

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, October 15, 2013
10 am – Noon
Lane Transit District Next Stop Center
1099 Olive Street – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pete Barron, Chair	Annie Saville, Vice Chair
Misty Brazell	Aline Goddard
Stefan Kwiatkowski	Ruth Linoz
Gail Lundeen	Bill Morganti
Eleanor Mulder	Renee Van Norman
Scott Whetham	

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Paul Blaylock

OTHERS PRESENT:

Hoover Chamblis
David Braunschweiger
April Georgi
Beth Mulcahy
Clara Kuhn
Max Kuhn

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu
Cosette Rees
Janice Friend, captioner

I. Call to order

Mr. Barron called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order at 10:01 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

II. Introductions, Announcements, Agenda Review

Those present introduced themselves.

There were no announcements.

III. Audience Participation

No members of the audience requested to speak.

IV. ACTION: Minutes Approval, September 17, 2013

MOTION: Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Ms. Mulder, to approve the September minutes as presented. The motion was approved by consensus.

V. ACTION: Appoint LTD EZ Access Advisory Committee

Ms. Hekimoglu reported that a revised Half-Fare system would be implemented in Fiscal Year 2014-2015. Consultation with ATC members would be crucial as the project and budget were developed. This citizen committee would be made up of three or four ATC members as well as other interested people. The committee would meet regularly and report progress back to the ATC.

Ms. Rees said the program's eligibility parameters had eroded and would need to be revisited to ensure the correct parameters were in place and were administered in the best way possible. There also had been problems with the half-fare passes that were sold to non-profit organizations for free distribution to their clients being sold instead. One of the challenges would be recreating the program to provide what people needed while staying within the budget.

Mr. Morganti volunteered to serve on the committee. Mr. Kwiatkowski said he was not available Friday mornings but otherwise would be willing to serve. Mr. Chamblis offered to serve as a community member.

VI. LTD Legislative Update

LTD's new Government Relations Manager, Edward McGlone, provided the ATC with an update to recent legislative action resulting in additional money for elderly and disabled

transportation services and talked about what was coming up and how the committee could assist with lobbying efforts.

Mr. McGlone handed out a document titled "Senior and Disabled Transportation" on one side and "Oregon's Senior Medical Tax Deduction" on the other. He reported that LTD had received part of the state lottery funds it requested for completion of the West Eugene EmX and that Connect Oregon may help make up the difference. Funding was being sought for non-roadway transportation needs such as pedestrian facilities.

Part of the Legislature's "Grand Bargain" in which PERS benefits would be reduced and some taxes on businesses increased could also involve putting an income cap on the medical tax deduction for seniors and putting some of that money into services that supported seniors, including LTD's RideSource program. Mr. McGlone pointed out that accessibility based services were key to keeping people in their homes which saved the state from additional expenditures on care.

Responding to Ms. Rees's inquiry about how the committee could participate in discussions of these changes that would be considered during the 2014 legislative session, Mr. McGlone recommended sending e-mails and letters to legislators telling personal stories that illustrated the importance of transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. He stressed the importance of people coming forward who needed and used the services to provide a voice other than that of providers requesting more funding.

Ms. Mulder said she would bring to the next meeting a list of Lane County legislators and their contact information that was compiled by the League of Women voters.

Ms. Linoz commented that Cottage Grove was part of a community conversation about health needs and she wondered if the state was also looking more broadly at healthcare as including transportation, food, and housing needs as well as doctors and medicine. Ms. Rees responded that the goal of coordinated care was to decentralize and the conversation about outcomes and specific services to provide was to be in the hands of the local coordinated care organizations.

Answering further questions, Mr. McGlone said there were specific criteria for Connect Oregon grants on which proposals were graded and he agreed to provide them to the committee. Certain parts of the West Eugene EmX route where sidewalks did not currently exist would qualify and an Amazon bridge project likely would compete most favorably.

Ms. Lundeen wondered about plans for expansion of RideSource in the northern part of Lane County (i.e., Junction City). Mr. McGlone indicated that LTD would like to expand in that

direction but there had been no specific conversations about it at the legislative level. He anticipated that a transportation funding package may be on the Governor's agenda for 2015.

The committee briefly discussed moving away from using gas tax revenue for transit funding and the possibility of a vehicle mile tax or carbon tax as a new funding source.

Ms. Rees invited Mr. McGlone to attend future meetings of the committee and told him it could be a powerful advocacy group. She encouraged committee participation in future Transit Days in Salem, typically held in March or April during the legislative session. The event provided an opportunity to meet legislators and attend hearings and an attempt was made to schedule it around transportation committee hearings.

