

SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION FUND COMMITTEE MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

Friday, January 11, 2019

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on January 4, 2019 and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Special Transportation Fund Committee of the Lane Transit District held a meeting on Friday, January 11, beginning at 1:00 p.m. at the Next Stop Center, 1099 Olive Street, Eugene, Oregon.

Present: Ruth Linoz, Chair  
Lise Schellman  
Ed Necker  
Hoover Chambliss (by phone)  
Dolores Donis (by phone)  
John Ahlen

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL** — Ms. Linoz convened the meeting and called the roll.

**COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR** — Ms. Linoz welcomed those in attendance.

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

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION** — No one wished to speak.

**MEETING MINUTES**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** — Minutes from the last meeting were not addressed.

**BIENNIAL GRANT INTERVIEWS** —

Funds for Vehicle Maintenance

Mr. Ahlen spoke about LTD purchasing vehicles and subsidizing vehicle leases to partner agencies who provide services beyond LTD's scope. The lease arrangements are made at very reasonable costs. LTD is able to pursue grant opportunities that other agencies cannot, and they can therefore partner with other agencies to provide services. Each vehicle is purchased with unique grant funds.

Ms. Linoz asked if this is the primary way the partner agencies get their vehicles, and Mr. Ahlen responded that the agencies can get their vehicles through grant-funded public leases or through private acquisition, or a combination. Ms. Linoz wondered how maintenance of these vehicles is covered. Mr. Ahlen noted that he is asking for preventive maintenance costs only for vehicles which are primarily owned by LTD. Responding to a question from Mr. Necker, Mr. Ahlen confirmed that the providers are responsible for maintenance costs of their own privately-owned vehicles. LTD never wants the program providers to be frugal about preventive maintenance on the LTD-owned vehicles, so the maintenance budget is separate from the operations budget.

Mr. Necker asked whether under "population to be served," "general public" includes older adults and people with disabilities, and Mr. Ahlen replied that it does. Mr. Ahlen explained that some

services serve the general public, which includes older people and people with disabilities. Some services serve only people with disabilities. Both types of services fall under the general umbrella of preventive maintenance.

Mr. Ahlen proposed a budget of \$733,200 to cover every vehicle in every program to be properly maintained over the next two years. This current fiscal year, the preventive maintenance costs are averaging \$4,400 per vehicle (for one year). He is asking for a \$200 increase in FY20, and a \$200 in FY21. The budget also accounts for inflation. He estimated that the percentage increases per year in maintenance expenses are 4.5% for FY20, and 4.3% for FY21. He explained that the majority of the maintenance costs will come out of the federal 5310 funds received from ODOT. They would then need to match slightly over 10% from state funds, so \$75,300 of the total budget would need to be funded by STF. In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Mr. Ahlen confirmed that this is only for preventive vehicle maintenance.

Mr. Ahlen reported that while the amounts presented cover maintenance for the current 78 vehicles owned by LTD, it could end up being plus or minus a couple vehicles. LTD is retiring a couple vehicles at the moment, and they have some on order.

Ms. Linoz noted that providing only 10% of overall maintenance costs is a good deal.

A consensus was reached to accept the vehicle maintenance funds as presented.

#### Funds for Vehicle Replacement

Mr. Ahlen then moved on to vehicle replacements for the same fleet as described earlier with respect to maintenance. Many vehicles are reaching the end of their usable life, which is estimated to be around 7 years or 200,000 miles. As funds become available, LTD identifies vehicles that need to be replaced and then pursues grant funding to do make the replacements. This group makes recommendations on funding for vehicle replacements to keep up with needed vehicle replacements within the fleet, instead of waiting for many vehicles to break down at once. Separate from the 5310 funds through ODOT, the FTA provides a direct disbursement allotment. Mr. Ahlen recommended that this direct disbursement allotment be used for vehicle replacements within the ADA and rural paratransit fleet. Three years of funding have been identified: \$731,711 direct disbursement 5310 funds based on FY17 and FY18. He had estimates only for FY19. The total overall amount may change slightly, but Mr. Ahlen asked this group for permission for LTD to move forward to use whatever FTA disbursement allotment they are given to fund the purchase of new vehicles.

