

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, September 17, 2013
10 am – Noon
Lane Transit District Next Stop Center
1099 Olive Street – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Annie Saville, Vice Chair, Presiding	Gail Lundeen
Pete Barron	Bill Morganti
Misty Brazell	Eleanor Mulder
Stefan Kwiatkowski	Ed Necker
Ruth Linoz	Scott Whetham
Patti Little	

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Paul Blaylock

OTHERS PRESENT:

Anne Angvick
David Braunschweiger
April Georgi
Beth Mulcahy

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu
Cosette Rees
Kris Lyon
Debby Bonds, captioner

I. Call to order

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

II. Introductions, Announcements, Agenda Review

Those present introduced themselves.

There were no announcements.

Ms. Rees added an item about a handle to replace straps on buses to the agenda to immediately follow VI. ATC Work Plan Review.

III. Audience Participation

L.M. Reese of Eugene spoke about an incident in which he was stranded at Valley River Center due to a malfunction of his wheelchair and when he called the RideSource Call Center for an emergency pick-up, the ride was denied because he did not provide one day's advance notice.

The committee discussed options for such emergencies. Ms. Lyon noted that RideSource did not provide the type of emergency service Mr. Reese needed and that same-day service was an option only in medical emergencies. Ms. Rees said that the Group Pass Program paid for emergency rides home for its members but that was different than the RideSource program. She mentioned that RideSource had capacity issues. Mr. Barron wondered whether there was a special fund that could be tapped to provide non-medical emergency service and he added that an accessible taxi was an option for those who could pay for it.

Mr. Whetham reported that Alternative Work Concepts had phone numbers for people who could repair chairs and sent one of them out to provide assistance when necessary. Mr. Reese commented that his chair had not been repairable on site.

Ms. Lyon described what happened to Mr. Reese as an unusual situation that was not covered by the ADA but was a concern, so she would research how other agencies handled things like this and would bring information back to the group in October for further discussion. Mr. Reese expressed his desire for the committee to be involved in the situation. Ms. Saville commented that her goal was to provide better service.

IV. ACTION: Minutes Approval, May 21, 2013

MOTION: Mr. Barron moved, seconded by Ms. Lundeen, to approve the May 21 minutes as presented. The motion carried, 8:0:1, with Mr. Kwiatkowski abstaining because he had been absent.

V. ACTION: Election of Officers

Ms. Saville nominated Pete Barron to serve as Chair. Mr. Barron said he would be honored to serve but would be absent January through March 2014 and the Vice Chair would need to take over during those months. Ms. Saville indicated that she was willing to continue as Vice Chair and to accept that responsibility.

MOTION: Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Mr. Kwiatkowski, to elect Pete Barron Chair and Annie Saville Vice Chair. The motion carried unanimously, 9:0.

Ms. Linoz arrived at 10:15 a.m.

VI. ATC Work Plan Review

Staff had prepared a schedule of meetings and a work plan for committee consideration which were included in the agenda packet. In this off-year for the biennial funding process, the ATC's three main objectives were as follows:

- Provide a more thorough review of the programs and projects that were funded through the ATC. Over the course of the year, staff would present productivity and other in-depth information about each of the funded projects and would review the coordination of services overall in Lane County.
- Review the EZ Access fixed-route half-fare program.
- Work on membership recruitment.

a) Program Review

Ms. Hekimoglu noted that the program review would be done by the committee as a whole instead of by just the Grant Review Subcommittee and that program managers would be invited to participate. The review would look at the programs in terms of how they fit into the big scheme of things, their efficiency, why they were being funded and whether they were meeting the objectives of the Coordinated Plan. This would allow

members and staff to become more familiar with each program's challenges and opportunities and would provide more information for making future funding decisions.

Answering a question, Ms. Hekimoglu confirmed that LTD did extensive advertising during the discretionary grant process. Centro Latino had been the only new program that submitted a proposal during the most recent process. The committee would have a chance to learn more about the new Veterans Transportation program during its review in May and Ms. Hekimoglu said it would be helpful to learn how other programs around the country were providing for veterans' needs.

