

MINUTES OF MEETING
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 15, 2015
10 a.m. - Noon
Next Stop Center - Eugene Station
1099 Olive Street, Eugene, Oregon

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pete Barron, Chair	Annie Saville, Vice Chair
Bill Morganti	Stefan Kwiatkowski
Renee Van Norman	Aline Goddard
Paul Blaylock	Josh Haring (arrived 10:20 a.m.)

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Hoover Chambliss

OTHERS:

Salish Davis, White Bird	Fred Stoeffler, Special Mobility Services
Chris Shuster, SDS	April Georgi, White Bird

STAFF:

Cosette Rees	Scott McFarland
Zach Fish	Kris Lyon
Dave Sedgwick,	David Braunschweiger
Richard Belcher	Janice Friend, captioner
Lynn Taylor, minutes recorder	

I. Call to Order

Mr. Barron called the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ATC) to order.

II. Introductions, Announcements, Agenda Review

Those present introduced themselves. There were no announcements or changes to the agenda.

III. Audience Participation

There was no one wishing to speak.

IV. Minutes Approval: September 15, 2015

This item was deferred until a quorum was achieved.

V. Minutes Approval: October 27, 2015

This item was deferred until a quorum was achieved.

VI. 2016 Grant Update

Ms. Rees reviewed the 2016 Program Guidelines for the STF Discretionary Grant Program, copies of which were distributed to committee members. She said the funds were intended to serve seniors and people with disabilities, but was not a formula allocation by STF agency, only by region. She said Region 2 would receive almost \$2 million but the local agency would have to compete with those from other communities within the region. She said it was one-time funding and LTD, as an STF agency, could apply for up to eight projects. Those would be ranked locally and moved forward to a regional body that would make decisions about which projects would be

funded. She stressed there was no guarantee that any local projects would be funded. In addition to the formula allocations to regions, an additional \$2 million was available for projects of statewide significance, projects that spanned regions or ones that could be replicated elsewhere in the state.

Mr. Barron said he had reviewed several projects staff had been working on:

- Dialysis pilot program to train volunteer drivers so patients could have greater flexibility in transportation to and from dialysis appointments and an associated program to recruit, coordinate and manage the volunteer drivers
- Half-fare pass program review and eligibility verification
- Extended veterans' transportation
- ADA paratransit service

Mr. Barron said he supported the proposed projects and commended the work of LTD staff. He asked for comments and suggestions.

Mr. Morganti expressed interest in the dialysis program.

Mr. Kwiatkowski asked if any of the dialysis clinics were in fixed route "dead zones." Ms. Lyon said both clinics could be accessed via fixed route, but the nature of dialysis treatments left patients so physically exhausted that it was extremely difficult to ride the bus. The volunteer drivers would provide more convenient transportation that would get patients to appointments on time and provide rides home at specific times related to their dialysis schedules.

Ms. Rees said the grant program did not require a broad solicitation of projects, but she did need direction from the committee to focus on the proposed projects. She said projects also needed to be in the Coordinated Plan and those projects fit that criteria and would be competitive. She said staff would present the projects to the committee at its January 2016 meeting for review and ranking and applications would be submitted in March 2016.

Mr. Haring arrived at 10:20 a.m. and a quorum was achieved.

By consensus, the Committee members directed staff to move forward with the proposed projects and agreed that no public solicitation would be necessary for this one-time grant.

IV. Minutes Approval: September 15, 2015 (cont.)

Mr. Morganti, seconded by Mr. Kwiatkowski, moved to approve the September 15, 2015, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously, 8:0.

V. Minutes Approval: October 27, 2015 (cont.)

Mr. Kwiatkowski clarified that his question during the discussion of the *MovingAhead* update related to the Eugene section of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Mr. Morganti, seconded by Ms. Van Norman, moved to approve the October 27, 2015, minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously, 8:0.

Mr. Barron revised the order of agenda items pending the arrival of presenters.