Ms. Linoz asked for clarification regarding the geographic area for the application for these funds. Mr. Ahlen responded that it covers both metro and rural areas, and replacements will be based on whatever vehicles are most in need of replacement.

Mr. Ahlen further clarified that what he needs from this group is the match for the FTA direct disbursement funds. He needs a match rate of 20% for a capital purchase, which is \$146,342.

Mr. Necker asked if LTD still retains ownership of the vehicles that it leases, and Mr. Ahlen confirmed that it does. He added that ODOT is sometimes considered the primary lien holder or the secondary title holder. When a vehicle reaches the end of its service life, LTD is required to take them to auction.

A question was asked regarding how the FTA funds are currently allocated. Mr. Ahlen replied that last biennium, the STF Committee allocated them toward offsetting the extra General Fund contribution required for RideSource service, due to tax cuts.

In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Mr. Ahlen stated that 5311 is separate from this particular application. The 5310 direct disbursement funds come directly from FTA, and to use them, LTD has to apply for match funds for vehicle replacement.

Ms. Linoz asked if there is any other funding source for match. Mr. Ahlen replied that the General Fund or any cash source could be used.

Ms. Donis wondered if the General Fund could only be used for in-district versus out-of-district. Mr. Ahlen clarified that when LTD is matching funds for rural programs, they cannot match using General Fund money. In those circumstances, they try to match with STF dollars. For example, for replacements of vehicles used outside of the metro area, STF funds will need to be used. A minimum of 60% of the overall STF budget must be used outside the metro area.

Ms. Linoz asked how many vehicles would be replaced, and Mr. Ahlen said it is not definite, but it would be roughly 9 RideSource-sized cutaway vehicles over the next two years.

Mr. Necker asked how the process of staggering vehicle purchases works, and Mr. Ahlen answered that the goal is to make sure funds are available when they are needed. He estimated that approximately 10 vehicles should be replaced per year, and this particular funding source will only cover 9 over two years, but there are other funding sources.

Ms. Donis inquired what the average lead time is on a cutaway as opposed to a minivan (time from identifying funding to having the vehicle on the road). Mr. Ahlen estimated that it is a roughly two-year turnaround time from ordering to delivery.

A consensus was reached to move accept the vehicle replacement funds as presented.

#### Funds for Diamond Express Service

Mr. Ahlen next talked about Diamond Express, which is the service between Oakridge and Eugene. It is important because Oakridge is not a transportation hub, so this service connects passengers to Eugene where they can use all other types of transit. Trips are \$2.50. If a passenger buys a round trip ticket, they also get a day pass for LTD to use for traveling around Eugene. Round trip is \$5.00. People use this for commuting to work, school, and hospital trips. It runs three times per day round trip. There are three stops in Oakridge, a stop in Westfir, a stop at Eugene LTD Station, a stop at Amtrak in Eugene, and a stop at the hospital. This service is heavily subsidized using a city grant called 5311(f). That will be applied for competitively, but LTD needs approval now for matching funds. Some money comes directly from the City of Oakridge. LTD needs \$153,706 of matching funds, and the rest of the \$405,876 comes from other sources. The amount of fare box revenue in the upcoming two years is different from that in the current year. Estimates versus actual fare box revenue turns out to be very different, and that has led to cutting some of the service.

Mr. Ahlen shared that over the last biennium, there have been two main challenges facing Diamond Express. First, there was a change in contractor, which led to a significant cost. The cost of Diamond Express used to be bundled with RideSource service, but it is now separate, so LTD has a better idea as to the actual cost of running this service.

