

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, September 16, 2014
10 am – Noon
Next Stop Center – Eugene Station

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Annie Saville, Vice Chair
Paul Blaylock
Misty Brazell
Aline Goddard
Josh Haring
Stefan Kwiatkowski
Ruth Linoz

Gail Lundeen
Bill Morganti
Eleanor Mulder
Ed Necker, ex officio
Tim Shearer
Renee Van Norman
Scott Whetham

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Hoover Chamblis

OTHERS PRESENT:

Dave Braunschweiger
April Georgi
Alissa Kugler for Rachel Jacobsen

Beth Mulcahy
Fred Stouffer

STAFF:

Susan Hekimoglu
Kris Lyon
Cosette Rees

Janice Friend, 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.

III. Audience Participation

No members of the public requested to speak.

IV. ACTION: Minutes Approval May 20, 2014

MOTION: Mr. Morganti moved, seconded by Ms. Linoz, to approve the May 20, 2014, minutes as presented. The motion carried 9:0:1 with Ms. Mulder abstaining because she had not been present at the meeting.

V. ACTION: FY15 Membership Roster

Ms. Hekimoglu reviewed the roster, noting that terms of Mr. Morganti, Mr. Barron, Ms. Brazell, and Ms. Lundeen were expiring and they were eligible for and seeking reappointment. Mr. Shearer and Mr. Blaylock had served as Community Representatives for at least one year so met the requirement for full membership and were recommended for appointment to fill two vacant positions.

Ms. Hekimoglu said recruitment for new members relied on announcements in *Bus Talk*, contacts with other agencies, and word of mouth.

Mr. Necker arrived at the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Ms. Mulder encouraged better outreach to the community. Ms. Rees responded that future efforts would utilize Facebook, a press release in the *Register Guard*, and the LTD website.

MOTION: Mr. Kwiatkowski moved, seconded by Mr. Morganti, to adopt the 2014-15 Membership Roster as presented. The motion carried 9:0.

Mr. Blaylock and Mr. Shearer were invited to move up to seats at the table.

Mr. Morganti suggested inviting Hoover Chamblis to serve as a Community Representative. Mr. Chamblis indicated his willingness to do so.

VI. ACTION: Election of Officers

Ms. Hekimoglu announced that both Mr. Barron and Ms. Saville had volunteered to serve an additional year as Chair and Vice Chair.

MOTION: By unanimous acclamation, Mr. Barron was elected ATC Chair and Ms. Saville Vice Chair for fiscal year 2014-15.

VII. ACTION: Review Funding Priorities and Appoint Grant Review Committee

Ms. Hekimoglu reminded members that over the past year they had reviewed all the programs funded through the biennial discretionary grant process. That process was beginning again for

Fiscal Years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, and while State appropriations likely would not be known until sometime in late September, the committee needed to review the previously established funding priorities.

Ms. Hekimoglu reviewed the priorities for projects funded through the Special Transportation Fund as set forth in the Lane Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan: 1) maintain existing service levels; 2) respond to growth within existing services; and 3) respond to emerging community needs.

Responding to Ms. Mulder's inquiries, Ms. Lyon said services to veterans had been increased somewhat but the allocation could be doubled and still not meet all the needs. Care was being taken with the expenditure of these funds to ensure that those served were veterans and had no other sources of transportation available to them. A variety of transportation services had been provided, including some trips to the VA hospital in Roseburg and trips to transport vets to memorial services for someone with whom they had served. She was hopeful that LTD would receive some additional funding through a pilot program started by the State a couple of years previously.

Ms. Brazell wondered about collaboration with veterans services across state borders. Ms. Lyon said she had participated in conference calls with the other Oregon agencies providing transportation for veterans but there had been no direct collaboration with service providers in Washington. LTD had, however, provided a Veteran trip to Walla Walla, Washington, for special surgery.

Answering questions from Ms. Linoz, Ms. Rees said collaboration with Medicaid and Trillium was part of the CCO contract, and Ms. Hekimoglu added that discretionary grant funds typically were not applied to Medicaid services.

