

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 21, 2014
10 am – Noon
Lane Transit District Next Stop Center
1099 Olive Street – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Annie Saville, Vice Chair	Gail Lundeen
Aline Goddard	Bill Morganti
Rachel Jacobsen	Eleanor Mulder
Stefan Kwiatkowski	Ed Necker, ex officio
Ruth Linoz	Renee Van Norman
Patti Little	Scott Whetham

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Paul Blaylock

OTHERS PRESENT:

Hoover Chamblis
April Georgi
Tim Shearer
Cari Turner
Dennis Turner
Jennifer Vogel

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu
Cosette Rees
Janice Friend, captioner
Kris Lyon
Beth Mulcahy
David Braunschweiger
Todd Lipkin

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 or changes to the agenda.

III. Audience Participation

Jennifer Vogel said people on a limited income were not receiving adequate services. She complained of being unable to self-schedule Waivered Rides Program taxi rides and of having to wait for her rides and being dropped off too early.

Ms. Lyon responded that the Waivered Ride program, intended to keep people living at home, provided up to 12 rides per month for trips between 0 and 10 miles one way. Only people receiving services in the home through Senior and Disabled Services were eligible and rides were scheduled through the Call Center. Individual providers determined the length of their window for pick-ups.

Ms. Little offered to speak with Ms. Vogel's case worker and her supervisor if needed and Ms. Rees also offered to speak with Ms. Vogel about her issues outside of the meeting.

Ms. Vogel recommended implementing an electronic debit card system for these rides and allowing clients to handle their own scheduling.

IV. ACTION: Minutes Approval, November 19, 2013

Mr. Morganti requested an addition to the third paragraph on page 7 of the minutes so the second sentence read as follows: "The functionality of the Transportation Access Management System (TAMS) and the Extensible Provider Connection (EPC), software programs used by the Call Center, was being evaluated."

MOTION: Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Mr. Kwiatkowski, to approve the November minutes as corrected. The motion was approved unanimously, 11:0.

V. Staff Presentation: Annual Route Review

Andy Vobora, LTD Director of Customer Services and Planning, reviewed the status of the 2014 Annual Route Review (ARR) and described the proposed route changes identified for consideration. In addition, the District's fare policy supported rotating fare price increases, which meant that the District should evaluate a monthly pass fare increase for 2014. The

board chose not to adjust any part of the fare structure in 2013, and the last fare increase occurred in 2012, when cash fares were increased. The last monthly pass fare increase occurred in 2010.

If approved, the proposed \$2 increase in adult monthly passes and \$1 increase in youth and half-fare program pass prices would represent approximately a 4 percent increase. The consumer price index rose an average of 2 percent per year during the past four years.

Mr. Vobora showed a chart outlining the proposed route changes affecting routes 11, 19, 27, 28, 40, 55, 78, and 96, most of which added service. System-wide holiday service would be reinstated on July 4, Labor Day, New Years, and Memorial Day.

Mr. Vobora described opportunities to provide feedback on the changes which included the Good Earth Home Show and the Springfield Chamber Business Expo. LTD was notifying Title VI agencies, paid and social media, group pass organizations, and neighborhood organizations about the changes.

Ms. Rees clarified that along with adding back holiday service on fixed routes, RideSource also would operate on those days.

Mr. Vobora concluded his presentation with the comment that as development occurred around EWEB and 5th Avenue, LTD would look at increased service needs in those areas.

VI. ACTION: Supplemental Special Transportation Funds (STF) Allocation

The September 2013 Special Session of the Oregon Legislature made \$5 million in state general funds available to the Special Transportation Fund Program. In October, the Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) provided input on allocation, and in November, the Oregon Transportation Commission approved a population based distribution with a \$30,000 biennial minimum allocation. The legislature also requested \$100,000 of the funds be used to continue a pilot project that currently was testing activities to improve medical access for veterans. The funds were intended to return the program to previous service levels. Lane Transit District, as the STF Agency for Lane County, was allocated \$401,982 for two years. The In-District portion of the allocation (84%) would be \$337,665, and the Out-of-District allocation (16%) would be \$64,317.

LTD Finance Manager Todd Lipkin reported that these one-time funds were not intended for new projects, and staff recommended that the in-district portion be used to fund RideSource ADA Paratransit for the next two years, freeing up other funds currently used for that purpose. LTD would continue urging the Legislature to find sustainable funding for seniors and people with disabilities. In the short-term, out-of-district STF funds could increase the reserve while in

the long-term they would be used for vehicle replacement and maintenance needs. Ms. Rees noted these funds were for the current biennium.