A question was asked regarding whether the grant and match funds cover the funds missing from farebox revenue that was lower than expected. Mr. Ahlen noted that the 5311(f) grant funds are increasing in the next biennium. They are anticipating lower fare box revenue now, and the cost will be more consistent because there will not be another contractor change.

Mr. Ahlen is asking for the match portion from the STF funds, which is \$153,706 over a two-year period for the Diamond Express. This service also includes a dial-a-ride service to transport older adults to a meal site similar to Meals on Wheels. That is a donation only program and is a collaborative program with LCOG.

Ms. Linoz asked how the dial-a-ride service works, and Mr. Ahlen responds that there is an extra vehicle used for that, and that vehicle is also used as a backup vehicle for Diamond Express if there is a problem with the main vehicle.

Mr. Ahlen noted that a refurbished bus is being purchased for Diamond Express, but no STF funds are needed for that.

The funds being sought right now for Diamond Express are just to keep the service running as it already is.

A consensus was reached to accept the Diamond Express funds as presented.

#### Funds for Rhody Express

Mr. Ahlen spoke about Rhody Express in Florence. This service has a North loop and a South loop in Florence. This is a fixed route service, unlike Diamond Express, which is an inter-city service. The loop around town in Florence runs once per hour. There is a requirement to run at least once per hour while running a fixed route service. Mr. Ahlen said they need match funds for this service. For Florence, they use 5311 funds, which are formula funds, a locked-in amount (as opposed to 5311(f), which are competitive funds). The 5311 funds for Florence need to be matched at a 43.92% rate. LTD is seeking \$101,950 in match funds to support a service that costs \$351,012 over a two-year period. They receive a contribution of \$30,000 per year from the City of Florence, 5311 funds, and farebox revenue, all of which goes to fund this service. Rhody Express will look to the STIF committee to do some expansions, but the funds requested from this committee are to continue providing the same services that are already provided. LTD is asking for a little bit less money this biennium because they are receiving a little bit more in 5311 funds.

Mr. Necker asked for a brief explanation of the difference between 5311 and 5311(f). Mr. Ahlen replied that the 5311(f) is competitive, without an amount guaranteed, and 5311 funds are formula funds that are guaranteed to support a fixed route. Ms. Linoz added that the federal requirements differ as to how the services are operated. Mr. Ahlen noted they have slightly different match requirements as well.

A consensus was reached to accept the Rhody Express funds as presented.

Mr. Ahlen summarized that after reviewing the applications, it appears that roughly \$150,000 more will be spent from the General Fund than was spent last biennium. That can be accounted for almost entirely by the match for vehicle replacement, which was not done last biennium.

#### Application from the Pearl Buck Center

Ms. Schellman presented an application from the Pearl Buck Center. They are seeking match funds for the transportation service for the preschool. Mr. Ahlen reviewed the procedure for a member of the Committee presenting an application from their own organization, explaining that they may present, but if they have a conflict of interest, they will need to excuse themselves from the Committee's decision-making process regarding the funding for that particular application.

Ms. Schellman identified herself as the Preschool Director at the Pearl Buck Center, noting that she has a potential conflict of interest as a member of the STF Committee.

Ms. Schellman explained that the mission of the Pearl Buck Center is to offer people with disabilities and their families quality choices of support, and she shared the history of the Center. The services now offered by the center include employment, supported living, community inclusion services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as a preschool and family support program for families led by parents with cognitive limitations. The Center is now working more intensively with the parents and helping them develop skills. Parents with cognitive limitations have a 50% chance of having their children put in foster care or put up for adoptions. However, most of these parents are capable of providing good and safe homes for their children with proper training and support. The Pearl Buck Center has a contract with DHS Child Welfare to provide support services for families with children in the foster care system or who are being investigated to help children be returned to their families and stay there. Many of the parents in this program are also diagnosed with anxiety or depression.

