

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

SPECIAL MEETING/WORK SESSION

Wednesday, January 17, 1996

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on January 11, 1996, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, a special meeting/work session of the Board of Directors of the Lane Transit District was held on Wednesday, January 17, 1996, at 5:30 p.m. in the LTD Board Room at 3500 East 17th Avenue, Eugene.

Present: Kirk Bailey, Vice President
Rob Bennett
Patricia Hocken, President, presiding
Dave Kleger, Treasurer
Thomas Montgomery, Secretary
Roger Saydack
Phyllis Loobey, General Manager
Jo Sullivan, Recording Secretary

Absent: (one vacancy, subdistrict #2)

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 5:40 p.m. by Board President Pat Hocken. She added an emergency agenda item, based on new information in the continuing discussions with the City of Eugene regarding the Eugene Station property purchase.

EUGENE STATION SITE PURCHASE AGREEMENT: Planning and Development (P&D) Manager Stefano Viggiano stated that the issue of allowing buses on Willamette Street between 8th and 10th Avenues had been discussed for some time. That day, at the Eugene City Council meeting, a member of the staff had suggested for the first time that one way to ensure that there would be no buses traveling on that portion of Willamette would be to prohibit it in the agreement for sale of the Eugene Station site to LTD. Ms. Loobey said that staff had understood as of the previous Friday that the Council officers were going to direct the City staff to work with the LTD staff on the issue of buses on Willamette, but that did not happen at the Council meeting. She said that District staff would like to offer a compromise solution, which would make sense from a service standpoint, but had had no time to work with the City staff.

Mr. Viggiano showed a diagram of the downtown core. He discussed the number of buses coming from the northwest across the Washington/Jefferson Street Bridge or Highway 99. It would take more time for those buses to use Willamette than to use Charnelton or Olive Streets. Buses from the southwest and the east and University of Oregon would travel on Olive to the station. Staff had estimated an annual cost savings of approximately \$60,000 for 11 buses per peak hour, or six buses during the non-peak times,

to travel to the station on this reopened portion of Willamette. Because the station had been redesigned since this original travel plan was made, Mr. Viggiano said that it may make more sense for some of the 11 peak-hour buses to use Olive Street instead of Willamette to enter the station. Therefore, staff had developed a proposal that they thought accomplished LTD's service needs: to limit buses to six per hour on the reopened portion of Willamette Street. He said the District may want to factor in some growth in that number as the system grows--maybe a percentage growth after five years.

Mr. Viggiano asked the Board if they would like to approve this proposal. He added that it was staff's recommendation that buses on Willamette not be tied to the sale of the property.

Ms. Hocken stated that she was concerned that the District might agree to something that might not work 20 years in the future. She did not know what the status of BRT would be at that time, and she would be very nervous to agree to six buses per hour forever, especially because the City had no authority to limit bus travel on any streets. She said that she had had enough of trying to accommodate the City and was very upset that the City staff seemed to be jerking LTD around.

Mr. Kleger said that this position by the City was discriminatory to bus riders regarding access to the center of downtown. There would be no direct access for bus riders, but there would be for cars. He called this a dirty, underhanded, anti-transit proposal. He added that he did not see anything wrong with the proposal for six buses per hour as long as the District did not box itself into a long-term agreement. He thought the District needed to retain flexibility, and added that the City was spending a lot of money to get people in their cars downtown.

Mr. Bennett agreed. He asked about LTD's legal position. Mr. Viggiano replied that LTD could operate on any street. Mr. Bennett said he would not make any deal in writing or initiate any formal agreement. He doubted that the City's negotiating position of not selling LTD the property would be acceptable in the community. He said he would tell the City that LTD would try to limit its buses for some period of time to six buses, because LTD believed it could approach the situation this way, but he would not enter into any formal agreement.

