

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 21, 2013
10 am – Noon
Lane Transit District Next Stop Center
1099 Olive Street – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mary Otten, Chair	Gail Lundeen
Annie Saville, Vice Chair	Bill Morganti
Pete Barron	Eleanor Mulder
Misty Brazell	Ed Necker
Aline Goddard	Renee Van Norman
Ruth Linoz	Scott Whetham
Patti Little	

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Paul Blaylock	Sheila Thomas
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OTHERS PRESENT:

David Braunschweiger	Todd Lipkin
April Georgi	Beth Mulcahy

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: 02 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

Ms. Mulder asked for notice of the meetings to be listed in the *Register Guard*.

Ms. Hekimoglu said that she typically did not publish the notice if no action was being taken but agreed that it was a good idea and would encourage greater attendance.

IV. Minutes Approval, February 19, 2013

Mr. Morganti corrected the spelling of Mr. Kwiatkowski's first name to Stefan.

MOTION: Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Ms. Mulder, to approve the February 19 minutes as corrected. The motion carried unanimously, 12:0.

V. LTD Accessible Services Fund Budget Review and Approval

Ms. Hekimoglu called attention to two handouts, one titled "Accessible Services" and the other was an Accessible Services Program Revenue and Expense Summary for FY14.

Noting that preparing the budget was challenging in this first year after Ms. Parker's retirement, Ms. Hekimoglu said that the presentation to the committee was occurring after the LTD Budget Committee had approved the entire Accessible Services budget, including the transfer from the General Fund. She would have preferred having the committee's recommendation for approval prior to that meeting but said that if changes were needed they could still be considered since the LTD Board had not yet adopted the budget.

All grant applications had been completed for this year. Because most grants were formula funds, the applications requested the amount that would be provided. Ms. Hekimoglu said that the only one that was not certain was the 5311f Intercity grant for the Diamond Express.

Ms. Rees introduced Todd Lipkin from LTD's Finance Department who was available to answer questions. He reviewed the In-District Revenue sources.

Mr. Lipkin reported that this year the process focused more on projects than on funding and that nothing the Grant Review Committee had approved earlier had been changed. Ms. Hekimoglu added that there would be no grants to review in 2014 but the Grant Review Committee would conduct an in-depth review of specific programs in the fall so when it was time to submit applications in two years, committee members would have a better understanding of the individual programs being funded.

Ms. Rees explained that after the committee looked at programs, Mr. Lipkin worked to allocate the revenues appropriately to leverage as much as possible. This allowed stakeholders to focus on what needed to be done with the money instead of how the different sources were combined to provide funding. For example, people would see the total budget for the RideSource program but not how much was from STF and how much from other specific sources.

Ms. Hekimoglu reviewed each line in the revenue and expenditure summaries, pointing out that year-end estimates for the FY13 budget were based on nine months. Next year LTD anticipated a fare increase as well as increased demand for both RideSource and Diamond Express.

Mr. Lipkin noted that a cut in STF funds had been expected last year but had not materialized. It was typical to take 48 percent of the two-year allotment in the first year of the cycle and more the second year. More STF funds had been spent in the first year of the cycle than was anticipated so the budget for FY14 reflected the entire remaining amount, all of which was allocated to RideSource. He said that the available Federal funds from 5316 Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and 5317 New Freedom were the last of grants that had been received several years previously.

Answering Mr. Necker's question, Mr. Lipkin said that JARC funds were designated for the purpose of getting people to their jobs and that Mobility Management determined the best method for individuals to access their jobs.

Federal DHS Developmental Disabilities (DD) funding helped offset the costs of RideSource rides for DD clients.

Mr. Lipkin explained that the Grant Review Committee had decided how the Federal 5310 discretionary funds were to be divided between in-district and out-of-district services. He pointed out that preventive maintenance for RideSource vehicles was being fully funded. Federal 5311 funds supported the Diamond Express in Oakridge and the Rhody Express in Florence. The cities of Florence and Oakridge both contributed some matching funds which were being held flat this year. Mr. Lipkin anticipated asking for more next year.

