

MINUTES OF BOARD SERVICE COMMITTEE

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

Wednesday, March 4, 2014

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on February 28, 2014, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Board Service Committee of the Lane Transit District held a Board service committee meeting on Wednesday, March 4, 2014, beginning at 3:30 p.m. in the LTD Board Room at 3500 East 17th Avenue, Eugene.

Present: Michael Dubick
Gary Gillespie
Ed Necker
Ron Kilcoyne, General Manager
Andy Vobora, Director of Customer Services and Planning
Tom Schwetz, Planning Manager
Sasha Luftig, Development Planner
Ken Augustson, Service Planner
Heather Lindsay, Service Planner
Tim Simon, Service Planner
Russ Arnold, Marketing Manager
Angie Marzano, Marketing Representative
Susan Oldland, Minutes Recorder

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mr. Necker convened the meeting at 3:33 p.m. and called the roll of the Lane Transit District (LTD) Board Service Committee.

Mr. Schwetz explained that the meeting would consist of an overview of the proposed service adjustments, fare increase proposal, and public outreach efforts.

REVIEW PROPOSED - 2014 ANNUAL ROUTE REVIEW SERVICE CHANGES

11 Thurston: Mr. Schwetz described the proposed routing change which would serve areas along 32nd, 42nd, and Jasper Road once per hour on weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Mr. Schwetz said that this change was driven primarily to provide service to the Relief Nursery, but also would provide connections to schools in the area. Mr. Gillespie asked what the name of the route would be, and Mr. Kilcoyne replied that this service would likely have a new route number. Mr. Necker agreed and suggested the route be called the 10 to clarify the difference in service for the riders. Mr. Gillespie added that he had received positive feedback about this new routing.

Mr. Arnold explained that an open house was planned for March 20 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Relief Nursery, and notices had been distributed along the route to inform the neighborhood of the proposed change and the open house. Additionally, a mailing was planned for distribution to about 3,100 homes in the area to invite them to the open house.

Mr. Vobora reported on a meeting with the Springfield City Council, in which LTD provided an overview of all the service changes. The proposed changes to the 11 generated a fair amount of discussion, including its effect on regular route 11 ridership and how to measure its success since it would serve a

different population at a different level of service. In essence, this discussion was a productivity versus coverage debate.

Mr. Vobora said Councilor Woodrow expressed concern that bus service was not compatible with this neighborhood and that residents should provide a mandate that they wanted the service. He said she had asked if a survey was planned, and Mr. Vobora explained that a system-wide survey was planned but not one for this specific area. He said she also expressed concern that this service would be dangerous. Mr. Vobora said Mayor Lundberg voiced concern that the service change could negatively affect the Main Street visioning process currently underway. He said she also stated that the proposed service was too infrequent and that current service was successful and simple. She had stated that the change could affect this success.

Mr. Necker asked if LTD had safety concerns about running on Jasper Road. Mr. Vobora responded that he did not see any particular issues with this routing; buses had used it in the past, and large trucks used it currently. He continued that Mayor Lundberg voiced the most compelling reason not to implement the new routing. He also addressed concerns that the service would be discontinued once Main Street EmX was on line; he assured those present that this would not be the case. Mr. Dubick asked if the new service would be inbound and outbound; Mr. Vobora confirmed this fact. Mr. Gillespie asked how hard Jasper was to cross, and Mr. Vobora explained that it had two vehicle lanes with bike lanes, so was not difficult to cross.

Mr. Schwetz pointed out a map that illustrated the distribution and concentration of communities of concern such as the elderly, minorities, low-income, people with disabilities, and those without cars.

19 Fairview: Mr. Schwetz said this route currently was on a two-hour schedule and had very low ridership throughout the average weekday so was proposed for removal. The primary concern was about serving the senior center, and LTD was coordinating with Willamalane on possibly using one of its vehicles to provide transportation to get elderly people to the center from the Springfield Station. The entire route was within walking distance of other transit service and the eastern portion of the route had direct access to downtown Springfield.