VII. LTD West Eugene EmX (WEEE) Project Update

Facilities Manager Joe McCormack presented an update regarding recent developments in the WEEE project. The design team expected to have a 30 percent complete construction document within the next month and a half and was trying to nail down station aspects as well as roadway details. Station layouts would be similar to Gateway stations with a minimum 10-foot depth and 12 feet when possible. A focus group would consider accessibility for people with visual disabilities at an October 17 meeting.

With the design work done by spring 2014 some project work would begin in the summer with utility relocation being the biggest such project EWEB had ever tackled. Comcast also had significant infrastructure moving work ahead. Work was continuing on acquisition of additional right of way property. While it was an ambitious goal, service start date was scheduled for 2016.

The Franklin EmX project had pioneered audible pedestrian signals and they were now found everywhere. They were on a timed network in the downtown area but further out from the core the signals were by request.

The EmX vehicles in current use were no longer being manufactured so LTD was seeking a new bus that would best meet its needs and would function well everywhere.

Answering Mr. Morganti's questions about routing and schedules, Mr. McCormack said the EmX would travel in a continuous loop between RiverBend and west Eugene so it would be a single ride between the farthest points of the system.

Because when traveling from west Eugene he had been denied boarding due to lack of space for wheelchairs, Mr. Chamblis requested that capacity for chairs be increased on the new buses. Ms. Rees explained that once the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a vehicle

manufacturer was released it would be important to discuss details like layouts and securement systems. She recommended inviting the LTD staff member managing the RFP process to the next ATC meeting to hear the committee's priorities for accessibility and capacity. LTD was also ordering new smaller buses and this would be an opportunity to provide some input on them as well. Ms. Rees noted that LTD's bus purchases had to meet Buy America requirements.

Mr. Chamblis also brought up problems with the slope of the ramps now being used on LTD buses. Ms. Hekimoglu said this could also be discussed at the next meeting and added that a LTD was working with the vendor to improve the slope and a new version of the ramp was currently being tested on the 1101 bus.

Ms. Mulder reiterated her hope that Connect Oregon funding could be used for sidewalks on West 11th. WEEE Project Manager John Evans reported that all sidewalks that were adjusted would be built to current standards. LTD was working with the City of Eugene to create a more accessible pedestrian environment and a significant portion of construction funding was dedicated to upgrading sidewalks. The project website included maps that showed all the planned improvements.

Mr. McCormack cautioned that there would be times during construction when traffic lanes and sidewalks had to be closed. LTD would work with the contractor about creative ways of providing alternative routes. In addition, confining work areas to small sections would help reduce the impacts. Mr. Evans indicated that LTD would have additional staff working on constant web updates and alerts that would help people work around the construction closures.

Mr. Blaylock asked about EmX expansion plans after the west Eugene project. Mr. Evans said the Springfield City Council had approved initiating a study of enhanced transit on Main Street to Thurston and connecting to Lane Community College. Concurrently LTD was looking at a northwest Eugene to LCC extension. Mr. Blaylock commented that there was a need for EmX to serve River Road.

VIII. Program Review – Rhody Express

Ms. Hekimoglu reviewed information in the packet about Rhody Express's current services, the history of the budget and ridership. She was working with the City of Florence and the Confederated Tribes to add service to the casino as a one-year pilot project providing eight round trips per week day between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on about an hourly basis.

Clara and Max Kuhn, operators of the Rhody Express and associated ADA services, provided additional information about how what began as a taxi company developed into a dial-a-ride

service providing service primarily for seniors and people with disabilities. Eventually the Florence Area Council on Transportation had gone out of service and the City of Florence had discontinued its involvement. LTD had assumed administrative responsibilities for the service and River City Taxi had successfully competed in an RFP process to receive a five year agreement to operate the Rhody Express bus service in Florence and had now been providing service for about 12 years. In its first month 56 riders had been served and now that number was just under 1,000.

Answering questions, Mr. Kuhn said that ridership had dropped during the past year likely because the core group of riders were seniors and that group was shrinking. He expected the pilot project with the casino to increase ridership.

Ms. Rees pointed out that shrinking ridership compromised the service's ability to obtain future funding. The casino had agreed to both promote the service and to offset the additional costs for providing ADA Paratransit service.

Ms. Hekimoglu explained that 5311 funds combined with Special Transportation Fund money and a contribution from the City of Florence supported the service. She noted that Rhody Express was well managed and the bus was rarely out of service for repair or maintenance. River City Taxi was a contracted provider with the RideSource Call Center, so also did some Medicaid and ADA trips.

