennium. The STF will work at a similar pace, so there will be more time to finalize and report recommendations back to the Board.

LTD already has its preliminary notice of funding from the state. For 5310 funding, there is a 6.5% increase from last biennium. STF funding is same as last biennium. The portion of 5311 funds that LTD is applying for is increasing by 10%. The portion allotted for Cottage Grove 5311

funding is 5% less. While some of this could change slightly, this will all be the starting point for the STF committee as they make their recommendations.

LTD staff will be going to ODOT training at the end of November and will be publishing a notice for a grant workshop for any community partners who would like to apply for grants for funds. Those grant applications will be reviewed by the STF committee and then will go to the LTD Board for approval. This process will take place over the next 3-4 months, and then the funding level will be set for next two years. Anyone can come to the public meetings and grant workshops and can give feedback throughout the process. LTD will also be updating the Lane County Coordinated Transportation Plan, which sets priorities for the use of funding for the upcoming biennium and the kinds of services they are hoping to fund through STF process. STF reviews how different funding sources interact to increase services for people with disabilities and older adults. That includes 5310 funding, STF funding, 5311 funding, local contributions from cities, partnerships with other agencies, etc.

Mr. Necker added that the STF was created so that the composition of committee would meet state guidelines. Originally, it served at LCOG with the Accessible Services Committee. The staff found that they were duplicating work, so they combined STF with the ATC, but the ATC does not meet state guidelines for composition to determine recommendations for STF.

Ms. Linoz asked if the STF committee will develop the updated coordinated plan. Mr. Ahlen replied that the STF will be working on the coordinated plan in conjunction with developing recommendations for the upcoming grant biennium. The same public process will suit both tasks well, including public notice and hearings, minutes meetings, etc. Both processes require a significant amount of outreach.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Lane Transit District — Ms. Rees was not present. Mr. Ahlen commended Mr. Necker for the new building name and for his work in the community. He then shared photos of new RideSource vehicles, six El Dorado Airtechs. Ms. Lyon shared that she took a test ride on a vehicle that has a new suspension system called “liquid springs,” and it was a very smooth ride. They hope to have a similar demo vehicle to try with mobility devices. Vehicles can be retrofitted, and the cost is not known yet, but it can be done on site. This would be great, particularly for cutaways and paratransit vehicles.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered if at the time a demo comes here, they could reach out to riders who have expressed the need for smoother rides so that those riders can test it out. Ms. Lyon said that will be an option. She added that if the vehicles are retrofitted with liquid springs, it would take at least a year.

Ms. Linoz cautioned against lowering the chassis because that isn’t good on rural roads.

Mr. Hendrix mentioned that with hybrid vehicles, the batteries are in the roof of the vehicle, and you can feel the bus lean.

Mr. Ahlen reported that three additional vehicles are being built for Willamalane, Florence/Yachats, and South Lane Wheels (as part of the Mobility on Demand pilot project).

Mr. Barron added that if shocks can be retrofitted, older buses could be phased out faster.

RideSource Call Center Advisory Committee — Ms. Lyon reported that the committee met last week. They are continuing the discussion about path and purpose of the committee, and they are looking at the rules for non-emergent medical transportation. At the next meeting in January, they will look closely at the metrics that RideSource attempts to meet with rides, complaints, call status, etc. They will look at the data compared with the metrics and will think about things that could be done to meet those metrics. The committee will be meeting more often.

RideSource Call Center — Ms. Oylear announced that there are changes coming up next month with staffing on the Call Center side and on the Paratransit side. Michelle Buie was Call Center Manager and is now going to be Operations Manager position on the Paratransit RS side. The Call Center Manager position was posted today, and interviews begin next week. Ms. Oylear will be working with Ms. Lyon to select final candidate. Ms. Buie starts her new position on December 2nd, and the new Call Center supervisor will hopefully begin in the middle of December. The Call Center is also looking at different committees to put together to improve ways of gathering need-based information. The Advisory Committee suggested looking at what the Call Center is missing, so different teams will meet once a month to discuss various issues to help improve service.

RideSource ADA Paratransit — Ms. Oylear reported that they are doing bi-monthly “safety blitzes.” Managers meet for the pull-out in the morning at 5:00 am, talk to the drivers, and discuss a particular safety topic. Right now, the focus is on defensive driving. Next will be customer service and the origin-to-destination policy, and clarifying what that means. It is a continued training process to help eliminate complacency with this type of job.

