

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 15, 2013  
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
Aline Goddard	Annie Saville, Vice Chair
Stephen Kwiatkowski	Renee Van Norman
Patti Little	Scott Whetham

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Paul Blaylock

OTHERS PRESENT:

David Braunschweiger	Fred Stoffer
April Georgi	Dennis Turner
Tony Myers	

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu  
Cosette Rees  
Janice Friend, captioner

**I. Call to order**

Ms. Otten called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order at 10:03 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **II. Introductions, Announcements, Agenda Review**

Those present introduced themselves.

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

## **III. Audience Participation**

No members of the public wished to speak.

## **IV. Minutes Approval, November 20, 2012**

Paul Blaylock noted that on page 10 of the November minutes the first sentence in the next to last paragraph should read as follows (addition italicized): "Mr. Blaylock saw a need for more articulated buses on the *Saturday runs* of the #12 to help reduce the overload."

**MOTION:** Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Ms. Norman to approve the November 20 minutes as corrected. The motion carried 8:0:3 with Ms. Mulder, Mr. Kwiatkowski, and Mr. Cetto abstaining because they had been absent from the November meeting.

Mr. Necker and Ms. Georgi arrived at the meeting at 10:06 a.m.

## **V. Transportation Grant Program for Lane County**

### **a) Staff Presentation**

The Accessible Transportation Committee at its November meeting reaffirmed the priorities for funding projects through this grant opportunity as 1) maintaining existing services; 2) expanding existing services; and 3) funding new programs. The ATC also appointed a Grant Review Committee (Misty Brazell, Eleanor Mulder, Bill Morganti, Dennis Turner, and Stacy Clauson) which had met throughout early December to review the applications and proposals that were received.

The Grant Program combined funding from the Federal Transit Administration Section 5310, Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and People with Disabilities through the Oregon Public Transit Division, and money already allocated to LTD under federal 5316 Job

Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and federal 5317 New Freedom programs. Additional funds were provided through other sources such as the Special Transportation Fund and the LTD General Fund.

Staff had developed and published a grant timeline and application packet that was distributed to service agencies and transportation providers throughout Lane County. The final grant application was due to the Oregon Public Transit Division on January 18.

LTD received 14 project proposals and the Grant Review Committee had reviewed those proposals at three meetings in December and created a funding recommendation for consideration by the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC). Grant Review Committee meeting notes and materials were available upon request.

Ms. Rees reported that the total amount available in this two-year funding cycle was \$2,406,620.

Ms. Brazell arrived at the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Ms. Rees continued by saying that proposals had been received for projects in all three of the priority areas. The Grant Review Committee had decided to look not just at how the \$2.4 million would be spent but how programs were funded by the different funding streams in general. She noted that the December Grant Review meetings were well attended and had provided opportunities to ask applicants more questions and have useful dialogue with them. One of her goals was to increase staff's interactions with the funded programs.

Ms. Hekimoglu reviewed each of the projects seeking funding. A description of each project, the amounts requested, and the funding recommendations as detailed in the agenda packet.

After commenting that he believed that transit hosts needed to better identify themselves, Mr. Cetto left the meeting at 10:19 a.m.

Ms. Otten, inquired about language barriers in the eligibility assessment process, and Ms. Little responded that Senior & Disabilities Services could take referrals for Spanish speakers.

Ms. Rees provided highlights of some of the conversations about Priority 1 projects that took place at the Grant Review Committee meetings.

With less funding for replacement of *RideSource* vehicles in the future, it was important to find ways to extend their lives. Increasing preventive maintenance was one way to do this.

Federally mandated *RideSource* ADA Paratransit services utilized numerous different funding sources. Revamping the Shopper Service over the past year had resulted in better coordination and grouping of some frequent trips which saved costs. The addition of new stores such as Wal-Mart and Winco had resulted in increased usage.

