

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, October 17, 2006
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Lane Transit District
3500 East 17th Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Necker, Chair	Tara Sue Salusso
Aline Goddard	Kay Christopher
Bob Proctor	Kristine Sirmans

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Dave Kleger

MEMBERS ABSENT:

L. M. Reese, Vice Chair	Scott Whetham
Hugh Massengill	Ann Angvick
Kay Metzger	Evan Sloan
Jan Aho	Mark Phinney

OTHERS PRESENT:

Beth Mulcahy	Fred Stoffer
Glen Adams	Chris Watchie

STAFF:

Terry Parker	Susan Hekimoglu
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INTRODUCTIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS / AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Necker called the meeting of the Lane Transit District (LTD) Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order. Those present introduced themselves.

Mr. Necker reviewed the agenda. There were no changes suggested.

MINUTES APPROVAL – August 15, 2006, and September 19, 2006

Due to lack of a quorum, the approval of the minutes of the August and September meetings was postponed until the next meeting.

REVIEW PROGRAM PRIORITIES for the draft Lane Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan and for Discretionary Grant Applications

Ms. Parker handed out an outline for the Draft Coordinated Plan and explained the process by which the information was gathered. Staff had researched other coordination plans to see what format worked best. Ms. Parker noted that the outline was similar to one presented two months earlier, but had more information, and the current task was to determine how the information should be organized.

After some remarks about what other agencies had done, Ms. Parker reviewed each section of the outline with the group. The plan began with a brief history of the Accessible Transportation Program, starting with LTD's paratransit service, continuing through its various partnerships with other providers, and setting the stage for the current situation.

In response to a question from Mr. Proctor regarding inclusion of the brokerage system, Ms. Parker said that it would be included in the next sections, Existing Services and Coordination. Existing Services included transportation by transit agencies, school districts, intercity transportation providers, and other direct and indirect providers. She said the range of services provided by each category was considered, as was how the service looks today.

Regarding the Coordination section, Ms. Parker noted the categories of service, funding, capital, and other coordination, using the example of transfers from fixed route to paratransit vehicles or from Diamond Express to the LTD bus. Emerging developments in the coordination area included the Medicaid brokerage and homeless transportation initiatives.

Ms. Parker said she hoped that the draft coordinated plan could evolve into an Accessible Services Strategic Plan. She noted that while analyses of population demographics were not included, it was well-known that the population of seniors was growing.

Mr. Necker suggested that "brokerage" could go under Coordination. Ms. Parker said they were still looking at that, as well as the whole area of "needs assessment." She said staff were working on guiding principles and next steps. Ms. Parker said she wanted to convey the idea of what could be done between this day and January 31, when the grant applications were due. She noted that while the first draft was not perfect, it provided a basis for getting to "the next step."

Responding to a question from Ms. Salusso, Ms. Parker said that the first draft of the coordination plan was expected to be completed by the end of November. It then would undergo a public review, followed by a public hearing at the ATC meeting in December. The final plan was due in March 2007, but staff hoped to have a final draft that defined projects and priorities in time for the submission of the grant application in late January. Ms. Parker reported that LTD staff had applied for planning funding and were writing an RFP for a consultant to work on finalizing the plan. If the funds were approved, the consultant would take the plan to the next stage, but it would not be completed in time for the current grant cycle.

Ms. Salusso asked if the coordinated plan could use data from another agency, like the United Way. Ms. Watchie said the United Way had some preliminary data, but it did not have the depth needed for the plan. Ms. Parker said that if the United Way plan showed community priorities, LTD could reference that plan. Mr. Proctor noted that the coordination plan would be more of a needs assessment than a plan, and that the actual plan, which could reference the United Way data, would be ready for the 2008 grant cycle.

There was some discussion about an opportunity to put plan-specific questions in the United Way data collection process, Ms. Watchie pointed out that the draft coordination plan should include the public process to date. She suggested that it could be included between Sections 3 and 4, or could be a part of the assessment section and how the qualitative information on unmet needs came about. Ms. Salusso agreed that public process should be part of Assessment, then recommended that "Emerging Developments" should be Section 5, moving Strategic Plan to Section 6.

Following some discussion about the structure of the outline, Ms. Parker explained that "direct and indirect transportation providers" included taxis, shuttles, and other means of connecting people to transportation whether they paid for it or not. She also explained some of the nuances of intercity service and how that service was defined by the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Ms. Parker said there would be a draft document for the committee to review in late November.

Ms. Parker referred the group to the Program Priorities Review memo in the meeting packet. She reminded the committee members that the priorities discussed at the March 2005 meeting were the basis of the plan, and that those priorities had been aligned with funding strategies. She noted that the committee's actual priorities might differ, but the ones listed were in line with the priorities that were set by the state for this grant cycle. Priorities included vehicle

preservation, rural community transportation, fleet maintenance and community transit.

Ms. Parker said the plan was to review the priorities to ensure that they still fit the committee's goals for funding and for the draft Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan.

