

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

Tuesday, September, 19, 2017

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on September 12, 2017, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Accessible Transportation Committee of the Lane Transit District held a meeting on Tuesday, September 19, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Next Stop Center, 1099 Olive Street, Eugene, Oregon.

Present: Pete Barron, Chair  
Bill Morganti  
Stefan Kwiatkowski  
Tim Shearer  
Rachel Jacobsen  
April Wick  
Ruth Linoz  
Josh Haring  
Scott Whetham  
Paul Blaylock  
Annie Saville  
Ed Necker,  
Hoover Chambliss

Absent: Salish Davis  
Aline Goddard  
Eleanor Mulder

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:** Mr. Barron convened the meeting of the Accessible Transportation Committee (ACT) and called the roll. Those present introduced themselves.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:** Mr. Barron asked to have a discussion of the new EmX West service.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** There was no one who wished to speak.

**ITEMS FOR ACTION AT THIS MEETING:**

MOTION **Approval of Minutes:** Mr. Kwiatkowski moved to approve the June 20, 2017, minutes of the Accessible Transportation Committee meeting as presented. Mr. Blaylock provided the second.

VOTE The motion was approved as follows:  
AYES: Barron, Morganti, Kwiatkowski, Shearer, Jacobsen, Wick, Linoz, Haring, Whetham, Blaylock, Saville, Necker, Chambliss (13)  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
EXCUSED: Davis, Goddard, Mulder (3)

**Medical Transportation Management (MTM) Introductions:** Human Services Transportation Coordinator Kris Lyon introduced Dave Daley, General Manager, and Chris Tobey, Operations

Manager, with Medical Transportation Management (MTM). She said MTM had been contracted with to operate the RideSource, Call Center and internal fleet services as of September 1, 2017. She said that Special Mobility Services had previously operated the services extremely well for many years.

Mr. Daley said that he and his staff were working closely with LTD staff and the community to assure that service expectations were being met during the transition to MTM. He said most of the existing medical transportation providers were continuing with MTM, which was conducting a much more comprehensive credentialing process for providers and drivers. A majority of internal fleet drivers also transitioned, although some had retired and been replaced by local new hires. Two key dispatch staff had left and other staff had been moved into place. MTM was in the final phase of transition to the NOVUS software, and was assisting providers to understand the new system.

In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Mr. Daley said the system was paperless and the only thing call takers had to write down were out-of-area geo codes to be entered into the program. All assessments and scheduling were paperless and efficient. He said that with recent hires the Call Center was now fully staffed with 22 employees. He noted that the only out-of-area hires under the transition to MTM were himself and Mr. Tobey.

Mr. Chambliss inquired about call wait times. Mr. Daley said it was improving, but still was not what it should be. He said that he expected as the recent round of new hires were fully trained and able to work independently wait times would continue to shorten over the next month. He said the phone system did allow callers to leave a call back number. MTM's contract with LTD included specific objectives for call answer and call wait times.

Committee members identified several issues they hoped to see addressed as the transition progressed:

- wait times of less than 10 minutes
- whenever possible use smaller vans to transport those who are medically fragile
- let phone ring longer on call backs as it is difficult for some people to get to the phone quickly
- system should not cut off waiting callers after a certain length of time

LTD General Manager Aurora Jackson said LTD's upgraded phone system was intended to address new service demands and she said feedback from customers was welcome and necessary in order to identify where improvements could be made to meet the needs of the community. She invited ongoing discussions with the ATC about system features that would help customers access public transportation.

Mr. Tobey described his responsibilities overseeing internal fleet operations and said new safety and supervisory staff had been added. He was pleased with the transition process, which had been proactive and positive.

**Membership Roster:** Accessible Services Specialist John Ahlen distributed ATC membership applications. He said current members who wished to be reappointed should complete an application and invited them to refer any individuals who might be interested in serving on the ATC to contact him. He said some positions would become vacant due to term limitations and that he hoped to have completed applications by October. He noted that the position occupied by an LTD bus driver would become vacant when Ms. Saville's term expired and this would be her last meeting. Staff and committee members commended Ms. Saville's service on the ATC.

Ms. Saville said her participation on the ATC over the past six years had been an interesting and wonderful experience. She encouraged recruiting an operator with EmX experience to replace her on the committee.