X. Program Updates

a. **Lane Transit District**—Ms. Rees said LTD was in the process of its Annual Route Review (ARR), with service changes to be implemented in the summer or fall of 2016. She said obtaining input and making changes to the system was a lengthy process. Information about the ARR was available in *Bus Talk* and on the LTD website. The public could provide input in writing, online, and at various community events. She said the new phone system was still being debugged and asked for patience as LTD worked through the process.

Ms. Rees said LTD had purchased property in Santa Clara for a future River Road station. She said a portion of the property included a residence that LTD donated for veteran housing. The rehab work was done by volunteers.

b. **RideSource Call Center Steering Committee**—Ms. Lyon reported that the committee met in November. She said attendance was low and the group discussed process and recruitment. She requested a representative from the ATC to serve on the RideSource Call Center Steering Committee.

Mr. Morganti volunteered to serve.

c. **RideSource Call Center**—Mr. Belcher said the phone system was undergoing final adjustments and the remodeling of space had been completed. He said the center was experiencing a high volume of calls; the prior day's count was 1,800. The center was trying to staff to decrease hold time. Customer use of the call back feature would also address that issue.

d. **RideSource ADA Paratransit**—Mr. Braunschweiger said drivers were being hired and trained and the new staffing patterns were very effective. He said an additional maintenance position was also very helpful. He said LTD had provided online refresher training for protected health information and staff from Lane County Developmental Disabilities had offer training for reporting developmental disabilities.

Mr. Kwiatkowski asked if radio communications were analog or encrypted. Mr. Braunschweiger said he did not think the radios were encrypted, but the new software would keep data within the network.

e. **South Lane Wheels**—No report.

f. **Florence Rhody Express**—Mr. Haring said Rhody Express was working with LTD marketing staff to develop a new marketing program. The goal of the marketing campaign was to attract new riders.

g. **Oakridge/Diamond Express**—Ms. Goddard said there had been snow in Oakridge, but the roads were clear. The service had experienced some vehicle problems with the large bus shutting down while on the road and the lift on the #13 bus stalling. She expected four vehicles to be back in service tomorrow.

h. **White Bird Clinic**—Ms. Georgi said the STF recertification process had begun in July. She said the agency was providing 400-500 rides per month and was applying for a new grant that would double the number of staff and create a "hub" of crisis services for Lane County.

i. **Alternative Work Concepts**—No report.

j. **Lane Council of Governments Senior & Disability Services**—Ms. Shuster said SDS was conducting a needs assessment as part of developing a five-year area plan. She said interns

were assisting with the process and she expected results to be compiled in March 2016 and used to inform the agency's direction for the next five years.

k. **LILA**—No report.

l. **Other**—There was no other business.

VII. WEE Station Signage

Ms. Rees said there would be a large number of stations on the West Eugene EmX corridor and distributed a list of proposed station names and signage. She explained that there would be a new Seneca Station on West 11th Avenue. West of Seneca Road and the current Seneca Station would be renamed Seneca Park and Ride to better define how that station would be used. She reviewed the list of proposed signage and asked for feedback from the committee by the end of the week.

Mr. Kwiatkowski felt using the name West 11th for the route would be more descriptive than West Eugene, since the EmX vehicle would primarily travel on that street. Ms. Rees said staff had discussed that, but decided that West Eugene better captured the breadth of service; even though EmX would travel on West 11th Avenue, it would provide connections and serve the region.

Mr. Barron suggested a map on EmX vehicles that showed the route, location of each station and current location of the vehicle along the route so riders could clearly see where they were and what station was next. He said adding some landmarks, such as the Matthew Knight Arena, would also be helpful.

Ms. Rees said staff was discussing changes to the shape of the EmX medallion on kiosks to make it less expensive when a medallion needed to be replaced.

She asked if wayfinding signage would be needed at the Seneca Park and Ride (currently the Seneca Station) to help customers navigate from regular service to the EmX service.

There was consensus among committee members that wayfinding signage was necessary. Mr. Kwiatkowski said that wayfinding signage was also needed in Creswell.

