

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 18, 2014

10 am – Noon

Lane Community College Downtown Campus
101 West 10th Avenue – Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Annie Saville, Vice Chair	Bill Morganti
Misty Brazell	Eleanor Mulder
Aline Goddard	Ed Necker
Stefan Kwiatkowski	Scott Whetham

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Paul Blaylock

OTHERS PRESENT:

April Georgi

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu	Kris Lyon
Cosette Rees	Beth Mulcahy
Ann Angvick	Fred Stouffer
Dave Braunschweiger	Janice Friend, captioner

I. Call to order

Ms. Saville called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order at 10:09 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

II. Introductions, Announcements, Agenda Review

Those present introduced themselves.

Mr. Morganti announced that the stop at 34th and Hilyard he had mentioned at the last meeting as being inaccessible after the February storm had been cleaned up and fully functional the day following the February meeting.

Ms. Hekimoglu offered an update to information presented at the February meeting as part of the review of Paratransit Services. The previously reported cost of \$188 per ride for the Escort Service provided by LCOG Senior Connections had omitted rural rides from the calculation and

the correct cost per ride projected for 2014 should have been a much more reasonable \$4.66. Ms. Hekimoglu noted that 19,358 rides already had been provided this year.

Due to the lack of a quorum, action items to approve the February minutes and the RideSource Call Center Advisory Committee bylaws were postponed to the April meeting and the agenda was reordered accordingly.

III. Audience Participation

There were no requests to speak.

IV. PROGRAM REVIEW: Transportation Eligibility / Mobility Management

Ms. Hekimoglu reported that the committee would complete its program reviews in June.

Since the 2008 opening of the RideSource Call Center, LTD contracted with Lane Council of Governments, Senior and Disabled Services, Senior Connections Program and with Alternative Work Concepts to conduct in-person transportation eligibility assessments throughout Lane County. Senior Connections staff was located in Eugene/Springfield, Cottage Grove, Oakridge, and Florence and already were conducting home visits with many of the people who were and would become Call Center customers for their transportation needs. Alternative Work Concepts typically conducted assessments only in the metro Eugene/Springfield area for individuals under the age of 60 who experienced multiple and developmental disabilities. This past year, LTD also began contracting with White Bird Clinic to perform eligibility assessments on those individuals who experienced more severe mental and emotional disabilities and also acted as a consultant for the rest of the assessment team.

Because of the larger volume of people now enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan, both Senior Connections and Alternative Work Concepts currently were adding staff to help address the higher volume of assessments.

A combination of funding sources was used for the program's \$252,000 budget. An average of 230 eligibility assessments was conducted each month at a cost of about \$120 each.

Ms. Hekimoglu and Mr. Whetham clarified that assessments were about a 2-3 hour process with additional staff time required to set up the appointments and complete paperwork afterwards.

Responding to Ms. Brazell's question about the FTE (full time equivalent) required for the 230 assessments, Ms. Hekimoglu explained this number was difficult to calculate because the Senior Connections staff also completed other tasks during their in-home visits. Currently, at LCOG, ten employees were doing the work, two at Alternative Work Concepts, and Ms. Georgi was the only staff member at White Bird who was being trained to do assessments.

Ms. Georgi added that she was primarily working on the scheduling portion of the process right now but hoped to be fully trained to complete assessments and enter the data by the end of the month.

Ms. Mulder wondered whether this program would be affected by City or County budget constraints that were putting a number of human services programs at risk. Ms. Lyon responded that this program had no interface with the CAHOOTS vans and its funding sources were not impacted.

Answering questions, Ms. Lyon said that reassessments were to be conducted every three years except people who were temporarily eligible were reassessed every six or nine months. The assessment process was the same regardless of whether it was a new eligibility assessment or a reassessment so the work load was the same in both cases. After January, the backlog of assessments had grown to about 170. Ms. Rees said the hope was that newly hired staff at LCOG and Alternative Work Concepts would allow that backlog to be completed. She noted that contracting with the three different entities for the assessments benefited both LTD and the community. Staff conducting the assessments had expertise that allowed them to best determine the needs of specific populations and to connect clients to other programs in the community if other unmet needs were identified during the process.