Ms. Linoz wondered if the funds could be used for the Veterans program but Ms. Hekimoglu said vets were being served through RideSource. Ms. Rees pointed out that the Legislature had allocated \$100,000 statewide to provide medical transportation for veterans. Mr. Lipkin added that the intent was not to increase RideSource services but just to free up funds that could be used to benefit more people.

Ms. Mulder brought up the issue of increasing the payroll tax. Mr. Vobora described that as a separate issue and said the board was meeting with representatives of businesses and was awaiting results of a study on whether the economy had sufficiently recovered to consider increasing the payroll tax.

MOTION: Mr. Kwiatkowski moved, seconded by Ms. Mulder, to approve applying the supplemental in-district STF funds to RideSource ADA Paratransit service and to hold the out-of-district supplemental funds in reserve for discussion and allocation at a later time. The motion carried unanimously, 11:0.

VII. Staff Presentation: West Eugene EmX Update

John Evans, EmX Project Manager, provided an update and discussed the proposed stops, vehicles, and the terminus design. He reported that the project was at the 30 percent design stage and all big decisions were being solidified. A recent travel simulation demonstrated no net loss of travel time for general traffic and faster transit time once the West Eugene EmX route was operational.

One significant change had been to move the western terminus across 11th from Target and place it in the far corner of an unused area of the Walmart parking lot, resulting in covered stations on both the north and south side of 11th and providing an area for bus turnaround and layovers. A new button-activated pedestrian crossing on 11th would increase convenience for both fixed route and EmX passengers but with no facilities in the bus turnaround area, there could be an issue if passengers wanted to remain on the vehicle while it turned around instead of getting off, crossing the street, and waiting at the inbound stop for the bus to complete its turnaround.

Committee members discussed the pros and cons of requiring riders to vacate the bus while it turned around, noting that the absence of a platform in the turnaround could create a problem for riders remaining on the bus while it was in that area and that traffic may make it difficult for the bus to make the left turn into the turnaround area.

Responding to Ms. Mulder's inquiry about creating a park and ride area at this location, Mr. Evans said it was not LTD's policy to purchase land for such lots but if demand increased that was something that could be considered. He added that he would meet with Walmart representatives later in the day to discuss options.

MOTION: Ms. Linoz moved, seconded by Mr. Kwiatkowski, to recommend that riders be required to disembark at the Target stop to allow the vehicle to be empty in the turnaround location. The motion carried 7:3, with Ms. Little, Mr. Morganti, and Ms. Mulder voting in opposition.

VIII. PROGRAM REVIEW: White Bird Clinic

White Bird Crisis Manager April Georgi presented information about White Bird's Mental Health Transportation program that provided transportation for people who could not use public transit (either LTD or RideSource) due to a disabling mental condition. She called attention to the history of services on page 12 in the agenda packet and Ms. Hekimoglu reviewed information in the packet.

White Bird was beginning to perform RideSource evaluations and eligibility assessments. Ms. Georgi reported that White Bird had not added staff to perform the assessments and she was being trained by Senior and Disabled Services and Alternative Work Concepts to serve in this capacity. Some of LTD's 5310 discretionary grant funds had been allocated to fund the eligibility assessment portion of the White Bird program.

Most of the trips were one way in order to keep costs down. Ridership and the budget both had steadily increased over the years. Ms. Georgi offered a correction to the packet information: 536, not 445, persons were served in FY13. Typically the program depleted its funds before the end of the year and Ms. Hekimoglu suggested looking for ways of increasing the budget in the next biennium in order to ensure that all people were being served.

Ms. Georgi described program clientele as people who were dealing with a variety of extreme mental health issues and depended on the program for transportation to social services and counseling appointments or to get their medications. White Bird dealt with a large portion of the homeless population. Ms. Rees added that many of the clients were likely to be kicked off buses because they were unable to behave appropriately and would be unable to obtain services in the absence of this program. Answering a question, she said that when a rider was removed from the bus, LTD typically contacted the police or Cahoots.

Responding to Ms. Linoz's question about whether health care reform made more people eligible for services, Ms. Georgi said that White Bird's programs served people suffering from mental health disorders regardless of whether they had insurance.

IX. PROGRAM REVIEW: Oakridge Dial-a-Ride

Ms. Rees explained that the committee had reviewed the operation of Oakridge's Diamond Express at a previous meeting and the current review was of the provision of Medicaid service through the RideSource Call Center.