Mr. Ahlen said that elections for the ATC chair and vice chair would occur in the near future. He noted the bylaws changes recommended by the committee had been forwarded for review for consistency with Oregon Administrative Rules and Oregon Revised Statutes. They would be returned to the committee for further review and possible revisions at some point. That could include how constituency and membership of the committee were determined and members selected.

Mr. Ahlen noted there were current vacancies in the categories of community representative and rural rider (outside of the Eugene/Springfield urban growth boundary).

**EZ Access Updates:** Mr. Ahlen said the agenda materials included two versions of the EZ Access application. The long form was the current application; the shorter form was the proposed replacement based on feedback from the ATC at previous meetings. He said that during fall training, which would begin immediately, every LTD employee would receive instruction on half-fare and EZ Access programs, with the new form and process to be implemented January 1, 2018.

In response to a question from Mr. Necker, Mr. Ahlen said the intent of the new form was to combine both the half-fare and honored rider in one, create an easier to complete application, and a more streamlined process. He said in some cases issuance of an EZ Access half-fare pass could be immediate; some applications might require a longer review and include an interview regarding eligibility and specialized service needs. He said that would typically be a one- to two-day process.

Ms. Linoz asked if an outline of standard lift dimensions could be placed in the customer service area to help riders determine if their mobility devices would fit on the transit vehicle.

Mr. Necker said it was a complicated issue with factors that included the turning radius of a device and the type of vehicle being accessed.

Mr. Ahlen said LTD tried to prevent problems by taking an empty bus to the home of a rider so he or she could practice boarding. Staff also worked with people who had new mobility devices to install straps for securement purposes and determine if they needed training on boarding or other aspects of riding transit with the bus. He said some mobility devices would not fit on all LTD vehicles, but LTD made every effort to accommodate devices if riders were willing to try.

Mr. Kwiatkowski suggested a flyer that could be distributed to places where people might be considering a mobility device, such as medical offices and vendors, describing the logistics of using transit with a device and what types could be easily accommodated on vehicles.

Committee members and staff pointed out that the choice of a mobility device was generally driven by medical need and cost and there could be liability issues if LTD was perceived as making recommendations about various mobility devices. Mr. Ahlen reiterated that LTD would do its best to make transit use possible for anyone with a mobility device who wished to ride.

Accessible and Customer Services Manager Cosette Rees added that the information about assistance was on LTD's website and accessibility brochure. She said the empty bus could be

taken to the rider's home or other convenient location and could also be taken to a vendor if the rider was considering a new device.

Mr. Ahlen described the interview process, which helped to identify any services or accommodations that might help users of mobility devices to achieve greater independence.

Mr. Necker said the interview should address whether the person was able to back their device as that was sometimes an issue.

Ms. Jacobsen said that some clients who had a recently acquired disability and had begun using a mobility device had a fear of trying to navigate with that device and were resistant to navigating independently. She asked how the subject of travel training could be broached and at what point someone might be eligible for RideSource if the fear of using transit could not be overcome, even though the person might be physically able to ride the bus.

Mr. Ahlen said eligibility for RideSource could also be based on mental health or cognitive ability that might interfere with the ability to ride the fixed route system. An assessment could determine if RideSource was an appropriate option.

Mr. Whetham explained the travel training program, which was tailored to each individual's needs. He described the various program options available to address a wide range of potential barriers to riding a bus, such as being able to practice boarding an empty bus or van.

Mr. Ahlen said the goal was to begin implementing new EZ Access free and half-fare cards on January 1, 2018. At that point, riders with old cards would be asked to go to customer service and have a new card issued. He recommended, based on feedback he had received, that LTD begin issuing honored rider and half fare cards at no cost instead of the current \$3.00 fee. The purpose of the cards was to promote riding the bus and remove barriers to independence. Eliminating the fee would acknowledge the effort it would take to come in and obtain a new card. He also recommended charging a \$5.00 fee to replace cards that were lost or stolen, but not for cards that had expired.

Mr. Kwiatkowski suggested a transition period for the new cards that began December 1, 2017, and extended for two or three months. This would allow people to retain their expiration date if it was not at the beginning of the month. Mr. Ahlen stated that he appreciated the suggestion and said he would recommend a transition period, as well as setting an expiration date for old style cards at January 1, 2019. This would give riders a full year to obtain a new card, after which it would be at the operator's discretion.

Ms. Saville raised the concern that leaving the use of an old card to operators' discretion would place an unfair burden on operators. Twelve months was sufficient time for riders to obtain the new cards and operators should not be placed in the position of determining if someone should be granted additional time.