South Lane Wheels (Cottage Grove) — Ms. Linoz reported that South Lane Wheels is gearing up for Mobility on Demand service in Cottage Grove starting in January. This service will use an app to do ride-sharing, with standard cutaway buses. Riders will use an app to request rides, and drivers will respond. The dispatcher can help with those who do not want to use technology, i.e., a rider can call, and the dispatcher can put the ride request into the software. Next month they will have training. It will serve a zoned area within the city of Cottage Grove and has parameters that will keep travel times down. Mobility on Demand will be available 7:00 am - 7:00 pm, which is a longer service period than the community has had. It will still only be on weekdays, but it will allow individuals within Cottage Grove to connect with LTD as well as to travel to and from destinations within Cottage Grove. South Lane Wheels will still operate regular local and metro service, as well as the concierge service for ride requests outside of that.

Florence Rhody Express — Mr. Haring reported that they are running both buses and taking in information. The Yachats route is going well. The first two months had high numbers. It has sporadic ridership, all over the board throughout day. The Washburn stop is still used, but its popularity is seasonal. Mr. Barron asked if there is a stop at the Sea Lion Caves, and Mr. Haring explained that there is not, because it would take too long to pull in and back out. This route is a straight shot along the 101 between Florence and Yachats, and they want to maintain consistency.

Mr. Ahlen mentioned that ADA improvements are high on ODOT's list for highway improvements.

Oakridge/Diamond Express — Mr. Higham was not present.

White Bird Clinic — Ms. McNally shared that it has been a slower month than usual. They usually average over 300 rides, but last month there were 237. They enrolled 17 new people. They are planning to expand dental services into the other building, and then they will be able to expand medical services as well.

Alternative Work Concepts — Ms. Nail reported that there have been a lot of travel trainings, which is unusual for colder weather. Zach, the newest travel trainer, is doing well. AWC just travel trained a high school kid who had not taken a bus before, so they had a bus come out to his school so he could practice.

LCOG Senior & Disability Services — Ms. Jacobsen reported that Emily Farrell has been hired as the new Director of S&DS. Brooke Emery is the new Deputy Director (formerly the Medicaid Program Manager). Ms. Jacobsen also announced that starting the following day, the Cottage Grove office would be open for walk-ins 3 days per week - Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday - instead of 2 days per week. Because S&DS is hosted at Community Sharing in Cottage Grove, the hours are 11:00 am - 3:30 pm.

Ms. Linoz inquired about the full lunch hour for which the Cottage Grove office is closed, even with such short hours. Ms. Jacobsen replied that they hope staff will take required breaks and lunch because they have back-to-back clients. In the metro office, S&DS has enough staff to stagger lunch breaks, but with only 3 staff members in Cottage Grove, they cannot stagger their lunch hours. Lunch is 12:00 - 1:00 pm, and the hours the office is open is the best chunk of time possible if it can only be open half a day. Hopefully the new Mobility on Demand ride service will help to get clients there at the right time of day.

LILA — Ms. Helwig was not present.

Ms. Linoz clarified that South Lane Wheels will be operating Mobility on Demand, which is a Lane Transit District service. They are hoping that the experience of showing that rural service can be more on demand will reach a younger demographic and those who have not thought of public transportation being offered by South Lane Wheels.

Mr. Blaylock asked the group if there were any comments about Greyhound moving to Springfield. Mr. Kwiatkowski shared that Greyhound is now at the Springfield bus station. They did not want to use the Eugene building anymore, and they have part of the indoor space at the Springfield bus station. Mr. Johnson said that Greyhound's typical pick-up and drop-off spot is on A Street. Then the bus turns around and goes through the station. Ms. Linoz asked about a waiting area for Greyhound, and Mr. Kwiatkowski reported that they are using the old Cricket store for that purpose.

Mr. Blaylock asked if Mr. Ahlen had an update on the Highway 99 pedestrian crossing improvement from ODOT. Mr. Ahlen responded that he has not received an update, but he believes it is part of one of the prioritized ADA improvements. The short-term plan includes immediate needs, and long-term, all crossings should have curb cuts. ODOT has done an

inventory of all highway crossings, and the most inaccessible ones have been marked for immediate improvement, and he believes that the stretch on Highway 99 is one of those. Mr. Ahlen is not sure about the timeline for the improvements on specific crossings, but he believes the crossing at the service station will be improved sooner rather than later.

NEXT MEETING — The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, December 18, 2018.

ADJOURNMENT —

Mr. Kwiatkowski moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:21 am, and Mr. Blaylock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(Recorded by Rachel Burstein)