

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, September 18, 2012
10 am – Noon
Lane Transit District Next Stop Center
1099 Olive Street – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mary Otten, Chair	Gail Lundeen
Pete Barron	Bill Morganti
Misty Brazell	Eleanor Mulder
Mike Cetto	Ed Necker (LTD Board rep, ex officio, after 10:25)
Aline Goddard	Annie Saville, Vice Chair
Stefan Kwiatkowski	Reneé Van Norman
Ruth Linoz (after 10:07 a.m.)	Scott Whetham
Patti Little	

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Paul Blaylock	L.M. Reese
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OTHERS PRESENT:

Erica Abbey (until 10:23 a.m.)	April Georgi
Ann Angvick	Mike Miller
Charles Biggs	Beth Mulcahy (after 10:15 a.m.)
Janice Friend, captioner	Dennis Turner
David Braunschweiger	

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu
Kris Lyon
Cosette Rees

I. Call to order

Ms. Otten called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order at 10:04 a.m., and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

II. Introductions, Announcements, Agenda Review

Those present introduced themselves.

Ms. Rees introduced Kris Lyon who had replaced Rand Stamm when he left LTD to work for Sound Transit in Seattle. She described Ms. Lyon's background and said that LTD was fortunate to have her on board. She also introduced Ann Angvick who had replaced Ms. Lyon at the *RideSource* Call Center

Mr. Cetto raised an issue about a letter he had received from another member accusing him of inappropriate behavior at the January meeting. Mr. Cetto disputed the accusation. Ms. Otten reminded members of the importance of maintaining civil discourse.

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

III. Audience Participation

Erica Abbey introduced herself as the City of Eugene's Equity and Access Analyst. She reported that her office had been contacted by community members concerned about the pattern of fixed route & EmX buses turning right on the red light without stopping at the corner of 10th and Olive. She said that pedestrians had nearly been hit on more than one occasion. Ms. Abbey asked for the cooperation of the committee and LTD Customer Service staff in finding solutions to the problem.

Staff agreed to follow up with Ms. Abbey about the appropriate steps to address the situation.

Ms. Linoz arrived at the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

IV. Minutes Approval, June 19, 2012

MOTION: Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Mr. Kwiatkowski, to approve the minutes of June 19.

Ms. Goddard offered a correction to her East Lane County report on page 13. In the second paragraph, her comment "...that the Diamond Express had been down for two weeks" should be corrected to read "that the Diamond Express vehicle had been down for two weeks."

VOTE: The minutes as corrected by Ms. Goddard were approved unanimously.

V. Appoint Grant Review Committee

The State's Special Transportation Fund Program provided financial support to designated counties, transit districts and Indian tribal governments for special transportation services benefiting seniors and people with disabilities. The majority of the STF money was allocated on a population-based formula and the remaining 25 percent of funds were distributed by the Public Transportation Discretionary Grant Program. The STF Formula and Discretionary grant process for Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015 begin in September and end in January 2013.

A grant review committee would meet five or six times between late October and late February to review funding applications and prepare a recommendation for funding to the ATC. Ms. Hekimoglu said that she was looking for volunteers willing to serve. She said that potential recipients of the funds may have a conflict of interest so probably should not volunteer.

Mr. Morganti, Ms. Brazell, and Ms. Mulder volunteered. Ms. Rees said that Terry Parker would be the staff lead on the committee. Mr. Reese said that he would serve if the meetings were held at the Next Stop Center. Ms. Otten was willing to serve if all materials were available electronically. Ms. Saville also volunteered if she could be marked off from her LTD driving schedule. Dennis Turner said he would serve as well.

Mr. Morganti requested captioning for the meetings since both he and Mr. Turner had hearing impairments.

VI. West Eugene EmX Update

This item was delayed until later in the meeting when West Eugene EmX Extension (WEEE) Senior Project Manager John Evans was scheduled to be present

VII. Program Updates

- a) ATC Chair's Report: Ms. Otten had nothing to report at this time.
- b) Lane Transit District: Program Updates - Ms. Rees noted the staffing changes she had mentioned at the beginning of the meeting: Kris Lyon was the new human service transportation coordinator and part of the Accessible Customer Services (ACES) Team. Her duties included managing the *RideSource* Call Center contract and related projects and programs.

Ms. Rees announced that during the Oregon Transportation Association's (OTA) annual conference in Seaside held September 9-12, former Accessible Services Manager Terry Parker was presented with the Award of Excellence in recognition of her 27 years of exceptional service to public transportation in Oregon. Also at the OTA conference, Liz Fox, Scott Whetham, and Jacque Gerdes of Alternative Work Concepts were presented with the Distinguished Local Service Award. Ms. Rees added that the OTA conference had provided an opportunity to establish new contacts and to learn more about accessible services.