Mr. Saydack agreed. He said that if LTD were going to do this, it should be adopted as a formal Board policy rather than as an agreement with the City. He did not think the District should negotiate its right to operate; it did not make good policy or good sense. If the District limited the buses on Willamette, it should announce that as a policy that the Board adopted and was free to change at any time. He would not do this as an agreement and would not be bound by it. And, he said, he would only go that far if the Board felt that not doing so was going to cause a failure to reach agreement on the purchase of the station site, but he did not believe that it would.

Mr. Kleger said he liked Mr. Saydack's suggestion.

Mr. Montgomery said he did not think the District should be tied to anything. He asked if the Board could just be willing to adopt a policy rather than actually doing so. Ms. Loobey replied that a Board policy gave staff more strength.

Mr. Saydack asked if the District had ever done anything like this before. Ms. Loobey replied that it had not had to. However, the District did evaluate service every year, so that would not be unusual. In response to a question from Mr. Saydack, Mr. Viggiano stated that this probably would be the way that staff would design the service, anyway.

Mr. Bailey said he thought there was enough public concern and curiosity about Willamette Street that the Board's adopting a policy was a good idea. Mr. Montgomery suggested that such a policy be limited to a certain section of Willamette, and Mr. Viggiano agreed that it should specify Willamette Street between 8th and 10th Avenues.

Ms. Loobey stated that if the Council was determined to tie the sale of the station site to the issue of buses on Willamette, then staff would have to come back to the Board in a special or emergency meeting. She suggested that Board members should be calling their Council members to discuss this issue, because the following Monday the Council could direct City staff to work with the District, but she did not know if that would happen.

Mr. Bennett asked if LTD could just let the City know that the District had reviewed its operating policy and, as a result, would run six rather than ten buses per hour for the foreseeable future. He thought that taking a Board position would look like compromising out of fear that the City would not sell the land to the District. Mr. Viggiano explained that under the old station design, there was no entrance on 10th Avenue, so the most efficient way for buses to travel to the station would be on Willamette. However, since the station had been redesigned with an entrance on 10th Avenue, it made more sense for some buses to travel to the station on Olive Street.

Mr. Bennett said that running as efficiently as possible was good public policy. He added that the position that the City would not sell LTD the land not because of any issues with the price or the land was not good negotiating procedure.

Mr. Saydack agreed with Mr. Bennett. He said that LTD needed to be very careful about its reasons for taking this sort of action. He did not want to corrode the Board's credibility or weaken its position. He suggested that staff could let the City know that the District had heard the City's concerns, and this was what it was going to do. He did not believe that was overly intrusive, but thought it did answer the concerns.

Ms. Loobey said that under normal circumstances, she would agree with that. However, with this particular City Council, she thought that message needed to come from the Board, because some of the Council members did not regard staff opinions very highly. Mr. Saydack said that staff could explain that the concerns were brought to the Board's attention, and the Board asked staff for a policy; the staff gave an analysis, and the Board said it was fine. Mr. Kleger thought there was something of a precedent with the Annual Route Review (ARR), when the Board reviewed staff recommendations on routing

decisions. He wondered if something along that line should be the way the Board spoke about buses on Willamette.

Mr. Hocken called the Board's attention to a copy of a letter sent to the City on November 8 regarding buses on Willamette. She said it did not seem inappropriate to re-send that letter to the Council, and write a second letter explaining ARR issues, the staff recommendation, and Board approval. Mr. Saydack suggested that a press release also might outline the issues.

MOTION Mr. Kleger moved that the Board accept and approve the staff report on the tentative routing plan for the new downtown station, and request that formal written communication about that plan be sent to the City and appropriate publication to the public be made. Mr. Bailey seconded the motion.

Mr. Bailey suggested letting the City know that the Board did not appreciate being held hostage; that the members were outraged, shocked, and appalled.

Mr. Bennett wanted to make sure that the District would not need more than six buses on Willamette. Mr. Viggiano said that number could be reviewed and changed annually as part of the Annual Route Review.

Mr. Kleger said that he did not want this tied to the property issue by LTD.

