

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 16, 2007
10 a.m. – Noon
Lane Transit District
3500 East 17th Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Necker, Chair	Kay Metzger
Ann Angvick	Bob Proctor
Kay Christopher	

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Mary Otten

MEMBERS ABSENT:

L. M. Reese, Vice Chair	Kristine Sirmans
Jan Aho	Evan Sloan
Aline Goddard	Mark Phinney
Hugh Massengill	Scott Whetham
Tara Sue Salusso	

OTHERS PRESENT:

David Braunschweiger
Glen Svendsen

STAFF:

Terry Parker
Rand Stamm
Susan Hekimoglu

1. Introductions

Mr. Necker called the meeting to order. Those present introduced themselves.

2. Announcements and Agenda Review

Ms. Parker provided a formal introduction of Mr. Stamm, Human Services Transportation Specialist, who was new to the LTD Accessible Services program staff. She described his many areas of expertise and experience in the transportation field.

3. Minutes Approval – December 19, 2006

Mr. Necker tabled the approval of the minutes, as there was not a quorum due to the inclement weather.

4. ODOT Discretionary Grant Application

Ms. Parker said that, despite the lack of a quorum, the group needed to get as much testimony during the meeting as possible, as the LTD Board would be meeting the next night to discuss the issue, and the January 31, grant application deadline was quickly approaching. She suggested that perhaps the group could meet again when the weather was better, later in the week.

Mr. Necker asked if, since the Board had already approved the priority of the grants, they would be amenable to any suggested changes. Ms. Parker replied that they might make suggestions based on testimony received, noting that some applicants would be called and asked to make their comments by telephone.

Applicant Comment Period

Glen Svendsen, City of Eugene Facility Management Division, said his office was responsible for the physical development of the Eugene Depot area. He said the City needed to be more integrated with the Accessibility Committee and the Lane Coordinated Plan because they had substantial improvements planned for the depot area, which would become a transportation node connecting bus, transit, and rail.

Ms. Parker said that although the Coordinated Plan was a new requirement with a short time frame and without resources to complete, the good part was that it brought new partners to the table. She mentioned the Human Rights Commission's Accessibility Committee as a potential resource for City staff.

Ms. Parker said the Depot project did not meet the Group 2 criteria, but was a Group 3 project due to its inter-city connectivity.

Kay Metzger, with Senior & Disabled Services, said they had applied under the Mobility Management category, particularly to do ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and paratransit assessments and consultation with people using special transportation. She described the application as a good partnership with LTD, noting that they already had staff connected with the subject populations. Ms. Metzger said the grant would allow them to expand their consultations (eligibility assessments for RideSource) and would allow separation of eligibility determination and service provision. She noted that it would provide a "one-stop shopping" concept, in that someone ineligible for a Medicaid ride could be connected to other transportation options.

In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Ms. Parker explained that the aforementioned proposal represented a departure from having the provider do the assessment, noting that increased ridership could lead to increased conflict of interest. She added that the program was like "transportation case management," providing a service that would help users navigate many different transportation options.

A call was placed to Jan Aho of the Pearl Buck Center. She provided some background about the Center's relationship with RideSource and the lack of reimbursement for transportation costs. She said the proposal would allow RideSource to be fully funded for the service that they provide to the Center. Pearl Buck Center would provide the match for the grant, which was an amount less than they currently were paying for transportation. The grant also would mean that LTD would not have to help subsidize the program, as they had in the past.

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Ms. Parker clarified that the \$65,000 grant covered a two-year time period. Ms. Aho thanked the committee for their help.

A call was placed to Tara Salusso, Director of South Lane Wheels, who was reached at her home. She said a lot of work had gone into the proposals, and she was glad that most had been approved. She expressed surprise that the proposal for a Rural Services Transit Marketing Coordinator position was not approved, as it was written pursuant to Ms. Palmateer's recommendation. Regarding the other rejected proposal, she hoped to have a discussion about how to achieve reasonable salaries for staff.

