

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Present: Hugh Massengill, Chair, Gail Lundeen, Aline Goddard, Bill Morganti, Stefan Kwiatkowski, Mike Cetto, Eleanor Mulder, Annie Saville, Ruth Linoz, Renee' Van Norman, Ed Necker

Community Representatives Present: Sheila Thomas

Others Present: Debbie Bonds, Captioner, April Georgi, Fred Stoffer

Staff: Terry Parker, Susan Hekimoglu

Absent: Misty Brazell, Mary Otten, Vice Chair, Kay Metzger, Scott Whetham

**I. Call to order:** Mr. Massengill called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order at 10:03 a.m.

**II. Introductions, Announcements, Agenda Review:** Those present introduced themselves. Mr. Cetto said he hoped that LTD would serve more of Lane County instead of just the metro area, particularly the coast and Veneta. He believed that three buses daily to Veneta was inadequate coverage. Ms. Parker added discussion about announcements relating to EmX and fixed route under agenda item VII. I) Other.

**III. Audience Participation:** There were no requests to speak by members of the public.

**IV. Minutes Approval, September 20, 2011:** Mr. Morganti noted that the minutes did not include the presenters in the section listing those present at the meeting. Ms. Hekimoglu explained that people who came to the meeting to present specific items but were not regular attendees were introduced in the appropriate place in the minutes and not listed among those who attended the entire meeting. Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Ms. Lundeen, to approve the minutes of the September 20, 2011, meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Massengill observed that his comments had been well articulated in the minutes and Ms. Parker expressed her appreciation for the thoroughness of the September minutes.

**V. Accessible Services Work Plan and ATC Meeting Schedule for FY 2011-2012:** During the summer months, Accessible Services staff spent time updating the annual work plan for the coming year. Ms. Parker reviewed a list of the major projects for this Fiscal Year.

RideSource Call Center Systems Update: LTD was in the process of preparing to upgrade the RideSource Call Center's 25-year old communication and IT systems with current technology. Both the database software and telephone systems needed to be replaced for effective operations and continuity to (1) ensure seamless interaction with modern software technologies, (2) allow for growth and adding new services, and (3) take into account significant data security needs for privacy and asset protection. This project was on-going from last year. A consultant had been brought in to evaluate the Call Center business process in order to facilitate a recommendation. The consultant would assist LTD with writing a Request for Proposals and vendor selection.

Wheelchair Securement: The securement system used on fixed-route buses was evaluated this past year with an eye to improving operator safety and eliminating risk of accidents that could cause injury to passengers or operators, and secondarily, could damage equipment. Securement equipment was reviewed for consistent placement on vehicles. Dr. Joe Zaworski of Oregon State University met with staff to review optimum placement of securement straps as used by LTD. Fleet Services was working to correct placement of the securement straps for consistency throughout the fleet. In addition, LTD was receiving bids to retrofit the 6100 EmX vehicles to be like the new 9100s with two rear-facing wheelchair bays. LTD bus operators received additional training last fall on the proper body mechanics for assisting with securement and the use of the lap and shoulder belts. Window stickers were installed on vehicles to remind customers of the availability of the lap and shoulder belts. This year's focus would be on further review of securement of three-wheeled, flat floored scooters and non-traditional mobility devices.

Ms. Parker said that there was no perfect securement system available today that would guarantee no movement and also allow self-securement. The committee had been helpful in addressing the problems and recognizing that some compromise was necessary. She explained that the strap placement had changed on new buses, creating inconsistency within the bus fleet. LTD was now trying to get all straps placed at the optimum position for a three-point/two-strap system as recommended by Professor Zaworski. Four-point systems such as were used on RideSource were effective but did not allow for independent

securement by passenger s using mobility devices, significantly slowed down the securement process and called attention to the user.