The casino operated a free bus between Eugene and the casino which offered a possible connection with the Rhody Express. Ms. Hekimoglu was exploring the possibility of the casino bus adding a university area stop to its route that currently ran through north Eugene to Springfield. Mr. Barron wondered about the casino bus connecting with the West Eugene EmX and whether the casino bus was accessible. Ms. Rees added that the Tribes could apply for 5311 transportation funds and she expected to see more partnerships in the future.

Ms. Rees reported that Oregon public transit was looking for gaps in service and how they could be filled. She anticipated being asked to look at the lack of service between Yachats and Florence and said there was a new trend for transit providers not to be limited to county boundaries.

Ms. Mulder announced that the new Talgo train would be on line soon and ODOT was evaluating routes and seeking public comment. Ms. Rees pointed out that the person in charge of rail at ODOT was also in charge of public transit which was resulting in some silos being broken down and partnerships forming.

Mr. Blaylock spoke about the Talgo train going into Corvallis instead of just through Albany on the north-south corridor. Ms. Hekimoglu said she would provide more information about this at the next meeting.

Responding to Ms. Lundeen's question, Ms. Hekimoglu said that average cost per mile was calculated by dividing the total cost per year by the number of miles traveled.

IX. Program Review – Diamond Express

Diamond Express was a 5311-funded service providing transportation between Oakridge and Eugene. Its ridership was robust and no significant changes were being considered, but the mid-day curb-to-curb service in the metro area was being reviewed for use and the services being accessed.

Ms. Goddard provided an outline of the daily schedule for the Diamond Express which had been operating on the same schedule and route for the past ten years. Ridership had increased each year. The first bus of the day went to 11th and Willamette while the second trip took riders to their destinations, primarily Gateway, Wal-Mart, and Valley River. Of the three buses, the 18-passenger one was good for people who used mobility devices and often was used for medical transport. Each vehicle was equipped with bike spaces and quite a few riders used them.

Mr. Chamblis wondered about the impact of Oakridge being promoted as a bike capitol on the number of bikes being transported. Ms. Goddard said use was heavier on some days but there had been no recent capacity-based denials of boarding. Mr. Braunschweiger added that private charters handled transportation for special events and on weekends. Ms. Hekimoglu noted that bike capacity could not be increased on current vehicles but when they were replaced, LTD could look into that.

Answering a question, Ms. Goddard said that occasionally more people wanted to return to Oakridge than had ridden the bus into Eugene but Ms. Hekimoglu said it was very rare that there were extra riders needing the back-up bus to be put into service.

Ms. Hekimoglu explained that the 5311 funding for East Lane was not formula based as it was for Florence and South Lane, and it was possible to apply for as much as was needed. ODOT now required coordination of service with Amtrak and an agreement would need to be developed on how the services would connect. She noted that both Diamond and Rhody Express were recently added to Google Transit maps.

X. Follow-Up – September Public Comment Issue

In response to the request by L.M. Reese for the RideSource Call Center to provide same-day

urgent non-medical rides in circumstances such as when a power wheelchair broke down, Kris Lyon had contacted four transit districts in Oregon that participated with Medicaid and ADA Paratransit to find out how they responded to same-day urgent non-medical ride requests. All those contacted confirmed that providing a same day urgent, non-medical trip was outside the scope of what was required of the ADA Paratransit program. Most areas would attempt to do what they could, but most often it was to provide the person with the phone number of another transportation company that could do the ride at a cost. All systems stated they would not have a driver push a broken power wheelchair due to safety concerns for the operator. Ms. Lyon also had contacted Trillium about the situation. Staff would provide the ATC with a formal recommendation at the November meeting.

XI. Program Updates

- South Lane County (Cottage Grove): Ms. Linoz reported that South Lane Wheels had been able to purchase credits from the state to bridge the gap until the Federal government reopened and 5311 funds became available.
- East Lane County (Oakridge): Ms. Goddard reported that Oakridge had been in the news due to a \$40 million drug bust in August.
- White Bird Clinic: Ms. Georgi said White Bird continued to work on TAMS integration (online assessment program). Ms. Hekimoglu noted that LTD had just signed a new five year contract with White Bird.

Ms. Lundeen distributed flyers announcing the Viking Sal "BIG HUSH" silent auction fundraiser to be held November 10.

Ms. Rees announced that the Veterans Stand Down would be held October 25 at Willamalane Center at 32nd and Main in Springfield from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Many services would be available and LTD would have an information table. LTD day passes for the event were available at St. Vincent de Paul and Dairy Mart locations.

XII. Adjourn

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, November 19, 2013 at 10 a.m.

Mr. Barron adjourned the meeting at 11:29 a.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)