

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, April 18, 2006
10 a.m. – Noon
Lane Transit District
3500 East 17th Avenue—Eugene, Oregon**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Necker, Chair	Ann Angvick, Vice Chair
Kathy Jenness	Kay Metzger
Aline Goddard	Evan Sloan
Bob Proctor	Tara Sue Salusso
Kristine Sirmans	Dan Haun
Kay Christopher	L. M. Reese

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Hugh Massengill	Mark Phinney
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MEMBERS ABSENT:

Gordon Wyatt	Scott Whetham
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OTHERS PRESENT:

Mary Otten	Dave Kleger
Beth Mulcahey	Ann Lauver
David Braunschweiger	

STAFF:

Terry Parker, Lane Transit District Accessible Services Manager
Susan Hekimoglu, Lane Transit District Accessible Services Assistant

INTRODUCTIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Necker called the meeting of the Lane Transit District (LTD) Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order at 10:02 a.m.

Those present introduced themselves.

Ms. Goddard invited all in attendance to the upcoming Tree Planting Festival in Oakridge.

Ms. Parker reported that the Eugene Downtown Lions annual crab feed and auction was scheduled to occur on April 26 at Saint Thomas Episcopal Church.

Mr. Necker reviewed the agenda and noted that the item entitled *LTD & EMX Vehicles—Interior Design Update* would be later in the agenda than scheduled.

MINUTES APPROVAL: Ms. Salusso questioned the abstentions reflected in the vote on the fiscal year (FY) 2006-07 budget on page 7 of the minutes of the March 21, 2006, meeting, as she did not recall anyone other than herself, Ms. Jenness, and Mr. Whetham abstaining. To clarify, Ms. Parker recalled a previous committee discussion regarding conflicts of interest as they pertained to the work of the Advisory Committee. Those members representing agencies who were direct recipients of Special Transportation Fund (STF) dollars did not need to declare a conflict of interest or abstain from the vote, as the committee membership was directed by state law. However, members might choose to do so at their discretion.

Ms. Parker and Ms. Hekimoglu indicated they would follow up and check on the tape of the minutes to confirm the vote. An e-mail follow-up from Ms. Hekimoglu clarified the final vote.

Mr. Reese, seconded by Ms. Jenness, moved to approve the minutes of the ATC meeting of March 21, 2006, with the caveat that staff would follow up on the vote in question. The motion passed unanimously.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES BUDGET OVERVIEW: Ms. Parker distributed and reviewed spreadsheets showing the revenues and expenses associated with the Accessible Services Fund for FY2006-07. Members asked questions clarifying the information contained in the spreadsheets.

Responding to a question from Ms. Salusso, Ms. Parker indicated she would follow-up on an apparent disparity between the total revenues and total expenses.

LTD SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY: Ms. Parker referred the committee to draft policy changes to LTD's service animal policy, included in the meeting packet. She invited questions.

Responding to a question from Mr. Necker regarding the reference to pets on page 3 of the draft policy, Ms. Parker clarified that LTD patrons could bring pets on buses in approved containers. She acknowledged there was a wide range of containers available, and LTD had no specific policy regarding what constituted an "LTD approved container." On occasion, people have transported animals in cardboard boxes. She said that people who rely on public transportation need to take their small animals to the veterinarian, and having a pet policy allows for that service. Ms. Parker noted that the draft policy had been reviewed by LTD's legal counsel.

Ms. Goddard asked how a provider could determine whether a service animal was vaccinated. Ms. Parker said that all animals must comply with local regulations related to licensing, and vaccination was required in order for an animal to be licensed. The requirement was not related to a service animal's certification. Ms. Goddard questioned how she could know an animal's vaccination was current. Typically, if the license was current, it meant that the animal's rabies vaccination also was current. It was pointed out that licensed animals must wear a numbered tag. Ms. Parker indicated staff would do further research into the issue.

Ms. Angvick perceived a conflict between the statement on page 1 of the policy that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibited public or private entities from requiring proof of a service animal's training and the statement on page 2 that a service animal must be trained to do work or perform a task related specifically to a person's disability. Ms. Parker said the ADA did not want transit operators or private entities such as restaurants being capricious in how they addressed the issue of service animals. There was no certification system in place. At the same time, the ADA stated that a service animal must be trained in a way that helped its owner in a demonstrable way with his or her disability. An animal that merely provided comfort to its owner was considered a pet and not covered by the ADA unless, for example, the owner had an extreme anxiety disorder and the animal was trained to do something demonstrable to ease the effects of the disability.