27 Fairmount: Mr. Schwetz described the proposed change as moving from inbound on High Street to inbound on Oak Street, with outbound remaining on Pearl Street. It would turn onto Oak at 19th. Staff saw more destinations being located on Oak Street but some business owners on High Street had provided feedback that there were a number of destinations on that street as well. Operators had also indicated the extra couple of blocks to get to Oak were more congested. Rider feedback had articulated Oak Street was over-served and High Street was under-served, but boardings on the High Street stop were only about two per day. The change would be attractive to riders going to Safeway and the medical offices located on Oak Street. Answering Mr. Gillespie's question, Mr. Schwetz said there would be no impact on the Laurel Hill runs.

28 Hilyard: The proposed change was to add evening service with 9:45 p.m. and 10:45 p.m. trips. Mr. Gillespie said he had appreciated the addition of earlier morning service.

55 River Road Connector: With low ridership, especially on the interior routing portions and heavier ridership farther out, staff had taken the proposed changes for the 55 Connector to the River Road community to find out how people would feel about the route no longer running past Emerald Park. This resulted in a modified proposal but it still did not go by the park. A second open house was held. LTD was told that North Eugene students came to the park for swimming but conversations at the open house indicated there were other ways for them to access the park and they did not need to come from the front. As part of the rebuilding of Howard Elementary School, the 4J district had proposed a pedestrian path from Howard to connect with a path leading through the park. This path also could be a connector for transit. After conversations with the director of the recreation center, he agreed to have his staff use

a form provided by LTD to ask people arriving at the center how they got there. LTD staff also would set up an information table at the center later in the month during the heaviest used days and times and talk to people. Available data showed few boardings but it was notable that different people used the center every day. Consideration also needed to be given to the fact that 250 apartments/condos were being built on the nearby open field. Most of the feedback reflected that people did not object to the route going downtown but they also wanted it to circle the park. The challenge for staff was how to serve both the park and the outer area and also get downtown on an hourly schedule. The fiscal impact of the change was about the same as the current route which was the only route that was a loop only and did not go downtown.

Mr. Gillespie confirmed with staff that a primary reason for the change was to remove congestion on other River Road routes that had produced reports of wheelchairs and other riders being left behind due to capacity. This bus would follow the 51 route into downtown.

Mr. Schwetz said a staff presentation on this had been allotted only ten minutes on the River Road Neighborhood meeting agenda. He expected there would be attendees at the public hearing on service changes who were there to try to save the Emerald Park stop.

Mr. Gillespie commented that people who potentially could use the bus but who were not actually riders were likely to come forward when their ability for potential use of the service was at risk and he believed if the data did not support keeping the park stop and the change would alleviate some congestion on River Road, LTD should go ahead with this change.

Mr. Schwetz noted that the park district was important to people in this area and they were extremely active around issues that impacted them, having passed a bond measure with 73 percent of the vote. One resident had said discontinuing service to the park was not an option. Some in the area believed the City of Eugene intended to take over the park district.

78 UO/Seneca Station: This route currently ran concurrently with the University of Oregon fall, winter, and spring terms and the proposed change would add service over the summer. Mixed-use development was planned for the former Rexius site and more low-income housing was going in on Bailey Hill. This was the only route running down the western portion of 18th Avenue and was the only way to get from 18th to the Seneca Station and Fred Meyer store.

The summer service may be implemented in 2014 instead of waiting until 2015. This would add some cost for the current year but it was minimal and LTD's finance staff saw no problems. Building the schedules for summer would begin the following week so staff needed to get a sense of whether this route would be added. Mr. Gillespie considered the change a great idea. He added that gathering data on ridership over the summer while there were fewer students would be beneficial. Mr. Necker concurred. The summer supplement to the Rider's Digest was one way to market the service change and signs at stops were another effective way of reaching people who used the route.

At this point, the group briefly discussed process and whether they should meet once more prior to the full Board's April meeting and decision, but after the March 20 open house when more input on the Route 11 change was expected. No decision was reached.

96 Coburg: Mr. Schwetz spoke about the north Eugene "doughnut hole" area where service currently was non-existent. This proposed change would reroute the 96 going to Coburg through the middle of that hole. In addition to the route change, a couple of trips also would be added. Steve Lee who owned the Monaco property and paid significant payroll taxes had indicated there were about 500 employees at that site currently and he said additional businesses whose employees were strong transit users would be starting up by fall, bringing the employee numbers up to between 750 and 1,000. Mr. Lee had recommended LTD use the turnaround on the Monaco property. Mr. Schwetz said this would add a few

minutes of travel time and slightly more cost. He said staff would look carefully at how it might work and come back with some options.