Answering a question from Mr. Necker, Ms. Parker said that the optimum strap placement was (starting from the back) low to the floor so the strap could then angle upward toward the chair to align with the center of gravity for the person in the chair. Some chairs did not have anything to hook to in an optimum location. Some securement systems used buckles while others had hooks that have a ratchet and locking feature. While the ratcheting hooks worked well, the person in the chair was unable to release them, requiring operator assistance 100% of the time. Again taking more time and reducing rider independence.

Ms. Saville commented on a problem she had seen with self- securing and people trying to hurry. Many riders would ring the bell and then unfasten the securement straps before the bus came to a stop in order to not cause a delay. She said that this seemed to happen more frequently than it used to. It was disconcerting to drivers and very unsafe for passengers.

Ms. Mulder observed that the problem appeared to be unsolvable because designs of both chairs and buses would change over time and no solution would be perfect for long.

Mr. Cetto wondered if helping with securement was an example of drivers being overworked, and he related a customer's request that hand sanitizer be provided on buses. Ms. Parker responded that operators not only were required by law to assist, but also want to provide assistance to keep passengers safe.

Mr. Kwiatkowski agreed with Ms. Mulder that design changes would render any solution temporary. He also saw Ms. Saville's point and said that he only pulled the cord when the last light before his stop was green. Ms. Saville pointed out that Mr. Kwiatkowski thought things through more than the average rider.

Ms. Parker concluded that improving wheelchair securement would be an ongoing item on the project list.

EZ Access Half-Fare Program Evaluation: This project would begin in December with an evaluation of the current program that included consulting with a variety of participants to determine what improvements were needed. The goal was to improve accountability and managing the re-issue of half-fare cards.

Gas Vouchers: One of the overarching goals of the RideSource Call Center (RSCC) was to develop low-cost options for human services transportation. This project would identify programs within the RSCC that support a gas voucher (or mileage reimbursement) option. The goal was to create lower cost choices that could be used by transportation customers who had access to legally licensed and insured vehicles, but who could not afford the cost of fuel.

Mileage Reimbursement: Currently, all Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) in Lane County was coordinated through the RSCC with the exception of mileage reimbursement for those individuals covered under the Oregon Health Plan Plus (OHP+) program who had access to a vehicle and drove themselves to their covered medical appointments (or had a friend, family member, or acquaintance drive them). The Oregon Department of Human Services, Division of Medical Assistance (DMAP) would undertake a pilot project with two counties in Oregon, and staff would keep an eye on that project. The Call Center was poised and ready to adopt a mileage reimbursement program as soon as DMAP gave the go-ahead.

Regarding the last two projects listed above, Ms. Parker said that staff were looking for ways to provide more trips with limited dollars. Mileage reimbursements and gas vouchers were used in many systems as a way to reduce costs. They were not presently being handled by the Call Center, but rather through an individual's case manager, which seemed inconsistent with the coordinating function of the Call Center. As case managers arranged less transportation, they knew less about the full range of transportation options available. Ms. Parker referred to a Portland program in which people found their own volunteers who then went through training and received mileage reimbursements. She said it was an inexpensive way of getting transportation but it required some organization and oversight.

Lane Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (Lane Coordinated Plan) Update: Ms. Parker told the committee that staff would be updating the Lane Coordinated Plan. The goal was to be sure that public money was being used wisely and that the plan responded to needs within the community.

Several resources were available to provide information on transportation needs to inform the 2012 Plan update. Senior and Disabled Services recently completed a needs assessment survey that included key questions about transportation. LTD was doing an origin and destination survey that included

questions about disability for the first time in this survey's history. It would show the percentage of people with disabilities who were using services and would provide information about what those users saw as gaps in service. Ms. Parker emphasized that the survey was short to increase participation and that it would be statistically valid by hitting all routes at various times.

The transportation needs of veterans would be included in the updated Plan. LTD would convene a veterans' task group that would include representatives from several local agencies that serve veterans as well as committee members Hugh Massengill and Ed Necker.

The Lane Coordinated Plan Update would concentrate on bringing information from the 2009 Plan up to date.