Ms. Mulcahy arrived at the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

Ms. Rees reported on an initial conversation with the developing Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) in Lane County that was administered by Trillium. The CCO had begun providing health care coordination for Oregon Health Plan and Medicaid eligible people on August 1. The CCO was focused on the medical side of its responsibilities now and would address transportation issues later.

LTD had contracted directly with the State to provide Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation for eligible people, but under the new system that shifted Medicaid healthcare management to regional CCOs instead of the State, such a contract would

be with Trillium. LTD hoped to be awarded this contract and Trillium appeared interested in continuing to contract with LTD.

The transportation transition had been scheduled for January 1, but it appeared likely that it would happen later. Ms. Rees said that staff would keep the committee updated as the process developed.

Ten-Ride Ticket Books: Ms. Rees described the new ten-ride ticket books LTD would begin selling to the public on October 1 at regular sales outlets and at the Customer Service counter. They were similar to the old tokens and provided customers with a discount over paying cash. Tickets would be valid for two years and the books would cost \$16 for adults aged 19-64 and \$8 for Half-Fare and Youth. One ticket would be good for a single one-way ride and two tickets could be exchanged for a day pass. LTD planned to replace the day passes provided by agencies with these tickets.

Answering Mr. Barron's question, Ms. Rees said that while the ticket books would not be available at sales outlets until October 1, they probably would be available the next week at Customer Service.

There was a brief discussion about the point in the month when three-month passes could be purchased. Ms. Rees stated that a grace period for expired passes had been discontinued because there were too many requests for extensions and it became unreasonable.

Ms. Abbey left the meeting at 10:23 am.

Fall Service Changes: Ms. Rees continued by saying that fall service adjustments went into effect September 16, with many routes experiencing minor adjustments. New Riders Digests were available at the meeting and information was also available on the website at www.ltd.org. A Fall Bid Service Adjustments Sheet was included in the agenda packet.

Many of the changes were at the Eugene Station and mostly involved the bays for inbound buses not being the same as for those outbound. She said that the changes had resulted from trying to maximize service while retaining reliability, which resulted in things operating more tightly.

Mr. Necker arrived at the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

Mr. Barron commented that he had just returned from Mexico where he had observed police officers stopping buses that were off their schedule, removing their license plates, and then the bus company had to buy them back.

Ramp Update: Lift-U representatives had been working with LTD to resolve issues with the new 6:1 ratio ramps that buckled when deployed and caused wheelchairs to high center. Several customers who use mobility devices had demonstrated the problems, and in late August a new prototype was installed in bus 1101.

Mike Miller was one of the volunteers who tested the new ramps. He reported that the new prototype was an improvement. He particularly appreciated having a yellow stripe in the middle of the ramp to help users focus and orient within the space. He noted that Lift-U was trying to address the problem, and he remarked favorably on LTD's responsiveness to complaints and problems. He understood that LTD was the first transit company to talk to Lift-U about this problem and conjectured that other transit companies may not work as hard to address complaints and problems.

Ms. Rees expected that the company would make some additional changes in the ramp and produce another prototype for testing before LTD retrofitted the remaining buses with the improved ramps. She wondered how adequately ramps were tested prior to being placed on the market and said that the problematic ramps were still being produced and sold. She said that the new 1:6 ratio ramp requirement had not been finally adopted as the ADA standard and that some transit companies had gone back to the 1:4 standard. She pointed out that while buses went through rigorous testing, ramps did not. The FTA Access Board needed to reconsider the 1:6 standard to determine if it was realistic and achievable.

Mr. Miller added that a great deal of a ramp's usability depended on the driver's skill in deploying it and in positioning the bus appropriately.

Ms. Linoz commented that ramps were designed for the ideal urban street and not for non-standard settings, especially those found in rural areas. She thanked LTD for working to find solutions.

Ms. Saville observed that operation of the ramps had become easier for drivers after the initial operating instructions were modified and that drivers had to practice before they were good at deploying the ramps in different settings. She reported numerous complaints from passengers about the bumpers that were intended to protect people but were wider than was necessary to accomplish their purpose.

Mr. Necker remarked that problems with the bumpers were because of the fare box base and that the bumpers should be the same size as the fare box. He added that drivers had a choice whether to kneel the bus, and in his opinion it was better to kneel when on the ground and not on a curb.

Mr. Miller said that in testing the ramp prototype, an attempt was made to deploy the ramp in different locations that replicated all the worst case scenarios a driver might face. He recommended providing drivers an opportunity to practice with new equipment before it was put into use.

Mr. Barron liked the idea of a yellow stripe down the middle of the ramp on all buses.

Ms. Rees concluded that the 1101 bus was on a fixed schedule route and she would provide updates as LTD looked for ways to put it into more general service.