Ms. Lyon explained that mobility management looked at a number of transportation programs, including metro ADA Paratransit, Medicaid medical and non-medical transport, Crucial Connections, and Veterans transportation. She said the ADA required that eligibility determinations be made within 21 days, so those assessments were given the highest priority with Medicaid coming next. In the meantime, people waiting for their eligibility assessments were being recommended for specific types of rides through telephone screening. Because she only had a few assessments in the pipeline, Ms. Georgi said she could do a few more if needed.

Ms. Mulder observed that funding cuts at LCOG could impact the program. Ms. Hekimoglu clarified that LTD was funding a good part of the cost of the Senior Connections positions at LCOG involved in transportation eligibility assessments. Ms. Lyon added that most of the funds for Senior Connections staff came from federal Older Americans Act money or from federal Aging and Disability Resource Center money so was somewhat more secure than other LCOG and City programs in the human services area. Ms. Rees noted that it was important to monitor the situation to avoid losing resources if LCOG chose not to replace or hire new staff.

V. Oakridge Service Review

Lane Transit District was the designated Special Transportation Fund (STF) Agency for Lane County. As such, LTD acted as the pass-through and oversight agency for federal and state funding of human services transportation programs throughout Lane County, including the rural communities of Florence, Oakridge, and Cottage Grove. The transportation services currently being provided in Oakridge included the Diamond Express, which provided three round trips per weekday between Oakridge and downtown Eugene, and local meal-site services within Oakridge. The Diamond Express was funded with Federal Non-urbanized Area Formula (Section 5311) funds for intercity bus services, while the local meal-site program was funded with state STF Out-of-District funds. Special Mobility Services, Inc. was the contracted provider of the Oakridge transportation services. There were 10 vehicles assigned to Oakridge, two of which provided the Diamond Express service. Medicaid trips assigned through the RideSource Call Center made up the bulk of the service being provided by the remaining vehicles.

The Diamond Express had proven to be very effective, with an average of 16,000 rides per year. The local meal service provided approximately 700 rides per year both delivering meals to people who were homebound and delivering folks to the meal site for lunch. This service operated twice per week.

ODOT Public Transit Division recently raised some concerns about the services provided in Oakridge. One concern was that the Diamond Express did not meet the definition of true intercity bus service, defined as regularly scheduled bus service for the general public which operated with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not close in proximity, and which had the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and which made meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service was available. A requirement of the contract with ODOT was that LTD have an agreement with Amtrak and/or Greyhound that would include Oakridge as a destination of those services using the Diamond Express as a thru-way bus to and from Oakridge. In addition, the Diamond Express schedule must include stops at or near Amtrak and/or Greyhound at times that coincided with train/bus departures.

Another concern expressed by ODOT was with regard to the delivery of meals in Oakridge. According to the Public Transit Division's State Management Plan, meal delivery was not an allowable activity using publicly funded vehicles unless the agency providing the meals (LCOG Senior and Disabled Services) bore the entire cost of the meal delivery service.

A final concern was that Medicaid trips currently were the primary purpose of the use of most of the federally funded vehicles currently assigned to Oakridge, and while it also was an allowable service, it must be an "incidental" part of the business rather than primary.

In response to these concerns, staff was undertaking a full review of the Oakridge services. It had been 11 years since the Diamond Express began operations, at which time a survey of community members was conducted. Staff were planning a follow-up survey to determine what enhancements, if any, the community would like to experience, and determine if connections to Amtrak and/or Greyhound would be favorable. The survey also would determine whether a general public dial-a-ride service in Oakridge/Westfir would be viable and at what level. Communications with LCOG Senior and Disabled Services were ongoing to determine how the meal delivery service could be transitioned to volunteers, which was how meal-delivery was done throughout the rest of the county.