The Volunteer Escort program served both rural and metro areas. Answering a question from Mr. Necker, Mr. Braunschweiger said that SMS was one of the providers of vehicles for this program but only two of the four minivans were used regularly. Ms. Rees added that this was a relatively small program that should be expanded.

White Bird's Mental Health Transportation involved some challenges in the fact that many of those clients fell outside what was handled by the Call Center. By conducting some eligibility assessments White Bird would be able to get these clients into the data base and provide better coordination in the future.

Use of the Veterans and Crucial Connections program had increased, likely due to efforts to educate people that it was available. The program met people's immediate needs to get to critical appointments and provide additional time to identify other transportation options to use in the future. Ms. Rees said that Crucial Connections' 5310 funding had been used for the veterans' component.

The Preschool Transportation program at Pearl Buck Center, provided service to children whose parents experienced disabilities, and who otherwise would be transported on individual *RideSource* rides accompanied by a parent who would need a round trip ride on both the morning drop off and afternoon pick up trips.

Travel training and transit hosts helped people who otherwise might need *RideSource* to use the fixed-route system. Providing this service was less expensive and allowed people to have more independence than they would if they had to preschedule

RideSource trips. The newly acquired uniforms for transit hosts improved their ability to successfully interact with the public.

Ms. Rees commented that the need for transportation assessments would grow as the population ages.

Ms. Rees briefly commented on Priority 2 and 3 projects. After meeting with representatives of Centro LatinoAmericano, it became clear that a certain population utilized the services of Centro and no other agencies and services. Centro was interested in providing eligibility assessments but the committee had not felt it was appropriate to add a new program at this time so it recommended allocating a small amount to help Centro participate in the coordinated effort to conduct transportation eligibility assessments. The committee wanted LTD staff to continue discussions with Centro. Ms. Brazell pointed out that if the allocated \$5,000 was not used, it could reallocate it elsewhere.

Ms. Rees explained that when the funding application was submitted to the Oregon Department of Transportation, it was presented as a large program-level application and did not separate out all the individual projects that were to be funded, so there was the flexibility to reprogram funds not being used.

Mr. Kwiatkowski pointed out the difference between the \$2.4 million in funding that was available and the nearly \$9 million total cost of the recommended projects. Ms. Rees commented that the total cost included all the other sources of funding and that this had been the first year the Grant Review Committee had taken such a holistic approach to programs regardless of the funding source. The ATC was only responsible for approving the use of 5310, JARC, and New Freedom funds. The remaining costs would be borne by various other funding sources.

Ms. Rees remarked that staff hoped the Grant Review Committee would meet more frequently than during the grant cycle every two years so it could provide more direction and engage in ongoing conversations with programs and staff. She suggested that it become a standing committee of the ATC.

Mr. Whetham arrived at 10:34 am.

Mr. Necker asked that staff send him information about the use of STF funds and LTD's General Fund to help prepare him for the upcoming budget discussion by LTD Board members.

A document entitled "LTD – Discretionary Grant Applications – Projects by Priority" was distributed and reviewed by Ms. Rees. She said that it showed the true cost of the program and helped staff begin the process of developing a budget. She noted that the Grant Review Committee recommendations were primarily for maintaining the existing services and allowing for a two percent increase.

Answering questions, Ms. Hekimoglu said that "DD Transportation" was for people with developmental disabilities and was funded by different sources. Vehicle replacement included only RideSource vehicles and replacement of fixed route buses was outside the parameters of the ATC process.

Ms. Otten was curious about what would happen if funding sources were cut during the budget process. Ms. Rees responded that staff would come back to the ATC or the Grant Review Committee to request adjustments and that there would be no automatic across-the-board cuts.

Referring to providing transit hosts with uniforms, Ms. Otten observed that uniforms did not eliminate the difficulty people with low or no vision had in finding the hosts and she asked if there was a specific place people should go if they needed help. Ms. Hekimoglu said that the LTD Customer Service Center was available to people with vision disabilities.