Ms. Mulder asked whether Diamond Express allowed young tourists to use it primarily for transporting their bicycles. Ms. Hekimoglu responded that Diamond Express was a general public service available to anyone who paid the full fare of \$2.50 one way or \$5.00 round trip. It had a bike rack on the front as did LTD buses on rural routes. She did not believe rides had been denied to bicyclists.

Typically RideSource expenses went over budget and because it was a mandated service, the deficit was addressed by General Fund transfers. That was not occurring this year and Ms. Rees conjectured that it may be due to outsourcing some of the rides to more efficient ways of accomplishing the trips such as the taxi program. Mr. Lipkin added that another contributing factor was that fuel costs had been lower than expected.

Mr. Necker observed that a decrease in expenses for the Escort program may reflect the fact that people were becoming less eager to volunteer.

The entire Crucial Connections budget had been spent in the first year of the biennium because demand had been huge.

Ms. Goddard commented that she continued to receive requests for transportation for veterans. Ms. Rees explained that no funds remained for this program and that once its existence had become known the demand mushroomed beyond Accessible Services'

ability to meet it. She said that Kris Lyon was looking at additional parameters around use of the program to limit use to specific needs. She was attending a conference that focused on homeless vets, and access to housing, healthcare, jobs and school. She was advocating for all programs to include a transportation component and funding that allowed people to access the programs.

Mr. Lipkin said that some of the 5310 money was supporting the Vets program but that meant that less was going to RideSource so the General Fund made up that loss.

Ms. Rees clarified that the Vets program was only for urgent medical needs and was to be used only for a short duration while a client made other arrangements. She agreed to keep the committee informed as additional parameters were developed.

Mr. Lipkin indicated that there may be formula errors in the Crucial Connections budget and he would look into that.

An increased budget for Transit Training and Hosts was because of the large increases in demand. Similarly Mobility Management's budget had increased due to the addition of assessments for White Bird Clinic's clientele.

Mr. Lipkin reviewed the out-of-district services. The Rhody Express provided complimentary ADA service. Some changes were being made in Florence to boost flagging ridership.

Answering a question from Ms. Little, Mr. Lipkin said that when a program went over budget, the deficit was addressed in different ways. For RideSource the General Fund met the demand because it was a mandated program. The DHS DD program was a shared cost program so DHS paid a percentage of the overage and LTD matched it with General Fund money. Programs receiving biennial State funds may use more in one year than the other. If they were ADA-mandated, the General fund typically was tapped to make them whole.

Ms. Hekimoglu said that rural services funded by 5311 technically could be discontinued if they went over budget but because they were providing essential services, other funds were usually tapped to balance.

The Diamond Express and Oakridge Dial-a-Ride were two different services. For Dial-a-Ride members of the general public could call to arrange a local ride within the communities of Oakridge and Westfir, but not to Eugene. The service also did some meal deliveries. South Lane also had a Dial-a-Ride service for the general public.

Transfers and contingency funds included the beginning fund balance, the Special Transportation Fund, and other fund reserves. These funds would provide a match for the purchase of ten metro vehicles included in the budget as well as a match for the vehicle maintenance funding.

Ms. Georgi complimented staff for doing a good job developing the budget.

MOTION: Mr. Barron moved, seconded by Mr. Morganti, to recommend to the LTD Board of Directors approval of the LTD Accessible Services Fund Budget. The motion carried unanimously, 12:0.

Ms. Rees acknowledged Ms. Hekimoglu and Mr. Lipkin for their work. She said that Ms. Hekimoglu and Ms. Lyon would share responsibility for monitoring the programs and that by meeting with programs this year it would be easier to anticipate future needs.