Ms. Hekimoglu reported that the current issues of Transit Access Report had included a large article on bus ramps and that the Access Board had reopened the comment period on the 1:6 ramp standard. She had copies of the report and copies of the Access Board's information about providing feedback. The comment period was open until October 31.

Ms. Saville brought up the issue of LTD's installation of loops on wheelchairs to help secure them on buses. She said that appointments for this service were only available one day each month and that it was important to make it more convenient for people to have this done. Mr. Reese agreed and Ms. Rees expressed surprise that the appointments were so limited.

Ms. Linoz suggested making the need for the loops part of the assessment process and coordinating the installation through the Medicaid brokerage. Ms. Rees indicated that securement loops needed to be installed by an operator or supervisor who was very

familiar with the securement systems. She and Ms. Hekimoglu agreed to further explore the issue.

Ms. Lyon reported on a pilot program beginning in the next four to six weeks that would provide non-emergency ambulance transport. While the Call Center's non-emergency medical transport service provided transportation for OHP eligible patients who had to lay flat while being transported, the pilot program would allow the Call Center to authorize non-emergency ambulance transport for patients who also required medical monitoring during transport. That monitoring might involve administering IV, oxygen, pain management, or injections. At this point, staff was contacting ambulance providers and working on an intergovernmental agreement for the pilot project.

Mr. Reese brought up a situation in which he had been released from the hospital on a Saturday after having surgery on Friday but was unable to find an available wheelchair cab so had ended up taking an EmX bus home from the hospital.

Ms. Lyon responded that because there was little demand for wheelchair taxi providers on weekends, companies were unwilling to provide the service. She said that Ms. Angvick would continue to work on this issue. Ms. Rees added that providers needed to hear that they were losing revenue by not providing the service on weekends.

RideSource Call Center: Ms. Angvick was now responsible for this service area. Ms. Lyon reported that she had requested information on the Veterans Program because it had been new for the Call Center. She had learned that since April the Call Center had provided 250 trips, 144 of which were to local VA services. A few had been to Portland or Roseburg, 40 had been to other medical providers, and a few had been to the housing authority or to the courthouse. In August, 15 individuals had been served by 78 trips.

Ms. Lyon announced a November 10 Lane County Stand Down event to be held at the Springfield Armory. It would provide information and some basic services (such as haircuts) for veterans. A shuttle service would operate between the Springfield Station and the Armory. She hoped that access to the event would be improved by its move to the Lane County Fairgrounds in 2013.

RideSource Paratransit: Mr. Braunschweiger thanked Ms. Lyon for establishing the management position at the Call Center. He said that the transition had been smooth and that Ms. Angvick had a good background for her new position.

Mr. Braunschweiger said that business was picking up after a summer slump. Additional driving staff had been hired to help on weekends. He said that Sunday mornings were especially busy. Because the regular mechanic would be off for four months, a part-time temporary replacement had been hired. He expected demand to increase over the fall and winter.

South Lane County: Ms. Linoz had nothing new to report.

West Lane County: There was no West Lane representative at this time.

East Lane County: Ms. Goddard reported that things were busy in Oakridge. One of the two new drivers she had hired had become ill and unable to drive so she needed to hire again. She said that the Diamond Express needed a larger bus.

White Bird Clinic: Ms. Georgi reported that she had met with Ms. Rees, Ms. Hekimoglu, and Ms. Lyon to discuss maximizing resources. Staff was collecting data on how many of their clients were on the Oregon Health Plan and could use the RideSource Call Center. Client numbers were increasing.

Mr. Necker asked for more information about OHP clients using the Call Center. Ms. Georgi explained that was an option for eligible clients who were mentally able to ride the bus and White Bird encouraged them to contact the Call Center in order to preserve White Bird's resources for clients unable to access other services.

Other: The committee discussed meeting locations. The Next Stop room was too crowded and had poor acoustics and Ms. Hekimoglu hoped to keep the meetings in the downtown core area. Meeting rooms at the Library and Atrium were all busy on Tuesday mornings and she wondered whether the committee should look at changing its meeting time and/or day. She agreed to check both the Library and Atrium for regular availability on other days and times.

Other suggestions included the old or the new LCC building, the First Methodist Church on Olive Street, or the McDonald Theater. Assistive listening capability was a

requirement for whatever room the group used. Mr. Kwiatkowski suggested rearranging the furniture in the Next Stop Center meeting room to provide more space around the outside of the room.

Ms. Hekimoglu announced an Oregon Disability Conference in Salem October 25-27 that would focus primarily on employment issues. Flyers were available if anyone was interested.

Ms. Rees expressed her appreciation for committee members' dedication to various programs and told them they provided exceptional service to the community.

At this point (11:23 a.m.), Mr. Evans arrived at the meeting and agenda item VI was addressed.