VOTE There was no further discussion, and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

Ms. Hocken asked if staff wanted Board direction, by Board action, that the Board did not believe it was appropriate to tie the number of buses on Willamette to the sale of the property. Mr. Montgomery said he did not believe the Board should act on that unless forced to. Ms. Loobey stated that the issue had been raised by staff, but the Council did not have any discussion about it, nor did they direct staff in any particular manner. Mr. Bailey said it seemed to him that what happened was a convenient trial balloon, and he questioned how the Board was going to respond, whether that be in an official capacity or not. For instance, would there be some response at the next meeting that this was totally inappropriate, or would anyone answer questions asked by the press? Mr. Bergeron stated that the press did note the staff suggestion at the Council meeting that day, and he had talked with *Register-Guard* reporter Jeff Wright about that a little while before the Board meeting, and one of the television stations had arranged an interview at LTD for the next morning. He said the suggestion had been noted and he thought it would be appropriate for LTD to respond with what the District thought about that. Mr. Bergeron said he understood the distinction that the Board was making: that the two issues of service and the station purchase not be linked, but the District should express its concern about the City suggesting that they be linked.

Mr. Bennett said he was not interested in the City and LTD beating each other up in the press, even though he was very concerned about the suggestion made at the Council meeting that day. He wondered if LTD could talk about it in such a way as to say that LTD did not understand that connection, did not think there was one, and was proceeding as if

there was not one. Ms. Hocken agreed that it was a good way to respond, as long as the point was made that the Board did not see the connection.

Ms. Loobey said that was good advice, and she preferred that in public comments they would take the "high road" and talk about justification, funding, the downtown plan, the Council goals on alternative transportation, service to the community, and the efficient operation of the District.

WORK SESSION ON ANNUAL ROUTE REVIEW AND CURRENT ROUTE PRODUCTIVITY STANDARDS: Ms. Loobey explained that staff thought it would be useful to talk about what the District measured, how, what it meant, and what mechanism would be used to develop the measures that were important for the Board of Directors with changing times. One of the questions was how the District could tell whether it was making changes in the reduction of vehicle miles traveled (VMTs). She could not recall the date of an old document, but it had showed that on the average, 75 percent of total service hours at Tri-Met was in revenue service, 18 percent was in layovers, and 7 percent was in deadhead time. At LTD at that time, 91.5 percent was in revenue hours, with 1.6 percent allocated to report time, .8 to turn-in time, 1.2 percent to layover time, and 4.9 percent to deadhead time. She said there probably were a lot of reasons for those numbers, but from the standpoint of getting the maximum amount of hours of revenue service at the fleet, LTD was at 91.5 percent at that time. She said these were not specifically part of the UNCC study or other measures, but it was important in terms of how LTD cut the runs to produce the bid work for the operators. When doing so, she said, staff were measuring all of these things. Part of it was contractual, such as allowing enough time to walk around the bus and make sure it was ready to go, etc.

Andy Vobora, Service Planning and Marketing (SP&M) Manager, said that the purpose of the work session was to show the process staff went through and have the Board help answer some questions about productivity. Three questions were listed in the agenda materials for the meeting: (1) Are current productivity standards appropriate?; (2) What is the balance between service coverage and frequency?; and (3) Are lifeline services important (rural or urban)? Staff were not asking for decisions that evening, but did want the Board's input on these questions.

He explained that each year, service changes were made in the fall at the time of the new driver bid (when bus operators selected the routes they would drive until the next bid). A few adjustments normally were made at the winter bid. Service was scaled back in the summer, when less service was needed to the University of Oregon, Lane Community College, and public schools. Service was evaluated and analyzed during the winter, and a recommendation for service improvements for the coming fiscal year was proposed in February each year. If the service recommendations were approved during the budget process, production of informational materials began and the service changes were implemented.