ATC Meeting Schedule: Because this was not a year that Discretionary Grant applications would be submitted or reviewed (it was the middle of the two year cycle) staff did not anticipate more than six ATC meetings as follows:

September 20, 2011: Program and Project Updates

October 18, 2011: Coordinated Plan Update Work Group

January 17, 2012: *Draft* Coordinated Plan Update

March 20, 2012: Public Comment - Coordinated Plan Update / STF Budget Review

April 17, 2012: STF Budget Approval

June 19, 2012: Election of Officers / Membership Appointments

Ms. Parker pointed out that while there was little work for the committee during the next couple of months, beginning in January activity would pick up and the committee would be busy. She added that small work groups may be convened as other items came up or that additional meetings could be scheduled as needed. As an example of work that should be done by subgroups of the committee, she referred to a new crosswalk system being tested at 13<sup>th</sup> and Alder and suggested that Mr. Cetto and other people with visual disabilities should check it out.

Ms. Parker asked the committee to e-mail or call her with additional ideas or suggestions about the work plan.

Mr. Cetto inquired whether the signals had been installed on Alder Street.

Ms. Hekimoglu responded that 13<sup>th</sup> and Alder had always been signaled but that

the crossing process had changed. Ms. Parker clarified that a new phasing system was being tested in which all traffic stopped while pedestrians crossed. When all traffic was stopped, pedestrians were crossing diagonally even though that was not being promoted as an option. Ms. Hekimoglu said that LTD volunteers had been at the site to provide directions to people. She said that she could provide more information.

Ms. Saville noted that this was an intersection of two one-way streets. Ms. Parker added that the signal had three phases: one allowed traffic to proceed on Alder, one allowed vehicles on 13th to move, and the third allowed all pedestrians to cross. Because people with visual impairments typically relied on the sound of parallel traffic to know when to cross, this arrangement could be confusing.

Mr. Kwiatkowski observed that Alder was a two-way street for bicycles, which added another complication to the system being tested.

Mr. Massengill remarked on the risk of being a pedestrian in downtown Eugene. Mr. Necker replied that pedestrian safety was a priority of the Senior and Disabled Services Advocacy Committee, which met the second Friday of the month at the Senior and Disabled Services office downtown. Ms. Parker appreciated these comments and said that the City of Eugene was presently reviewing its bicycle and pedestrian plan and needed input from people with disabilities. She said there was no mention of pedestrian and bicycle transfers to transit or of the connectivity between pedestrians, bicycles, and transit in the draft plan.

Mr. Kwiatkowski reported that there were two bus stops on the south side of the intersection of Coburg Road and MLK Boulevard but there was a sign indicating that the crosswalk between them was closed, meaning pedestrians attempting to go from one stop to the other had to go all the way around the intersection through three lights to get to the other stop. Ms. Saville added that drivers have to be especially alert at that intersection.

Mr. Massengill said that in such situations, pedestrians often put themselves at risk and assume that cars won't hit them when they cross where it makes sense instead of going around.

Ms. Linoz said that she had attended the monthly meetings of the bike-pedestrian group (on a Thursday evening) at the Atrium. She said many people

operated on the assumption that paved roads took care of the vehicles and advocacy was only needed for pedestrians and bicycles, resulting in a significant absence of the connective process familiar to the ATC.

Mr. Morganti indicated that like Mr. Massengill, he would like to serve on a pedestrian safety committee. Ms. Parker said that there were many opportunities to provide input on pedestrian safety issues. Mr. Massengill expressed his gratitude for Eugene signals that had audible timers.

**VI. Coordinated Plan:** Ms. Parker asked for volunteers to serve on a work group that would meet once or twice before January to review the draft Coordinated Plan. Mr. Morganti, Mr. Massengill, and Ms. Lundeen volunteered. Ms. Mulder also agreed to serve if the meetings were held downtown.