The Northeast neighbors had expressed concern about bypassing the senior facilities being built in the area but it was unclear whether formal comments had been submitted. The 66 and 67 would continue to serve Coburg Road. With the 66 heading downtown slightly before the 96, some riders passed up boarding the 66 and preferred to wait for the 96, possibly because of the 96's stop on 8th Avenue.

An onboard survey was conducted that morning. Two employees of Camping Town who boarded the outbound 96 at Harlow would be directly impacted. Most riders inbound from Coburg were happy with the modifications, especially with the additional two trips. A couple of people living in Coburg were concerned that they no longer would be able to access Sheldon Plaza's shopping amenities. However, with the 96 not being an all-day route and having a six hour gap in service, it was not really conducive to shopping trips and people could get off on Crescent and transfer to the 66 or 67 to reach shopping destinations.

Sid Leiken had talked about the need for this service during a Lane Livability Consortium meeting.

Mr. Gillespie suggested that businesses on the Monaco site could be encouraged to use the pass program. Mr. Vobora commented that the Group Pass Program did encourage ridership.

Holiday Service: LTD staff had been considering adding back a full package of holidays. The survey had asked people to rank four proposed holidays according to which they most wanted service added. July 4th was the most wanted, with Memorial Day, Labor Day, and New Year's Day ranked less highly.

Cost summary for 2014 service adjustments: Mr. Schwetz noted that discontinuing the 2:52 p.m. Route 11 trip would save about \$16,000. The total cost of the adjustments without factoring in fare revenue would be \$92,000 with holiday service being the most costly.

Future Service: In addition to this years' service modifications, staff were looking ahead and anticipating the need for additional service for the new Veterans' Clinic, the state hospital in Junction City, and numerous student housing projects. West Eugene EmX service was expected to begin in 2016 or 2017 and a future expansion of Crescent Village, the Obie project around the 5th Street Market, and development of the EWEB and Courthouse areas all would have service implications. Communication with Northwest Community Credit Union about serving its facility in the EWEB area had already begun although here was no proposal as yet. As the Riverfront area was redeveloped a shuttle route may be warranted.

News had been received earlier that day that the FTA had apportioned the full \$24 million and the President's budget included the \$51 million balance. Transit appropriations no longer included earmarks and it was left to the FTA to determine how funds would be distributed.

Mr. Schwetz reported the lawsuit was awaiting the judge's ruling on both parties' requests for summary judgment, which normally took some time.

Additional comments on proposed adjustments:

The group acknowledged the Springfield Mayor and council's concern about avoiding route changes in the short-term that could generate opposition to and put at risk the larger project planned for Main Street.

Mr. Gillespie posed a question about the once-per-hour diversion of the Route 11 bus from Main Street between 32nd and 42nd that would result in 20-minute service in that section. Someone who did not want to wait 20 minutes for the next bus could walk a maximum of six blocks to another stop.

Mr. Gillespie also asked if Relief Nursery expected its staff members to become riders. The Springfield Relief Nursery program was still being built and its interest in transit was more focused on volunteers and program participants than on staff. The current facility on Chambers in Eugene was not heavily used by transit riders. Mr. Gillespie suggested trying the Route 11 change and seeing what happened. Mr. Schwetz said that staff wanted to gather more input at the March 20 meeting and if there was positive feedback and the Mayor was more comfortable, staff would advise going ahead with the proposed change.

Mr. Schwetz stressed that staff did not know at this point what its recommendation to the Board on Route 11 would be. The area needed service and this had appeared to be the only way to do it without incurring huge costs. For him the fact that the current route on Main Street was simple, successful, and easy to understand raised concerns about change, but he had supported the idea because it was one way to provide needed service. However, he was reserving his final recommendation to see what outreach showed the public wanted. Staff would make a recommendation on March 19 then the public hearing would be held that night and if something came up then, additional modifications could be made to the final recommendation staff brought to the Board in April.

Fare Increases: This also was the time when LTD reevaluated pass prices. Proposed changes included a \$2 increase for monthly passes and a similar increase for three-month passes. Group pass pricing would increase 5.8 percent with a differential in the rates for payroll tax payers vs. non payroll tax paying businesses. A draft rate equity analysis showed no disproportionate impact to minorities or people with low income.