In response to a question from Ms. Wick, Mr. Ahlen said the original \$3.00 fee helps to offset the cost of issuing a card, but the cost of creating a card was far outweighed by the advantages of encouraging people to ride the bus; one RideSource trip compared to using a fixed-route bus would cover the costs of issuing many cards. Additionally, there were potential riders who might use other forms of transportation so removing barriers to transit benefited the entire community. He noted that LTD staff would retain the discretion to waive the \$5.00 replacement fee as circumstances warranted.

Mr. Ahlen reviewed other proposed procedural and policy changes. He said that currently LTD's policy on the fixed-route system was that an unlimited number of attendants could ride with an individual for free, but it had become apparent that there was some abuse of that practice. The proposed change would allow one attendant to ride for free with an individual that had an attendant endorsement on their EZ Access card and that the attendant would have to board and depart with that individual; other attendants would have to pay full fare. He said those requesting an attendant endorsement would be told of those requirements, although acknowledged that enforcement would be difficult. The primary purpose of the policy was to discourage misuse.

Mr. Ahlen said that LTD would be implementing a grant-funded service animal pilot project in collaboration with the federal government. He said it was an opportunity to expedite the boarding process for riders with a service animal. He said currently drivers asked two questions of those riders and a frequent transit user could be asked those questions many times as they encountered different drivers throughout the system. The pilot project would allow people who obtained an EZ Access card to answer those questions at customer service and get a paw print service animal endorsement on the card. When an operator saw the endorsement, the two questions could be skipped. He stressed it would be a voluntary process and not prevent someone from boarding with a service animal and answering the two questions in lieu of the paw print endorsement. It was an option available to those who used transit regularly and wanted to avoid having to answer questions each time they boarded. All service animals would still be held to behavioral standards.

Mr. Necker asked about riders who used service animals but did not have an EZ Access card. Mr. Ahlen said that a card could be issued on request to any rider with a service animal who wanted to use that option. Ms. Rees emphasized that training for LTD employees would stress that the paw print endorsement was voluntary as certification for service animals was illegal; a voluntary certification for a person traveling with a service animal was permissible. In response to a suggestion from Ms. Wick, Ms. Rees said that a flyer describing legal requirements and options for those traveling with service animals would be developed and made available to the ATC for review.

Mr. Ahlen determined there were no objections or serious concerns about the proposed form and procedural and policy changes. He would incorporate the committee's suggestions as the changes were finalized.

**3/4 Mile ADA Boundary:** Ms. Rees explained that LTD currently used discretion to extend Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) services to those living more than 3/4 of a mile outside of the fixed-route service boundary. Within the 3/4 mile ADA boundary LTD was required to provide complimentary paratransit service. This discretion was implemented at the direction of the LTD Board of Directors when a customer living just outside the 3/4 mile area complained the restriction created a hardship. In 2010 the Board directed that out-of-area services could be provided if the rider lived no more than five minutes outside of the 3/4 mile boundary and paid a \$2.00 fee. She explained that in 2010 there were 162 out-of-area trips, and although the service was not widely promoted, by 2016 there were more than 1,000 out-of-area trips. She said demand had grown far beyond the intention of that service and was very expensive because paratransit service was the most costly. She said that staff had been discussing eliminating that out-of-area service in the future, but grandfathering in the 151 people who were already eligible and using the out-of-area service. No new riders would be eligible and eligibility would discontinue for current out-of-area riders who changed addresses.

Ms. Lyon said that it was difficult to determine if someone was within a five minute drive of the 3/4 mile boundary when they contacted the Call Center and required a RideSource employee to drive the route to determine eligibility, which was an additional expense.

Ms. Linoz commented that sometimes a rider might become outside of the 3/4 mile boundary because of LTD service changes. Ms. Rees said the intention was not to create mobility barriers, but the service came at a cost and that was paid through the General Fund because it was beyond what was required by ADA. At some point it would impact the ability to provide fixed service. The balance between the needs of the many and the needs of the few was an issue the committee often faced when making funding decisions.

Committee members discussed issues related to out-of-area service and offered suggestions to lessen the impact of the proposed change on current and future riders:

- consider what impact service changes on routes near the edge of the fixed-route boundary might have on the 3/4 mile ADA boundary
- develop materials to help educate riders during transportation assessments about the 3/4 mile limitation outside of the fixed-route boundary
- develop similar educational materials for those who might also have an impact on where riders lived, such as real estate agencies, housing authorities and housing developers

Ms. Rees thanked the committee for its suggestions and asked that they make a recommendation to the Board of Directors, who would have to approve the policy change.