Continuing, Ms. Parker noted that one issue for LTD was with people training their own animals and the standard of behavior they applied to that animal. An animal that was not well-trained could put people and other well-trained animals at risk. Ms. Parker said that generally, LTD did not question whether an animal was a service animal, but focused on behavior. Operators were told to consider the general behavior of the animal as well as its behavior toward passengers and other animals.

Ms. Christopher suggested deleting the section of the policy that indicated service animals were allowed to sit in a vehicle seat. Ms. Parker said that legal counsel believed that represented a reasonable accommodation, but she would flag the issue and ask Operations to review the section in question. She acknowledged that allowing service animals to occupy a seat could create issues during peak travel hours.

Responding to a question from Ms. Christopher, Ms. Parker indicated she would revise the policy to reflect LTD's current policy related to exclusions, which stipulated that the operator would first contact the supervisor or dispatch if the supervisor was not available.

Ms. Otten asked if LTD had a policy related to the provision of seats for disabled patrons with dogs when traveling on standing-room-only buses. Ms. Parker responded that she anticipated further internal discussion about the seating arrangements on the 40-foot buses, and the potential of identifying more seats for those with disabilities. She did not think that would be an element of the service animal policy, however.

Mr. Necker observed that other riders were pretty good about moving to accommodate people with disabilities.

Ms. Parker said that LTD's marketing department was working on a "Courtesy is Contagious" campaign, which could be a way to highlight patron awareness of the needs of those with disabilities and seniors, particularly on crowded buses.

Ms. Christopher observed that she had seen an increase in the number of animals riding the bus, many of whom appeared not to be service animals. Drivers were trained to look for behaviors, and if an animal was well-behaved, it was allowed to ride the bus. However, she was concerned that as time went on, LTD was creating a situation where more people would be bringing their animals on the bus. Ms. Salusso questioned how many people had the luxury of bringing animals with them to work or shopping. She maintained that people were not going to stores or to work with their pets, and that when people brought animals on the bus, they most likely were service animals that addressed a specific need. Ms. Parker said that was formerly the case, but increasingly, people were taking pets everywhere. However, she agreed the majority of such animals traveling on the bus were service animals, and the law did not allow LTD to be any more restrictive than the draft policy.

The committee briefly discussed a situation raised by Ms. Christopher where conflict occurred between two animals, one of which appeared to be poorly trained and difficult for its owner to control. Ms. Parker asked Ms. Otten to comment, and if she would prefer that the driver intervene in such a case. Ms. Otten suggested that in certain cases, the driver must intervene, such as when a dog growled or lunged at another rider or animal. She said the gray area was the driver's knowledge of the degree of control an owner had over an animal.

Mr. Kleger anticipated more conflicts related to wheelchair users and service animals in the future, and said those conflicts raised schedule compliance issues as all delays represented a burden on bus travel time.

Ms. Parker indicated the committee would see the policy again following review by Operations staff.

LTD MARKETING UPDATE: The committee heard a marketing update from LTD Marketing Representative Cosette Rees. She reported that LTD staff was working on a *Courtesy is Contagious* campaign, which it hoped would spread beyond the bus and throughout the community.

Ms. Rees noted the EmX launch date of December 17, 2006, and invited ideas for how to reach the community with the news. She reported that the service change information provided to patrons in September would include a transformation theme.

She also reported that LTD was working to replace the old reduced fare cards, and bus operators were handing out informational fliers regarding the EZ Access Program, which was now one year old. She confirmed, in response to a question from Ms. Christopher, that currently, the only place to get the cards was at the Eugene Station. She said it could be possible for staff to go to a Springfield site to provide cards, such as Willamalane, but the equipment was not very portable. Responding to a suggestion from Ms. Metzger, Ms. Parker agreed to give thought to providing the cards at the Springfield Station or Willamalane Adult Activity Center.