VI. Program Updates

a) ATC Chair's Report

Ms. Otten reminded committee members that she was ineligible to serve another term and that June would be her last meeting as chair. She urged other members to consider serving as chair.

b) Lane Transit District

Ms. Rees reported that the statewide transition for transportation from the State to local CCOs was scheduled for January 1 but because Lane County was one of the pilot programs for the transportation component, its transition was slated to be July 1 or possibly July 15. Meetings were underway with Trillium (the local CCO) and there were a number of processes yet to be put in place but Ms. Rees was encouraged by Trillium's philosophy of service and she anticipated the transition to be seamless from a consumer perspective.

The medical reimbursement program was scheduled for implementation July 1 at which point brokerages would take over the reimbursements for meals, lodging and transportation that had previously been reimbursed by the State. Although a lot of work remained to be done on the transition, Ms. Rees was confident that consumers would not notice a difference.

Ms. Rees reported that an increasing number of scooters and mobility devices were being carried by buses and there was some concern that some of the devices were intended for home use only and were inappropriate and dangerous for use in transportation. Most of the problems were with three-wheeled scooters that tended to tip over and were not designed to be secured but the ADA said people with such devices could not be denied service. The plan was to roll out a campaign this summer to help raise awareness that some devices were inappropriate for transportation. The campaign would include community outreach, stickers in wheel well areas, going to health fairs, a flyer that helped people determine whether their device was appropriate, information on the website and links to owner's manuals for the most common devices.

Mr. Barron commented that changes to social security and insurance payments allowed payment only for scooters designed to be used inside the house.

Committee members suggested tapping the Easter Seals program to help advocate for people making better choices in their selection of mobility devices. They recommended contacting churches and assisted living and senior centers to help with the campaign. They also proposed dispensing information through providers of mobility devices but Ms. Rees pointed out that when retailers had been approached in the past many were unwilling to carry any message that could possibly hurt some of their sales. She said there were many other stakeholder and advocacy groups that could be approached to assist in getting the word out.

Ms. Linoz suggested incorporating something into the assessment process. The group continued to discuss issues of scooters being too large to fit in vehicles, total weight and size limitations, and people's inability to properly handle and maneuver their devices. They concluded that people had to be given the benefit of the doubt, it was not possible to weigh chairs and their occupants at the time of boarding, and that everyone had to be accommodated as long as they did not create a hazard on the bus.

Ms. Hekimoglu pointed out that heavy chairs and users produced significant wear and tear on lifts and that new vehicles would have a 1,000 pound capacity. Ms. Rees asked members to let her know if members had additional suggestions and she would let them know about the communication plan and its key messages before it was implemented at the end of the summer.

c) *RideSource* Call Center

Mr. Braunschweiger reported on behalf of Ms. Angvick who was on vacation. He said that the Call Center would work with both the State and with Trillium after July 1 because Trillium would not be responsible for all Medicaid transportation currently provided by the Call Center.

A new staff person likely would be hired later in May to help with the Transportation Reimbursement program. He was unsure how big this program would be but noted that Medford did about 20,000 reimbursements each month. Numerous procedures and technical issues were yet to be resolved.

The Nonemergency Ambulance service was starting more slowly than anticipated and currently was only preauthorizing trips and not billing or arranging new ones.

Mr. Braunschweiger reported that staff duties had been rearranged somewhat during Ms. Angvick's absence and that lack of space continued to be an issue.

Ms. Brazell asked how medical providers were being informed about the availability of the nonemergency ambulance transport. Mr. Braunschweiger responded that Ms. Angvick and Ms. Lyon had met with hospitals but that at the present the program primarily was doing retroactive pre-authorizations and had minimal involvement earlier in the process. More outreach and marketing would be required to change that.

Ms. Rees mentioned that DMAP was taking another look at the program because of the low level of usage and that it might make more sense for the CCO to take this over and do the billing instead of the brokerage.

Mr. Necker asked about communication between the Call Center and 9-1-1. Ms. Lyon and Ms. Rees had met with 9-1-1 operators and helped them understand what the program was intended to accomplish but when 9-1-1 received a call, they could not determine with certainty whether it constituted an emergency. They referred calls for

future trips to the brokerage but dispatched emergency ones without worrying about authorization. There had been a big increase in stretcher trips in Eugene.