Regarding one of the goals listed, Mr. Necker asked what the difference was between "demand-responsive" and "real time" transportation services. Ms. Parker said "demand-responsive" referred to dial-a-ride programs, where people typically had to make reservations according to a prescribed timeline, whereas "real time" referred to services, such as taxi's, that responded immediately to a request for a ride.

Ms. Parker read aloud the Public Transit Division's list of goals for the 2007-2009 Discretionary Grant Solicitation. She said the State had aligned its priorities with the rules of the various funds that they had available to distribute, whereas the ATC would determine community needs, and then determine if those needs fit into the funding categories.

Mr. Proctor noted that there seemed to be two different purposes for priorities, one that would fit the funding and one that fit community need. He suggested that the coordinated plan should take a step further to address community issues, e.g., homeless transportation, and to develop new resources.

In response to Mr. Necker's question, Ms. Parker said that "transportation services where service is not yet available" generally referred to rural areas, and noted that adding services where there were none could take priority over enhancing existing services. She said that where the state's concept of demand response focused on the elderly and disabled, LTD sought to coordinate those with the general public rides to expand the dollars and open the resource to more groups, including people with low-income.

Ms. Parker said LTD and Lane County already did a high level of coordination, but was it the right coordination, and was it a priority to maintain the existing levels of coordination. She cautioned against funding new projects at the expense of maintaining a successful program over time.

Ms. Watchie noted that priorities 1, 2, and 3 of the March 2005 priorities involved maintaining existing services, and number 4 concerned enhancing services. She suggested having a subset of priorities under number 4.

Ms. Salusso said that South Lane Wheels had a deviated-route transportation program serving homeless youth that could be modified to include other groups.

Ms. Parker said the goals of the Public Transit Division may not specifically reflect the ATC's priorities, since they were more global in scope and were based on funding criteria. She stated that service gaps had been identified in the June coordination workshop and in conversations with case managers and others. She again emphasized that the ATC needed to determine its own priorities.

Ms. Parker said Lane County would be applying for a number of things that would move the Medicaid brokerage along, noting that it was a huge coordination effort and a statewide project. She told the group that TriMet's Elderly and Disabled plan referenced LTD's coordination brokerage model and said that TriMet was waiting to see what LTD would do with the program.

Ms. Parker noted that the brokerage **was** coordination, and said it was hoped that coordination would lead to more service efficiency. She said the practice over the last 20 years had been to use resources effectively, but not everyone liked the "coordinated model" because individual providers could lose autonomy. She provided the example of taxi drivers who did not like the Medicaid brokerage because business would be steered away from taxis to RideSource or South Lane Wheels. She added that creating service efficiency with existing resources was a high priority, a concept that could be placed at the top of the list.

Mr. Proctor said there might be some differentiation between priorities and principles. He suggested that there be overarching principles so that projects could first be assessed by principle, then by priority. Ms. Parker agreed, noting that "Guiding Principles" was the first subheading under the coordinated plan's Section 4 – Assessments.

Ms. Salusso raised the point that private service providers allowed the community to have resources available during off hours, and that perhaps private providers should have a "voice at the table." Ms. Parker said it was important that the plan's goals and tenets be clear enough to give providers enough information to determine if their proposed project would fit into the funding priorities.

Regarding vehicle replacement and maintenance, several members agreed that these were high priorities. Mr. Proctor noted that maintenance allowed vehicles to last longer. Mr. Kleger said maintenance was critical, and suggested that each time a vehicle needed to be replaced; there should be an assessment of whether the vehicle was meeting current needs. He said demands and expectations

could shift, and that such a review would make it clear to those looking at LTD's practices that these issues were being reviewed.

Ms. Salusso asked if "Fleet Maintenance" should be under "Vehicle Preservation," or if it carried more weight as a separate item. Ms. Parker said it was up to the committee, and pointed out that "Vehicle Preservation" referred to vehicles operated within a coordinated network. Mr. Kleger said that most funding agencies wanted maintenance expenses to be accounted for separately from capital expenditures (replacement). He thought it would be better to keep maintenance as a separate category in the plan so as to be able to respond to funding agencies' preferences.

Mr. Proctor said that the way it was now demonstrated that maintenance was a priority, even for vehicles that were not part of a coordinated transportation effort. Ms. Parker noted that preventive maintenance was tied to vehicles under 5311 funding, and it would be hard to separate vehicles into different categories. She said the plan seemed to focus on maintaining the current effort, and that in the next round, the committee could evaluate the effort and decide what to continue. She noted that that degree of evaluation and innovation was about as far as staff would be able to get in the next six weeks before the grant application was due.

As an example of a creative project, Ms. Parker suggested that typically, vanpool vehicles were not in use during the day, and utilizing those vehicles as dial-a-ride vehicles while they were not in use would be considered creative. She asked the group to look at maintenance of effort, then at target populations, then at gaps in service to come up with more creative projects as ways to compete for available funds.

Ms. Salusso asked if agencies that were already providing a particular service could get funds for the existing service. Ms. Parker said that resources already being used could be used to pull in matching resources, and that the first priority should be to maintain existing services.