Mr. Whetham said that people needing travel training could call Alternative Work Concepts and a host would be sent to meet them.

At this point, Ms. Rees introduced David Galati who was the new Public Transit Division area coordinator for our area. Ms. Rees described him as very collaborative and a good advocate for local needs and interests.

#### b) Public Hearing

Ms. Otten opened the public hearing on the Transportation Grant Program for Lane County at 10:53 a.m.

Ms. Georgi thanked the Grant Review Committee for its recommendation on White Bird's project.

There being no further requests to speak, Ms. Otten closed the public hearing.

c) Action on Proposed Funding

**MOTION:** Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Mr. Kwiatkowski, to approve the proposed projects as presented, which included Federal 5310, Special Transportation Fund, Job Access Reverse Commute, and New Freedom funding.

Ms. Little asked whether providers who had a project included on the list needed to abstain from voting. Ms. Hekimoglu replied that the STF program allowed providers to participate on advisory committees.

Ms. Rees clarified that the ATC was being asked to take final action to authorize staff to submit an application for funds.

**VOTE:** The motion carried, 11:0:1, with Ms. Van Norman abstaining.

Thanking everyone who had participated in the grant review process, Ms. Rees requested that the ATC appoint a Grant Review Subcommittee to meet once or twice annually to receive updates on projects and provide staff with some direction. The subcommittee also would look at future funding issues. She said that applications for projects in the next two-year cycle could be expected in September 2014. The funding outlook could be very different at that point.

Ms. Hekimoglu suggested that when an ATC subcommittee met in May 2013 to review the bylaws, it could consider formally adding the Grant Review Subcommittee to the bylaws and charging it to review grant applications and programs that had received funding.

**VI. Lane Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan, 2013 Update**

LTD's current Lane Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (the Plan) was last reviewed and approved by the LTD Board of Directors in 2009. The

update of the Plan included transportation service needs of area veterans and also presented the opportunity to update other information.

On December 13 the Central lane Metropolitan Planning Organization designated LTD as the direct recipient of FTA Enhanced Mobility Services and Individuals with Disabilities Program funds. The Plan satisfied requirements specific to funds administered through the FTA and ODOT Public Transit Division.

Staff would conduct a public input process advertising that the Plan was available for review over the next month and would be the subject of a public hearing at the ATC's February 19 meeting. Staff requested that committee members review the Plan in preparation for the public hearing. Feedback also was being sought from other agencies. ATC members would be asked to make a recommendation of adoption to the LTD Board of Directors. Ms. Rees commented that in addition to meeting FTA and ODOT requirements, updating the Plan also provided an opportunity to look at programs and services available in the community and to identify service gaps.

Ms. Hekimoglu agreed to provide Mr. Morganti with a hard copy of the plan document attached to the agenda packet that had been e-mailed. Because some members had inadvertently deleted their copies, Ms. Hekimoglu said that she would resend the plan to everyone and that the attachments were available on the LTD website.

## **VII. Correspondence Review**

Committee members were asked to review and discuss an e-mail sent to them by Mr. David Freeman that described an incident that had occurred on an LTD bus in October and that proposed the implementation of a new policy intended to prevent future similar accidents.

Ms. Hekimoglu reported that Ms. Rees and other LTD staff members had spoken with Mr. Freeman several times. They had suggested that any passenger could make specific requests to the driver, and Mr. Freeman's also could ask the driver not to move the bus until he had been seated without divulging a disability, and without announcing it to the entire bus. If the passenger preferred typing that request on a card, it could be handed to the driver. Staff had encouraged Mr. Freeman to take a seat in the front of the bus when one was available to allow operators to proceed more quickly but he preferred sitting in the rear of the bus.



Mr. Kwiatkowski suggested putting a sticker on Mr. Freeman's access card.