**MOTION** Ms. Wick moved to recommend that LTD adopt a 3/4 mile ADA boundary for new riders as proposed. Mr. Kwiatkowski provided the second.

**VOTE** The motion was approved as follows:  
AYES: Barron, Morganti, Kwiatkowski, Shearer, Jacobsen, Wick, Linoz, Haring, Whetham, Blaylock, Saville, Necker, Chambliss (13)  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
EXCUSED: Davis, Goddard, Mulder (3)

#### **PROGRAM UPDATES:**

**Lane Transit District:** Mr. Ahlen asked for feedback on the newly implemented EmX West service.

Mr. Kwiatkowski commented that the traffic light at the crosswalk at Walmart was long and occasionally pedestrians became impatient and walked against the light, causing cars to slam on their brakes. He said EmX drivers also seemed to encounter many yellow lights. Overall he liked the service.

Mr. Chambliss said he had taken EmX West to the meeting and was pleased with the service. He said that he felt enabled and empowered by the new service. He added that he was confident that any problems during this early phase would be worked out and people would learn how to use the crosswalk at Walmart. He said there were still some cracks in sidewalks along the corridor and hoped there could be some yellow striping done to warn people, particularly mobility device users, about uneven surfaces and driveways. Mr. Ahlen said LTD was looking at areas along the corridor where some additional railings might be needed.

Mr. Blaylock said that construction on the corridor should be cut off at 10 p.m., at least during the work week. He liked the real-time trip information at stops.

Mr. Barron supported EmX because of faster times and the large infrastructure improvements associated with EmX corridors.

A representative from the White Bird Clinic also applauded the new EmX service and related service redesign.

Mr. Ahlen asked committee members to continue to provide feedback to staff on their experiences with EmX West service.

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

**RideSource Call Center Advisory Committee:** Ms. Lyon said the committee had been on hiatus and would meet again in October.

**RideSource Call Center:** Ms. Lyon said this topic had already been addressed during MTM's presentation at the start of the meeting. She was pleased to be working with MTM.

**RideSource ADA Paratransit:** Mr. Daley said "will calls" had been changed slightly as the current practice did not work well for clients. He said it was preferable to schedule rides if the need for service was predictable and staff was encouraging people to do that.

**South Lane Wheels:** Ms. Linoz said the compressed timeline for the transition was challenging for providers and she was still looking for clarity on expectations and performance measures. She said that she liked MTM's new and more comprehensive credentialing process, but it would remain to be seen what impact that might have on providers in terms of cost and ability to comply.

**Florence Rhody Express:** There was no report.

**Oakridge/Diamond Express:** Mr. Ahlen said Pacific Crest Bus Line was the new operator of the services. It would be the same drivers, vehicles, route and schedule so riders should not notice any difference in the services. LTD was providing a new vehicle from its fixed route fleet for the service on October 1, 2017.

**White Bird Clinic:** Mark Mason, White Bird program coordinator, said White Bird was pleased to be working with LTD to provide special transportation services to a vulnerable population. He said last year approximately 3,100 rides were provided to clients along with an additional 52 out-of-town transportations for treatment.

**Alternative Work Concepts:** Mr. Whetham reported that training on the new EmX West service was under way and LTD had done an effective job in its efforts to notify the public about service changes. He said there were several issues to resolve for clients who were not aware of changes, but overall the new services in West Eugene were resulting in more people using the fixed-route system.

**LCOG Senior & Disability Services (S&DS):** Ms. Jacobsen said that a number of changes impacting recipients of Medicaid services would be going into effect on October 1. Changes to eligibility determinations and assessments could impact clients' service priority status and qualification for services. Other changes were related to in-home caregiver services.

Ms. Jacobsen said questions about the changes should be directed to S&DS offices, and if the committee wished an S&DS representative could make a more detailed presentation at a future ATC meeting. She said limited service offices were now open in Creswell and Cottage Grove.

Mr. Barron asked that an S&DS presentation be scheduled at a future committee meeting.

**LILA:** There was no report.

**Full Access:** Ms. Wick invited everyone to the 10th Annual Sprout Film Festival to be held October 19-21, 2017.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting was scheduled for October 17, 2017. More information on activities and location would be made available in the next newsletter and online

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mr. Barron adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

*(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)*