VIII. EZ Access Half-Fare Program Revisions

Mr. Fish said that he and Susan Hekimoglu were reviewing the present program and identifying possible changes for the future. He distributed a handout entitled EZ Access Half-Fare Program Eligibility. He said currently accepted eligibility included Medicare cards, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, Social Security Disability (SSD) benefits, Veterans' Administration (VA) benefits at 50 percent or greater and VA non-service connected pension. Vocational Rehabilitation was not accepted as eligibility nor were referrals from White Bird. He said the primary concern was that non-eligible people were using the EZ Access Half-Fare Program.

Ms. Rees explained that a staff had verified the federal requirements for automatic eligibility, which was limited to Medicare cardholders. She said LTD likely would maintain Medicare, SSI, SSD, and Veterans 50% disability as automatic qualifiers. She said some other qualifiers might be allowed, but program eligibility was not based solely on having a disability; the disability must be such that special accommodations were required to ride the bus. She said LTD was required to provide the half-fare program, but received no funding for it.

Mr. Kwiatkowski urged LTD to continue with the "honored rider" category. Ms. Rees and Mr. Fish said that was the intention.

In response to questions from Ms. Georgi, Mr. Fish said that White Bird could still refer people to the program and LTD would conduct the eligibility determination. Ms. Rees added that the change was not a reflection on agencies, which had historically been able to certify that someone was eligible. She explained that as agencies had turnovers in personnel, LTD had not done a good job of assuring that new staff understood the *EZ Access* eligibility requirements. She said it was difficult and time-consuming for LTD to make sure new staff was trained and that was why eligibility determinations would now be done in-house. She said the changes were still at the conceptual stage and that was why the ATC was being asked to provide feedback.

Mr. Fish estimated that changes to *EZ Access* would be implemented in May 2016.

Ms. Georgi suggested streamlining the referral and application process so clients could quickly access services. Mr. Fish said that customer service was understaffed and there was little time for supplemental training. One option being considered was to have Alternative Work Concepts (AWC) assist in conducting eligibility interviews if the applicant did not fall into one of the automatic eligibility categories.

Mr. Barron cautioned that interviews had to be conducted in a way that did not require the applicant to explain what their disability was, only why they needed special accommodation to ride the bus. Mr. Fish agreed and felt AWC was better prepared to do that until LTD staff was fully trained. Ms. Rees said AWC was a way to expedite the *EZ Access* recertification process.

Mr. Fish said once LTD staff was trained, it was likely that specific hours and would be identified during which qualifying interviews would be done and specific staff would be assigned in order to reduce the program's demand on staff time.

Ms. Saville questioned why the half dozen customer service staff could not all be trained to conduct the qualifying interviews as part of their normal duties. Ms. Rees agreed it was a point that merited further discussion. Mr. Fish noted that people would still be able drop off applications and documentation at any time and did not need to be present when staff reviewed the paperwork. He said a new work schedule was being implemented that would try to accommodate all of the services customers required.

Ms. Georgi also expressed concern that having only a few staff able to make *EZ Access* eligibility determinations could delay customers' access to services. Ms. Rees explained the wide range of duties customer service representatives performed and said there were six employees to cover 12 hours. She said Mr. Fish was suggesting that specific staff be scheduled for periods of time during the week to focus only on *EZ Access* qualifying reviews and interviews with no interruptions. She said that could assure LTD's due diligence in determining program eligibility and passes could be mailed if the customer wished.

Mr. Kwiatkowski suggested allowing eligibility determinations by appointment for those who could not get to the facility during designated hours.

Mr. Fish said the *EZ Access* and Photo Card Program databases were using old technology and the information in them was not current. He hoped to integrate the databases with the RideSource database so that information could be shared, which would be a great benefit to all programs and their customers. He said as more details about this part of the project were developed the information would be shared with the ATC, likely at its February or March meeting. He invited ATC members to provide feedback to him at Zach.Fish@ltd.org.

IX. Meet LTD's new General Manager, Aurora "A.J." Jackson

Ms. Jackson was unable to attend the meeting.

XI. Adjourn

The next meeting was scheduled for January 19, 2016.

Mr. Barron adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.