Acknowledging that she felt badly about what had happened to Mr. Freeman, Ms. Saville opined that passengers should not have to carry a card saying they needed to be seated before the bus moved, that asking the driver to wait should be sufficient and that speaking to a driver was the established practice for preventing such problems. She added that Mr. Freeman had the right to sit where he chose on the bus. Because Mr. Freeman had aired his grievance in the *Eugene Weekly* before contacting the ATC, she suggested that he appeared to be seeking public acknowledgment that he had been wronged.

Mr. Barron wondered if Mr. Freeman was uncomfortable announcing his disability on the bus. Ms. Hekimoglu maintained that asking a driver to wait until one was seated did not reveal a disability. She added that a mother with a child in her arms, for example, also may need to ask the driver to not move the bus before she was seated.

Ms. Mulder observed that there was an obligation to the general public for the bus to follow its schedule.

Ms. Lundeen related that her experience was that disabilities that were not readily visible were often ignored and individuals were not accommodated to the same degree as were people with visible disabilities.

Ms. Rees commented that drivers generally were attentive to passengers' requests, but Ms. Saville contended that because of the time pressure put on them, some drivers considered being on time a higher priority than anything else.

Ms. Rees indicated that it would be possible to create a card for Mr. Freeman or put something on the back of his id card about holding the bus until he was seated but she did not support creating a whole new class of riders with special id cards, as Mr. Freeman had requested.

Ms. Lundeen suggested creating a public information piece that advised people to talk with the bus driver if they had special needs or requests. Ms. Brazell said that a card would be helpful for people who were deaf or could not speak.

Ms. Saville reported that she had never had a passenger unable to communicate with her. Mr. Whetham said that Travel Training provided people with yellow destination cards that people could show to a driver.

Ms. Georgi observed that having to speak to a driver may remind Mr. Freeman of his unfortunate accident and could create an uncomfortable situation for him.

Ms. Rees said that staff would follow up with Mr. Freeman and would offer to provide him with a card. Information would go out to all drivers reminding them to be sensitive to needs such as Mr. Freeman's.

Ms. Otten commented that compromise was needed by everyone to achieve balance and that it was unreasonable to make accommodation of individual personal preferences on a system-wide basis.

Ms. Rees said that staff would continue to provide accommodations on an individual basis. She pointed out that when a severely autistic child had a problem wearing shoes, an exception was made for that individual but was not made available system-wide for everyone.

Ms. Brazell noted that she considered a reasonable accommodation to be something that did not require an inordinate amount of staff time or cause a major disruption to bus service.

Ms. Georgi suggested putting something in the Rider's Digest cautioning that sometimes buses would start to move before people were seated and that riders should let the driver know if this would create a problem for them. Ms. Rees liked this idea for increasing public awareness.

### **VIII. Program Updates**

#### **a) ATC Chair's Report**

Ms. Otten again thanked the Grant Review Committee for its work.

#### **b) Lane Transit District**

Lead Customer Service Representative Chris Marquez would represent LTD in the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Customer Service Challenge

competition. Ms. Rees anticipated that Ms. Marquez would be selected for the final competition.

LTD would host a two-day workshop March 27 and 28 covering Paratransit eligibility determination processes and focusing on in-person interview and assessment options. The training was to be provided by Navigator Mobility Consulting and was intended for agencies and individuals responsible for compliance with ADA eligibility requirements. Ms. Rees invited interested committee members to attend. Ms. Hekimoglu added that Ms. Georgi would attend and a representative from Centro Latino would be invited.

Ms. Rees brought up the issue of the automatic front door near the Customer Service counter being inadvertently triggered to open very frequently during the recent cold weather. Because it would be very expensive to retrofit the door, consideration was being given to disabling it and leaving the two doors on the end that were less sensitive to open automatically.

Committee members discussed possible solutions, suggesting that push button power doors should be explored.