VI. West Eugene EmX Update

The 45-day public review period for the West Eugene EmX Extension (WEEE) Environmental Assessment (EA) closed on August 29, 2012. The EA identified the potential beneficial and adverse environmental, social, and economic effects of the proposed project. This federal public disclosure document was prepared by technical experts and LTD in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Mr. Evans reported that more than 300 comments had been received during the comment period, with the majority of them coming from the Our Money Our Transit Group. LTD also received a large number of supportive comments and some questions about the analysis. The EA concluded that the project would produce no significant environmental effects and that any effects could be mitigated through what was proposed in the project design. The major effect was property acquisition which was not a true environmental effect and involved minor strip acquisition along the route. Two properties were most affected, one along Garfield, and one at 11th and Arthur. There was a question about whether parking would be affected to a degree that would be detrimental to the business. While the project would pay to help relocate those businesses, it appeared that mitigation could address and avoid any potential problem.

The next step was for the FTA to work with LTD to review all comments and to respond to them in detail if they related to the technical analysis. If the FTA felt there were no significant effects remaining, it would issue a finding of no significant effects. At that point the next phase would involve refining the project designs which was expected to take a couple of years. Implementing mitigation would involve meeting with all property owners and with interested and affected groups to ensure that the designs avoided impacts to property and the environment. Mr. Evans said that this process would be thorough and detailed.

The timeline currently anticipated that with City approval within the next month, construction could begin in 2015 and the route could be operational in early 2017.

The City of Eugene was scheduled to review its year-old initial affirmation of the locally preferred alternative and to look at plans for mitigation at a September 26 work session and then to issue its second opinion on whether it supported the project. Following that, the LTD Board would engage in a similar process.

Mr. Miller asked whether boardings would require wheelchair users to cross the street. Mr. Evans answered that all boardings would be curbside and not at medians. Most would be at locations with a nearby crosswalk but a couple on West 11th would be where there were long blocks currently without crosswalks. Pedestrian-activated traffic stop signals would be added. He pointed out that the project would improve sidewalks wherever roadway construction took place. Poles would be removed from the full ten-foot wide pedestrian areas. He added that moving utility poles required coordination with EWEB and Comcast.

Mr. Evans said that a great deal had been heard from opponents of the project and he wanted more input from people with disabilities. He reported that some stations would be farther apart than they were on regular routes and some people said that would make it difficult for seniors and people with disabilities. He also had been told that many people with mobility devices found it easier and faster to board EmX buses and preferred them to regular buses.

Mr. Cetto commented that passenger comfort was important and suggested adding window shades because tinted windows did not protect passengers from the sun.

Mr. Miller said that he was sometimes denied boarding because the wheelchair spaces were all occupied and he suggested added more of those spaces. Mr. Blaylock echoed this request.

Mr. Barron also favored adding additional wheelchair capacity. He strongly favored EmX expansion and said it was easier to ride. He was concerned that the greater distance between stops might make it more difficult for people who used walkers or canes. He suggested enhancing RideSource services to help those people who moved slowly and for whom the greater distance created a problem.

Ms. Lundeen asked which businesses would be highly impacted. Ms. Rees responded that one was an Adult Shop franchise whose owner lived in Salem and that LTD would work with them to mitigate any problems. Others included the 4J bus facility and King's Asian Market where some parking close to the street would be lost. LTD was talking to the City about the possibility of shortening a ten-foot wide barrier preventing turns from Arthur Street to 11th as a step that would help mitigate the parking issue for the market.

Mr. Evans responded to another question from Ms. Lundeen by saying that LTD might spend in the low \$10,000s to help the affected businesses find a new location and move.

Mr. Barron observed that many of the anti-EmX signs had been put up by property owners and did not reflect the views of the tenants.

Answering Ms. Linoz's question, Mr. Evans said that the EmX extension would add six or seven buses to the route and would provide service every ten-minutes on most days. He added that the purchase of new buses could provide an opportunity for different configurations and additional spaces for wheelchairs.

Members noted that some riders get motion sickness if they are unable to ride facing forward. Ms. Rees said that side-facing seats on EmX buses allowed for quicker on and off access and increased capacity by allowing more space for passengers to stand. She explained some of the difficulty of finding buses that provided more spaces for mobility devices and still provided doors on both sides. She said that staff could continue to work with manufacturers to try to find better solutions.

Mr. Miller commented that the flooring on some buses was extremely slippery. Mr. Evans agreed that this should be considered when ordering new vehicles.

Ms. Hekimoglu thanked members for their comments and suggestions and encouraged them to continue providing them.

Ms. Otten thanked Mr. Evans for his presentation.

VIII. Adjourn

The next regularly scheduled meeting was set for Tuesday, October 16, 2012 at a location to be announced.

Ms. Otten adjourned the meeting at 11:54 a.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)