The anticipated cost of the survey and associated outreach was \$30,000 and staff was applying for 5311 start-up funds to help offset this cost. If any additional costs were incurred, the STF Out-of-District reserve funds would be used. The University of Oregon Marketing Research and Marketing Communications Classes would be participating with this project as a class team spring-term project.

If it was determined that the local dial-a-ride service would not be needed or utilized, the fleet of non-Diamond Express vehicles would be reassigned to another provider in another area. The Diamond Express was expected to continue to operate.

Part of the review process focused on how to align Amtrak, Greyhound, and Diamond Express schedules. Ms. Hekimoglu would work on developing a contract with Amtrak to make the Diamond Express connector between Eugene and Oakridge part of Amtrak's scheduling system. It was possible that additional trips would be needed. Ms. Rees commented on the high level of interest in transportation connectivity at the state and federal level and said it would be financially advantageous to remain in the intercity pool. A requirement to work with Amtrak and Greyhound was part of LTD's 5311 contract with the state. It was unclear at this point whether part of the Amtrak ticket price could be returned to Diamond Express if the connecting service was booked through Amtrak's system.

Ms. Hekimoglu clarified that the Porter Stage Lines connecting Eugene and Florence already was connected with Amtrak. The review only dealt with ground surface transportation and airport service was not part of the discussion.

Ms. Saville summarized that the Diamond Express had to be capable of connecting with other intercity transportation services regardless of whether people actually used those services in order to keep its 5311 Intercity designation and funding and be considered a true intercity service. Ms. Hekimoglu added that the Oakridge dial-a-ride service was up in the air and that the state considered the use of Diamond Express vehicles primarily for Medicaid service as

inappropriate. However, Ms. Hekimoglu pointed out that in the absence of other providers in Oakridge and the existence of great need, she hoped the state would consider agreeing to let these vehicles be used for what was most needed. The survey would determine the need for a local dial a ride service as well as the number of vehicles needed and the hours and days of operation.

Answering Ms. Brazell's question about the Meals on Wheels program, Ms. Hekimoglu said the most recent discretionary grant was for two years and the second year would begin during the summer. If the program could not be continued, the LCC contractor would be provided 2-3 months' notice so service likely would not end before late September. Ms. Rees mentioned the possibility of diverting the funds used for the two-days-per-week Meals on Wheels service to a true dial a ride service and transitioning the meal delivery to Senior and Disabled Services volunteers. How to provide rides to meal sites for some people still would need to be addressed.

In response to Mr. Necker's question about RideSource delivering Diamond Express riders to doctor appointments once they got to Eugene, Mr. Braunschweiger said there were a few but not many calls for this service and many riders used LTD once they got to Eugene. Mr. Morganti commented that if a medical clinic opened in Oakridge it would change the dynamics significantly and fewer people would come to Eugene for services.

Ms. Goddard saw scheduling issues as a big concern. Ms. Hekimoglu said there was a potential for increased funding for Diamond Express. Mr. Necker suggested adding another morning trip to Eugene and possibly using two vehicles to make more trips possible. Ms. Georgi wondered about adding a Saturday trip to Oakridge and anticipated that adding Amtrak riders could require more frequent trips.

VI. Program Updates

a) Lane Transit District

LTD completed its first site visit by Trillium Community Health. As a requirement of providing non-emergency medical transportation benefits under the Oregon Health Plan, LTD was tasked with developing a comprehensive compliance plan, ensuring that it was meeting Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other requirements. Trillium was working collaboratively with LTD to develop the policies and procedures to be implemented at the RideSource Call Center. This likely would take about a year to complete.

As discussed earlier, LTD increased its contracts with Senior and Disabled Services and Alternative Work Concepts to provide more capacity to meet increasing demand for eligibility assessments for the RideSource Call Center. The number of assessments had been creeping up

for some time; and with the expansion of Oregon Health Plan's eligibility, this was necessary in order to effectively manage this function with existing staff.