Ms. Schellman described the ways in which the Center works with the families they support, which include parent education and case management services, specifically for families with children ages 0-5. To identify the children who are eligible to be transported by bus and attend the preschool, they look at the families with the highest risk. In response to question from Mr. Necker, she clarified that eligible children are those who have parents with cognitive limitations, not children who themselves have such limitations. They perform family assessments including health, education, housing, etc., with the goal of offering the most support to the families who need it the most. For families with children age 0-2 or who do not meet the criteria of the preschool, there is an outreach program, the Center continues to do home visits and give support.

Ms. Schellman shared the strategies the Pearl Buck Center uses, including helping to connect families with the services and parenting education they need, providing specialized preschool, help with safety screenings in the home, and working toward goals to build confidence. Quality preschool makes a big difference in future educational success for children of parents with cognitive limitations. Ms. Schellman added that they partner with Head Start, since the Pearl Buck Center does not receive any state or federal early childhood funds. Some of the children of families who don't get into the Pearl Buck preschool attend Head Start, and Pearl Buck helps

support them. She also explained that state-funded support workers for the parents cannot help teach parenting skills, so the Center helps with that.

Ms. Schellman continued to describe the preschool, which provides specialized early education for the children and also gives respite time to the parents, which is very important and is necessary for parents with cognitive limitations. While the kids are in preschool, home visits are done to help parents work on skills and goals. Therefore, the existence of the preschool and RideSource's transport of the kids to preschool ends up benefiting all the parents involved as well. There are 28 kids currently at the preschool, all of whom are transported by RideSource, and school is held 4 days a week. They get nutritious meals at school on the days they are there. The Center also provides food boxes for the families. During home visits, they teach parents about child development, make sure they are connected with needed services, accompany parents and children to medical appointments and help with their ongoing medical care, help with communication, transportation, etc.

Ms. Schellman then presented information about various stressors faced by the families served by the Pearl Buck Center and its preschool. These include social isolation, abuse, finances, and many other issues. All of these lead to struggles with parenting, and they need support in that area.

Ms. Schellman emphasized that one of the critical factors in the program's success is that they can transport the families using LTD RideSource. Most of them would have no other way to get around. 82% of their families reported last year that they could not participate without the transportation provided, and this year it is closer to 100%. Since their program is not eligible for government funding, they always operate at a deficit. The only government funding they receive is through USDA for the food program, Early Childhood Special Education, and LTD RideSource. This leaves a \$300,000 deficit, covered mostly by grants such as the LTD grant, and the rest comes from the agency. They have also lost some funding from two long-time donors due to changes in their funding models. Therefore, the Pearl Buck preschool is asking for an increase in grant funds and a decrease in their matching obligation.

Responding to a question from Ms. Linoz, Ms. Schellman confirmed that receiving less than the full ask would not change the program, but it would help the Center not have to spend its own funds. She added the families served now need very different services and support than they did ten years ago.

It was asked if there might be more support at the state level, given current attention to funding for preschool. Ms. Schellman replied that she is working with state legislators to find funding for this particular population.

In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Ms. Schellman said that currently, Pearl Buck Center is paying 44% as their match. She is asking to lower that to approximately 40%, which would help quite a bit.

Ms. Linoz asked for clarification about the years of the budget, and Ms. Schellman acknowledged that the years on the application are incorrect.

Mr. Ahlen calculated that with a 40% match rate, LTD would need to provide approximately \$201,000. Mr. Ahlen also asked for clarification on the \$37,000 the Center might not receive due

to certain donors changing their funding models. Ms. Schellman responded that with one of the funding sources, they don't know when there will be a definite answer about that. For the other one, United Way, they will probably know in February.

Mr. Ahlen reported that last biennium, LTD gave a grant of \$173,700. The original current ask at the 44% match rate would be \$221,395, and at 40% would be approximately \$201,000.

**ADJOURNMENT** — Ms. Linoz adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

*(Transcribed by Rachel Burstein from audio recording provided)*