Ms. Rees summarized by saying that the best plan appeared to be disabling the automatic feature of the east door and installing a push button, disabling the automatic opening of the north door, and not changing the west door. She said that the committee could further discuss the ideas at its February meeting.

At its December 19 meeting, the LTD Board accepted the audit report for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2012, and received information on the LTD Sustainability program and the West Eugene EmX Extension.

c) *RideSource* Call Center

In Ms. Angvick's absence, Mr. Braunschweiger reported that software solutions for working with the newly formed Community Care Organizations (CCOs) were being discussed and that there were many questions about how the CCOs would work with brokerages.

LTD was in the final stages of implementing the pilot program to coordinate Medicaid Oregon Health Plan Plus covered non-emergency ambulance transportation for Lane County. LTD and *RideSource* staff were working closely with the Department of Medical

Assistance Programs staff and ambulance providers, and also were working to update software and operations in preparation for the program. Implementation was expected by February 28. This program would require a slightly different process for the Call Center and it represented a cultural shift for providers.

Mr. Braunschweiger said the Call Center would implement the Transportation Reimbursement program sometime in the spring.

Answering Mr. Necker's question, Mr. Braunschweiger said that details about how the transportation component would be handled through the CCOs were yet to be worked out. Part of the challenge was in the fact that brokerages differed from medical clinics and doctors in that they dealt with many more different types of customers and criteria for service eligibility.

d) *RideSource* ADA Paratransit.

Mr. Braunschweiger reported that usage had been down during the holidays but was returning to normal and a couple of new drivers would need to be hired soon. He mentioned that *RideSource* had been without a trainer for six months but that the driver supervisor now was providing training both for *RideSource* staff as well as for staff from other providers.

e) South Lane County (Cottage Grove)

Ms. Linoz was absent so there was no report from Cottage Grove.

f) West Lane County (Florence)

There still was no West Lane representative. Ms. Hekimoglu reported on a request from the Confederated Coos and Siuslaw tribes asking to expand service to include the Three Rivers Casino. This would change the current one-hour service model and add about eight to ten minutes to the route which could require a second vehicle and driver. LTD and Casino staff were working on possible scenarios for the service and more meetings with tribal representatives and others from Florence would be held. Ms. Hekimoglu explained that because tribes had their own special transportation fund designation, additional cost implications of the service would be absorbed by the tribe. She noted that the Casino also provided once or twice weekly bus service from Eugene.

g) East Lane County (Oakridge)

Ms. Goddard reported that RideSource and the Diamond Express were busy. She told about the cold weather freezing the lock on the gate to the bus area that morning which required a blowtorch to get it open.

h) White Bird Clinic

Ms. Georgi told the committee that White Bird clients appreciated the consistency being provided this year. Budget issues had caused a lot of fluctuation in the number of rides that were available in the past. Knowing a ride was available if needed contributed to better mental stability among clients.

i) Other

Mr. Whetham commented that Alternative Work Concepts had a waiting list and that lots of people were in training. He said the hosts were extremely busy.

Ms. Hekimoglu asked Mr. Whetham to provide staff with more information about the numbers of people hosts met on a daily and weekly basis. He said that there were about 1,200 scheduled transfers each month but he could compute encounter numbers in more detail to include the additional categories of the general public, seniors, and people with disabilities who were not on a daily schedule.

Ms. Rees mentioned that Ms. Otten and Ms. Brazell would attend the LTD Board work session the following day for the presentation on discretionary funding.

Ms. Rees announced that Terry Parker's retirement party would be held Thursday January 24 at the Next Stop Center. She encouraged committee member attendance.

Ms. Lundeen said that Viking Sal would celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an independent non-tax funded center on February 14. She wanted to send an invitation to Ms. Parker because she had managed Viking Sal at one time.

**IX. Adjourn**

The next regularly scheduled meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, February 19, 2013.

Ms. Otten adjourned the meeting at 11:56 a.m.

*(Recorded by Mary Feldman)*