In order to develop the staff recommendation, staff reviewed the current system's performance (ridership and route productivity). Customer requests also were considered. These requests were received in the form of telephone calls, letters, and forms, and

solicited through surveys and contact with the general public, such as in the Origin and Destination survey, being at Valley River Center during the Joy Ride, or staffing a booth at the Gateway Mall. Employee input also was gathered, through employee participation on the Service Advisory Committee and through comments received from the general work force. The P&D and SP&M staffs were reviewing nine pages of comments from bus operators for the current ARR. Other input was received through market analysis, which mainly was input from non-riders, and from Board input, especially in the Board's strategic vision. Mr. Vobora said that developing the final service recommendation was a balancing act to meet the needs of riders, non-riders, employees, and the Board.

Performance indicators studied by staff were ridership increases and rides per service hour. One question was how to tell how many rides per hour were enough. The current urban standard that had been set by the Board was that a route was considered to be below standard if it fell below two-thirds of the urban average for rides per service hour. The current average was 35 rides per service hour. Therefore, the fall 1995 standard was 23.61 rides per service hour. The Saturday standard was 22.46 rides per service hour, and Sunday's standard was 21.63 rides per service hour.

Mr. Bennett asked if the urban average of 35 meant that there were a lot of routes above that average. He wondered why a route would be considered substandard if it were 67 percent of the average, and if there was a wide range. Mr. Vobora said that was true, and staff would be discussing this in more detail with the Board. The express service standard was 25 rides per trip, or about 44 rides per service hour, which was 1.25 times the peak hour urban average. The standard for express service was higher because the cost was higher, since it was one-directional service, with more deadhead time. The rural standard was 20 boardings per one round trip, or 15 on any given trip.

Mr. Vobora showed a system map with substandard routes drawn in red. Staff were reviewing the Ferry Street Bridge area routes and trying to figure out the factors, such as low densities or higher incomes, that caused substandard ridership in this area. Also shown, in green, were the routes that were producing between the standard and 40 rides per hour, and, in brown, the rural routes. The only substandard rural route went to the town of Coburg. Routes producing in the range of 40 to 50 rides per service hour were shown in blue, and the very high-producing routes of 50 or more rides per service hour were shown in purple. These included a corridor toward west Eugene, and a lot of the service along 18th Avenue traveling to the University of Oregon and Sacred Heart Hospital area.

Mr. Vobora also discussed some of the things staff looked at to balance whether routes should remain in service or be cut. He explained that the Market District route was not meeting standards on any days, and staff were discussing cutting unproductive trips during the day, since there may be trips within the daily schedule that lowered productivity. The lifeline service question was involved in providing service to Ya Po Ah Terrace and Campbell Senior Center. They had no other good service, so if this service was cut, it would strand a number of senior citizens.

The #10 was a newer route creating a cross-town link on weekends, connecting downtown, Gateway Mall, and Valley River Center. On Sundays, the route productivity was

exceeding standards by quite a bit. Saturday was still below standards, but because it was just implemented, staff did not recommend cutting this service before giving it a chance to mature. This service might be marketed differently and evaluated next year.

In response to a question from Mr. Kleger, Mr. Vobora said that route segment analysis helped analyze service on trunk lines, loops, etc., according to specific stops, so staff would know if some parts of the route were more productive than others. He said that this was the case on one of the River Road routes, where the trunk route was very well used, but no one road one of the loops. In that case, staff would consider cutting out the loop or giving that service to another route.

Route #15 had been in service 1.5 years and was well below the standard. Staff were considering cutting this service and reallocating it to other places in the system. Mr. Vobora said that as the District began to cut service, the Board might hear from customers affected by those cuts. Mr. Bennett wanted to make sure that those customers would receive advance notice; Mr. Vobora said that they would. Mr. Bennett then commented that it would be important to take the financial considerations into account, to balance the customer's input with the significance of the savings.

Mr. Vobora explained that sometimes the pairings of routes through the system would mean that there might not be a cost savings if a route was cut.