Responding to Ms. Brazell's question about whether the purpose of the program was to have providers contact the Call Center instead of 9-1-1 for dispatch, Ms. Rees said that had been the original intent but was not what was happening. There was a different relationship with medical providers than with taxi services. Ms. Brazell commented that providers likely called 9-1-1 because they had an established relationship there instead of contacting the Call Center to make a determination whether a stretcher, ambulance, or some other form of transportation was needed.

Mr. Braunschweiger said that the Call Center's relationship with DHS volunteers was evolving and that DHS would continue with its oversight function but the Call Center was taking on the daily scheduling function. There were issues to work out and this was being regarded as a pilot project.

d) *RideSource* ADA Paratransit.

Mr. Braunschweiger reported that scooters and large chairs had presented few problems for *RideSource* except sometime on hills where there were physical limitations to what drivers were able to do without injuring their backs.

Ridership had only increased slightly this year and ADA ridership was decreasing, likely because many of those riders were using other providers. There had been an increase in individual developmentally disabled ridership, partly because some people who had been considered ADA riders were now DD under the contract.

Cameras and microphones were being installed in some of the *RideSource* buses. Mr. Braunschweiger was grateful for the additional funding that allowed for repairs because there had been a lot of problems with aging vehicles this year. There ensued a brief discussion of whether it was better to do major system rebuilds on older vehicles or to buy new ones. Mr. Necker supported first investing some of the maintenance funds in overhauls.

e) South Lane County (Cottage Grove)

Ms. Linoz reported that all was well with South Lane.

f) West Lane County (Florence)

There was no representative from Florence.

g) East Lane County (Oakridge)

Ms. Goddard explained that the RideSource Call Center Medicaid trips were increasing business and she had to hire more people. The #15 big bus had been hit by a tree limb that broke its windshield. No one had been hurt and it had been repaired and was back in service.

h) White Bird Clinic

Ms. Georgi was pleased to report that this was the first year when she had not had to juggle promised rides at the end of the fiscal year because funding was running out. This made it easier on the clients and additional funding budgeted for next year would provide a better level of consistency.

She looked forward to the new program in which Mobility Management would help people who had a difficult time going through the normal assessment process.

Answering questions from Ms. Hekimoglu, Ms. Georgi said that people were notified at the beginning of the month how many trips were available to them. Despite counseling to help clients ride the bus, some of them simply were unable to do that. Reducing the number of available rides from four to three per month created anxiety for some clients regardless of whether they actually were utilizing all the rides available.

Regarding medical rides for vets, Ms. Georgi said that if more vets were aware of White Bird's program they might benefit from it instead of using the limited Veterans Transportation program. Ms. Hekimoglu wanted to discuss this further with Ms. Georgi.

i) Other

Scott Whetham reported that Alternative Work Concepts was doing a large number of travel trainings. Assessments were showing that some people could use the bus with some training which would save LTD money if they transitioned from RideSource to the regular system. One transit host was taking a sabbatical to Sweden and the plan was to fill those shifts with current staff and avoid hiring at this point. The LTD summer bid would result in minor route and schedule changes that would require additional help for clients.

Sheila Thomas reported that she was working on a presentation about different mobility devices, how they fit in the ADA, and how best to accommodate people with different types of devices. She said that she would provide the committee with some of this information.

Ms. Brazell reported that changes in the Department of Human Services (DHS) due to Bob Proctor's retirement could result in some restructuring of her program. She pointed out that the RideSource Volunteer Escort program and the DHS Volunteer Driver program differed and that while they served the same populations the DHS program was not a part of the Call Center and that its 30 volunteer drivers represented a cost savings.

She announced that Mr. Proctor would officially retire at the end of the month but would help with the transition for the next three months. She commended his service to the community over the past 32 years.

IX. Adjourn

The next regularly scheduled meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, June 18, 2013 at 10 a.m.

Ms. Otten adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)