**VII. Program Updates:** Chair report, Mr. Massengill reported that he would turn 65 in a couple of weeks and would begin retiring from his board and commission duties. He expected to conclude his service on the ATC at the end of June.

Lane Transit District: The LTD Board met in regular session on Wednesday, September 21, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. Items for action included approval of an update to the fare policy, which included some minor editorial changes and the addition of language regarding anti-discrimination analysis (under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act) that the Federal Transit Administration requested be part of the District's Fare Policy. The Board voted to join the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Sustainability Commitment. By becoming a signatory of this commitment, LTD could receive recognition for these efforts and use this participation as impetus to focus on making further progress in sustainability in all areas of the organization. The Board also adopted the final draft of the new LTD Salaried Employees' Retirement Plan, which would become effective for all administrative employees hired on or after January 1, 2012.

Accessible Services responded to the Federal Transit Administration's grant solicitation under the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative. Grants must 1) Support the creation or expansion of community-based "one-call" transportation centers and mobility management strategies to include veteran and military family-directed resources; and 2) Target outreach efforts to the military and veteran communities through veterans service organizations

and military family support organizations. LTD's project would replace outdated systems within the RideSource Call Center.

Ms. Parker emphasized that this grant was very specific to call centers and did not provide funding to add services for veterans. It tied in well with the work plan item to update software and the telephone system for the call center. She predicted that there was a good chance of success with this grant application and said that staff would know the outcome by the beginning of the year.

Ms. Parker had presided over the fall meeting of Easter Seals ProjectACTION National Steering Committee (NSC) held in conjunction with the American Public Transit Association's (APTA) Annual Meeting in New Orleans. NSC members attended APTA committee meetings on the Americans with Disabilities Act, older adult transportation, mobility management, and access.

Ms. Parker informed the committee that APTA's agenda was about public transportation and not the disability aspect of it. The co-location of the two conferences was an opportunity to get more people with disabilities into the APTA committee meetings and it had been a productive experience. She said that people in large public transit environments were familiar with mobility management and coordination and used appropriate language when discussing people with disabilities and their needs, which would not have been the case ten years earlier. The ADA had forced large transit systems to integrate people with disabilities into their systems instead of relegating them to separate systems, so there had been a definite shift in the thinking within these organizations over the past 20 years. Ms. Parker said that she had only encountered one conference presenter who was an exception to this general cultural shift.

Mr. Massengill wondered how large public transit systems in cities like New York and New Orleans differed from that in Eugene. Ms. Parker responded by saying that large cities on the west coast tended to be more progressive and more accessible than those on the eastern seaboard. She conjectured that the age of some eastern cities could contribute to them being less accessible, as illustrated by the cobblestoned streets of Boston. There was more transit in New York because so many people did not own cars. She reported that there were no accessible taxi cabs in Washington DC until about two years ago. The entire transit system in New Orleans was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Presently its historic street lines were not accessible but others were and in general New Orleans had good public transit.



Ms. Parker continued by saying that infrastructure issues were big issues in many cities. In those with older light rail systems, it was difficult to retrofit stations for level boarding and many cities had not done that. In addition, elevators and escalators often were not functioning and many were hidden in remote and scary locations within the stations.

Ms. Mulder observed that large cities such as Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, and New York ran public transit to their airports while Eugene did not.

Mr. Kwiatkowski told about being with his brother on an EmX bus behind another EmX that had been involved in an accident the previous day. Their bus was transporting passengers from the earlier bus and was extremely crowded by Eugene standards. His brother had remarked that the bus was not packed compared to buses in Montreal and Toronto.