Mr. Bennett asked about route redesign, such as running service differently rather than keeping it or not keeping it; running it less often, more often, etc., to try to make a difference. Mr. Vobora said those issues were considered. Some routes might be reconfigured through different neighborhoods to maintain service coverage, some might be offered hourly instead of half-hourly, etc.

In describing express route service, Mr. Vobora said that some of the District's "express" routes actually were limited-stop routes rather than express routes. One, the 3X, did not meet the express route standard, with only 32 rides per service hour, but staff were considering whether different standards were needed for limited-stop routes.

Mr. Bennett wondered if staff could tell by looking at productive routes if they could become more productive by running more buses, and maybe marketing those additions effectively. Mr. Viggiano said that staff had experienced that. For example, on Saturday some routes were increased to provide service every half-hour instead of every hour; their ridership doubled, so they kept the same productivity. Ms. Loobey said that this also was the experience when increasing the Thurston route to every 15 minutes from every 30 minutes.

Mr. Vobora said that staff would recommend marketing the Coburg route better. The area was growing rapidly, and Monaco was moving there, adding another 1,000 employees. Monaco asked LTD to pull into its site, so staff thought ridership would increase.

Mr. Vobora next discussed preliminary service change options. Some changes would be recommended to fix operational problems on some routes. He explained that some time

may need to be added to some routes to allow for traffic, more ridership, etc., which may decrease productivity initially. However, it was hoped that once the routes were more dependable and people could trust them to be on time, their ridership would grow. Some service would be redesigned. Staff were evaluating how to connect with cross-town routes, and were considering a major redesign in the Ferry Street Bridge area. The #67, which currently traveled in front of the Sheldon Plaza, might be changed to go behind Sheldon Plaza to serve the new Bi-Mart and Oasis grocery store across from Sheldon High School.

Staff also were considering cutting the #15 and adding a new route to make better connections with the #14.

Mr. Bennett wondered if staff would be able to respond if someone wanted to see some sort of priority routing system that would get LTD to a position where the fares were 22 percent of the budget, or someone asked what the system would look like if LTD wanted to increase productivity by 5 percent, rather than looking at individual routes. He said the reason he thought it was important was that he could foresee a situation where LTD would have a reduction in government support, and, considering the initiatives that the Board would like to pursue, he could see the District running out of money very fast. Philosophically, he said, while he knew that LTD could not operate like a private business and there were lifeline services and private contracts, LTD might have to make choices if people chose to live out somewhere. He said the District was proud of its coverage ratio, but maybe in order to position itself better and have more credibility and support for meeting the longer-term, it may not be economically reasonable to do as much. He stated that this was an issue he had been thinking about for some time.

Mr. Vobora said that to raise productivity standards did require looking at the system on a route-by-rate basis. It would be possible to calculate how many service hours would have to be cut to reach a certain productivity ratio, but cutting certain routes affected routes those riders transferred to, and could hurt the connectivity that people needed in the service. However, if the Board wanted to get to that point, staff would know where to start from and where to start paring back. He thought that this route-by-route consideration had helped the District increase productivity over the years.

Mr. Viggiano said that when considering the District's history for the past ten to twelve years, it was clear that LTD had been able to achieve greater increases in ridership than in service. He said the District probably had not been as critical in looking at low-productivity routes as he was hearing from Mr. Bennett that they should be. Low-productivity service had been cut in the past, but it probably was more critical this year. He said that the Board would have the chance to look at this specifically in the next couple of months.

Transit Planner Will Mueller added that staff believed they were pushing the envelope with some of the routes, as far as being able to keep to the advertised time points. Some of the changes being considered would be to add operational time to make certain routes better able to stay on time in increasing traffic. Mr. Kleger added that this would not result in much more ridership in the short run.

Mr. Bennett asked if losing five minutes in route time was different than his spending five minutes on the Ferry Street Bridge, and if that would cause LTD to lose passengers or market share. Mr. Vobora replied that it did, if people could not make their transfers. Mr. Kleger agreed that the District lost market share if it did not run as advertised.