Ms. Brazell asked how emerging needs were determined. Ms. Hekimoglu said staff sometimes recognized service gaps or became aware of new programs that would create a new need. Ms. Rees added that updating the Human Services Transportation Plan helped identify gaps and emerging needs and that doing that process in tandem with outreach for the discretionary grant funding was intentional. Ms. Hekimoglu noted that partnerships were a way of stretching funding and she expected the Grant Review Committee to discuss possible expansion of services in specific areas like veterans transportation.

Ms. Linoz cited the closure of Creswell's local grocery store as an example of an emerging need that resulted in looking at how to provide a shopper service. Response had been too little to indicate a need, but she said she still saw it as an unmet need that might need to be cultivated and a process developed to create a solution that worked.

Mr. Blaylock mentioned assistance with grocery shopping as an emerging need. Ms. Rees urged members to think about additional opportunities for providing service that may represent a shift in priorities.

Answering further questions, Ms. Hekimoglu said the application period would be announced as soon as notice was received and she expected applications would be due by late October and the Grant Review Committee would have a month or two to review them before making its recommendations.

Josh Haring (Rhody Express operator) arrived at the meeting at 10:27 a.m.

Ms. Rees pointed out that the October meeting was not scheduled due to conflicts on the regular day, but she asked members to consider holding a meeting on a different day to kick off the grant review process. The group discussed their availability.

MOTION: Ms. Mulder moved, seconded by Mr. Kwiatkowski, to schedule an ATC meeting for October 14. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Hekimoglu described tasks for the Grant Review Committee and said it may begin meeting in mid-October and then as often as weekly until its work was completed in December. It would report to the ATC monthly. Mr. Morganti and Ms. Brazell volunteered. Mr. Kwiatkowski said he would check his calendar and Mr. Haring was willing to participate if his being an applicant did not create a conflict.

Rhody Express: Ms. Hekimoglu reported that Max and Clara Kuhn were retiring and had sold the Rhody Express and River City Taxi business to Mr. Haring. Mr. Haring said the transfer would be complete in November. Members thanked Mr. Haring for coming from Florence for this meeting. The group agreed with Ms. Rees's suggestion to invite the Kuhns to the next meeting and have some sort of celebration for them.

VIII. Lane Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update

Ms. Lyon reviewed the timeline for the plan update and the documents that needed to be reviewed as part of the process. The most current update had been done in 2013 and a number of new elements needed to be incorporated. The plan would be the subject of a public hearing, likely in February, before going to the LTD Board for approval. Ms. Hekimoglu added that every project the committee approved for funding had to be included in the plan and the criteria for funding those projects also were part of the plan.

IX. Review Draft FY15 ATC Work Plan

Ms. Hekimoglu reviewed the draft ATC work plan schedule and said the Discretionary Grant and Rhody Express items should be moved to the October meeting. EZ Access Program revisions would be less comprehensive than previously thought. Ms. Hekimoglu explained that there were about 24,000 clients in that program now and the plan was to redesign the cards to make the expiration date easier to read, to ask operators to check those dates, to improve training for agency staff that verified eligibility, and to use the services of Alternative Work Concepts to ensure compliance with the law that based eligibility for this program on disability and not on income. Ms. Rees commented that the desire of agencies to advocate for their consumers had led to some people being qualified for the program because they were low income but they were not in need of accommodations. LTD offered a different program through which agencies could purchase passes for low-income clients at half price and then give them to their clients at no charge.

Ms. Saville reported she hoped to see abuse of the accompanying attendant element of the EZ Access program addressed. Ms. Hekimoglu said staff were well aware of that problem and were considering several possible solutions. Ms. Rees added that service animals were another element that caused some problems, and input from the committee and from operators would be valuable as staff tried to find solutions.

Mr. Whetham said there needed to be more thorough screening of new applications for EZ Access eligibility. Mr. Shearer added that consumers also needed to be better informed about the intent of the program.

The group discussed issues related to attendants, including attendants getting a free ride when they were not performing attending duties aboard the bus, and the burden placed on providers when someone needed the services of an attendant but expected the provider to provide that assistance. Ms. Lyon said the new software would help indicate in the eligibility assessment whether an attendant was required. Ms. Hekimoglu agreed to research with other agencies whether attendants rode for free on fixed routes and she would report back on this.