Ms. Parker reported that the new 40-foot buses had a new look around the ADA seating area at the front of the bus. The aisle-facing seats and the first row of forward-facing seats had the ADA insignia printed into the seat fabric and there was new more identifiable marking on the floor. The aisle space between the modesty panels behind the wheelchair securement bays also was widened slightly to allow easier access to the forward-facing seating. Lastly, there was additional leg room and an aisle-facing jump seat located in front of the first row of forward-facing seats to allow space for a walker, for example. Committee members were invited to view the new look following the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

Ms. Parker currently chaired the Oregon Department of Transportation's Public Transit Advisory Committee. She was serving on a work group of the Oregon Public Transit Division that was formed to evaluate the formula used to distribute funding for Federal 5311 Small City/Rural Service programs. The group would make policy recommendations. Its first meeting was held in Salem on October 17<sup>th</sup>.

Another work group Ms. Parker served on was the statewide coordination work group which would meet later in the week for the first time. It would look at the question of coordination and whether it worked, whether it saved or cost money, and what level of benefit was being derived from it.

RideSource Call Center: Mr. Stoffer reported that Call Center demand continued to increase. Interested members could get more details by requesting a packet of information from Ms. Hekimoglu. He said that Ms. Lyon and Mr.

Stamm were in Salem for the quarterly brokerage managers meeting whose agenda included items on medical marijuana dispensary transportation and weapons on vehicles.

Mr. Stoffer mentioned the use of subcontractors for ADA services. They were working with two transportation providers and soon would be working with three. There were differences in the business models among RideSource, the Call Center, and other providers. For example, much of the scheduling for RideSource was done at the end of the day and schedules were issued after 7:00 p.m. Most taxi providers shut down their scheduling departments closer to 6:00 p.m., so did not evaluate the rides until the next morning and would often send some of them back to RideSource because there were not enough drivers. Mr. Stoffer said that staff were seeking better ways to coordinate the process and make it work more efficiently because the number of referrals was growing. The largest number of referrals in a single day had been 50 rides.

Answering a question from Mr. Morganti about how medical marijuana had become a transit issue, Mr. Stoffer said that Rogue Valley Transit had raised it as an issue because they were experiencing a demand for that service. He explained that Medicaid only paid for transportation to Medicaid-eligible services and medical marijuana was not one of those services. Ms. Parker added that there had been an issue with a passenger using medication while in a vehicle.

RideSource ADA paratransit: Mr. Stoffer reported that all the new vehicles except one had arrived and they were being put into service as they were inspected and cleared.

Ms. Parker added that a couple of rural service “state of good repair” vehicles had been funded and would be ordered as soon as signed agreements were received.

South Lane County (Cottage Grove): Ms. Linoz reported that a new vehicle had arrived the previous day. It had a new boarding lift that was closer to the front door and had more variable space inside.

West Lane County (Florence): No one from Florence was present. Ms. Hekimoglu was attending meetings of the Florence Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), which currently was developing a Long-range Transportation Systems Plan. She reported that the TAC was conducting a comprehensive review of the road network, looking at pedestrian access and transit. All cities in

Lane County were updating their comprehensive transportation plans as funding was available. Ms. Parker said that Florence had received a grant for this work.

Mr. Kwiatkowski noted that LTD was a district within Lane County but its service area did not extend to all of Lane County. Ms. Parker provided some historical perspective by saying that LTD had authority to levy a business payroll tax, and when LTD began, communities that agreed to the payroll tax became part of the district and those that did not were outside the district. Oakridge and Florence declined, while McKenzie Bridge agreed, for example. More recently, on its second vote on the matter, the citizens of Cottage Grove had elected to come into the district in the late 1990s.

Ms. Parker added that the RideSource boundary was within the LTD boundary and defined by forming a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile circle around the metro area bus routes. Because LTD receives funding from the special transportation fund that covers all of Lane County, the ATC was unique in its ability to make decisions about programs and service in areas that lie within the County but outside LTD's district boundary.

East Lane County (Oakridge): Ms. Goddard said that the City of Oakridge's dire financial situation caused her to check to see whether the lights were still on as she approached her office each morning. She reported problems with several vehicles in the Oakridge fleet, including an accident that occurred between the Diamond Express vehicle and an LTD bus, and a dead battery on the smaller Diamond Express bus that very morning.