Mr. Vobora said that the District would implement a bikes on buses program during the summer of 1996. That could slow down routes, and some bus operators were very concerned about that. Staff would need to measure the impact of that program.

Mr. Kleger asked Mr. Bennett if he was thinking about shifting resources to high-productivity routes. Mr. Bennett said he did not know the answer to that. The frequency issue was involved, and considering productivity and cost, as well as whether the District could continue to keep this level of service and meet other obligations, and finding the balance in those issues. In order for LTD to serve the public, what percentage might productivity have to be increased? He said it was a good idea to see if the District was going in the right direction, and ask whether it made sense to try to reach 85 percent of the coverage area, just to meet a coverage standard. He added that lifeline service was a separate issue. He thought that sometimes more can be done than people thought, and that there was a different perspective from just trying to maximize each route.

Ms. Hocken suggested setting a target and seeing if the system could meet that target. It could be that staff would find that the target was not feasible.

Mr. Saydack said that this had been a good discussion for him. He thought he heard Mr. Bennett saying something that he had been struggling with, himself: that this type of analysis, although necessary and valuable, may be the kind of analysis that perpetuated the status quo. Like Mr. Bennett, he thought there would be some real challenges to the status quo in the years to come, that would require LTD to rethink some pretty basic issues about how to deliver bus service in the community. He thought those challenges would come from threats to the sources of funding and other areas. He wondered if there was a way to approach this analytically that made people think about it in a different way; maybe as a question of what the new fundamentals of service would be. Given those new concepts, what would staff design?


Mr. Vobora said he thought that already was developing with BRT, which would make the current route structures obsolete. He said that Mr. Saydack had hit the issue; that the current service design came from standard set by past Boards. The standard of 85 percent coverage was in the current service policy. The Board could reevaluate and reset that standard. If the Board wanted to go in new directions, staff needed to hear that. He added that staff were struggling with not knowing exactly what that direction would be.

Mr. Bennett said it was important for him to say the following. Staff had taken time to show the individual routes. He did not know if he would ever really need to understand that entirely. Rather, he needed to talk about the approach and discuss current policy and some potential objectives. The question was: What are the objectives now, and what will they be in the future? He said that when the Board got into specifics, unless they rode the bus and were very familiar with the service, he did not think that was a good role for the Board.

Mr. Saydack agreed. He said he would like to know next month what were the basic things like the 85 percent rule (the assumptions and basic premises for the service) that the service recommendation grew out of. Mr. Vobora said the Board also would see the financial projections and dollar amount for the recommended changes. Mr. Saydack asked if staff could design service to show the Board what it would look like if the Board did not want to increase costs. Ms. Loobey said that was possible, and the staff also would show the consequences of doing so. She said that the District did not have the ability to put money aside to play with in innovative ways of doing service, because state budget law required more specificity. However, there were some things LTD could begin to do, not for this next budget process, but for the next few years. For example, there might be another way to provide lifeline service in some cases. She said that staff knew what the costs were, and from the standpoint of how it was managed internally, there would be changes as the District melded into the BRT system. LTD could increase ridership with an LCC group pass program, but not at the cost LCC wanted, because of political problems with doing that.

EUGENE STATION: Mr. Bennett commented about the discussion regarding utilization of the new Eugene Station site. He had heard that day that Tim Laue might suggested that there would be a public purpose use of air rights that could allow for more intensive development of the site. He wondered if the Board could talk about that again. Ms. Loobey said that if Mr. Laue had a proposal regarding the use of public space at the site, there had to be a plan for who would pay. The Federal Transit Administration probably would not pay for LTD to house another public entity not related to transit. If other public entities wanted to pay, that would be different. Ms. Hocken thought the District could use revenue bonds and pay the money back out of rent. The other public entities would have to sign a lease, in that case.

ADJOURNMENT: There was no further discussion. The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:30 p.m.


Board Secretary

C:\WPDATA\BDMN117W.DOC