Continuing to review the work plan timeline, Ms. Lyon added that after the committee's reviews of the draft Coordinated Plan and Discretionary Grant in November, there would be some public outreach before the committee approved and forwarded them to the LTD Board for adoption in February.

Ms. Linoz said the committee would need to discuss the potential impacts of reductions in Federal 5311 funds. Ms. Rees suggested inviting LTD Government Relations Manager Edward McGlone to provide legislative updates as they became available. She also encouraged participation in the Transportation Day at the Capitol and agreed to add these to the timeline.

She asked members to let staff know if there were other activities or presentations that would help them make decisions.

Ms. Linoz was interested in hearing from human services staff about their assessments of people's transportation needs and whether people were staying at or closer to home more and needed more local services to support them. Ms. Lyon said other plans addressed these issues and would be part of the Coordinated Plan update. Ms. Rees added that transportation played a key role in the aging-in-place strategies being applied to the large bubble created by the aging baby boomer population.

X. Oakridge Survey Results

Ms. Hekimoglu introduced Tammy Lockwood from Lockwood Marketing Research which had completed last summer's survey of residents in Oakridge and the surrounding area as well as the initial survey there in 2002.

Ms. Lockwood used a PowerPoint presentation to summarize results of the survey that had been mailed to 1,852 addresses and returned by 386 of them for a 26 percent return rate. Objectives of the study included measuring the importance of transportation service between Oakridge and the Metro area, the importance of access to Amtrak and Greyhound, community interest in a general public Dial-a-Ride service, and identifying use of service only for meal delivery.

The survey indicated that transportation service use could increase with expanded hours and Saturday service on the Diamond Express, adding connecting service to Amtrak should be considered, Medicaid trips could occur on the Diamond Express if transportation to a stop was provided, there was interest in general Dial-a-Ride service and willingness to pay for a ride but the community needed education on the differences between transportation provided by Diamond Express and by a Dial-a-Ride service.

Mr. Necker left the meeting at 11:42 a.m.

Ms. Linoz commented that people in Cottage Grove also had shown a lack of understanding of the differences between public Dial-a-Ride and long distance trips.

Ms. Lockwood added that Springfield was shown to be a more frequent destination than Eugene and that low-cost shopping was a common trip purpose. Lane Community College was a more frequent destination than was the University of Oregon. There had been no indication that Oakridge residents objected to people shopping in the Metro area instead of locally. A few had complained about the lack of a covered stop and inadequate route and time signage. Ms. Goddard noted there was a covered shelter across from Ray's.

Ms. Hekimoglu reminded the committee that unlike the Rhody Express, the Diamond Express was considered intercity and was funded with 5311(f) funds. She said she would be having conversations with Amtrak about advertising Oakridge as an Amtrak destination.

Mr. Chamblis opined that the Amtrak connection made sense.

Ms. Hekimoglu noted that meal delivery service by Diamond Express was not allowed unless paid for entirely by Senior & Disabled Services as the agency that provided the meals. Oakridge was the only location where Meals-on-Wheels did not use volunteer drivers. She agreed to keep the committee informed as the Amtrak connection was explored.

Members asked about service to the Eugene airport. Ms. Rees explained that public transportation service was planned for a year-long period and airlines were unable to commit to a consistent year-long schedule. She said with no critical mass for airport public transportation buses would be running empty. LTD had tried unsuccessfully to market commuter services to businesses near the airport. Ms. Linoz commented that she was not allowed to compete with taxis and another service that operated airport transportation with a permit.

XI. Program Updates

Ms. Rees announced that LTD had been selected as the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) 2014 North American (including Canada) Public Transit District of the Year for districts with between 4 million and 20 million boardings. Emphasizing that LTD's services were a reflection of the community, the LTD Board wanted to share the recognition with the community that played an important role in making the award possible.

Due to lack of time, program updates were postponed.

XII. Adjourn

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, October 14 at 10 a.m. at the Next Stop Center.

The meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

(Recorded by Mary Feldman)