Ms. Parker explained that the first proposal was counter to the requirement of "no direct service." She agreed that suitable salaries were an important issue, but were more related to a budget discussion than to a two-year grant cycle. Ms. Salusso said bringing it to a budget level meant a reduction of service delivery in order to have staff salaries at levels comparable to parallel organizations. She noted that it was hard to cut services where the need was greater than the services available.

Ms. Parker reported that Special Mobility Services was not planning to comment.

Mr. Svendsen left the meeting at 10:48 a.m.

Discretionary Grant Review and Recommendation

Mr. Necker said he would speak for the committee and, at Ms. Metzger's request, described the grant review process. He said they reviewed preliminary applications from all agencies that wanted to apply after placing them in appropriate groups. Ms. Parker added that, for applications that had to be ranked, the committee went back to the coordinated plan priorities. Maintenance of effort was the highest priority; second priority was enhancements without having to build new infrastructure; and third priority was innovative or creative projects. Ms. Parker said that several projects that had potential for statewide applicability could have another opportunity that some of the smaller projects did not have, that is, also being considered as "Innovations."

Mr. Proctor said that much of the time during the two review meetings was spent studying all the variables and possibilities, then the members made the rankings as best they could. Mr. Necker said the review committee had put the projects on the board, added each member's individual rankings for each project, and then added those numbers to get an overall ranking. Ms. Parker said that another factor was which projects had the best chance of receiving funding; she provided some examples.

In response to a question from Ms. Otten, Ms. Parker said that mobility management guidelines were "non-operating projects that support coordination" and that paying a staff person to market an operation did not fit in that category. She provided other reasons why the project in question was not suitable for this grant funding.

Ms. Angvik asked why RideSource was replacing so many vehicles. Ms. Parker replied that it was because they were now on a two-year cycle and because the increased service demand caused vehicles to reach their mileage threshold more quickly. She added that RideSource also needed new expansion vehicles to cope with increased demand.

Ms. Parker spoke about item ranked number ten on the list, crisis intervention transportation through the CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) program, an amalgamation of three White Bird projects that were similar in nature. She noted that the

CAHOOTS vans that picked up people on the street and took them to treatment or detox centers seemed more a part of public safety for the City of Eugene, and provided a cost savings for the City in that those transported by the vans did not have to be picked up by police officers and run through the booking process. The committee felt that it was a stretch to call the CAHOOTS van service "public transit" and Ms. Parker said they would need more information about that project before moving it forward.

After some discussion about why the City of Eugene was not providing more funds for White Bird, Mr. Necker asked if ranking their project last would send a message to the City. Ms. Parker said it would be a message to White Bird, and that they could in turn request funds from the City of Eugene.

As there was no more discussion about the discretionary grants, Ms. Parker suggested that since there was no quorum and the Board was meeting the next evening, they could have the executive committee forward the recommendations of the review committee to the Board. Ms. Hekimoglu observed that all executive committee members sat on the review committee. As the members present did not object, Mr. Necker said they would forward the recommendation to the Board "as is." Ms. Parker said they would let people know that if they had any additional comments to make, they could address them to the LTD Board.

Program Updates

Lane Transit District

Ms. Hekimoglu said they had received talking points from Kelly Brooks from the Ulum Group regarding lobbying for an increase in the cigarette tax for STF (Special Transportation Funds) funding. For those members who gave permission, Ms. Hekimoglu provided their contact information to Ms. Brooks in the event of an urgent need to reach legislators. Ms. Brooks would call or email the members to let them know when to contact legislators.

Diamond Express/Oakridge

Mr. Braunschweiger described various local weather conditions and reported that on the preceding Friday, the Diamond Express trips for the morning and midday had been canceled, as well as the 4:00 p.m. trip, noting that it was very icy on Highway 58 throughout Oakridge. The media were notified so that word got out about the cancellations.

RideSource/Eugene, Springfield

Mr. Braunschweiger said that with the inclement weather, RideSource had not had to cancel many trips, but had 260 cancellations on the preceding Thursday, which was two-thirds of their normal volume, and 120 cancellations on Friday. He noted that the 4J school districts had closed on those days, as had Lane Community College. There were no accidents or injuries reported locally, but several were reported in Portland and on the I-5 corridor.