Ms. Rees announced the upcoming *Train the Trainers* meetings occurring on May 2 and May 11 at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., respectively, at LTD, and on May 17 at the Eugene Library. People who train people with disabilities to use the LTD bus system were being invited to these meetings to learn about the Franklin EmX system. She confirmed, in response to a question from Ms. Parker, that she would have the raised station maps within a few weeks, and hoped they would be available at the Train the Trainers meetings. Ms. Parker asked Ms. Rees to ensure that Braille packets were available for the trainings. She added that all committee members would get invitations to the Train the Trainer events and asked that they let her know about others in the community who were involved in providing such training.

Ms. Rees circulated examples of the signage proposed for the EmX platforms. She welcomed input into the Braille signage. Responding to a question from Mr. Necker about the location of the signs in relationship to the boarding location, Ms. Rees indicated that while the stations were all different, the signs generally would be placed at the station entrances. The consistency of the location of signs would be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the Insight Workgroup. She confirmed that people would be able to navigate around the signs without getting too close to the boarding platform.

Ms. Rees indicated that a real-time reader board was being contemplated, but it might not be a part of the initial EmX system implementation. She said she would work with the Insight Group on the announcements that would be made inside and outside of the vehicle.

Ms. Parker noted the long period of time that the EmX project had been under discussion and in the design phase, and said that some of the decisions made in the past might need to be revised for future project phases now that construction of the first corridor was underway, and LTD would soon have experience with the actual system.

The committee briefly discussed the potential of including audible signage at the EmX stations. Ms. Rees suggested that the signs at the stations would not be used very often given the frequent headway of vehicles. Ms. Parker noted that TriMet used readerboards that included audible alerts regarding upcoming MAX (the Portland light rail service) arrivals, and all Tri-Met bus stops were also GPS-located for those who used GPS way-finding devices. Ms. Rees thought that LTD also was heading in that direction as all LTD stops were now also GPS-located. Mr. Kleger noted the board's

discussion of the technology involved, and suggested the expense of such a system would be a barrier for LTD until prices came down.

LTD & EMX VEHICLES—INTERIOR DESIGN UPDATE: Franklin EmX Project Manager Charlie Simmons joined the committee for an update of the interior design of the EmX vehicles. He recalled the committee's question of the degree of slope in the wheelchair bays on the EmX vehicle, and reported that he understood it would be the same slope as was currently the slope in the articulated fixed-route buses. He added that the slope was necessary due to the front-axel joint.

Ms. Parker indicated the slope could be advantageous to rear-facing riders and more challenging to forward-facing riders, but is what riders experienced in the current low-floor vehicles.

Mr. Simmons recalled the committee's concern regarding the "hockey stick" or stanchion in the rear-facing wheelchair bay on EmX and said staff was working on different options with the vehicle manufacturer, New Flyer, but the issue remained unresolved at this time. In regard to the forward-facing securement for the wheelchair bay, he anticipated LTD would use the same securement it used in its current buses, and that request had been made to New Flyer. Ms. Parker added that staff continued to work on the back rest design for the rear-facing station.

Ms. Parker asked the committee to share any concerns or questions they had. She anticipated that it was likely that LTD would ask committee members to volunteer to test the wheelchair bays on the vehicles after they arrived during the operator training sessions before going into service.

Ms. Jenness noted that she was hearing concerns expressed regarding the drop-offs and further distances people will have to travel to reach their destinations. Mr. Simmons acknowledged there might be some inconvenience, but staff had worked hard to place stations at key collector points along the corridor.

Responding to a question from Mr. Necker, Mr. Simmons confirmed that service would continue on the #11 Thurston bus. Responding to a follow-up question from Ms. Metzger, Ms. Parker said that the EmX route through Glenwood would be the main bus route between Eugene and Springfield. She confirmed that it was possible that some riders would need to use *RideSource* because of their physical location. Ms. Jenness asked if those who used *RideSource* would have to pay full fare for EmX. Ms. Parker said that was a good question which she would note and report back on. She observed that currently, LTD did not charge both fares for those who used the bus and *RideSource*, and she anticipated that policy would continue with the EmX routes.

Ms. Parker reported that LTD is in the process of ordering new 40-foot Gillig buses and asked committee members to comment on her suggestion to take out one of the seats that are located behind the wheelchair stations in the buses now in the fleet and install a

single jump seat either facing forward or sideways to accommodate a rider accompanied by a service animal or those who use walkers. Committee members endorsed the suggestion.

PROGRAM AND PROJECT UPDATES: Ms. Parker called members' attention to the program summary included in the meeting packet.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 16, 2006.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)