The RideSource Call Center had taken advantage of lessons learned in the two snow and ice incidents this year to identify areas of improvement during such situations. While the service worked very well, staff was working to improve communications with contracted providers, customers, and service/retail establishments.

ODOT would perform a compliance review of the Florence Rhody Express and Oakridge Diamond Express on March 26. This standard review assessed how transit agencies met the varied compliance requirements imposed by the Federal Transit Administration and Oregon ODOT.

Ms. Rees announced that the state recently allocated an additional \$4 million to be distributed according to a formula. It was unclear how much LTD would receive or when and portions would be allocated both to in-district and to out-of-district services. There would not be enough to develop new programs but the additional funds would allow some gaps to be filled. She reported conversations about transportation were occurring at the legislative level and she hoped this would lead to sustainable funding. Ms. Rees encouraged transportation proponents to advocate in Salem for sustainable funding for transit.

Ms. Hekimoglu distributed copies of Trillium's new *Transportation Benefits* brochure that would be provided to all clients receiving Trillium services under the CCO. Mr. Kwiatkowski wondered about the photographs in the brochure showing a fixed route bus and bicyclists. Ms. Lyon said many Trillium clients used these forms of transportation which were less costly than some of the programs with which the committee was more familiar. She saw the brochure as a reflection of transportation being a key to health outcomes.

Mr. Necker asked for an update on misuse of the transportation reimbursement program. Ms. Angvick acknowledged that during the first few months there had been some abuses of the program but they seemed to have been curbed. Now that staff recognized some doctors' signatures and regular program users were established, fewer verifications of people actually going to their appointments were required. A large number of out-of-town doctor visits continued to require verification.

Ms. Angvick mentioned that a client had referred to a gas card issued by the Department of Human Services, but Ms. Brazell said DHS previously had provided vouchers but did not do so anymore, and she knew nothing about a gas card program. Ms. Angvick said this would require further research and could have been a misuse of terminology.

The group briefly discussed rules about children under 12 being accompanied by an adult. A bank of DHS volunteers had been thoroughly vetted and was used to accompany children who did not have a family member available.

b) *RideSource* Call Center Steering Committee

The RSCC Steering Committee held its quarterly meeting on February 27 at the LTD board room. The first order of business was the review and approval of the committee bylaws which had been forwarded to the ATC for adoption. The document was the result of several months of work ensuring the bylaws were in line with the ATC and the committee was happy with the results. The Affordable Care Act Medicaid expansion was also discussed. The numbers of new customers eligible for medical transportation had increased by nearly 30% and this resulted in some provider capacity constraints. Thus far, the call center had been able to roll with the constraints and in cases where the transportation could not be arranged had been working closely with medical offices to rearrange appointment times in order for people to be seen. Trillium was pushing the use of the transportation benefit as demonstrated by the brochure the committee had received.

The RSCC software replacement project was discussed. Trapeze had been selected as the vendor, and LTD would purchase its NOVUS-DRM software package. Over the next year staff would work closely with Trapeze to develop the functionality required as well as to learn how to best utilize the software's features to improve service delivery. Due to the snow in December and February, discussion arose on how to communicate with both customers and contracted transportation providers on priorities for services when ice and snow were present. Several suggestions were made and LTD staff would consult with other agencies and bring back some ideas for the committee to consider when suggesting a proposed procedure to follow. During the last part of the meeting the committee reviewed the second quarter complaints, resolutions and compliments recorded by the call center, in addition to ridership and telephone statistics for the same time period. Due to the number of items discussed and needed follow-up, the committee decided the next meeting would be in May to discuss elections that would follow in July.

c) *RideSource* Call Center

Ms. Angvick reported that Mondays and Tuesdays continued to be exceptionally busy with an average of more than 1,000 calls. Between 30 and 40 new reimbursement customers called each week which was an increase over numbers in the fall. Some of these clients called in multiple times because the mailing from the bank that contained the debit card was mistaken for junk mail and destroyed.