The survey had asked respondents how they paid their fares. Most of those who selected an "other" category had written in they were a UO or LCC student which actually indicated they were group pass users. When asked if a fare increase would change their riding habits most responded not at all and some indicated they would either ride less and pay cash or ride less and use the 10-ride ticket books.

Outreach: Mr. Arnold described community events staff had attended. An offer to do presentations was extended to Title VI agencies and neighborhood associations. A presentation to one Title VI agency was scheduled for March 20. There had been an operator input session. An onboard survey for Route 96 was underway and one would be done for Route 19. As mentioned earlier, staff would host an information table at the Emerald Park rec center.

About 600 responses to the public survey had been received. In addition a good number of e-mails were received about specific routes and these would be compiled along with the summary of presentations. On the survey people were asked to indicate their top three requests for service additions. Limiting it to only three was intended to illustrate to the community the vast amount of needs for which LTD was being asked to provide and to demonstrate that resources were constrained. The top request was for increased late night service, followed by more frequent weekend service and increased service frequency system-wide. Of the 600 respondents about 250 indicated late night service was their top choice.

Mr. Arnold described how questions on the survey were designed to look primarily for potential negative impacts the proposed changes might have on riders. There was a question about LTD's ability to correlate answers to the questions about the initial proposal for Route 55 changes to respondents' IP addresses and then to resurvey those who actually used the route on the revised proposal.

Staff shared how the proposed changes were depicted on the website and demonstrated how someone would navigate through it. The information had been available since the first part of January but was not heavily promoted until more recently when paid advertising began. A big social media push would occur in early April and the survey would end at midnight on April 6, giving staff time to compile all the feedback and get it to the Board before the April meeting.

Signs inviting e-mail feedback had been posted on bus stop signs and the e-mail address posted on Route 11 signage was unique so staff would know from where that stop-specific input was coming. Laptops had been made available at the Home Show to encourage people to take the survey while there. Most of the traffic however had been through the LTD website even though promotions through social media had been purchased.

A memo was attached to the agenda that summarized the process from this point forward:

- March 19 Board public hearing on service and fare changes at LCC Downtown Center
- March 20 workshop on the annual route review at Relief Nursery
- Ongoing research and outreach related to route changes for 19, 55, and 96
- April 7 second public hearing

Traditionally the LTD Board held two public hearings on these changes and often at the second hearing the Board was asked to adopt the package of changes. In an effort to avoid taking up Board members' time unnecessarily, April 7 could be an open house or "modified public hearing" that only required the attendance of one Board member or the committee. It was hard to predict what kind of turnout either type of meeting would attract and more about that would be known after the first public hearing. With no intent to vote at the April 7 meeting no Board quorum would be required.

Staff emphasized that a draft recommendation to the Board would be made public for the March 19 hearing but input from that hearing and other feedback LTD received could result in a revised package for presentation April 7. Additional feedback at that meeting could change the proposal coming to the Board April 16 as a final recommendation.

Mr. Gillespie commented that in the past the process had worked to give people the sense that if they expressed a concern it was addressed or something was changed as a result and he wanted to preserve that. He wanted to wait until after the first public hearing to decide how formal the April 7 meeting needed to be. He planned to attend all the meetings.

Other

Mr. Gillespie brought up two issues that he hoped to have addressed at a future time. He said Route 33 did not continue up the hill on Chambers but stopped at the base of the hill and riders going south had to deboard north of 24th which left them with a challenging walk south up the steep hill on Chambers. He wanted to know the cost and impact of extending the route further south up Chambers.

Mr. Gillespie's other issue had to do with changing departure times downtown and increasing ridership. Saying most businesses emptied on the hour and half hour, he said this meant employees had to wait a half hour or 45 minutes for their buses. If departures were changed to be on the 15 and 45, riders coming from LCC would not get downtown until the 30 so could not take the 15s. At night when departures were hourly it became even more challenging. He was thinking primarily of City of Eugene employees and said he did not know LCC's schedule for when employees' days ended and any change would impact other routes but this was something he hoped could be evaluated.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Necker adjourned the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

(transcribed by Mary Feldman from a recording)