Ms. Brazell observed that the proposed program review schedule listed some programs twice. Ms. Hekimoglu responded that this draft schedule would be revised.

b) EZ Access Program

The second area targeted for work in the current year, the EZ Access fixed-route program had a large backlog of applications that had not been entered into one of the two data bases used for the program due to a lack of staff resources to complete that effort. Staff hoped to look at a new data base that would include more information in a single place, to develop a budget and by June have a proposal for a redesigned program that could be better managed.

The group discussed the problem of expired passes, eligibility, lack of oversight in the program, and the difficulty of communicating with targeted groups of users, all issues that a single data base could help address. Ms. Hekimoglu pointed out that a shared data base also would help improve accountability and management of the provision of half-price passes to non-profit agencies for distribution to their clients.

Responding to Mr. Kwiatkowski's concern about the honored rider program for people over age 65, Ms. Rees assured the group that LTD had no plans to change that program.

Committee members suggested that LTD consider using volunteers to help catch up with entering information in the data base. There was some concern about volunteers having access to protected information provided by program applicants. Staff explained that instead of trying to catch up with data entry in a program with so many flaws it would be more efficient to begin afresh with new applications and a process that collected all the needed data at once. The process would be labor intensive at the

beginning but having the resources of Alternative Work Concepts, Customer and Accessible Services all in one location would be useful.

Staff hoped to form a subcommittee in October that would meet regularly to review, advise, and help develop a recommendation that would include a software package.

c) Membership Recruitment

Ms. Hekimoglu told the committee that a membership subcommittee should begin meeting in March to look at committee vacancies and recruitment practices. She was hopeful that a new transit advisory committee in Florence would recognize the value to the City of Florence and to the Rhody Express of having a representative on the ATC. She noted that LTD did not pay for transportation for committee members to attend meetings. The group could consider meeting in regions of the county outside the metro area.

VII. New Handle to Replace Straps on Buses

Ms. Rees asked for committee feedback on a plastic handle that LTD Marketing staff was considering purchasing to replace the straps now hanging from the poles in buses. It would be possible to sell advertising on the handles and they appeared to be more stable and comfortable than the straps.

Committee members commented that the handles could be a liability if they hit a standing rider in the head during a quick stop. Some people would be unable to grip the handle but could put their hand through a strap. Some people were too short to reach the straps where they were now and the handle would be more difficult to slide into the correct position than the straps. Some members preferred not seeing more advertising on devices. In summary, committee members were not enamored with the handle idea and considered their only advantage to be the fact that they could be sanitized.

VIII. Program Updates

a) Lane Transit District

(1) LTD now had an online storefront at www.shop.ltd.org. Over the summer, customer service staff had been busy getting it up and running. RideSource and Diamond Express ticket books also were available on the LTD Web Store. Shipping charges would go into effect for purchases after

September 30. Football shuttle passes also were available through the online store.

(2) Changes had been made to the Non-Emergency Ambulance Pilot Project and Trillium Community Health Plans had assumed responsibility for all non-emergency medical transportation for OHP Plus- eligible participants, effective July 1, 2013. Ms. Lyon said it was better for Trillium to be making the decisions on authorizing medical transportation. The Call Center continued to take calls and do scheduling for people who were not Trillium members.

(3) Preliminary engineering had been completed for a new EmX station near the north end of the Peace Health RiverBend campus. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) was reviewing the design efforts to date and would determine the level of environmental impact, which staff anticipated would be negligible. Staff were hopeful that the FTA would issue a notice to proceed by October so the remaining design and construction could take place during the winter months.

(4) Fall Service Adjustments would begin on September 22, and the new Riders Digest was available.

(5) A Request for Proposals had just been released for design of a new website and staff would ask for the committee's feedback in the months ahead.

(6) Kris Lyon has been named LTD's Employee of the Month and she would be recognized at the LTD Board meeting the following day. Her work around the Trillium changeover had been noted and was greatly appreciated.

b) *RideSource* Call Center

Ms. Angvick announced that the reimbursement program for medical transportation had increased the call volume over the summer and the client base had grown dramatically. She clarified that the program covered meals, mileage and lodging when it was medically necessary. Ms. Rees added that better coordination resulted in more appropriate use of resources.

c) *RideSource* ADA Paratransit.