Mr. Braunschweiger said there had been a holiday lull in service requests, but they were getting back up to speed. They were looking forward to receiving the new vehicles, some of which would arrive in March. Because of increased demand, RideSource has had to shuffle large and small vehicles to meet demand. He added that they were up around 800,000 miles per year for last year, and it was projected to reach one million miles per year by the time the new vehicles arrived.

Mr. Necker asked if Senior and Disabled Services already had taken over eligibility determination. Ms. Parker said it was being planned, and the grant application was the first step. It had been discussed with administrative staff, but not yet with line staff. Ms. Parker said that driver input could be valuable for determining eligibility.

Lane Transit District

Ms. Parker reported that the EmX system officially had started on Sunday, January 14, with a bus packed with dignitaries for a ribbon-cutting ceremony. LTD also had a briefing with the head of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), James Simpson, and staff were able to speak to the accessibility features of EmX and talk about the need for FTA to work with LTD in terms of accessibility. She felt the meeting was very successful.

Ms. Parker said there were still some accessibility issues to work on with EmX. The forward-facing bay was not in its final configuration because New Flyer had not sent the poles for aisle-side securement. Also, not all vehicles had the floor decal to assist wheelchair riders in lining up in the bay. Addressing Ms. Otten, Ms. Parker said that the Insight Workgroup would be consulted about the location of the buttons for access to the actuated pedestrian signals, among other things.

Ms. Christopher said she drove the #11 bus and observed that it seemed as if people had to walk a long way to get from the EmX to the #11 (in Springfield). She explained that the EmX was parking at the event shuttle area because there was another EmX already in the bay. Ms. Parker said the matter would be checked with Operations. Ms. Christopher left the meeting at 11:21 a.m., as she was needed in Operations.

Mr. Necker brought up the issue of the different-colored pavers at the Springfield station. Ms. Parker said there had been a number of problems with ordering pavers. Ms. Hekimoglu said the Insight Workgroup would be reconvened to review crosswalk issues and several other accessible issues.

Mr. Proctor said he rode the EmX bus the night before and noticed that there were still problems with the community knowing about the dedicated bus lane. He said buses were having to make sudden stops, creating problems for people with bicycles or wheelchairs. Ms. Parker said she would check in with Scott Whetham, who was providing the training for people who used mobility devices. She said the rear-facing bay sat in a bit of a well, which helped protect mobility devices from sudden movements. She was more concerned about the forward-facing bay, which was angled a little downhill. If securements were not tight, it could be a concern.

There was further discussion about cars and the bus lanes, and problems created by drivers who did not stop behind stop lines. Ms. Parker compared the "public awareness" issue to that of the new checkout system at the library when it first opened. There were problems at the beginning, but as people became familiar with it, the problems ceased to exist.

Ms. Otten referenced a prior set of minutes wherein she had read that EmX operators did not want announcements at all the stops. Ms. Parker explained that there were announcements at all stops, but the EmX buses did not stop at the curbside stops in Glenwood. She said that the policy could change with redevelopment. Ms. Hekimoglu found the referenced portion of the minutes, which said, "EmX vehicle operators had requested no announcements when approaching a station; instead a chime will indicate exit to the left or right." Ms. Otten did not like this idea.

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Ms. Parker explained that currently, the announcement said, "Approaching, approaching," accompanied by a short tune. There was not time for that sequence, so they were taking a different tack to make sure that the timing was appropriate to the stop. Ms. Parker said the "approaching, approaching" became annoying, so the thought was to use the chime to get people's attention. Ms. Otten was assured that the name of the station would still be announced.

Ms. Metzger said there were a few stops where someone had to push a button to make the bus stop, and that it could be hard to get used to. She observed that some riders might not know that they needed to push the button to make the bus stop at particular stops since it stopped at other stops automatically. Ms. Parker said that they had advocated consistency, but it was decided to make the Glenwood stops request-only. Mr. Necker noted that he had had to push the button to get the bus to make the stop that allowed him to get to this meeting. Ms. Parker said she would ask for feedback from operators to see how many people missed the first stop in Glenwood.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for February 20, 2007.

Mr. Necker adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

(Recorded by Bernie Burson, City of Eugene)