Ms. Rees reported on a conversation with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) regional transportation coordinator who informed her that LTD should not be using Federal funds for these trips, creating a conundrum about how to provide service without using those publically funded vehicles for this non-emergency medical transport program. The Call Center was working with private providers to encourage them to take some of these trips, and also was exploring use of the Diamond Express, volunteer drivers with a reimbursement, and other ways of meeting the need. Ms. Hekimoglu pointed out that Medicaid rides needed to be an incidental part of the Dial-a-Ride services but for the ten vehicles in the fleet, it had become a major part of their use.

Ms. Hekimoglu said that a full review of Oakridge service was underway and may result in a redesign. Funds for the current year had already been distributed, but staff hoped the review could be completed as quickly as possible.

Ms. Little commented that ODOT also raised an issue with Senior and Disabled Services about Meals on Wheels and use of vehicles to transport food instead of people.

Ms. Goddard reported that she used ten part-time drivers for the Medicaid program and four of them also drove the Diamond Express with one hour and 15 minutes allowed for a trip from Oakridge to Eugene.

Ms. Rees concluded by saying the service was complex and covered many miles. She commended Ms. Goddard for the work she did and said that if Medicaid provided vehicles it would solve the problem.

Mr. Necker left the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

X. Program Updates

a) Lane Transit District

During the December snow and ice storm Customer Service and Accessible Services staff performed admirably as an information resource for customers. Staff had worked on Saturday when the Customer Service Center was closed to ensure that customers could receive routing information from a staff person. During the storm, staff received calls from many first time or infrequent bus riders. Also with the snow and ice, RideSource provided some extra trips at the request of PeaceHealth Medical Center which had an increased patient demand but found it difficult to get medical and administrative staff to and from the hospital because of the snowy conditions.

LTD had established a partnership with Willamalane to participate in a summer youth pass to provide community youth with the opportunity to access all Willamalane facilities, including full LTD access, between June and August. Additional recreational and educational partners would be included in the package such as the Eugene Emeralds, Skate World, and Timber Bowl.

The Good Earth Home and Garden Show January 24-26 at the Lane Events Center would provide staff with a good venue to discuss the Annual Route Review, possible fare increases, and transportation options.

b) *RideSource* Call Center

Ann Angvick reported that with the increase in Oregon Health Plan (OHP) eligibility, more customers were eligible for Medicaid rides so additional call takers had been added. While the number of calls did not increase, the time required for them was longer.

Mr. Whetham left the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

To address capacity issues resulting from new customers, taxi providers were asked increase the number of vehicles and drivers. In terms of staff time, the reimbursement program added in July was having a greater impact than was the increase in OHP eligibility.

Ms. Lyon mentioned that due to Medicaid expansion resulting from OHP increased eligibility, the number of eligible individuals on the Call Center roster had increased by 22,000. Only about four to five percent of those needing services were being served. Ms. Little added that the increase had also affected those doing transportation assessments.

c) *RideSource* ADA Paratransit

David Braunschweiger reported a busy month. He said that while Medicaid rides were an incidental use of RideSource vehicles, those rides were sometimes denied because ADA trips had a higher priority. He thanked dispatchers and drivers for their efforts to provide limited services during the snow when many vehicles were stuck.

Mr. Braunschweiger complimented the service provided by CAHOOTS during an incident involving a person with schizophrenic symptoms.

d) South Lane County (Cottage Grove)

Ruth Linoz appreciated the business opportunities provided by Medicaid and said she had increased the number of drivers and vehicles in anticipation of increased volume. South Lane had lost some drivers but had recruited and trained new ones. She looked forward to the arrival of a new vehicle later in the week. Ms. Linoz saw travel time as a challenge and said contract guidelines prevented serving each customer as if they were the only person in the system. She saw a need for riders to become better educated about the service parameters that determined what providers could do.

e) West Lane County (Florence)

No representatives were present.

f) East Lane County (Oakridge):

Ms. Goddard had nothing additional to report.

g) White Bird Clinic

Ms. Georgi's report was covered under the program review agenda item.

h) Alternative Work Concepts

Scott Whetham had to leave the meeting earlier.

i) Other

Ms. Lundeen commended both LTD and RideSource drivers for keeping people moving during the December snow.

XI. Adjourn

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at 10 a.m.

Ms. Saville adjourned the meeting at 11:57 a. m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)