Referring to the earlier mention of weapons on buses, Ms. Goddard had received a phone call from someone who reported leaving his switchblade and sun glasses on the bus. The sunglasses had been found but the switchblade was never located.

Ms. Hekimoglu said that Oakridge was scheduled to receive some new vehicles, as were the City of Eugene, South Lane Wheels, and Willamalane.

White Bird Clinic: Ms. Georgi reported that White Bird was doing well with the funding it had received. Presently, those who were not able to ride the bus due to their disability were being provided with two rides per month to access critical needs and necessary services. Because there typically was an increase in the manifestation of mental illness during the holiday season, those rides may be increased to four per month to meet seasonal needs. Currently between 100

and 150 rides per month were provided for medical or social service appointments or for such things as shopping. Last year White Bird had depleted its funds at the beginning of June but staff hoped to maintain services with its current funding until July 2012.

Responding to a question from Ms. Parker, Ms. Georgi said that demand was increasing, driving the effort to develop a system to ensure that funding was sustainable throughout the year. Ms. Parker suggested that if trips could be grouped it might be possible to run them through the call center. Ms. Georgi said that White Bird worked with the Eugene Mission to provide some carpooling rides for people who needed transportation to the White Bird Clinic in the mornings. Ms. Parker hoped to discuss this further with Ms. Georgi.

Other: At this point, Ms. Parker brought up the issue of announcements on buses. The problem was illustrated by Ms. Mulder's difficulty getting off the 9:10 a.m. EmX from Eugene at the correct Glenwood stop that morning. While all the EmX stops from downtown Eugene to Glenwood were automatic stops, in Glenwood they became curbside stops that required pressing the stop request button. The announcement of that requirement did not come on until the bus reached a stop and by the time the button was activated it was too late to disembark. Ms. Parker thought the announcements were triggered by mileage and a slight variation in the travel path could cause the announcements to be out of sync.

Ms. Mulder clarified that in fact the button had not been functional and when she reported that to the driver he said that she should have pressed it sooner. She said the driver also told her the front door was not operational and she had to exit through the rear door.

Mr. Massengill wondered whether LTD tracked such problems. Ms. Parker pointed out that while it would be optimal service to stop at each stop automatically, a bus gained time if it only stopped at some infrequently used stops by request. She added that Ms. Mulder's dilemma seemed to be caused by malfunctioning equipment, which was an ADA repair that needed to be reported and fixed as quickly as possible.

Committee members briefly discussed their experiences with EmX automatic versus push-button stops, the timeliness of announcements and situations in which announcements repeated themselves. Ms. Linoz pointed out that novice users had no way of knowing which stops were automatic and which weren't,

illustrating the importance of timely announcements and functional buttons. Ms. Parker agreed to speak with staff about the issue.

Ms. Parker observed that announcement system problems seemed to come up in large numbers when a new bid began. Ms. Saville noted that LTD relied on drivers finding and reporting each of the problems in a blue card system and that it was difficult to remember the exact details of each one by the end of a shift. She found the system frustrating. Mr. Kwiatkowski said that he would report any problems he encountered. Mr. Cetto suggested that he would like to receive a free day pass when he reported problems.

ATC Follow-up: at the September meeting, Mr. Kwiatkowski had brought up that on the weekends, the access door to the Customer Service Center for restroom or waiting area use was not accessible to people who could not pull or push the door open. Facilities and operations staff were working to resolve the issue, possibly by opening up the automatic doors on the east end of the Customer Service building facing Willamette Street. Currently, the small swinging door at the north-east corner of the building was unlocked on the weekends.

**VIII. ADJOURN:** Before adjourning the meeting, Mr. Massengill commented that as a regular transit user, he was grateful to LTD for doing a good job of getting people around.

Mr. Massengill adjourned the meeting at 11:26 a.m.

**IX. FIELD TRIP:** Those interested were invited to view the ADA stations on new 40-foot buses.