Mr. Braunschweiger reported that the transition to Trillium and its systems accounted for the largest portion of recent activity. Overall *RideSource* ridership was up about three percent but ADA ridership had decreased slightly during the past fiscal year. He

attributed part of this change to the increase in riders under the Developmental Disabilities contract instead of under the ADA. In addition, more providers were doing ADA trips so the load was more spread out.

Answering Mr. Kwiatkowski's question, Mr. Braunschweiger had not noticed a decrease in shopper ridership in Eugene since the plastic bag ban went into effect.

d) South Lane County (Cottage Grove)

Ms. Linoz reported fewer rides over the summer and she wondered whether there had been an increase in providers in the RideSource program. A grant was allowing South Lane to add a vehicle to its fleet which would require expansion of the parking lot in order to accommodate it. She expressed concern about having to create an advisory committee as part of the Title 6 requirements for a grant-funded agency. Ms. Hekimoglu said that South Lane could create its own advisory committee but she believed that participation on the ATC satisfied the Title 6 requirement. She recommended that Ms. Linoz follow up on this with Ms. Rees.

e) West Lane County (Florence)

Florence did not currently have a representative on the ATC. Ms. Hekimoglu reported on work with the Confederated Tribes to expand Rhody Express service to the Three Rivers Casino. An inactive transit advisory group had become active in Florence and was promoting increased service. One proposal for a casino stop had eliminated stops at a Florence Senior Center and at the Greentrees, a 55-and-over community, but public input had convinced the City Manager to propose that the route continue to be the same as previously with an additional stop at the Casino. This would result in a 65-70 minute route instead of an hourly schedule. The one-year pilot project would be used to gauge ridership increases at the Senior Center and at Greentrees. Efforts would be made to better promote the service. The Tribes were paying over-budget costs for the pilot project, including any additional signage.

Mr. Morganti expressed his wish for a daily round trip bus between Eugene and Florence. Ms. Hekimoglu said that Porter Stage Lines provided service between Eugene and Florence and that the casino provided a daily bus to the Casino and back.

Ms. Rees complimented Ms. Hekimoglu's efforts to develop a positive relationship with the City of Florence and noted that the Florence Mayor was a good transit advocate.

f) East Lane County (Oakridge)

In Ms. Goddard's absence, Mr. Braunschweiger reported that Oakridge was getting new buses to replace older ones used primarily for meal site and medical transportation.

g) White Bird Clinic

Ms. Georgi said that White Bird had been busy with nearly 300 clients. Additional funding was providing up to four rides per month to clients. White Bird would be working with RideSource to add clients to LTD's Transportation Accessible Management System (TAMS: a software system for transportation program eligibility).

Ms. Lyon added that training was underway for White Bird to do transportation assessments. LTD was discovering that it needed help working with a number of people with mental health issues.

h) Alternative Work Concepts (AWC)

Mr. Whetham reported that AWC was doing travel training and transit host services, and was attempting to reduce the waiting lists for training. When bus services changed, more hosts were needed to provide additional support for people making transfers at the Eugene Station.

Ms. Rees expressed appreciation to AWC for staying on top of the many frequent changes that construction season had produced. Mr. Whetham complimented LTD staff and drivers on doing a good job during this hectic period.

i) Other

Ms. Linoz had attended the passenger assistance training offered by RideSource for providers under contract and noted that Alternative Work Concepts had delivered a helpful presentation that made her more aware of "people first" language, changes in preferred terminology, and how to be more sensitive to different needs and cultures.

Ms. Lyon responded that theirs was the only brokerage that offered specific training on sensitivity to customers and staff considered it a significant part of training. She appreciated the feedback.

Mr. Barron described Portland Metro's system of soliciting feedback from customers, and Ms. Rees thanked him for the information and said that as LTD considered revamping its reward and recognition program it would be good to have an avenue for soliciting positive feedback.

Ms. Lundeen called attention to a newspaper article describing the experience of riding the bus during the summer.

IX. Adjourn

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, October 15, 2013 at 10 a.m.

Ms. Saville adjourned the meeting at 11:29 a.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)