Ms. Watchie suggested that the plan list guiding principles – service efficiency with existing resources and coordination – then have priorities and strategies that adhere to the principles under those, followed by a list of items to be funded. Ms. Parker said she needed a plan that people could respond to, and she would come to the next meeting with a draft for discussion.

Mr. Kleger recommended including "enhancement of service" in the list. He said there were not many opportunities to do so, but that it would be politically valuable to enhance some services. Ms. Parker provided the example of Florence, which added service hours to the Rhody Express schedule, resulting in more general public riders. She noted that there was either \$2 million or \$4

million available for “innovations” projects. The state would decide whether projects fit in the innovations category, but Ms. Parker thought that the Medicare brokerage would be a candidate.

Mr. Adams noticed that there did not seem to be much about new vehicles in the plan, noting that as demand grew, it might be necessary to expand fleets to provide the same amount of service. Ms. Parker said they might want to look at responding to growth in Emerging Developments, and asked where it should be in the priority list. She observed that cost of living, replacement of vehicles, and meeting increased demand all constituted maintenance of effort, and they did not want to erode service.

There was some discussion regarding geographic gaps in service, equity in use of funds, and the merits of expanding existing service or establishing rural service.

Ms. Parker concluded by saying she would focus on maintenance of effort and meeting demand for current service, look at the populations being served and the “gap analysis” discussed to date, and develop a draft that the group could respond to.

ADA JEOPARDY

Ms. Hekimoglu distributed game pieces to the members while Ms. Parker explained that Accessible Services was presenting the ADA Jeopardy game in fall training, which was annual training for all LTD bus operators. The purpose of ADA Jeopardy was to test ADA-related knowledge and refresh that knowledge in a fun way. The training was presented to about six employees at a time and took about 13 minutes, and coffee coupons were given to high scorers and all participants. Ms. Hekimoglu explained the rules, which were similar to the TV game show, *Jeopardy*. The group then participated in a demonstration of the game.

PROGRAM AND PROJECT UPDATES

a) Lane Transit District

Ms. Parker announced that she attended the Oregon Transportation Association annual conference in Seaside, commenting that it was a good conference that featured a cost allocation workshop.

LTD had two visitors from Easter Seals Project Action in Washington, D.C., who were particularly interested in accessibility in bus rapid transit. They were given tours of the stations, RideSource, and other areas of interest. Ms. Parker said

that she had spoken about LTD programs in her quarterly meetings with the Project Action people, but they did not get the “dynamic nature” of the program until they saw it in person. Ms. Parker also showed a report produced by Easter Seals called “Transportation Services for People with Disabilities,” that featured LTD in many of the examples in the booklet.

Ms. Parker said LTD was working on the automated stop announcements, which were having some problems. She explained that they were not controlled by GPS, but were geared to distance traveled. Thus, any deviation (around construction, for example) threw off the timing of the announcements. After some comments and examples of the problem provided by the group members, Ms. Parker described the process by which the issue would be addressed.

b) South Lane Wheels – Cottage Grove

Ms. Salusso reported that the deviated route model was halfway through its fourth month and was working very well. Based on increasing usage, the trial period had been extended to six-months, with some minor schedule changes.

Ms. Salusso said she would be going to the 17th National Rural and Intercity Transit conference in Washington, noting that most of the conference topics were relevant to issues in this area.

Ms. Salusso said that “Life Sustaining” trips had increased significantly, and that hours had been expanded to accommodate the increase. South Lane Wheels was looking at changing its service delivery due to the huge demand on time and fuel. Speaking to Ms. Salusso’s mention of the SLW vans being able to hold only one wheelchair, Ms. Parker asked if the next van purchase should be reconfigured to accommodate at least three chairs. Ms. Salusso concurred, and said that program delivery would continue to be reviewed.

c) Rhody Express – Florence

Ms. Sirmans reported that hours for the Rhody Express had been extended, and the response had been increased ridership.

d) Diamond Express – Oakridge

Ms. Goddard said the Diamond Express was getting busier, but that riders needed to learn that the bus traveled according to the clock on the bus, not on the riders’ clocks or the radio’s clock. Upon learning that the bus’s clock was “just a regular clock,” Ms. Mulcahy suggested using a clock that would be updated by satellite, similar to clocks on cell phones.

Ms. Goddard also reported that a local rehab agency had asked for brochures and wanted to coordinate some training.

e) RideSource – Eugene / Springfield

Mr. Adams reported that RideSource continued to experience an increase in demand, and there appeared to be more travel related to dialysis treatments, even late at night. He said users were generally satisfied with service, but the “hour window” was the biggest cause for complaint.

NEXT MEETING

After general discussion about the best time for the next two meetings, it was agreed that November 14 and December 12 would be best. Ms. Hekimoglu said she would send an email to the members to see if there would be a quorum for the meetings. If not, she will poll the members to determine alternative dates.

Mr. Necker adjourned the meeting at 12:01 pm.

(Recorded by Bernie Burson)