Mr. Necker commented that the reimbursement program was one that potentially could be misused. Ms. Angvick said she saw some misuse initially and less now. Some customers had

complained that caseworkers from both Senior and Disabled Services and the Department of Human Services had given them incorrect information about the program when RideSource first took it over. She said this program now was a big piece of RideSource activity. Ms. Rees credited the program with helping ease capacity issues because fewer taxis and RideSource vehicles had to be used when people had the option of other transportation. Ms. Angvick concluded by saying the long distance trips in which people had to be gone for extended periods of time were new for staff and produced lots of extra work. She cited an example of someone who went to Seattle for six months for a lung transplant and said the customer had come in recently and was doing well now.

d) RideSource ADA Paratransit

Mr. Braunschweiger reported on the aging fleet of vehicles and regular turnover of driving staff. Occasionally in the past six months, end of day trips had to be limited to ADA trips only. Demand was being met but keeping the vehicles on the road all the time was a challenge. Buses were being operated at much higher mileage than in the past, typically about 250,000 miles when the minimum useful life expectancy was 150,000 miles, and more major overhauls were required to keep them in the fleet.

The previous Friday, 80 reimbursement applications had been sent out with another 20 on Monday.

e) South Lane County (Cottage Grove)

Ms. Linoz was unable to attend the meeting so there was no report from South Lane.

f) West Lane County (Florence)

Ms. Hekimoglu reported service to the casino had started November 1 with the route now 70 instead 60 minutes. Ridership was fairly steady with casino ridership about 12 per month. A "bus buddy" program was being started with brochures being developed.

g) East Lane County (Oakridge)

Ms. Goddard reported a large number of medical rides. She had reported in February on her plan to hire four new drivers but said it had been hard to find applicants. Four potential hires were in process now. The #13 bus had a problem the previous day when it could not be shut off and was in the shop for repair. Ms. Goddard wanted to be sure that potential changes would not include discontinuation of taking people to meal sites because as many as 21 people used that service.

h) White Bird Clinic

Ms. Georgi reported that White Bird had up to 350 regular riders and she continued struggling to ensure that the number of rides per month did not exceed the budget. She planned to

propose that the three rides per month currently being provided be reduced to two per month for a couple of months to get to the end of the fiscal year. She was investigating whether Oregon Taxi would provide rides at a discounted rate. Her concern was how to continue providing rides to those who really needed them.

Ms. Georgi said she was comfortable conducting transportation eligibility assessments but was still not confident in determining appropriate resources for people after the assessment.

Ms. Hekimoglu proposed meeting with Ms. Georgi before it was time to renew White Bird's contract. She wanted to help with an accurate assessment of the needs so when Ms. Georgi talked to the discretionary grant committee she could present a realistic needs-based request that would not require constant juggling of the number of rides in order to meet the budget.

Ms. Brazell shared a story about someone in crisis who was served by White Bird and had noted the compassion and helpfulness of the van drivers.

i) Alternative Work Concepts (AWC)

Mr. Whetham reported that about 1,200 people were served monthly by the transit hosts. He expected travel training numbers to increase as the weather improved and said around 10-12 people received travel training each month with 6-8 of them being new.

Ms. Hekimoglu said that soon more details would be included in the reports generated by AWC and more information would be available about how much the program was saving LTD. Mr. Whetham noted that the program had not been marketed and relied on word-of-mouth advertising and referrals. He announced that the current office space at 915 Oak Street had been sold, so AWC would be relocating. Some space in the downtown Customer Service Center would continue being used by travel trainers and transit hosts.

i) Other

Mr. Morganti announced that he had been summoned for jury duty April 11 and if he was seated on a jury he might miss the next meeting.

IX. Adjourn

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 15, 2014 at 10 a.m. with the location to be determined.

Ms. Saville adjourned the meeting at 11:38 a.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)